



# W friends of WILLIAM STAFFORD NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 4 NO. 3

LAKE OSWEGO, OREGON

AUGUST 2000

## TOURING BROADSIDE EXHIBIT AND POETRY READING AT MARYLHURST UNIVERSITY THIS MONTH

"Like Frost on a Window--The Beauty of the Written Word," a traveling exhibit of broadsides by thirty-six contemporary writers, will be on view in the Streff Gallery of the Shoen Library at Marylhurst University, August 3-29, between 9 AM-10:30 PM on weekdays, 9 AM - 6 PM on Saturdays, and Noon-5 PM on Sundays.

### Poetry Reading Thurs., Aug. 24, 7 PM

Several local poets will present a reading of works included in the exhibit. Readers will be Carlos Reyes, Shelley Reece, Joseph A. Soldati, Jane Glazer, Paulann Petersen, Joan Maiers, and Dorothy Stafford. Ms. Maiers is coordinator for both the Marylhurst exhibit and the poetry reading, sponsored by The Friends of Shoen Library.

The exhibit, which has traveled throughout the United States, features poems by William Stafford, whose work originated the exhibit, and nearly forty other writers including Robert Bly, Marvin Bell, Madeline DeFrees, Gary Snyder, Rita Dove, W.S. Merwin, Naomi Shihab Nye, and E. Ethelbert Miller. (A broadside of a poem in the exhibit, "Because," by Christopher Merrill, FWS National Advisor, appears in this newsletter.)

Other Oregon writers include Ursula K. Le Guin, Barry Lopez, Kim Stafford, Ralph Salisbury, Ingrid Wendt, Carlos Reyes, Primus St. John, Vi Gale, Paulann Petersen, and Sandra Lopez.

The broadside exhibit is the property of The Friends of William Stafford. Most recently the exhibit has been on display in Lake Oswego, OR, in Lewiston, ID, and in LaConner, WA. Nancy Winklesky, FWS Board member is curator.

For further information about the exhibit and poetry reading at Marylhurst, phone Joan Maiers at 503-636-8955, or Shoen Library, 503-699-6261.

## STANLEY KUNITZ NAMED U.S.A.'S NEW POET LAUREATE

Stanley Kunitz, whose book of poems, *PASSING THROUGH: The Later Poems, New and Selected* (W.W. Norton, 1995) won the National Book Award for Poetry, was named this country's new Poet Laureate. He follows Robert Pinsky who brought frequent notice to poetry during his two terms. When an NPR interviewer reported that Kunitz's duties were not expected to be extensive in consideration of his age [94], he stated he had several ideas for projects he wanted to accomplish while in his new position.

David Barber writes about *PASSING THROUGH* in the June 1996 *New Yorker*: "It should be noted that *PASSING THROUGH* is addressed to Kunitz's wife, Elise Asher; this is no last will and testament but a love poem. The whole effect is vintage Kunitz: lines unforced and seemingly spontaneous yet so ineffable that one can almost image them having been inscribed on papyrus. To write this calmly and collectedly, with a sanity so finely tempered that it acquires a spooky prescience, one has to have done more than simply endure. And such is clearly the story behind the exemplary resilience of grand old man Stanley Kunitz: the fullness of time hasn't just left his senses intact but has concentrated his mind wonderfully. That dust has moved mountains."

FWS applauds the selection of Stanley Kunitz who had a close friendship of many years with William Stafford.

\*\*\*\*\*This year start out the school year right.

Donate a book of poetry to your local school library.\*\*\*\*\*

## PIERRE RIOUX FUNDS STAFFORD POETRY BROADSIDES

Dr. Pierre Rioux, FWS member from Minot, ND, has donated funds to produce several letterpress broadsides of William Stafford poems. Rioux's funding permits FWS to use the sale of these broadsides to fund FWS projects. (See back page for purchase information.)

Doug Stow, FWS member from Half Moon Bay, CA, sets the type by hand and uses his letterpress to print each broadside. The second of these featuring "Why I Am Happy," is illustrated by Barbara Stafford and will be ready for purchase in early September.

This past year Rioux received several honoraria for his professional work which he chose to donate to a non-profit organization, FWS. To prepare himself for questions in a recent phone interview, Rioux wrote about how poetry became a part of his life:

"My interest in poetry stretches back quite a few years. While in grade school, I won a local poetry contest. During high school, I found several intriguing poems, but I couldn't quite put my finger on how they created their effect on me. My early adult life was busy with academia, work, interpersonal and other pursuits and poetry gradually faded as an ongoing interest. Middle age found me having accomplished what I had set out to do professionally and I then turned towards the larger world.

