

AMERICAN LIFE IN POETRY:

Creative Writing Can Focus On The Ordinary

BY TED KOOSER
U.S. Poet Laureate

We who teach creative writing have been known to tell our students that there is no subject so common and ordinary that it can't be addressed in a poem, and this one, by Michael McFee, who lives in North Carolina, is a good example of that.

SPITWADS

Little paper cuds we made
by ripping the corners or edges
from homework and class notes
then ruminating them into balls
we'd flick from our fingertips
or catapult with pencils
or (sometimes after lunch)
launch through striped straws
like deadly projectiles
toward the necks of enemies
and any other target where they'd
stick with the tiniest splat,
I hope you're still there,
stuck to unreachable ceilings
like the beginnings of nests
by generations of wasps
too ignorant to finish them
or under desktops with blunt
stalactites of chewing gum,
little white words we learned
to shape and hold in our mouths
while waiting to let them fly,
our most tenacious utterance.

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USD

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the argument that says the government should not tell its citizens what they should and should not buy, he said.

"You cannot walk naked in the streets, so you have to have clothes," Lepres said. "You will be jailed if you let your children starve because they don't get food, so you have to buy food. So, there are many things where the government is dictating that you have to buy a particular product."

Hensel said that despite most criticisms, public support for universal healthcare is "remarkably stable."

According to a Gallup Poll taken in 1938, 81 percent of respondents said the U.S. government should be responsible for providing a system of healthcare. The results of a similar poll taken in 1991 put the number at 80 percent.

The total usually stands around 50-60 percent, Hensel said.

"It's not a huge majority, but it is a majority," he said.

Mike Myers, associate professor at the USD School of Law, currently is involved in a lawsuit with a Yankton clinic. He said that a Nebraska man took his wife to the clinic so she could undergo a mammogram. The couple told the receptionist at the clinic that they did not have Medicare Part B, but did have Medicare Part A.

"The words were, 'Don't worry,'" Myers said. "So that guy thought, 'They're going to accept Part A.'"

However, he said, this was not the case.

"They get a bill and they can't pay it," Myers said. "His income is \$1,011 a month, hers is \$890. Right around two grand a month. They don't have the money to pay, and (YMC wants) \$866."

The issue with the bill was

assigned to Credit Collection Services. Myers said he tried to resolve the matter with the owner of that company, but could not make any headway.

As a result, a countersuit has been filed on behalf of the couple, as they were told not to worry at the clinic.

"What that person at the desk should have said was, 'Since you don't have Medicare Part B, you will be charged and we will expect the sticker price — \$866 — instead of the \$240 that Medicare Part B pays,'" Myers said. "We're going to contend that that was a breach of contract and that there's something called the fiduciary duty between doctors and patients."

Myers suggested that this information should be posted at clinics so patients can be aware of what they will be charged under their respective plans.

"I would suggest that even the doctor ought to have some awareness as to the financial implications of the treatment that he or she is providing," he said.

Benno Wymar, forum moderator and professor emeritus of economics at USD, said charts outlining plans doctors will and won't accept currently are available in Germany, his home country, and elsewhere in Europe.

Lapre said this is similar to the fact that under universal healthcare, patients will not be admitted to emergency rooms for non-emergencies. For this reason, general practices have been incorporated into most European emergency rooms.

"(That way), you're not sending someone away. You're sending someone to someone else," he said.

Car Fire Not Something To Take Lightly

BY TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI

Dear Tom and Ray:
Last week my fiancée's father was driving his 1987 Buick from the farm into town. A couple of hundred yards away from the house (and about .1 mile from the highway) on the gravel road, the car caught fire. Her dad, instead of using his cell phone to call the fire department, left the car on the road and walked home to tell his wife. He told her it'd burn itself out. A short while later, they were in the kitchen and were — seriously — surprised to see the fire department outside putting out the blazing car. So, (1) what the heck kind of family am I marrying into? And (2) we know that it's toxic, in poor taste and dangerous, but would the car actually have pulled a "movie moment" and exploded? Or, like her father says, would it have burned itself out? —Seth

TOM: I think Pops REALLY wants a new Buick, Seth. He was afraid that if he put out the fire, they'd somehow be able to patch up his car, and he'd have to drive it for another five years. So he walked away to make sure it had ample time to caramelize.



CLICK & CLACK

RAY: That's a very dangerous thing to do. It certainly can explode. What happens is that fires usually start in the engine compartment. Sometimes they can burn themselves out, if they run out of nearby materials to combust.

TOM: But lots of times they keep burning. And then they spread to the undercarriage, and then the tires, and the interior. Once a

fire spreads, it easily can melt the fuel lines, or cause the pressure in the fuel tank to rise so much that the tank breaks.

RAY: And even if the car doesn't explode like the Death Star in "Star Wars," any rupture in the fuel lines or fuel tank will result in a huge and violent increase in flames.

TOM: That could set nearby fields, and then houses, on fire, which won't endear Pops to his neighbors.

RAY: So, whenever you have a car that catches fire that you can't address immediately with the proper fire extinguisher, you should move away from the car and call the fire department.

TOM: What kind of family are you marrying into, Seth? One that needs to work on its communication skills. If Pops had been able to say, "Ma, I really want one of them new Buicks," perhaps this could have been avoided.

Got a question about cars? Write to Click and Clack in care of this newspaper, or e-mail them by visiting the Car Talk Web site at www.cartalk.com.

