Friends of William Stafford has received the 2001 Whiting Memorial Award from the International Society for Philosophical Enquiry (ISPE).

The award consists of a $2,000 grant and a crystal plaque noting the contributions that FWS has made in its promotion of cultural literacy through the reading, writing, and enjoyment of poetry throughout the United States.

Dr. Pierre Rioux, a clinical psychiatrist who will soon join the Mayo Health System in Minnesota, a member of FWS and the vice president of ISPE, nominated the Friends of William Stafford for the award. Rioux has also sponsored the broadside printings of three Stafford poems, which FWS sells as part of its fund-raising efforts.

ISPE president Dr. Daniel J. Schultz of St. Louis, Missouri, sent his congratulations to FWS, saying that its board and members “deserve recognition” for the work that they do.

“All members of the Friends of William Stafford are delighted to have received this prestigious award which recognizes that what we do has important ramifications in American cultural life,” said FWS Board Chairman, Dr. Joseph Soldati.

He added that the work of all the FWS board members helped make the award possible, noting that the award-winning nomination packet was written and compiled by Dr. Shelley Reece, Paulann Petersen, Ceil Huntington, Patty Wixon and himself.

Friends of William Stafford will use the grant to continue to advocate and promote the reading, writing, and enjoyment of poetry and all the literary arts. The grant will help FWS sponsor poetry readings, publicize literary events, and continue its traveling poetry broadside exhibit in schools, colleges, and civic centers. It will also help to underwrite the cost of publishing this newsletter, and maintain the website www.williamstafford.org where you can read more about the award and find a link to the ISPE.

The Whiting Memorial Award Plaque

The International Society for Philosophical Enquiry is an institute for advanced studies, original research, and high achievement. Founded in 1974 by Dr. Christopher Harding of Queensland, Australia, it is a non-profit global scientific-philosophical society that encourages societal and cultural enrichment and advancement, and whose membership is among the top 99.9 IQ percentile. ISPE has 651 members in 33 countries and territories.

The Whiting Memorial Award commemorates ISPE’s first president, Steve Whiting. Recent recipients of the award include Alexandra York, president of the ART Foundation in New York, and the Alcuin Society in Canada, which promotes book development and book arts.

Soldati’s essay, nominating FWS for the Whiting Award, appears on Page 3 of this newsletter.
26 August, 1993

You Reading This, Be Ready

Starting here, what do you want to remember? How sunlight creeps along a shining floor? What scent of old wood hovers, what softened sound from outside fills the air? Will you ever bring a better gift for the world than the breathing respect that you carry wherever you go right now? Are you waiting for time to show you some better thoughts? When you turn around, starting here, lift this new glimpse that you found; carry into evening all that you want from this day. This interval you spent reading or hearing this, keep it for life – What can anyone give you greater than now, starting here, right in this room, when you turn around?

– William Stafford
Used with Permission
The Way It Is, Graywolf Press

Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, in 1902. His parents were divorced when he was a small child and his father moved to Mexico. He was raised by his grandmother until he was 12, when he moved to Lincoln, Illinois, to live with his mother and her husband. It was during his high school years that Hughes began writing poetry. His first book of poetry, The Weary Blues, was published by Alfred A. Knopf in 1926. He finished his college education at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania three years later.

Hughes, who claimed Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Carl Sandburg, and Walt Whitman as his primary influences, is particularly known for his insightful, colorful portrayals of black life in America from the twenties through the sixties. He wrote novels, short stories and plays, as well as poetry, and is also known for his engagement with the world of jazz and the influence it had on his writing, as in Montage of a Dream Deferred. His life and work were enormously important in shaping the artistic contributions of the Harlem Renaissance during the 1920s.

Among his poetry books are The Dream Keeper, (1932); Shakespeare in Harlem, (1942); Freedom’s Plow, (1943); Collected Poems of Langston Hughes, (1994). Langston Hughes died in 1967.

More information is available on line at www.poets.org.

From our readers:

One family’s favorite William Stafford story

In April 1976, William Stafford came to Iowa to give three readings, at the University in Iowa City, Cornell College in Mt. Vernon and at Coe College in Cedar Rapids. He spent a night at our house. I did up his bed in monogrammed linen sheets – I think only the second time in my marriage that I used them!

