

Marc Hudson

If Walt Whitman is Grass

then William Stafford is lichen
subsisting on boulders above the timberline,
a pioneer symbiont
at the cold edge of possibility.
And if Robert Frost
might be seen as eastern hemlock,
then Stafford is the neighborly organism
pointing the traveler north.

I never saw him
precisely as a man, even in person
could never bring that plain,
unassuming face into focus.
So I liken him to this reticent
habitué of granite.

Once, after hearing him read,
I walked out into Seattle rain
feeling a strange elation,
as if I were the acolyte
of a mild-mannered apocalypse,
as if through infinite space
a fine mist were processing,
blurring well-kept boundaries.

So I imagine him dissolving
the speeches of politicians
the way lichen softens, then
assimilates, the most obdurate rock.