

William Stafford

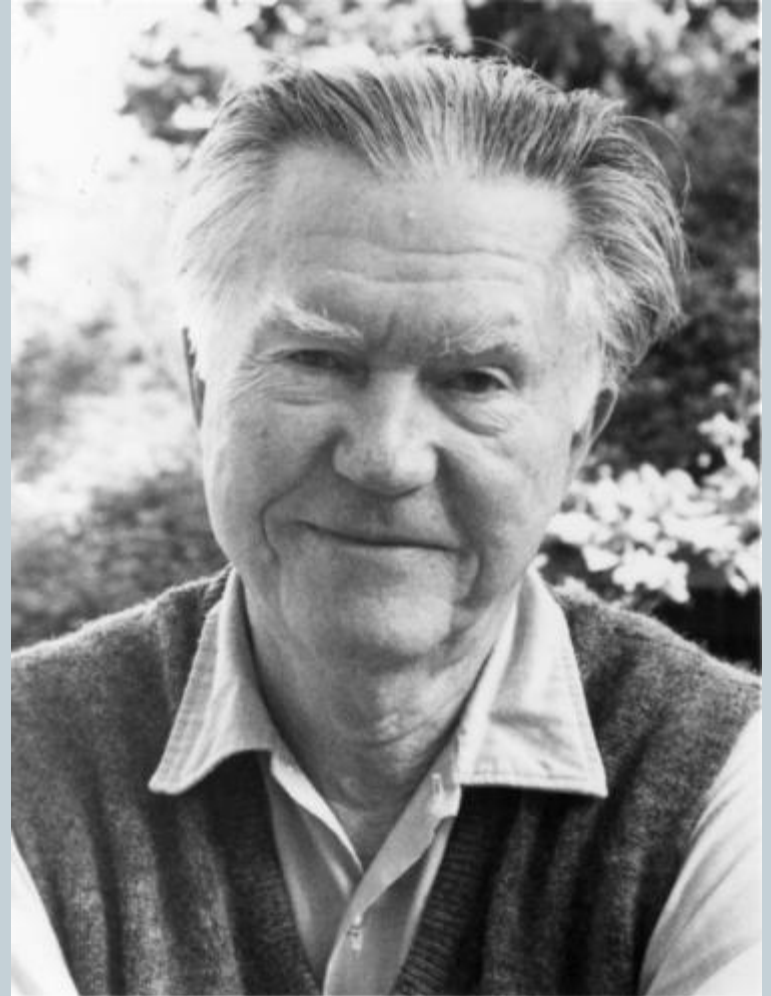


A MINI-BIOGRAPHY

William Stafford--Life



- Born: 1914 in Hutchinson, Kansas
- Moved to Oregon in the 1950s
- Became the Poetry Consultant to the Library of Congress in 1970 (now called Poet Laureate)
- Became Oregon's Poet Laureate in 1975
- Died: 1993 in Lake Oswego, Oregon



William Stafford—Selected Work



- **Books:**

- *West of Your City*
- *Traveling Through the Dark*

- **Poems:**

- “Traveling Through the Dark”
- “Remembering Mountain Men”

“After Arguing against the Contention that Art Must Come from Discontent”

By *William Stafford*



Whispering to each handhold, ``I'll be back,"
I go up the cliff in the dark. One place
I loosen a rock and listen a long time
till it hits, faint in the gulf, but the rush
of the torrent almost drowns it out, and the wind—
I almost forgot the wind: it tears at your side
or it waits and then buffets; you sag outward. . . .

I remember they said it would be hard. I scramble
by luck into a little pocket out of
the wind and begin to beat on the stones
with my scratched numb hands, rocking back and forth
in silent laughter there in the dark—
``Made it again!" Oh how I love this climb!
—the whispering to stones, the drag, the weight
as your muscles crack and ease on, working
right. They are back there, discontent,
waiting to be driven forth. I pound
on the earth, riding the earth past the stars:
``Made it again! Made it again!"

Traveling Through the Dark

By *William Stafford*



Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,
alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—,
then pushed her over the edge into the river.