

friends of WILLIAM STAFFORD

A Newsletter For Poets & Poetry
Volume 12, Issue 2 - Summer 2007

10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Portraits of a Life Going By

by Michael Markee

Vince Wixon and I were at a William Stafford poetry reading at Western Oregon in the summer of 1985 when we decided to ask Bill if we could do a portrait documentary about him. Vince and I had been going to readings and teacher-related workshops of Bill's for a number of years. We had researched and watched every documentary that had any reference to Bill—and we didn't think much of them. The one black and white 16mm film that has Bill riding his bicycle to work at Lewis & Clark is delightful, but we thought dated.

And so we nervously asked Bill—and he said yes, provided his face never appear in the film. We laughed and flinched. Was he kidding? We applied for a grant, with Patty Wixon's help, to The Oregon Arts Commission for five thousand dollars, and to our great surprise, we got it. Our first question was: "What do we do now?" We approached a noted 16mm filmmaker from Eugene to join us in our enterprise and he wanted complete control of the project and with 16mm film, ten thousand dollars might make a five minute film with a one-to-one film ratio.

We scrapped the film idea and approached a young videographer named Jeff Hart from Salem who had taken a filmmaking class from me at Chemeketa Community College and the project began.

We followed Bill around the state and the country for over three years. I still

remember Bill saying late in the first project, *What The River Says*, "I hope you complete the project before I expire." We did complete the project and reproduced it on video tape in summer of 1989 and on August 4th 1989 I received a letter from Bill saying he and Dorothy had watched it with friends and "...I couldn't dream of asking for so elegant a treatment."

Of course, Vince and I went on to do a second documentary with Bill, entitled *The Life of The*
continued on 6



Photo/Michael Markee

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Friends of William Stafford is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness of poetry and literature in the spirit of the legacy, life and works of the late award-winning poet William Stafford.

The Archives Audio Collection

By Patty Wixon

This special Report from the Archives comes from one of the Friends of William Stafford founding members, the board's first Chair and the newsletter's first editor.

In 1996, I began a project I knew would require concentration, detailed organization, and intense commitment. I had no idea it would take over three years to complete, and that even now, eleven years later, I'd be referencing the collection sometime every month. Early in the development of the Stafford Literary Archives, several of us realized that the cardboard boxes where Stafford tossed the audio tapes given him after his readings, speeches, and workshops, stored in the attic of the Stafford home in Lake Oswego, would not last long where summers baked and winters froze the tapes. The project goal was to transfer the audio recordings (some cassette, some reel-to-reel, some early films, some later videos) to a stable medium in a readily accessible format. I slowly worked through the tapes with sound engineer Frank Sullivan of Sullivan Recording in Ashland, who was surprised most of the tapes were in good condition, and he was able to successfully splice those that had become brittle.

The process was straight forward. Frank transferred the original "source material" in its raw state to Digital Audio Tape (DAT). From DAT Frank burned Compact Disc (CD) masters, removing as much noise as possible so the clarity of Stafford's voice came through. I worked through each master CD selecting only Stafford's voice, for the most part, to become the labeled Archive CD. This excluded recordings of other people reading or performing Stafford's work. When Stafford appears in a group reading, only his reading is on the CD. There are a few exceptions, primarily when Stafford is working closely with someone else giving readings and workshops, such as Richard Hugo at Rogue Community College in the 1980s or with Marvin Bell at Port Townsend in 1988. Where other voices are integral to the dialogue or program, these voices are preserved with Stafford's. There are interviews with well-known people, such as Studs Terkel, and not so well-known high school students, all with content of importance.

Each CD holds about 70 minutes of recording, which might be one long event (such as a keynote address at a national convention) or several short ones (some radio interviews).

There are currently 95 CDs that preserve more than 150 events. The earliest is July 9, 1959, and the latest is a broadcast shortly after Stafford's death in 1993. Stafford reads nearly 500 different poems. Most frequently read are "The Little Girl by the Fence at School" and "At the Un-National Monument Along the Canadian Border." There are 233 poems read only once with the earliest recording containing seven of these. This reel-to-reel tape was not in one of Stafford's cardboard boxes but late in the project Kim Stafford was handed it in a chance meeting at the Portland Art Museum. A few others became part of the CD project through informal conversations. We

know this collection represents only a small number of recordings still out in the world.

Two important projects have relied on the audio archive. During each annual William Stafford symposium since 2003, audiences have heard Stafford's voice from one of the CDs—sometimes poems, sometimes commentary—each time with appreciation. A second project was the production of the CD, *The Unknown Good in our Enemies: William Stafford Reads Poems of Reconciliation* made from recordings in the collection. Though *The Unknown Good in our Enemies* appearance was to serve as a companion to the book, *Every War Has Two Losers* (Milkweed Editions, 2003), it has found an audience of its own. On the twenty-minute CD, Stafford reads twelve poems recorded between 1970 and 1993.

Every couple of months, I return to make changes to the liner notes as I receive documentation from Paul Merchant, the Stafford archivist, when he finds additional connections, missing dates, places where events occurred. Recently when an audio clip was added to the FWS website (an airing of an excerpt from a NPR interview of William Stafford and Henry Lyman plus Stafford reading two poems), the NPR announcer gave the date and place of the interview (October 7, 1990, Lake Oswego, Oregon)—we suddenly had accurate data we hadn't had before.

