



On Bill Stafford's Birthday — A Visit to the Mountain

By Sulima Malzin

The opening lines of William Stafford's poem, "The Magic Mountain," seem to best exemplify the 2004 Stafford Symposium at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, which took place on January 17. Like visitors to the mountain, people had come out to talk, to listen, and to wander around with words and memories of the highly esteemed poet, on what would have been his 90th birthday.

Some 70 celebrants gathered in the small conference center at the Northwest Writing Institute to spend a Saturday morning exploring and pondering Stafford's attitudes about pacifism and the writing life, and to learn something new about themselves.

Facilitating the interactive symposium were Kim Stafford, the Writing Institute's director; Paul Merchant, the William Stafford archivist; and FWS board member and NWI instructor, Ann Staley.

The Magic Mountain

A book opens. People come out, bend this way and talk, ponder, love, wander around while pages turn. Where did the plot go?

Why did someone sing just as the train went by? Here come chapters with landscape all over whatever happens when people meet. Now a quiet part: a hospital glows in the dark.

I don't think that woman with the sad gray eyes will ever come back. And what does it mean when the Italian has so many ideas? Maybe a war is coming. The book is ending. Everyone has a little tremolo in them; all are going to die and it's cold and the snow, and the clear air. They took someone away. It's ending, the book is ending. But I thought – never mind. It closes.

William Stafford

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Throughout the morning, the voice of Bill Stafford was heard playing from the CD, *The Unknown Good In Our Enemies—William Stafford Reads Poems of Reconciliation*. Material taken from the two most recently published books of Stafford's work, *The Answers Are Inside the Mountains—Meditations on the Writing Life*, and *Every War Has Two Losers—William Stafford On Peace And War*, served as the catalysts for a morning of reflection and discussion.

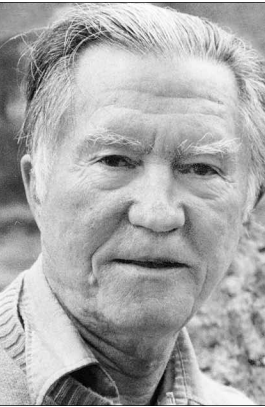
Following introductory remarks by Kim and his mother, Dorothy Stafford, Paul Merchant engaged participants in a spirited dialogue prompted by questions posed in *The Answers Are Inside the Mountains*, about the nature and purpose of poetry. Reflecting on his writing life in 1990, Stafford wrote: "Should poetry inspire? If not, is it all right if it does? ... Are poets inviting others to engage for an interval in whatever topic the poem



Photo/Mike Markee

Kim's daughter, Rosemary Stafford.

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Photo/Naomi Shihab Nye

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A Visit to the Mountain... *Continued from Page 1*

is on? Is poetry a message?" People wrestled with the questions, wondering what might lie behind or underneath them, but quickly realized that this was truly an experiential workshop, and that even if there were answers, probably none would be forthcoming from outside themselves.

Next, from an index card on which Stafford organized notes for his writing classes, came this query: "Assessing Writing: 1) Is this topic significant? Yes. 2) Is the meaning clear? Yes. 3) Is the writer good? Yes. 4) Is the writing interesting? No. Can this sequence be justified?" There were no answers here either.

The third portion of Merchant's presentation focused on the question, "What Happens When You Say or Write a Word?" Here is some of what Stafford wrote in July of 1971. "Some questions should not be asked—or, at least, not answered; for an answer is an entry into a point of view or set of assumptions you may not really share. The answers are inside the mountains." As you might guess, the discussion that followed was lively, thoughtful, and provocative. It even brought to mind, for some of Stafford's former students, the frustration they felt when their teacher insisted that they find their own answers.

The second part of the program, led by Ann Staley, directed the audience's attention to four poems taken from *Every War Has Two Losers*. They were "Poetry," in which the tender line, "it's a flower in the parking lot of The Pentagon" appears; "For The Unknown Enemy," reprinted on page 12 of this newsletter; and "The Star In The Hills," in which Stafford is slyly tempted to take an oath of loyalty to a star—but only if it's bigger than California. Last was "A Memorial."

After some discussion of all four poems, and listening again to the voice of Bill Stafford reading "For The Unknown Enemy," small groups came together to respond in writing to particular lines and phrases. People explored what "the great mutual darkness" might be or how it felt to let ourselves "glimpse what our mind long turned away from."

To close the program, Kim Stafford initiated dialogue from a selected list of his father's daily writings. They were taken from a chapter entitled "Citizen Here On Earth" in *Every War Has Two Losers*. Among them, from September 1967, "Those who champion democracy, but also make a fetish of never accepting anything they don't agree with—what advantage do they see in democracy?"

Perhaps the most engaging discussion focused on writing from October of 1968: "The people we found alien in the 1940s—pressing for victory, setting up the cold war, developing the bomb, strengthening the West—have turned against the war in Vietnam and have increased attempts to achieve 'social justice.' This change, though, is motivated and marked by much that still separates us: 1) aggression is a means of attaining the ends; 2) the machinations of certain evil persons must be stopped; 3) distrust, punishment, stern behavior is essential." Not wanting something as simple as word changes to be construed as answers, the group, nevertheless, suggested that it might be reconciliation that attains the desired ends, that utilizing the resources of everyone could deter the need for machinations, and that mutuality may be what is truly essential.

