

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 139

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

Man's best friend is, of course, woman's best friend, too. The Illinois poet, Bruce Guernsey, offers us this snapshot of a mutually agreed upon dependency that leads to a domestic communion.

The Lady and the Tramp

As my mother's memory dims
she's losing her sense of smell
and can't remember the toast
blackening the kitchen with smoke
or sniff how nasty the breath of the dog
that follows her yet from room to room,
unable, himself, to hear his own bark.

It's thus they get around,
the wheezing old hound stone deaf
baying like a smoke alarm
for his amnesiac mistress whose back
from petting him is bent forever
as they shuffle towards the flaming toaster
and split the cindered crisp that's left.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org), publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Poem copyright © 2007 by Bruce Guernsey, whose newest book, "New England Primer," published by Cherry Grove Collections (WordTech Communications) is due out in 2008. Poem reprinted from *Spoon River Poetry Review*, Vol. XXVI, no. 2, by permission of the author. Introduction copyright © 2006 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

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