



# friends of WILLIAM STAFFORD

A Newsletter For Poets & Poetry  
Volume 19, Issue 1 - Spring/Summer 2014

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## Letters to Bill

By Jess Alberg

I was a student in Lewis & Clark's William Stafford Archives class, and so I got a chance to work in the archives. During that time I had the chance to look through a lot of his letters and they're mind blowing. As a student of this day and age you don't get to see letters like this anymore; you don't get to experience them this way. And one of the most interesting things about his letters was the way people wrote to him, people who didn't know him and this letter is a great example of that. I don't know if you are familiar with Charles Bukowski. If you are, you know his poetry, you know the difference between him and Stafford and if you know the difference between them, it would shock you to know that they had a joint reading once in San Francisco. If you don't know Bukowski, he was one of those poets that was in your face. He swore and used very provocative language and very, very strong words.

William Stafford is a poet of understatement, to say the least. The woman who gathered them together for the reading talked about how she wanted to create a different environment, to introduce different people to different poets. People who normally go to see Charles Bukowski would not go to see William Stafford. She later said that the reading was a mistake.

I'm not sure William Stafford and Bukowski would agree. Though you could see why she would say that, why all the critics who went did. Stafford got up to the stage and the Bukowski fans hissed at him. Bukowski had all these groupie girls who heckled Stafford from the audience while he was talking. And when Bukowski spoke, before Stafford, he insulted Stafford. He said things like "has he fainted yet," or "should I do as Stafford does and say I have two more poems?" You wonder why he would insult the man reading next. Later, when Bukowski was reading a poem, as was usual for him, he stopped in the middle of his poem to say, "I hate precious poets and I hate precious audiences. They destroy each other."

Now, of course, Bukowski would consider Stafford a precious poet. He would consider him a man who was more soft-spoken, who didn't say exactly what

he needed to say. But Stafford got up after Bukowski, got up for his reading and said, "Knowing the nature of tonight's reading, I have brought only my tamest poems." And again that speaks to Stafford. He's not going to be violent; he's not going to insult Bukowski back. But he certainly is going to take a stand.

The first poem he read was "Passing Remark," and if you know that poem, you'll know why he read it. Now, I think that poem really spoke to the reading itself. Bukowski, a vivid man, did not understand why Stafford would like flat country. Why he would like common, normal, everyday folk. But Stafford wanted to show that to him. He wanted to say something to him. And so after the reading Stafford wrote to Bukowski (see below). Stafford said to him, "there was such a swirl that I missed you." Bukowski left before Stafford and he could even officially meet. They read their poetry separately, and then Bukowski's groupies swarmed the audience and he left with them.

But Stafford got one picture of Bukowski, and he sent it to Bukowski and he said that there was a poem of Bukowski's he liked and he "got it put into an anthology." So Stafford was actually a fan of Bukowski; he did have some work Stafford admired

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c/o Black Sparrow Press  
Box 25603  
Los Angeles, Calif. 90025

10 Dec 73

Dear Charles Bukowski,

After the reading at the S.F. Museum there was such a swirl that I missed you--when I looked around you were gone. I didn't think I'd miss a chance to meet a partner in a joint reading!

I tried to get a picture of you, but my attempt wasn't good. I blame the lighting. Still, I do have a souvenir print.

The poem of yours I first encountered, and with immediate liking, was "The Day I Kicked the Bankroll Out the Window"--I got it put into an anthology.

Good luck.

So long--





## Selections from Centennial Publicity

I had a special connection to Stafford. In the late 1960s, I went to the University of Oregon to work on my master's. It was there that I first read his poetry. Then, three different times, he came to seminars I attended.

The first time he came to see me, the director had told him there was someone from Hutch in the group. When he got up front, he said, "Where's my Hutch person?" When I held my hand up, he told me to come up. There we sat in front of everyone while we chatted. Then he said, "Stay up here. If I tell any lies about Hutch, you can tell the folks."

Once he read "Prairie Town," which begins, "There was a river under First and Main, salt mines honeycombed farther down ..." He turned to me and said, "Shh! Don't tell them it's Cow Creek. That didn't work."

from "The Way it was for William Stafford," Sheila Lisman, *The Hutchinson News*, April 3, 2014

"It's surreal to be here. I was raised on stories of Kansas," Kim Stafford said, speaking to the students in Bill Sheldon's creative writing class and "Introduction to Shakespeare" class at Hutchinson Community College. "When he talked about Cow Creek, his voice had a reverence ... Hutchinson was his religion."

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"Kansas, Hutchinson, he carried it with him through life like a gypsy wagon," Kim Stafford said.

from "Honoring the Poet," Kathy Hanks, *The Hutchinson News*, April 2, 2014



PHOTO BY LIKA KUZNIK

Dave Miller and Kim Stafford at the recording of the Think Out Loud segment devoted to the Stafford Centennial.

From "Behind The Scenes: William Stafford Project," [W]orking on this project, I learned Stafford wrote tens of thousands of poems on lots of different themes, the idea that the most important thing in the world is understanding and connection among and between people remains, to me, the thing I think about when I think of Stafford.

Allison Frost, senior producer, *Think Out Loud*.

Stafford was a transplant. He lived a very rich and determined life elsewhere before he made the decision to stay and grow it here. His understated passion, a humor so subtle it's almost mischievous, his love and respect for nature, his clarity — it all travels well, but his words are at home in Oregon. So for us transplants, seeing Oregon through the prism of William Stafford is as initiating as it must be for the grade schoolers who grew up here. It's a conversion of sorts, because after reading Stafford, Oregon and I will never be the same.

Robe Imbriano, producer, *Oregon Art Beat*.

I fell in love with his personal story — young pacifist from Kansas; married his wife, Dorothy, after just three meetings; father to four; professor to thousands; National Book Award winner; and probably best known for his practice of writing a poem every morning.

Then I discovered "The Way It Is." It starts with the phrase "There's a thread you follow" and the rest of the poem provides gentle reminders about the importance of following your thread. Does he mean career? Life? Being a poet? Knowing Stafford, probably all of the above. The poem eloquently expresses how I feel about life and its unfolding. I've read and reread that poem more times than I can count, and every time it slows me down and reminds me to take a breath. I like to think that was Stafford's intent.

Katrina Sarson, producer, *Oregon Art Beat*.

In one case, Stafford seemed to be standing up for a fellow poet, Martha Gatchell, even in the afterlife.

"I did not, alas, know him very well," said Gatchell, who lives in Drain and is part of a group called Friends of William Stafford, dedicated to furthering appreciation of poetry in the manner of the man.

"I did not discover him until 1983, when I took a workshop from him in Newport. I was enthralled—his poetry spoke to me the way few other poets' did."

Once, she had the opportunity to introduce Stafford to the audience at a meeting of the Lane Literary Guild at the Hult Center. "I said, 'People tell me I'm so fortunate to know Bill Stafford,' and I tell them, 'I don't know him well at all, but his poems have been friends of mine for years,'" Gatchell says, "Afterward, he thanked me for saying that—he was very moved by that."

Later, after Stafford's death, Gatchell submitted a poem to Fireweed Press, which was putting together a collection of poems as a memorial to Stafford, each written as an address to him. "I submitted a poem, and it was accepted," Gatchell says. "I was thrilled because it was one of the first poems I had sent out that was accepted."

It was the way she found out that seemed to have Stafford's handprint on it.

I was watching Oregon Public Broadcasting, which was showing a film about William Stafford called 'A Literary Friendship,' about his relationship with Robert Bly, a couple of months after he died, Gatchell says. "I was staring at the TV, and the phone rang. I thought, 'Oh, drat, I don't want to miss this,' but I got up and answered it." The person calling was an editor from Fireweed Press, "and he told me my poem had been accepted, but they wanted me to drop the last two lines from it," she recalls. "I thought, 'Oh, no, I don't want to do that,' but I didn't want to jeopardize having it included, so I was just about to agree."

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Just then, her eyes still fixed on the television screen, Gatchell watched as Stafford gave a little speech that seemed aimed right at her. “He said, ‘You have to take responsibility for your own work, to say what you want to say,’” Gatchell says. So I swallowed hard and told the editor, ‘No, I can’t do that.’ And he said, ‘OK,’ and my poem was published the way I wrote it.

“It was uncanny to hear Bill Stafford say that, right at that moment,” she says. “It was like a message directly from him to me when I needed it.”

from “A Poet’s Thread: The late William Stafford’s contributions still touching lives,” Randi Bjornstad, *The Eugene Register-Guard*, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014

William Stafford “flowered here in part because of the way Oregon is much less about class and money than other places,” said Doyle, author of *Mink River*. “It’s about hope and creativity and endurance and hard work and facing toward what can be rather than what was.”

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“I love the fact that he thought everyone was a poet, if only we pay attention to the miracle of what is and report on it without fuss and bluster, and I especially admire what I think was his deeper genius — his deft asking of questions about war and peace,” Doyle said of Stafford, who was a life-long pacifist and a conscientious objector during World War II. “[I have] total respect for the famous poet, but I think his greater art was making people think how, as he said, that ‘violence is a failure of the imagination.’”

“His greatest gift may have been his belief that writing is one of the great free human activities, available to all of us, and a way to deepen our understanding and enrich our connections with one another,” said Kim Stafford. “I think my father’s writing teaches us to savor the hidden, enriching dimensions of daily life.

from “Stafford Celebrated at North Plains Library,” Debby de Carlo, *Hillsboro Tribune*, January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014

His life had integrity, a rare wholeness. No work-play dichotomy, no compartments. He taught as he lived, and wrote as he taught. The same man who wrote “Ode to Garlic” and “Choosing a Dog” wrote “At the Bomb Testing Site” and “Thinking for Berky.” I never saw Bill Stafford trying to be someone else.

He was kind, inclusive and uncommonly generous. But he had a steely intelligence, and many of his poems ponder imponderably hard facts and choices. Let me know if you find a Stafford poem where he cheats the reader by taking the easy way out.

“William Stafford: a workshop with Stafford helped turn a journalist into a poet,” Don Colburn, *The Oregonian*, Jan. 29, 2014.

And being raised as a Quaker, he had a way of writing about spirituality as “light” and despair as “darkness.”

Poet William “Bill” Stafford: A quiet centennial for a quiet giant” Jerry Earl Johnston, *Deseret News*, Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014\*

As a conscientious objector, working for the Church of Brethren during World War II, Stafford stood at the forefront of people

yearning for reconciliation and peace in the midst of a world ravenous for conflict and war.

“Thoughts on the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Poet, William Stafford,” *Crossmap*, 2014\*

**\*Editor’s Note:** Bill was not raised a Quaker nor was he a Brethren, as these pieces written by people connected to specific religions suggest. Bill’s spirituality can be harnessed to misleading horses, however loosely and well intentioned those reins are. The camps he served in, most of them, I believe, were administered by the Brethren, one of the three peace churches who oversaw the conscientious objectors who did alternative service in World War II, but Stafford was not a Brethren. See issue 15.2, p. 6 of this newsletter, “Not in the way you expect,” for Paulann Petersen’s instructive story on this issue. “Not a WASP, or a WASC, I could settle for being called a mixed Un-itarian.” *You Must Revise Your Life*, p. 67.



PHOTO BY IKA KUZNIK

Singer Avery Hill at “Making War No More: Celebrating the Spirit of William Stafford” on Jan. 18th, at Portland Community College’s Sylvania campus, sponsored by the Oregon Fellowship of Reconciliation.

#### THE NEXT TIME

The next time as I troop  
into the Bi-Mart, saluting  
with my membership card,

I'll try to remind myself  
to remember that companion  
card I kept in my wallet--

my draft card, issued by my  
draft board for the duration...  
Then, stationed among wares,

I'll contemplate what price  
Bill Stafford may have paid  
for conscientious stature,

before I seek what I'm after.

