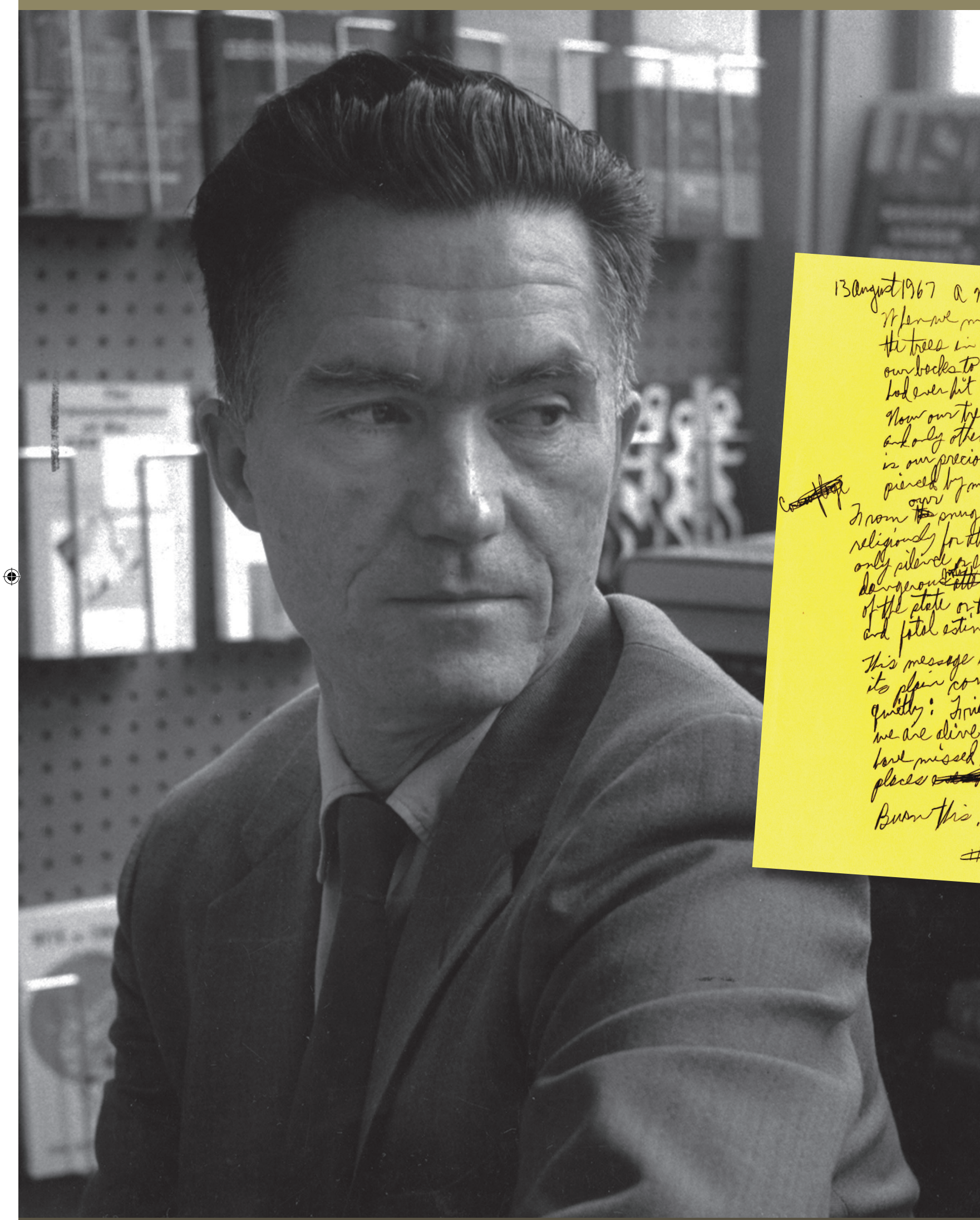
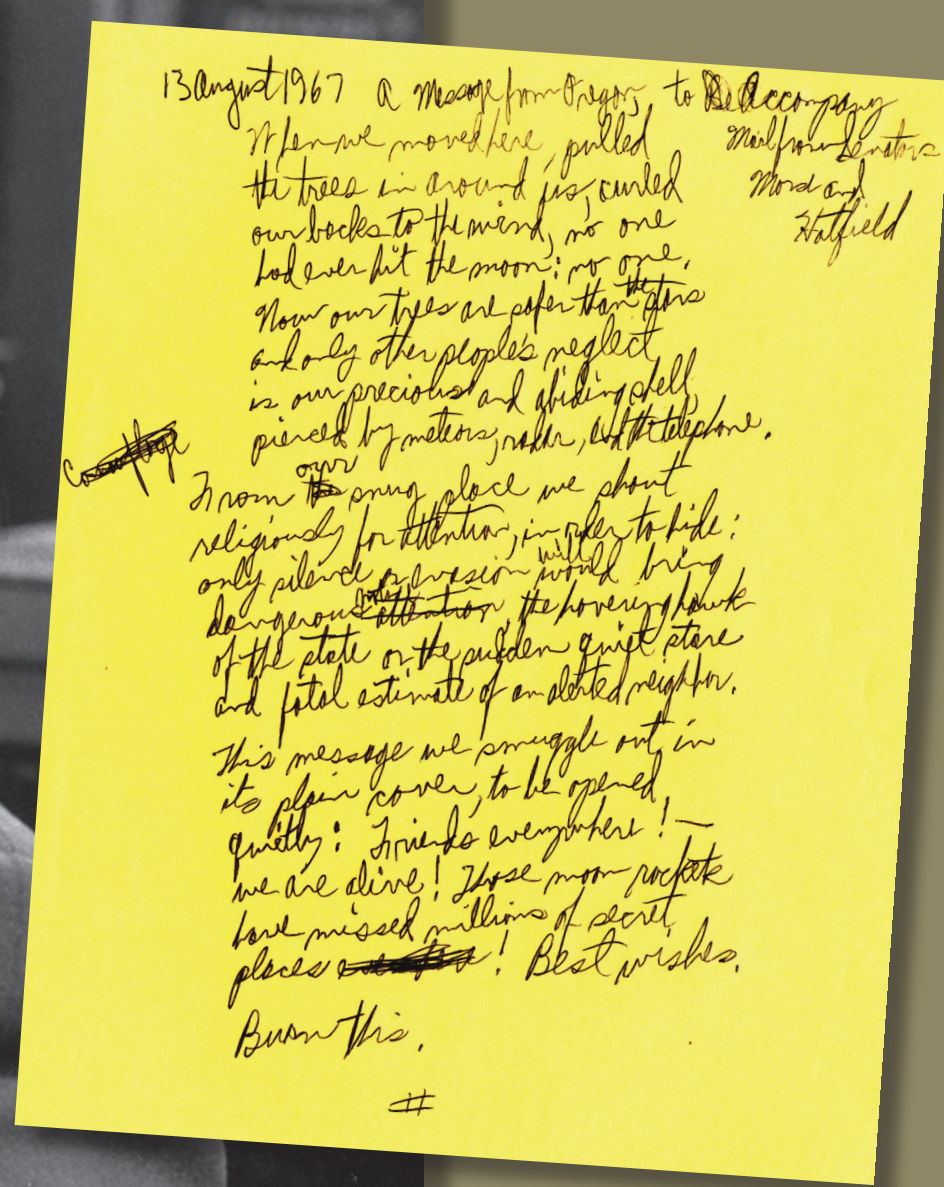
Oregon Archives Month

