

# 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 719

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

The glaciers that flattened my part of the world made their exit eons ago, but in Alaska, where Peggy Shumaker lives and writes, they're just now beginning to turn back. Only deep in a Nebraska snowbank can you shovel your way into the blue she describes at the end of this poem, from her new and selected poems, *Cairn*, from Red Hen Press.

### Exit Glacier

When we got close enough  
we could hear

rivers inside the ice  
heaving splits

the groaning of a ledge  
about to

calve. Strwn in the moraine  
fresh moose sign—

tawny oblong pellets  
breaking up

sharp black shale. In one breath  
ice and air—

history, the record  
of breaking—

prophecy, the warning  
of what's yet to break

out from under  
four stories

of bone-crushing turquoise  
retreating.

American Life in Poetry is made possible by The Poetry Foundation ([www.poetryfoundation.org](http://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 Peggy Shumaker, "Exit Glacier," from *Cairn: New and Selected*, (Red Hen Press, 2018). Poem reprinted by permission of Peggy Shumaker and the publisher. 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](mailto:alp@poetryfoundation.org)  
This column does not accept unsolicited poetry.