

Friends of WILLIAM STAFFORD NEWSLETTER

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LAKE OSWEGO, OREGON

JUNE 1999

EXHIBITING POETRY BROADSIDES NOW FWS SPECIAL PROJECT

"Like Frost on a Window," an exhibit of work by thirty-eight American writers has completed a two-year tour of the United States and is ready to begin another tour, this time as a special project of Friends of William Stafford. Dena Brown, Director of Visual Arts Resources, Eugene, OR, which formerly toured the show, has officially turned over the exhibit to FWS. Nancy Winklesky will serve as Special Project Coordinator for the Broadside Exhibit.

The brochure describing "Like Frost on a Window" states, "The broadsides beautifully illuminate poetry and prose selections by well known writers. The show presents 67 letterpress broadsides and unbound book pages, as well as selections from commemorative folios and limited edition portfolios. Many are the result of collaboration between the printer, and other artists: illustrators, printmakers, calligraphers, and paper makers."

Eight of the broadsides are of poems by William Stafford. Other writers included in the exhibit are James Agee, Agha Shahid Ali, Marvin Bell, Wendell Berry, Robert Bly, Madeline DeFrees, Ivan Doig, Rita Dove, Martín Espada, Vi Gale, Tess Gallagher, Donald Hall, Mark Halperin, Joy Harjo, Robert Hass, Jane Hirshfield, Richard Hugo, Stanley Kunitz, David Lee, Li-Young Lee, Ursula K. Le Guin, Denise Levertov, Barry Lopez, Sandra Lopez, W.S. Merwin, E. Ethelbert Miller, Howard Nemerov, Naomi Shihab Nye, Carlos Reyes, Alberto Rios, Ralph Salisbury, Richard Shelton, Peggy Shumaker, Gary Snyder, Kim Stafford, James Welch, and Ingrid Wendt.

If you are interested in making arrangements to schedule the exhibit at your local library, museum, art gallery, or school, contact the project director:

Nancy Winklesky 115 Randall Court,
Oregon City, OR 97045

or Phone = 502-655-1443

or E-mail = thewinks@teleport.com



"STEWARDSHIP IN
FORESTRY"

WS POEM WILL HIGHLIGHT TILLAMOOK STATE FOREST DEDICATION JUNE 19

You are invited to join the Oregon Department of Forestry for the dedication of a special site in the Tillamook State Forest: the first facility in a network of planned opportunities for forest interpretation and education.

The Gales Creek Overlook dedication is set for 11 a.m. Saturday, June 19, 1999. The forest wayside is located 18 miles west of Forest Grove near milepost 35 on the Wilson River Highway. A permanent interpretive sign contains Stafford's poem, "The Tillamook Burn," which will be read as part of the dedication.

Because of limited parking at the site, a van will shuttle attendees to the overlook that morning. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to Chris Friend, Interpretive Program Coordinator, 503-359-7451 or email= cfriend@odf.state.or.us, and he will provide you with further logistical information.

ROBERT PINSKY'S FAVORITE POEM PROJECT LEAD TO STAFFORD POEMS BEING READ ACROSS THE NATION

This spring many poetry readings highlighted National Favorite Poem Project, giving people of all ages an opportunity to talk about their favorite poem and read it to an audience.

The program at Ashland High School, Ashland, Oregon, was typical of ones occurring all over the country. Twenty-four readers, ages nine to eight-two, stepped up to the microphone with their favorite poem which included ones by Whitman, Dickinson, Wagoner, Cummings, and others. William Stafford was the most read poet, with three of his poems chosen for the occasion: "Traveling through the Dark," "Tuned In Late One Night," and "You Reading This, Be Ready."

The following are excerpts from remarks made by Beverly Partridge and Frederick Rodgers, who read at the Robert Pinsky evening April 2 at Powell's Books in Portland, Oregon. Partridge reported, "A wonderful evening. Great array of chosen poems from Robert Service to Neruda."

