

# 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 307

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

I like this poem by 97-year-old Lois Beebe Hayna of Colorado for the way it captures restrained speech. The speaker spends most of her words in describing a season, but behind the changes of spring another significant change is suggested.

### Brief Eden

For part of one strange year we lived  
in a small house at the edge of a wood.  
No neighbors, which suited us. Nobody  
to ask questions. Except  
for the one big question we went on  
asking ourselves.

That spring  
myriads of birds stopped over  
briefly. Birds we'd never seen before, drawn  
to our leafy quiet and our brook and because,  
as we later learned, the place lay beneath  
a flyway. Flocks appeared overnight—birds  
brilliant or dull, with sharp beaks  
or crossed bills, birds small  
and enormous, all of them pausing  
to gorge at the feeder, to rest their wings,  
and disappear. Each flock seemed surer than we  
of a destination. By the time we'd watched them  
wing north in spring, then make  
an anxious autumn return,  
we too had pulled it together and we too moved  
into what seemed to be our lives.

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