

Reconciliation

'The patient, worthy job'

EVERY WAR HAS TWO LOSERS:
William Stafford on Peace and War.

Edited and with an introduction by Kim Stafford.
Milkweed Editions, 2003. Paperback, \$16.

Kim Stafford knows his late father, former Oregon poet laureate William Stafford, in ways not open to most of us. William named Kim his literary executor, which is both a privilege and a great responsibility. *Every War Has Two Losers: William Stafford on Peace and War* is a new collection of William's pacifist writings, edited and introduced by his poet, teacher, pacifist son.

"I first thought of my father as a poet," Kim Stafford said in a recent telephone interview. "But my understanding of his work has evolved. Now I see he was a seeker, who used writing in both his private life and his public life to accomplish many things. Poems were his currency."

Stafford speaks on "Poetry and the Life of the Seeker" at 7:30 pm on Feb. 3 in the Knight Library Browsing Room. A public reception follows. A limited-edition letterpress broadside from Knight Library Press will be for sale as well as books for signing.

Stafford directs the Northwest Writing Institute at Lewis and Clark College in Portland. He has taught at Lewis and Clark 25 years, and before that studied 12 years at the UO, where he earned three degrees, culminating in his 1979 Ph.D. He's spending his working life in academia, and he is passionate about making poetry matter.

"Poems can result in action," Stafford said. "We can learn to live our lives in a different way because of poetry. We should ask of the university: Is it a closed system? Or is it expanding, moving us into the world? Where's the Big Bang?" Stafford said he had recently heard L.A. performance artist Snowbird say, "Poetry will always be essential in society, because poets don't make enough money to lie."

Stafford is also clear about the difference between being opposed to war and being an active peacemaker. "'Anti-war' is not as strong as 'reconciliation,'" he said. "War has a strong story-line. It is visible. The work of peacemakers is inclusive and

sustained. It's what my father called 'the patient, worthy job.'"

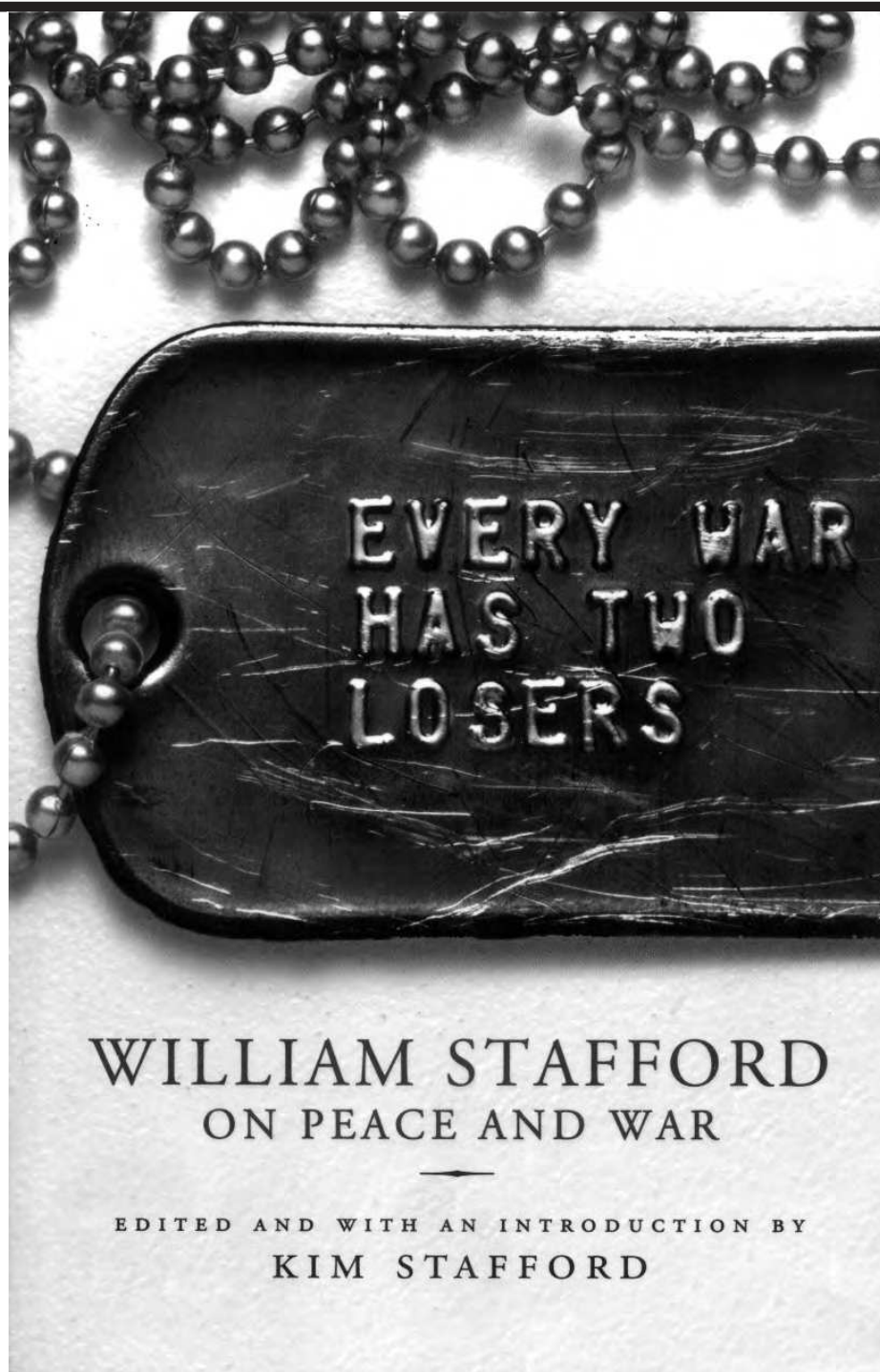
Likewise, Stafford insists that *Every War Has Two Losers* is not about the ethics of war. "It is about the impracticability of war to solve problems," he said. "A pacifist doesn't have to solve the historical predicament to make a personal choice to practice and advance reconciliation. Even in World War II, some soldiers leveled with their officers: 'I won't kill. Put me somewhere that I won't have to kill.' They made a separate peace."