There are many ways of considering what's preserved on these CDs. One is the various ways Stafford reads a single poem, some following published versions, others not. It seems that a list of further studies of Stafford's work using this collection could be endless. But I realize now, all these years later, the greatest impact of the audio collection in the William Stafford Archives is yet to come. When the Archives finds its permanent home, where academics and ordinary citizens alike can listen to William Stafford say, "it is important that awake people be awake," then William Stafford's legacy will have a chance to live among future generations.

"For me, Bill was not only a great poet and an astonishing follower of the golden thread, but an elder as well. He was one of those 102-year-olds who sit under a tree in some African village, who can put you in touch with the ancestors. There's no one to replace him."



Robert Bly
September 3, 1993

Former Director remembers FWS humble beginnings

by Peter Sears

Congratulations to Friends of William Stafford on its tenth anniversary – a good time to look back. Had it not been for the generosity of Literary Arts in hosting several meetings following Bill Stafford's death, I am not so sure the organization would have come into being. Those of us in this exploratory group decided there was most surely a need for such an organization and many ideas were bandied about. Eventually, Kim Stafford and I founded FWS and Dorothy Stafford hosted all the early board meetings at her home in Lake Oswego. So you can't say we didn't have a good time getting started.

Meanwhile, Kim and I exchanged weekly e-mail reports and we met now and then over a meal down the hill from Fat City Café in Multnomah Village where the William Stafford archives were located then. I remember those meetings with Kim fondly, as we tried to envision a supple creature of an organization.

Our biggest challenge was gaining non-profit status; a lengthy process in which we had to clearly show ourselves as being independent of and separate from the Stafford estate - not an easy task. But we did it, and we have former board member Brian Booth and his law firm to thank for getting us through this all-important development.

I had worked part-time as the organization's first director, but as I recall, I stepped down within the year, not wanting the organization to have to focus on raising money to pay a staff member. When Patty Wixon took over as board chair, she took on all the staff duties, and was a terrific leader. It was during her tenure, I believe, that the organization began to develop the wonderful series of January Birthday Readings in Bill's honor. For many years now, these events have been guided by the capable Paulann Petersen – and what a great job she has done!

In establishing a non-profit, a good and necessary strategy is to look first at what kind of contribution the organization will make toward the greater good. Its mission statement needs to reflect the central point of that contribution. For a "friends" organization, it is not enough to simply preserve the memory of the particular person, so during our early board meetings we looked into the ways by which the Friends of William Stafford could make a particular contribution that Bill would have appreciated.

In order to contribute to William Stafford's legacy for generations to come, we decided to focus on education in ways that would encourage and enrich a broad spectrum of writers and readers. All the while, I dreamed of establishing a William Stafford Center somewhere in the Portland metropolitan area. I still do.

IN MEMORIAM



Beverly Jeanne Partridge

1923-2007

For 16 years Beverly Partridge taught elementary grades at Catlin Gabel School in Portland, Oregon. On June 16, 2007 the crowd that gathered in The Barn to celebrate her life ended the memorial service by singing all five verses of "The Happy Wanderer."

Born in Chicago, Beverly (Armitage) Partridge was a happy wanderer. A teacher, artist, and poet, she and her husband John, whom she married in 1944, moved with their children to Lake Oswego in 1957, and there began a long friendship with Bill and Dorothy Stafford. A well-known figure in Portland's arts and literary community, Beverly Partridge served on the founding board of the Friends of William Stafford when the organization first began to take shape in 1997. Many will remember her as one of those featured readers at January Birthday events who always had an interesting anecdote about Bill to share with the audience. We miss her.

"My father's poems will travel on their own. When friends commiserate with me about my father's passing, I often find myself saying to them, 'Well, yes, he's gone, but he did leave word.' ... The script for any conversation, peppered with rich intervals of silence, is right there, line by line: '...don't ever let go of the thread.'"



Kim Stafford

Early Morning: Remembering My Father

AGAIN – It's Poetry & Potluck Time in Foothills Park

The Board of Trustees is looking forward to visiting with a crowd of FWS members, along with their families and friends, Sunday, September 16th in Lake Oswego's Foothills Park at 199 Foothills Drive. The occasion, of course, is the Second Annual Poetry & Potluck – an afternoon of fellowship, food, and poetry.

Participants are asked to bring a main dish, salad, or dessert to share, a couple of poems to read (yours, Bill's or anyone else's) and an appetite for great food, conversation, and a few surprises. Lawn chairs or a blanket would also be welcome. Board members, who will be supplying the plates, utensils, beverages and welcome mat, will be on hand to chat, answer questions, and gladly sign anyone up who wants to volunteer for future projects.

Once again, we appreciate Sharon Wood Wortman coordinating our plans. This year's program will be emceed by board member Rich Wandschneider, who will introduce featured readers John Daniel, Kirsten Rian, and Doug Stow. Joyce and Mike Gullickson, FWS members visiting from Burnet, Texas, will also be featured. To learn more about them all, click on *Events* when you visit our website www.williamstafford.org.

