

## Chapter 1 – Poems Honoring People

This first collection of poems honor people who directly or indirectly affected Bernice's life. Some were people she actually knew, such as her parents, and some were historic or contemporary figures who had inspired her. Her choices show what was important to her and her community.

The poems about Bernice's parents seem idealized to me. According to Bernice's son, her parents did not want her to get married, so she fled Poland and came to America when she was 24. She may have felt guilt over that and wrote these poems to create a public persona of the loving daughter. Although "I Love You Mama" was found published in 1937, another poem which may have been published earlier, "On All Souls Day," refers to her parents as already passed, so "Mama" may have been written earlier and perhaps published more than once.

Two different poems were dedicated to 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish poet Maria Konopnicka, who presumably inspired and influenced Bernice. Perhaps someone more familiar with Konopnicka's work can confirm that. It also shows that Bernice's education in Poland included sources like this famous poet.

I was initially reluctant to include the poem about Charles Lindbergh in this collection because he is now considered a suspected Nazi sympathizer. At a minimum, his promotion of isolationist policies delayed America's support for the Allies during WWII. However, this poem is actually about Bernice's emotional reaction to the kidnapping of Lindbergh's child in 1936. Bernice became a U.S. citizen in 1936 and should have understood the concept of innocent until proven guilty, but this poem shows she went along with the popular press at the time in demanding retribution for the heinous crime, even though a man was convicted based on circumstantial evidence.



Maria Konopnicka, from Wiki Commons