William Stafford was a conscientious objector in WWII, and one of the most moving chapters in *Every War* is "The Mob Scene at McNeil." Kim Stafford said there were 700 soldiers for every CO in that war. "The story of the COs is the hidden part of the story," he said. "It wasn't known. It was very inconvenient to let it be known." William's experience on a Sunday afternoon, March 22, 1942, in McNeil, Ark., expresses some of the inner strength — and the sense of humor — required to be a peacemaker during "the good war."

"It takes such an intricate succession of misfortunes and blunders to get mobbed by your own countrymen — and such a close balancing of good fortune to survive — that I consider myself a rarity, in this respect, in being able to tell the story from the subject's point of view," Stafford wrote. He was reading Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, another CO was writing a poem, and a third was painting a picture of a decrepit building when some men from town gathered around them, began to mutter and quickly became belligerent.

The eight-page story is beautifully written and suggests William Stafford might also have found success as a prose writer had he not so loved the poetic form to express his thoughts. Stafford included the story in his 1947 master's thesis with the title "Peace Relic." (William Stafford's thesis has been re-published by OSU Press as *Down In My Heart: Peace Witness in War Time*.)

Kim Stafford said *Every War* doesn't have one big answer to our current predicament. "It asks questions. It begins meditation and the search for reconciliation. It's a packet of seeds. It can contribute to the next paradigm the world is moving toward." **CW**



BOOK NOTES Jan. 29 - March 4: From her acclaimed memoir, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, **Azar Nafisi** will read at 7:30 pm on Jan. 30 at Annie Blooms Books, Portland. ...**Kim Stafford** reads from *Every War Has Two Losers* and discusses "Poetry and the Life of the Seeker: William Stafford on Peace and War" at 7:30 pm on Feb. 3 in the Knight Library Browsing Room. ...**Diane Hammond** reads from her novel, *Going to Bend*, at 7 pm on Feb. 5 at UO Bookstore. Free. ...**Elizabeth Engstrom** speaks on "How to Write a Well-Crafted Sex Scene" at 6:30 pm on Feb. 5 at Baker Downtown Center. \$5 non-members. ...Romance and mystery writer **Carola**

