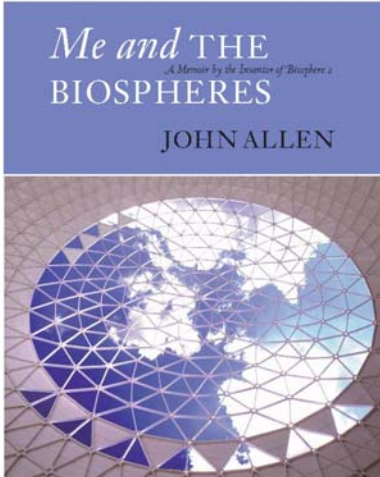




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ME AND THE BIOSPHERES: A Memoir by the Inventor of Biosphere 2

“[An] enthralling account of disciplined, daring, imaginative and truly staggering achievements, of, conceivably, the greatest magical-technological mind of our time.”

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Santa Fe, New Mexico – In a world wracked with climate change and energy crises, Synergetic Press is proud to announce the long-awaited release of *Me and the Biospheres: a Memoir by the Inventor of Biosphere 2*, the definitive autobiography of one of the most luminous minds of our time. John Allen unfurls “a story that is both a warning and a call to action” (Tim Smit) and navigates the reader through his engaging and charming account of the largest laboratory for global ecology ever built in the world.

Anyone concerned with the current world trajectory will identify with Allen’s uplifting account of the most ambitious environmental experiment ever undertaken. Contained within a magnificently designed air-tight glass-and-steel-framed setting, Biosphere 2 covered three acres of Arizona desert and included models of seven biomes: an ocean with coral reef, marsh, rainforest, savannah, desert, farm and a micro-city. Eight people lived inside this structure for two years (1991-1993) and set world records in human life support while monitoring their impact on the environment and providing crucial data for future manned missions into outer space.

Accomplished total systems scientist, poet, philosopher and inventor John Allen began his story and the manifestation of Biosphere 2 by assembling many “smaller” projects: the creation of a ferro-cement hulled ship to study ocean and river ecologies and cultures, the development of a rainforest enrichment project, a theater group, world-class art gallery and more. These projects and Biosphere 2’s awe-inspiring construction and operation demanded the efforts of the most diverse team of international scientists, engineers, artists and thinkers with whom John Allen worked closely for decades. His memoir, lavishly illustrated with nearly four hundred photographs, is a rich and complex narrative that comprises his travels to Egypt, Vietnam, Nepal, Tibet and India and his meetings and friendships with people like Buckminster Fuller, William Burroughs, and Ornette Coleman. From building developments in Iran to adobe houses in New Mexico, from Harvard Business School to cafés in Tangiers, from corporate meetings in world cities to mystical moments with Sufi sages, John Allen has impacted millions of people with manifest integrity.

Humorous and Whitmanesque, *Me and the Biospheres* is a tribute to the ingenuity and dauntlessness of the human mind. “A book not to be missed by the intelligentsia of the 21st century” (Ramon Carr), *Me and the Biospheres* is a passionate call to reawaken to the beauty of our peerless home, Biosphere 1, the Earth.

Synergetic Press is a forty-year-old independent publishing company specializing in books from the cutting edge in biospherics and ethnobotany, and from the vanguard in fiction and poetry. To learn more about Synergetic Press, visit www.synergeticpress.com.

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Praise for *Me and the Biospheres: A Memoir by the Inventor of Biosphere 2*, by John Allen

Mark Twain once famously said that reasonable men bend themselves to the ways of the world therefore it stands to reason that only unreasonable men can change it ... John Allen is an unreasonable man, a visionary, a poet and a true polymath which makes him a square peg in a very round hole and this gets up the noses of people who want business as usual even if what they are doing quite plainly doesn't work. This book should be read by all those who believe as I do, that for great things to work you need to harness all the talents, you need to leave no stone unturned in your quest for knowledge and enlightenment. It is one of the tragedies of our age that those who champion science and the arts are so often blinkered by their need to conform. This brilliant book tells a story that is both a warning and a call to action. There is nothing more dangerous and uplifting than a visionary who does stuff rather than talk about it. These are the "movers and shakers" of our world and as we face possibly the greatest threat to mankind in the form of climate change, peak oil, food and energy security and the need to create resilient communities, John Allen's brilliant book opens up a world of opportunity and the joy of seeing challenge as we face our greatest test - are we worthy of the name we gave ourselves, Homo sapiens sapiens - the wise hominid, or are we evolution's greatest example of self delusion. The court is still out, but John Allen's book gives us reason to hope.

