

Seattle City Council

Public Safety, Government Relations, and Arts Committee Meeting

Tuesday, 2:00 PM, September 18, 2007

Words' Worth

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Brian McGuigan**

Today's poet is **Fredda Jaffee**

Fredda Jaffe was raised in New York City, and has made her home in Seattle for the last thirty years. She received a Community Arts Fellowship from the Earthwatch Institute to study salmon habitat restoration on the Skagit River; was a 2005 Jack Straw Writer, currently teaches in the WITS Program (Writers in the Schools) and works as a family therapist in private practice.

Breaking Silence

by Fredda Jaffee

*Knowing what I do, there would be no
future peace for me if I kept silence.*

Rachel Carson

She was a private person
raised in a time when
you write like a man was
taken as compliment.
When we worshipped Science
like some terrible god
prayed to be delivered and we were;
built bomb shelters
or wished we had,
crouched in classrooms
for mock air drills
against unseen enemies;
Dr. Strangelove
exhorted us to stop worrying,
love what's lethal
and we did.
One letter (you remember letters?)
from a friend in Cape Cod
carried news: spraying
to control those buggers (mosquitoes),
birdbath filled with DDT;
carcasses of songbirds,
legs drawn up to breasts
beaks gaping open.
Threatened bees,

frogs, crickets, coyotes;
rivers of death
poisons to make the Borgias'
hair stand on end.
No one published her articles
so she strung them together in a book
words true enough to harbor critics
even today.

-- *end* --