

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 717

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

Ryler Dustin of Bellingham, Washington, is a graduate student in our creative writing program at The University of Nebraska, and this lovely poem is from the manuscript of a book for which he's hoping to find a publisher.

To Make Color

Every morning, my grandmother cleaned the Fischer stove
in the back of the trailer, lifted ash in a shovel, careful

not to spill the white-gray dust. *Precious*, she said, her breath
smoking in the cold. *Precious* in winter's first lavender

not-quite-light—and you could smell it, the faintest acrid hint
of ash, a crispness calling you from bed. You could watch her

cap it in a chicory coffee can to stack among others, back bent
from a long-gone fever. *For the garden in spring*, she said.

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 ©2018 by Ryler Dustin, "To Make Color." Poem reprinted by permission of Ryler Dustin. Introduction copyright ©2018 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.