Tim Smit, Founder and Chief Executive, Eden Project, Cornwall, England

The Biosphere 2 project was surely one of the great scientific and technological enterprises of our time. Building a working model of the Earth's biosphere is essential preparation for the coming era of space travel and manned exploration of other worlds. In this memoir by the multifarious genius inventor/explorer John Allen, we learn how he used his knowledge and experience in engineering, metallurgy, design, ecology, large-scale organizational finance, agriculture (and other fields), to draw together and inspire an extraordinary team of highly skilled and knowledgeable collaborators from a wide range of scientific and technical disciplines. He relates amazing stories from his years of travel in all parts of the world, doing ecosystem restoration projects, building a research ship that (still!) sails the seven seas and co-creating a travelling theatre in which he and his friends explored the mythic and moral dimensions of the multifaceted adventure of life in the biospheres. An astonishing book! Inspiration guaranteed!

Ralph Metzner, Ph.D., author of *The Unfolding Self* and *Green Psychology*

John Allen belongs to the great and noble tradition of Transcendentalism, the tradition of Ralph Waldo Emerson, of R. Buckminster Fuller and Frank Lloyd Wright. His whole existence, his studies, work, and interests are moved by a few fundamental principles. In John Allen, these principles share an organic, total ecologic structure that intimately combines land, nature, air and art with philosophy, theater and spiritual aspirations. The particularity of his work and life is that this combination has brought amazing results on the highest levels of achievement in science and engineering such as Biosphere 2. He has also realized small but extremely vital projects such the October Gallery in London, the Synergia Ranch in Santa Fe and the vessel Heraclitus that has been sailing the world since 1975. John Allen's stature is that of a Nobel prizewinner. For the reader of this book, there unfolds an unforgettable, stimulating and fascinating account of freedom and the possibility of human creation when it is nourished by profound reason.

Antonino Saggio, Editor of *The IT Revolution in Architecture* book series,
Professor of Architecture, University of Rome

Me and the Biospheres is an excellent and highly inspiring book, showing in a fascinating way what single humans can accomplish with like minds, and how important and trend-setting far reaching holistic thinking and consciousness change is for human evolution and survival of our species within a livable environment, the gaian biosphere.

Dieter A. Hagenbach, Gaia Media Foundation, gaiamedia.org

In this era of climate change and the ever-increasing environmental impact of human activities, *Me and the Biospheres* shows that human ingenuity can also be our greatest asset in protecting, preserving, and celebrating the original biosphere: Earth.

Ashley Biggers, *New Mexico Magazine*, May 2010

John Allen must be one of the most extraordinary men anyone has met. I met him in Paris around 1980, introduced by Brion Gysin who had pointed him out as a man who knew how to make dreams happen. John, as I later learned, also knows exactly what to say and when to say it. And here it is. *Me and the Biospheres* is a wonderfully enthralling account of disciplined, daring, imaginative and truly staggering achievements, of, conceivably, the greatest magical-technological mind of our time.

Terry Wilson, author of *Here to Go* and *Perilous Passage*

Me and the Biospheres is the autobiographical memoir of a visionary who has embodied "The Meeting of East and West" (F.S.C. Northrop), has vigorously participated in "The Two Cultures" (C.P. Snow) and has been a leader in the engineering reification of "The Biosphere" (V.I. Vernadsky). Now, that is a book worth reading.

Harold Morowitz, Ph.D., Robinson Professor, George Mason University

Now the inside story of Biosphere 2 is told by the man who created it. A fascinating and insightful read into the origins of one of America's most ambitious ecological experiments and the journey it took to get there, much of it starting right here in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Richard Polese, Publisher, Ocean Tree Books,
Executive Director, New Mexico Book Association

Biosphere 2 is the most important human/environmental experiment of the 20th century. It brought to public attention for the first time that we live in a closed environment and that the fragility of our environment is affected by such factors as CO₂ accumulation and interplay of human ecology of environmental scientist and corporate America whose motivation was and is the accumulation of knowledge for profit. What a pleasure to savor this history as a piece of art and culture from the genius mind of John Allen, the dreamer/creator of Biosphere 2. Follow the raga of John's exploration as he fugues from the wisdom of Walt Whitman through the jazz refrains of Ornette Coleman. From the coffee shops of the Haight Ashbury to the Promethean construction of the legendary research vessel Heraclitus, to the exploration of the Amazon searching for shamans and their plant allies with Dr. Richard Schultes, to dada theater, in Zurich, to the amazing human, ecological and geological experiment that was Biosphere 2, *Me and the Biospheres* is a book not to be missed by the intelligentsia of the 21st century. John Allen is the proof of Robert A. Heinlein's dictum, "Specialization is for Insects."