So ended the visit to the magic mountain for this year. Seventy people, many of them strangers earlier that morning, had wandered together through the ever-changing landscape of turning pages and stood here together, letting a part of their minds escape. Now the book was gently closing, leaving everyone with their little tremolos and another year to go inside their own mountains.

A Memorial

In Nagasaki they built a little room
dark and soundproof where you can
go in all alone and close the door and cry.

William Stafford

Used with permission from the Estate of William Stafford

Li-Young Lee Receives \$25,000 Fellowship

Renowned poet and Friends of William Stafford national advisor Li-Young Lee is the recipient of the 69th Fellowship from the Academy of American Poets. This annual award is chosen by the Academy's Board of Chancellors, which includes the current U.S. Poet Laureate, Louise Glück, and Yusef Komunyakaa. It is granted for "distinguished poetic achievement" and includes a stipend of \$25,000.

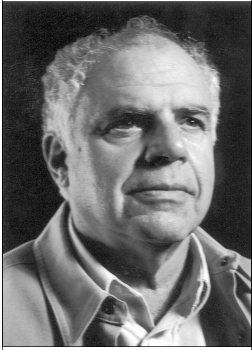
Li-Young Lee was born in Jakarta, Indonesia in 1957, and he and his family emigrated to the United States in 1964. He is the author of several books of poetry including *Book of My Nights* (2001), and *Rose* (1986), which was given the Delmore Schwartz

Memorial Poetry Award. In his career, Lee has been awarded the Lannan Literary Award, the Whiting Writer's Award, and he received fellowships from both the National Endowment of the Arts and the Guggenheim Foundation.

Past recipients of the Academy of American Poets Fellowships include Robert Frost, e.e. cummings, and William Carlos Williams. The academy was established in 1934 and gives away more than \$200,000 in awards every year to American poets in all stages of their careers, and also administers the National Poetry Month, which is April. You can visit their website at www.poets.org.

Great Writing is Timeless in Nature, Moving in Spirit

From the Chair



Joseph Soldati

Poet Stanley Kunitz, who is ninety-eight, said at a reading he was giving in Provincetown, Massachusetts, this summer: “If we want to know what it felt like to be alive at any given moment in the long odyssey of the race, it is to poetry we must turn.” (Quoted by Dana Goodyear, *The New Yorker*, Sept. 1, 2003).

This quotation came to mind just the other day when, while visiting friends, I saw a copy of Homer’s *Iliad* on the table, and I got to thinking how the great poems of antiquity connect us in the way that Kunitz mentions. What must it have been like to hear the *Iliad* read or recited for the first time? Or the *Odyssey*? Virgil’s *Aeneid*? *Job*? Or, even before these, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*?

All of these works, of course, were told and/or composed long before our Common Era, *Gilgamesh* dating from around 2700 BCE. Who among us does not feel, every time we open their pages, a quickening of breath, a slight tingle in the blood, an increase in heart-rate? Reading these great epics, we experience friendship, sorrow, passion, death, descents into the realm of the dead, longing, heartbreak, deceit, defeat, triumph, and homecoming.

We walk about Ur and ancient Mesopotamia, sail “the wine dark” sea of the Greek world before it was even called the Greek world, sit on the stinking dung heap with Job listening to his

infuriatingly smug comforters, and come ashore with that band of Troy’s survivors to Rome before it became an Empire: “Aeneas gave the ship / Her head before the wind, drawing toward land / At the Euboian settlement of Cumae” (VI.1-3).

I never read or, more precisely now, re-read any of these without re-acquiring my pagan demeanor, becoming all the better for doing so.

Which is not to say that poetry of the Common Era has little to move us, to show us what is meant—and means—to be alive in our own time. From the poetry of Beowulf to Dante to Shakespeare to Keats to Emily Dickinson to Yeats to Lorca to William Carlos Williams to Gwendolyn Brooks to William Stafford to Kunitz and other poets writing today, we connect with our race at our moment—its blessings and woes (of which there are a lot of both).

Which is to say (and I’ve taken the long way to get here) that none of this was more apparent than at the Stafford Commemorative Readings held this past January. If you attended just one of those readings, you are aware not only of how Stafford’s poems mark our current on-going journey through the world, but how the poems by the featured poets do likewise.

Of Stafford’s poems, “At the Un-National Monument Along the Canadian Border” was ubiquitous, which at this time in American history seems appropriate. That you came away from the reading you attended either refreshed or troubled or, more likely, both refreshed and troubled, is to know that you are alive at this moment.

FWS National Advisor, Ursula LeGuin, Receives Margaret A. Edwards Award

Ursula K. LeGuin, who lives in Portland, Oregon, is the latest recipient of the Margaret A. Edwards Award from the American Library Association (ALA). This award honors an author’s lifetime achievement for writing books with proven longevity. Sponsored by *School Library Journal* magazine, it recognizes authors’ work in helping adolescents become aware of themselves and addressing questions about their role and importance in relationships, society, and in the world.

The Awards Committee chair, Francisca Goldsmith, commented that in the *Earthsea* series, “young protagonists mature not only physically, but also spiritually, as Ms. LeGuin’s real world readers must in order to navigate young adulthood.” LeGuin will accept the \$2,000 award at a luncheon during the ALA’s Annual Conference in Orlando, Florida, June 24-30. Look for a feature story about her in the next issue of this newsletter.

