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# friends of WILLIAM STAFFORD

A Newsletter For Poets & Poetry  
Volume 18, Issue 1 - Spring/Summer 2013

*William Stafford: An Annotated Bibliography.* By James W. Pirie. Oak Knoll Press / Lewis & Clark College, 2013.

## Resounding Time: A Review

This book has a glow to it, a weight, that comes from its dimensionality, physical and intellectual. It's a beautifully designed book, with arresting graphics dividing up its content-opulent sections. It is literally weighty because it is a hardback of 541 pages and philosophically weighty because it is the cynosure for the life of William Stafford as it is evidenced in print, the work he sent into the world to read. The dimensionality of this book comes from the way it gathers the past, visually realizes the present, and offers the future the opportunity to form itself. This is his legacy in the sense that it catalogues his gift and enables it. It glows because it contains within its covers the past, the present, and the future of William Stafford, poet and thinker.

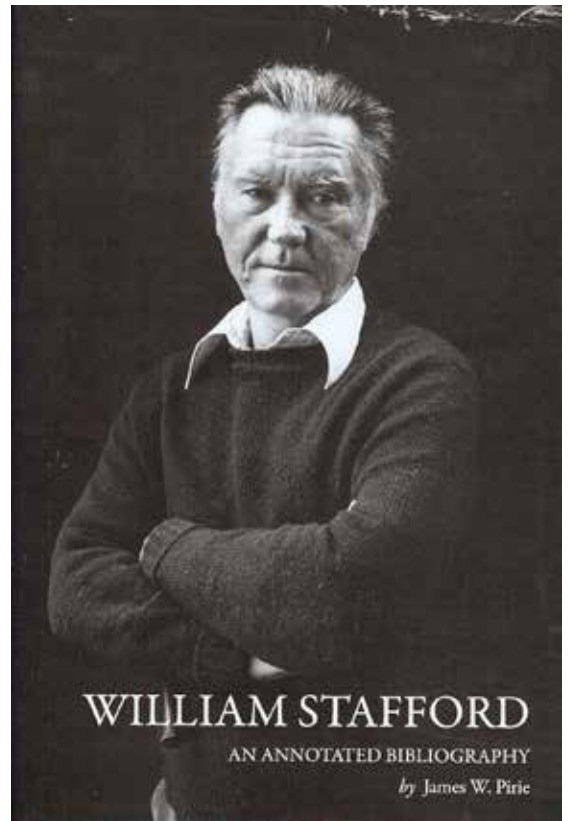
Collected here, in as welcoming a presentation as scholarly tomes can be, is the publishing information on almost everything William Stafford wrote over his fifty-five year publishing career. At a recent meeting this editor attended, Doug Erickson, head of special collections at the Lewis & Clark Watzek Library and one of the editors of this book, said that Stafford may be "the most prolifically published American poet in the last 100 years." Reading through this book, it would seem difficult to dispute this claim. This editor was at a reading recently and mentioned the bibliography to Dorothy, Bill's widow, who laughed, "It's a wonder he had time to do anything else." He did, of course, but one wonders how he did when one starts paging through.

This book is a wonder and a wonderful place to wander if you like William Stafford's work. It is also a wonder of the bibliographer's art. Stafford's production was immense and keeping track of it a daunting task. There are a number of people to credit. The first is Stafford himself for being uncharacteristically organized for a poet and the second is James Pirie, the director of the Aubrey R. Watzek Library at Lewis & Clark from 1966 to 1982, who began a record of Stafford's publication soon after coming to the college, keeping it until Stafford's death in 1993. The bibliographic work

then fell to others: Erickson, Paul Merchant, head of the Stafford archives until last year, Jeremy Skinner, archives and special collections librarian, and others interested in Stafford's work, some of whom have done introductions to sections of this bibliography: Vincent Wixon, Joanna Haney, and Casey Elizabeth Newbegin. If I went further in mentioning the people involved, I would be foolish. This is a monumental achievement, literally and figuratively, and the number of names in the acknowledgments page reflects it.

An annotated bibliography is a listing of publications that goes beyond just the title of the work, the publication, and the date. A scholarly annotated bibliography includes information on variant printings and editions, book design and material, the contents (the pages each poem is on), the particular circumstances of publication of each book, broadside, anthology, and periodical. This is particularly detailed when it comes to books and broadsides. We learn, for example, that there is an art book called *Ask Me* that is the poem "Ask Me" printed on a "dark blue Japanese paper" that "has been pierced and folded seven times

(cont. on p. 8)



*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.

## No Frills Poet

By Brian Hanna

William Stafford is a no frills poet. His directness can be movingly eloquent but his intentions never seem to be primarily aesthetic. He seems, more concerned with the content of his ideas than the elegance of their expression. His preoccupations, peace and the natural environment, are today more relevant than ever, as is his sensitivity and compassion for people. He wears well. His poem “Bess” reflects great tenderness of feeling for the small town school librarian who is losing her battle with cancer. For solace she has buried herself in the beauty of flowers, which may have had the ability when all else failed to bless a fading life with meaning, to “kiss the joy as it flies,” as Blake would put it. His unblinking readiness to walk her last mile with her is very beautiful to read. Is it a wonderful poem, or is it simply a description of a soulful and observant man witnessing a small life locked in a brave but desperately unequal struggle? Your call, but I know what I think. I think he engaged me not technically but emotionally. What more should I expect of him?

I had a Bess in my life, except her name wasn't Bess, and she wasn't a librarian, but she did read poetry better than anyone ever. She would disappear so completely into a poem that you would wonder if you should send out a search party to bring her back. Like Bess, she would have tried to protect my “happy” ignorance, even if I had been complaining about trivial matters like “food or work or the weather,” and like Bess, she died of cancer.

Stafford represents Oregon at its best. The Oregon that lacks pretension, nurtures individuality, is home to many who revere art and the written word, the Oregon which possesses a natural beauty of landscape that commands the poet's muse. As an Oregonian, he belongs to us; he is ours. So when we celebrate him, as Kierkegaard says, “We drink from our own well.”

The poets that we value highly are the ones who offer the most engaging and practical insights into our shared human experience, who give to our deepest knowing more shape, more clarity, more eloquence than we can bring to it ourselves. They seem to know us.

I am not damning him with faint praise when I say—I feel I know him or at least I know I would have liked him. He is transparently decent. He is courageous, observant, and virile, but more than that he offers his readers those insights that really only those capable of deep intimacy can possess. Notice, for example, the qualities of character he seeks to emphasize when describing George, his friend and fellow CO in *Down in My Heart*, “George...lived for a life of reconciliation, of kindness, of governing the mind and its retributive feelings.” Stafford could control his mind's retributive feelings because he knew how to forgive.

Some people of strict principle, such as he, sometimes surprise us by how tolerant they in fact are. Apart from a non-negotiable commitment to peace, he seems remarkably open-minded and nonjudgmental, as if charitably aware that some of us live in a permanent lather of conflict and anxiety, that we can no longer tell the difference between our opinions, where we can presumably agree to differ, and our principles, where presumably we cannot, because they are bigger than we are. He seems to have a healthy skepticism about any collective that commands our sacrifice because it is bigger

## Bess

Ours are the streets where Bess first met her cancer. She went to work every day past the secure houses. At her job in the library she arranged better and better flowers, and when students asked for books her hand went out to help. In the last year of her life she had to keep her friends from knowing how happy they were. She listened while they complained about food or work or the weather. And the great national events danced their grotesque, fake importance. Always

Pain moved where she moved. She walked ahead; it came. She hid; it found her. No one ever served another so truly; no enemy ever meant so strong a hate. It was almost as if there was no room left for her on earth. But she remembered where joy used to live. She straightened its flowers; she did not weep when she passed its houses; and when finally she pulled into a tiny corner and slipped from pain, her hand opened again, and the streets opened, and she wished all well.

WILLIAM STAFFORD

and more important than we are. On the other hand, he doesn't have too much time for “Those who champion democracy, but also make a fetish of never accepting anything that they don't agree with—what advantage do they see in democracy.”

His poems are for the most part brief perhaps because, as he claimed, “You don't need many words when you already know what you are talking about.” Nevertheless, he wrote a lot of words. James Dickey said of him that he was one of the “poets who pour out rivers of ink” but went on to add, “all on good poems.”

He is a mystic, but free of airs and mumbo-jumbo. He tells us that “Even the upper end of the river / believes in the ocean.” Nature would probably meet his spiritual needs, in the unlikely event that he would have any. “The world speaks everything to us. / It is our only friend.” But how would he have us relate to this our only friend? How can we find our place in it? He would have this gentle answer:

One way to find your place is like  
the rain, a million requests  
for lodging. The one that wins, finds  
your cheek: you find your home....

Life to Stafford is about self-perception. Life is what you think it is, so think the best. Humankind is not in need of redemption for it already carries in its genes the DNA of divinity. A view, you would have to concede is more energizing than the dispiriting historical Christian view that we, mired in our sin, are unworthy to gather up the crumbs from under God's table. Stafford would tell us that we deserve a much nobler concept of ourselves. But if we abandon the road map of the last 2000 years, where can we go in search of our highest selves?

In one of my favorite quotes from him, Stafford urges us to listen to our inner voice:

the whisper that runs  
any day in your mind,  
“Who are you really, wanderer?”—  
and the answer you have to give  
no matter how dark and cold  
the world around you is:  
“Maybe I’m a King.”

I am sure he would allow the ladies to speculate that they may also be queens.

He seemed to be a devoted husband and father. It’s always a good sign if your love of family can leap authentically off the pages of your life’s résumé. His manifestly does. He trafficked fearlessly in the ultimate mysteries, but I believe that the sight of his craggy features at your door would have indicated the presence of a poet of real life, ready to lay down his pen and pick up his jumper cables to help start your car on a winter morning.

Towards the end of his life he explained his lasting commitment to peace with a certain whimsical regret that many of his comrades at the end of the war had moved on to other, he would have said, lesser concerns: “I just kept on doing what everyone starts out doing. The real question is why did the others stop.”

He was a man of conscience who opposed his country’s participation in World War Two. He warned that “The children of heroes have” only “glory for breakfast.” Once I was a small boy in an air-raid shelter in Belfast. I confess that I am glad 72 years later that there were not too many William Staffords in America busily raising their eloquent voices to discourage attempts to rescue me and the rest of Europe;<sup>1</sup> but now that that particular threat has passed, and as the questionable excuses for more recent military involvement in foreign lands mount, I can at least appreciate his refusal to kowtow to the bogus patriotism of street gangs who menaced the COs when they left their work camps in Arkansas and California and went into town. But even there he recognized that vast resources had been spent to insure the public’s compliance. So he bears no grudge: “They were incidents without heroes and without villains,” he said when writing of those potentially ugly confrontations. To the common charge that cowardice and stupidity were the only possible reasons a CO would shrink from doing his duty of defending his country and if necessary killing other people, he would quote Gerald Heard, who on facing accusations of being “misguided, cowardly and stupid” retorted, “We are each of us fallible, cowardly, and dumb. We can say, as what great men have said before, ‘Yes, it is true, I am a frail vessel in which to transport the truth; but I cannot unsee what I see....’” Stafford takes it from there, “I hope that some day everyone—the soldiers and the enemy and the displaced persons, and all people, everywhere—can have that peace. The real war doesn’t end for us till they do.”

George seems to remain in the CO camp after Stafford himself has been released, for he is obviously trying to assure his friend that he is still loved and remembered. This is Stafford signing off a letter to him: “It’s dark and late now; the snow is white under the lamps, but the wind has stopped blowing.

I have to go.  
I’ll leave the light on.  
So long, George.”

Am I wrong to see in these words the power of an eloquence anchored in simplicity? Or can finite words we use every day truly become a vessel that can contain the infinite?

From now on, I will seek to discern poetry, as he would have me discern poetry, “from the corner of your eye.” “You can be too well prepared for poetry,” he warns us, mischievously adding that a “conscientious interest in it is worse than no interest at all.”

I’m not at all sure that all my poet friends would take too kindly to that notion. But at the risk of exhibiting my “conscientious interest in poetry,” I must confess that I love his last line: “[poetry is] like a very faint star. If you look straight at it you can’t see it, but if you look a little to one side it is there.”

<sup>1</sup> **Editor’s Note:** With all due respect and thanks to Brian Hanna, I think it important here to call attention to another idea Stafford learned from Gerald Heard, that of the “specious present.” This is the idea that an individual could be expected to change the inevitable by trying to interrupt the irresistible momentum of its making. Stafford describes this moment as “an interval during which nothing effective can be done to interrupt a series of events that has passed a certain critical point.” Heard’s example is “that asking a pacifist what he would have done if he had been in command on Pearl Harbor day is comparable to running the Normandie at full speed till it reaches only fifty feet from the dock and then turning to a passenger and saying, ‘All right, you stop her.’” Stafford would not have been trying to discourage the rescue of the young Brian Hanna and the rest of Europe. That kind of criticism of pacifism, Stafford would have maintained, is unfair—“justice will take us millions of intricate moves.”

