

Poet goes to inaugural

By DONNA KIMURA

Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Santa Cruz poet Don Eischen, whose words often deal with society and the environment, has been asked to read at the inaugural celebration of President Clinton.

He is expected to read his poems in the inaugural ceremony as well as participate in "Celebrating the Journey," one of many events taking place in Washington, D.C. next week to mark the beginning of Clinton's second term.

"My poetry has a lot to do with society, with society in this blooming age," Eischen said, sitting in his Westside home.

His poems have included memories of feeding the hungry and descriptions of a woman who sits on a grape.

A former college English teacher, he is friendly and laughs easily. Eischen is quick to tell stories about growing up one of six boys in his large family.

Although a Republican, he has supported the Democratic president the last two elections. He has said that if Clinton won a second term, he would officially become a Democrat.

The two men met in 1992 when Clinton was on the West Coast, campaigning for office.

Eischen then wrote a poem about Clinton's election victory.

"It was like a new birth to politics," he said. "I was so tired of hearing the same old thing time after time. Here was a new voice."

Eischen visited the White House in 1994 as part of the "Poetry for Peace" program.

He is keeping secret the poem he will read at the inaugural.

He said he thinks he will read a new poem he wrote about a blind student's quest for knowledge and understanding.

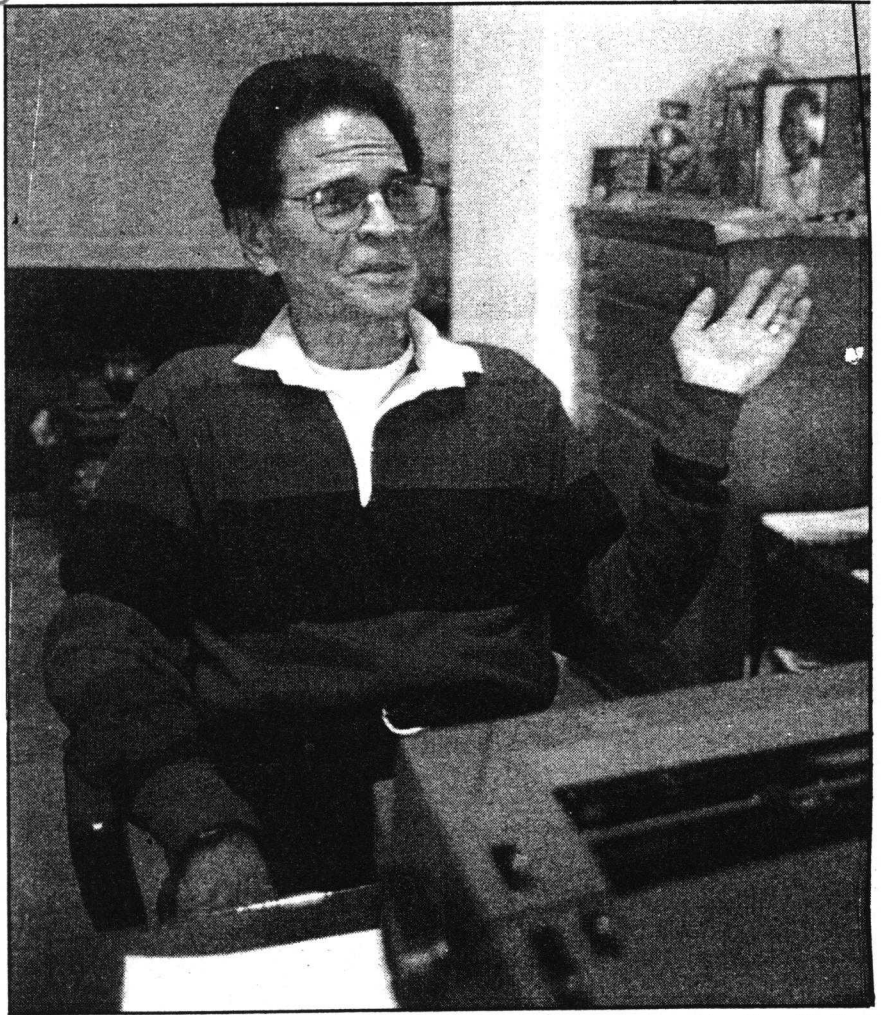
At the "Celebrating the Journey" ceremony, he expects to read his humorous "The Purple Grape: Disaster to Triumph" and "Bill Clinton: Election Night 1992."

The son of a San Joaquin Valley grape farmer, Eischen has written since he was a young boy.

He taught English at Fresno State and Fresno City College before moving to Santa Cruz in 1991. He writes daily at a desk in his home overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Eischen is working on a book of poetry, "Mirror Up to Nature," which will be published in November.

He and his wife, Jennie Capriola, have two grown children.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Poet Don Eischen first met President Bill Clinton in 1992.

The Purple Grape: Disaster to Triumph

One purple grape doomed by its shape

Dropped through the air plopped on the chair

Sneaked under a dame as she shifted her frame

Its fate was to crush between chair and tush

Made a purple stain like a varicose vein

On the left-hand cheek; it caused her to shriek

She swabbed the spot made a polka dot

She without pause wanted to cause The stain to erase and leave no trace

She rose from her seat and beat a retreat

To the ladies loo to wipe off the goo
With might and main she attacked the stain

It wouldn't wash out but faded about

To a violet Rorschach all over her back

When she tried to explain her friends would exclaim

On the clever design they said it was fine

But we knew where it came it was the stain

Of an errant grape splotched onto her shape

Between seat and rear not worth a tear.

— Don Eischen