‘Catalyst’Airs Stafford Reading from CD

Lydia Howell produces and hosts a weekly public affairs program called “Catalyst: Politics & Culture” on KFAI Community Radio in Minneapolis/St. Paul on Tuesday mornings at 11. She states, “As a writer and reader, all my life I’ve felt poetry is ‘soulfood.’ William Stafford has been a lovely discovery for me. Feeling that poetry is first ‘in the ear,’ not on the page, the CD, *The Unknown Good In Our Enemies*, is a magnificent experience.”

Howell broadcast the voice of Bill Stafford reading his poems, “Entering History” and “For The Unknown Enemy” on her two-hour December holiday special, “Making Peace On Earth.” She says she’ll be playing more poems from the CD because “it’s not enough to just ‘state the facts’ if we want to create peace with justice. In order to open people’s minds, often you must begin with moving their hearts.” Lydia Howell believes that poets like William Stafford do both. You will find “Catalyst” on the web at www.kfai.org.

A Search for Meaning Leads to Portland and the FWS

By Hermon Joyner

It was the search for a life of meaning and significance that fueled Larry Overmire and Nancy MacDonald's journey from New York City to Los Angeles to Columbus, Ohio, and finally to Portland, Oregon. It was the impetus behind their transitions from the world of acting to a life of writers and poets. It was the motivation for their connections to the poetry of William Stafford and the Friends of William Stafford. Larry smiled and said, "We're just trying to find something meaningful."



Photo: Hermon Joyner

Nancy McDonald and Larry Overmire

Larry and Nancy have the polished bearing and good looks you associate with movie stars. Nancy's face is fluid and animated, going through a dazzling slideshow of emotions and movements with every breath and sentence. With Larry, you see his penetrating dark brown eyes, and his open and warm expression.

They led parallel lives growing up in Ohio within an hour of each other. Each fell in love with the world of acting and theater, living in New York City and L.A. They've worked in soap operas, performed Shakespeare, and worked with the top directors and actors in America, like Brian DePalma and Tom Hanks. Together they founded and ran the Writer's Lab in Hollywood, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the creation of quality writing and programming in the entertainment industry. Yet, despite their accomplishments, the desire for a quiet life of value has never left them. It was the pursuit of this life that drew them to Portland and the Friends of William Stafford.

Nancy lived in New York City for 12 years from 1979 to 1991, working in soap operas like *All My Children* and *One Life to Live*. She also helped start the Shakespeare Stage Company there and appeared in productions like *Twelfth Night*. Larry lived in New York from 1981 to 1991 and appeared in a Broadway production of *Amadeus* and soaps such as *Loving* and *All My Children*. Despite the relatively small theater community and the fact that, for a while, Larry was subletting an apartment from Nancy's best friend, they never ran into each other.

Larry decided to move to L.A. in 1991 and was going to stay with his friend, Steve Tschudy. When he arrived, Steve told him that another guest from New York was still staying there, and Larry would have to find somewhere else. The guest who wouldn't leave turned out to be Nancy. It didn't take long for Larry and Nancy to decide they were meant for each other. Nancy said, "We had all these connections, but somehow we had never met. But when we did, we never left each other's side."

The idea to get married hit them when they were planning a vacation in Las Vegas in 2000. They drove to the Little White Chapel (the one recently used by Britney Spears) at ten in the morning and asked for the "I Do, Do You?" special. Pastor Steve came out to their car and asked if they wanted religious or secular. They opted for the secular. They filled out the paperwork and Pastor Steve knelt by the car door. Nancy said, "We didn't even have to get out of the car! He married us right there." There was music playing, and when it was over the gate in front of the car opened and out they drove. Larry said with a laugh, "We were in shock. Did we just do that?"

In 1996, family obligations and a desire to try another life besides acting caused them to move back to Ohio. While they were there, they moved into new careers. For Nancy, it was a busy time of corporate training and project management. It was also a time to focus on her journal writing and personal poetry. She continues to set aside time every day for her writing. For Larry, he decided to try out the life of a writer and poet. In the five years since he threw himself into poetry, he has amassed a fantastic track record. He has published more than 700 poems in over 200 publications. Nancy said, "Like Stafford, Larry is a prolific poet."

The ability Larry developed for creating characters had a direct effect on his poetry. He said, "As an actor, I'm constantly playing different roles. This enabled my poetry to take on different voices. I'm a very eclectic poet." Another connection to Stafford is Larry's preference for accessible work. He sees Stafford and his poetry as down-to-earth and unpretentious.

In 2001, once the family issues were settled in Ohio, Larry and Nancy were ready to move. Scott Campbell, a friend and yoga instructor from South Carolina, told them that he knew a guy in Portland, Oregon who absolutely loved it there. Being adventurous people, they decided to give it a try. Nancy laughed, "I remember saying, 'Now is Oregon west of Washington?' I had no idea where it was." They were ready to pack up and move at the recommendation of their friend, but Nancy's sister convinced them to fly out first and check it out. Nancy replied with a grin, "Well, we could do that." They spent a week in Portland, found an apartment, flew back and moved. It was a grueling drive across the country in January.

Today, both are extremely active in teaching acting classes at the Oregon Children's Theater Acting Academy and in public schools throughout the region. Nancy also teaches acting classes for Portland Community College and is a regular lecturer for the Lunch and Learn series at the downtown Portland library. Larry has created a successful workshop for teaching public speaking to elementary students called *Loud and Clear*.

