

# 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 429

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

Here's a poem by Robin Chapman, from Wisconsin, that needs no introduction, because we've all known an elderly person who's much like this one.

### Time

My neighbor, 87, rings the doorbell to ask  
if I might have seen her clipping shears  
that went missing a decade ago,  
with a little red paint on their shaft,  
or the iron turkey bank and the porcelain  
coffee cup that disappeared a while back  
when her friend, now dead, called the police  
to break in to see if she were ill, and have we  
had trouble with our phone line, hers  
is dead and her car and driver's license  
are missing though she can drive perfectly  
well, just memory problems, and her son  
is coming this morning to take her up  
to Sheboygan, where she was born  
and where the family has its burial lots,  
to wait on assisted living space, and she  
just wanted to say we'd been good neighbors  
all these how many? years, and how lucky  
I am to have found such a nice man  
and could she borrow a screwdriver,  
the door lock to her house is jammed.

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