In the fund-raising department, this year's gathering offers drawings for baskets of poetry items, Stafford broadsides, including the newest, "Hummingbirds," AND the opportunity to purchase (through a sealed bid auction) a magnificent, solid mixed-wood table bearing the Stafford poem, "Spirit of Place: Great Blue Heron."

Created by one of our newest Friends, wood-burning artist Shirley Marie Dees, the table is 17 inches in height and 19.75 inches square. The main image on the table top is that of a great blue heron standing to the viewer's left with the heron's image overlapping from the top surface to the next layer less than an inch below. To the viewer's right the words of the poem are woodburned into the surface. The table is painted in metallic and opaque paints, the background in metallic golds with some copper, brown, and black, all loosely suggesting a pond scene with woods behind. The single pedestal is several inches in diameter with external carvings painted to resemble feathers. It is solidly attached to a base painted in metallic gold and copper. You may see full-color images of the table on our website, www.williamstafford.org, by clicking on "Events," and you may learn more about the artist by visiting www.burningartistry.com.

Dees, a well-known Northwest artist, became interested in creating something using "Spirit of Place," she says, while talking with board members Patricia Carver and Sulima Malzin at the June poetry reading at Lake Oswego Library where she heard the poem read. "Heron's are impressive birds even though pretty common in these parts," she said, "And I like to make art about aspects of Oregon."

If you wish to bid on this one-of-a-kind artwork but are unable to attend, you may download a bidding form from our website and

send it to our post office box. Please mark the envelope "sealed bid." There will also be directions for electronic submission. If yours is the winning bid, you will be notified by phone, and payment must be received within 5 business days from that notification. In fairness to all bidders, this must be 'a one-bid only' process. It will not be competitive, unless the bid is tied. Each bid (the highest price a bidder is willing to pay) will be placed inside a sealed envelope where it will remain until all bids are removed and reviewed by the committee. At the end of the day, the person who submits the highest bid over \$350 will be awarded the table. Transporting the piece to its new home will be the responsibility of the new owner. Payment must be by cash or check.

If you have questions regarding the Poetry & Potluck you may call 503-639-9327 or email sulimama@gmail.com, placing FWS P&P in the subject line.



Photo/Shirley Marie Dees



Photo/Shirley Marie Dees



From the Chair

by Shelley Reece

In a recent New York Times Book Review, James Longenbach claims, “the strength of American poetry depends on the fact that hardly anybody notices it.” He claims further that a poet’s “freedom” arises from that lack of notice. Longenbach suggests that there’s a great separation

between poet and audience. Unlike Longenbach, Edward Hirsch sees that “poetry is as ancient as the drawing of a horse at Lascaux or an Egyptian hieroglyphic, and yet it also feels especially relevant to a post-9/11 world...” (Poet’s Choice, 2006). In this world, poet and audience need each other. Hirsch says further, “the nature of turning something into poetry is turning toward a human community. It suggests there is some hope because there is a future listener. There is some outstretched hand there” (Joshua Ringel Memorial Reading, 2006).

Friends of William Stafford tries to locate poet and audience next to each other, or, more likely, to put the poet in the middle of the audience to let community develop. The history of FWS is that of bringing poets together and reducing the distance between poet and audience. For instance, in the January celebrations of William Stafford’s birthday, something magical often happens. A member of the audience may step forward, tell a Stafford story, and read a Stafford poem that was enclosed in an exchange of letters, an unpublished poem not seen or heard in public before that moment. In “How the Ink Feels,” viewers may study the visual and verbal art of the broadsides in the exhibit and return to the guest book to write a comment about a poem or image that has moved them.

For the last two years, FWS has sent to annual contributors a gift of words for National Poetry Month. In 2006, it was W. S. Merwin’s essay “For an Undersea Library.” In it, Merwin considers the effects of particular essays, novels, and poems on “someone sitting in front of the button” on a nuclear submarine. Stafford’s “Earth Dweller” is one of five poems he chooses, a poem that sees the world “as our only friend.” In 2007, the gift was Naomi Nye’s “Gate 4-A,” a previously unpublished journal entry in which the author hesitantly steps forward and through speaking Arabic to a desperate woman in an air terminal, participates in creating community among strangers. These two gifts resonate with Hirsch’s suggestion of hope.

This September we will hold our second annual Poetry and Potluck celebration on Sunday, September 16 at Foothills Park in Lake Oswego, another event that puts poets and audiences together to create community.

Finally, the Stafford Newsletter, which you are now reading, is a way FWS tries to keep us all in touch locally and nationally. This is the

tenth anniversary of the newsletter. As you read this, may I urge you to e-mail the editor, Sulima Malzin, or another board member with any matters that will help Friends of William Stafford write its script for the future so that we may all in our little ways, encourage good fortune.

The Little Ways That Encourage Good Fortune

Wisdom is having things right in your life and knowing why.

If you do not have things right in your life you will be overwhelmed:

you may be heroic, but you will not be wise.

If you have things right in your life but do not know why,

you are just lucky, and you will not move in the little ways that encourage good fortune.

The saddest are those not right in their lives who are acting to make things right for others: they act only from the self – and that self will never be right: no luck, no help, no wisdom.