The couple spent the first few months learning about their new home by hanging out at the West Linn and Lake Oswego libraries. They were drawn to William Stafford as soon as they saw his work, and checked out every available book and video

Still Life with Knife

I'd like to peel myself
like an apple
discard that thin skin
bruised so easily,
cut out the hollows
where worms have dug their holes,
carefully remove the seeds
clutched tight within the core,
plant them in some new place
warm and sunny,
rich soil and plenty of water
where thirsty roots can finally take hold.

Perhaps then
my branches opening to the sky
I could, with outstretched limb
bring from bud to blossom
that rarest of fruit
pure, sweet, unblemished
the incomparable red
delicious.

Laurence Overmire
Used with the author's permission

about him. It was there at the library that they picked up a brochure about the Friends of William Stafford. Nancy said, "For me, learning about Stafford was the same as learning about our new home. Now, I feel like I know the man, even though he's not physically present. He's so present in his work." Larry agreed with Nancy and said, "He's down to earth and there is nothing fake about him. You can usually get to know poets better through their poems, than by just talking to them."

Concerning the Friends of William Stafford and the connections they have discovered there, Larry said, "The very fact that we have Stafford in common, gives us a lot of shared ideals. The people who like Stafford have a certain view of what poetry is." Nancy added, "We may be all different people that are members of this organization, but what we share is a viewpoint, what we share is a value, what we share is a poem and a word. And that is precious."

Looking at Larry Overmire and Nancy MacDonald, it is easy to see life as a long string of opportunities. The important lesson is figuring out what you can do in the time you have. Nancy said, "We know there's not enough time, and so we have to choose and ask, 'What do I really want to do right now?' It really is a matter of seeing the range of possibilities and acting on them." She adds with a smile, "We're squeezing in as much as we can."

41st Lake Oswego Arts Festival to Commemorate Hometown Poet

This year, the 41st annual Festival of the Arts will take place the weekend of June 25-27 in downtown Lake Oswego, Oregon, the long-time family home of William Stafford. This year, as a special tribute to its internationally esteemed hometown poet, the festival is making poetry a part of the Arts Chronicle exhibit. This exhibit features work that reflects the life and spirit of the Northwest.

Board member, Patricia Carver, has accepted the Festival's invitation to represent the Friends of William Stafford. She has invited eight area poets to read work they have written that is in keeping with the regional theme. The eight are Jane Glazer, Paulann Peterson, David Hedges, Joan Maiers, Don Hynes, Maggie Choula, Sherron Norlen, and Primus St. John.

A variety of poetry readings will take place throughout the three-day weekend. At least one will feature high school poets. There will also be a prelude reading on Thursday, June 24, at the Lake Oswego Library. Look for updated information as it becomes available on our website www.williamstafford.org

January Birthday Events Roundup

January was a busy month for the board members and volunteers who contributed time and talent to the annual Stafford Birthday Events. More than 37 readings were held in the Portland metro area, around the state, and in Washington, Kentucky, Wisconsin, and Maine.

What follows are reports on several of the events, as sent our way by the organizers and hosts. We wish to thank them, as well as all of the other volunteers who helped set up, bake goodies, host readings and read, all in the spirit of William Stafford. We send a special “thank you” also to the members of the Stafford family, Dorothy, Kim, Barbara, and Kit, who made special guest appearances at a number of the gatherings.

If you are local to the Portland area and happened to miss all of the events, or didn’t get to as many as you would have liked, you don’t have to wait until next January for the next one. The great snow and ice storm of the new year struck down the first of the readings, which has been rescheduled right in the middle of National Poetry Month at the Tigard City Library on April 14 at 7 p.m. Hosted by Tim Barnes, it will feature guest readers Steve Arndt, Gerry Foote, Jim Grabill, Diane Holland, Dan Skach-Mills, Carolyn Moore, and FWS board member, Dennis Schmidling.

If you’d like to host a Stafford Birthday Event in your area next year, please contact Paulann Petersen at Paulann@Paulann.net. You’ll be first in line when the schedule gets set up.

‘A Valley Like This’ Sets the Theme for Corvallis Event • By Linda Gelbrich

The poem, “A Valley Like This,” was the theme for the Corvallis area William Stafford Celebration held on January 17. The poem was offered to inspire poets and visual artists, as well as the community at large, and it did just that! The suggested theme sparked Roger Weaver’s work with children’s art in an elementary school and resulted in an intergenerational exhibit of 68 poems and visual art pieces, at the Corvallis Library from January 17–31.

On Saturday the 17th, Weaver, a retired OSU professor and published poet led 22 participants through a poetry workshop, and 15 attended a showing of Stafford videos. The finale was an evening reading attended by 65 people. Featured readers were Chris Anderson, a poet and non-fiction writer who is part of the English Department faculty at OSU, Wyn Schoch, a nature poet and local psychiatrist, and Michael Spring, yet another local, published poet, as well as Jean Heath, who at “80-something” is still involved in reader’s theater. Unfamiliar with Stafford’s work, she admitted that she quickly “fell in love him via his poetry.” Jana Zvibleman emceed the event, during which members of the all-age audience had an opportunity to read favorite Stafford poems.