Bill Stafford is well known around these parts, but he is also widely read across the United States and around the world. I have read his poems for all the time I've lived in Portland-- some forty years. It's hard to choose one favorite poem. There are so many, so clear, so in sync with my living. But I think the well-know one, "Ask Me," comes the closest to help.

The fact that this great poem this mentor, has the same feelings, wonderings about his life as I do about mine, gives me encouragement to go on, to keep looking, listening, to find the depths of my river. What the river says, that's what I say.

Beverly Partridge

Ask Me

Some time when the river is ice ask me
mistakes I have made. Ask me whether
what I have done is my life. Others
have come in their slow way into
my thought, and some have tried to help
or to hurt: ask me what difference
their strongest love or hate has made.

I will listen to what you say.
You and I can turn and look
at the silent river and wait. We know
the current is there, hidden; and there
are comings and goings from miles away
that hold the stillness exactly before us.
What the river says, that is what I say.

WILLIAM STAFFORD

It is a classroom commonplace to say that the personal or biographical foundation under any poem does not matter especially. "A Ritual to Read to Each Other," one of Bill's better known poems, stands quite firmly on the foundation of fundamental truths respected globally. That is why I chose it. "A Ritual" was written longhand at the Iowa School of Writing on June 23, 1953....there were revisions. For example, "...the darkness around us is deep" was added only after he sat down to type. Hudson Review smartly accepted it in October, 1953, never mind that William Stafford was not yet famous. In 1993, his friend Robert Bly chose The Darkness Around Us Is Deep as title for his own selection of Stafford poems.

I value this poem largely because it has always offered me a sharp, crystalline challenge coupled with a warning. Stafford slices off any mask I might want to wear or that I suspect another of wearing. I now know that even a minor untruth often hatches as a dragon. I am not coasting on a slick

paraphrase when I remind myself that a functional, enjoyable society depends on me and everyone I meet-- strangers included-- recognizing "...a voice, something shadowy, a remote, important region...." then, walking our talk, saying what matters, not what is supposed to matter.

Frederick G. Rodgers

from THE WAY IT IS: NEW & SELECTED POEMS (Graywolf Press, 1998)

A Ritual to Read to Each Other

If you don't know the kind of person I am
and I don't know the kind of person you are
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world
and following the wrong god home we may miss our star.

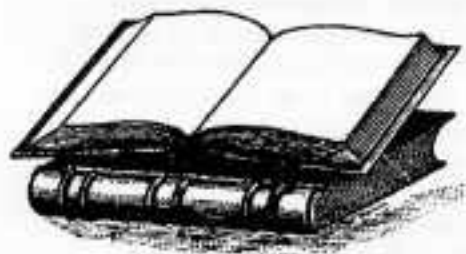
For there is many a small betrayal in the mind,
a shrug that lets the fragile sequence break
sending with shouts the horrible errors of childhood
storming out to play through the broken dyke.

And as elephants parade holding each elephant's tail,
but if one wanders the circus won't find the park,
I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty
to know what occurs but not recognize the fact.

And so I appeal to a voice, to something shadowy,
a remote important region in all who talk:
though we could fool each other, we should consider--
lest the parade of our mutual life get lost in the dark.

For it is important that awake people be awake,
or a breaking line may discourage them back to sleep;
the signals we give--yes or no, or maybe--
should be clear: the darkness around us is deep.

WILLIAM STAFFORD



OPRAH READS WILLIAM STAFFORD POEM ON TV

With the country in shock following the Columbine High School massacre, Oprah focussed her April 21, 1999, television program on how to help each other. As part of her nationally televised show, Oprah read William Stafford's poem "A Ritual to Read to Each Other."