∞ WILLIAM STAFFORD

“William Stafford, originally from the land of Kansas, to the land of Oregon, to the widest lands of being, was a champion of language, a seeker, a deep rememberer, a purely original poet, and a beloved man. Now fiercely missed. But read these poems. That is part of it.”



Naomi Shihab Nye
preface to *The Way It Is*

Portraits of a Life Going By

continued from 1

Poem. Then I went on to do a third video about Bill's poetry for the signs along the Washington State Northern Cascade Highway called *The Methow River Poems*. Our relationship with the Stafford family continues to this day.

One thing that I did all through the projects was to carry along a still camera in addition to the video equipment. And, on most occasions while the shoot was happening or before or after it, I shot photos of Bill, Dorothy, the family, other poets, workshop participants, and our video crew.

I have selected here, although they are not necessarily my most artistic photos of Bill, a small group of portraits that either have a story attached or are significant in some way.



Photo/Michael Markee

Over the years I shot many photos of Bill and Dorothy together, but in this particular photo I think the essence of Bill's love and devotion to Dorothy is more apparent than any of the others. Bill's look tells it all.

Our first shoot at William Stafford's home at Sunningdale in Lake Oswego I shot 35mm B&W negatives of Bill reading on the couch and typing up a poem in his office. I was excited about what I shot, but entrusted a student of mine to develop the film. The student came back sheepishly later in the day and told me he had "cooked the negatives." You know what I wanted to do to the student. I didn't. However, I may have flunked him. I did a test contact sheet and decided the negatives were unprintable and filed them. Two years ago I pulled out the negatives and printed Bill writing on his living room couch and the print looked almost like an impressionistic painting. I have made many prints of the negative since then. (See FWS newsletter Vol. 9, no.2, 2005 on www.williamstafford.org.) But, what I'm including here, on page 1, is another previously unseen negative of Bill typing up a poem in his office.



Photo/Michael Markee

One of the later shoots of *What The River Says* happened when Bill was teaching a summer writing workshop at Cannon Beach. We asked Kit to come to down to do a shoot with her father as visuals for the poem, "With Kit, Age 7, at the Beach." While our videographer was setting up, Bill and Kit talked and I took color photos of father and daughter. The video shoot was wonderful. Even though the day wasn't stormy, father, daughter, and daughter's dog moved along the beach, seemingly choreographed in a dance that blended majestically with Bill's poem. And I captured, with my 35mm camera, what I thought was a touching moment with Bill and Kit.

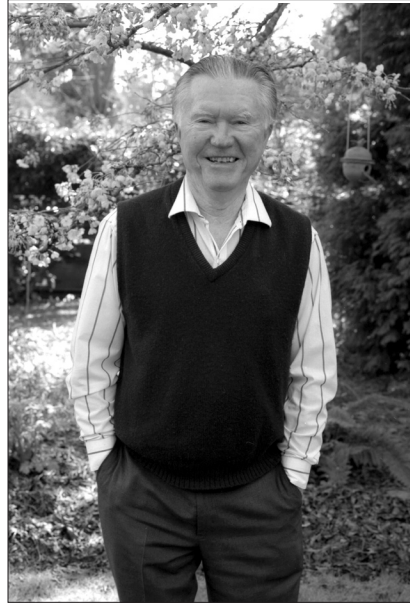
An Archival Print

God snaps your picture—don't look away—
this room right now, your face tilted
exactly as it is before you can think
or control it. Go ahead, let it betray
all the secret emergencies and still hold
that partial disguise you call your character.

Even your lip, they say, the way it curves
or doesn't, or can't decide, will deliver
bales of evidence. The camera, wide open,
stands ready; the exposure is thirty-five years
or so—after that you have become
whatever the veneer is, all the way through.

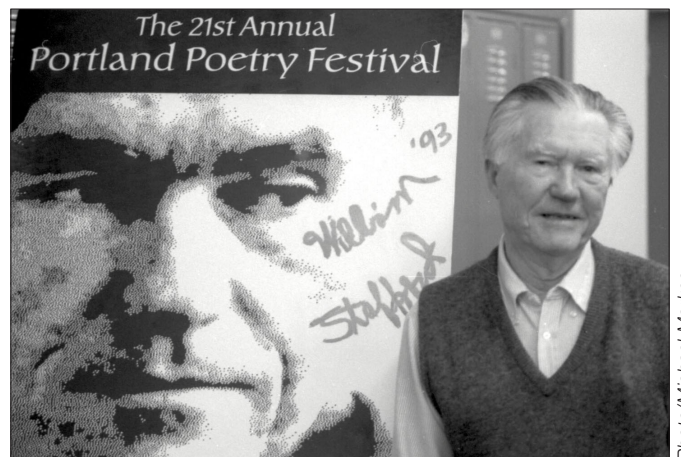
Now you want to explain. Your mother
was a certain—how to express it?—*influence*.
Yes. And your father, whatever he was,
you couldn't change that. No. And your town
of course had its limits. Go on, keep talking—
Hold it. Don't move. That's you forever.

