

The Southampton Press

4/17/08

Poets Remember Siv Cedering

BY PAT ROGERS

It was both somber and a celebration, centered on the poetry of Siv Cedering. The Swedish poet, writer and artist who made her home in Sagaponack succumbed to cancer in November. On Saturday, friends, family and poets gathered to read her poetry, paying homage to her, her talent and the work she left behind.

Ms. Cedering was an award-winning, and prolific, poet and writer. She listed among her credits more than 12 books of poetry, two novels, and six books for children and young adults, along with books she illustrated and books she translated from English to Swedish and vice versa. She wrote television programs and songs for children and her work appeared in hundreds of anthologies and textbooks.

As an artist, she combined poetry with sculpture or made photographs. Her work shared equal billing with that of her husband, the sculptor Hans Van de Bovenkamp, prominently displayed in the sprawling sculpture garden at their Sagaponack home. Her work was exhibited in galleries in New Mexico, California, Washington, Colorado, New Jersey and upstate New York. Locally, she showed at Elaine Benson Gallery, Gayle Willson Gallery, Art-Space in Amagansett, Guild Hall, the East End Arts Council, Suffolk County Community College and others.

On Saturday, it was her poetry that was celebrated, to help mark National Poetry Month. The event was arranged by Daniel Thomas Moran, the Suffolk County Poet Laureate from 2005 to 2007. After a brief introduction, poetry written by Ms. Cedering was read by people who knew her well.

Each selected poetry that meant something to the reader. There were no introductions made beyond the person's name. There was no explanation given for the piece selected. The focus was placed squarely on Ms. Cedering, whose voice came through clearly and distinctly, despite the different timbres and tones of the people reading her work.

The range and the breadth of the readers was vast. Men, women and a child took their turns at the podium in front of the room. Ms. Cedering's grandson, Zachariah Fox Gamble, read a poem that was written for him on the day of his birth. The poet Ann Porter—now in her mid-90s—raised her clear voice to read a poem that conjured Ms. Cedering's childhood in Sweden near the Arctic Circle.

Ms. Cedering's daughter, Cedering Fox, read a poem that conjured her childhood and teenage years spent ice skating with her mother that invoked the grace and optimism that radiated from her. Poems that captured celestial wonderment were read by author Dava Sobel. Playful and lighthearted moments experienced in

childhood were read by longtime friend and publisher Martin Tucker, who came from Florida to be part of Saturday's Memorial Poetry Reading.

Passages were read from well-loved books of poetry from across her career, including a posthumous release that was illustrated by artist Connie Fox. People selected poetry from her children's books or moving prose from her novels. The readers included publisher Bill Hendersen, poet Allen Planz, Fran Castan, Claire Nicolas White and Ed Butscher. Diane Giardi, Denise Regan and Michelle Murphy also read. So did Harvey Shapiro, Lucas Hunt and Nondita Mason. The afternoon was capped by a reading by Ms. Cedering herself, recorded before her final illness silenced her poetic voice.

The Memorial Poetry Reading began with a short introduction by Mr. Moran who described being "dazzled and humbled by the magnitude of her gift." Ms. Cedering's husband, Hans Van de Bovenkamp, took the podium next and described the generous and magnanimous spirit that flowed from his wife. He welcomed the 80 or so people who sat in the audience and gave Ms. Cedering's blessing on the memorial poetry reading.

"She would have loved this and sprinkled her love on all of you," Mr. Van de Bovenkamp said.



Dan Moran, left, Martin Tucker and Hans Van de Bovenkamp, the late poet's husband, at the Siv Cedering Memorial Poetry Reading at Stony Brook Southampton.

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