Cambridge Poet at 100

By Nina MacLaughlin  GLOBE CORRESPONDENT  JUNE 30, 2017

Poet Celebrates his Centennial

Cambridge poet Joseph Cohen turns 100 years old on July 13, and part of his celebration of a century on the planet will involve the publication of his second collection of poetry after “A Full Life” in 2005.

The clarity and lyricism of “A New Path” (Ibbetson Street) belies Cohen’s advanced age. His poems wade into the lofty (love, war, inspiration, art) and the quotidian (a tennis game, a dogwood tree, an elevator). Many revolve around music — his daughter Beth Cohen is a violinist who teaches at Berklee and has performed with Led Zeppelin, Phillip Glass, and Itzhak Perlman; his late wife Sonia was a composer and pianist. The two were married 71 years.
Many poems reference Sonia’s smile, the pleasure of listening to music with her. There’s a palpable optimism in his lines as he advocates, directly and indirectly, to turn ones face towards joy. From the title poem, he argues age need not diminish ones ability to experience beauty: “Love of music, art, fine literature,/ the visual creations do not demand muscles or speed.” One can sense from this collection, a poet who remains open, eager, and engaged. As he writes, “Never a night without a feast of music.”