

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 328

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

How I love poems in which there is evidence of a poet paying close attention to the world about him. Here Angelo Giambra, who lives in Florida, has been keeping an eye on the bees.

The Water Carriers

On hot days we would see them
leaving the hive in swarms. June and I
would watch them weave their way
through the sugarberry trees toward the pond
where they would stop to take a drink,
then buzz their way back, plump and full of water,
to drop it on the backs of the fanning bees.
If you listened you could hear them, their tiny wings
beating in unison as they cooled down the hive.
My brother caught one once, its bulbous body
bursting with water, beating itself against
the smooth glass wall of the canning jar.
He lit a match, dropped it in, but nothing
happened. The match went out and the bee
swam through the mix of sulfur and smoke
until my brother let it out. It flew straight
back to the hive. Later, we skinny-dipped
in the pond, the three of us, the August sun
melting the world around us as if it were
wax. In the cool of the evening, we walked
home, pond water still dripping from our skin,
glistening and twinkling like starlight.

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