In Washington, They Came on Skis and Snowshoes to Talk About Peace • By Diane Allen

On Saturday, January 10, 14 people made their way to the White Salmon Valley Community Library on snowshoes and skis, for the 3rd Annual Stafford Reading in the Columbia River Gorge.

Only a few wanted to read poems; among them, “Ask Me” and “A Ritual To Read to Each Other,” so I read a lot from *Every War Has Two Losers*. This led to an interesting discussion of conscientious objection. Some of the folks attending were part of the Columbia River Fellowship for Peace, a branch of the same Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) that Stafford was a member of for more than 50 years.

Our local high school English teacher, Doug Miller, talked about how he uses “Traveling Through The Dark” to teach poetry to his students, and told us how this worked. First, the students wonder why the poem doesn’t rhyme, and then they are taken in by the first-person voice.

Again this year, many new people were introduced to the work of William Stafford through the great publicity done by Jennifer Hull at the Fort Vancouver Library System, White Salmon. Hope all the readings go as well as ours. Peace in 2004.

Lower Columbia College Combines BroadSides and Readings • By Joseph Green

Having to reschedule the William Stafford birthday celebration because of snow made it possible to combine the opening of the traveling broadside exhibit *How The Ink Feels*, with the readings. I’m sure we would have had a larger crowd if we didn’t have to postpone, but it was a terrific reading anyway.

In the college art gallery, an audience of 37 heard eight readers share their own and Stafford’s poetry, surrounded by the magical influence of beautifully, carefully prepared poetry broadsides.



Photo/Richard Berry



Photo/Mel White

Dorothy Stafford in Salem (at far left) and the crowd at Joseph-Beth Booksellers in Lexington, Kentucky.

“Celebrating William Stafford: Poet and Person” at Salem Library • By Eleanor Berry

An audience of 60 responded enthusiastically to the rich variety of perspectives on William Stafford’s life and legacy shared at a birthday celebration in Salem on Sunday, January 18. The two-hour program, organized by Janet Markee and me, featured Dorothy Stafford, Paul Merchant, Michael Markee, Steve Jones, Ann Staley, Peter Sears, and Ingrid Wendt. (Vincent Wixon was unable to participate because of a death in the family.) The presenters gave us insight into the family life in which Stafford’s work was embedded, the ethical concerns that informed it, and the ways it continues to touch other writers.

Dorothy Stafford, widow of the poet, launched the first hour with readings from a book she had compiled of *Lost Words*—imaginative bits of language, uttered mostly by the Stafford children in the midst of family life. Merchant, who with Wixon, selected, edited, and compiled writings from the Stafford archives for *The Answers Are Inside the Mountains*, read passages from that book, as well as from *Every War Has Two Losers*, Kim Stafford’s collection of his father’s writings on war and peace. Completing the first part of the program, Michael Markee recounted some of his and Wixon’s experiences in preparing video documentaries of Stafford’s writing life, then showed his short video, *The Methow River Poems*, with readings of the poems by Garrison Keillor and Naomi Shihab Nye as well as Stafford himself.

Following an intermission of cider, fruit, homemade cookies and lively conversation, writing teachers Jones and Staley led off the second hour, highlighting precepts they had drawn from Stafford’s example—principally the notion that everyone can write and that regular journal-writing can lead to wonderful language, images, and insights. They also shared writings of their

students and of their own. Poets Sears and Wendt then talked about how their encounters with Stafford and his poetry had affected their own poetic careers. They emphasized different aspects of Stafford’s legacy to younger colleagues. For Sears, Stafford gave permission to be wild in poetry, and showed the power of an offhand voice and receptiveness to the world. For Wendt, who concluded the formal part of the program with a moving tribute to Stafford as exemplar and mentor, he was a source of courage to say and do what she thought, exemplifying the inseparability of the writing and the person, showing her the value of a constant readiness for whatever might come.

Kentucky Poets Celebrate Stafford’s Birthday Again • By Diane Batts and Christine Delea

Poetry lovers gathered on January 24 at Joseph-Beth Booksellers in Lexington to celebrate the work of William Stafford. The host was an ex-Oregonian, poet and EKU faculty member Christine Delea. This was the 2nd annual reading in Kentucky. Featured readers were poets Rebecca Bailey, Harry Brown, Martha Ngwainmbi, Young Smith, and Jeff Worley. Each read a Stafford poem and one of their own, and a few talked about meeting him.

The knowledge the speakers imparted to the crowd about this conscientious objector included information about his politics, his poetry, his views on writing, and his personality. Audience members were then asked to share a favorite Stafford poem, and many of the 62 assembled did. Poets, teachers, editors, and students came forward to read and to share. The event concluded with a group photo of the featured readers, taken by the event’s official photographer (and Christine’s husband), Mel White. Kentucky is proud to have been the first state outside of the Pacific Northwest to hold a William Stafford Celebration, and the fact that so many had memories of him is proof of his amazing impact and influence.

January Birthday Events Roundup



Photo/Hermion Joyner

Paulann Petersen at Annie Bloom's Books, one of the eleven major Portland area events.

Stafford Celebration in Bend Draws

Large Crowd • By Judith Montgomery

I'm delighted to report that, even though it was an absolutely gorgeous day outside, 50 people came to the Deschutes County Library for the Stafford birthday celebration, Sunday, January 11.

