

Haibun

Swaddled World

Near the shadow of Mt. Rainier nestled in a 17-foot white Nomad travel trailer with a newborn son, I diapered him on a blue changing pad on the table. I swaddled him in bulky, grayish cloth diapers. His Dad built him a crib on the top bunk. Two wooden boxes holding diapers and clothes framed the mattress. A fold-down meshed gate was the guard rail caging him safe. Cramped inside a metal cocoon, my son snuggled in my arms, watched me from an infant seat while I read, wrote and cooked. Such a small area to grow in.

Cooped inside by Spanaway rain held warmly in a receiving blanket, he is mostly silent. Between storms I roll his stroller through mud puddles, over slugs in the trailer park lawn. Faraway from East Coast relatives. Hours alone with my son, while his father soldiers in ROTC at Fort Lewis. After five months, narrowly escaping Vietnam, he haul the Nomad to Arizona and graduate school. In the desert sun we have more room to grow.

On a student exchange nineteen years later, faraway from his Oregon family, our son dies in a bike-truck accident. In Tuscaloosa's August sun, our son is dead before he can be bandaged.

Cottony clouds

gauzy skies diaper rain
release sunshine

Playing with William Stafford

Grandchild Rowan and I became parents of the frog child William Stafford. The poetic dedicated beanbag doorstep has a long, leggy line. William was our baby in need of diapers and frequent changes in attire and residence. As working mothers we needed a homeless babysitter Grandpa to care for him. As we plinked our "computers" on the table, we requested vacation time. Our sitter read froggy fare to William. He was a sickly lad. We went to the Grandpa doctor for treatment. The Grandpa steward made our airplane trips safe and comfortable. William was a pampered infant.

One day Rowan and I wondered why our baby was a frog. Maybe it was a switch at the hospital. We decided we must return him to his true parents. This was sad for we were fond of our froggy son. Reluctantly he was returned for a blonde, blue-eyed Cindy human. But we missed William and never bonded properly to Cindy. When we play parents again, I wonder who our child will be? William has longevity. A leg up on any others. A leap for froggy-kind toward mother-kind.

Leap in fantasy
Frog child Will steal hearts
breaking reality.

Our Boy Bill

Our frog-child William Stafford did not like life in the frog pond with his hyperactive parents. They fed him bacon, not flies, dove out of sight to Bill's bewilderment, didn't hold him or rock him or provide a wardrobe. He wanted to return to his human mothers. So Rowan and I rescued him from lily-pad life. We had some trouble finding a babysitter, for our homeless sitter now had to go to work. Janet did not babysit frogs. Doris would but got sick. Corum finally did even though Bill got chicken pox. We took temporary jobs in a computer store, a bookstore and a toy store. We outfitted him in Smokey the Bear clothes, sleeping bag and backpack. We camped and moved to two apartments with Bill's gear and medicines. But Bill despite our bathing attempts and a mini-pond for him, wanted to be a little frog in a big pond. He returned to his froggy family. Pregnant Rowan hoped this time she'd have a human baby and a girl. We thought of poet's names and soon Hazel Hall was born. Imagination transformed her from a frog to a human child. We are off to new adventures in an amusement park.

Our froggy boy Bill
croaks loudly in his own pond
not in Rowan's arms.

Haibun: Japanese travel journal form with prose paragraph and a haiku. Two forms-poetry and prose merge. Contemporary Haibun have many experiments in how many paragraphs before a haiku, subject matter. Usually ends with a Haiku. Haiku also has many transformations in contemporary poetry.