After the Coe reception, I encouraged the people present to come to our house to have more of Bill. In the course of that event, our son Nicholas, then 16, came home – long-haired and a bit scruffy but at least well-mannered. He extended his hand, saying to Bill, “Mr. Stafford, I’ve heard a LOT about you for a LONG time.” Bill looked regretful and responded, “Forgive me.”

Sara “Sally” Simmons, Ellicott City, Maryland

Member appreciates Stafford’s legacy

I just want to thank you for the new newsletter. Mine just came in the mail today. Living in Nashville, Tennessee, I feel a bit “out of the loop” with regard to all the Oregon activities. But I share with you all a deep love and appreciation for William Stafford’s work, and his living legacy. If it would be all right with you, I would like to write again and share with you in more detail what William Stafford’s work has meant to me. There is no one here who can really fully appreciate the imprint his poems have made upon me and my family.

Nicholas Dowd
Nashville, Tennessee
The Uniqueness of William Stafford’s Work and Its Continued Relevancy to Contemporary Life

One aspect of the mission undertaken by The Friends of William Stafford is to preserve the poet’s artistic legacy, believing that Stafford’s poetry will continue to be relevant far into the twenty-first century. Further, we believe that introducing readers to Stafford’s work promotes the reading of all writers’ work in all the literary arts (poetry, fiction, and nonfiction), encourages people to write, and at the same time preserves the tradition of free expression throughout the United States.

The uniqueness and on-going relevancy of a great poet’s work are not difficult to assess. William Stafford was a great poet whose work since his death eight years ago has increased in readership and has attracted considerable criticism by scholars and writers for its artistic merit. Yet what truly makes Stafford’s work unique and relevant is that now it’s more vivid and contemporary to everyday Americans’ lives and thoughts than it ever was. The poet is dead, but his poetry lives. And it lives not just on the pages of Stafford’s many books, but, more importantly, in the minds and hearts of his readers.

One unique feature of Stafford’s poems is that they speak within, even as they speak to a reader. They never speak at a reader. Reading his poems, one often has the feeling of a quiet voice in the ear, a moment of epiphany in which elements of what it means to be human come together – almost as if the reader thought of it himself: “nobody’s voice / can find so tiny a message as comes / across your hand” (Turn Over Your Hand). Here the fact that we literally carry around our true identities (“this fine record,” as the poem asserts) in our own hands is both enlightenment and confirmation. One is compelled, as I have often heard readers and hearers of Stafford’s poems do, to utter an audible “Yes!”

To anyone who thinks that Stafford is not unique, I would suggest this: try to imitate him. Whether his poems are dark and troubling:
- Animals full of light
- walk through the forest
- toward someone aiming a gun
- loaded with darkness (from Meditation)
da droll and amusing: “Talk like a jellyfish can ruin a party” (At the Chairman’s Housewarming); or positive and heartening: “Even the upper end of the river / believes in the ocean” (Climbing Along the River), readers wonder at the easy grace and rhythms of his language, his almost disarmingly simple vocabulary and syntax. Stafford writes in an American idiom that has no discernible state lines. Even when he alludes to the Great Plains or to the mountains and rivers of the Northwest, his poetic idiom is the landscape of the United States.

Stafford’s continuing relevancy seems to abide in the man him self – both the poet and the human being – which can be found in the poems that constitute his literary legacy. The twinkle of his eyes might belie the somberness of one of his poem’s themes, yet few of his poems actually despair. A Stafford poem, no matter what the topic, often becomes an old friend, even after first reading it. Stafford himself was in many ways like his poetry: he befriended without showing off, he would talk to anyone and he was genuinely gracious to both readers and writers. He encouraged young people and aspiring poets, and he often wrote to them, answering a variety of questions and supporting their own writing endeavors.

Stafford’s poems make friends of us, invite us to spend time with our minds and imaginations and consciences, to go beyond the barricades of self to explore the finite and infinite truths of life in the very cosmos in which we are so small yet play such a large role. The relevancy of Stafford’s work, and of poetry in general, to contemporary American life is perhaps best expressed in his poem Poetry:

Its door opens near. It’s a shrine
by the road, it’s a flower in the parking lot
of The Pentagon, it says, “Look around,
listen. Feel the air.” It interrupts
international telephone lines with a tune.
When traffic lines jam, it gets out
and dances on the bridge. If great people
get distracted by fame they forget
this essential kind of breathing
and they die inside their gold shell.
When caravans cross deserts
it is the secret treasure hidden under the jewels.
Sometimes commanders take us over, and they
try to impose their whole universe,
how to succeed by daily calculation:
I can’t eat that bread.