OCTOBER 2014

# Celebrating Oregon's Poet William Stafford, 1914-1993





13 August 1967 a Message from Oregon, to be accompany mail from Senators Morse and Hatfield

When we moved here, pulled
the trees in around us, curled
our backs to the wind, no one
had ever hit the moon: no one.
Now our trees are safer than stars
and only other people's neglect
is our precious and abiding self
pierced by meteors, radar, and the telephone.
From our snug place we shout
religiously for attention, in order to hide:
only silence or evasion would bring
dangerous attention the hovering hawk
of the state on the sudden quiet store
and fatal estimate of an elected neighbor.
This message we smuggle out in
its plain cover, to be opened
quietly: Friends everywhere! —
we are alive! Those man rockets
have missed millions of secret
places! Best wishes.
Burn this.

#

A 1967 draft of Stafford's poem, "An Oregon Message." Image courtesy of the William Stafford Archives at Lewis & Clark College, Portland, Oregon.

William Stafford, ca. 1963. Image courtesy of the William Stafford Archives at Lewis & Clark College, Portland, Oregon.

## VISIT YOUR LOCAL ARCHIVES TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WILLIAM STAFFORD AND OTHER OREGON WRITERS.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS & RECORDS COMMISSION

Supported by a grant from the NHPRC (http://www.archives.gov/nhprc/) and sponsored by the Oregon State Historical Records Advisory Board (http://sos.oregon.gov/archives/Pages/shrab-main.aspx).

