

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 214

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

Sometimes I wonder at my wife's forbearance. She's heard me tell the same stories dozens of times, and she still politely laughs when she should. Here's a poem by Susan Browne, of California, that treats an oft-told story with great tenderness.

On Our Eleventh Anniversary

You're telling that story again about your childhood,
when you were five years old and rode your blue bicycle

from Copenhagen to Espergaerde, and it was night
and snowing by the time you arrived,

and your grandparents were so relieved to see you,
because all day no one knew where you were,

you had vanished. We sit at our patio table under a faded green
umbrella, drinking wine in California's blue autumn,

red stars of roses along the fence, trellising over the roof
of our ramshackle garage. Too soon the wine glasses will be empty,

our stories told, the house covered with pine needles the wind
has shaken from the trees. Other people will live here.

We will vanish like children who traveled far in the dark,
stars of snow in their hair, riding to enchanted Espergaerde.

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