

from Steve Dickison

3:08 AM (4 hours ago)

Sadly, soaking in the news, per Nate Mackey's post, that Ken Irby has left us.. (November 18, 1936–July 30, 2015) —beautiful poet, beautiful man.. great son of Kansas (!), where he lived many years of his life, with significant days on both West Coast and East — so fortunate for us all that his *The Intent On: Collected Poems, 1962-2006* was delivered to us by editors Kyle Waugh and Cyrus Console, via North Atlantic Press. Anniversaries and points of passage marking the calendar were always a big deal to him: he was the first poet I programmed at the Poetry Center, Feb 10, 2000, and Ken opened the night with tributes to Larry Eigner, Edward Dorn (who had just passed, that 10th of December, 1999 — we'd host a memorial reading for him the following week), Robert Duncan (Duncan and Eigner both died Feb 3, RD in 1988 and LE in '96), and Charles Olson (his departure, Jan 10 1970) all w/ anniversaries near that date.. I'd arrived later than I should have (nervous) and found everyone clustered outside the enormous main sanctuary at the Unitarian Church on Franklin and Geary — we'd been bumped out of our arranged smaller space.. so our audience ended up ranged in their pews across the vast room — Ken read for a long time, as was his habit; we took a breather, then, as planned, Bob Grenier took the stage to "interview" Ken.. Bob was enchanted by the spinning chair he was given, and took a few spins, then proceeded to ask questions of his friend of near forty years, since Harvard days.. meanwhile, word came down that the church organist had arrived and was needing to practice for Sunday's service.. so that the moment Bob and Ken were finished and the applause swept in, the organist hit one giant chord, fortissimo, and launched into her number — was it Bach?? —salute to Kenneth Irby, and condolences to all who knew him as friend and fellow poets — "the real work".. Onward!

Radiant photo is by Ben Friedlander, from November 2011, can't recall exactly where — Boston? Orono?.



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