

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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During World War II the government endorsed the publication of inexpensive paperbacks for persons serving overseas. Jehanne Dubrow, who lives and teaches in Maryland and whose husband is a naval officer, here shows us one of those pocket-sized volumes. This poet's latest book is *The Arranged Marriage*, (University of New Mexico Press, 2015).

Armed Services Editions

My copy of *The Fireside Book of Verse*
is as the seller promised—the stapled spine,
the paper aged to Army tan—no worse
for wear, given the cost of its design,
six cents to make and printed on a press
once used for magazines and pulp. This book
was never meant to last a war much less
three quarters of a century.

I look
for evidence of all the men who scanned
these lines, crouched down in holes or lying in
their racks. I read the poems secondhand.
Someone has creased the page. Did he begin
then stop to sleep? to clean his gun perhaps?
to listen to the bugler playing taps?

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