∞ WILLIAM STAFFORD



Photo/Michael Markee

This photo was taken in color in the spring of 1992 in the Stafford's back yard. I had just purchased a new medium format Pentax 6x7 camera and wanted to capture the day that Bill was receiving a major award (the award escapes all of us now, even Dorothy). Bill stood in front of the beautifully blooming cherry tree dressed in his usual long-sleeved dress shirt and blue sleeveless sweater and I shot three color negatives. I've made 16x20 prints from this negative as well as a second one with Bill and Dorothy. It was a day of celebration.



Photo/Michael Markee

On Labor Day weekend in 1992 Bill was doing a workshop at Bumbershoot in Seattle and the Wixons and the Markees joined him. One evening we took Bill to our favorite restaurant on Lake Union, Ivar's Salmon House. This photo captures Bill with Patty Wixon as we sat on the dock in the dark talking and watching the boats travel by and the traffic crossing the I-5 bridge above us. It was a magic moment and from it Bill wrote a poem called "Being Alive," and later shared it with us. I don't believe it has been published in any of his books.



Photo/Michael Markee

On the occasion of the Portland Poetry Festival celebrating the work and life of William Stafford, August 11-15 1993, this photo was taken less than two weeks before Bill's death. It was a glorious weekend and I shot B&W 35mm all weekend, getting some of my best late negatives of Bill and the celebrants surrounding him. At one point we took the poetry poster and Bill stood next to it as I shot a series of negatives, some serious, some in jest. It brought to mind a video shoot early in our *What The River Says* project when we were shooting with Bill along the Metolious River what would become the opening scene of the video. Bill and I were waiting for Jeff Hart to set up the camera and Bill made the off-hand comment, "I really don't like my face and never have." I like to think back on this comment and on this great poet with his frumpy sophistication. I have always thought that Bill Stafford's face was one of the most distinguished looking faces in all of poetry from all ages and I feel honored that I've been able to capture it on video and film for others to share.

Another World Instead will be latest in posthumous publications of Stafford Work

The early poems of William Stafford, collected and edited by Fred Marchant, will be published soon by Graywolf Press. The volume, entitled *Another World Instead*, will be added to the list of books, videos, audio cassettes, compact disks and DVDs produced since Bill's death in August of 1993. Marchant has been working on the collection for the past couple of years in collaboration with Paul Merchant, the Stafford Archivist, and publication is expected in Spring, 2008.

The other publications are as follows: *The Darkness Around Us Is Deep* (ed. Robert Bly) Harper Collins, 1993. *William Stafford and Robert Bly: A Literary Friendship* (video), Magnolia Films, 1993. *Holding onto the Grass*, Weatherlight Press (England), 1994. *Learning to Live in the World*, Harcourt Brace, 1994. *The Whole Wide World Pours Down*, Library of Congress, 1994. *The Methow River Poems*, Confluence Press, 1995

The Methow River Poems (cassette), read by Garrison Keillor, Naomi Nye, and William Stafford, TTTD Productions, 1996. *Even in Quiet Places*, (collected small press poems), Confluence Press, 1996. *The Methow River Poems* (video), TTTD Productions, 1997. *The Last Reading, 13 August 1993*, (compact disc) TTTD Productions, 1997. *Traveling through the Dark*, Weatherlight Press (England),

1997. *Crossing Unmarked Snow* (ed. Paul Merchant and Vincent Wixon), University of Michigan Press, 1998. *The Way It Is, New and Selected Poems*, Graywolf Press, 1998. *Down In My heart* (3rd ed., w/intro by Kim Stafford), Oregon State University Press, 1998. *A Scripture of Leaves* (rev. 2d ed., w/intro by Wendell Berry), Brethren Press, 1999. *William Stafford: An Exhibit Catalog and Bibliography*, Watzek Library, Lewis & Clark College, 2000. *You Reading This, Be Ready*, Cedar Fence Press, 2000. *Early Morning: Remembering My Father William Stafford*, by Kim Stafford, Graywolf Press, 2002. *The Answers are Inside the Mountains* (ed. Paul Merchant and Vincent Wixon), University of Michigan Press, 2003. *Every War Has Two Losers* (ed. Kim Stafford), Milkweed Press, 2003. *The Unknown Good in Our Enemies*, (compact disc), TTTD Productions, 2003. *William Stafford Life and Poems*, DVD containing "What the River Says" 1989, "The Life of the Poem," 1992 and "The Methow River Poems" (1997), TTTD Productions, 2004. *The World Speaks Everything to Us: Seven Poems 1933-1993* (broadside portfolio), Paper Crane Press for the Friends of William Stafford, 2004. *Traveling through the Dark* (intro by Kim Stafford), Urban Editions, 2005. *Down In My Heart* (4th ed., w/intro by Kim Stafford), Oregon State University Press, 2006.

Newest FWS broadside to be unveiled at Poetry & Potluck

"Hummingbirds," an obscure poem written on August 12, 1992 and published in *The Christian Science Monitor* sometime in 1993, is the latest in the series of Stafford broadsides published for Friends of William Stafford by Doug Stow of Paper Crane Press in Half Moon Bay, California. The broadside's illustration is by Millbrae, California artist, Carol Marie Garcia, who is a long-time lover of Stafford poetry.

