



**Dr. Maurice Kenny**

**1929-2016**

(photo by Michael Wappl)

The Editors of *Blueline* dedicate this volume to our friend and colleague Maurice Kenny, who passed away on April 16 at the age of 86. He was born in Watertown, New York, to parents of mixed ethnic heritage: his father had Mohawk and Irish ancestry and his mother was both Seneca and English. Maurice would go on to become a highly influential writer with extensive literary achievements, many of which arose from his Native American heritage. To name just a few, both *Blackrobe: Isaac Jogues* (1982) and *Between Two Rivers* (1987) were both nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. *The Mama Poems* (1984) won the American Book Award. For decades he promoted Native American writers through his independent Strawberry Press. In 2014, he became a member of the New York State Writers Hall of Fame, achieving the same literary stature exhibited by such writers as Herman Melville and Toni Morrison.

Maurice shared his talents generously with *Blueline*. During his service as Writer-in-Residence for the Department of English and Communication at SUNY Potsdam, from 1999-2012, Maurice contributed greatly to the magazine. He was our Fiction

Editor from 2005-09, and he also served as Guest Editor for two special collections of poetry, “Adirondack Water” (Volume 20) and “Ikons of the Adirondacks” (Volume 34). He also published numerous poems and book reviews in these pages. As *Blueline*’s Editor-in-Chief since 2009, I can say that Maurice was one of the most productive writers I’ve ever encountered: I could barely keep up with the man. In February, for instance, he sent me a new sheaf of his writing that’s now awaiting review for our *next* issue.

In the meantime, the Editors are honored to feature two of Maurice’s recent poems, “Observation” and “Saranac Lake Cinquain,” on pages 4 and 5. Let me also recommend the two fine book reviews of Maurice’s *Perplexed: Early Poems, 1958-1974* (Many Moons Press, 2015). Written by Nancy Berbrich and James J. Donahue, these reviews begin on page 148. They’re both fitting tributes to Maurice’s lasting influence on this magazine.

If anything surpassed Maurice’s passion for writing it was the energy he invested in performing his writing in public. One of these readings may well be remembered as his most riveting, and I’m proud to say that *Blueline* provided the occasion for it, at the magazine’s 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in November of 2014. Maurice recited “Židovské muzeum v Praze (Jewish Museum of Prague),” a poem he’d written after visiting a Holocaust memorial in the Czech Republic, which unexpectedly reminded him of the Native American genocide: “For every Weitzman carved / into the walls... / there was a Rokwaho, a John Mohawk.” The poem is both a stirring lament and a powerful reminder that “love and understanding are infinitely less expensive” than bigotry and its carnage. Maurice’s reading was spirited, unforgettable. Like many others in the audience that night, I knew that I’d witnessed something remarkable and profound. I’m grateful for that experience.

We’ll miss you, Maurice, for so many reasons. You inspired us all and kept us on our toes. What a great privilege it is to call you a friend.

Best wishes to all,  
Donald