The library's Liz Goodrich provided a conference room for the event, as well as "birthday cookies," punch, and coffee. She also did a great job of getting word out to the local newspapers, preparing handouts, and setting up an exhibit of Stafford books before the event, most of which were borrowed before the reading.

Our five featured readers were Kake Huck, Dorothy Leman, Robert Currie, John Martin, and Peter Lovering, and special guest Kit Stafford, Bill's daughter, who drove down from Sisters to talk about her dad. Wearing her father's gray vest, Kit played a few poems read by William Stafford on the CD *The Unknown Good in Our Enemies*. What a treat it was to hear his work read in his own inimitable voice.

Among other offerings from the audience, John Brown, an old friend of Stafford's and a former dean at Lewis and Clark College, spoke of his own relationship with the poet. He told a moving story about Bill's commitment to giving a dedication speech at Coe College in Iowa, even after the death of his son.

We were very pleased with the turnout and with the atmosphere of attentive listening and responsiveness to William Stafford's work and spirit. I'm already thinking about next year!

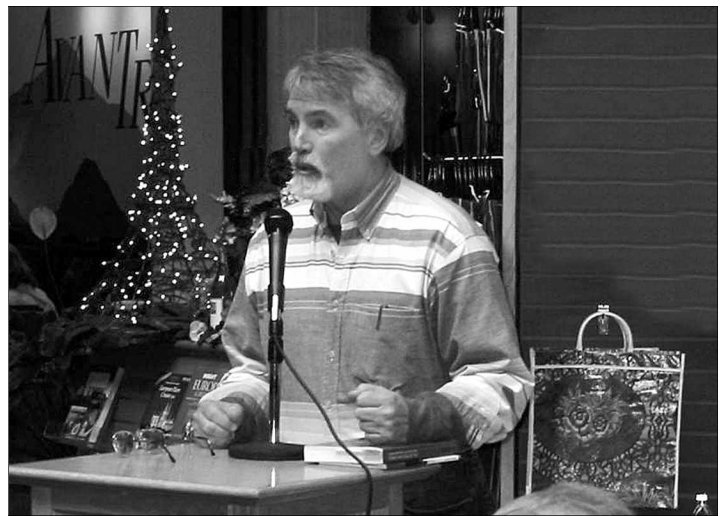
Wisconsin Celebrates Stafford's Birthday Twice • By R. Virgil Ellis

Wisconsin celebrated William Stafford's birthday with two bookstore readings on January 16 and 17. Friday night, we had freezing rain outside, but Bill's poems warmed us inside The Village Booksmith in Baraboo, where Jeannie Bergmann, Daniel Kunene, Kathy Miner, Myra Furse, and R. Virgil Ellis complemented (and definitely complimented!) their Stafford picks with their own poems.

The next night we slithered and slid on sheets of ice to get to Avol's Bookstore in Madison, where Ron Czerwien, Susan Elbe, Andrea Potos, Richard Roe and Lynn Patrick Smith held forth.

Each evening began with a video projection of William Stafford reading and discussing one of his poems, selected from a video tape I made in the hills above Salt Lake City in 1991. Bill's image and voice seemed to extend outward as the screen went dark, becoming a presence in the room, lending a grace to each reader. Receptive audiences at both bookstores expressed their pleasure at the long reach from Portland, which made these readings possible. Many commented at how serendipitously the poems seemed to dialog with each other, as if we were tapping into a continuing conversation. There were almost no duplications in the choice of poems, even through the open mic segments, which gave several of Bill's non-writing readers a chance to perform.

We are all grateful to the Friends of William Stafford, and to our hosts Annie Randall at The Village Booksmith and Ron Czerwien at Avol's for these celebrations. And there's no doubt we'll do it again next year!



Photo/Mel White

Jeff Worley talks about William Stafford at a Birthday Celebration in Lexington, Kentucky.

Patricia Carver serves as FWS Goodwill Ambassador to former U.S. Poet Laureate

Billy Collins, who has been praised as “an American original, a metaphysical poet with a funny bone and a sly questioning intelligence,” played to an audience of 2700 at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall in downtown Portland, OR, on January 14. Collins was momentarily overwhelmed by the sold-out crowd. He called them the largest indoor audience he’d ever read to, and commented that it was good to see that poetry wasn’t dead, after all. Named U.S. Poet Laureate in 2001, Collins stepped down in August, passing the two-year title to Louise Glück. Following his reading as part of the Portland Arts and Lectures series, Collins graciously received guests at a reception in his honor, where FWS board member, Patricia Carver, found him to be as charming off-stage as on.



Photo: Kathleen LaNier

Patricia Carver and Billy Collins

News, Notes & Opportunities

EDITORS’ NOTE: The items that appear in this column have been gleaned from a vast array of offerings. If you have something you think would be of interest to our readers, please send it to news@williamstafford.org, and we will do our best to include it. We’d like to offer a special note of thanks to Dennis Schmidling for our newly expanded website, www.williamstafford.org, where these and other literary events are posted.

HOW THE INK FEELS • The Friends of William Stafford traveling broadside exhibit, **HOW THE INK FEELS**, is currently being featured in the library at Western Wyoming Community College in Rock Springs, Wyoming. It will remain through mid-March, with a number of events planned around it.

