

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 213

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

Bill Holm, one of the most intelligent and engaging writers of our northern plains, died on February 25th. He will be greatly missed. He and I were of the same generation and we shared the same sense of wonder, amusement, and skepticism about the course of technology. I don't yet own an Earbud, but I won't need to, now that we have Bill's poem.

Earbud

Earbud—a tiny marble sheathed in foam
to wear like an interior earring so you
can enjoy private noises wherever you go,
protected from any sudden silence.
Only check your batteries, then copy
a thousand secret songs and stories
on the tiny pod you carry in your pocket.
You are safe now from other noises made
by other people, other machines, by chance,
noises you have not chosen as your own.
To get your attention, I touch your arm
to show you the tornado or the polar bear.
Sometimes I catch you humming or talking to the air
as if to a shrunken lover waiting in your ear.

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