## Compliments and Complaints

“I tip myself on my side  
so the words can flow easily”  
-- William Stafford

I tipped myself as well,  
sleep came easily.  
So I sat and scribbled,  
emptying the wrong words  
from my pen  
before forming the good ones  
into lines.

I would bring him ‘my stuff’  
timid or with marked exuberance,  
either way it was  
the same game every time;

I was blindfolded,  
spun around three times,  
sent to make my best guess,  
did I get the donkey’s ass?

His answer was always the same  
“if you like where you put it...  
then so do I”

PETER QUINN



## 23 Sandy Gallery—The Stafford Collection

23 Sandy Gallery is a fine arts gallery dedicated to the book arts, to the aesthetics of making beautiful volumes. Located just east of downtown, in Portland's central east side arts district, 23 Sandy Gallery presents local and national artists working in contemporary book and paper arts. Laura Russell, a book artist and photographer, owns the gallery.

The gallery had six works by Stafford: three books and three broadsides until the editor's birthday, and now it has five. You can get a sense of the kind of art to be seen at the gallery by looking at the pictures below. The collection of art books and broadsides is extensive, including books designed by Charles Seluzicki. Among the poets featured in gallery books and broadsides are Paulann Petersen, Matthew and Michael Dickman, Kim Stafford, Dorianne Laux, Pattian Rogers, Carl Adamshick, Michael McGriff, Tom Crawford, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

Russell sells to libraries, museums, and special collections, seventy percent going to the latter. Russell told this editor that Stafford's books have gone to university collections as well as private collections. The University of Denver has purchased at least four of the Stafford items.

For more information and a visual feast, go the 23 Sandy Gallery website by googling the name. URL: [www.23sandy.com](http://www.23sandy.com)

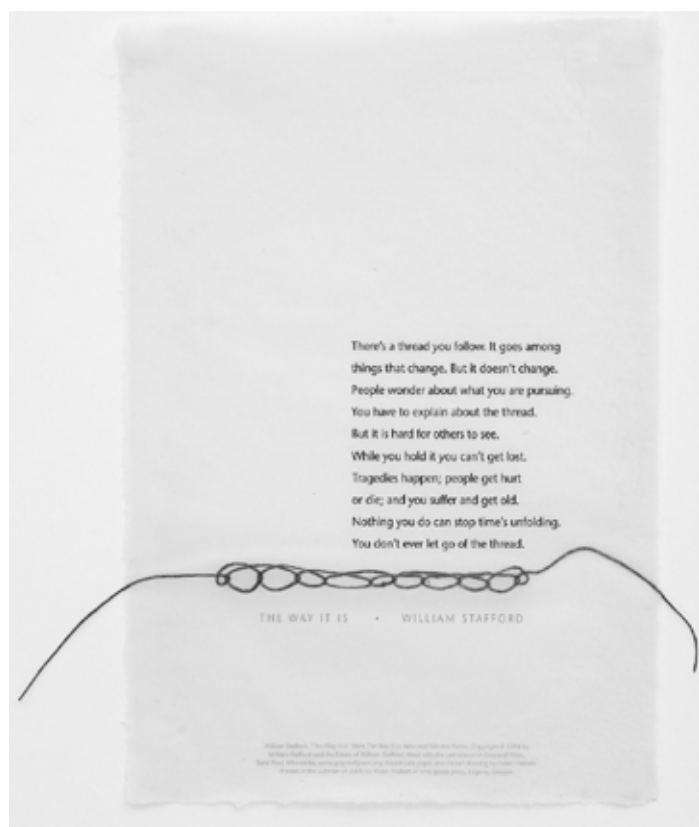


PHOTO BY 23 SANDY GALLERY

"There is a Thread." Helen Hiebert. This is a broadside done on Abaca paper and sewn with red hemp thread made by Hiebert. The letterpress printing was done by Sandy Tilcock in Helvetica Neue and Arial. It is 12" x 18". Fifty copies were printed in 2010.



PHOTO BY 23 SANDY GALLERY

*Ritual to Read to Each Other.* Susan Lowdermilk, Lone Goose Press (Eugene, Oregon). This is a tunnel book with a three-panel wraparound cover. The center panel pops up accordion style. The text is set in Gill Sans Condensed with a wood-cut image printed on Zerkall Niddegen paper. Text and image are printed in gold on black paper. Lowdermilk printed it in an edition of 25 in 2007 as a response to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.



PHOTO BY IJKA KUZNIK

## A Way of Listening: William Stafford as Teacher

By Philip Metres (excerpts from a talk on Stafford's workshop philosophy given at the 2013 AWP conference as part of a panel presentation called "Lower Your Standards")

Stafford became a pivotal figure in my book *Behind the Lines: War Resistance Poetry on the American Homefront*, as I traced the key contributions of the conscientious objector poets during World War II (which also included Robert Lowell, William Everson, and Stanley Kunitz). He remains, for me, the most important pacifist American poet—both for what his work offers, and for how he lived, wrote, and taught.

◆  
[T]he telos of Stafford's writing is not to create immortal poetry, nor is it to fulfill some personal ambition or hone his aesthetic vision or style; rather, it is to shore up his "moral integrity." It's the sort of old-fashioned refusal to choose either the "work" or the "life" (see W.B. Yeats' "The Choice"). Stafford, by contrast, works toward what Yeats himself called "Unity of Being."

◆  
For Stafford, writing is not necessarily the most important thing, but it's the first thing. We must not mistake his linguistic simplicity for mildness and his propensity to wisdom talk a kind of artlessness. There is also a steely ferocity to Stafford that belies attempts to turn him into what one critic has described him as "Polonius in a cardigan."

◆  
In a time when the poem is almost fetishized—if not a commodity in the classic sense of the term, then at least something that one brands for professional status—Stafford's potlatch approach to his own poems feels like countercultural and not unlike the so-called "outsider artists" whose peculiar obsessions drive lifelong and voluminous production. In music, I think of the cult-oddball Robert Pollard, the principal songwriter of the band Guided by Voices, whose approach to unceasing songwriting has a Staffordian mania about it.

◆  
Stafford's question, "when did you stop being a poet," is one that I have readily adopted as both writer and teacher. It's a sweet and democratic invitation, a lowering of the bar of participation. It says, since all of us employ and are employed by language, we too are makers, are poets—until we cease taking pleasure in words and their odd sounds and sinewy insinuations.

◆  
In "Facing Up to the Job," Stafford writes of the importance of "creating an atmosphere of trust in the classroom," not by merely praising the students' work, which Stafford says they find scary, but by being "neutral or the way I would be with a friend discussing something that neither of us has a fixed position on but which we are both exploring." He writes, in "The Priest of the Imagination," about the desire "to be informed by the students, not to be a monument waiting for their efforts, but to be a participant in communication."

◆

(cont. on p. 6)

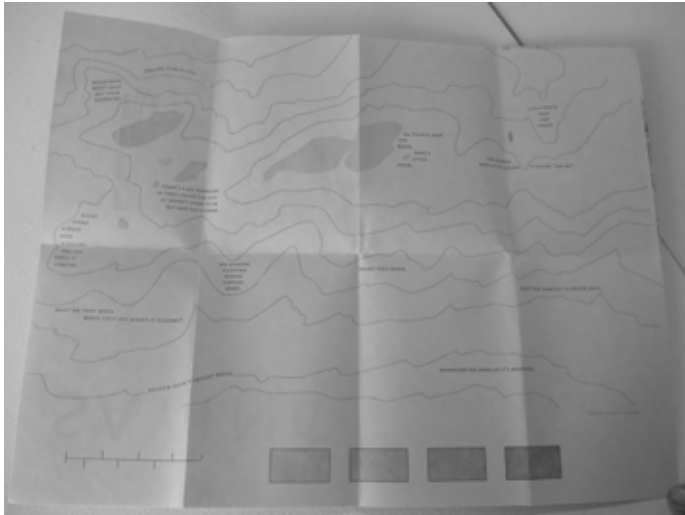


PHOTO BY ILKA KUZNIK



PHOTO BY ILKA KUZNIK

*Sayings of the Blind*. Roni Gross, z'roah press (New York, New York). Letterpressed in Scala with titlings in Lithos, the text is printed on Shikoku with a sleeve of Ca L'Oliver handmade paper. It is a single sheet of paper printed on both sides and folded accordion style. The sheet has been pasted into a light blue and tan marbled paper cover and inserted into a blue paper slip case with the title on the front and acknowledgments, colophon, and copyright information on the back. Fifty copies were printed in 2010.

Other Stafford works in the gallery: "A Memorial / Art Lesson: William and Kim Stafford." This is a limited edition broadside designed by Sally Tilcock that features poems by both father and son.

"Ask Me." By William Stafford. Illustrated by Henk Pander and designed by John Laursen of Press-22, it is also available from The Friends of William Stafford. See the Friends website for details.

"Meditation." By William Stafford. This is a broadside done by Joseph Green's Peasandcues Press. It features an original linoleum cut by Marquita Green and is also available from the Friends of William Stafford.

See the Stafford Collection on the gallery website for more about these works of art using Stafford's poetry.

(cont. from p. 5)

Stafford's focus is on assisting writers to tune to the harmony of their own life, to create an Emersonian self-reliance, rather than to reach vainly after some golden ring, some future fame.

◆ All of which is why Stafford should be placed alongside the celebrated artist (and fellow pacifist) John Cage, when considering a model of the workshop that requires the teacher to be more than a judge.... One need only briefly consider "Some Rules for Students and Teachers" by Cage, to demonstrate how Cage and Stafford forward a common vision of the possibilities of the creative life. First, the very title suggests that Cage wants to propose rules that apply both to students and to teachers, leveling the field of learning to one of collaboration, rather than one of gate-keeping. Though Cage does see the teacher's role as being more than merely co-creator, he also places the burden of freedom on the student, as in Rule Five: "be self-disciplined - this means finding someone wise or smart and choosing to follow them. To be disciplined is to follow in a good way. To be self-disciplined is to follow in a better way." How much this rhymes with Stafford's notion that the teacher's job should neither be about praise nor about blame. For both Stafford and Cage, the workshop is an opportunity to create a space of trust, labor, self-discipline, experimentation, and even joy.

◆ What Stafford reminds us is that if we are to teach people not merely to write, but to become writers, our job is to create a space for committed, daily writing (even inside the classroom); to invite students into their own receptivity and listening, by encouraging disconnection from the wired and wireless devices that drown out the quiet; and by reminding students to trust that working with language will take them where they need to go.

## ENDLESSLY WAYFARING

you will make a path  
to a someday point where present thoughts  
transformed  
have flown and wait to be  
your wind, your anchor, your horse,  
your cove, your tide, your pillow,  
your sun, your mirror, your blanket,  
your echo, your tree, your fire,  
your cathedral,  
and there  
all the touched souls of your history  
will haunt you  
with  
peace.

JAMES DEPREIST



## James DePreist, 1936-2013, FWS National Advisor

James DePreist, conductor of the Portland Symphony for many years, was one of the national advisors for the Friends of William Stafford. DePreist died on February 8<sup>th</sup> of this year at his home in Scottsdale, Arizona. He published two books of poetry, *This Precipice Garden* (1986) and *The Distant Siren* (1989). Stafford, a friend of his, wrote the afterword to *The Precipice Garden*. I am told on good authority that Stafford also helped John Laursen of Press-22 arrange the book. He sat down on the floor of the print shop and spread out the poems so he could see them and then sequenced them in the sections, his usual way of arranging his own manuscripts. In his afterword, "Inner Journeys, Outer Balances," he writes, "Art knows more than we do. Set free to exercise itself on its material, the art impulse will explore those hidden connections that lurk in the mystery around us." DePreist's poems, he continues, "demonstrate the power of discovery" and the "accomplishments of a gifted musician working in another medium."