Stafford’s voice is an American voice, sometimes rebellious, but always individual, self-reliant and free.


– Joseph Soldati, FWS Chair
Two exhibits at Lewis & Clark College Library

Two exhibits featuring some of the broadsides from “How the Ink Feels” and items from the William Stafford Archives will be on display this summer in the Watzek Library at Lewis & Clark College.

Doug Erickson, archivist and head of special collections at the Watzek Library, and Paul Merchant, director of the William Stafford Archives, will be co-curators. The exhibit will be on display from late July through August.

Selected broadsides from “How The Ink Feels” are part of the first exhibit titled “For My Friends: Broadsides by Contemporary American Poets.” The second exhibit is titled “See Our Fine Paper!” Consisting of poems on books, libraries and reading by contemporary American poets, it will include some of William Stafford’s works and selected archival materials.

Phone (503) 768-7274 for details. Lewis & Clark College is at 0615 SW Palatine Hill Road, Portland.

Church sponsors unique literary contest

“In The Beginning Was The Word” is a literary arts contest open to all writers. This contest is founded on two basic premises:
1) The primary way to the Spirit is not through doctrine, but through experience;
2) Poetry and creative prose possess the greatest capabilities, not only of reporting such “numinous encounters,” but of re-creating and mediating them.

Entrants need not meet any doctrinal or church membership requirements. There is no fee to enter. Cash prizes are: first place, $500; second place, $250; third place, $100. The entry deadline for the contest is Sept. 1, 2001. For an entry form, phone (503) 635-4348, e-mail loucc@teleport.com or write to Lake Oswego United Church of Christ, 1111 SW Country Club Road, Lake Oswego, OR 97034.

Previous first-place winners have included local writers Annie Callan, Brian Doyle, Joan Maiers and David Oates.

The contest usually draws many entrants from around the country, as well as international submissions.

30 August, 1993
For William Stafford

Someone we love, old friend, has telephoned to let me know you’re gone – and so you are.
I touch the steady books; my mind casts back, then forth, and says, as you said once, so long –
I look toward seeing you everywhere.

– Henry Taylor
Used with permission of the author


– By Paulann Petersen

Henry Taylor pays tribute to Stafford at reading

After opening his April 5 reading at Reed College with one of his own poems, Pulitzer Prize winner Henry Taylor paid tribute to William Stafford by reciting – by heart – Thinking for Berky.

Talking about his admiration for Stafford, Taylor recalled that when he was 15, his father read E.A. Robinson aloud to him.
““There are quite a few 15-year-olds who haven’t had this experience,” he quipped. But Taylor didn’t know how to truly appreciate Robinson until, as a young man, he read Stafford’s poetry. “Stafford’s work showed me what Robinson could give me.”

Describing himself as “simultaneously a Quaker and a Virginian,” he related an anecdote about a Quaker cabinetmaker who was putting a walnut bottom into a walnut cabinet. Someone told the craftsman that he could easily put poplar in such a hidden spot, because “no one would know.” “I would,” the cabinetmaker replied. Taylor used this anecdote to explain something about his own work: his love of form, his desire to use intricate, demanding forms so unobtrusively that his poems still sound conversational.

For William Stafford

Someone we love, old friend, has telephoned to let me know you’re gone – and so you are.
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2001 Literary Arts Contest

In the Beginning … was the Word

2001 Literary Arts Contest

Sponsored by
The Lake Oswego United Church of Christ
(Congregational)
(503) 635-4348, e-mail loucc@teleport.com
Member profile: Don Colburn

Don Colburn feels very lucky, lucky enough to call Bill Stafford friend. Stafford led the first poetry workshop that Don ever attended. That was in 1984, in Port Townsend, Wash., at the Centrum Writers Conference.

As his poem, Differences, suggests, Don felt “wonderfully lost.” Over the following years, Don got to know Stafford quite well, keeping in touch by letters or visits. When Stafford was Consultant to Poetry at the Library of Congress, they got together whenever possible. He has collected some 35 books and chapbooks by Stafford for his bookshelf.

Don’s poems have appeared in The Iowa Review, The Nation, and Virginia Quarterly Review. He earned an MFA in creative writing from Warren Wilson College. Now a reporter for The Oregonian, Colburn worked at The Washington Post for 16 years. He is a member of FWS. His poem, Differences, was first published in Prairie Schooner.

