

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
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BY TED KOOSER, U.S. POET LAUREATE, 2004-2006

Tell a whiny child that she sounds like a broken record, and she's likely to say, "What's a record?" Jeff Daniel Marion, a Tennessee poet, tells us not only what 78 rpm records were, but what they meant to the people who played them, and to those who remember the people who played them.

78 RPM

In the back of the junkhouse
stacked on a cardtable covered
by a ragged bedspread, they rest,
black platters whose music once
crackled, hissed with a static
like shuffling feet, fox trot or two-step,
the slow dance of the needle
riding its merry-go-round,
my mother's head nestled
on my father's shoulder as they
turned, lost in the sway of sounds,
summer nights and faraway
places, the syncopation of time
waltzing them to a world
they never dreamed, dance
of then to the dust of now.

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