

# 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 189

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

In celebration of Veteran's Day, here is a telling poem by Gary Dop, a Minnesota poet. The veterans of World War II, now old, are dying by the thousands. Here's one still with us, standing at Normandy, remembering.

### On Swearing

In Normandy, at Point Du Hoc,  
where some Rangers died,  
Dad pointed to an old man  
20 feet closer to the edge than us,  
asking if I could see  
the medal the man held  
like a rosary.  
As we approached the cliff  
the man's swearing, each bulleted  
syllable, sifted back  
toward us in the ocean wind.  
I turned away,  
but my shoulder was held still  
by my father's hand,  
and I looked up at him  
as he looked at the man.

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