Resolution declaring December 22, 2005 Kenneth Rexroth Day in San Francisco.

Whereas, The poet Kenneth Rexroth became intimately associated with San Francisco from the day of his arrival in this City at age 21 in summer 1927, and remains to this day intricately bound up with the cultural life and history of San Francisco in the minds of generations of contemporaries and successors; and

Whereas, Kenneth Rexroth, as poet and mentor to countless poets, occupied the unusual position of a celebrated major American poet and writer working outside the centers of official United States culture, choosing to live and write in this City that was widely regarded as a provincial outpost on the far West Coast, and furthermore choosing to forge a distinctive career as poet, artist, literary translator, essayist, critic, and cultural historian, outside the approval system of traditional academia; and

Whereas, Kenneth Rexroth insisted on a living, interdependent interaction among the creative arts in San Francisco, by his example through his distinctive work as a painter and promoter of painters, as a pioneer of the live performance of poetry and jazz, as an advocate for local theater from traditional Chinese and Noh plays to early performances of Brecht and Beckett, as promoter, lover, and critic of chamber music, opera, and dance; and; and

Whereas, Kenneth Rexroth brought to San Francisco a way of conceiving of the City as an international community, through the unbounded breadth of his learning and inquiries, his translations of the world’s poetry from Greek, Latin, French, Spanish, Italian, Chinese, and Japanese, and his embracing the full sweep of San Francisco’s extremely various ethnic communities, recognizing in our regional distinctiveness a reality that exceeded the provincial...
conception of both the East Coast Establishment and this City’s more narrowly focused official
town criers; and

Whereas, Kenneth Rexroth consistently saw political engagement as a necessity for
the creative artist and individual citizen, exemplified by his participation in the General Strike
of 1934, his long-term involvement with a wide variety of Anarchist and Pacifist groups in San
Francisco, his intense engagement in the direction taken by artists involved locally in the
Works Project Administration during the Great Depression, his direct aid to Japanese
American families displaced during the forced relocations of World War II, his personal stance
as a Conscientious Objector and counsel to COs and war resisters from World War II to the
war in Viet Nam, and his many social-political writings, including a history of Communalism;
and

Whereas, Kenneth Rexroth worked as a highly influential teacher through a variety of
modes, conducting classes in art history at the San Francisco Art Institute, teaching at San
Francisco’s International Repertory Theater, heading open-ended courses in creative studies
at San Francisco State University, authoring the City column aimed at general readers,
grocery clerks and cab drivers, three times weekly for the former San Francisco Examiner,
reviewing the world’s literature regularly for the Saturday Review in his “Classics Revisited”
essays, and broadcasting weekly for 20 years over local Pacifica radio’s KPFA-FM, of which
he was a co-founder; and

Whereas, Kenneth Rexroth became instrumental to the burgeoning of the
internationally renowned San Francisco Renaissance in poetry during the 1950s, contributed
to the founding of the Poetry Center at San Francisco State University, and acted as guide,
mentor, and Master of Ceremonies to the Beat movement, and simultaneously as that
movement's harshest, most engaged critic (when crowned by national media as “The
swinging big daddy of the Beat Generation,” he replied “An entomologist is not a bug!”); and

Whereas, Kenneth Rexroth became internationally regarded as an originator of the
contemporary ecology movement, through his work as amateur naturalist, his eloquent
address in his poems and other writings to a beloved natural world, readily at hand whether in
city or wilderness, his decades of hiking and mountaineering in the local coastal range, and
the high Sierras; and

Whereas, Kenneth Rexroth throughout his life engaged in a spiritual pursuit embracing
paths as distinctive as Zen Buddhism and Roman Catholicism, recognizing the moral role of
the creative individual, of whatever persuasion, deeply rooted in what he termed “reverence
for life”; therefore

Resolved, that on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of his birth, the San Francisco
Board of Supervisors declares December 22, 2005 Kenneth Rexroth Day in San Francisco.
Resolution declaring December 22, 2005 Kenneth Rexroth Day in San Francisco.

December 13, 2005  Board of Supervisors — ADOPTED
       Ayes: 10 - Alioto-Pier, Ammiano, Dufty, Elsbernd, Ma, Maxwell, McGoldrick,
              Mirkarimi, Peskin, Sandoval
       Absent: 1 - Daly

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED on December 13, 2005 by the
Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.