Poetry beckoned again. It suggested nuances of insights that were often lacking elsewhere. Also, by that time I had become satiated with the primacy of the empty visual image in our culture and sought out the printed word as an alternative means for self-exploration. Mary Barnard's translation of Sappho opened my eyes, again, to the wonder of the human spirit, and how this sense can be communicated to others through poetry.

Horace and Lucretius seemed to speak with an ongoing relevance to modern day life. Omar Khayam lit an incense of reflective images through his quatrains. Europeans such as Matthew Arnold, Edward Fitzgerald, Constantine Cavafy, Philip Larkin, Juan Ramon Jimenez, Fernando Pessoa and others enlarged my scope of appreciation. The haiku masters

Basho, Issa and Buson proved that a few words carry larger meanings. Americans such as Edgar Allan Poe, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Edwin Arlington Robinson, H.D., Robert Frost, Robert Francis, Mary Oliver and Dana Gioia brought their ideas forward in luminous ways.

### **Poets are the heartbeat of a culture.**

Odd how some things come into our lives in roundabout ways. While reading The Wall Street Journal, I came across a piece describing the creation of poetry intended to be sited in natural settings. I contacted the National Park Service, and through them was able to obtain the Methow River Poems video. That's how William Stafford came into my life.

"Where We Are" and "Ask Me" are so beautiful they hurt. **Reading them reminds me of what a privilege it is to be consciously alive.**

I bought several of his books and gave them as gifts to friends. This led to further forays and brought other favorites forward: "Why I am Happy," "My Name Is William Tell," "Brother Wind," "All White," "August," "Yes," "The Last Class," and "The Way It Is." It became clear to me that William Stafford is a healer.

**Through his poems the rough edges of our experiences have a chance to be redeemed for a more comprehensive wholeness.** There is a quiet strength behind his words. I work as a psychiatrist and thus have a reservoir of direct knowledge about how our lives can be self-limiting. Without resorting to a Pollyannaish optimism, he finds a way to remind us of the restorative parts of our existence.

Our essential aloneness is tempered by seeing that we still can, and must connect with others. This serves as a counterweight to the shadow side of our lives, neither ignoring nor deferring to it. At times I have the sense of water flowing over a smooth round stone when reading Stafford. At other times it is as if I catch a glimpse of a stunning view through a canopy of trees - a real treasure. Then I realize a greater pleasure: he is the one pulling the branches aside so I can see this. He is a master of weaving time, identity and experience together in ways that invite quiet contemplation, sometimes sadness and often a profound sense

**TOWARD OREGON: One Writer's  
Natural History INCLUDES SECTION  
ON STAFFORD**

John Daniel's new book, *Toward Oregon: One Writer's Natural History* will be published next year by Milkweed Editions as part of their new "Credo" series. Other writers featured in the series include Rick Bass, Pattiann Rogers, Scott Russell Sanders and William Kittredge.

The following excerpt from the book appears here with permission of Daniel, FWS member living in Elmira, OR.

"In 1979 William Stafford came down to teach at a Klamath Falls writing conference. His poems, as he read them aloud and later as I read them on the page, seemed to create around themselves an intense cumulative quiet, an aura of possibility. They weren't rhetoric, I realized, thinking painfully of my own work in contrast. The poems made no claims but simply opened like flowers--or didn't open, but even the ones that stayed obscure to me glinted with hidden life, like fish in deep water. They called forth an alertness, a generosity of attention, by offering the same. In one of his poems that night ["Vocation"], Stafford read a line spoken in the poem by his father to Stafford's boy-self: 'Your job is to find what the world is trying to be.' That was the poet's work, I decided. That would be worth all the years and concentration I could possibly put into it."

Daniel further quotes Stafford. 'Anyone who breathes is in the rhythm business... and anyone who speaks is engaged with language. A creative writer is one who gives sustained attention to the promptings of language and is willing to follow where they lead. Often they lead nowhere, but sometimes they take you to a wholeness, a crystallization of sense and sound that would never have occurred if you hadn't trusted your blind and tentative initial jottings. That wholeness is a poem. If it's a bad poem, good. You've got it out and now can make yourself available to what's next. The well is deep, and unless you ignore it for too long or start telling it what it ought to yield, it's inexhaustible.'"

