

# Arts & Entertainment

## Poet Kooser believes writers need isolation

By Jackie Fox

Poems from *Sure Signs* by Ted Kooser. Reprinted by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press.

### Nebraska Poets

#### Spring Plowing

*West of Omaha the freshly plowed fields  
steam in the night like lakes  
The smell of the earth floods over the roads.  
The field mice are moving their nests  
to the higher ground of fence rows,  
the old among them crying out to the owls  
to take them all. The paths in the grass  
are loud with the squeak of their carts.  
They keep their lanterns covered.*

Ted Kooser surely is one of Nebraska's most prominent poets.

In addition to having several books published, he has had poems featured in *The New Yorker*, *The American Poetry Review*, and *Prairie Schooner*, among others. His poems also have been included in high school and college textbooks. He recently was awarded a writing grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Kooser has written poetry since he was a child, but didn't get serious about it until he was 19 or 20. One of his reasons for getting involved with poetry was his need to feel set apart and special, something he believes is important. Kooser said if he lived in a tribal situation and the tribe was gathered around the fire, he would be the one set slightly apart from the others, standing at the edge of the forest.

He had another reason for becoming a poet: women. He hadn't felt physically impressive as a teenager and wanted to be able to reach women. He said he believed he could do this by being able to discuss things that football players couldn't.

When he writes, he usually starts out with a line or a word as opposed to an idea. He said ideas usually don't turn into poems.

Kooser said he dislikes the "ingrown toenail" type of poem. He described an ingrown toenail poem as short and well-written, yet insignificant and not moving.

He said writing classes are useful to beginners only up to a point. Beyond that, the only way to learn writing is to write.

Kooser said poets should be isolated. He said he rarely has enough time alone to write.



Ted Kooser

Mark Davis/Daily Nebraskan

## Smurfs, Joan Rivers give U.S. bad name

Announcer: "Too many cooks are gonna spoil the stew,

Too many cooks are gonna spoil the stew,

Too many cooks are gonna spoil the stew,

But there ain't nobody cooking, here but me and you.

### Tom Mockler Glenn Stuva

Glenn: Hi America. Tom and I are here today to discuss a subject that is near and dear to our hearts. That subject is this great country in which we live. America. The old U.S. of A.

Tom: More specifically, things we don't like in this otherwise great country of ours. Do you want to go first?

Glenn: Sure, why not? I tell you Tom, I love this great country of ours, but

there are some things about it that really tick me off. For starters I can't stand Burger King commercials.

Tom: Yes. Every time one of those comes on I want to scream. I even eat there occasionally, and I can't stand them. They try to be so clever, and come across being so irritatingly stupid.

Glenn: I think the advertising firm that came up with Burger King's present advertising strategy ought to be banned from ever working again.

Tom: Much more clever in this genre are Wendy's "Where's the beef?" ads, or even McDonald's inoffensive high road/middle of the road ads.

Glenn: Another thing that gets my goat is the explosion of different brands of toothpaste. Whatever happened to the good old days when people either brushed their teeth with water or didn't brush them at all?

Tom: Toothpaste ads don't bother me as much as those stupid Cabbage Patch dolls. How little imagination does the American public have left? What

ever happened to teddy bears?

Glenn: Damn right. And what about Smurfs? I hate Smurfs. I want to cut their stuffing out.

Tom: Smurfs don't bother me as much as Garfield (the cat). The cartoon equivalent to Burger King ads, this is another item that attempts cleverness but fails miserably. The most irritating part is that a lot of people think he's funny, just like Joan Rivers. Did you know they're selling large stuffed Garfields for \$200? Two hundred dollars! So some weak-willed person can set it along side their brat's Cabbage Patch doll.

Glenn: Joan Rivers isn't funny. She's merely crude and obnoxious. But perhaps the single thing I hate most in America is John Cougar. I guess it's John Cougar "Mellencamp," now. John Cougar knows nothing. "Little pink houses?" I don't know about you, but I never lived in a pink house. I just wish he'd stop singing and go take a bath.

Tom: Or get a haircut. The man is

really "LC," to borrow a phrase.

Glenn: And of course there are certain second district congressmen that should be retired permanently, but I can't mention any names because we're not supposed to get political.

Tom: You mean Hal Daub?

Glenn: Yeah, The Weasel.

Tom: Two-faced (censored).

Glenn: Well Tom, we seem to be running out of time. Let's mention a few things we like about America. Pizza for instance.

Tom: Volkswagens.

Glenn: The Beatles, hamburgers, and cable television.

Tom: Big Gulps, drive-in movies, Friday nights with Mary Jane.

Glenn: Certain film critics and of course that All-American institution: freedom of the press.

Tom: I think I'm going to start to cry.

Glenn: Let's hear it for America folks. It's your country. It's our country. It's everybody's country, even it it's not their country.