Broadsides for sale benefit FWS

Sales of letterpress broadsides featuring Stafford poems A Ritual To Read To Each Other and Why I Am Happy benefit the Friends of William Stafford. A third broadside, Earth Dweller will be available in August. The printing is being done by Doug Stow at The Paper Crane Letterpress in Half Moon Bay, CA.

These works of art, each gently illustrated and suitable for framing, make great gifts at just $10 each, plus $3.50 for shipping. To place an order, make checks payable to FWS and mail to Nan Atzen, 29365 NE Putnam Road, Newberg OR 97132.

OSPA news and events

The Oregon State Poetry Association’s 2001 Fall Conference, Saturday, Oct. 13 at Willamette University in Salem, will feature workshops and readings by noted poets. (Presenters are unconfirmed at press time.) The fall conference is open to non-members.

OSPA’s Fall Poetry Contest is underway, with $900 in prizes in eight categories open to all poets and another $100 in a special members-only category. The postmark deadline is Sept. 1. OSPA contests typically attract more than 600 entries from poets in 25 states.

OSPA will host the 2002 convention of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc. The dates are June 27-30 at the new performing arts center at Southwestern Oregon Community College in Coos Bay. For more information, write to OSPA, P.O. Box 602, West Linn, OR 97068 or visit their website at www.oregonstatepoetryassoc.org.

Differences

In memory of William Stafford

There was your knack for sounding regional in every region and the way you swam out past the single-minded, past the blocked on shore belaboring their alibis. Such gumption could hold a poet afloat in the cold sea or start a car on ice, the poems sifting down like snowflakes: differences made of tiny differences.

I think of you in your brim hat, white shirt and old jeans, a morning’s words in your shoulderbag, crossing the grass to sit with us in a circle outside the old Fort Worden schoolhouse. It was the summer of ’84 and I wanted to be your student. But you were tricky like wind and nearly drove me crazy when you refused, coyote-faced, to praise or blame. You wouldn’t let us, any more than generals, use your mind. You steered us back toward recklessness and I’ve just begun to understand this need to give a poem up not to miss the next one.

No one had ever leaned on me to lower my standards, make grammar an enemy, greet failure gratefully. All these heresies — a life — in harmony under the voice. A poem finds its way the way you’d listen as you roved a field alone, alert for local differences.

— Don Colburn

‘How The Ink Feels’ on exhibit at WOU

“How the Ink Feels,” FWS sponsored traveling exhibit of letterhead broadsides, will be at Western Oregon University in Monmouth for three months, Sept. 15 to Dec. 15, in the Hamersly Library. Readings and events will be scheduled.

“How The Ink Feels” features 64 matted and framed letterpress broadsides of poetry and prose by well-known writers such as Naomi Shihab Nye, Robert Bly and Rita Dove. Nancy Winklesky, exhibit coordinator, may be reached at (503) 655-1443 or by e-mail at thewinks@teleport.com.
Billy Collins the nation’s next poet laureate

Billy Collins, distinguished professor of English at Lehman College at the City University of New York, has been named as the nation’s next poet laureate.

In addition to having taught English at Lehman College in the Bronx for the last three decades, Collins, 60, is a writer-in-residence at Sarah Lawrence College in Yonkers. He will assume his new duties in October, when he opens the Library of Congress’s annual literary series.

As for his plans for the honorary post, he said: “I hope to put my own spin on it, to add my touch to the laureateship. How that is going to be done except for activism and engagement in Washington I’m not sure yet.

Former FWS director wins Western States Award

Peter Sears has received the Western States Book Award for Poetry 2001 for The Brink (Gibbs Smith, 2000).

Sears was the executive director of Friends of William Stafford in 1994, and was instrumental in bringing the organization together. He now works for the Oregon Community of Writers and for a publishing company in Corvallis, where he resides. Other books by Sears are Tour: New and Selected Poems and Secret Writing. His poems have appeared in The Atlantic, Iowa Review, Field and Ploughshares.

Membership renewals much appreciated!

The FWS Newsletter’s new format and an appeal to members generated a considerable number of renewals since April.

Membership dollars go toward the cost of printing and mailing the newsletter, putting our web site on line, and supplementing the funds generated by fees from the touring broadsides exhibit.

Our membership roster has included a number of people we’ve been “carrying” - some since 1997! A reminder letter has resulted in 39 of these long-timers renewing their memberships, as well as renewals from 34 active members.