The new broadside will be unveiled and offered for sale for the first time at the members and friends Poetry & Potluck at Foothills Park in September (see related article on page 4).



Hummingbirds

Too small to feel fear, one arrives
faster than sight and then hangs, more jewel
than bird, at a flower, wings worshipping speed,
a blur in the air. Once, picking up
one stunned by the glass, I felt that little
motor in my hand, a religion that I now knew
all the way up my arm, abrupt as the universe
was when there was nothing and God said, "Go."

Sometimes like that you meet what is real,
touched alive, a visit nobody arranged.
A day comes, tame you thought, and you dream
along just being you doing a kind act:
suddenly you have a hummingbird in your hand.

© WILLIAM STAFFORD

Celebrating Traditions with Room for More

By Sulima Malzin

Like Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, who said “Because of our traditions we’ve kept our balance for many, many years,” the Friends of William Stafford believe the words, *tradition* and *balance* are important to the life of our organization.

While it hardly seems possible that the Friends of William Stafford and this newsletter have existed for ten years, it is true, and, in keeping with our mission to *share Stafford’s work and advance the spirit of his teaching and literary witness* we have indeed established some traditions. The evidence is on our website, www.williamstafford.org. Click on *News* and you can trace our process and our progress from spring of 1997 to the present. The archived issues offer a wealth of information about the development of FWS.

You can see how the newsletter has unfolded over time as its three successive editors, Patty Wixon, Patricia Carver, and Sulima Malzin each added their own special touches. Publishing a newsletter, however, is truly a collaborative effort and it was during Carver’s tenure that the overall appearance of the FWS newsletter took on its new look thanks to Helen Schmidling’s design and technological skills. Today Susan Gillespie serves as our graphic design and layout wizard as the tradition of the newsletter goes on.

In the inaugural issue, the first gathering of members and their families was announced; a picnic supper on Sunday August 24, 1997 at Lewis & Clark College’s Templeton Center, where guests enjoyed good food, conversation, poetry readings, and reminiscences of Bill. Sounds a lot like our upcoming Poetry & Potluck in Foothills Park.

Perusing that first issue of the newsletter, you can see the foundations of FWS being laid. The list of National Advisors is in place and *The Methow River Poems* project completed. Ideas for fund raising had begun and audio cassettes and video recordings of the poems read by Garrison Keillor, Naomi Shihab Nye, and Bill himself were offered for sale with proceeds going to FWS. The proceeds from the sale of 14 copies of *Even In Quiet Places*, donated by Confluence press also went into the coffers that year.

In that same issue you might also notice that at the National Conference of Teachers of English (NCTE) there was a broadside exhibit entitled *Like Frost on a Window*, which included several Stafford poems along with other well-known poets’ work. As you may have guessed, it was this exhibit which was taken over by FWS and became *How the Ink Feels*, touring the nation for the past several years under the able hand of board member Nancy Winklesky.

“It was late March, 1999” Winklesky recalls, “I was again reading my January newsletter when the ‘Volunteer Sign Up’ list caught my eye and I contacted Patty Wixon. Looking back, that phone conversation opened the door to an unexpected adventure and a truly learn-by-doing education. I had mostly wanted to contribute some money

toward a special project, but Patty responded to my offer with something like, ‘Well, maybe you’d like to consider doing a special project instead.’ She went on to tell me about a traveling exhibit of letterpress poetry broadsides that FWS had the opportunity to take over if someone was willing to take on the task of coordinating its travels. Given some time to consider it, I thought mostly about Bill and his travels around the country leading workshops and reading his poems, alone and with other poets, all-in-all offering both a forum and an invitation for speaking and listening. I especially thought about his generosity, which I had experienced first hand. Patty told me that a good number of the broadsides in the exhibit were on loan from the Stafford estate. It seemed the right thing to do, to say ‘yes,’ to keep Bill’s voice and the voices of many other fine poets out there, traveling together in this new configuration.”

Nancy Winklesky has been responsible for touring the *Ink* exhibit ever since and would like to give someone else a chance. If you are interested, or know someone who is, please contact her through our website. You may read about the exhibit’s travels around the country on our website by clicking on “How The Ink Feels,” and in many issues of the archived newsletters, particularly Winter 2006 which features the six-month Alaska tour.

continued on 10

Being Alive

At the waterfront we talk into the evening.
As it gets darker a boat glides by with lights
along the side. A late seagull swoops for
a mallard across reflections that dance on the harbor
waves. A call arches over from shore and surrounds
our faces, our shadows. Time in a gush is pouring
its minutes. I carry more years than the others and feel
rich for my voyage beyond. I yearn for souls in the air
around me, for the lights dimming and brightening
only what we have labels for, lost in the fathoms
around us, those invisible waves ghosting through even
the most sensitive touch of our blind hands.

☞ WILLIAM STAFFORD

Celebrating Traditions

continued from 9

1999 was a big year for change. Paulann Petersen, as a new member of the FWS board, proposed adding another Stafford birthday reading to the ones she had hosted the past two years at West Linn Library. And so, in January of 2000, Lake Oswego's Heritage House, which was at that time featuring the *Ink* exhibit, became the second site for a Birthday reading – a Standing Room Only event that made it clear to Petersen there should be more.

