

Before's and After's

Our lives are filled with before's and after's.

We meet someone who becomes a lifelong friend.

We fall in love.

We break a heart

and have our hearts broken.

We walk into a college classroom

and discover how much joy there is in learning.

We read a book or a poem, see a movie, hear a song
that pulls us in a new direction.

We have a car accident that leaves us with an injury.

We live through a 6.9 earthquake.

We experience the deaths of people we love.

We take care of our father 24/7 dying from cancer.

We leave the place we call home

to create a new home—

We have a health crisis.

The person we were before

is not the same

as the person after.

This photo was taken on October 18th, the day after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake by photographer Bill Gallery. I was 31 and working at Apple Computer. As the building in Cupertino began to shake, my colleague and I dashed beneath the drawing table, not the best of choices. The first thing that went through my mind was "I've wasted my life." It was my first wake-up call to change paths. I always wanted to teach Writing and Literature at community college like my mentor and lifelong friend Professor Cynthia Katona. In 1996, I graduated with an MA in English Literature. Cynthia died in 2016 at age 69, an after that walks with me every day.

