

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

My maternal grandparents got their drinking water from a well in the yard, and my disabled uncle carried it sloshing to the house, one bucket of hard red water early every morning. I couldn't resist sharing this lovely little poem by Minnesota poet, Sharon Chmielarz.

New Water

All those years—almost a hundred—
the farm had hard water.
Hard orange. Buckets lined in orange.
Sink and tub and toilet, too,
once they got running water.
And now, in less than a lifetime,
just by changing the well's location,
in the same yard, mind you,
the water's soft, clear, delicious to drink.
All those years to shake your head over.
Look how sweet life has become;
you can see it in the couple who live here,
their calmness as they sit at their table,
the beauty as they offer you new water to drink.

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