

# The Well Rising

By William E. Stafford

The well rising without sound,  
the spring on a hillside,  
the plowshare brimming through deep ground  
everywhere in the field—

The sharp swallows in their swerve  
flaring and hesitating  
hunting for the final curve  
coming closer and closer—

The swallow heart from wingbeat to wingbeat  
counseling decision, decision:  
thunderous examples. I place my feet  
with care in such a world.

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Born in Kansas, Stafford lived with other conscientious objectors in work camps in Arkansas and California during the 1940's. He taught at Lewis and Clark College, Manchester College, and San Jose State College (now University). He also served as U.S. Information Agency lecturer in Egypt, Iran, Pakistan, India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, and held Oregon's Poet Laureate position from 1975-93. Stafford was a prolific writer and authored numerous books of nonfiction and poetry as well as edited several collections of poetry and prose and contributed to translations and anthologies.

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