A New Stegner Biography: Wallace Stegner and the American West by Philip L. Fradkin

Wallace Stegner was the premier chronicler of the twentieth-century western American experience, and his novels, the Pulitzer Prize-winning Angle of Repose and The Big Rock Candy Mountain, brought the life and landscapes of the West to national and international attention. But in his illuminating biography, Philip L. Fradkin goes beyond Stegner’s iconic literary status to give us, as well, the influential teacher and visionary conservationist, the man for whom the preservation and integrity of place was as important as his ability to render its qualities and character in his brilliantly crafted fiction and nonfiction.

We learn of Stegner’s hardscrabble youth on the Canadian frontier and in Utah. We watch as he makes a home with his wife, Mary, in the foothills of Palo Alto, whose rapid development into Silicon Valley he fights tirelessly while at the same time opposing dams on the Colorado River. Here are his years at the head of the Stanford Creative Writing Program, where his students included Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry, Ken Kesey, and Robert Stone. And here, too, is the full story of the discredited accusations of plagiarism that followed the publication of Angle of Repose. Rich in personal and literary detail, and in the sensual description of the country that Stegner loved and that shaped his work and his life, Fradkin’s biography of one of the most acclaimed writers, teachers, and conservationists of our time is a must-read for Stegner fans.

Philip L. Fradkin has written ten previous books about Alaska, California, and the interior West, including A River No More: The Colorado River and the West. He shared in a Pulitzer Prize at the Los Angeles Times, was western editor of Audubon magazine, and has taught at Berkeley, Stanford, and Williams. He lives on the Pacific Coast just north of San Francisco.

Fradkin joined the Wallace Stegner Center last spring to read from Wallace Stegner and the American West and will also speak at the Stegner Center’s 14th annual symposium, “Wallace Stegner: His Life and Legacy” in March 2009.