

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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Our species has developed monstrous weapons that can kill not only all of us but everything else on the planet, yet when the wind rises we run for cover, as we have done for as long as we've been on this earth. Here's hoping we never have the skill or arrogance to conquer the weather. And weather stories? We tell them in the same way our ancestors related encounters with fearsome dragons. This poem by Minnesota poet Warren Woessner honors the tradition by sharing an experience with a hurricane.

Alberto

When the wind clipped
the whitecaps, and the flags
came down before they shredded,
we knew it was no nor'easter.
The Blue Nose ferry stayed
on course, west out of Yarmouth,
while 100 miles of fog
on the Bay blew away.

The Captain let us stand
on the starboard bridge
and scan a jagged range.
Shearwaters skimmed the peaks
while storm petrels hunted valleys
that slowly filled with gold.
Alberto blew out in the Atlantic.
We came back to earth
that for days might tip and sway
and cast us back to sea.

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