



## Trying to Tell It

By William Stafford

The old have a secret.  
They can't tell other, for to understand  
you have to be old.

You need that soft velvet over your ears  
and the blessing of time in your hands.  
Any challenging sound has a bell at the end.

The vista you heard on a phone all your life  
has moved into your head,  
where it lures you to listen away.

The secret is wrapped in a message you begin  
to hear even in silence,  
and at night it wakes you and calls.

The secret is told to you by touches  
that spread a thin layer of understanding  
again and again, a hint, another: conviction.

You can't see it or hear it but it's there,  
like a live wire, a power inside things,  
an art, a fantasy.

You have always wanted more than the earth;  
now you have it. You turn to the young.  
They do not understand.