

# 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 181

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

Stuart Kestenbaum, the author of this week's poem, lost his brother Howard in the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center. We thought it appropriate to commemorate the events of September 11, 2001, by sharing this poem. The poet is the director of the Haystack Mountain School of Crafts on Deer Isle, Maine.

### Prayer for the Dead

The light snow started late last night and continued  
all night long while I slept and could hear it occasionally  
enter my sleep, where I dreamed my brother  
was alive again and possessing the beauty of youth, aware  
that he would be leaving again shortly and that is the lesson  
of the snow falling and of the seeds of death that are in everything  
that is born: we are here for a moment  
of a story that is longer than all of us and few of us  
remember, the wind is blowing out of someplace  
we don't know, and each moment contains rhythms  
within rhythms, and if you discover some old piece  
of your own writing, or an old photograph,  
you may not remember that it was you and even if it was once you,  
it's not you now, not this moment that the synapses fire  
and your hands move to cover your face in a gesture  
of grief and remembrance.

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