Lawson Fusao Inada  
15 Jan 14

# Some Thoughts on William Stafford's Teaching Methods

By Ken McCullough

When my son was a second year student at Beloit College, in Wisconsin, William Stafford came for a one-month residency in fall semester 1990. The class was for advanced poetry students. The class filled immediately, as one would expect. My son was taking an intro to poetry writing class that semester so he was hardly an advanced poetry student at that point. He had, however, written quite a bit in high school, had observed my process as a poet, and had been to many readings in Iowa City. I took a chance and called Mr. Stafford, introduced myself as a poet and asked if he would consider adding my son to the class. He said, yes, he would do this, on one condition—that I attend one session of the class and bring along a poem of my own to workshop.

The class had been going for several weeks before Mr. Stafford joined it. My son told me that there were two people in the class, both male, who were quite snide in their assessments of the work of others, and they had made it such that some of the members of the class had withdrawn from active participation, wishing to avoid the harpoons of the twosome. And others in the class had stepped up their own level of sarcasm in order to survive.

I had heard William Stafford read on two occasions, both in Iowa City, so I knew what he looked like and how he carried himself. I must admit that when I read his poems during the late 60's they didn't engage me—not edgy enough. But the older I got and the more responsibilities came my way, the more I've come to appreciate his style and where the poems came from. On the day of my visit, I arrived a little early in order to introduce myself. He was friendly and asked me if I had remembered to bring my poem for discussion. I showed him the copies I'd made for distribution. I don't remember how the class started but almost immediately we started in on a poem by a young woman. She read the poem, with confidence. Just by sizing up the body language in the room, it was apparent who the snipers were. Mr. Stafford asked one of them for his response to a certain part of the poem. Then he went around the room in random order, asking more questions about the poem. When he looked at the student speaking it was with undivided attention, as if what that person was saying was of ultimate importance. It was also evident that he knew the likes and dislikes of specific members of the class and who the rivals were—he would ask questions that forced them to focus on specifics. His facial expressions were many, and if you watched carefully, you could read what was going through his mind. And when they'd ask him a question, he'd respond with another question—which did not come off as avoidance, but as a way of taking the discussion to a deeper or wider perspective. It was a form of aikido—he took the energy of the question and deflected it; hence, while he did not answer the question himself, he steered it deftly. Let's say a poem seemed to have arbitrary line breaks—he might ask a question about one particular line break without tipping his hand as to his own assessment of that line break, but would somehow open up the discussion and have the members of the class make the assessment. During this exchange he might break in with other questions of a seemingly non-judgmental nature. During

that three-hour workshop, I did not hear him pass judgment on a poem—now and then he would point out a skillful turn of phrase or a particularly appropriate choice of verbs or a dazzling metaphor. But, again, he didn't pronounce judgment on a poem, and when another student did that, he might undercut their snippy criticism with another question that caused them to amend their remark.

I don't know this for a fact, but I have heard that he never gave a grade in a poetry course in his entire teaching career.

Only once during that workshop did I hear him raise his voice—it was when a student made a bone-headed remark about *Desert Storm*, which was just ramping up. Mr. Stafford's jaw tightened and he began a three-minute response to the student's ill-conceived remark. He did not direct his castigation toward the student, but sometimes looked above all of us to a spot on the wall, but more often looked around the room and made eye contact with each and every one of us. In effect, he made us aware of our culpability in and responsibility for the political decisions being made by our government. After his oration, he took a breath to clear the air and resumed his perky beatific smile—he was not waiting for our responses—this was not Q&A. We went back to the poems.

I mentioned that he had required of me that I bring along a poem for discussion. I brought a poem which I felt good about but also one which I regarded as being unfinished in several ways. I cannot remember which poem I brought, unfortunately, but I do remember that the students took it on with respect and the same level of incisive responses as they did with the work of their classmates. There was no deference, and I think they recognized that I was willing to listen to their comments. I was included, not an outsider. During the workshop, Mr. Stafford made sure that I was not just a passive observer—he threw questions my way, often at critical junctures in the discussion. Also sitting in on the class was a middle-aged representative of the Beloit alumni magazine, there to write a story about Mr. Stafford's visit to the school. I don't think he had chosen the assignment, and it was my observation that he felt outside his comfort zone in talking about poetry—he was a journalist, used to writing factual stories that were palatable to alumni in general. I eavesdropped when he introduced himself to Mr. Stafford before the workshop started, and Mr. Stafford made it clear to him that now and then a question would come his way. And that is the way it happened—he was included and it was apparent to me that by the end of the class that this man, let's call him Mr. Johnson, was enjoying himself and no longer felt like a stranger to the world of poetry.

So, to summarize my brief encounter with William Stafford's teaching methods, I would say that he never made pronouncements about the poems—whether they were “good” or “bad” or whether the ideas expressed were flawed. It was obvious that he could have done that at any point, but preferred to conduct the discussion by asking or deflecting questions to the class members. If he suggested, for example, an alternate word choice in a line, it usually worked out that you came up with the choice, not him. In the end, the writers knew the shortcomings of their work but they didn't get their guts ripped out as sometimes happens in MFA workshops. There was civility and a sense of community. You felt that he was with you, not above you; he spoke with quiet authority, but not as an authority. He left out the pejoratives. Sometimes I myself might

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(cont. from p. 5)

write something like “hogwash!” in the margin of a student’s paper or poem or story—I find it hard to imagine Bill Stafford doing this. To this day I conjure up Bill Stafford’s visage as an antidote whenever I find myself pontificating. I may have been reading this into Mr. Stafford’s methods, but they seemed to me to be logical extensions of his philosophy as a pacifist and as a conscientious objector. It was clear, likewise, that he was capable of throwing the Money Changers out of the temple.

Reading my remarks, some might gather that William Stafford was a master manipulator—“to manipulate” is almost always to be doing something negative. There was some measure of direction in William Stafford’s method, but it was not controlling and there was no scheme involved. To use an overworked phrase, he was an “active listener,” but his listening went to a much deeper level than, say, a psychiatrist’s. He invited you in to the place of quietude that was his being and if YOU listened, you came away changed in a profound way. I have taught on and off since 1970 in a wide variety of circumstances, from grade schools to universities to prisons, and make a “conscientious” effort to ask myself at least once during the course of a class or workshop or lecture, “What would Bill Stafford do?” That sounds corny, a spin on “What would Jesus do?” and I know that William Stafford didn’t think of himself as a saint, but his standards were high and his life and writing are worth considering and emulating. He was a Master in the truest sense.

## Bill Howe Boards Board

Bill Howe joined the board of the Friends of William Stafford in 2011 but it has taken this editor a long time to catch up with him because he is a very busy man. This new member profile should explain why and also give the Friends and readers of this newsletter a sense of why we are so glad he has boarded the Board.

Howe was born in Chicago and moved to Oregon in 1959 when he was eleven. His father was a banker and his grandfather was a friend and school classmate of the legendary Chicago mayor Richard Daley. I won’t go into details but he told this editor that the politics in Oregon are squeaky clean compared to what he observed about Chicago politics and its justice system in his youth.

Howe discovered William Stafford’s poetry when he was a sophomore at St. Mary’s High School in Medford, Oregon. He still has his first edition of *Traveling through the Dark*.

He graduated from the University of Washington with a B.A. in political science and philosophy. He remembers that one of his English professors loved two poets, Keats and Stafford. After college, he and his first wife spent six months in Europe surviving on \$5.00 each, as was then popular with budget travelers. He returned to Oregon and received a law degree from

Willamette University. At law school, he read Stafford’s poetry to relax and for inspiration, sometimes even quoting Stafford in legal briefs. After graduation in 1975, he moved to Lake Oswego and opened a private law practice in the Georgia-Pacific (now Standard Insurance) building in downtown Portland.

One day, while shopping for groceries at the Lake Oswego Safeway, he found himself in line with Stafford and introduced himself. Howe frequented the Looking Glass Bookstore, which was located near his office and owned by a former student of Stafford’s. Stafford frequently read at Looking Glass and he and Howe would often talk after readings.

For the last eighteen years, Howe has practiced family law as a shareholder in Gevurtz, Menashe, Larson, and Howe. He has received many awards for his work, including being named Best Lawyer of the Year for 2009 in Family Law by the publication *Best Lawyers*. In 2003, he received the Oregon State Bar Pro Bono Challenge Award for the highest number of pro bono public service hours.

In 2012, Howe and his wife Joy Bottinelli co-produced the musical play *Recognition*. Written by Chris Tabor, the play features characters struggling with and triumphing over physical disabilities. The play’s moral was that we all have disabilities, some visible and some not. Like so much of Stafford’s poetry, it highlighted the shared human condition. *Recognition* won the prestigious Portland Area Musical Theatre Award for the Best Ensemble the same year.

After Stafford’s death in 1993, Howe and Dorothy Stafford became close friends. Dorothy enjoyed coming to Howe’s home particularly for the fourth of July parties because one can see the many fireworks displays from his hilltop home. As part of the wedding ceremony for Bill and Joy, Dorothy read Stafford’s poem “Proposal,” a poem Stafford wrote from his own wedding and not previously published.

Howe and Dorothy read “Passing Remark” together at a January celebration in 2003. Their performance was a hit and they repeated it many times over the next ten years. Howe calls Dorothy “a life force” and has enormous respect for every member of the Stafford family. He also has deep reverence for the role of the arts and poetry in our lives. He feels that Bill’s poetry has the power to bestow wisdom and serenity. Howe’s interest in philosophy has made him alert to the philosophical side of Stafford, which he finds engaging and profound.

### Proposal

I will call you by the softest name.  
Dim snow will fall along the farthest hill.  
Winter will end; nothing will be the same.  
At first we will not know; and then we will.  
Down all the long increasing breath of day,  
into our eyes and gently on the land  
the snow will say its whiteness,  
and I’ll say your softest name,  
your hand within my hand.

WILLIAM STAFFORD



PHOTO BY ILKA KUZNIK

## The Honest Pint Stafford Excerpts

Here is what Tavern Books says about *The Honest Pint* subscription Series, edited by Matthew Dickman: “Each month, subscribers receive a brief prose piece written by a contemporary author that celebrates the work of a poet. Each piece is uniquely designed and printed, and often contains exciting ephemera. Nothing digital about it. *The Honest Pint* arrives only by mail. This analog-era throwback is all about paper, ink, and a writer’s brain, as well as the interplay between good design, text, and image.”

And, as a subscriber I can say it’s true. Past issues include “The Stone Tower of Robinson Jeffers,” Diane Wakoski; “On Encountering Huidobro,” Joshua Edwards, and “The Belly Song of Etheridge Knight,” Tomás Q. Morin. Two issues feature pieces on Stafford, numbers twelve and fourteen, from which the following excerpts are taken.

### from “*William Stafford’s Boot Camp for the Seriously Bewildered*,” James Moore

If Stafford had been leading a workshop, as we understood workshops to be, some of what we all hoped for would have happened. But absolutely none of it did. I remember at one point someone said to him, near the end of our afternoon together—the student had read a poem aloud to the entire group—“Can you tell me, Mr. Stafford, what you see when you look at this poem?” Stafford answered, after holding the poem up and looking at it for some time, “I see you have a new typewriter ribbon.” He didn’t smile; he didn’t say it in an ironic or sarcastic manner, but quietly and somewhat hesitantly, as he had said so many other things that afternoon, as if he just might be wrong about this.

He simply wouldn’t pass judgment, wouldn’t offer us advice about how to improve as poets, wouldn’t tinker with our poems to make them better or at least more presentable in some immediate if superficial way.

