

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 215

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

To commemorate Mother's Day, here's a lovely poem by David Wojahn of Virginia, remembering his mother after forty years.

Walking to School, 1964

Blurring the window, the snowflakes' numb white lanterns.
She's brewed her coffee, in the bathroom sprays cologne
And sets her lipstick upright on the sink.
The door ajar, I glimpse the yellow slip,

The rose-colored birthmark on her shoulder.
Then she's dressed—the pillbox hat and ersatz fur,
And I'm dressed too, mummified in stocking cap
And scarves, and I walk her to the bus stop

Where she'll leave me for my own walk to school,
Where she'll board the bus that zigzags to St. Paul
As I watch her at the window, the paperback

Romance already open on her lap,
The bus laboring off into snow, her good-bye kiss
Still startling my cheek with lipstick trace.

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