Ramon Carr, Environmentalist,
Co-Director, *Sage Center for Alternative Healing*

John Allen can daily create with his thoughts, spoken words and writing pen. His visionary, innovative and synergistic ideas help humankind understand its capabilities to advance towards a more enlightened world. This book gives us a deep look into John's life, loves and achievements. Dig it.

Lisa Law, photographer, videographer, historian,
author of *Flashing on the Sixties* and *Interviews with Icons*

About the Author



John Allen - traveler, author, poet, playwright, scientist - studied anthropology, classics, writing and history at Northwestern, Stanford and Oklahoma universities. He served in the U.S. Army's Engineering Corps as a machinist, later receiving his MBA with High Distinction from Harvard Business School and became a Union organizer on Chicago's south side in 1951-52.

In the late 1950s, Allen headed a special metals team at Allegheny-Ludlum Steel which developed over thirty alloys to product status. He subsequently worked with David Lillienthal's Development Resources Corporation in the U.S., Iran, and Ivory Coast, giving up his career in 1963 to journey around the planet.

On this journey, Allen contacted the avant-garde and Berber scenes in Tangiers; hitch-hiked across North Africa and studied the origins of civilization in Egypt before heading south to explore the origins of humanity. Meeting with tribal chiefs and shamans from South Sudan to Lake Victoria; he journeyed through Uganda, Kenya, to the sacred Zambezi River; north to Swahili Mombasa, taking third class sea passage with refugees to the Rann of Kutch. Having wandered through the physical and metaphysical realms of Hindu Karma yoginis and Tibetan Lamas, Allen encountered America again working as a journalist and a volunteer with a U.S. hospital located on the Ho Chi Minh trail.

Allen has since led expeditions exploring ecology and early civilizations of Nigeria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Nepal, Tibet, Turkey, India, Mexico and the Altiplano. His rich personal history alongside the social history of his many destinations is chronicled through novels, poetry, short stories and plays. Allen emerged as an accomplished author with his trilogy of the sixties, beginning with *Thirty-Nine Blows on a Gone Trumpet*.

Allen writes his fiction and poetry under the pen name Johnny Dolphin; he has read for audiences around the world in venues such as George Whitman's Shakespeare & Co., Paris, in New York accompanied by Ornette Coleman on saxophone; October Gallery, London (on occasion accompanied by fellow poets such as Ira Cohen, Sebastian Barker, Jack Hirschman, Taiwo Jegedey, and Aidan Dun); Caravan of Dreams Performing Arts Center, Fort Worth, Texas and City Lights Book Store in San Francisco. His plays have been performed on every continent, from ICA London and Theatre du Soleil in Paris to villages on the Amazon and streets in California. He has set up ten acting studios, instructed some 200 actors and still performs annually with poetry and drama readings.

Of two dozen publications to Allen's credit, about half are scientific. A fellow of the Linnean Society, Explorer's Club, Royal Geographical Society and the World Academy of Art and Science, Allen co-founded the Biosphere 2 project - the world's largest laboratory for global ecology (www.biospheres.com). As Executive Chairman, then Director of Biospheric Research, Development and Engineering, he led the world class science and engineering teams that created Biosphere 2's materially closed life system and development of spin-off technologies.

He currently serves as Chairman of Global Ecotechnics Corporation, an international project development and management company with a Biospheres Division engaged in preparing to build the second generation of advanced materially closed biospheric systems and ecologically enriched biomes (www.globalecotechnics.com). He also chairs the EcoFrontiers Division which operates ecological projects he helped design in France, Australia, Puerto Rico and England (www.ecotechnics.edu), and is director of the non-profit Institute of Ecotechnics whose research ship, the Heraclitus, has sailed over 250,000 nautical miles exploring Planet Water and the ethnosphere (www.rvheraclitus.org).

An accomplished speaker, Allen continues to lecture at international forums on the emerging science of biospherics, the implications of Biosphere 2 for health, environment, science, and culture, the future role of space biospheres and on humanity's place within the biosphere.