

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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American Life in Poetry: Column 158

BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Putting bed pillows onto the grass to freshen, it's a pretty humble subject for a poem, but look how Kentucky poet, Frank Steele, deftly uses a sun-warmed pillow to bring back the comfort and security of childhood.

Part of a Legacy

I take pillows outdoors to sun them
as my mother did. "Keeps bedding fresh,"
she said. It was April then, too--
buttercups fluffing their frail sails,
one striped bee humming grudges, a crinkle
of jonquils. Weeds reclaimed bare ground.
All of these leaked somehow
into the pillows, looking odd where they
simmered all day, the size of hams, out of place
on grass. And at night I could feel
some part of my mother still with me
in the warmth of my face as I dreamed
baseball and honeysuckle, sleeping
on sunlight.

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