

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

Here's a fine poem about two generations of husbands, by Pauletta Hansel of Ohio.

Husbands

My mother likes a man who works. She likes
my husband's muddy knees, grass stains on the cuffs.
She loved my father, though when weekends came
he'd sleep till nine and would not lift
his eyes up from the page to move the feet
she'd vacuum under. On Saturdays my husband
digs the holes for her new roses,
softening the clay with peat and compost.
He changes bulbs she can no longer reach
and understands the inside of her toaster.
My father's feet would carry him from chair
to bookshelf, back again till Monday came.
My mother likes to tell my husband
sit down in this chair and put your feet up.

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