ARTICLE, "ON THE STAFFORD TRAIL," TELLS STORY OF METHOW RIVER POEMS

The Winter issue of THE FAIRFIELD REVIEW (Westport, CT) carries an article by Janet and Edward Granger-Happ titled, "On the Stafford Trail." Complete with color photos, it relates their experiences exploring the Methow River poems in the Cascade Mountains last summer. See this lively story at www/FairfieldReview.org/fairfield/FairRevw.nsf/links/99Winter02.1

STAFFORD'S "QUESTIONS AFTER THE WAR" GETS RESPONSES ON WEB SITE

A report came from Thomas Doty, professional storyteller of tales from the Native West. Doty posted a short Stafford piece, "Questions after the War," on his web site and received several responses. One was from Kimberly King, a student in a class taught by Stafford years ago, posted a poem and comments inspired by Stafford's words. Go to (www.dotycoyote.com) and click on "Story Board" to see it.

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS REFLECT ON INFLUENCE OF STAFFORD'S POETRY

The following two poems were written by high-school seniors from Portland, Oregon, Emily Teitsworth and Abel Kloster, who have been working on a catalog of William Stafford's journal publications. Emily's poem is in part related to Stafford's "Bi-Focal," while Abel's includes an allusion to "Spirit of Place: Great Blue Heron." It is a pleasure to see such thoughtful writing from the new generation in the spirit of William Stafford, and I also greatly appreciate Emily and Abel's bibliographical assistance.

Paul Merchant, Director,
The William Stafford Archives,
Portland

*LOOKING FOR A WAY TO THANK A
TEACHER FOR INSIGHT AND EFFORT IN
HELPING YOUR CHILD LEARN TO WRITE?
LOOKING FOR A WAY TO THANK A
TEACHER FOR HOOKING YOUR CHILD ON
READING? THEN DONATE A BOOK TO THE
SCHOOL LIBRARY TO HONOR THE
TEACHER, YOUR CHILD, AND THE
MEMORY OF WILLIAM STAFFORD!*

Poet's Blood

The Sky. Before I learned to write
I could not call it "arched," like a bow
with a quiver of dappled mountains, or compare
slithering "s" to squat "b."

But poetry moved in my blood, slowing gelatin veins
with word's weight, purple bulge
under the skin of my forearm. Or it lay
across the sky and I called it by the wordless name
beyond silently understood.

When first I stood alone in battle
I carried not a bow but its unstrung meaning.

Emily Teitsworth

That Time of Day

My vision was a painting at that time of day
we came stepping down the mountain
bodies covered with dirt and pine needles

It is a song that seems always on the top of your tongue
a slow train bringing a long anticipated revelation
still I know where it dwells.
Go down in the mud where the truth is.

We rub away the dirt and
make small talk on the corner
we follow our noses to the coffee house and
recite greetings and grievances

But is it a coincidence
that a secluded lake seems to absorb sound?
That reflecting eye once again finds us
clinging to roots in our ascent.

Abel Kloster

Friends of William Stafford Mission: To provide ongoing education in literature, particularly in poetry, in a way that will encourage and broaden the community of readers and writers. We want to keep alive William Stafford's gifts as a teacher devoted to the free expression of literature and conscience. We seek ways to share and send forth his work by advancing the spirit of his teaching and witness on behalf of literature in our lives. We direct our work toward education within local communities in order to contribute to the poet's legacy for generations to come.

Friends of William Stafford National Advisors: Marvin Bell, Robert Bly, Kurt Brown, Lucille Clifton, James DePreist, Donald Hall, Maxine Kumin, Li-Young Lee, Ursula Le Guin, Chris Merrill, W.S. Merwin, Naomi Shihab Nye, Gary Snyder.

WAS YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL RETURNED?

Because of a mix-up with our postal service, letters received during April and early May were returned to sender. If yours was among them, please give us another chance. Use the form below, or just attach a sticky note to your check which will give us enough information to note your renewal on our member list.

Yes, I would like to be part of
Friends of William Stafford.

Enclosed is my annual donation of

Individual \$25

Student or Retired \$10

Additional donation:

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Make check payable to Oregon Community Foundation fbo *Friends of William Stafford* and mail to *Friends of William Stafford*, P. O. Box 592, Lake Oswego, OR 97034.