Dismayed at the idea of having to turn people away, she decided to organize more events and make room for as many as were willing to come. "Over the last seven years," she says, "that's turned out to be thousands and thousands." In 2001 there were 11 events, with 36 in 2004 and 52 in 2007. Most were in Oregon, many in Washington; the rest scattered throughout the U.S. from New Jersey to Texas to California. Paulann Petersen's eyes light up as she announces, "It looks like 2008 will bring Stafford Birthday Celebrations to Lumpur, Malaysia and Puerta Vallarta, Mexico. As Bill Stafford might say, (and here her eyes really twinkle) 'tomorrow the world.'" If you would like to celebrate Bill's birthday where you live, contact Paulann Petersen at Paulann@Paulann.net.

And speaking of the world, what quicker way to bring Stafford's legacy to it than through our website? Dennis Schmidling, who also joined the board of FWS in 1999, has done a fine job of creating a site whose design has remained purposefully simple while including complex technologies like streaming audio and video. He has recently begun posting video clips of Stafford reading and talking about poetry, and continues to expand reportage on literary news and events as well as links to poetry and bibliographic resources.

"The initial idea behind a website," says Schmidling, "was to establish a public identity and create a repository for Stafford's work. But something more took place. It became not only a place to celebrate his life, work, and legacy, but a celebration of the life force of poetry itself. The internet takes us past our local boundaries, reaching people who never heard of William Stafford and may have never read a poem. Through our website, his spirit is like a seed on the wind, making its way to fertile soil everywhere." Schmidling's enthusiasm for the possibilities to come really shines through when he says, "The look and feel of the website and its ease of navigation make it user-friendly to everyone, just like Bill Stafford himself."

And so, the Friends of William Stafford celebrates ten years of sharing Stafford's work and advancing the spirit of his teaching and literary witness. The FWS board appreciates all of you who have joined us in this adventure. We welcome your support and ideas as we continue seeking to balance the stability of tradition with opportunities for growth and change.

Desert Rendezvous with William Stafford

The call that night struck like an icy draft:
She said you'd spilled the sparkle from your eyes.
I filled my lungs and held my breath, and wept,
And laughed at death, and danced among the stars.
She spoke about your craft in hollow tones,
And how the sudden darkness chilled: "Just think...
The voice is stilled...the pool of wisdom drained...
The lively footsteps...lost." You photographed
Me once, in black and white, and now the photo haunts:
Our talk about a desert rendezvous
Rolls through my mind – two poets out where time
And space evaporate, and distance daunts.
We'll keep our date: I'll face the rimrock, thrilled
to see you there, a rucksack on your back.

DAVID HEDGES

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"Being Alive," unpublished poem written in 1992, reprinted with the permission of the Estate of William Stafford.

"Desert Rendezvous with William Stafford" by David Hedges, First Place winner of the Perryman-Visser National Poetry Award (1997). Reprinted with author's permission.

"What can anyone give you greater than now, / starting here, right in this room, when you turn around?"

☞ William Stafford, "You Reading This Be Ready"

W BECOME A Friend of William Stafford



MISSION OF FWS

IN THE SPIRIT OF WILLIAM STAFFORD, we are committed to the free expression of literature and conscience. We seek to share Stafford's work and advance the spirit of his teaching and literary witness. We strive to provide ongoing education in poetry and literature in local schools and communities in ways that will encourage and enrich a broad spectrum of readers and writers. In doing so, we hope to contribute to William Stafford's legacy for generations to come.

WHY JOIN?

BY JOINING THE FRIENDS OF WILLIAM STAFFORD, you become part of an international community of poetry lovers and writers with broad access to other poetry organizations and events. As a Friend, you'll receive a subscription to our triannual newsletter, filled with poetry and poetry news. In addition, your contribution provides vital funding for our traveling broadside exhibit, *How The Ink Feels*, supports the annual William Stafford Birthday Celebration Readings, maintains our web site, www.williamstafford.org, and helps initiate new projects. We always welcome your volunteer services.

To join the Friends of William Stafford, renew your friendship, or make a donation, please fill out this form and mail to: FWS, P.O. Box 592, Lake Oswego, OR 97034. Checks payable to "Friends of William Stafford."

JOIN OR RENEW:

(Please check ALL appropriate boxes)

- New Renewal Gift
- Standard Annual \$25 Lifetime \$150
- Student \$10 Retired Annual \$10

Please add \$5.00/year outside the U.S.

DONATE:

Support FWS with an additional donation!

- Donation amount: \$_____
- Donation for general use
 - Donation for specific purpose: _____

FWS is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. Donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Name* _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Country** _____

Email _____ Phone () _____

May we list this information (or any part of it) in a "friends-only" directory of which you will receive a copy? _____

*If this *friendship* is a gift, please add your name and address on the line below so that we may send an acknowledgement to the recipient and to you. **If you reside outside the United States, please add any additional postal codes we may need to ensure that you receive your mail.

