

# Report to Crazy Horse

William E. Stafford

All the Sioux were defeated. Our clan  
got poor, but a few got richer.  
They fought two wars. I did not  
take part. No one remembers your vision  
or even your real name. Now  
the children go to town and like  
loud music. I married a Christian.

Crazy Horse, it is not fair  
to hide a new vision from you.  
In our schools we are learning  
to take aim when we talk, and we have  
found out our enemies. They shift when  
words do; they even change and hide  
in every person. A teacher here says  
hurt or scorned people are places  
where real enemies hide. He says  
we should not hurt or scorn anyone,  
but help them. And I will tell you  
in a brave way, the way Crazy Horse  
talked: that teacher is right.

I will tell you a strange thing:  
at the rodeo, close to the grandstand,  
I saw a farm lady scared by a blown  
piece of paper; and at that place  
horses and policemen were no longer  
frightening, but suffering faces were,  
and the hunched-over backs of the old.

Crazy Horse, tell me if I am right:  
these are the things we thought we were  
doing something about.

In your life you saw many strange things,  
and I will tell you another: now I salute  
the white man's flag. But when I salute  
I hold my hand alertly on the heartbeat  
and remember all of us and how we depend  
on a steady pulse together. There are those  
who salute because they fear other flags  
or mean to use ours to chase them:

I must not allow my part of saluting  
to mean this. All of our promises,  
our generous sayings to each other, our  
honorable intentions—those I affirm  
when I salute. At these times it is like  
shutting my eyes and joining a religious  
colony at prayer in the gray dawn  
in the deep aisles of a church.

Now I have told you about new times.  
Yes, I know others will report  
different things. They have been caught  
by weak ways. I tell you straight  
the way it is now, and it is our way,  
the way we were trying to find.

The chokecherries along our valley  
still bear a bright fruit. There is good  
pottery clay north of here. I remember  
our old places. When I pass the Musselshell  
I run my hand along those old grooves in the rock.