He was, in short, a force of nature. Yes, a very quiet force of nature (just as his poems are often such quiet forces of nature), but still: his presence blew through us like a sudden storm coming in through an open window scattering papers everywhere, rearranging our desks—our very lives—in the process.

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When I read a William Stafford poem, I often have many of the feelings I had that afternoon all those years ago: annoyance, bewilderment, exhilaration, sheer delight at the strangeness and unpredictability and, finally (let’s not be afraid to call it what it is) the wisdom of his imagination: “imagination” being understood as the mind’s wildness given enough room to find its way to wherever its strange—bewildering, mysterious—needs must take us next.

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If there is one thing William Stafford is not in his poems it is simple. Yes, his poems often present in a relaxed, slightly hesitant way, but that only makes them all the more surprising, unexpected, and impossible to summarize. Diffidence, then, is a tool, a way for Stafford to let himself begin to let go of the known and enter the unknown.

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In the end, here’s what Stafford taught me in his own indirect, gentle, but powerful way: I had to find my own way. Which is to say I had to lose that way and trust that eventually I would be lead somewhere at once ambiguous and yet clarifying. Such ambiguity gives one new ways to see the world, to be in the world, to praise and mourn the world.

No other poet has had the impact on my life and work that William Stafford has had. In life, we barely knew each other. And yet, to this day, his life and work remind me of both the pleasure and uneasiness which is at the heart of reading and writing poetry. The gratitude I owe him is enormous, of course.

### from “*Out in the Cold: William Stafford 1947*,” Paul Merchant & Vince Wixon

Some poems perfectly embody a key moment in the writer’s life. “Night Words” is just such a poem. It stands near the heart of the collection *Winterward*, William Stafford’s doctoral dissertation at the University of Iowa, submitted in February 1954, and now, almost sixty years later, presented to the public by Tavern Books.

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“Night Words” is placed fifteenth in *Winterward*’s thirty-five poems, near the start of a run of thirteen poems in the dissertation that were never reprinted in a subsequent poetry collection during Stafford’s lifetime. These thirteen poems, the middle third of the volume, are its somber, realist core, more restrained and bleak than the poems of the first and last thirds, most of them published in prominent journals and later collected in the volumes *West of Your City*, *Traveling through the Dark*, and *The Rescued Year*.

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What will explain this prodigal rejection of prestigious poems in favor of less negotiable pieces at the heart of *Winterward*? It seems that in this first public collection we see into William Stafford’s most private postwar emotions. He would later create volumes with a more universal appeal, one of them soon to win the National Book Award. But in 1954 the sense of isolation was too recent, the pain of rejection too raw, and he let these feelings be seen. In a 1987 interview he said, “You don’t unlearn in a hurry those readinesses to take a stand, even a stand that may not be trumpeted but is very seriously held on all kinds of issues, any kind of issue. A kind of side-slipping of the social pressure that would hit other people but doesn’t hit you. Even from your friends, even from your family. And a kind of coldness, I think, is in my writing, and maybe in myself, as a result of being out in the cold for four crucial years.” *Winterward*, with its rueful title, is William Stafford’s most vulnerable book, and “Night Words” may be the key statement of that tragic sensibility deepening all his later work.

**Editor’s Note:** “Night Words” can also be found in *Another World Instead: The Early Poems of William Stafford 1937-1947*, Fred Marchant, ed.

### From “*Skywritten*,” Paulann Petersen

One boy said, “Mr. Stafford, how do you deal with writer’s block?”

Bill looked at him, calmly, steadily, and said, “I don’t know.”

The boy—plainly pleased with the question he’d posed, pleased with its writerly nature (his question made it clear he had, for goodness sakes, known enough to know that real writers got something they

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(cont. from p. 7)

called writer's block)—that boy was startled, surprised. I could see him hesitating, thinking, could this William Stafford guy be a bit dense?

The boy insisted, "You know. Writer's block. When you just stare at the blank page. You can't write."

"Well," Bill said, "I don't know, because I've never had writer's block."

"How can that be?" the boy blurted. "How can you never have writer's block?"

"Think of it this way," Bill said, raising one arm a bit above his head, stretching his hand out flat, tilting his fingers upward. "If you're piloting a light airplane, and you tilt the nose up, the plane stalls."

We all stared at his hand turned upward, stalled in the air.

"You're aiming too high. I just"—and here he tipped his fingers down, making a wide, low swoop—"I simply lower my standards and keep going."

**Editor's Note:** This is part of an essay about a letter Petersen wrote to Bill about his visit to her class in Klamath Falls in 1982 and never sent.

*from "Three Photographs of William Stafford," Kim Stafford*

I will write about small things, local things. I will listen to quiet people. I will remember childhood. I will look squarely at my nation's acts, what its leaders say, and especially what they do not say. What they do not say, I will say. I, and others. My teaching will be asking. My writing will be plainspoken, but dive deep. My citizenship will reach farther than the boundary my half-talking leaders are able to see. My words are for you.

**Editor's Note:** This is the coda close to a meditation on photographs taken of his father in 1937, 1964, and 1990.

## Peter Sears, New Poet Laureate of Oregon



PHOTO BY TIM BARNES

Peter being unofficially crowned with real laurel leaves at a recent meeting of the Oregon Literary Coalition. Sears was a founding member of the FWS and instrumental in furthering the legacy of William Stafford.

## Maxine Kumin, 1925-2014

### Woodchucks

Gassing the woodchucks didn't turn out right.  
The knockout bomb from the Feed and Grain Exchange  
was featured as merciful, quick at the bone  
and the case we had against them was airtight,  
both exits shoehorned shut with puddingstone,  
but they had a sub-sub-basement out of range.

Next morning they turned up again, no worse  
for the cyanide than we for our cigarettes  
and state-store Scotch, all of us up to scratch.  
They brought down the marigolds as a matter of course  
and then took over the vegetable patch  
nipping the broccoli shoots, beheading the carrots.

The food from our mouths, I said, righteously thrilling  
to the feel of the .22, the bullets' neat noses.  
I, a lapsed pacifist fallen from grace  
puffed with Darwinian pieties for killing,  
now drew a bead on the little woodchuck's face.  
He died down in the everbearing roses.

Ten minutes later I dropped the mother. She  
flipfopped in the air and fell, her needle teeth  
still hooked in a leaf of early Swiss chard.  
Another baby next. O one-two-three  
the murderer inside me rose up hard,  
the hawkkey killer came on stage forthwith.

There's one chuck left. Old wily fellow, he keeps  
me cocked and ready day after day after day.  
All night I hunt his humped-up form. I dream  
I sight along the barrel in my sleep.  
If only they'd all consented to die unseen  
gassed underground the quiet Nazi way.

Maxine Kumin, one of the national advisors for the Friends of William Stafford died on February sixth of this year at the age of 88. Kumin published nineteen books of poetry, six novels, twenty-three book for children (four with her good friend Anne Sexton), and five books of essays. She received a Pulitzer Prize, a Ruth Lilly Prize, and was the Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress from 1981-82, ten years after Stafford, and the poet laureate of New Hampshire, where she lived on a farm with her husband of sixty-seven years. Her poem "Woodchucks" was often compared to "Traveling through the Dark." This photo was taken by Bill and is in the Lewis and Clark Stafford 100 Exhibition.





## The Buffet Supper Is Over

The buffet supper is over,  
cut off by the sharp edges  
of doors—car doors, front doors,  
doors I slammed—  
and I have escaped  
leaving my napkin  
for hostage, my hand  
wrung dry as a starfish  
souvenir. But the men  
and women taut as  
drumheads remain there,  
talking, each with his own  
variation on the nervous  
laugh, sitting forever  
like dressmakers' dummies,  
talking—afraid someone will let  
the lethal does of silence  
fall like acid into the evening.



PHOTO BY WILLIAM STAFFORD

VERN RUTSALA, 1934-2014

Vern Rutsala was born in McCall, Idaho, graduated from Reed College, and attended the Iowa Writers' Workshop. He came to Lewis & Clark in the mid-fifties and was a colleague of Stafford's for twenty years. Like Bill, Rutsala had a gift for engaging the ordinary, making it magical and mysterious. Unlike Bill, his subject was often the domestic, the house, the urban, which he plumbed with metaphoric gusto and rich irony. He published a number of books of poems and was a National Book Award finalist for his 2004 collection, *The Moment's Equation*. He passed away in Portland two weeks after receiving the C.E.S. Wood Distinguished Writer Award at the Oregon Book Awards.

## William Stafford poems go forth to find readers in the world....

A list by Kim Stafford

The designer for Pioneer Place Mall in downtown Portland called to say she wanted to set a William Stafford poem in brass letters into the terrazzo floor: "Climbing along the River."

A developer in Lake Oswego asked permission to have a William Stafford poem sandblasted into stone at the corner of his building, just outside the bank: "The Way It Is."

Someone sent an email from India after visiting a remote village. In the little school, all the children barefoot and eager, she saw on the blackboard the William Stafford poem "A Story That Could Be True."

After my father died, I had a note from the journalist Charles Kuralt. He had been in a canoe far into the boundary waters of northern Minnesota when his guide set down his paddle, having come to the Canadian border, and took from his wallet the William Stafford

poem to read "At the Un-National Monument Along the Canadian Border." "I always do this," said the guide, "when I come to the border."

I was giving a lecture about my father's work in Kansas, when a young man told me his grandmother had received a gushy letter from my father back in the 1960s. She was the "girl in the front row who had no mother" in the William Stafford poem "At Liberty School." "We read the poem at her funeral," the young man said.

A teacher in New Orleans, the day Katrina hit, had written the poem "For My Young Friends Who Are Afraid" on the blackboard for discussion. Then the storm came, and the school was evacuated. Chaos. Terror. Death. Two weeks later, watching the news from Houston, she saw a clip of the National Guard billeted in her classroom. Everything had been taken from the room to make way for the soldiers, she said, but there was the poem still on the board, undisturbed.

The editor of the *Oregon Business Journal* tells me he reads William Stafford's "An Oregon Message" every morning before turning on his email—just to get grounded.

A reporter for NASCAR tells me he reads William Stafford early on the day of a big race—to settle his nerves.

I am told that at Annapolis they have used "Traveling through the Dark" to teach the essential skill of making tough decisions under impossible conditions.

Years ago, in Scotland, from Glasgow we took the train to Oban, then a ferry across to the island of Mull, then a bus across Mull to Fionnphort, then a second ferry to Iona, the island with no cars where we tramped two miles north to the hostel, where I took off my boots, climbed into my bunk, and looked up to find taped to the bottom of the bunk above me the William Stafford poem "Bonuses."

Any island, or a break in the weather,  
or resting awhile under  
bridges or by a rock in the sun—  
these offer themselves.

You know these intervals allowed,  
moment by moment, lost  
in the large parade of the days.

Even a hesitation while a door  
opens can balloon  
and then there's an arch with  
all you need, sheltered there.  
All through your life.

Island by island.

William Stafford used the word *island* 121 times in the first line of a poem/daily writing. I have had to search the list of daily writings countless times for individual nouns, and never have I come up with such a high number for a single word that is consistently used over 40 years. Something to ponder.

