

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY

A FREE COLUMN FOR NEWSPAPERS BY TED KOOSER, POET LAUREATE OF THE UNITED STATES, 2004-2006
AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY © 2006 THE POETRY FOUNDATION WEBSITE: WWW.AMERICANLIFEINPOETRY.ORG CONTACT: ALP@POETRYFOUNDATION.ORG

American Life in Poetry: Column 570

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

Here's a poem of loss by Jo McDougall, from her collected poems, *In the Home of the Famous Dead*, from The University of Arkansas Press. Like many deeply moving poems, it doesn't tell us everything; it tells us just enough. Ms. McDougall lives and writes in Little Rock.

This Morning

As I drove into town
the driver in front of me
runs a stop sign.
A pedestrian pulls down his cap.
A man comes out of his house
to sweep the steps.
Ordinariness
bright as raspberries.

I turn on the radio.
Somebody tells me
the day is sunny and warm.
A woman laughs

and my daughter steps out of the radio.
Grief spreads in my throat like strep.
I had forgotten, I was happy, I maybe
was humming "You Are My Lucky Star,"
a song I may have invented.
Sometimes a red geranium, a dog,
a stone
will carry me away.
But not for long.
Some memory or another of her
catches up with me and stands
like an old nun behind a desk,
ruler in hand.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation (www.poetryfoundation.org), publisher of *Poetry* magazine. It is also supported by the Department of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Poem copyright ©2015 by Jo McDougall, "This Morning," from *In the Home of the Famous Dead: Collected Poems*, (The University of Arkansas Press, 2015). Poem reprinted by permission

of Jo McDougall and the publisher. Introduction copyright ©2016 by The Poetry Foundation. The introduction's author, Ted Kooser, served as United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress from 2004-2006. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts.

American Life in Poetry ©2006 The Poetry Foundation
Contact: alp@poetryfoundation.org
This column does not accept unsolicited poetry.