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

Thomas R. Moore, a poet from Maine, has written a fine snow-shoveling poem, and this is a good time of year for it. I especially admire the double entendre of "squaring off."

Removing the Dross

After snowstorms my father
shoveled the driveway where it lay
open to a sweep of wind across

a neighbor's field, where the snow
drifted half way down to the paved
road, before snow-blowers, before

pick-ups cruised the streets with
THE BOSS lettered on red plows.
He heated the flat shovel

in the woodstove till the blade
steamed, like Vulcan at his furnace
removing the dross, then rubbed

a hissing candle on the steel
so the snow would slide unchecked
as he made each toss. He marked

blocks with the waxed blade, lifted
and tossed, lifted and tossed again,
squaring off against the snow.

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