## The Sherman Ranch Poems

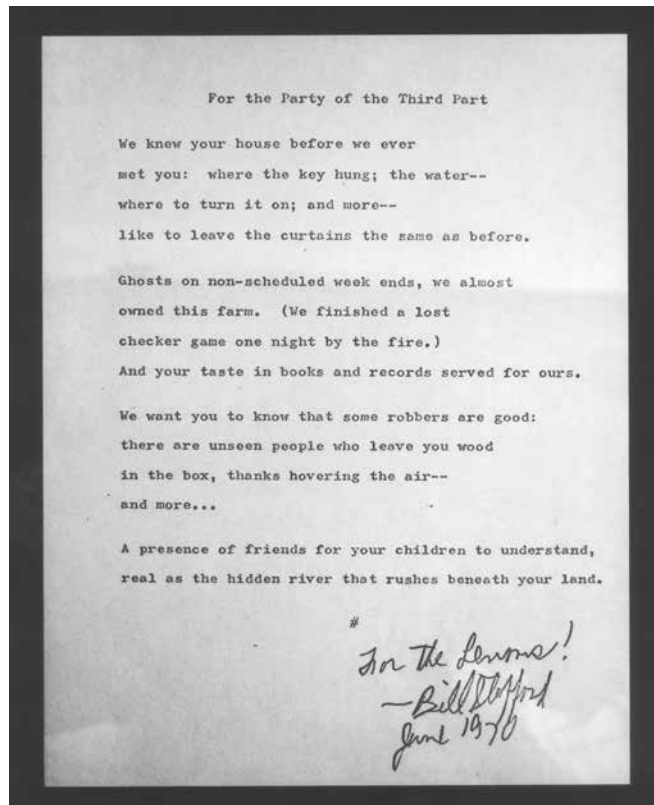
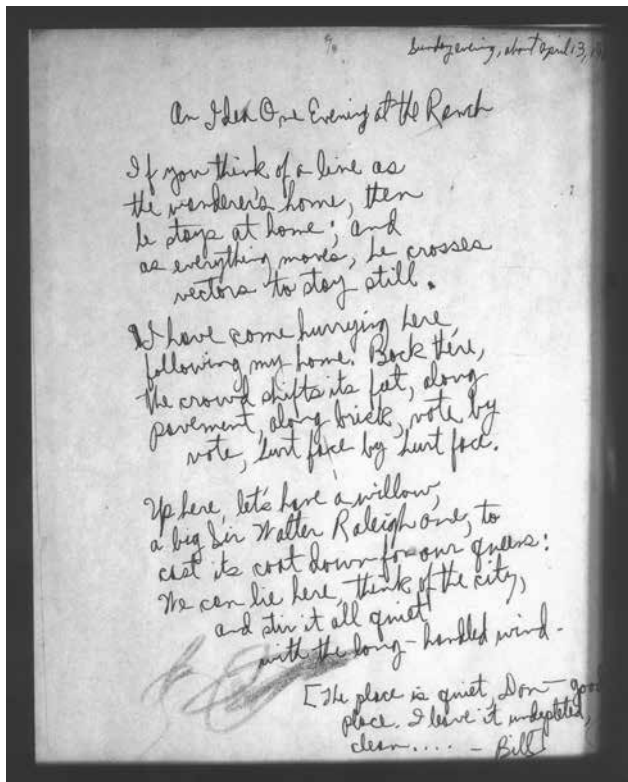
A colleague of Bill's, Bob Balmer, owned a cabin in Camp Sherman with his wife and two other couples: Harlow and Jane Lennon, Don and Pat Willner. The Staffords and the Balmers were friends for many years and so Bill and Dorothy went often to the cabin. Bill left these poems there as gifts to the cabin. Betty Balmer framed the poems and put them on the walls. Susan Crowley saw them on a visit in 2010 and photographed them. There is a Balmer family story that one summer when their grandson and some friends were at the cabin and it had to be evacuated due to a forest fire, they grabbed the Stafford poems and fled.

The only one of the three poems to reach print was "For a Stone at Balmer's Ranch," which appeared in the *Southern Review* in 1967. The poems were read and displayed at the January Celebration at the Columbia Arts Center in Hood River in 2012, which was organized by Barbara Young.

The above is redacted from the emails of Susan Crowley, Betty Balmer, and Paul Merchant. I thank Leah Stenson for putting all the emails together for me.



## POEMS FROM SHERMAN RANCH



Sunday evening, about April 13, 1969

## An Idea One Evening at the Ranch

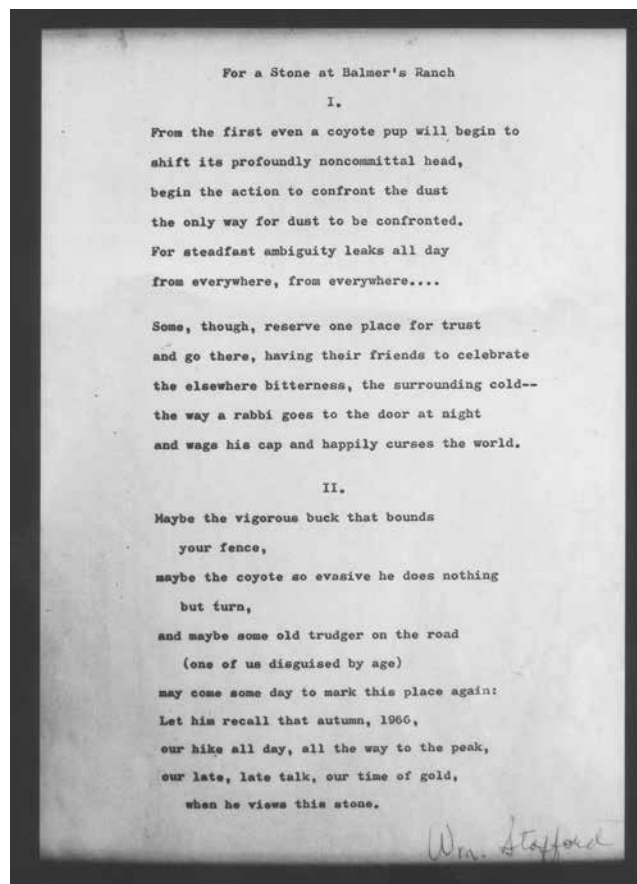
If you think of a line as  
the wanderer's home, then  
he stays at home; and  
as everything moves, he crosses  
vectors to stay still.

I have come hurrying here,  
following my home. Back there,  
the crowd shifts its feet, along  
pavement, along brick, note by  
note, hurt face by hurt face.

Up here, let's have a willow,  
a big Sir Walter Raleigh one, to  
cast its coat down for our queens:  
We can lie here, think of the city,  
and stir it all quiet  
with the long-handled wind.

[The place is quiet, Don - good  
place. I leave it undepleted,  
clean . . .

- Bill]



PHOTOS BY SUSAN CROWLEY

(cont. from p. 1)

accordion-style, to create a rippling river, to correspond with the poem's subject." We learn there are only four copies of this book and that Anne Bingham of hurdy-gurdy press in Seattle made the book "to share with friends" and uses it as a model in her bookbinding classes. It is this kind of attention to detail that makes an annotated bibliography glow.

There are eight sections in the book, each with a short introduction by one of the aforementioned people, and four appendices. In "The Books by Stafford" section, introduced by Kim Stafford, we learn that there are eight-five books by William Stafford, the most recent being *Sayings of the Blind* (2010). A fascinating thread in this section is the exquisite books done by small-press publishers like Walter Hamady's Perishable Press and Donnell Hunter's Honeybrook Press. A careful reading will reveal that the raw material for the paper upon which Perishable Press' *Tuft by Puff* (1978) was printed included the worn-out terry cloth bathrobes of Stafford and Hamady.

The "Books Edited by Stafford" section, introduced by Vincent Wixon, is the thinnest, containing only six books, one of them, though, *The Achievement of Brother Antoninus: A Comprehensive Selection of his Poems with a Critical Introduction*, is his "only full-length critical study of a single poet." Antoninus, whose given name is William Everson, was also a conscientious objector in WWII and helped found the fine arts camp in Waldport, Oregon.

In the "Translations by Stafford" section, introduced by Paul Merchant, we find that Stafford did translations from seven languages, the most frequent being from the Spanish of a variety of poets, including Federico García Lorca and Vicente Aleixandre. These were often done in collaborations with others. His most sustained translation endeavor was of the ghazals of Ghalib (1797-1869), an Urdu poet associated with the last Mughal emperor of India. These translations appeared in *Poems by Ghalib* (1969) and *Ghazals of Ghalib* (1971). Fellow translators in the latter include Adrienne Rich, W.S. Merwin, and Mark Strand.

One of the most fascinating sections, introduced by Doug Erickson, is "Broad-sides & Leaflets with Poems by Stafford." Here is a record of Stafford's relationships with hundreds of artists, fine press printers, publishers of all sizes, and a record of the places where his poetry finds its most beautiful settings. The list of publishers is large: Copper Canyon, Press-22, Paper Crane, Honeybrook, Prescott Street, and is a history of sorts of fine press printing in America. A number of these were done in connection with readings and so are a record of his travels and popularity. Erickson estimates that Stafford's poetry was used in over 250 broadsides and leaflets.

As you might expect, the largest section in the bibliography is "Serials with Contributions by Stafford." In her introduction, Joanna Haney tells us that Stafford published close to four thousand poems in close to two thousand magazines, beginning in the fall of 1938 with "To Schuman-Heink," published in *The Bard, A Quarterly of Verse*, located in Jackson, Missouri. You can find where your favorite Stafford poem first appeared as well as see the names of poems you may have never read. Work on *The Uncollected Poems of William Stafford* begins here. We also find out that Stafford was a regular reviewer for *Poetry* and the *Chicago Tribune*, "publishing over a hundred reviews in the 1960s." These reviews of a wide array

of poets are an untapped source for understanding Stafford's ideas about poetry. His published prose is also listed in an appendix, "Prose by William Stafford."

In "Stafford Contributions to Works by Other Authors," Jeremy Skinner tells us that starting in 1947 with *New Signatures I: A Selection of College Writing*, edited by Alan Swallow, Stafford "contributed to over eight hundred books, catalogs, and calendars." Here we can trace the growth of his influence and popularity. One can see also which poems were the favorites of editors. "Traveling Through the Dark" has been anthologized over 142 times and counting. I just bought an anthology too new to be listed, *The Ecopoetry Anthology*, and there it is. A distant second is "Fifteen," probably because of editors interested in reaching younger people. One also sees what poems are of use to particular interests; "At the Bomb Testing Site" often appears in anti-war / peace anthologies.

The penultimate section of the bibliography, "Stafford Archival Collections," introduced by Merchant and Skinner, lists the library archives that contain Stafford material, mostly correspondence. Besides Lewis & Clark, there are nineteen, including the Richard Hugo Papers at the University of Washington. The record, though, is not complete (see p. 21), testifying to Stafford's incredible gift for literary friendship. The Ed Skellings Papers at the University of Florida are not listed. For researchers, though, the Lewis and Clark Collection is the primary one, an incredible resource (take my word for it) and includes much more than correspondence, as one can see by the listing of material in this section. Here you will discover that there are over 16,000 negatives from the photographs he took. You will not discover that they have been digitized and are available for viewing if you have a couple of weeks to spare. You will also see that there are three boxes of music (sheet, tape, disc) composed for his poems.

The final section, "Criticism of Stafford's Writings," is another lengthy one, though Casey Elizabeth Newbegin notes in her introduction that "Stafford has seldom been treated critically in recent years." The frequent words used to characterize Stafford, Newbegin says, are "plain," "pastoral," "wilderness," and "nature." The critics who have done the most sustained and serious work are Jonathan Holden, Alberta Turner, and Judith Kitchen. *Friends of William Stafford: A Newsletter for Poets and Poetry* is listed nine times and this editor appears twice, much to his satisfaction. But so do a great many people. A number of the essays listed are collected in *On William Stafford: The Worth of Local Things*, but many are not. This seems ripe territory for another collection of essays, possibly beginning from magazines with special issues devoted to his work, including *Practices of the Wind* (1983), *Oregon English Journal* (1994), and *Eclectic Literary Forum* (1995). Also listed are academic theses on Stafford's work; I counted twenty.

To make this tome even weightier, more resonant and deeply dimensional, there are four appendices, one that lists his prose, which is also found in the sections that list his contributions to magazines and anthologies. A second lists print interviews. Beginning in 1970, the year he was Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress (now called the U.S. Poet Laureate), Stafford averaged five or so a year, the most being eight in 1989. The third appendix lists translations of Stafford's work into other languages. His work has been translated into eleven languages, including Bangla and Farsi, most frequently



into Japanese. His published photographs make up the fourth appendix, the tip of the iceberg of the thousands of photos he took. This appendix features his delightful photo of Carolyn Kizer flirting with W.S. Merwin at an NCTE conference in 1966.

For anyone interested in the work of William Stafford, this book is a browser's dream. The index, seventy pages long, lists so many poems, essays, magazines, anthologies, presses, broadsides, and people's names, each entry a story in itself, it is truly astonishing. One could get lost, which I can testify to, and find oneself hours later, more informed and having formed an even more profound respect for Stafford's stature. This is a truly multi-dimensional book. With it one can measure the height and weight of his contribution to American literature. One can see the breadth and scope of his work and his influence. One can get a sense of the depth of his thinking and the range of his thought. The past (his work), the present (the physical book), and the future (the ability to assess his stature) cohere in this hefty and handsome book. It is a major contribution toward the appreciation and understanding of William Stafford's work and its resonance through time.

## John Daniel on Stafford in *Open Spaces*

[William Carlos] Williams's poems persist, tenacious as dandelions. So will the work of William Stafford, who endured some of the same condescension from the muckamucks of high art. Stafford was open to anything a natural place or human encounter could teach him, and so his two principal landscapes, the Great Plains and the Pacific Northwest, are persistently evident in his work. His imagination naturalized both and made of them a world in which any reader was welcome. Alertness was all he asked, and maybe it's a kind of transpersonal alertness that characterizes our literature at its best. We try to attend not to our personal pains and ecstasies alone but also to the greater memberships we belong to, memberships that William Stafford had in mind as he weighed what to do with a dead doe on a mountain roadside, the body warm with an unborn fawn and a danger to human motorists. "Around our group 1 could hear the wilderness listen," he wrote. "I thought hard for us all..."