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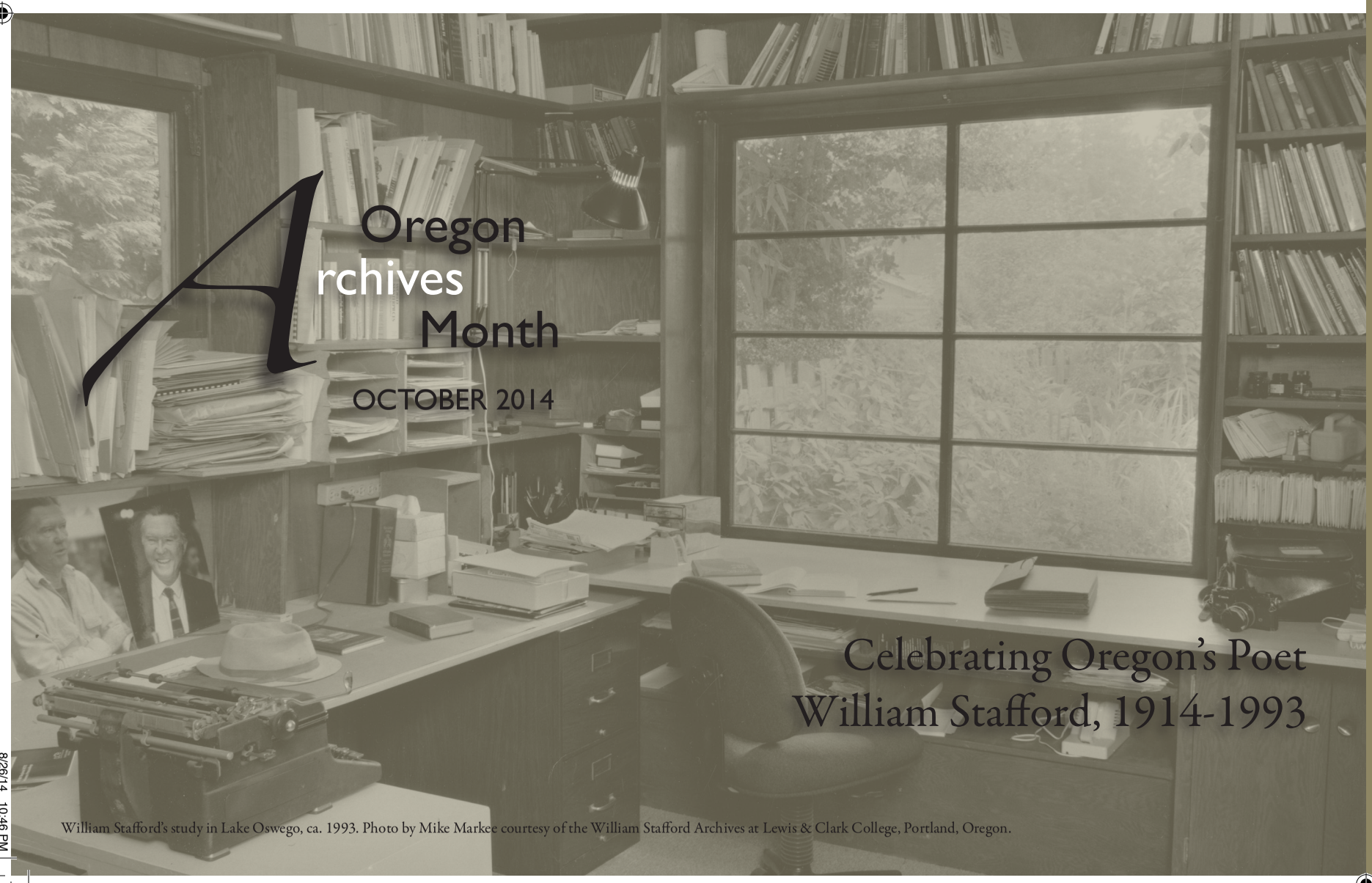
Oregon State Historical Records Advisory Board
800 Summer St NE
Salem, OR 97310




William Stafford's study in Lake Oswego, ca. 1993. Photo by Mike Markee courtesy of the William Stafford Archives at Lewis & Clark College, Portland, Oregon.