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CUTS

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bers presented — not just tonight, not just this last few weeks, not just the last few months, but rather, throughout the last few years — that the district is facing a financial crisis that was compounded by the cuts to education funding this year. We don't have time to go through and take the chance that we can get something passed later if the opt-out doesn't pass the first time. That would be pure foolishness on our part. We waited as long as we possibly can. When you look at it on a 10-year plan, we cannot afford not to do this."

Superintendent Dr. Joseph Gertsema said that, at this time, the district — because of a state law requiring all teacher contracts to be renewed for the following year by April 15 — was forced to address the \$1.6 million shortfall that was created by the cuts to educational state aid funding handed down by the 2011 Legislature.

"I really hope that when people leave here tonight, they will have a better understanding, that we have put a face to how deep our cut in state aid funding really is," he said. "The teacher's positions got the most attention, as they should, but the reason that there were any cuts at this time was because of the April 15 deadline that we face. If

you go down the list and look at everything we have proposed to cut, from the teachers to programs to paraprofessionals, we are still only at \$1.3 million and we took a cut of \$1.6 million."

A total of 24 teaching positions will not be filled: 22 via reduction in force (RIFs) cuts and two because of not filling a vacant position.

"The total savings due to RIFs this year is around \$888,000," Gertsema said. "Programming cuts address the rest. At this time, we have eliminated all grade 5-6 activities and all grade 7-8 activities. What that means is, the school board can come back at a later point and rehire those positions, but because of the April 15 date, the cuts had to be made now. Between now and when the final results of the opt-out and the final budget are available, the board will have the flexibility and hopefully some of those activities will come back."

Board member Chris Specht took on the responsibility of naming the teachers and positions targeted for RIF during the meeting. As the reading of list of positions cut settled on the audience, the board passed the proposal unanimously.

"The administrators were asked to speak to the teachers last week," Stevens said when asked about how those being laid off were informed. "I don't know that there was a good or bad way to handle it. I do know that there was not a single administrator who looked for-

ward to that day. It is a bad day anytime you have to tell a teacher that their contract will not be renewed.

"At this point, I don't anticipate that there will be any additional teachers (let go), but that doesn't mean that classified staff will not face further cuts. We still have to come up with reducing our expenses to meet our budget. This is what we had to do tonight. ... It is a matter of having to calculate what we have and making it work," he added.

Gertsema stressed that even though the district has made these moves, it only addresses the shortfalls created with the cuts to state funding of education. It doesn't address the structural deficit facing the district.

"We are taking this in steps," he said. "Steps two and three will have to be taken between now and the May school board meeting where we have to present the initial budget. The board will be considering cutting additional programs. Because the board will have to decide (if) they want to go deeper than the \$1.3 million, we are looking at everything. This is not a little thing, this is a huge thing."

One other option the district identified as a savings for the general fund balance during Monday's meeting was the transfer of some classifications from the general fund to the food service budget. Another possibility the district has, due to legislative action this past Legislative session, is the possible transfer of some expenses from the

general fund to the capital outlay fund. It's an option district officials have been opposed to in the past, saying that it would fix the problem in the short-term but would in the long-term, create two budgets that were out of balance.

"Between now and the May 24 opt-out vote, we will have plenty of opportunities to speak to the public," Gertsema said when asked why the board did not take public comment during the meeting. "We have been fielding many questions and calls already, and the information regarding the opt-out has been given to the public. In addition, we have the website set up where people can go to get answers and ask questions."

The district opt-out website is www.yzd.k12.sd.us/optout.

"There is not a dollar that we have spent that I didn't feel should be spent," Stevens said after the board meeting. "We have a very efficient school district and we can account for every penny that has been spent. This isn't a matter of going to an auction and going in high hoping you get it for a little lower; we need every penny we have asked for in the opt-out. It bothers me significantly that we are having to do this. I had hoped we would never have to do this. Trust me, in the years I have been on the board, we have done everything we could to avoid this situation."

The next monthly meeting of the school board will be Monday, May 9.

CITY

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that the commission make the \$5,000 appropriation for the project out of the general fund.

A unanimous decision was

PLAN

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discussion until now of cuts in the government's massive benefit programs for the elderly and poor, Obama will acknowledge a need to reduce spending on

made by the commission to provide the funding and allow KYB to move ahead with the beautification project.

In other business Monday, the commission awarded a \$339,920 bid to Feimer Construction of Yankton for the reconstruction of Locust Street from Fourth to Eighth streets.

Medicare and Medicaid while at the same time tackling defense spending and calling for increased taxes on the wealthy, White House officials said.

If that sounds like a reprise of last week's budget fight that barely avoided a government shutdown, it isn't. The stakes are far higher, the political risks greater and the goals more ambitious. At issue are long-term budget deficits and a \$14.3 trillion national debt that many say could threaten the nation's economy.

Yankton Library To Screen 'Tangled'

The Yankton Community Library, 515 Walnut, will screen "Tangled" as an after-school movie at 3:45 p.m. Thursday, April 14.

The PG-rated, 100-minute film is the 50th feature in the Walt Disney Animated Classics series.

The storyline of the movie will be recognized by young and old as the German fairy tale "Rapunzel" by the Brothers Grimm. Popcorn will be served.

For more information, call the library at 668-5275.



50th Anniversary

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Potts

Robert and Anita Potts of Yankton, SD, are celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary on April 15, 2011.

The family is requesting a card shower. Greetings may be sent to 2316 Valley Rd., Yankton, SD 57078.

Robert Potts and Anita Feilmeier were married April 15, 1961, at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Bow Valley, NE.

The couple has 3 children: Sheri and Chico Mason, Girard, PA; Deb and Dan Leise, Hartington, NE; and Jeff and Stacey Potts, Riverdale, NE. They have 9 grandchildren.

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