

The Nebraskan

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Weather: Unseasonably cool weather will continue today and into the first part of the weekend. Expect mostly sunny skies and pleasant today with a high of 75 (24C). Clear and cool tonight with a low of 54 (12C). For the weekend expect pleasant and mild conditions to continue with highs in the lower to mid 80s (29C).

Barb Branda/The Nebraskan

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Mark Davis/The Nebraskan

Businessman, poet, writer, artist: Kooser

By Scott Harrah
Staff Reporter

Banks loan money and libraries loan books, but do businesses loan their own personal poets?

Lincoln Benefit Life, a local insurance company, has done just that.

Nationally-known poet Ted Kooser has been "loaned" by the company to UNL's English department for the first five-week summer session.

The company donated the services of their second vice president-marketing administration as part of a commitment to Nebraska humanities, Kooser said.

Kooser, a 1969 UNL graduate, is currently teaching a creative writing course with his old friend, English professor Warren L. Fine.

According to English department chairman Fred Link, Kooser was asked to teach the class because he is both an acclaimed regional poet and a "good teacher."

In the class Kooser and Fine listen to students' poems and short stories, then offer criticism and professional advice afterwards.

Dealing with the transition from boardroom to classroom has been easy for Kooser because, he said there is no great separation between the two life

styles.

"There's no reason a businessman can't be a poet or an artist, too," he said.

Kooser started working in life insurance in 1964, and has been equally successful in both his business and literary endeavors.

He has written numerous books of poetry and fiction, and his works have appeared in such eminent publications as "New Yorker," "American Poetry Review," and "The Nation."

Other achievements include two Creative Writing Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, being appointed to the Nebraska Arts Council,

and becoming editor and publisher of Windflower Press, a local publishing house.

Kooser feels that experience is the cause of his many successes.

"You learn a lot about the process of writing by just writing," he said.

He has been writing for so long, he said, that it is impossible for him to remember when he first picked up his poetic pen or why.

Kooser is also a visual artist whose paintings have graced the covers of many magazines and on all of the books published by Windflower Press.

But poetry still remains his first love, he said.

"Painting and drawing is fun for me. Poetry's fun, but it's also hard work," he said.

Unlike many poets, Kooser doesn't write about ideas. He said most of his poetry consists of life experiences or what is presently on his mind.

"When I write," he said, "I never think I'm writing *about* something."

Now in his mid 40s, Kooser plans to experiment with other literary genres. He said he would like to write more fiction and be remembered for writing "two or three good poems" after his death.

"As a writer," he said, "I just want to keep getting better."