--a note from Zach Selley at the William Stafford Archives

1010 Madeline Rd.  
El Paso Texas 79902

Dear Mr. Stafford,

(Personal letter)

I saw you in person once in San Francisco I was sad because you read poems with Charles Bukowski who was very insulting. I'm not too educated but I like poetry about nature I read everything I could find about you but our library don't have much. Do you know where I can send in for some whole books of your poems? I found a book I bought because of you in a used book store it's an introduction to Poetry I never wrote to anybody famous before neither but I wanted to write to you I'll tell you why because of the poem *Traveling Through the Dark* My whole family is farmers I grew up on a farm in Ohio and it happened just like your poem

We were riding by Lake Mead one day and there right in the middle of the road somebody hit a young doe and we could tell because blood was coming from its mouth and because of the way it was bent you could see its spine was broke right in 2 and it still was able to keep flopping and it was in so much pain and I ran back to my dad's truck and then I got my jack knife out of the glove box and I ran back and those eyes looked right at me just like a human and I was really crying and then I took my knife and I cut his throat and killed it and the blood squirted all over it was bad because my knife wasn't sharp and I had to keep cutting until it hit right there in the jugular vein and the deer kept flopping and looking at me so we just put him by the side of the road after he was dead and you know I started crying but almost as bad when we got to Ashland to the truck stop they started telling everybody that I was crying and they tried to make me look like a queer because I was crying so that night I sneaked back

I had my shovel I was going to bury him but I couldn't find that spot in the woods. It says on page 241 Who are those traveling through the dark. That's why I wrote to you this is my favorite poem I'm going to get somebody to type it and I'm going to save it. but the book says makes it to mean there's some secret meaning here. Don't traveling Through the Dark just mean you were driving your car at night? Or what? Did this incident really happen? What were you thinking when you said I thought hard for all of us - my only surviving? Did this incident happen in Washington? Thank you very much I hope you can write to me I would really like to know some more about this poem  
Thank you.

Your friend  
John Budan

get somebody to type it and I'm going to save it. but the book says makes it to mean there's some secret meaning here. Don't traveling Through the Dark just mean you were driving your car at night?

And he goes on to ask a few more questions, very simple questions which may look dull to some more advanced readers of poetry. But Stafford has a poem called "The Trouble with Reading." In it he talks about how a lot of times we take ignorance to mean stupidity. But, rather, when we don't know something we look out into the dark—that is our last chance to understand poetry. When we think we can see all clearly, we don't really look at a poem. John Budan writes to Stafford and says I have a couple questions, these are my questions; he allows himself to be open to it, which I think is noteworthy. And the fact that he, someone who has "never wrote to anybody famous before neither," writes to Stafford and tells him the story of how he cried for the dying deer and how Bukowski says "I am frightened" to Stafford—I mean these are remarkable moments. I think they are quite, quite extraordinary.

There's one more letter that I'd like to share. It's from a milk farmer who milks his cows, as he says, from 1 am to 9 am everyday. He went to a reading of Stafford's and went up afterwards and said that he liked Stafford's reading, and Stafford gave him his address and said, "Write to me." And so he did. Here's a little portion of his letter:

I'm pretty new at being acquainted with poetry, but I'm starting to get to know it. I work milking cows from 1A.M.-9A.M., and I take my big fat Norton Anthology with me and read whenever I get a break. . . . I have written poetry ever since I was about thirteen, and haven't often had someone who knew what he was talking about to give me some feedback on my poetry. I hope it's alright with you if I send you three or four of my poems and ask for some candid comment on them. If you don't have time, I'll understand. . . . I recently decided to



step. 5 Sept  
80

Dear Mr. Stafford,  
you probably don't remember who I am, my name is Craig Witham, and I met you and talked to you briefly after your reading at Orem Public Library in Orem, Utah. You gave me a copy of the poem, "In A Corn." and your address.

Before the reading, I had only read the few poems of yours in Modern Poetry of Western America. Since then I have borrowed the book Starks That Could Be True. (I will definitely buy it when I get some money some day.) I love your poetry. I'm amazed at the images you can create, and the superb subtlety of messages created with such unpretentious language.

I'm pretty new at being acquainted with poetry but I'm starting to get to know it. I work milking cows from 100 A.M. to 9:00 A.M. and I take my break at Norton Anthropology with me and read whenever I get a break. It doesn't give me much of a perspective of contemporary poets though, so I'll have to find another source soon that's.

I have written poetry ever since I was

go back to school and pursue an English Major. And I have a strong desire to develop my writing ability—especially in Poetry.

So we have the letter here, and we have the response note that Stafford would always leave but there are no poems. This tells us that, of course, Stafford went through and read his poems, wrote some comments and sent them back. And again this is a nice moment where another farmer opens up to Stafford. Again, it's not remarkable when you're a famous poet and famous people write to you and say to you, "Would love for you to be my mentor, would love for you to read my work." But when a milk farmer writes to you and says that he's been writing poetry for years and needs your help, I think that's quite significant.

Stafford was one of those people who allowed people to open up to him, not only through his poetry, but also just through his person, giving this farmer his address, or meeting Bukowski, furtively, the way he did. These are moments that really allow us to not only become his reader but allow us to experience moments together. You see that in his poetry; he gave that to us. He was a part of us. And so these connections of these letters and these connections of poetry are what I wanted to share from my experience in the archives.

**Editor's Note:** Jess Alberg gave this essay as a talk at the Lewis & Clark "Stafford at 100" Symposium. I asked her to type it up and send it to me for the newsletter. It originated in Pauls Toutonghi's Lewis & Clark class, English 100-02, A Poet's Life: William Stafford. The class uses the Stafford archives to introduce students to archival research. For a more detailed essay that focuses just on the Bukowski / Stafford encounter, go to the William Stafford Archives blog and read Alberg's "I like flat country' and 'I hate precious poets': How William Stafford and Charles Bukowski once met." The poet Kathleen Fraser organized the joint reading.

about thirteen, and haven't often had someone who knew what he was talking about to give me some feedback on my poetry. I hope it's alright with you if I send you three or four of my poems and ask for some candid comment on them. If you don't have time, I'll understand.

A little bit more about myself - I'm 26 yrs old, married & have 2 children - you know already, that I milk cows. I recently decided to go back to school and pursue an English Major. And I have a strong desire to develop my writing ability - especially in poetry.

Well, I guess that's enough, I'll be waiting for your reply.

Thank YOU,

Craig Witham  
Craig Witham  
255 N. 800 West -  
Provo, Utah  
84601

## Next Time

Next time what I'd do is look at the earth before saying anything. I'd stop just before going into a house and be an emperor for a minute and listen better to the wind or to the air being still.

When anyone talked to me, whether blame or praise or just passing time, I'd watch the face, how the mouth had to work, and see any strain, any sign of what lifted the voice.

And for all, I'd know more—the earth bracing itself and soaring, the air finding every leaf and feather over forest and water, and for every person the body glowing inside the clothes like a light.

WILLIAM STAFFORD





*AN OREGON MESSAGE* BY CHRIS HABERMAN.



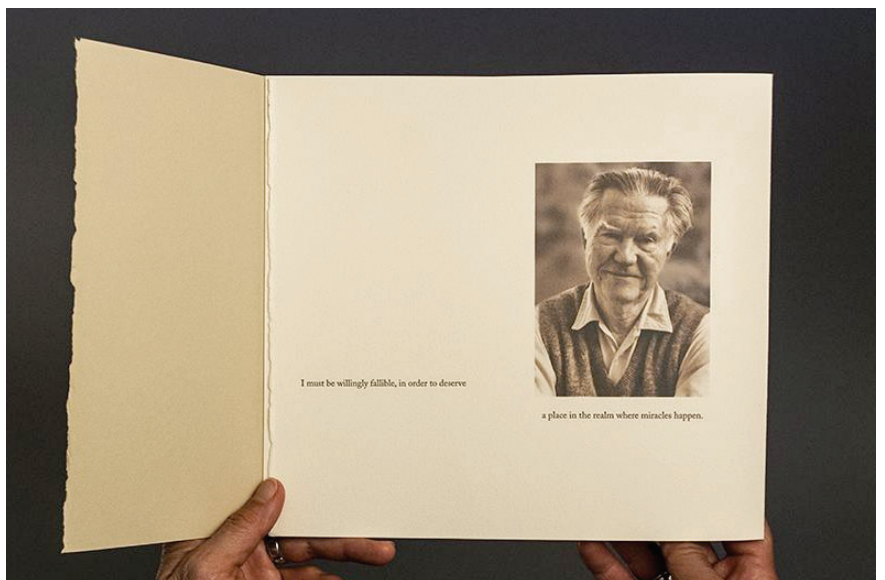
*"WHO TURNS AWAY WHEN SO GENEROUS A BODY..."* BY MARY KEEFER. FROM A SERIES OF FIFTEEN ACRYLIC AND MIXED MEDIA LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS BASED ON STAFFORD'S POEM, "GODIVA COUNTY, MONTANA."



LEFT: PAGE EIGHT FROM *THE OSAGE ORANGE TREE*.  
 ABOVE: "HER UNDULATIONS ROLL" BY MARY KEEFER. ALSO BASED ON "GODIVA COUNTY, MONTANA."



A MURAL BY ANGELINA MARINO-HEIDEL, ILLUSTRATOR OF *EVERYONE OUT HERE KNOWS: A BIG FOOT TALE*, WORDS BY WILLIAM STAFFORD. (THE INTERSECTION OF TERWILLIGER BLVD. AND HIGHWAY 10.)



ARTIST BOOKS BY CATHY DEFOREST (JUBILATION PRESS).  
 LEFT: *HIDDEN*, CONTAINING APHORISMS BY STAFFORD. ABOVE: *PORTRAIT: APHORISMS* BY WILLIAM STAFFORD.



## So Many Stars

I woke before the alarm  
 With a start, staring into a ceiling  
 Of full blown sky  
 Raining stars  
 And across one hundred years  
 Out of his universe  
 I heard William Stafford speak  
 Those hot stabs of light  
 Are poems  
 Crawl out of bed  
 Sit there at that desk  
 Pick up your pen  
 Begin again.

RON SEARS

to improve my game, to slow down, and to take a breath and a long look before I open my mouth. And then “I’d know more”; I’d know that I teach to a light show.

**Editor’s Note:** Leanne’s essay will appear in *Teaching with Heart* (see p. 22).

## Jeremy Skinner: Archivist

The winter 2013 issue of the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* contains a fascinating essay: “A Rich Darkness: Discovering the William Stafford Archives at Lewis & Clark College” by Doug Erickson and Jeremy Skinner. The essay is a biography of Stafford’s life as a writer as it pertains to how his archives are organized. One of the interesting things is that Stafford’s way of organizing his work distinctly influenced and assisted in the shaping of his archive.

Along with Paul Merchant, until recently the head of the Stafford Archives, and Doug Erickson, head of the Watzek Library Special Collections, Skinner was essential in making the writings and other materials Stafford left behind physically and electronically available to anyone interested. Skinner has left Lewis and Clark to work at the Coos County Library and so I wanted to ask him about his experience and about how he came to be in the position to make such a significant contribution to William Stafford scholarship.

We talked on a wet, blowy day last December in a Watzek Library conference room with large windows dark with fir trees. Skinner grew up in Gold Beach in Curry County. His father was a surgical equipment supplier and his mother worked for the municipal court. His interest in history might come, he suggested, from not being one of those kids who put baseball cards in the spokes of their bikes. Studying near the history section in the library, he guesses, may have led him to the realization that history was all around. Discovering the work of southern Oregon historian Kay Atwood helped him realize the connection between local history and his immediate community, something he found surprising and engaging.

Skinner came to Lewis & Clark in 1996 and took classes from the historian Stephen Dow Beckham and was excited by Beckham’s enthusiasm for history and his way of taking history outside of academia. During this time, he worked part time in the Special Collections. Skinner earned a B.A. in history and went on to study with David Johnson at PSU, where he earned an M.A. in history.

He returned to Lewis & Clark in 2002, taking a full-time position in Special Collections as an assistant archivist. The work for the Lewis and Clark expedition bicentennial was in full swing at the time and Skinner helped edit text for an exhibition. He also worked with the Charles Erskine Scott Wood material, the Civilian Public Service material and the papers of a number of Oregon poets: Vern Rutsala, Paulann Petersen, and Edwin Markham.