PORTLAND LITERARY ARTS • ARTS AND LECTURE SERIES features **MATT GROENING** and **LYNDA BARRY** on March 18 at 7:30 pm. “...as entertaining as it will be thought-provoking.” **IAN MCEWAN**, winner of numerous literary honors, will speak on April 1 at 7:30 p.m. **POETRY DOWNTOWN** brings **PAUL MULDOON** to Portland on March 16, **CHARLES WRIGHT** on March 29, and **CAROL MUSKE-DUKES** on April 21. All will read from their work and respond to questions from the audience. For detailed information on these events, visit www.literary-arts.org or call Literary Arts at 503-227-2583.

MOUNTAIN WRITERS SERIES • A complete schedule and full descriptions of offerings can be found on their website, www.mountainwriters.org or by calling 503-236-4854. Here are two of our favorites: **CREATIVE NONFICTION** with Martha Gies—Explore the art of creative nonfiction writing using examples from James Baldwin, Edna O’Brien, Flannery O’Connor

and others. April 13–June 15, 2004, at Pacific Northwest College of Art, Portland, Oregon. **CHATEAU ST. JULIEN L’ARS: A WRITER’S WORKSHOP IN FRANCE**, Summer 2004—Looking for an excuse to go to France? This workshop offers total immersion in the art and craft of writing while located in a 16th century French Chateau.

WRITERS ON THE EDGE, sponsor of the Nye Beach Writers’ Series, has moved to The Dogwood, a downtown Newport, Oregon theater building. Access to the building through the end of 2004, granted by Marian and Dr. Steven Brown, allows Writers On The Edge to offer several new programs including a free critique group for high school students at 3:45 every Monday. There are also writing workshops for elders. The full schedule for 2004, with details of events is at www.writersontheedge.org. You may also call Carla Perry at 541-574-7708 or email her at cperry@pioneer.net.

APRILIS NATIONAL POETRY MONTH and there are many Oregon events in the preliminary planning stages – The annual **SILVERTON POETRY FESTIVAL**, the **OSPA** month of readings throughout the state, and others. We will post these on our website as dates are finalized.

THE OREGON STATE POETRY ASSOCIATION (OSPA) SPRING CONFERENCE will be held on Saturday, April 17 in The Commons at Marylhurst University. The all-day conference will feature open mic readings, a catered lunch, and the presentation of awards to winners of both the adult and student poetry contests. Cost to register is \$25. Go to www.oregonpoets.org.

News, Notes & Opportunities

THE FESTIVAL OF FAITH AND WRITING is a three-day event (April 22–24) that explores the connections between literature and faith with conversations and celebrations. This year's featured presenters are Li-Young Lee, Douglas Coupland, and Joyce Carol Oates. For more information, contact Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan at 616-526-6770 or on the web at www.calvin.edu/academic/engl/festival.htm.

THE AUSTIN INTERNATIONAL POETRY FESTIVAL will be held April 15-18 and will feature renowned poets such as John Kinsella, Joanna Catherine Scott, and Lucy English. If you're planning to be in Texas, contact AIPF at 512-349-9883 or email: info@aipf.org.

POETRY AND THE CREATIVE MIND • The second annual, star-studded benefit for the Academy of American Poets will be held April 6 at 6:30 p.m. at Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center, New York City. It will be hosted by co-chair Meryl Streep and features several of America's leading figures in the arts, music, and entertainment, such as Kevin Kline, Wynton Marsalis, and Diane Sawyer, reading their favorite poems. For tickets and information, email Beth Harrison at bharrison@poets.org.

FWS NATIONAL ADVISOR W.S. Merwin, and poet, Adrienne Rich, have agreed to serve as official advisors to **POETS AGAINST THE WAR**, and in upcoming weeks, several other poets' names should be added to the list. To read the full text of "A MESSAGE FOR THE NEW YEAR," from which this information was taken, visit www.poetsagainsthewar.org.

VITAL LINES, VITAL SIGNS • A conference exploring the relationship between poetry and medicine, and poetics and technology, will be held April 23–25 at Duke University, Center for the Study of Medical Ethics and Humanities, in Durham, North Carolina. Guests include FWS National Advisor, Li-Young Lee and other poets, scholars, and health care professionals. To learn more about this event, call 919-668-9000, or email poetryandmedicine@mc.duke.edu.

THE SECOND ANNUAL TIN HOUSE SUMMER WRITERS WORKSHOP • July 10–18 at Reed College, Portland, Oregon. Faculty and guests will include Whitney Otto, Chris Offutt, Aimee Bender, Anthony Swofford, and other nationally recognized writers. For more information visit www.tinhouse.com, or call 503-219-0622.

FUGUE LITERARY MAGAZINE is seeking entries for their annual literary contest. Fiction will be judged by Ehud Havazelet, and poetry by Ellen Bryant Voigt. The first place winner in each category will receive \$1,000 and publication in Fugue. Second and third place winners in both categories will also be published. To enter, send a check for \$15 along with

your story or poem to: Fugue Fiction Contest or Fugue Poetry Contest, 200 Brink Hall, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83844-1102. The entry fee includes a one-year subscription to the magazine. Postmark deadline is April 1.