Giver's Name & Address: _____

How did you hear of FWS? _____

Volunteer opportunities: Organize poetry readings in your community; Event help; Distribute posters/flyers; Publicize events; Other (describe): _____

New Annual Friends May-August 2007

- Jean Bennett
- Marie Buckley
- Cali Castile
- Shirley Marie Dees
- Helen Gerhardt
- Mary Hope
- Kay Varner
- Paul Willis

New Lifetime Friends May-August 2007

- Tim Barnes
- Confluence Press



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Please email comments, letters, news, and information on poetry events, awards, etc. to: news@williamstafford.org or mail to: Friends of William Stafford P.O. Box 592 Lake Oswego, OR 97034

friends of **WILLIAM STAFFORD**

P.O. Box 592 Lake Oswego, OR 97034
www.williamstafford.org | friends@williamstafford.org

THIS ISSUE CELEBRATES
OUR 10TH ANNIVERSARY



“Portraits of a Life Going By”

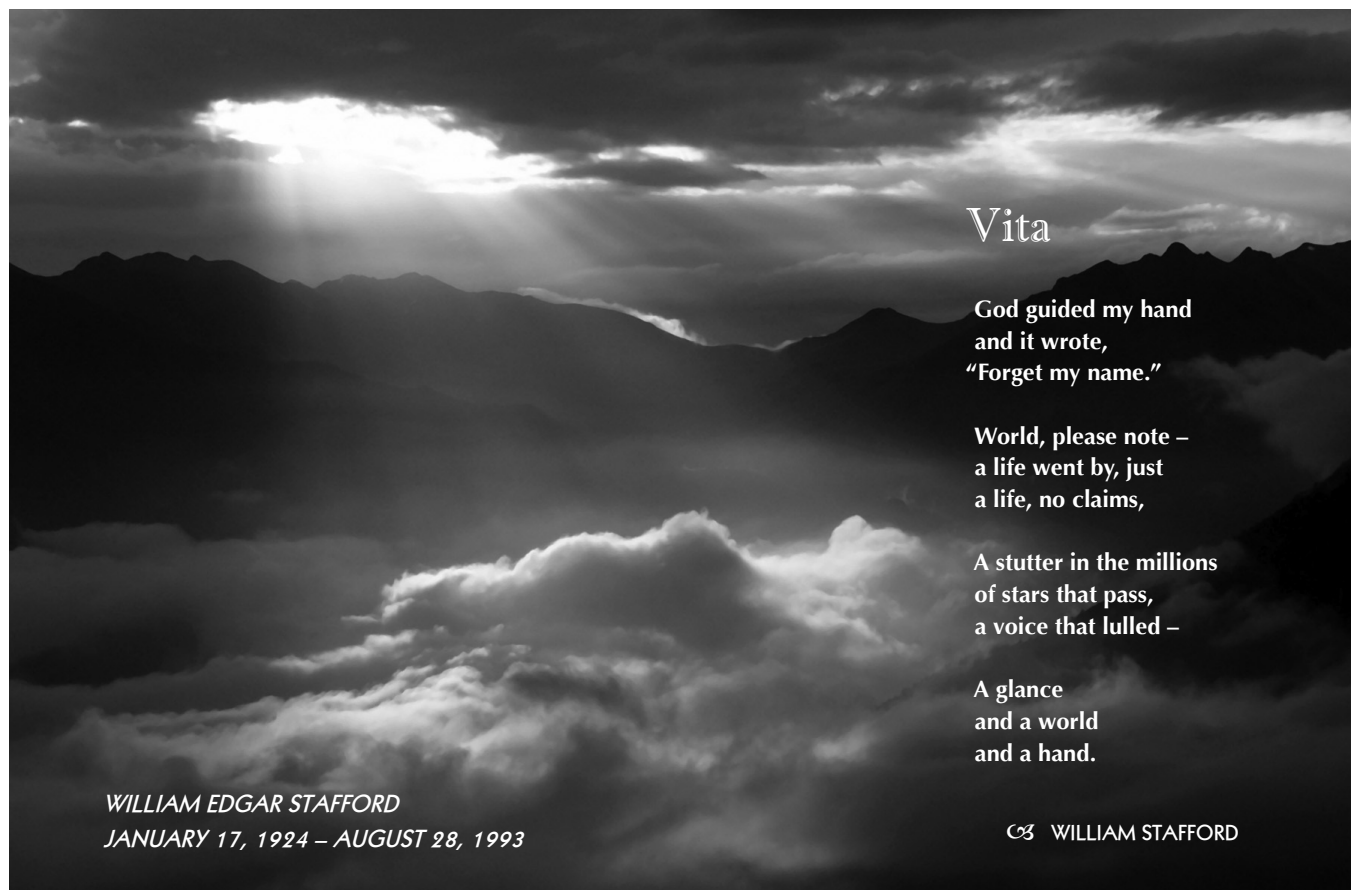
Special Photo Essay by

Michael Markee



Celebrating Traditions and
Adding More, pg. 10

Please notify sender of change of address



Vita

God guided my hand
and it wrote,
“Forget my name.”

World, please note –
a life went by, just
a life, no claims,

A stutter in the millions
of stars that pass,
a voice that lulled –

A glance
and a world
and a hand.

WILLIAM EDGAR STAFFORD
JANUARY 17, 1924 – AUGUST 28, 1993

CS WILLIAM STAFFORD