From 2003-2006, he traveled with the college’s Lewis and Clark exhibition, which went all over the country: Boston, Seattle, Monticello. Soon after this he received a Rose Tucker Fellowship to do work at the Oregon Historical Society. He also took online classes in library science from the University of Washington, receiving his



Stafford’s photo of Leanne Grabel Sander, taken in 1993, shown at Jeremy Skinner’s presentation at the Beaverton Library on March 30th, “Stafford’s Lens—Seeing Oregon Poetry.” This editor read poems by the poets whose photographs were featured.

## William Stafford’s “Next Time”

By Leanne Grabel Sander

The act of teaching, when it works, is magnificent. I share what I know with my students like it is a well-crafted gift, and my students accept it like a dress that fits perfectly and flatters, or a beaded head wrap, twinkling with lights. When it works, I feel like “an emperor for a minute.”

And yet, on those inevitable days when teaching doesn’t work—when the great ideas I had over the weekend go over like a lead balloon—I awake at 3:00 a.m. and microanalyze every move and misstep. Blame sits on me like a fat, wet dog. *You rushed*, it slobbers in my ear. *You judged, you railroaded, you ramrodded. You didn’t notice their faces, their strain, their flagging attention, or their flickers of light. You are the worst teacher ever.*

I teach special education in a treatment center. My students are “behavior” kids. They are trying to learn skills to cope with their emotional chaos along with academics. Throughout their short lives, everything has conspired to dull their light—poverty, homelessness, crappy-ass parents, drugs, learning disabilities.

The poem [see p. 11] reminds me that we all ache, we all struggle, and we all blaze. It reminds me to notice each struggle, each effort, each glow. Each time I read this poem, I’m determined “next time”





M.A. in 2010. During this time he developed an interest in the history of books and book publishing, writing his thesis on the Portland publishing company Binfords and Mort and how its sales suggest Oregon's taste in literature was not as modernist as many literary historians suggest.

The Stafford material came to the Lewis & Clark archives in 2008, and Skinner became heavily involved with the cataloging, organization, and digitalization of that material. The work involved developing finding aids for the 20,000 pages of Stafford's daily writing, his voluminous correspondence, scanning his 16,000 negatives, among many other things. A look at "A Rich Darkness" or the Stafford Archive website will clarify the extent of the labors. One can also see Skinner's hand in the design of many of the publications connected to Special Collections, the four-panel timeline that was in the Centennial newsletter would be a good example.

I asked Skinner what part of working with the Stafford material he found most engaging. He said he thought it might be the photographs. They have, he said, a Rosetta Stone aspect to them because as historical sources, they provide a history that texts don't about friendships, the family dynamic (half of the photos are of his kids). The self portraits, the "selfies," he took, Skinner said, show Stafford in a variety of moods—angry, depressed, silly, wild, zen—that reveal a layer of him that lies below his poetry.

The friends of William Stafford and the Friends owe Jeremy Skinner a great debt of gratitude for lending his considerable skills to illuminating the life and work of William Stafford.

## Centennial Events

Nearly 1,000 copies of William Stafford's "Ask Me" were distributed Tuesday evening, Jan. 7th, at the Lake Oswego Reads kickoff event. William Stafford's favorite dessert, carrot cake, was served.



PHOTO BY LAKE OSWEGO REVIEW

**Bainbridge Island, WA—Jan. 17<sup>th</sup>**

Hosted by David Hecker

The poets were asked to read a few poems and then say a few words about Stafford's legacy.

William Stafford's poems are superb examples of listening. His work in toto has been called uneven (for a few reasons, one being that he left the judgment of his work to editors, who too often said yes. Another more generous one: that Stafford wrote a handful of truly great poems. Only a few poets write great poems, and certainly even the great poets can manage only a few.). But I see as I read

page by page through Stafford's work the consistent and remarkable hallmarks of an exceptional listener. Such fluidity only visits a poet who trains himself to be patient and alert, who resists the temptation to teach his poems a lesson, or impose his own expectations or ambitions. Those characteristic Stafford moves—the surprising shift, for example, from "A telephone line goes cold;" to "A farm back of a great plain/ tugs an end of the line" (from "The Farm on the Great Plains")—are only possible when the poet is quiet and ready to receive. This is why reading Stafford's poems is the best kind of warm-up for writing my own. They are lessons in trust. I aspire to ever listen that well.

—Kathlen Flennicken, Washington State poet laureate.

Who can know the reach and depth of William Stafford's legacy? If he were here, I'm sure he would shrug his shoulders and merely say something like "I feel when I am writing that language crystalizes into a new poem." (*Crossing Unmarked Snow*, p. 116). In other words, it's not him, but some mysterious river of language that creates the poem.

But William Stafford through his poems, his widespread teaching and generous mentoring, has indeed, left a substantial legacy to writers of his, and future generations. Those writers are not necessarily well known or famous. They may, or may not, publish often or widely. Still, William Stafford opened the doors to a process as personally significant as prayer, meditation, or any other spiritual practice that reveals one's deepest self over the years. He slyly admits that writing can "take you out of the current of your obligations and put you in relation all over again to something that feels the big current outside of us, the tide of the eventfulness of being alive." (*Crossing Unmarked Snow*, p. 27). As he said, "This process that is so rewarding is a right for everybody." (*You Must Revise Your Life*), p. 85.

—Gayle Kaune

As with any worthy practice, that of reading and writing poetry can be approached from both the "outside in" (reading the masters, learning form, voicing, lineation and so on) and "inside out" (watching, listening to what emerges from one's own experience). William Stafford, who taught and wrote about poetry for decades, had much to say about the former.

But the Stafford I return to again and again is the one who daily rose in morning dark, sat ready with coffee and favorite pen, then got out of his own way. He opened his senses to the smell of wood smoke, the rush of wind, rays of early sunlight, and let these be his guide. "What," he asked, "can anyone give you greater than now, starting here, right in this room, when you turn around?"

—David Stallings

**Molalla, OR,— Jan. 26<sup>th</sup>**

By Larry Anderson

Hello! Our celebration yesterday was wonderful. Pat Love, Cindy Stewart-Renier and David Hedges --- together so much color, their experiences with Bill -- as David said "I had a blast."

We had around 20 people -- a slant toward discussion of "Stafford as a Person" may have made the program quite accessible to audience members.

Overall -- what fun!

(cont. on p. 16)



### Multnomah Country Library—Jan. 26th

Stafford Around the World—Poems in 13 Foreign Languages  
Hosted by Joseph A. Soldati

Andrea Hollander & Brooke Budy (French): “Libretto”; A. Molotkov (Russian): “Reminders” & “Yes”; Frances Payne Adler & Gloria Borg Olds (Hebrew), Michel Bolsey (Arabic), Joanie McClellan & Benedictus Hubertus Marius Bolsman (Dutch): “At the UNational Monument along the Canadian Border”; Jutta Donath (German): “How to Regain Your Soul”; Charu Nair (Hindi): “The Way It Is” & “Representing Far Places”; Lars Nordström (Swedish): “What Ever Happened to the Beats?”; Yu-Hwa Liao Rozelle (Chinese), Joseph A. Soldati (Italian): “Ask Me”; Greg Simon (Portuguese): “Every Morning All Over Again”; Julia Clare Tillinghast (Turkish): “Choosing a Dog”; Carlos Reyes (Spanish): “One Night” & “Ask Me”



### Lewis and Clark College, OR—April 12

A Musical Tribute to William Stafford

Musical settings of poetry by William Stafford with commentary by Stafford scholar Tim Barnes. Compositions: “Vita” & “Earth Dweller” Michael Johanson; “Our City is Guarded by Automatic Rockets” David Salkowski; “The Well Rising” Alex Koehler. Above: Soprano Katherine Fitzgibbon sings “Vita,” accompanied on piano by Susan Dewitt Smith.

The following is from Program Notes by Michael Johanson, Associate Professor of Music at Lewis and Clark: “William Stafford’s ‘Earth Dweller’ seems to describe an epiphany of sorts—a moment of absolute gratitude in which the narrator is overcome by the immense beauty of his immediate surroundings and for the world he inhabits. In setting the poem, I wanted to capture this sense of gratitude and reverence as well as the idea that majesty can be found even in the most simple and humble of contexts.”



### Lewis and Clark College, OR—March 15th

“Your Must Revise Your Life”: Stafford at 100, A Celebration and Reassessment.

Above: Mary Szybist, Vince Wixon, Maxine Scates, Primus St. John, on a panel, “Stafford at 100, a Reconsideration by Four Poets.”

### Port Orford, OR

I just went to the Library Participation Google doc and entered our head count for the 3 months of various poetry programs in Port Orford. As amazingly large as the numbers are, they do not tell the whole story. We had 3 glorious months of poetry in Port Orford. I am very thankful that we participated in this very special OR Reads program.

We had nearly 100 entries in our Everybody’s Poetry Contest and the best part of all that was that the 3 young winners read their poems! Amazing. We had 57 paintings paired with 57 poems in our art/poetry “Thousand Threads” Exhibit opening. Over 100 people attended that event.

Our panel discussions were so well received. We discussed Stafford’s life at one of them, and his work at the other. We had “3 Poets” night where 3 of our local poets read their work and some of Stafford’s work. At every event we talked about OR Reads, Stafford and read at least one of his poems.

We (my committee made up of 3 poets and myself) visited the grade and high schools, talking up poetry one time and then a quick poetry in-service another time. As mentioned above, the time paid off and it was a lot of fun. By the way, I counted these visits to the schools as part of the headcount--hope that is okay.

The presentation by poet Willa Schenberg was very well attended and her poetry workshop was greatly appreciated by local aspiring poets.

There are at least two results of all this: I now start every meeting I chair with a poem; and we are planning a month-long poetry immersion next March, leading into our annual Poet’s Round Up. We plan to place a poem in each local business every week and hold another poetry contest. We may even do another poetry/art exhibit. So many people thanked us for doing so many poetry events....who knew?

For me personally, it was a life-reminding experience. Poetry has a way of reminding me to be amazed.

Tobe  
Port Orford Public Library

# Sightings

## Staying Active: Centennial Books

By Tim Barnes

*A Ritual to Read Together: Poems in Conversation with William Stafford.* Becca J. R. Lachman, ed. Introduction by Fred Marchant & Kim Stafford. Woodley Press, 2013.

*We Belong in History: Writing with William Stafford.* Introduction by Paulann Petersen. Ooligan Press, 2013.

*Ask Me: 100 Essential Poems.* By William Stafford. Kim Stafford, ed. Graywolf Press, 2014.

*The Sound of the Ax: Aphorisms and Poems by William Stafford.* Vince Wixon & Paul Merchant, eds. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014.

*The Osage Orange Tree, A Story by William Stafford.* Linocut illustrations by Dennis Cunningham. Designed by John Laursen. Afterword by Naomi Shihab Nye. Trinity University Press, 2014.

*Everyone Out Here Knows: A Big Foot Tale.* Words by William Stafford. Illustrated by Angelina Marino-Heidel. Created and compiled by Tim Barnes. Arnica Creative Services, 2014.

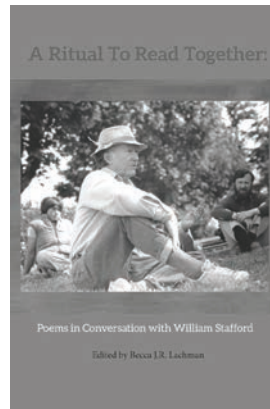
Kim Stafford joked recently that his father is the most active member of the Lewis & Clark faculty in terms of publishing. Two of the eight William Stafford books published in the last year or so have been discussed in this publication: *William Stafford: An Annotated Bibliography* and *Winterward*, his Ph.D. dissertation of poems. I'd like to take a celebratory ramble, with a critical stop or two, through the six books listed above. Doing so will reveal, I think, some of the aspects and dimensions of Stafford's work and influence. It will also give this editor a chance to talk about some fine books published by this eloquent emeritus.