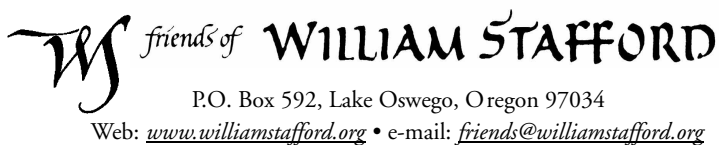
THE SITKA CENTER FOR ART AND ECOLOGY'S spring schedule for writers will include workshops with Annie Callen, (April 17–18) Joanne Mulcahy, (April 24–25) and Warren Slesinger, (May 8–9). For a full description of these offerings, including costs, visit www.sitkacenter.org, write to them at P.O. Box 65, Otis, OR 97368, or call 541-994-5485.

THE FROST PLACE: A CENTER FOR POETRY AND THE ARTS summer events take place at the 1915 farm home of Robert Frost in Franconia, New Hampshire. For more information call 603-823-5510 or visit www.frostplace.org. **5TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON POETRY AND TEACHING** (June 28–July 2) This conference examines the art of poetry and how it can be incorporated into the classroom setting. **THE FESTIVAL 2004** (August 1–7) accepts 45 writers from across the country to participate in six days of lectures, writing, critique, and readings, with nine resident faculty members. The festival has been an annual event since 1979.

PORTLAND'S ATTIC WRITERS WORKSHOP begins its Spring Schedule the week of April 4, offering fiction, novel-in-progress, journalism, memoir, and poetry workshops led by The Attic's founder, poet David Biespiel, and other teachers. For more information, call 503-963-8783, or contact David at info@atticwritersworkshop.com.

THE WILLIAM STAFFORD AWARD FOR POETRY will be given to the winner of Rosebud Magazine's annual poetry contest, along with a cash prize of \$1,000, publication in the magazine, and three copies of the contest issue. Postmark deadline is May 31 and winners will be announced on or about June 15. To enter, send three to five original, unpublished poems in any style or theme, with a check for \$10 and a self-addressed stamped envelope to: R. Virgil Ellis, c/o Stafford Poetry Award, PO Box 614, Cambridge, WI 53523. For more information and complete submission guidelines visit www.rsbd.net.

OREGON WRITING PROJECT OFFERS STAFFORD STUDIES FOR TEACHERS • July 12–16 at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Writing Project graduates and other interested teachers, K–college, are invited to participate. Ann Staley will lead the group in exploring the language and writing culture of William Stafford. For more information, contact the Oregon Writing Project at the Northwest Writing Institute, 503-768-6160.



MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide ongoing education in literature, particularly in poetry, in a way that will encourage and enrich a broad community of readers and writers. In the spirit of William Stafford's gifts as a teacher, we are also devoted to the free expression of literature and conscience. We seek ways to share his work and advance the spirit of his teaching and literary witness. We direct our work toward education in local communities, to contribute to the poet's legacy for generations to come.

BECOME A FRIEND OF WILLIAM STAFFORD

William Stafford's work ended with his death in 1993, but through the Friends of William Stafford, his gifts as a teacher continue. He traveled widely in pursuit of the free expression of literature and conscience. We continue to spread his work by advancing the spirit of his teaching in "a plain unmarked envelope passing through the world," By becoming a Friend of William Stafford, you will be contributing to his legacy for generations to come. Lifetime or annual donation includes:

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

Your donations support our newsletter and web site and the traveling broadside exhibit, How The Ink Feels, as well as the reading, writing and enjoyment of poetry.

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VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

(Check any you're interested in)

- [] Organize Poetry Readings in your community
[] Help with Refreshments/Set-up
[] Distribute Posters/Flyers
[] Publicize Events

How did you learn about Friends of William Stafford? _____

Payment: Please make check payable to "Friends of William Stafford" Mail to: Friends of William Stafford, PO Box 592, Lake Oswego, OR 97034.

Memberships (except for Lifetime) are due and renewable each January.

Please copy or use this form to renew and let us know if you change your address.

New Lifetime Members

- Doug Stow - 2004
Marjorie Briggs - 2004

New Members

Dec. '03-Feb. '04

- Gerda Edwards
Mary Ruhl
Helen McNaughton
Kay Exo
Juan Mobili
Ruth Hulett
Sharon Wortman
Elsie McFarland
Tamara Daley

Renewals through Feb. '04
45

Thank You, Members!

•••

You can now make your donations to FWS online.

Just go to our website, www.williamstafford.org and complete the donation form. You can pay by credit card or PayPal.

Your transaction is secure. REMINDER ...

if you have not yet renewed for 2004, do it now, using the form at left, or online.

FRIENDS OF WILLIAM STAFFORD Newsletter© is published quarterly. Editors: Sulima Malzin Hermon Joyner Publisher/Designer: Helen Schmidling Consultant/Webmaster: Dennis Schmidling Send comments, letters, news, and information on poetry events, etc. to: news@williamstafford.org or mail to Friends of William Stafford, PO Box 592, Lake Oswego, OR 97034

For the Unknown Enemy

This monument is for the unknown good in our enemies. Like a picture their life began to appear: they gathered at home in the evening and sang. Above their fields they saw a new sky. A holiday came and they carried the baby to the park for a party. Sunlight surrounded them.

Here we glimpse what our minds long turned away from. The great mutual blindness darkened that sunlight in the park, and the sky that was new, and the holidays. This monument says that one afternoon we stood here letting a part of our minds escape. They came back, but different. Enemy: one day we glimpsed your life.

This monument is for you.

William Stafford

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