One hazard of this orientation is piousness about the natural world, and some of us do fall too frequently into a default tone that Kim Stafford has aptly tagged "the first-person rhapsodic." A second hazard, to which anyone who writes of his own region is prone, is defensiveness. Many Western writers carry a chip on the shoulder (you may have sensed one in this essay) about the attention or inattention paid us by the greater literary culture. This attitude, sadly, is itself more injurious than any slings or silence from New York. Defensiveness is never fertile. Stegner and Stafford and Roethke and Maclean showed us the answer. The only reply to regional bias, finally, is to write well enough and long enough to overcome it.

From an essay, "Writing West," by John Daniel, that appeared in *Open Spaces: Voices from the Northwest* (2011), edited by Penny Harrison. Other contributors include Scot Siegel, Kim Stafford, William Kittredge, David James Duncan, and Kathleen Dean Moore.

## Daoist Out of Kansas

"Because it was good, we were afraid."

-- William Stafford

Whatever happened to the guy from Kansas,  
that fellow who talked to the grass? Remember him—  
the one we'd find leaning to listen  
underneath? Or we'd see him scanning the horizon  
in the dark. He sure could breathe far.  
Had a pet wind in his ear.

Remember when he tried to teach us the flat dance—  
plain standing? And that song  
for going along your own way called  
grammar. Those little handsprings  
he wrote every morning helped him master  
himself, he said. Nobody else  
had the patience, ornery as he was.

Maybe he's really gone or maybe  
something else. I keep looking underneath  
and listening far. He left us  
just enough. Wish he could show us  
that cave one more time, though,  
and that great fear.

CHARLES GOODRICH

## With Neighbors One Afternoon

Someone said, stirring their tea, "I would  
come home any time just for this,  
to look out the clear backyard air  
and then into the cup."

You could see the tiniest pattern of bark on the trees  
and every slight angle of color change  
in the sunshine—millions of miles of gold light  
lavished on people like us.

You could put out your hand and feel the rush of years  
rounding your life into these days of ours.  
From somewhere a leaf came gliding slowly down  
and rested on the lawn.

Remember that scene?—inside it you folded the last  
of your jealousy and hate, and all those deeds so hard  
to forget. Absolution: swish!—you took  
the past into your mouth,

And swallowed it, warm, thin, bitter, and good.

WILLIAM STAFFORD

# January Tales: The Birthday Celebrations

**Georgetown, TX—Jan. 11th**

By Mike Gullickson

The reading was quite successful and many of the poets thanked me for introducing [Stafford] to them. Many of the readers did not know him... so a new candle was lit in their minds.

**Vancouver, WA—Jan. 12th, Cover to Cover Books**

A Memory of William Stafford

By Melinda Bell

In 1989 when I met William Stafford I was hurting and in need of revision in my life. My self-esteem had been gutted in an academic fiction writing workshop, and I wasn't getting on with my life as much as I might. His paperback edition of essays, *You Must Revise Your Life*, was published in 1989, just about right timing.

A group of us, aspiring poets who'd never met each other, brought the very best we had, including our shadow selves, to the Auburn Writers' Conference that fall. We were awed to share the same room with William Stafford. We voiced his name with reverence. He signed my copy of *You Must Revise Your Life* as "Willie" Stafford. Later, at a Washington Poets' event, I'd hear Tacoma poet Betty Fukuyama, now deceased, refer to him affectionately in public as "Bill."

The evening before the Auburn workshop, while I stood in line to have *Winterkill* signed by Craig Lesley, Bill immediately put me at ease when I admitted I hadn't read all the books others were discussing. I felt a warm, interested and receptive presence. While we were waiting, he told me he'd kept a journal of his children's remarks when they were between the ages of two and five. At that time, children "do acrobatics with the language," he said. Kim Stafford had recently won the Western States Book Award for *Having Everything Right*, and I commented on that. Proudly, father pointed to a new Owl Creek Press anthology, which included one of his son's essays. In their family, being a writer was like being a "cobbler or a blacksmith," he said, and for that reason he now regretted that everyone who used to come to their house was well educated. "Where did you go to college?" was one of the first questions his children would ask visitors. One of his children, then very young, commented, "Only people with dirty hands can fix things."

The next day at Auburn a group of us, mostly fledglings, sat with Bill around tables grouped into ells before a rock fireplace. The fire that crackled and smoked was necessary, not merely an artistic touch, as little heat had had time to build up in this room on a blustery November day.



PHOTO BY TIM BARNES

Bill needed a timekeeper, someone who'd keep remarks to the time agreed upon for each person, and I volunteered. Having felt that my power in a workshop had once been taken, today I gave no slack. In the awful workshop two years before, men had attacked women writing of love, women writing of pain, and both sides had hardened over it. Being in Bill's presence strengthened a healing process that was beginning for me. When someone, even Bill, wanted a few more words, I reminded them of the time. In fact, by the time the workshop was supposed to be over, at 4:30, we'd actually finished. I had mixed feelings. On the one hand, I felt protective. I knew the poet was ill, and I was glad if I could help him leave for home early. On the other hand, I wondered how many words of wisdom I may have silenced. I will remember always that William Stafford and others in the room gave me the opportunity to do what I did, and yet I was accepted. The hell realm workshop of my past was in good measure exorcised.

I will remember how he didn't put pressure on us, how he refrained from leading group thought, though by his presence, a quiet insistence, he actually did influence us. I felt as if we were in a kind of group meditation, drawing upon our own intuition with his support. He was subtle; occasionally he was blunt. One woman, quite unsure of herself, had written a near-masterpiece. "When are you going to send it out?" he said, as close to praise as any I heard from him all day. "Good," he nodded to me when, after asking me which of my

two poems I wanted to work on, I selected the one most in need of art.

At one point we were considering the poem of a lovely woman who sat next to me. It concerned, most probably, childhood rape. I say so because I've counseled women who've been raped. Images were strong. Her sentences, though subtly written, were chopped in places, words scattered on the page. We sat still, not daring to speak, and Bill, characteristically, didn't jump in. I felt tremendous safety in that room. Fire crackled, warmth filtering through our sweaters. In the collective holding of breath we heard her quiet, matter-of-fact voice: "I'm all right."

We breathed out. Any comments we made flowed with care and love. No need to fix her, or her poem.

**Milwaukie, OR—Jan. 12th, Pond House**

As for my part, in 1974 I was a senior at La Salle High School here in Milwaukie, Oregon. My English teacher, poet Tom Bremer, arranged for me to represent the young people of Oregon at the ceremony where William Stafford was made poet laureate of Oregon. My words to William Stafford were based on one of his poems.

## Right Now

Right now, I am on a journey,  
just beginning to touch poetry;  
to search my path—neither straight  
nor crooked.

Upon the road, I have met William Stafford  
and so bring his message to travelers  
searching the same path.  
All, will fold into the curves,  
left, right, and arrive.

William Stafford has touched the door.

His road has straightened behind him.

It is now.

It has all come true.

LORENE DASSOW

### Pacifica, CA—Jan. 12th

By Doug Stow

We had a fruitful event. Only nine attendees, but all enthusiastic. Seven men, two women. We showed the Stafford / Bly film, then had an open mic and all participants read at least two Stafford poems. One gentleman brought a couple of anti-war poems I was unfamiliar with. I bet they're in *Any War*. I'll check...yup. There they are.

Margaret made brownies and Bob Walker, the host, brought coffee and hot water for tea. Several of us stayed after the allotted time and had a good time talking recklessly.

### Welches, OR—January 13th

By Sharon Wood Wortman

We started at 2 and ended about 4. It was a blue sky, brisk day near Mt. Hood, but a warm day in the great room of the Wy'east Bookstore. There were about twenty-five of us, more than half of whom read a Stafford poem at the open microphone. Musician and storyteller Suzan Lundy and poet and storyteller Ed Edmo brought their Stafford-focused artistry to get us started.

Tony Wolk and Lindy Delf, today's hosts, brought framed Stafford broadsides off their walls at home to show everyone how beautifully and simply Bill's poetry can be framed. (We sold two broadsides and one woman asked for the FWS website so she could order more.)

Tony and Lindy spoke about Bill's influence on their work and then led us in a favorite Stafford writing prompt exercise as described below. I'd written Kim a while back and asked him to share a prompt

that his dad might have used in the classroom. From his email:

"My dad's default writing prompt in workshops was to simply start with the phrase, 'I remember....' And see where that leads. He used this prompt himself in his poem 'Serving with Gideon,' repeating it several times: 'Now I remember...and now I remember....' With this, he would sometimes say 'Remember something you did, but write what you might have done. Remember something you said, but write what you might have said.'



Sometimes when I teach I illustrate the latter idea with the attached pair of examples from my dad's own writing: first, the polite letter, written to protect the reader...and second, the real letter, written to level with the reader or listener. I have people write the polite version of a message or conversation...and then the more accurate version."

About ten people read their more accurate versions. (That Stafford was a smart guy—he knew how to get people to bring their truth out of hiding.)

After the letters, everyone sang Happy Birthday to Bill and Carol Edmo, Carol also celebrating a birthday today. Then we all loved Tony's chocolate sourdough Bundt cake. He bakes his family recipe each year, dusted with powdered sugar, and made with a sour dough starter that dates to the late 1800s!

Bill was well served.

P.S. I am attaching a photo that Edmo brought for all of us to see today. It was taken with Bill at Lewis and Clark in 1973. Edmo, looking about 11 if it wasn't for the mustache, is second to the left. I've also included a photo of Carol, Ed, their granddaughter, and me, just before a group of us headed over to the Rendezvous Grill for dinner.





**Portland, OR—Jan. 13th, Stonehenge Studios**

By Daniel Sperry

For me, particular sounds and a particular flow of meter naturally comes in when I hear William Stafford's poetry in my mind as I am reading it. Ever since I have been traveling around the country - more than two years now - sharing poetry and my cello music - it has been almost as if Bill Stafford was following me around. I kept running into his poems and being stunned by them. I was fortunate to be hosted one evening by a man who knew Kit, Bill's daughter, who put me in touch with her, and as I traveled in 2011, I corresponded with her about hosting a concert in Sisters, OR.

As it turned out I was not only hosted by Kit in Sisters, for a beautiful evening concert, but I was able to stay with Dennis and Helen Schmidling at Stafford's cabin for the night, after the concert.

Since then my own poetry rose up even more, and every poem of Stafford's comes to me like a teacher.

Connecting with the Friends of William Stafford has been an ongoing discovery for me of a great community that recognizes this quiet genius coming through Stafford and waiting patiently in all of us. When I take a Stafford poem that I love and bring music into it, and feel how it resonates with me and speak it, I feel like I am carrying on a tradition that needs tending, like a fire, to keep a certain kind of knowing alive in us all - and it is with great gratitude to people like Stafford and Bly and the Friends of William Stafford, to Dennis, and Helen and Leah, that I feel inspired to keep sharing what I do.

**Bainbridge Island, WA—Jan. 14th**

By David Hecker

The panel members were John Davis (a former student of Stafford at Lewis and Clark), Peter Quinn (another student of Stafford at L&C), Gayle Kaune, a workshop student of Stafford, and Nancy Rekow (another workshop student of Stafford).

John Davis: "At the Un-National Monument Along The Canadian Border" was a poem I read in high school. Rather than being written by a poet who had been dead for many years, it was written by a living poet. I returned to it again and again. It put me in a certain place. It wasn't a puzzle. Bill Stafford was alive in his writing. When applying to colleges, I noticed that he taught at Lewis and Clark College. That was one of the reasons I attended the college.

At Lewis and Clark I first saw him running across campus and I thought, *That's what a real poet looks like.*

I worked up my courage and took his Romanticism class. He really liked Wordsworth. There was a calm presence about Bill. One day my pen failed during a writing assignment. He loaned me his, which was a fountain pen and I thought, *Now is my chance to be a William Stafford writer.* The pen worked, but the magic didn't click. I wrote some drivel and returned the pen.

A few years later we crossed paths at the Denver airport. By then I had begun to teach. "Traveling Through the Dark" was a selection I had chosen to discuss with my high school students. He kindly offered me pointers.

Always his idea of "lower your standards" has come to me. Great

**Any Journey**

When God watches you walk, you are  
neither straight nor crooked. The journey  
stretches out, and all of its reasons  
beat like a heart. Coming back, no triumph,  
no regret, you fold into the curves,  
left, right, and arrive. You touch  
the door. The road straightens behind you.  
It is now. It has all come true.

WILLIAM STAFFORD

advice. In life. In poetry. He believed in writing almost every day. While I don't seem to fit that schedule, I do write 150-200 poems a year. Some are good, and some are just poems. He opened me up to possibilities. "What you could do is write another poem." I love that echo.

Gayle Kaune: I met Bill Stafford when I was first starting to write. He was leading a workshop, sponsored by the Washington Poets' Association, that was held in Ellensburg. I'll never forget the reading he gave. There were about 30 of us, all sitting around a fireplace in one of the dorms and Stafford stood there and quietly read his poems. I was hooked.