Dunn speaks at the "In the Mood for Valentine's Day" celebration at 7:30 pm on Feb. 6 at the Downtown Library. ...**Elijah Wald** reads from *Escaping The Delta*, on the life of the bluesman Robert Johnson, at 4pm on Feb. 8 at Tsunami Books. ...Classical scholar and military historian **Victor Davis Hanson** speaks on "War and the West, Then and Now" at 8 pm on Feb. 11 in Alumni Lounge, Gerlinger Hall, UO campus. ...UO Law professor **Steven Bender** reads from his new book, *Greasers and Gringos: Latinos, Law and the American Imagination* at 7 pm on Feb. 12 in UO Bookstore. ...**Ursula Le Guin** reads from *The Lathe of Heaven*, this year's Readin' in the Rain selection, at 7 pm on Feb. 13 at First Methodist Church (1376 Olive. Free. ...Fundraiser (donations requested) for Readin' in the Rain finds **Le Guin** at a community book signing from noon- 4 pm on Feb. 14 at New Zone Gallery (Broadway and Willamette). Bring no more than one book to be signed, please. ...Writers and aspiring writers meet with **Le Guin** from 1- 4 pm on Feb. 15 at McNail-Riley House (13 and Jefferson). Register Jan 15 (302-8084 or 689-1650). \$50. ...**Marjorie Sandor** (*Portrait of My Mother, Who Posed Nude in Wartime*) and **Kathleen Tyau** (*Makai*) will read at 7 pm on Feb. 17 in the Downtown Library. ...**Laurie Drummond** reads from her new story collection, *Anything You Say Can and Will Be Used Against You*, at 8 pm on Feb. 19 in Knight Library Browsing Room. ...**Neale Donald Walsch** (*Conversations with God*) speaks at 7pm on Feb. 20 at South Eugene High School. \$20.... **Robert H. Kono** (*The River of Time*) reads at 1pm on Feb. 21 at Borders Books. ...**Joe Kurmaskie**, Portland cycling and travel guru, reads from *Riding Outside the Lines* at 7 pm on Feb. 25 in 100 Willamette Hall, UO campus. ...**Leslie Leyland Fields** reads from her memoir, *Surviving the Island of Grace*, at 7 pm on March 2 in Knight Library Browsing Room.

Sandy Tilcock, director of the Knight Library Press, and her student interns have created a black-on-black diptych broadside for the words of William Stafford and an unpublished poem by Kim Stafford. The broadside contains a central image of a Zen Buddhist symbol for the circle of enlightenment, an enso.

The polymer plate with the relief image of the enso is quite lovely by itself. The original graphic was created by Marilyn Reaves. Tilcock gave me this description of an enso — a sumi painting of a circle: "The circle contains both the perfection of the expressive moment and the imperfections of the ink, page and brush. ... Spiritually it may symbolize the emptiness of the void, the endless circle of life and fullness of the spirit. It may represent the moment of enlightenment, when the mind is free to let the body or spirit create. ...Each esno shows the expressive movement of the spirit in time."

"It was challenging to work with the words of two writers," Tilcock said, "trying to have something that works for both but also be different for each."

Originally, Tilcock planned to print on gray paper, but black paper kept coming up. Tilcock and her three interns spent the better part of four or five days mixing different inks, before creating a silver and black ink mix that works on black. Tilcock was resistant to the idea of a black-on-black broadside, but "Never be afraid to change your mind," she said.

The black paper selected had to be dampened so that the image didn't look like a shiny gloss on top of the paper. After the damp paper dried, the paper "looked like someone came in and scraped it," Tilcock said. It has body, and the image is in the paper. However, "It's more labor-intensive to have to dampen the paper and press wet," Tilcock said.

"But once I decided to embrace my darkness, it all fell into place," Tilcock said. "I was reluctant to take that step, to leave the safe grays and embrace the black. But I am very satisfied with what we've chosen."

Kim Stafford will not see the broadside until the day of the reading, Tilcock said. "It's very scary," she said. I don't think she has a thing to worry about. —**LW**