Volunteer Sign Up

Check areas you would like to participate in as a volunteer.

- ☆ Mailing (apply address labels and stamps)
- ☆ Organize poetry readings as a service to libraries and schools.
- ☆ Organize William Stafford Gatherings in your town.
- ☆ Serve as fundraiser for specific FWS projects.
- ☆ Other:

AUGUST 23, 1993, William Stafford died at his home in Lake Oswego, Oregon. People all over the world who considered Stafford their mentor have written poems about the loss they felt at his death. David Axelrod, of La Grande, Oregon, wrote one such poem. Axelrod is the author of a collection of poems, *THE JERUSALEM OF GRASS* (1992) and a chapbook, *THE KINGDOM AT HAND* (1993). He teaches creative writing at Eastern Oregon State College, and co-edits *CALAPOOYA COLLAGE*.

The Day Stafford Died

Five climbed Dutch Flat Saddle,
posed for photos in blustery gusts of wind,
summer ending early that year,
no turning aside from the narrow trail.

Wind hurried at our heels, surged
in silver waves across bogs
speckled by spikes of monkshood,
forcing the old spruces to lean hard.

Shaggy limbs brushed the air
and hissed the single syllable they know
for whatever tireless wind is
always becoming next. Our children,

who don't follow maps anywhere,
chattered like wrens in the boulders
as we ate, their own language still
so new it was more than laughter,

the tongue's first surprise at the wild
lingering tanginess of huckleberries—
the first lesson our master taught
though he never awarded his pupils

the prize. To walk hours at the edge
of clouds, earth visible below, dim
and far in dusky light, that privacy
we stray from—scree, meadow, crag.

Rare to live long enough and know
the mind of our patient master,
wilderness, who by dawn lay
silent below the year's first snow.

David Axelrod

**DEBBIE GORENSTEIN JOINS
FWS BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

At the June meeting of Friends of William Stafford Board of Directors, Debbie Gorenstein, was voted as a new Director. Gorenstein is a second/third-grade teacher who writes poetry and teaches her students the pleasures of writing and publishing their poetry. Other activities in Gorenstein's life include singing in a quartet, being a ghost-writer for several textbooks, and reading. Her daughter, Sarah, says they are a family of readers and "it seems like there's always a hundred books checked out of the library and stacked around the livingroom." For several years Debbie volunteered for the Portland Arts and Lectures series and for the Junior Great Books program in schools. This year she had another adventure as a member of a Dragon Boat team for the Portland Rose Festival. A Portland, OR, resident, she and her husband have three children, one each in middle school, high school, and college.

**LETTERS SOUGHT TO LIST
WILLIAM STAFFORD AS
FAMOUS LITERARY KANSAN**

FWS member, Michael Stubbs, writes, "I lobbied unsuccessfully to have William Stafford included in the Kansas Museum of History exhibit on famous Kansans. I would appreciate any 'Friends' letting the Historical Society know what an egregious error has been made. All correspondence will become part of the exhibit's permanent record." Send your letters to FAMOUS KANSANS, Kansas State Historical Society 6425 SW Sixth Avenue, Topeka, KS 66615-1099 or FAX 785-272-8682.



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Friends of William Stafford Board of Directors: Patty Wixon, Ashland, OR, Chair; Nan Atzen, Newberg, OR; Brian Booth, Portland, OR; Martha Gatchell, Drain, OR; Debbie Gorenstein, Portland OR; Robert Hamm, West Linn, OR; Ceil Huntington, Lake Oswego, OR; Paulann Petersen, Portland, OR; Shelley Reece, Portland, OR; Joseph Soldati, Portland, OR. FRIENDS OF WILLIAM STAFFORD NEWSLETTER is published quarterly. NEWSLETTER articles also appear on the FWS website: 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.
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Friends Of William Stafford

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