

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY © 2006 THE POETRY FOUNDATION WEBSITE: WWW.AMERICANLIFEINPOETRY.ORG CONTACT: ALP@POETRYFOUNDATION.ORG

American Life in Poetry: Column 240

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

We haven't shown you many poems in which the poet enters another person and speaks through him or her, but it is, of course, an effective and respected way of writing. Here Philip Memmer of Deansboro, N.Y., enters the persona of a young woman having an unpleasant experience with a blind date.

The Paleontologist's Blind Date

You have such lovely bones, he says,
holding my face in his hands,

and although I can almost feel
the stone and the sand

sifting away, his fingers
like the softest of brushes,

I realize after this touch
he would know me

years from now, even
in the dark, even

without my skin.
Thank you, I smile—

then I close the door
and never call him again.

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 ©2008 by Philip Memmer, whose most recent book of poetry is "Lucifer: A Hagiography," Lost Horse Press, 2009. "The Paleontologist's Blind Date," from "Threat of Pleasure" by Phil Memmer, ©2008 Word Press, Cincinnati, Ohio. Introduction copyright ©2009 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.

American Life in Poetry ©2006 The Poetry Foundation
Contact: alp@poetryfoundation.org
This column does not accept unsolicited poetry.