

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

Lots of us find ourselves under the interested fingers of dermatologists, who prosper on the fun we once had out in the sun. Here George Bilgere of Ohio, one of our most amusing American poets, sits back in his skin doctor's chair and reminisces about a party that took place years ago.

Basal Cell

The sun is still burning in my skin
even though it set half-an-hour ago,
and Cindy and Bob and Bev and John
are pulling on their sweatshirts
and gathering around the fire pit.

John hands me a cold one
and now Bev comes into my arms
and I can feel the sun's heat,
and taste the Pacific on her cheek.

I am not in Vietnam,
nor is John or Bob, because
our deferments came through,
and we get to remain boys
for at least another summer
like this one in Santa Cruz,
surfing the afternoons in a sweet
blue dream I'm remembering now,

as the nurse puts my cheek to sleep,
and the doctor begins to burn
those summers away.

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