After that, our paths crossed many times throughout the years as I attended several weekend workshops he gave and ran into him at conferences and gatherings. He was always open to accepting poems and we corresponded occasionally. My favorite memory is the time a friend and I put on a conference, the Rattlesnake Mountain Writers Workshop, in Eastern Washington. Bill Stafford and Marvin Bell were the major poets. I had a small time slot, 10 minutes to read poems on the first afternoon and when I looked in the audience I was surprised to see Stafford there. I read one poem inspired by the five different places I had lived. The next night when Stafford stood up to give his reading, he pulled a piece of paper from his pocket and announced he was going to read something he had written that morning from the "many little excitements" in Gayle Kaune's reading. He read a poem titled, "Tracks in the Sand." It has since been published, with a few changes, in the book, *My Name is William Tell*. Of course, I was floored and honored and hold that poem and Stafford dear to my heart.

David Hecker: My main point at the celebration about Stafford was a quote from his article "Making Best Use of a Workshop" in his book *You Must Revise Your Life*: "if you are a student you may find in yourself a continuing way of life that is enriched by the practice of art. What you might have identified as your goal--publication, fame, praise--you may discover to be incidental to satisfactions that come with working out by means of the materials of art the values and needs of your central being."

**Lincoln City, OR—Jan. 15th**

Lincoln City’s celebration was held Jan. 15 in the Community Room of the Driftwood Public Library. The first guests in the door were from New Westminster, B.C., followed by a couple from Salem, friends of the Wixons. One featured reader was ill, but his wife arrived with door-prize poetry books, as promised, then headed home to be with him. A few more locals arrived, until the gathering numbered nine. Mark, the library’s technology chief, set up a web-link so we could see some of the old poems from the WS Archives in manuscript and draft forms. Another of the featured readers introduced us to Stafford’s wartime experience with the CPS and then read a poem of address to Bill by FWS trustee Don Colburn (who will give a workshop at the library in April). Julius read “Meditation,” the same poem he reads every year, he said, beginning “Animals full of light / walk through the forest / toward someone aiming a gun / loaded with darkness . . .” Nearly everybody won a door prize, and Shirley, who didn’t, said, “I won last year.” The children’s librarian and the wife of one of the readers arrived in time for birthday cake, banana with butter-cream frosting. With lots of hands helping, we broke down this poetry encampment in minutes and left without any obvious trace—but as you probably know we went away changed.

**Salem, OR—Jan. 20th**

We had 50 to 60 in attendance... ran out of chairs. Both Marilyn Johnston and Alice Derry were delightful...by that I mean that their poetry was well worth our listening.. Both related well to the audience...very alive, connecting.

**Portland, OR—Jan. 20th, Blackfish Gallery**

By Willa Schneberg

In the last number of years, meditation has become almost as integral to my life as writing poems. Each morning I sit on a cushion, ring a bell and let my thoughts go.

I do believe that I have been drawn to poets like Mary Oliver, Billy Collins, Wendell Berry and Bill Stafford, all whom, unless I am mistaken have no particular formal connection with Buddhism, but have instead what I consider Buddhist sensibilities as strong as Jane Hirschfield, Allen Ginsberg and Gary Snyder, all poets that we would recognize as being within the Buddhist poetry canon.

Gary Snyder in his introduction to the 1991 anthology *Beneath a Single Moon: Buddhism in Contemporary American Poetry* states: “The marks of Buddhist teachings are impermanence, no self, the inevitability of suffering, interconnectedness, emptiness, the vastness of mind and the provision of a Way to realization.” When Snyder discusses the commonalities among the poems in *Beneath a Single Moon*, he could be speaking about Stafford’s work. He describes the poems as “unsentimental, not overly abstract, on the way towards selflessness, not particularly self-indulgent, whole-hearted, non-utopian, fluid... kindhearted, unembarrassed, free of spiritual rhetoric and pretense of magic, and deeply concerned with the questions of knowing....”

Isn’t Stafford addressing impermanence, and being in our present in his ubiquitous poem: “You Reading This, Be Ready.” Here is the final couplet: “What can anyone give you greater than now / starting here, right in this room, when you turn around?”

Stafford’s poem “Why I Am Happy” addresses the vastness of mind, a path to peace, and what some may call enlightenment, when we can accept we are just passing through but will always have that blue lake inside of us to tap into.

In the poem “It’s All Right,” Stafford speaks to how:

Someone you trusted has treated you bad.  
Someone has used you to vent their ill temper.  
.....  
Maybe weather or bad luck  
spoiled what you did.

Stafford shows us how we suffer, but at the poem’s turn he reveals that we create our own suffering that ebbs and flows and brings us back to our present, to our lived experience... in these poignant lines:

when the worst bears down  
you find a pretty bubble in your soup at noon,  
and outside at work a bird says, “Hi!”  
Slowly the sun creeps along the floor;  
it is coming your way. It touches your shoe.

“Yes” is another Stafford poem about impermanence and being in one’s present that I will read in its entirety:

It could happen any time, tornado,  
earthquake, Armageddon. It could happen.  
Or sunshine, love, salvation.

It could, you know. That’s why we wake  
and look out—no guarantees  
in this life.

But some bonuses, like morning,  
like right now, like noon,  
like evening.

My little dharma talk about Bill Stafford, the Buddhist poet has come to an end. I will leave you with a tiny Buddhist poem of my own.

Moon  
I looked for the moon tonight  
and couldn’t find it  
maybe it’s in your room  
looking out the window

(*Beneath A Single Moon: Buddhism In Contemporary American Poetry*, edited by Kent Johnson and Craig Paulenich, and the essay by Rev. Nonin Chowaney, the abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple entitled “William Stafford’s Dharma Eye” were the inspirations for this talk.)

**Santa Barbara, CA—Jan. 26th,** Los Prietos, Los Padres National Forest, the site of the CPS barracks where Bill slept.

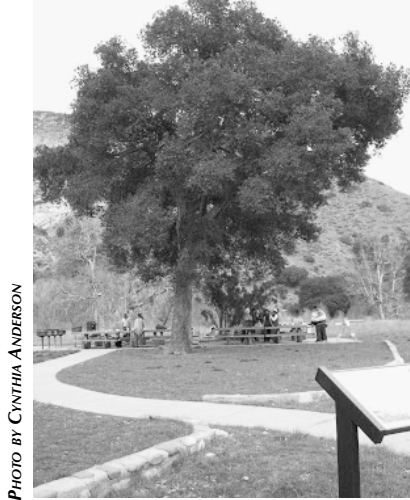


PHOTO BY CYNTHIA ANDERSON

## Los Prietos

The yucca fans ascend the folded sandstone cliffs like rows of sea anemones, memory of when these layers accrued upon an ocean floor. Funny how the earth is given to recapitulation, how our own race repeats itself. I, for example, sitting on this gravel shore at a long and silent bend in the river, watching the willow yellow where it has gone sere and sere before, thinking about the men who bathed in this deep pool after a day of building trail, far from the reddening paths of war, I too a prisoner of spiny conscience, leaving sediments of self upon this bank, layer upon folded layer.

PAUL WILLIS



PHOTO BY CYNTHIA ANDERSON

Paul Willis standing behind the plaque at Los Prietos (see back cover)

**Tigard, OR—January, 27th**

By Tim Gillespie

(Tim read this excerpt from his essay “Words to a Writing Teacher: the Provocations of Bill Stafford” as a part of his talk)



PHOTO BY ILKA KUZNIK

Tim Gillespie

The conference was held at a nearby high school. The classroom where Stafford’s session was scheduled filled quickly. Teachers crammed into student desks, sardined themselves around the sides of the room, sat on the floor. The room had no windows, and the air turned quickly warm. Stafford perched on the edge of a student desk to speak.

He explained how he didn’t really make assignments for the college students in his writing classes, but rather invited them to put writings they had done into a box he set up in the English Department.

“You don’t give assignments?” asked one teacher querulously.

“No,” said Stafford, “but I welcome all contributions.”

A hush fell over the room. Teachers exchanged glances.

“So,” said a teacher into the silence, “um, what kind of response do you offer to these writings?” Dozens of pens hovered above teachers’ notebooks, poised to take notes.

“Oh,” said Stafford. “I read them.”

A twitter crossed the room. The earnest teacher asked for more: no, he meant, what kind of markings, what sorts of comments, did he correct errors?

“Oh, no,” Stafford said. “I just read them.” After that, he explained, he handed the stories and poems back. The room was getting stuffier.

“Without any marks or comments?”

“Right,” Stafford said, clearly bemused. I imagined knots of bewildered college students examining their papers front and back, wondering why Dr. Stafford hadn’t marked their papers.

Another teacher pressed doggedly on, “Well, what if a student asks what you think about the work?”

“Well, I might say, ‘What do *you* think?’”

The crowd grew uneasy. All this seemed a bit indefinite to teachers girding themselves to face hundreds of students come Monday. Frustration settled into the room.

“So what do you do about grades?” asked another teacher.

“I avoid them if I can,” Stafford said, genially.

“Do you advocate this for others?” asked a skeptic.

“Well, this is where I’m sort of hovering in my own teaching.”

The conversation followed this path for the next half-hour. The poet was peppered with questions seeking particulars, techniques, tips. His answers were articulate, always patient and courteous, sometimes vague and elliptical . . . We sought certainty, Stafford didn’t. The room simmered with annoyance. I remember thinking at some point: *He’s enjoying this. He likes stirring the pot this way.*

When the time was up, the room slowly emptied. Some listeners left grumbling: Great poet, sure, but... doesn’t have to deal with high school kids, doesn’t have pupils by the dozens, lives in an ivory tower, only has to teach “creative” writing... and so on. Mutterings.



## Editor's Notes on the Celebrations

### Lake Oswego, OR—Jan. 15th

The Lake Oswego Library is a wonderful place for a Stafford celebration. It was Bill's library, and it celebrates him all year with banners hanging from the ceiling, broadsides on the walls, and a fine collection of his work. Check out their catalogue sometime. Someone joked that is just might also be the celebration event with



Barbara Stafford

the most hugging. Our handsomest board member, the silver-haired Bill Howe, who wore a magnificent purple shirt for the occasion, hosted this year's reading. Dorothy was there and told the assembled her five favorite F words: friends, family, food, flowers, and fun.

Paulann Petersen, FWS board member and Oregon poet laureate, spoke of Bill's optimism, which had to have been profoundly influenced by Dorothy's, telling us that the file containing his will was labeled, "If I die." Paulann also spoke of her visit to the Los Prietos celebration at the site of the barracks where Bill was housed during several of his years as a CO in World War II and of the dedication of a plaque (see page 14 and back cover) commemorating Bill's service and read the poem on the plaque, "Los Prietos." She also read "These Mornings," a poem Bill wrote three days after his thirtieth birthday while at the Los Prietos camp.

Barbara Stafford brought a bow that Bill made for Ian, her oldest son. It seems that Bill made bows for all the kids and grandkids. She remembered how Bill and the kids would climb the fence to the nearby school playground and set up a target for bow-and-arrow practice. She told of how Ian and Bill would go out into the field of that school with their bows. Together, they would tilt their bows to about a forty-five degree angle to get the best distance and loft arrows into the air and then walk across the grass to them, pull them out of the ground, and loft them back in the other direction. I had the distinct pleasure of holding that bow in my hands.

### Portland, OR—Jan. 22nd

A rather fascinating bit of story-telling synchronicity occurred at the First Unitarian Church. After some wonderful readings by Karen Reyes, Michael McGriff (whose Tavern Books will publish *Winterward*, Bill's Ph.D. thesis of poems, in 2014), Deborah Buchanan, Paul Merchant (co-editor of a yet to be titled collection of Bill's aphorisms also due out in 2014), and after this editor read his essay on Bill and Taoism, and after a number of audience members had read some of Bill's poems and some of their own, Portland's unofficial



Michael McGriff

poet laureate, the oft tipsy, usually disheveled, occasionally crazy, undeniably brilliant champion of Oregon's literary heritage, Walt Curtis, got up and began a ramble, promising as usual to keep it short. He rambled right into a story about being down along the river feeding the pigeons (always with whole wheat bread). A young



PHOTO BY IKA KUZNIK

Walt Curtis

man saw him there, pigeons whirling and cawing around him, and stopped to watch. Walt called out to justify his odd behavior that he was a poet, Walt Curtis, the poet. The young man responded that his grandfather was a poet. "Who?" Walt asked.

"William Stafford," the young man replied. It was Ian, Barbara's son. They began to talk. Walt asked what Ian remembered of his grandfather. He told Walt that when he was eight or nine years old, Bill had made him a bow and arrow set and they would go to the schoolyard and loft the arrows.

Ian told him, too, about how Bill taught him how to start a fire with an Indian fire starter, a bow drill, the kind with the small bow and string that wraps around a mandrel and heats up a hole primed with punk in a piece of wood. I am told there are a few hidden in corners of the cabin in Sisters.

### Tigard, OR—January, 27th

At the event in Tigard, I was host and again talked about Stafford and Taoism. Judith Barrington read her essay on "Serving with Gideon." Tim Gillespie talked about Bill's "No praise, no blame" workshop philosophy coming up against the OCTE. And then Primus St. John told a story that made "Serving with Gideon" come alive.