The books published in 2013, *A Ritual to Read Together* and *We Belong in History* demonstrate Stafford's geniality with other writers, established and aspiring, and his enabling witness to the writing process—one of his greatest legacies.

*A Ritual to Read Together* is an anthology of poems that respond in some way, directly, indirectly, obliquely, to Stafford's actual presence, his presence in his writing, or both. The editor, Becca Lachman, whose MFA, she tells us, "focused on the intersection of everyday nonviolence and the writing life," found Stafford and then found out her maternal grandfather was also a conscientious objector in World War II and served in CPS camps not far from Stafford.

The intersection of serendipity and conscience may explain some of the vivacity of this book. Lachman has divided it into three sections. The first contains poems of place and community; the second has poems touching the dimensions of peacemaking and violence, interior and exterior; the third treats Stafford's ideas on teaching and writing. Each section is fifty or so pages long. A study guide with writing ideas based on some of the poems in each section follows the selections.

An introduction by Kim Stafford and Fred Marchant, the editor of *Another World Instead: The Early Poems of William Stafford 1937-1947*, follows Lachman's preface. In it they put their fingers on the pulse of the anthology. Lachman brings together poets who wanted



to be "in good company, advancing together the idea that imagination, words and poems can make inroads against the dehumanizing violence of our time." The poets collected here share Stafford's belief in the vital benefits "honest language and humane imagination bring to us all."

This is the source of Stafford's engaging sensibility and what these poets and writers take up conversation with in *A Ritual to Read Together*. Some of them are quite well known: Robert Bly, Marvin Bell, Ted Kooser, Arthur Sze,

Naomi Shihab Nye, some not so well known, and some of them FWS board members: Paulann Petersen, this editor, and former board members: Scot Siegel, Vince and Patty Wixon, Shelley Reece. Several of the poems appeared in this newsletter: Charles Goodrich's "Daoist Out of Kansas," D. R. James' "Briefing Bill Stafford, 7 am," Peter Quinn's "Compliments and Complaints," Paul Willis' "Los Prietos," and this editor's "Kansas, Maybe."

This collection of poems in conversation with Stafford is not hagiography. It is a collection of lively and thoughtful poems written around a certain spirit. It may be a sense of childhood that rhymes in a slant way with Stafford's as does Paul Merchant's "Instructions for Childhood." Dan Gerber's "Twilight," about doves around a pond, touches on Stafford's reserve and his sense of freedom:

How lovely  
not to be a threat or a *thing*,  
to let my fingers touch the water  
they've stirred,  
for a moment at least, free  
from the choices I've made.

Stuart Kestenbaum's "Forgiveness" is quite beautiful with its causal chain of lyrical repetitions. "That Certainty" by Helen Frost reminds me that Stafford's advice for child rearing was "have a light touch." "A Call to Prayer" by Fred Marchant is exquisite and Kim Stafford's "Ten Years After the Last Word" is heart-wrenching and redemptive. I was particularly charmed by the close of Jeff Tigchelar's "Report to William Stafford":

I bought your book at Borders I'm sorry to say  
it had been there awhile I could tell

though you I'm sure would not have  
minded the dust

I found it on the back shelf

Other books had gathered around  
as if to listen

That poem describes in a certain way how this anthology came to be. It is made up of poets who in one way or another gathered around to listen to Bill Stafford. For those who don't know Stafford, this book is a lyrical introduction. For those who do, it will be a pleasurable affirmation enhanced by discovery.

*We Belong in History* also has a welcoming, genial aspect, like Stafford, but in this case focused on the generative side. This is the encouraging, accepting Stafford, the one who writes in "A Way of

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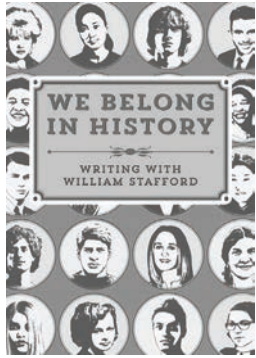


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Writing,” included in the front matter of this book: “A writer is not so much someone who has something to say as he is someone who has found a process that will bring about things he would not have thought of if he had not started to say them.” That essay, part of *Writing the Australian Crawl*, and that sentence, were extremely important to this editor as a young poet and its inclusion here is a good move.

Poets younger than I was then, sixth to twelfth grades, from all over Oregon, wrote poems in the fall of 2012 using Stafford’s words, sometimes based on the lesson plans that follow the students’ poems and sometimes not. The publisher’s note (Ooligan Press is a teaching press associated with PSU and many people were involved with this book) that opens the book tells us that there were “three loose categories,” nature, family, and moments in time.

The title of the anthology is interesting. It comes from “Parentage” and plays off the first line of that poem, “My father didn’t really belong in history.” Though Stafford goes on to say that unlike his



father, he does belong in history, the implication in the title is that poetry proves one fits in and will be remembered seems contrary to Stafford’s sense of being in society: “We live in an occupied country, misunderstood” (“Thinking for Berky”); “I live in a foreign country” (*Sound of the Ax*). The title, however, reminds me of another anthology, edited by Stafford’s friend Naomi Shihab Nye, *Time You Let Me In: 25 Poets under 25* (2010), and that makes *We Belong in History* seem more

like a reaching out, another way of saying, please accept us as poets and human beings. This anthology, puzzling title or not, makes the reader want to do just that.

Along with “A Way of Writing,” there is a prefatory piece by Paulann Petersen, “The William Stafford Classroom,” which tells about a visit Bill made to Paulann’s West Linn High School English class for the dedication of that room in his name in 1993. Each of the three sections opens with three Stafford poems, none of them “Parentage.”

But it is the student poems that are the heart of the book. Some of them are wonderful and some of them, well, they sound like student poems—clichés and platitudes, often about love, as one might expect. There are enough occasions, though, when the language becomes buoyant and fresh to keep the reader going: “The Whip of Ice” by Dylan P., “Equinox” by Ruby N., “I Am from Oregon” by Anushka N., “Strength” by Hannah H. “Compass Rose” by Julia R. ends with these lines: “Run away, but run in circles / and hold your map tight in your teeth. Wait until the paper dissolves / and the roads blur and in that moment you know a new way to find home.” Brielle B.’s “I Know Who You Are” is scintillating and too long to quote here, as is Julia R.’s “Literary Devices” but has these exciting lines: “Enjambment: the moments that spill / helplessly into each other / the summers that trip into falls.” Though many of the poems don’t, as they do in *Ritual to Read Together*, feel as if the writer had absorbed Stafford’s way, that’s understandable. There are some fine poems here and considerable talent.

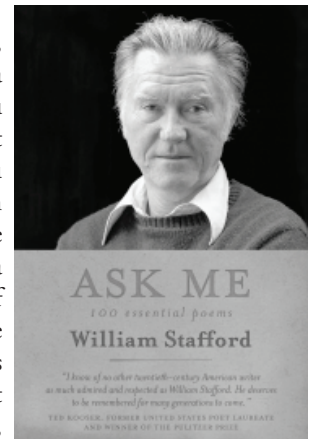
This book, though, frays a bit under the strain of pedagogy. The lesson plans that follow the poems stress revision in a way that is not consistent with Stafford’s practice. The first lesson plan of six parts, “Nature and the Writing Process,” perfectly doable though discouragingly detailed, talks about revision even though, as in “The View from Here,” (a poem used here as an example of revision) Stafford wrote out only one revision copy and appears to have sent the poem out a few days later. The second lesson plan, “Writing Down My Family: Using Our Histories as Research for Autobiographical Poems,” again, a detailed and probably useful scheme, contains this statement: “Remind them [the students] that Stafford would return to a poem over the course of many months.” That’s a questionable claim prompted, I think, by the fact that revision is more teachable than other things connected to poetry. In a 1972 interview reprinted in *Writing the Australian Crawl*, Cynthia Lofsness asks Stafford if he ever goes back and works on a poem he once considered finished. Bill’s response:

No, because after they are so old—maybe six or seven days old—they for some reason ... always just seem to have been written by somebody else. I’m more interested in something newer than that. So I’ve never gone back to do extensive revision of old work.

A short trip into the archives where the daily writings for his first two books, *West of Your City* and *Traveling through the Dark*, which are online, shows that for many poems, particularly the ones that begin the sections of *We Belong in History*, were published after just a draft or two. Elizabeth Bishop is famous for the sixteen years it took her to finish “The Moose,” admittedly a longer poem than any of Stafford’s. But this was not how Bill worked. He worked quickly, efficiently, even hastily, and got on to the most important thing, the next poem. Revision in high school can coincide with taming, socialization, and become a default response for teachers.

*Ask Me* and *Sound of the Ax* work with two of the essential aspects of Stafford’s work, poetry and philosophy or, say, lyricism and wisdom. They both also present another essential of his work, brevity. *Ask Me* is a slender, simple book. On the cover, Stafford, in his seventies and wearing a dark sweater and white shirt, looks directly at the reader with what his son Kim calls his *Honest Pint* piece quoted earlier (p. 7) his “Daoist composure.” There’s a short introduction by Kim, a table of contents, and then one hundred of his finest poems. That’s it. It’s the kind of book that should fit in your back pocket and though it doesn’t fit in the back pocket of my Levis, it does fit in the side pocket of my coat.

Many of Stafford’s best are here, maybe most, all but three or four on a single page. I won’t name them. You know many of them and if you don’t and want to meet Stafford, just you and him—this is the book. It is both an introduction and a testament to the power of his poetry. Stafford wrote a lot of poems and published a lot of them. In “Writing and Literature,” he says, “An editor is a friend who helps keep a writer from publishing what should not be published.” Perhaps,



if securing clear, unadulterated evidence of Stafford's stature and quality as a poet is paramount, his son has shown what a good son and friend he is. And the brevity of this book makes it approachable, manageable, condensed for easy access.

One could say this selection is too essential, condensed, mathematical (one hundred even?). Many will have a poem that was left out but readers will not feel left out of a multi-dimensional sense of Stafford's poetry. It's too good for that. The poem I think is missing is "Ultimate Problems," which gently questions anthropocentrism. Another thing that seems missing is some explicit sense of Stafford's concerns, his themes. Perhaps I wouldn't have noticed this but Kim has been circulating the table of contents Graywolf Press thought superfluous. I think it very helpful. 1. *Life of the Seeker* (12 poems) "A Story That Could Be True" to "Why I Am Happy" 2. *Good Relations Among People* (8) "A Ritual to Read Together" to "St. Matthew and All" 3. *Peace & War* (11) "A Dedication" to "The Star in the Hills" 4. *History of Our Tribe* (10) "Peacewalk" to "For My Young Friends Who Are Afraid" 5. *Home Kin* (13) "Listening" to "Once in the 40s" 6. *Kansas Prairie, Oregon Earth* (9) "One Home" to "An Oregon Message" 7. *Near Earth* (12) "Earth Dweller" to "Roll Call" 8. *Writing Design & Stunts* (11) "Things I Learned Last Week" to "The Animal That Drank Up Sound" 9. *Hail & Farewell* (14) "Indian Caves in the Dry Country" to "Smoke" (This will be most helpful to those who have the book.)

Brevity, simplicity, portability, and some of the greatest poetry of the twentieth century, and an Oregon Reads Selection for 2014—You or someone you know can't live without this book.