FWS now boasts 11 lifetime members who have contributed at the $150 level. For an organization with a small membership, that is almost 5 percent. If you have not yet renewed your membership this year, please do so, using the form on the next page. If you are paid-up, please share the membership form with a friend. Thank you, Members for your support.

Calendar of Events

**JULY**

**FISHTRAP SUMMER WRITING WORKSHOP:** July 9-12 in Enterprise, OR. Fishtrap Gathering follows through July 15. (541) 426-3623 or www.fishtrap.org

**LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE: “See Our Fine Paper!”** and “For My Friends: Broadside by Contemporary American Poets” both in the Watzek Library. Late July through August.

**LAKE OSWEGO FARMERS MARKET: Poetry Reading July 7, 14, Aug. 18.** Featured readers & open mike, bring your favorite poem. Millennium Plaza Park. Poet Don Hynes will be the featured reader on Aug. 18.

**ASHLAND WRITERS’ CONFERENCE:** July 24-28, Southern Oregon University. Workshops in poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction. Info: www.ashlandwriters.com

**HAYSTACK SUMMER PROGRAM IN ARTS & SCIENCES:** Cannon Beach. Info: (503) 725-4382, or www.haystack.pdx.edu

**AUGUST**

**Aug. 28:** Anniversary of William Stafford’s death, 1993.

**SEPTEMBER**


**HOW THE INK FEELS:** Sept. 15-Dec. 15, in Hamersly Library, Western Oregon University, Monmouth.

**OCTOBER**

**OREGON STATE POETRY ASSOCIATION:** Fall Conference, Oct. 13, Willamette University, Salem. Info: David Hedges, (503) 655-1274.

**NATIONAL POETRY DAY:** Oct. 13.

**LITERARY ARTS CONTEST:** Oct. 28, Reception and reading at Lake Oswego United Church of Christ. 11:30 a.m. (503) 635-4348.
MISSION STATEMENT:
Our mission is to provide ongoing education in literature, particularly in poetry, in a way that will encourage and enrich a broad community of readers and writers. In the spirit of William Stafford’s gifts as a teacher, we are also devoted to the free expression of literature and conscience. We seek ways to share his work and advance the spirit of his teaching and literary witness. We direct our work toward education in local communities, to contribute to the poet’s legacy for generations to come.

MEMBERSHIP FORM:
William Stafford's direct work as a writer ended with his death in 1993, but through the Friends of William Stafford, his gifts as a teacher continue. He traveled widely in pursuit of the free expression of literature and conscience. We aim to continue to spread his work, “a plain unmarked envelope passing through the world,” by advancing the spirit of his teaching. By joining the Friends of William Stafford, you will be contributing to his legacy for generations to come. Annual membership includes:

• Newsletters that let you know about activities of Friends of William Stafford;
• A forum to promote poetry in your community;
• Opportunities to volunteer for Friends of William Stafford projects;
• A network of other poets, writers, and poetry organizations.

Bill Stafford was about poetry, and so is the Friends of William Stafford. Your membership dollars support our own newsletter and web site as well as the reading, writing and enjoyment of poetry.

Date: __________________________
Name: __________________________
Address: _________________________
City: __________________________ State: _______ Zip: _______ Country: __________
e-mail: _________________________ Phone (with area code): __________

Business/Institutional Address OR Gift (Send to) Address:
Name: __________________________
Address: _________________________
City: __________________________ State: _______ Zip: _______ Country: __________
e-mail: _________________________ Phone (with area code): __________

Membership:
(Please check ALL appropriate boxes!
[ ] New [ ] Renewal [ ] Gift
[ ] Standard $25 [ ] Retired $10
[ ] Student: $10 [ ] Lifetime $150
How did you learn about Friends of William Stafford?

Payment:
Please make check payable to “Oregon Community Foundation fbo Friends of William Stafford” Mail to: Friends of William Stafford, PO Box 592, Lake Oswego, OR 97034
If you have not renewed your membership in 2001, please do so now. If you have, please share this form with a friend who would like to join. Or consider a gift membership. Thank You.
We are adding more news and links to our official web site, www.williamstafford.org. Now you can click on to view:

- News about the Whiting Award and a link to the International Society for Philosophical Enquiry;
- Links to other poetry web sites
- Past newsletters
- Links to e-mail for our board members
- A link to information on the new poetry stamp
- Sign up or renew your membership
- Submit letters and comments for upcoming FWS Newsletters.