Primus met Bill many years ago back east in Washington, D.C., or maybe New York. You could have seen them together in a picture on the cover of a 1969 issue of the *Tennessee Journal* (taken, I believe, by Galway Kinnell) if you had gone to the exhibition of his letters at the downtown library.

Around this time, Bill was going to lead a workshop at a writing conference in Boulder, Colorado. Bill invited him out and so Primus drove out to Colorado to attend the conference and take a workshop with Bill. Primus couldn't afford to stay in the dorms on the campus, and so he camped outside town in the hills with his girlfriend. He would, he told us, go to the workshop and then leave to get back to his camp and his sweetheart.



PHOTO BY IKA KUZNIK

Primus St. John

A few days into the conference, noticing that Primus didn't socialize with the other workshop members very much, Bill came up to Primus in the commons and started up a conversation, circling around to asking if he was being treated right by the others. "If you're not," Bill said to Primus, "I'll go out to where you are and stay with you." This, of course, threw Primus into a bit of a panic thinking about Bill out there in the hills with he and his girlfriend.

It does seem that the sensibility expressed in "Serving with Gideon" was Bill Stafford's way of being.

## Sightings

*100 Tricks Every Boy Can Do: How My Brother Disappeared.* By Kim Stafford. Trinity Press, 2012.

### Winter Words: A Review

This book is a riveting read. It's a love story and a mystery story, a story of brotherhood and a story of redemption. Written in a voice that is revelatory, exploratory, honest, and clear, it flows along, syncopated by short chapters varying from one paragraph to several pages, as if one were listening to the teller work through a harrowing tale bit by bit, piecing together in front of the listener the real reason for its telling, uncovering the layers of meaning right down to the stone-hard truth.

*100 Tricks Every Boy Can Do* is about the suicide of Brett Stafford, William Stafford's oldest child, in 1988. It's a love story because the brothers loved each other in life and Kim learns to love (in the sense that love is acceptance) his death. It's a mystery story because it tries to answer the question of who did it, who or what was guilty. It's about the brotherhood of two brothers because we see the details of a close and caring relationship. The redemption is in the creation of a book in which Brett is a living figure, returned to us as only literature can do, one of its best tricks.

The title comes from a book Brett had as a child, a book of magic tricks, sleights of hand. His disastrous attempt to snatch a tablecloth out from under a wine glass becomes a story Kim will tell his children. The idea of the trick becomes a metaphor for the way meaning emerges from memory and tricks us into our fate and our feelings about the fate of others. Kim's son Guthrie tells his dad, "Yeah... but suicide was a trick that didn't work."

*100 Tricks* is not a book about William Stafford. He plays a small role in the actual story, appearing as a kind but distant, even remote, figure: "Our father the poet could be very close and kind, and he could also be a distant enigma." His son's memoir of our friend William Stafford reveals more of the latter, the distant enigma. Kim tells the story of his father's advice when he goes off to college at the U. of O. "When I was with women," his father tells him over a bowl of shredded wheat, "I realized they trusted me to decide what was right." That's all he says. Kim takes this to mean he should not touch girls (this is told in a chapter called "Puritan Pleasures"), only later finding out this wasn't what his father meant. In this anecdote, we see the results of reticence, the enigmas of silence, which are at the center of this memoir.

This book is full of stories about the brothers, how they never fought, their good night rituals, their jaunts into the wilds, the things they said as children (recorded in a journal kept by their parents). We learn how as a junior in high school Brett organized the planting of one hundred flowering cherry trees along Country Club Road in Lake Oswego (they're still there). We learn about Brett's seven

summers as a fire fighter, his frustrations as a city planner, his move to Canada with his wife and two children, and the foundering of the marriage. We learn about Kim's college sweethearts and marriage and divorce, about his failures and how he rebuilt his life after his divorce. We learn about their struggles to achieve conscientious objector status during the Vietnam War. *100 Tricks* is a social history as well as a story of two brothers and the nature of their brotherhood. This is the focus of the book, not William Stafford

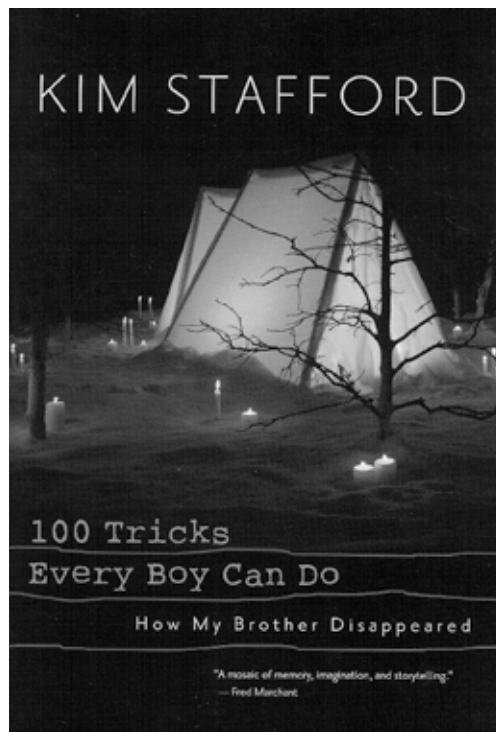
But this is not quite true. Though he is a minor character in the narrative, he is a major figure, a distant enigma with a deep shadow. This is because of the moral stature of their father, William Stafford. The family had sacrifice meals once a week in which they ate corn bread and milk and put money in a bowl for the poor. At Halloween they trick or treated for UNICEF. "Our family gospel," Kim tells us and many Friends know, "was pacifism." And, incredibly, the brothers never fought, "To deny oneself the luxury of anger—that was a trick we had to learn." As someone who has a brother close in age, I find the fact they did not fight, especially in their teenage years, remarkable, even appalling. And it may have been Brett's character

that accomplished this. In one of their few conversations connected to Brett's death, Kim asks his father how it was that he survived, "Brett was a saint," his father replies. "You're not. That's good." About the remarkable fact the brothers never fought, Kim writes, "I think of how much he and I must have suppressed to keep the peace." Someone said that suicide is internalized anger. It is with a statement like this that we get to how this book can help us deepen our understanding of William Stafford and his work—and of human nature.

Someone also said somewhere that we are haunted by the dreams of our parents. I heard Dorothy once say that she didn't know why Bill had to dream since it was all in his poems and, I would add, his way of life. William Stafford's dreams, his ideals and ideas, were made real in his poems and in his way of living. Yeats said, "In dreams begin responsibilities." There is a way

that Brett, in a way that has to do with the unique alchemy of each parent child relationship, may not have been able to shoulder that responsibility. This is the long shadow that broods over this book.

One of Bill's favorite phrases, one he often said at the dinner table, was "Let's talk recklessly." He said it to encourage adventurous and exploratory talk. But he didn't want to talk about Brett's suicide. He could not even sit with the family at the memorial service. In the months after, he closed the door to his study and read Wordsworth. We learn that Dorothy and Bill separated early in their marriage, that on one of their first walks together, he "went scrambling up the ridge, calling over his shoulder that he would converge with her farther along. She trod the path alone, wondering what she had gotten herself into." The book begins with an epigraph, "Why tell what hurts?" This is from the only poem Bill wrote specifically



about his son's death. He wrote a number of others touching on the subject, Kim tells us in *Early Morning*, not *100 Tricks*, but the line points to silence, an enigmatic silence that weighed on his family, especially the sons.

Silence is the culprit in this book. Kim writes of his father: "The mystery is that for all his advocacy of freedom in writing and his zest for exploratory talk at home, about certain things with our father you couldn't get a word. He never talked with me about my brother's death. Something stopped him." In his poetry, there are also quiet refusals, reticences. He rarely writes about romantic love, passion, or the erotic. He rarely writes about domestic life or about the pleasures of the flesh, food, and drink. Oh, I know he wrote a poem about garlic but I believe it was commissioned by the Gilroy Garlic Festival. He rarely wrote long poems or sequences, though he has a few in his earlier work. He gave up fiction in the late fifties.

This is the riddling winterwardness of William Stafford. This is the ice in the river that "says...what I say," the darkness around us that is so deep, the persona who pushes the deer into the river, the "cold posts" that pace toward what he knows, the deer walking toward those guns "loaded with darkness," the god "holding still" and "letting it happen again, and again and again." This is the vision of what happens when there are not any people around, of the "sky that never cared less," the person disappearing into those cold "meanings in search of a world."

Silence is the overarching character in *100 Tricks* and, I say again, probably the guilty party. Toward the end of the book, Kim writes, "For if there is one thing my brother's story teaches me, it is that the trick of life is harmonious relations, and the key to harmonious relations is talking bravely." One thinks of "A Ritual to Read to Each Other" and its response to the depth of the darkness around us. Kim closes his thought with this: "This I failed to do then. This I try to do now."

The underground stream that Bill listened to ran in a certain direction. *100 Tricks* makes this clear. It has a confessionality to it that is not often part of William Stafford's work, not even his daily writings. In another place, Kim tells of looking into his father's daily writings after he died to read about the day he and his first wife were married. His father notes it and then is off into a poem about something else entirely. The underground stream of thought Bill wrote out of flowed in certain ways and had certain sources (the natural world being the most obvious, community another) and ran through certain strata (the lyric most of all).

Kim's word stream runs another way, through other inscapes, different layers. He is another kind of writer and so we see more clearly, by contrast, the kind of writer Stafford was. This book would not exist if Kim was the same kind of writer his father was. Kim is more confessional, more forthcoming, vulnerable, intimate, anecdotal, and this is good because this is a wonderful book, a haunting, beautiful, redemptive story.

The portrait of William Stafford, though, is a dark one, to use one of his favorite words. His silences and the moral force they engage are at the heart of the mystery of Brett's death. Kim is wrong, I think, that talking bravely could have saved Brett, but who can say? Kim, though, does try to say and strives bravely for an answer, but there isn't one. This seems like a dirty trick except if you have a mind of winter, to paraphrase Wallace Stevens, and then it's the silence that is the true voice, the voice of William Stafford sometimes. Perhaps it

is the silence of the wilderness listening, the silence of bewilderment. Perhaps this is the silence that tricked Brett for a moment too long.

This book could lead one to wonder whether Brett drowned in a river his father wrote. Bill had an uncompromising ethic. He was a thorough pacifist. It is one of those things that give his poetry such depth and consistency. Kim once reminded me that there is a fist in the word pacifist, another paradox. At an early point in the memoir and a later point in Brett's life, he shows Kim the fortune he received from a Chinese cookie, "Learn to cut your expectations in half." The portrait of William Stafford we get in this book, the figure he cuts, is of a dark shadow, an ethical shadow perhaps too long and deep for Brett. It seems to have created in him expectations he could not live with or lower.

William Stafford has a vision of the world that many people treasure but his son Brett could not see himself in it. This is the role William Stafford plays in this book. It is a difficult one, hard to take, and only one version of a multi-faceted and fascinating man. It made me pause, gulp, and enter another strata of understanding. I thank his brave sons for that.

## A Memorial: Son Bret

In the way you went you were important.  
I do not know what you found.  
In the pattern of my life you stand  
where you stood always, in the center,  
a hero, a puzzle, a man.

What you might have told me  
I will never know—the lips went still,  
the body cold. I am afraid  
in the circling stars, in the dark,  
and even at noon in the light.

When I run what am I running from?  
You turned once to tell me something,  
but then you glimpsed a shadow on my face  
and maybe thought, Why tell what hurts?  
You carried it, my boy, so brave, so far.

Now we have all the days, and the sun  
goes by the same; there is a faint,  
wandering trail I find sometimes, off  
through grass and sage. I stop  
and listen: only summer again—remember?—

The bees, the wind.

WILLIAM STAFFORD



*What Poetry Brings to Business.* By Clare Morgan, with Kirsten Lange & Ted Buswick. The University of Michigan Press, 2010.

## Poetry and Profit: A Review

This book is an introduction to poetry, an apology for poetry, and a dramatic narrative. I write about it here because it uses William Stafford's poetry to make its argument: poetry can be of value to the business strategist. What kind of value is the conundrum of the book. Indeed, it uses four Stafford poems, more than any other poet, including W. H. Auden (a close second), W. B. Yeats, Robert Frost, Elizabeth Bishop, Ted Hughes, and surprisingly given the audience, Billy Collins.

In his introduction to the book, Bolko Von Oetinger, a senior partner in the Boston Consulting Group (BSG) and director of its Strategy Institute, writes that "it was William Stafford's 'Traveling through the Dark' that made me a believer in the value of poetry to business thinking." He goes on to explain: "It's a poem about road-kill. A pregnant deer lies dying by the side of the road. What to do?" Well, yes and no. It is about road-kill but the deer *is* dead: "I found a dear / *dead* on the edge of Wilson River Road." (my italics) Oetinger misreads the poem and Claire Morgan, director of the graduate creative writing program at Oxford University, misconstrues the purpose of poetry. And therefore, I think she, with the help of her co-writers, both employed by BSG, misuses Stafford's poetry slightly but significantly. Though Bill would be glad to be of use, I think he would have raised an eyebrow, maybe two.