Brevity and wisdom combine in *Sound of the Axe* and are also the hallmarks of an aphorism, a pithy statement that condenses much wisdom into a few words. The aphoristic tradition belongs to wisdom literature and goes back to the Sutras, the Greeks, Confucius, Ecclesiastes and beyond. It can be followed through Teresa de Avila, La Rochefoucauld, and Blake's "Proverbs of Hell." In their introduction, the editors connect Stafford's interest in it to Carl Sandburg's *The People, Yes* and Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*.

The writing of aphorisms or apothegms or gnomes, all fairly synonymous, was part of Stafford's fifty years of daily writings. Kim tells people the four elements of Bill's daily writing were the date, a few words about yesterday and maybe a dream, an aphorism, and then a poem. So Stafford wrote thousands of them and around four hundred are collected in *Sound of the Axe* along with a sprinkling of aphoristic poems. A familiar aphoristic poem is "Things I Learned Last Week," but there are some I had not seen before like "The Gospel Is Whatever Happens" and "Buddha's Thoughts":

In a mountain that is one big stone  
a crack is considering:  
we are saved by that hesitation.

All trees lean in the spring  
but soon toughen for winter  
waiting to say the great name.

In this world, what I really like  
are these things that don't happen.

That's a very Daoist poem, especially the final couplet, worth contemplation. The aphorisms in this book are sometimes quite gnomic and if one remembers that gnomes are little old men who live deep in the earth's interior and act as guardians of its treasures, then one sees the kind of contemplation available to the reader. Many of them are seeds for meditation and that seems to be how they served Stafford's thinking and writing. They were often, Kim says, the springboards, the loft, into a poem. Here are some of my favorites:

Every mink has a mink coat.  
The golden bough grows from your hand.  
The sky is bigger than any country.  
Beat your megaphones into ear trumpets.  
Now is made of ghosts.  
Most people explore on roads already made.  
A well-oiled gate won't give you a song.  
Any sound that we give our lives to turns to music.  
Deciding to be objective is a subjective decision.

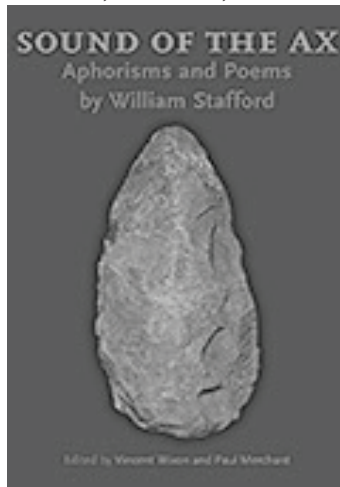
Any of these is a meditation. The first, by the way, was the working title for the book, but the U. of Pittsburgh Press thought it too cute. I don't. There is a trickster quality to it that is an aspect of Stafford's wisdom—the ju-jitsu shifting of boundaries, perspectives. Nasreddin, the middle-eastern trickster figure was walking along a river. Someone on the other bank shouted to him, "How do I get to the other side of the river?" Nasreddin called back, "You are on the other side of the river." These aphorisms have a wonderful way of shifting the ground under the feet of our assumptions: "Successful people are in a rut."

Stafford in many ways was a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, and a reader of it—Kierkegaard, Pascal, Wittgenstein, Barfield, Nietzsche. His poetry thinks about the world through the world. These aphorisms condense and highlight one of the things that makes Stafford's work wonderful—that open-ended and world-wondering *ahah* one feels at the end of one of the thought adventures that are his poems.

*The Osage Orange Tree* and *Everyone Out Here Knows* share brevity and lyricism with *Ask Me* and *Sound of the Axe*. They also coincide with the welcoming, encouraging aspect of Stafford found in *A Ritual to Read Together* and *We Belong in History*. But more than that, these books bring out another essential to Stafford's work—beauty. These are beautiful books. Beauty is not the first word one comes across in assessments of Stafford's work. But there is a shapeliness to his poetry—the use of regular stanzas (quatrains and tercets), measured lines—and, deeper, the coherence in the poems, the way they touch the world's textures, shades, and shapes and make them whole (just read "Godiva County, Montana"). These two books, one based on his fiction and another on a somewhat obscure poem, take the inherent beauty in Stafford's work and visually enhance it, representing it in vivid images, art.

Both of these books are meant for young people. *Everyone Out*

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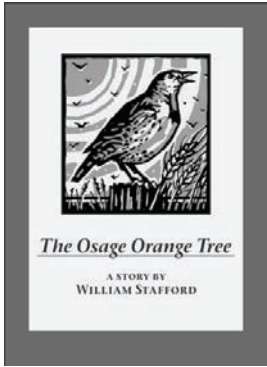


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*Here Knows* is for children, ages four to eight or so; *The Osage Orange Tree* is for adolescent readers. For Stafford fans, no matter what age, though, these books are essential, collector's items, treasures.

Stafford didn't write a lot of fiction, but especially early on, he did write some. The archive at Lewis & Clark holds thirty-three stories, most of them unpublished. "The Osage Orange Tree" won a statewide contest in Oregon for the best story in 1959 and a poem of his won as well, irking some of his peers.

It is easy to see why the story won. It's a lovely, lyrical, bittersweet love story set in the 1930s with a spare, mid-western, O'Henry feel. The shy narrator tells a simple story that takes on a deceptively surprising resonance. All this is enriched and deepened by Dennis Cunningham's linocuts, twenty four of them, done in black and red (see centerfold). Cunningham is a Northwest treasure and the lines and design of the linocuts are dramatic and beautiful. There is a linocut on the verso side of each page spread; the text being on the recto side. Turning the pages of this is book is a delight, though the first time (and



maybe every time) that pleasure may be mixed with some water from around the eyes.

This small, exquisite hardback book was designed by the legendary book designer John Laursen of Press-22. It has the classical, restrained elegance and clarity of his design aesthetic, understated yet generous. An afterword by Naomi Shihab Nye says that Stafford "Offered the widest, closest, most balanced gaze of any twentieth-century poet. He scanned the horizon and told us the truth." Gazing through this book, reading and seeing, is to participate in the world in a wide and balanced way.

Since this editor is the creator and compiler of *Everyone Out Here Knows: A Big Foot Tale*, it seems disingenuous to review it, so I would like to tell readers how it happened because that has something to do with its beauty and because it is an interesting story that speaks to how books come to be.

I found the poem "Everyone Out Here Knows" in 1983 in a teaching anthology edited by Ingrid Wendt, *Starting with Little Things: A Guide to Writing Poetry in the Classroom*. I was working in the Artist-in-Education Program then, doing poetry residencies all over Oregon. The idea with poetry was to offer a theme, read some related poems, and then ask the students to write. One of the writing ideas, prompts we now call them, that worked well for younger kids was poems about giants. Bill's poem was part of the mix when I worked with the giant theme. Where do giants go to cry was one of my favorite prompts for this theme.

Watching the faces of kids all across Oregon light up when I read "Big Foot waits / disguised as a shadow" told me that his poem would make a good children's book. It happened, as well, I have a friend, Angelina Marino-Heidel, who is a wonderful visual artist, a painter and muralist. A few years ago she did some murals with nature themes (see centerfold). Their complexity, depth, colors, shading, and beauty made me think about Stafford's poem and that children's book idea.

We talked about a book and in the fall of 2012, she did some preliminary illustrations. I mentioned the idea to Kim around the same time, telling him I was going to self-publish it. I also told Jim Scheppke, FWS board member, former head of the Oregon state library system,



and member of the Oregon Reads committee. There was no Oregon Reads 2014 Stafford book for younger kids. *The Osage Orange Tree* had been selected for older kids. *The Animal That Drank Up Sound* (1992), the children's book Bill did with Debra Frasier, was out of print. Jim arranged for Angelina and me to meet with Ellen Fader, a librarian and 2013 winner of the Walt Morey Young Readers Literary Legacy Award from Literary Arts, Inc., who had been on a Caldecott selection committee. Ellen was of immeasurable help to us.

In early February of 2013, I received an email from Kim suggesting I talk to a man name Ross Hawkins, a publisher in Portland. I did and found out Hawkins heads Arnica Creative Services. Hawkins liked the idea of the book and at that point the book took on another dimension and things went into high gear. Angelina practically ruined her Mac doing digital images. We sat should to shoulder laying out the book in InDesign. It came out in late 2013 with a publishing date of 2014 and was selected as an Oregon Reads recommendation.

The book took me to Washington D.C. and the National Book Festival as Oregon's representative to the Pavilion of the States, where I shook hands with Miss New Jersey and was mistaken, once, for the governor of Oregon. It also connected me to the Oregon Reads speakers list, which has taken me around Oregon and has been a truly engaging and enjoyable experience.

But more deeply, it has connected me to an understanding of how we see the wild. Bigfoot can be understood as projection of ourselves grounded in the mysterious, hidden, huge, shadowy, whispery, roary essence of the outdoors, especially those places where the trails disappear. Bill knew that.

The book also has an introductory poem I wrote to entice young readers into Bill's poem and Angelina's marvelous illustrations. It begins, "We invite you out to where / the Bigfoot stories grow. . . ." There is also some prose in the back with thoughts about Bigfoot and cryptozoology, the science of hidden animals. Bigfoot is a cryptid, like a yeti or a unicorn. Both Angelina and I have short afterwords and there is a listing of plants depicted in the illustrations and a list of some Bigfoot websites. It is our hope that young people will want to read it often and teachers and librarians will find it amenable to educational goals.

*Everyone Out Here Knows* didn't happen, though, for any particular reason. It happened as all of these books happened. Because William Stafford's work is, to borrow a line from one of his poems, "The Trouble with Reading," "a rich darkness." Stafford's work is generous, furthering, deep, and much of it is yet to be explored. In these six books, it would not be hard to claim, there are many discoveries for readers to make and much pleasure to be found. We can only thank Stafford for being such an active faculty and having such active faculties.



## News, Notes, and Opportunities

**Discovering William Stafford, An Oregon Artbeat Special.** You can stream the half hour OPB video at the OPB website (Google: William Stafford Centennial). At the OPB Stafford Centennial website, you will find “Stafford’s Words in Calligraphy” with Carole DuBosch; “Influence of the Next Generation,” an Arts and Life interview with students featured in *We Belong in History* and *Think Out Loud’s* full version of that interview. There is also an interview with Kim Stafford by Geoff Norcross: “Q&A: Kim Stafford Remembers Poet Father’s Work Ethic”; videos of Storm Large and others on “Discovering William Stafford” reading his poems; A photographic tour of the Stafford Stones at Foothills Park in Lake Oswego; Singer-songwriter Paula Sinclair performing “A Story That Could Be True”; “William Stafford’s Life as a Photographer” in which you can see pictures from Stafford family scrapbooks. You can also read Geneva Chin’s article on Chris Haberman and his painting based on “An Oregon Message.” And that is not all, but all I’m going to list here.

**Lake Oswego Library: An Evening Honoring William Stafford.**

Date: Tuesday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, Time: 7:00 to 8:30 pm. This poetry reading is a prelude to the Lake Oswego Festival of the Arts. Organized by FWS board member Pat Carver, this year’s readers will be Patty and Vince Wixon, winners of the 2014 Steward Holbrook Literary Legacy Award for their contributions to the literary life of Oregon. FWS board member Tim Barnes will emcee.

**William Stafford Calligraphy Project.** The Portland Society for Calligraphy has mounted an exhibition of Stafford poems that have been calligraphed. There are over forty. This editor went to the show when it was in the Streff Gallery at Marylhurst University. It is stunning. These calligraphy broadsides are a beautifully imagined visual feast. The editor hopes to have some photos of them for the next newsletter. Unfortunately, the lighting in the Streff Gallery was excellent for viewing but bad for photos. You can, though, view an episode of OPB’s Arts and Life that features Carole DuBosch, one of the calligraphers in the exhibition. She talks about her art and the exhibit and shows a Stafford piece she is working on. Google: DuBosch OPB. The calligraphy show will be at the Collins Gallery in the Multnomah Public Library, Sept. 27<sup>th</sup>–Nov. 9<sup>th</sup>. Artists Reception: Sept. 28<sup>th</sup>, 2-4 pm.