Oregon Archives Month

OCTOBER 2014

# Celebrating Oregon's Poet
# William Stafford, 1914-1993

Dear Oregonians:

On January 28, 2013, the Oregon Heritage Commission declared the 100th anniversary of the birth of William Edgar Stafford (1914-1993) an event of statewide significance and cause for statewide celebration in 2014. Stafford, who lived in Oregon for 45 years, was one of the most prolific and admired poets of the twentieth century. His book *Traveling through the Dark* was the recipient of the National Book Award for poetry in 1963, and in 1970 he was named to a one-year position as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, the office later known as poet laureate.

In recognition of Stafford's achievements as a writer and teacher, Governor Tom McCall named Stafford Poet Laureate of Oregon in 1975. For the next fourteen years that Stafford served in this position, he worked to encourage creative writing in Oregon schools, and gave countless poetry readings across the state. Today Stafford continues to inspire writers and literary scholars through his 85 books of poetry and his massive archive of over 20,000 pages of poetry drafts.

Join us in celebrating Stafford and Oregon's literary heritage by reading a Stafford poem. Stafford's poems and more information about his life can be found at the following websites:

Oregon Blue Book • www.bluebook.state.or.us/notable/notstafford.htm
The Friends of William Stafford • www.williamstafford.org
The William Stafford Archives • www.williamstaffordarchives.org

In celebration and appreciation,

Kate Brown
Oregon Secretary of State

Mary Beth Herkert
State Archivist

Dan Cantrall
Deputy SHRAB Coordinator

NATIONAL ARCHIVES
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS & RECORDS COMMISSION

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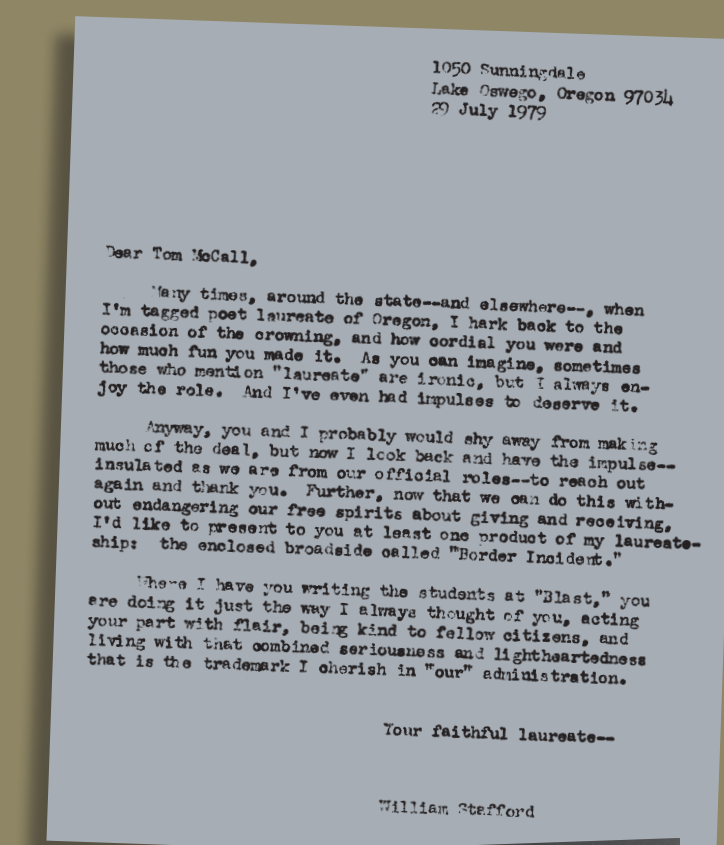

1050 Sunningdale
Lake Oswego, Oregon 97034
29 July 1979

Dear Tom McCall,

Many times, around the state--and elsewhere--, when I'm tagged poet laureate of Oregon, I hark back to the occasion of the crowning, and how cordial you were and how much fun you made it. As you can imagine, sometimes those who mention "laureate" are ironic, but I always enjoy the role. And I've even had impulses to deserve it.

Anyway, you and I probably would shy away from making much of the deal, but now I look back and have the impulse--insulated as we are from our official roles--to reach out again and thank you. Further, now that we can do this without endangering our free spirits about giving and receiving, I'd like to present to you at least one product of my laureateship: the enclosed broadside called "Border Incident."

There I have you writing the students at "Blast," you are doing it just the way I always thought of you, acting your part with flair, being kind to fellow citizens, and living with that combined seriousness and lightheartedness that is the trademark I cherish in "our" administration.

Your faithful laureate--

William Stafford

Top: Letter from William Stafford to Governor Tom McCall. Bottom: Stafford at his induction ceremony as Oregon Poet Laureate, 1975. Images courtesy of the William Stafford Archives at Lewis & Clark College, Portland, Oregon.