This book *is* useful as an introduction to poetry, particularly for those for whom poetry is discomfiting. Connecting poetry with money, profit, might have mollified some of those business majors who sat through my classes in my teaching days and cringed at the thought of literature, especially poetry.<sup>1</sup> But to be of use to help business strategize how to maximize wealth and stockholders' dividends, what Morgan calls the "responsibility to shareholders and the accompanying exigencies of the bottom line," strikes me as a misuse and a miscalculation on Morgan's part. Poetry is useful because it is mostly useless to the bottom line and this is what the book, in the end, seems to say, despite its other intentions and thoughtful, if mildly confused, argument.<sup>2</sup>

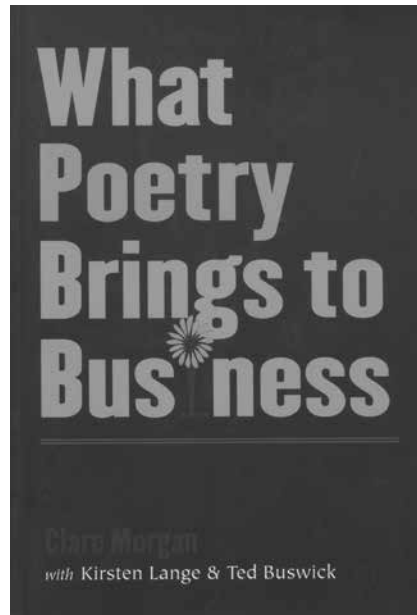
There are three sections of the book. The first, "What Is Not—Yet," deals with how poetry raises questions, presents complexity, and can help in making decisions based on incomplete information. In the initial chapter in which the narrative hook is the preparation for an upcoming workshop with executives from BSG that she will give at Downing College in London, Morgan closes with "You Reading This, Be Ready." The chapter's thesis, essential to that of the whole book, is that the "poet's world is not bound by the rules of cause and effect; it's not constrained by logic." Poets function in an atmosphere in which they make decisions based on "insufficient information." Poems though, like business activity, like corporations, Morgan

tells us in the second chapter, "are units characterized by strategic intent." This is true and these connections are what make this book interesting and a little chilling. The workshop, Morgan decides at the end of the chapter will be called, "Thinking Beyond the Facts." However, seeing clearly what the facts *really are* "What can anyone give you greater than now, / starting here, right in this room, when you turn around" seems to me to be what the poem is about, making the chapter title a mild distortion of the poem's meaning.

Of the four poems that seem to be the staples in her workshop arsenal, "Traveling through the Dark" is the most prominent and at Downing College, she uses it in a discussion with a small group of corporate executives from BSG. This discussion is contained in a chapter in the first part of the book called "Traveling through the Dark," which works with the idea that "reading poetry improves the play between the rational and non-rational parts of your thinking mind" and this should be beneficial for strategizing business execs. The workshop participants make remarks like, "He's a bit of a cold fish." "He's caught between value systems." "...in a way it's a tragedy." The consensus seems to be that the poem raises questions and opens things up. One of the execs shows alarm at the suggestion of "ecological implications" and the specter of "political correctness" that arises in the conversation. "Meaning is meaning, isn't it?" he says and packs up early. The CEO who organized the meeting writes to Morgan a week later with an assessment of the session: "It made everyone (or nearly everyone!) think again about how you decide what to do about tricky problems. Just how big they are. And the lack of clear-cut answers.... I guess the downside was that it raised lots of questions but didn't say how to answer them."

This is the essential problem. For poetry, and Stafford's poetry in particular, the questions raised are the upside. The questions are the answer. The question of who "us all" is, to use one of Bill's favorite verbs, is furthering. In it is the ecological question, the wider world. In a poem, a question is an answer. In business a question requires an answer. This kind of quandary is endemic to the book.

The second section, "Poetry and Creativity," begins with a chapter called "Reading Between the Lines" and has an epigraph from "How These Words Happened": "Monstrous alliances never dreamed of before / began." This chapter and this section focus on words and thinking about their various meanings. Morgan thinks that looking at language and how it works, how it carries hidden assumptions, connotations and associations, will help execs understand more clearly the complexities and subtleties of sentences, of what they say and hear, of discourse communities and how meanings shift as they go among them. An awareness of the implications of this might lead CEOs to be more awake, alert, and question certain assumptions. Morgan closes the chapter with the whole poem and I think that a good read, a good grok (as Bill might have said), of that poem could alert the receptive CEO to a level of language often ignored. But for what purpose? In an earlier subsection of the book called "Case Study: How Poetry Sells," for example, Morgan argues for the usefulness of poetry by showing how rhyme and rhythm sell



products: “Wonderbra for the way you are.” Is this a worthy purpose for rhyme?

This section of *What Poetry Brings to Business* uses “Found in a Storm.” Different parts of the poem serve as epigraphs for three of its eight chapters and the whole poem appears in the last chapter, which also collects Yeat’s “Leda and the Swan,” Bishop’s “The Fish,” and Philip Larkin’s “Arrival.” Following the poem are thoughts on it and a short biography of the poet. Here we learn that Stafford died in 1991, not 1993. Morgan, to be fair, is not afraid to tell the execs and CEOs that Stafford was a conscientious objector in WW II, and she quotes one of Stafford’s most helpful, clear-eyed thoughts about writing: “A writer is not so much someone who has something to say as he is someone who has found a process that will bring about new things he would not have thought if he had not started to say them.” The book, though, offers no source for this quotation from Stafford’s wonderful book on the writer’s vocation, *Writing the Australian Crawl*. It must be said as well that Morgan’s short explication of “Found in a Storm” does not deal with the key insight that a storm is a kind of reasoning: “We woke up in a gale / that was reasoning with our tent.” She speaks only of Stafford’s tendency to write about “man in nature” and how “the order of cause and effect give meaning to human existence.”

There is an element of the apology to this book. By apology I use the word in the sense that Shelley and Sydney did in their defenses (as in justification, vindication) of poetry. By connecting poetry to money, success, profit, though Morgan never does this in so many words, poetry gains cachet and acceptance among its most determined doubters, business people. To establish poetry as useful in making money throws one back to Shelley and Sydney and their attempts to establish the usefulness of poetry in its value as a moral force. An aspect of Morgan’s argument is to establish the power of poetry by showing how it can be useful to capitalists. Another part, though, is to offer the insights of poetry as a softening force, a way to wake capitalists up to a wider world. This is the puzzle of this book, how is poetry *really* useful for business.

In “A Defence of Poetry,” Shelley says, “Poetry strengthens that faculty which is the organ of the moral nature of man” and that is its “true utility.” The third part of the book, “Thinking Values,” which culminates in a meeting in Tokyo with BCG’s Japanese partner, in which “Traveling through the Dark” is one of the four poems discussed, focuses on the argument that poetry can generate “the particular perceptions (perhaps these could be called ‘deep realizations’) that may help inform ethical and social sensibilities.” “The estrangement,” Morgan thinks, “of the executive world from the general world could be lessened by an engagement with poetry.” Poetry can do this because in “coming to grips with a poem you have to flex your cross-modal thinking.” “The poem,” she writes in a chapter called “The Trust Gap,” which raises the question of corporate responsibility, “is a ground for non-confrontational exploration of values and attitudes.” I think Bill would approve of that definition.

The tendency of poetry to operate on non-rational levels should enable execs, to use an almost infamous cliché, “think outside the box” and do what E. M. Forester recommended, “Only connect”—empathize, employ the moral imagination. Morgan would, in Sydney’s words, seem to see poetry as useful for “the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue.” This is good but the book wants it

both ways—that the execs profit monetarily and morally—and the corporate execs at the culmination of the book’s narrative quest seem to realize the ultimately moral argument that Morgan is presenting in the guise of poetry’s “strategic” (i.e., monetary) usefulness. Morgan’s characterization of poetry and its powers is not the problem in this book, Bill and even Shelley would agree. They would, though, as I do, question the motives of someone who argues that business people could use it to raise their stockholders’ dividends.

The mistakes and misapprehensions in this book belie, I think, the forced nature of Morgan’s thesis. Oetinger misreads “Traveling through the Dark” and Morgan misreads several Stafford poems and gets the date of his death wrong. In an early chapter, she describes a transatlantic phone call with the head of the Academy of American Poets in which she hears that Bill Gates was one of the readers at the recent annual convention. After trying to get an interview with Gates, she finds it was actually, merely, Henry Louis Gates, the literary critic. Morgan wants too much for this book and though she makes a good case for the nature of poetry and collects an admirable group of poems to support her argument, she does not convince that poetry brings anything to business except pleasingly couched ethical questions that business is not really interested in.

In the end, at the meeting in Japan, toward which the dramatic narrative of the book is aimed, the executives conclude a number of things. For example, “Reading poetry is enjoyable and valuable.” They also conclude, “it is basically not relevant to the business system that corporations operate within.” So, the book ends essentially with the group of execs the writer has been hoping to convince of poetry’s efficacy for business strategy deciding that poetry is just peachy but not useful for their purposes. The presentation the whole book has been leading up to has flopped. The execs smile and say no thanks. Adios. I see Bill with a wry smile waving adios as well.

<sup>1</sup> For an interesting take on this phenomenon, I recommend Ursula Le Guin’s essay “Why Are Americans Afraid of Dragons,” which can be found in her book, *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Hyde has some wonderful thoughts on the subject of the uses of poetry in *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*.

## John Elder in *The Sun*

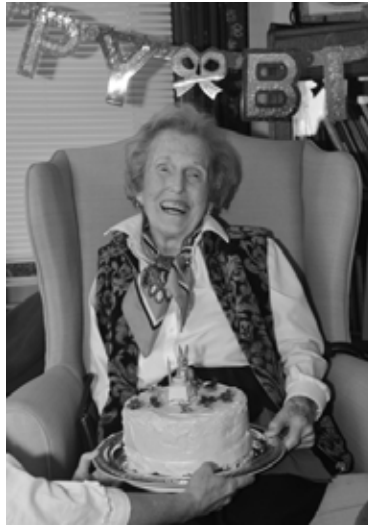
It’s been important for me to learn about the geology of Vermont, how the soil was built by the prehistoric lakes and seas that followed the melting of the glaciers. It’s been important for me to reflect on the dramatic seasonal changes here. My love of Robert Frost’s poetry has also helped me find a sense of place. But there are parallels wherever you go. If I were to move to Seattle, I would want to learn about the geology and the legacy of the indigenous people in that area. I’d want to know about the Northwest’s forest history and agricultural history. I’d read great Northwestern poets, such as Theodore Roethke and William Stafford.

From an interview with John Elder in *The Sun* (June 2013), “The Undiscovered Country: John Elder On The Wild Places Close to Home.” Elder was a professor of English literature at Middlebury College in Vermont. He is the author of *Imagining the Earth, Pilgrimage to Vallombrosa*, and most recently, *Reading the Mountains of Home*.

## Dorothy's Birthday



Barbara and Dorothy



Dorothy and Jane Glazer

PHOTOS BY MINE MARKE



## Dorothy's Investiture



"She was at the genesis of this institution – she represents its very beginnings to where it is today. By giving her an honorary doctorate here, it's an opportunity to showcase and honor a living embodiment of who we are and what we did."

-- Doug Erickson



"I thought of my husband who worked so many years to get his Ph.D. and my son who worked so many years to get a Ph.D., and mine just came over my shoulders like a rainbow. It doesn't seem quite fair."

-- Dorothy Stafford

PHOTO BY LAKE OSWEGO REVIEW



Kim, Barb, Doug, Dorothy, Ian, and others at the reception following the ceremony.

Dorothy was awarded a Doctorate of Humane Letters at the 2013 Lewis & Clark College commencement ceremonies. She was hooded by Doug Erickson, the head of the Lewis & Clark special collections and college archivist. In the upper right she is seen shaking hands with the commencement speaker, Canadian senator Roméo Dallaire. Speaking above and to the left is the president of Lewis & Clark, Barry Glassner.



Perrin Kerns, Dorothy, and Barb Stafford before the investiture.