**William Stafford at 100: A Centenary Exhibit.** For the entire centenary year, the Watzek Library will have an exhibit of Stafford material on display, including manuscripts, books, posters, photographs, letters, and artifacts. A part of the exhibit is 180 of the 16,000 photos that Stafford took from 1963-1993, curated by Kirstin Rian. They are of Bill’s literary friends (Galway Kinnell, James Dickey, Maxine Kumin, Richard Hugo, W.S. Merwin, Linda Pastan, and many more), his family, landscapes and still lifes, and a number of self portraits. These can be accessed online at [WilliamStaffordArchives.org/exhibits/](http://WilliamStaffordArchives.org/exhibits/). You can find an essay by Kirstin Rian about Stafford’s photography, “Evidence of Noticing: Photographs of William Stafford” in the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 114.4 (Winter 2013).

**Poetry Potluck.** The seventh annual Friends of William Stafford Poetry and Potluck will take place on September 14<sup>th</sup> at Foothills Park, location of the Stafford Stones, in Lake Oswego between noon and five. Bring food of your choice and a poem to read. Doug Stow of Paper Crane Press will unveil the latest broadside. Great food, fun, friends, and fellowship. Those who have been moved and furthered by William Stafford’s life and work will find congenial company among others who feel the same. All friends of William Stafford are welcome.

**Art Beat: Primus St. John.** Poet, former English professor at PSU and winner of the Western States Book Award for *Communion: Poems 1976-1998*, St. John was a good friend of Stafford’s. He was interviewed for a segment of Art Beat (#1518) that ran three times on OPB television in April. He talks about his work and his friendship with Bill, who is the one who convinced the New York City native to come to Oregon. Google: Primus St. John Artbeat to view it.

**“Stafford Studies” Week, with Kim Stafford:** Monday, July 21, 2014 - Friday, July 25, 2014. This Northwest Writing Institute (NWI) 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 will 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.

Participants will become familiar with the poetry of William Stafford, his habits of daily writing, his practice of publishing widely in little magazines, his unstinting correspondence, his witness for peace and reconciliation, his love of Kansas, Oregon, and other places, and his “let’s talk recklessly” approach to life and writing.

Who should attend? This course is for anyone with an interest in the work of William Stafford, the life of a writer, and the power of words to witness for peace and social justice. This includes teachers, writers, librarians, and others with an abiding interest in William Stafford’s work, and a dedication to developing community programs for Oregon libraries and schools.

NWI classes are offered to teachers, counselors, parents, veterans, and all community members interested in the power of stories to help us understand and practice human connections for the good of all. For more information: <http://williamstaffordarchives.org/events/>

**State of Wonder:** April Baer interviewed Matthew Dickman, Vince Wixon, and Jennifer Boyden about Stafford’s life and writings on the January 11<sup>th</sup> show. You can stream it. Google: State of Wonder OPB.

**Summer Fishtrap: A Gathering of Writers.** July 7<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>, Wallowa Lake, Oregon. What the River Says: The Act of Listening in a Turbulent World, a week of writing and conversation in the spirit of William Stafford on the centennial of his birth. The 2014 faculty includes Kim Barnes, John Daniel, Brenda Miller, Kim Stafford and Perrin Kerns, Luis Alberto Urrea. The keynote address will be given by Naomi Shihab Nye. URL: [www.fishtrap.org](http://www.fishtrap.org).

**Oregon Reads** (see 18.2, p. 5 of this newsletter) now includes 113 participating libraries, with Lake Oswego being the most active (just check out Lake Oswego Reads), though some were cancelled due to weather.

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**National Book Award.** Fifty years after William Stafford received the NBA for *Traveling through the Dark*, another Lewis & Clark College English professor, Mary Szybist, received the award for her book of poems *Incarnadine*. It is a beautiful book, mystical, wistful, intelligent, and humane. She told *Portland Monthly Magazine* reporter Jonathan Frochtzawaj, “I have felt myself to be both in Stafford’s shadow and his light, and I have been grateful for both.”

**Late Night Library Interview.** Paul Martone interviewed Matthew Dickman and Kim Stafford a few days before the Feb. 7<sup>th</sup> centennial event at the Newmark Theater. It’s forty-five minutes of thoughtful, interesting talk on William Stafford’s life, work, and legacy. Google: Late Night Library Feb. 4.

**Take Back the Fourth: Speaking Truth to Power:** The Fellowship of Reconciliation’s 56th Annual Pacific Northwest Regional Conference. July 3–July 6, 2014; Seabeck Conference Center Seabeck, Washington. This year’s “Take Back the 4th: Speaking Truth to Power” theme focuses on preserving our constitutional rights against unreasonable search and seizure. This constitutional protection is particularly important in the electronic information age, when all our communication can be potentially monitored, censored, and repressed. For one hundred years, FOR’s voice for truth and reconciliation has been a moving force for social justice and peace. We cannot not allow ourselves to be silenced. Keynote speakers: Peter Phillips (Project Censored), Michael Nagler (Metta Center for Nonviolence), and Rev. Kristin Stoneking (Fellowship of Reconciliation USA) will discuss this theme and other social movements that seek to bring peace and justice to our world. This year welcomes a partnership with the Friends of William Stafford. 2014 is the centennial of William Stafford’s birth and there will be four workshops honoring his poetry and contributions to peace and anti-war activism. A William Stafford Scholarship is available to anyone interested. Contact this editor for more information: [tim.barnes63@gmail.com](mailto:tim.barnes63@gmail.com). There will also be readings of William Stafford’s poetry at conference plenary sessions. This editor will be leading a workshop based on *Down in My Heart*. For more information: [www.forseabeck.org](http://www.forseabeck.org).

**FWS Summer Solstice Reading:** Saturday, June 21, 2014; 2:30 pm–6:30 pm; 1255 Crowley SE, Salem, OR. Friends of William Stafford (FWS) invite you to join them in the large back yard of Jan & Mike Markee. In addition to readings by Paulann Petersen, Patty Wixon, Vince Wixon, Alice Derry, and Lawson Inada. Audience members are also invited to share a favorite Stafford poem. Plan to begin at 2:30. Time will be provided for sales of books and a few snacks. Parking can be found along the cross street (Chaparral) and in the Goodwill lot one block west at Commercial SE and Crowley SE.

**Oregon State Poetry Association / Friends of William Stafford Fall Conference.** “Stafford by the Sea” Oct. 3–6, 2014. Bandon, OR. Likely participants include new Oregon poet laureate Peter Sears, Joseph Soldati, Ingrid Wendt, Ralph Salisbury, Paul Merchant, Jarold Ramsay, Vince and Patty Wixon, Liz Woody, and Barbara

**FWS Donation in Honor of Dorothy Stafford.** At its meeting on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the board of the Friends of William Stafford voted to donate \$200 in Dorothy Stafford’s name to Literary Arts, Inc., formerly known as the Oregon Institute for the Literary Arts (OILA), a group William Stafford was instrumental in creating.

**Teaching with Heart: Poetry that Speaks to the Courage to Teach,** Sam M. Intrator & Megan Scribner, eds. Foreword by Parker J. Palmer. Introduction by Taylor Mali. Afterword by Sarah Brown Wessling. *Teaching with Heart* is the highly anticipated sequel to the bestselling *Teaching with Fire* (2003), which was #2 on Edudemic’s list of [50 Most Popular Books for Teachers](#). It honors the heroic optimism of teachers and their belief that despite the many challenges and obstacles of the teaching life, much is possible. The book brings together the voices of our most treasured poets including Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, Billy Collins, Maya Angelou, Mary Oliver, and William Stafford with the voices of teachers and educators who are inspired and sustained by their words. Each of the 90 teachers in the volume – from all levels of experience across the entire educational spectrum – identified a poem that matters to them and wrote a moving commentary about how the poem taps into the joys, challenges, and struggles that define their work and identity as teachers. *Teaching with Heart’s* publication date is May 19<sup>th</sup>. It can be pre-ordered from your favorite bookseller at <http://bit.ly/CCRpoet>. On June 17<sup>th</sup> Broadway Books will host readings from the book.

**William Stafford Campus Walk.** Lewis & Clark College has placed nine placards around its campus, each with a Stafford poem and note about the significance of the location. The poems are “An Oregon Message,” “Run Before Dawn,” “When I Met My Muse,” “Serving With Gideon,” “A Ritual to Read to Each Other,” “The Way It Is,” “Why I Am Happy,” “Ask Me,” and “Fifteen.” For a map Google: William Stafford Campus Walk.

**Words That Burn at the Milagro Theatre.** Thursday, September 25, 2014 - Sunday, September 28, 2014. Three full staged readings will be produced in commemoration of Hispanic Heritage Month, the William Stafford Centennial, and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the rescindment of Executive Order 9066. Through a blend of poetry and monologue, this dramatic work explores how three historical figures – conscientious objector William Stafford, Japanese-American internee Lawson Inada, and East L.A. marine Guy Gabaldón – galvanized language to discover liberation during “the good war.” Friday, September 26 - Post-show “In Their Sons’s Words” panel featuring Kim Stafford and Miles Inada. Saturday, September 27 – Pre-show Japanese art exhibit and cultural performance by installation artist Yukiyo Kawano and Butoh dancer Meshi Chavez. Sunday, September 28 – Audience talk-back with cast, crew, creator, and co-producers following Sunday matinee on 9/28. For more information: <http://williamstaffordarchives.org/events/>

### PERMISSIONS

“Next Time” is reprinted from *The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems* and used with permission of Graywolf Press.

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The essays and features by Jess Alberg, Ken McCullough, Leanne Grabel Sander, and Kim Stafford are used by permission of the authors.

The letters in “Letters to Bill” are used with permission of the Lewis & Clark College Special Collections.



# 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, the annual September poetry and potluck picnic, 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  
 Patron \$100/yr     Individual \$35/yr  
 Family \$50/yr     Retired/Student \$20/yr  
 Lifetime \$500

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

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Country\*\* \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Giver's Name & Address: \_\_\_\_\_

How did you hear of FWS?

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

## Welcome New Friends October 2013-June 2014

Jeremy Skinner  
 John R. DesCamp Sr.  
 Susan J. Jenkins  
 Douglas S. Shadbolt  
 Rohn Jay Miller  
 Jesse Curran  
 Susan L. Blaine  
 Tina Castanares  
 Marvin Saltzman  
 Ronald H. Bayes  
 Bill Graves  
 Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts  
 Angelica S. Williams  
 Kjerstin S. Johnson

If you have any questions about your membership status, please contact Helen Schmidling, [helen@dsagroup.net](mailto:helen@dsagroup.net)

FRIENDS OF WILLIAM STAFFORD  
 NEWSLETTER©  
 is published three times  
 a year.

EDITOR: Tim Barnes  
[tim.barnes63@gmail.com](mailto:tim.barnes63@gmail.com)

**Note:** Anything in this newsletter that does not have a byline was written by the editor.

WEBMASTER: Dennis Schmidling

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)

Some Thoughts on William  
Stafford's Teaching Methods  
By Ken McCullough



Active Faculty: Centennial Books



Stafford Inspired Art: Keefer,  
DeForest, Haberman



Letters to Bill, Jess Alberg

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Please notify sender of change of address



Leif Winningstad, son of Allison Winningstad, reading Friends of William Stafford:  
A Newsletter for Poets & Poetry—our youngest reader and future Friend.