

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 609

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

We've been selecting poems for this column for more than ten years and I can't remember ever publishing a poem about a cat. But here at last is a cat, a lovely old cat. Ron Koertge lives in California, and his most recent book of poems is *Vampire Planet: New & Selected Poems*, from Red Hen Press.

Lily

No one would take her when Ruth passed.
As the survivors assessed some antiques,
I kept hearing, "She's old. Somebody
should put her down."

I picked her up instead. Every night I tell her
about the fish who died for her, the ones
in the cheerful aluminum cans.

She lies on my chest to sleep, rising
and falling, rising and falling like a rowboat
fastened to a battered dock by a string.

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