PHOTOS BY TIM BARNES



## News, Notes, and Opportunities

**Stafford on Ed Skellings.** I found this interview of Bill by happenstance one day. He is interviewed in late February of 1993 by Diane Newman on the subject of Ed Skellings, who was a friend of Stafford's. Skellings was a poet who received a doctorate in English from the University of Iowa, as did Bill, in the late fifties. In the early sixties he founded the Alaska Writer's Workshop at the University of Alaska and the Alaska Flying Poets, a group of five professors who flew a plane around Alaska and the Midwest to talk with students about writing. He was on the faculty of Florida Atlantic University and founding director of the Florida Center for Electronic Communication. He experimented with audio amplification and performance poetry, calling himself "The First Electronic Poet." He was on the crest of the very first wave of performance poets. Skellings published several books of poetry, including *Heart Attacks*, which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Stafford's blurb on the cover of this book reads: "one of the greatest things since Shakespeare loosed Puck



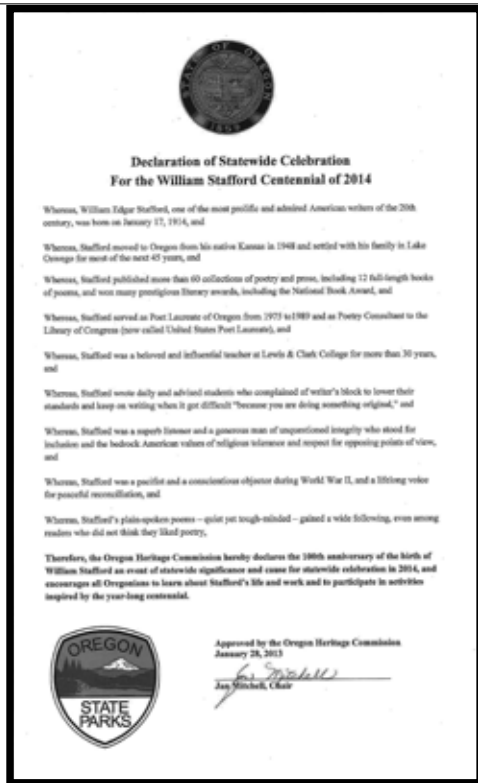
Ed Skellings

to slink through the King's English." The other blurb on the cover was written by Norman Mailer, another good friend of Skellings. Skellings was poet laureate of Florida for 32 years until his death in 2012. URL: //digitalcollections.lib.fit.edu/bitstream/handle/.../157 or google: Ed Skellings William Stafford D. Newman. Diane Newman has a biography of Skellings, *Edmund Skellings, Computer Poet: A Life Story*, in which

Stafford appears, that can be found at this URL: <http://skellingsda.lib.fit.edu/cgi-bin/showfile.exe?CISOROOT=/Biography&CISOPTR=0&filename=1.pdf>, or google the title of the biography. You can find their not insignificant correspondence at the Ed Skellings collection at the Florida Institute of Technology.

**The Friends of Lake Oswego Library William Stafford Fellowship** (\$2500) for 2013 was awarded to Myrlin Ambrosia Hermes, author of two novels, *Careful What You Wish For* and *The Lunatic, The Lover, and the Poet*. Hermes lives in Portland.

**Stafford Studies: A Workshop at the William Stafford Archives.** Instructor: Kim Stafford, Ph.D. Lewis & Clark College, July 15-19, 2013. **Content:** This course consists of reading, writing, discussion, and special projects growing from the poetry and prose of William Stafford. Using the resources of published books and the William Stafford Archives at Lewis & Clark College, participants practice inquiry into Stafford's approach to writing, thinking, teaching, and witness for reconciliation, and from this inquiry develop their own approaches to writing, teaching, and witness. **Goal:** to convene and empower a group of teachers, writers, and citizens to take part in community programs during the William Stafford centennial year, 2014. Tuition for the week-long course will be \$350 for Continuing Education credit. To register, contact Pam Hooten <phooten@lclark.edu> 503-768-6132.



The Oregon Heritage Commission, division of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, has declared the poet William Stafford's 100th birth anniversary in 2014 a statewide celebration.

## Paulann on Bill in the Oregonian

First of all, his poems are extremely hospitable. They invite a reader, a listener, in. There are few writers in this world who are or were more hospitable than Bill Stafford ... I think there's something else going on in Bill's work that people respond to very strongly, and that is in every word he wrote, every word he spoke, every action he took, he bore witness to his profound belief in the nonviolent resolution of conflict. His pacifism was not a simple matter at all.

A quotation from an article by Jeff Baker in the *Oregonian* (May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012) about Paulann Petersen and her latest book of poems, *Understory*.



Bill in Alaska in the 60s, photo from Skellings archive at Florida Tech.

## News, Notes, and Opportunities

**Bukowski and Stafford.** *The William Stafford Archives Blog* at Lewis & Clark has a post that tells the story of when the wildman poet Charles Bukowski and Stafford read together at the San Francisco Museum of Art on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1973. It is titled “*I like flat country*” and “*I hate precious poets;*” *How William Stafford and Charles Bukowski once met.* It includes a description of the event written by Jessica Alberg, Lewis & Clark class of 2013, an exchange of letters, and a video clip of Bukowski’s half of the reading.

“**Twenty Little Poems That Could Save America:** Imagining a renewed role for poetry in the national discourse??? and a new canon.” This is the title of an essay by Tony Hoagland that appeared in *Harper’s Magazine* online on April 11, 2013. His thesis is that in order to engage students with poetry, teachers should move from the contemporary backward, not from ancient to modern: start with Ferlinghetti, not Sir Thomas Wyatt, Billy Collins, not Chaucer. Among the twenty contemporary poems he recommends for the new canon is “Traveling through the Dark.” Hoagland says of the poem, its “well-known, but one with legs yet—it offers a lucid ethical dilemma that foregrounds the nature of choice.” Google: Hoagland Twenty Little Poems.

**Note from Morocco:** Joseph Green, who is spending a year in Morocco, sent this email to Paulann Petersen, who sent it along to the newsletter: “A young Moroccan poet I’ve been working with, Hicham Belaf, was inspired by the William Stafford birthday reading to memorize “At the Un-National Monument Along the Canadian Border.” Today we were out at the farm where his father grew up, walking along a rocky hilltop and looking up at the snowy High Atlas Mountains, and Hicham recited the poem. Knocked me out. I wish I could tell Bill that a young man in Morocco has memorized one of his poems. I think he would have liked that.”

**Stafford Poem in 1859, Oregon’s Magazine:** The January / February issue of 1959 has an article, “72 Hours in Sisters,” by Kevin Max that opens with an excerpt from “An Oregon Message.” The poem ends with the words, “Burn this.” Max weaves that line and a sense of the poem into his article about the town where Stafford had a second home.

**Friends: Kenny Johnson, William Stafford, Bob Dusenberry.** The latest post on the Lewis & Clark *William Stafford Archives Blog* is titled *New Photographs of Stafford and Friends During the 1950s.* Jeremy Skinner, the special collections librarian, describes the gift from Steve Johnson, son of Stafford’s colleague and good friend Kenny Johnson, of family photos from the 1950s and 60s. There are three photos posted: one of Stafford, Dusenberry, and Johnson at Mt. Jefferson, and two of Lewis & Clark English faculty doing a Christmas reading on KATU TV.

**Zachary Schomburg** of Portland received the Stafford / Hall Award for Poetry for *Fjords Vol 1* (Black Ocean) at the 2013 Oregon Book Awards ceremony.

**Los Prietos.** There are more pictures and a short narration of the Los Prietos January event at *Cynthia’s Hi-Desert Blog.*

**Dedication of William Stafford Classroom.** The Ooligan Press website features Paulann Petersen’s remembrance of the day in the spring of 1993 that Bill Stafford came to West Linn High School for the dedication of a classroom in his honor. It’s a lovely remembrance and is accompanied by a wonderful photo of Bill and Paulann talking at an event in the PSU park blocks. URL: [ooligan.pdx.edu/paulann-petersen-guest-poet-post/](http://ooligan.pdx.edu/paulann-petersen-guest-poet-post/) or google: Ooligan Press Paulann Petersen.

“**A poem is an emergency of the spirit.**” Gretel Ehrlich, poet and essayist, quoted these words of Bill’s in a PBS interview on Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>. She was discussing her new book about the tsunami in Japan, *Facing the Wave: A Journey in the Wake of the Tsunami.* The URL is too long. Google: Gretel Ehrlich Tsunami.

**John Daniel’s January talk at Tsunami Books:** This talk can be found online and is well worth watching. Daniel connects Stafford with Robinson Jeffers and closes by reading from a piece he wrote for a 1993 issue of *Western American Literature* (28.3). It closes with lines from a Stafford poem printed in this issue, “With Neighbors One Afternoon.” I encourage people to plug into this clip and listen to John’s talk. You won’t regret it. URL: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iod8DITL-2M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iod8DITL-2M). Google: John Daniel Tsunami Bookstore.

**Summer Fishtrap: A Gathering for Writers,** July 8<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>. Some of the writers offering workshops at this year’s gathering are Holly Hughes, William Kittredge, Annick Smith, Judy Blunt, Minton Sparks, and Ben Percy. The keynote address will be given by Cheryl Strayed of *Wild* fame. For more information: [www.fishtrap.org](http://www.fishtrap.org).

**Lake Oswego Library: An Evening Honoring William Stafford.** This is a poetry reading organized by FWS board member Pat Carver and is part of the Lake Oswego Festival of the Arts. Date: June 18<sup>th</sup>; Time: 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. Readers: Carolyne Wright and Penelope Scambly Schott; emcee: Tim Barnes.

**Poetry Potluck.** The seventh annual Friends of William Stafford Poetry and Potluck will take place on September 22<sup>nd</sup> at Foothills Park, location of the Stafford Stones, in Lake Oswego between noon and five. All those who have been moved and furthered by William Stafford’s life and work will find congenial company among others who feel the same.

### PERMISSIONS

“Bess,” “With Neighbors One Afternoon,” and “A Memorial: Son Brett” are reprinted from *The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems* and used with permission of Graywolf Press.

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The essays by Brian Hanna and Willa Schneberg and essay excerpts by Tim Gillespie and Philip Metres are used by permission of the authors. Gillespie’s essay was first published in *Oregon English Journal* 16.1 (Spring 1994).

The drawing of William Stafford on the first page is from the cover of *You and Some Other Characters*, Honey Brook Press, 1987; the Vignette of William Stafford on 20 is from the title page. Both are used by permission of the artist, Barbara Stafford.

Permission was given by Helen Hiebert, Roni Gross, and Susan Lowdermilk to use images of their books and broadsides from the 23 Sandy Gallery.



# 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 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
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### DONATE:

*Support FWS with an additional donation!*

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How did you hear of FWS?

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

## Welcome New Friends December 2012-June 2013

- Donald L. Blanchard
- Lisa Schmidt
- David R. James
- Gary L. Lark & Dorothy Swain
- Tim & Janet Gillespie
- Lorna Cahall
- Ann-Marie Lighthart
- Doug Stone
- Rae Ann & David Leach
- Gail Denham
- Loeta McElwee
- Kathleen F. Hanson
- Fred & Jean Thompson
- Carol A. Finster
- Sharon E. Streeter
- Elisabeth Miles
- William & Susan Sack
- Martha Lussenhop
- Jordan Niles
- Janet McReynolds
- Cynthia L. Anderson
- David. A. Hecker
- Charlotte Rubin
- Janet S. Wong
- Roger W. Gilman

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Special thanks to Ilka Kuznik

Please email comments, letters, news, and information on poetry events, awards, etc. to [news@WilliamStafford.org](mailto: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](http://www.williamstafford.org) | [friends@williamstafford.org](mailto:friends@williamstafford.org)

January Tales:  
Brian Hanna, Willa Schneberg



Sightings: Bibliography, Memoir, Apologia



Sherman Ranch Poems



Stafford and the Book Arts:  
23 Sandy Gallery

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Please notify sender of change of address

**William Stafford at Los Prietos**

The foundations before you are all that remain of the Los Prietos Civilian Public Service Camp (1942-44), where several hundred conscientious objectors served their country peacefully during World War II. Pictured below are some of the men receiving their morning work assignments.

The camp was first built for the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933. Toward the end of the war it was converted to the Los Prietos Boys Camp, which is now located just up the hill to your right.

Los Prietos was one of about 150 Civilian Public Service camps scattered about the nation, many of them in our national forests. The Selective Service Act of 1940 had provided not only for a military draft but also for alternative service involving "work of national importance." Thus about 12,000 men served in these camps during the war—building trails, planting trees, and fighting fires.



One of the men stationed here was the poet William Stafford (1914-93), pictured to the right next to one of the barracks. Stafford and others rose before dawn each morning to read and to write, a habit he kept for the rest of his life. He won the National Book Award in 1963 and was appointed Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress in 1970 and Poet Laureate of Oregon in 1975. But it was at this camp that he gained his confidence as a poet—and also where he met his wife, Dorothy Hope Frantz.

"Los Prietos" is one of the many early poems that Stafford wrote on this site.

**Los Prietos**

Dear friends, the swarthy earth shoulders into the stars here.  
The slopes are possessed of many trees.  
The gracious sun visits daily the open parks,  
and a chaparrone mountain serves all the canyon west.  
Deer timid through shadows. Birds fly across from cliffs.  
Misty silence rises and moves up the slopes  
past enchanted white spikes of yucca.  
This is the land we are exiled to from a world fighting.  
We look at each other and sing all the songs we have heard.

— June 20, 1942



This sign has been created by Willamette College and The Friends of William Stafford, with the permission of the United States Forest Service. Photos courtesy of the William Stafford Archive, Lewis & Clark College, Portland, Oregon, and the Estate of William Stafford. Please request with the permission of Greg and Paul Pease.

*This is the plaque that was recently installed at the site of the Los Prietos Civilian Public Service Camp where William Stafford served several years during World War II.*