***For William Stafford***

*A gentle, quiet-spoken man.  
As a teacher,  
he seemed to wholly possess  
the quality of attention.  
It wasn't so much  
he didn't talk  
but even his talking  
seemed to listen.  
At 19, I had plenty to say--  
I'd just learned to speak  
and wasn't ready yet  
for hearing.  
But somewhere deep in the ear  
I heard  
and planted, long dormant,  
the seeds of resolve  
to someday enter  
that quiet space  
where the ear speaks  
and the tongue listens.*

***Kimberly King***

*(storyteller of Native American  
tales and former student of  
William Stafford)*

=====  
Friends of William Stafford **Board of Directors:** Joseph Soldati, Portland, OR, Chair; Nan Atzen, Newberg, OR; Brian Booth, Portland, OR; Martha Gatchell, Drain, OR; Robert Hamm, West Linn, OR; Ceil Huntington, Lake Oswego, OR; Paulann Petersen, Portland, OR; Shelley Reece, Portland, OR; Dennis Schmidling, Tualatin, OR; Helen Schmidling, Tualatin, OR; Nancy Winklesky, Oregon City, OR; Patty Wixon, Ashland, OR. **National Advisors:** Marvin Bell, Robert Bly, Kurt Brown, Lucille Clifton, James DePreist, Donald Hall, Maxine Kumin, Li-Young Lee, Ursula K. Le Guin, Chris Merrill, W.S. Merwin, Naomi Shihab Nye, Gary Snyder. FRIENDS OF WILLIAM STAFFORD NEWSLETTER is published quarterly. NEWSLETTER articles also appear on the **FWS Website:** [www.wmstafford.org](http://www.wmstafford.org). Send inquires and correspondence to Friends of William Stafford, P.O. Box 592, Lake Oswego, OR 97034 or E-mail: [friends@wmstafford.org](mailto:friends@wmstafford.org)

**GROUP GATHERS IN VANCOUVER, WA, TO HONOR STAFFORD**

A National Poetry Month Celebration of William Stafford's work took place at Huckleberry's Book Store, Vancouver, WA, on April 16, 2000. Approximately eighty people attended. The group was welcomed by David Benedicktus of the NW Poetry Coalition. Sixteen local poets shared their memories of Stafford, read from his poetry and from their own. Betty Barton, Vancouver FWS member, was event organizer.

Copies of a chapbook were published by Northwest Poetry Coalition and distributed at

the event. Readers whose work is in the chapbook who read include Joyce Ackley, Melinda Bell, Chuck Bender, David Benedicktus, John Benson, Tod Braunwart, Howard Franklin, Chris Haberman, Barbara Hamby, David Hankins, Judith Irwin, Betty Johnson, Cindy Kidder, David Karacke, Mark Martin, and Cap Peck. Dorothy Stafford also talked about her husband, beginning, "There were challenges living with a poet, myself being a peasant!" She recalled asking him how it felt to have a degree of renown and recognition. He answered, "I never inhale."

\*\*\*\*\*  
**BROADSIDE OF POEM BY WILLIAM STAFFORD BENEFITS FWS**

Sales are continuing of a beautiful letterpress broadside created by Doug Stow at Paper Crane Letterpress, Half Moon Bay, CA. The 9 x 12" broadside of "A Ritual to Read to Each Other," uses Stonehenge paper with Bookman and Cloister Bold type with rust and black ink runs. Delivery of orders is within one week. Send your check for \$10 plus \$3.20 for shipping payable to Friends of William Stafford to Nan Atzen, 29365 NE Putnam Road, Newberg, OR 97132.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

**SECOND BROADSIDE WILL BE AVAILABLE IN EARLY SEPTEMBER**

A second broadside using a similar paper and ink runs as "A Ritual to Read to Each Other" is being created by Doug Stow of Paper Crane Letterpress, Half Moon Bay, CA. This broadside features the Stafford poem, "Why I Am Happy," with an illustration by artist Barbara Stafford. Sales will begin in September. Send your check for \$10 plus \$3.20 for shipping payable to Friends of William Stafford to Nan Atzen, 29365 NE Putnam Road, Newberg, OR 97132.

\*\*\*\*\*

*W* friends of WILLIAM STAFFORD  
P.O. Box 592, Lake Oswego, OR 97034