

# 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 575

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

Susan Aizenberg lives and teaches in Omaha, and the following poem is from *Quiet City*, published by BkMk Press. My father and perhaps yours, too, found a little pleasure in an early morning walk.

### Mornings

Before the train screamed him through tunnels  
to his windowless office, the idiots  
he had to "sir," my father needed a space  
without us, so in a crack of light from the bathroom,  
he dressed, held his shoes by two fingers,  
and left us sleeping. That walk

to the diner, the last stars fading out,  
the sky lightening from black to blue to white,  
was his time. He walked in all weather,  
let each season touch him all over,  
lifted his face to rain and sun. He liked  
to watch the old houses stir awake  
and nod to the woman in her slippers on 27<sup>th</sup>,  
smoking as she strolled her little mutt.  
To step back, smooth as Fred Astaire,  
from the paperboy's wild toss.

Milk bottles sweated on doorsteps,  
sweet cream on top, and once, he lifted a quart  
from its wire basket, drank it down  
beneath our neighbor's winking porch light,  
and left the empty on the stoop.

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