

American Life In Poetry

A Poetic Look At Toys And Their Impact

BY TED KOOSER
U.S. Poet Laureate

I'm a sucker for miniatures, I suppose because it's easy to believe I have control over my world when some of its parts are very small and I have positioned them to my liking. Here's a telling poem about a tiny plastic soldier by Mary M. Brown of Indiana.

CLASSIC TOY

The plastic army men are always green. They're caught in awkward poses, one arm outstretched as if to fire, legs parted and forever stuck on a swiggle of support, as rigid and green as the boots. This one has impressions of pockets, a belt, a collar, a grip on tiny binoculars intended to enlarge, no doubt, some tiny enemy. In back, attached to the belt is a canteen or a grenade (it's hard to tell). The helmet is pulled down low, so as to hide the eyes. If I point the arm, the gun, toward me, I see that this soldier is very thin. It's almost unreal, how thin he is.

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SNAP Recipients To See Decreased Benefits Nov. 1

LINCOLN, Neb. — Increased federal benefits to recipients in Nebraska's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program — formerly known as the food stamp program — provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 will expire Nov. 1, according to Thomas Pristow, director of Children and Family Services in the Department of Health and Human Services.

Benefits increased slightly for most households on Oct. 1 to reflect the costs of living. However, most families will see their benefits decrease Nov. 1, due to the end of the extra benefits provided by the 2009 law.

The amount of SNAP benefits each eligible household receives depends on many things, such as income, household size and expenses, Pristow said. On Nov. 1, a family of four with no income and no other changes to their case, will see a decrease in their monthly benefits of \$36.

SNAP Maximum Monthly Benefit Levels (listed by household size, Oct. 1 level,

Nov.1 level and difference): 1 — \$200/\$189: -\$11; 2 — \$367/\$347: -\$20; 3 — \$526/\$497: -\$29; 4 — \$668/\$632: -\$36; 5 — \$793/\$750: -\$43; 6 — \$952/\$900: -\$52; 7 — \$1,052/\$995: -\$57

The U.S. Department of Agriculture provides several resources to help people eat healthy meals on a low budget including:

- 10-Tips Nutrition Series (http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html)
- ChooseMyPlate.gov (http://www.choosemyplate.gov/)
- Plan, Compare and Prepare (http://blogs.usda.gov/2013/03/28/healthy-eating-on-a-budget/)
- Eat Right When Money's Tight. (http://snap.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/eat-right-when-moneys-tight)

The USDA Recipe Box (http://www.fns.usda.gov/fncs-recipe-box) helps people find healthy low-cost recipes and create cookbooks and shopping lists.

In Nebraska, 181,484 people currently participate in the program, he said.

NECC Driving Classes Set To Begin Nov. 2

NORFOLK, Neb. — Northeast Community College in Norfolk will soon offer another class to prepare 14-17 year-olds with the basic skills to operate a motor vehicle.

The Provisional Operator's Permit (P.O.P.) Driver's Education Course (TRAN 0450/13F and CRN #60455) includes 20 hours of classroom lecture. The classroom portion will meet Friday, Nov. 1, from 5:30-9 p.m., Saturday, Nov. 2, from 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday, Nov. 3, from 1-6 p.m., and Monday, Nov. 4, from 5:30-9 p.m. Classes will meet in Room 40 at Norfolk Senior High School, 801 Riverside Boulevard.

The six hours of driving lab will be arranged between the student and instructor Lorie Summers from Nov. 5-Dec. 13.

Students are asked to bring their learner or school driving permit to the first

class. A book will be provided.

Students must sign up for both the lecture class and the driving sessions.

There is a cost to class. To register, call (402) 844-7000.

Which Convertible Should I Get?

BY TOM AND RAY MAGLIOZZI
King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Dear Tom and Ray:

I want one more crack at a convertible, having had a wonderful Dodge Dart convertible in earlier years (it was stolen in Detroit when I left it with a company to replace the top and they parked it on the street — boo hoo!). Background: I'm 93 years old, drive a 2000 Subaru Outback (also a great car but has high mileage and a roof). I have extensive driving experience — across the country twice, 3,300 miles last summer (Mill Valley, Calif.; Durango, Colo.; Moab, Utah; across Nevada and back home). No arrests, no accidents, no problems (so far). What would you recommend for a secondhand, moderately priced, safe (air bags), serviceable and FUN convertible? Many thanks for your assistance. I've loved your column and radio show for many years. — Anne

RAY: Well, first I have to ask if you'd accept a marriage proposal from my brother. He's been looking for someone like you ever since Wife No. 2 changed the locks.

TOM: I see you in a Porsche Turbo Carrera, Anne — as long as I'm not making the payments. I've made enough "payments" already, if you know what I mean!

RAY: Actually, the car that first comes to mind for you is the Toyota Camry Solara. It's basically a Camry with two doors and a convertible top.

TOM: There are several things that



CAR TALK

Tom and Ray Magliozzi

make me think the Solara is the convertible for you. First, it's based on the Toyota Camry, which means it'll be durable, reliable, ergonomically practical and easy to service.

RAY: Second, it's a little bigger than some of the sportier convertible alternatives, like the Mazda Miata, the Mini Cooper or the VW Golf Convertible. And if you're driving across the country, it's nice to have a little room for your belongings and not feel cramped. Plus a slightly larger car will feel more stable on the interstate at high speeds. Not to mention that size often adds some measure of safety if you do have an accident.

TOM: Third, the Solara's a little higher off the ground than those other cars. That means you can get into it without having to "fall" down into the driver's seat, or rappel back out of the car with a grappling hook. That also

means you'll see better when you're driving. I thought of the Mustang for you, too. But you sit pretty low in the Mustang's seat, and I don't know how tall you are (you didn't mention a playing career in the WNBA), but you may feel a little bit like you're sitting in a bathtub when driving the Mustang.

RAY: Finally, it's an easy car to drive. Yeah, it doesn't corner at 90 mph like a Porsche, but it won't require constant vigilance on your part to keep it in its lane, either. And with the top down on a nice day, any car is fun.

TOM: I don't know what you consider affordable, Anne, but for \$15 or \$20 grand, you can pick up a very nice used Solara. I recommend red. Send us a picture, and enjoy it!

If you buy a used car, will you just be inheriting the previous owner's problem? Tom and Ray dispel this and other myths about used cars in their pamphlet "How to Buy a Great Used Car: Secrets Only Your Mechanic Knows." Send \$4.75 (check or money order) to Used Car, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475.

Get more Click and Clack in their new book, "Ask Click and Clack: Answers from Car Talk." Got a question about cars? Write to Click and Clack in care of this newspaper, or email them by visiting the Car Talk website at www.cartalk.com.

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Oz And Roizen

Do-It-Yourself Gene Therapy

BY MICHAEL ROIZEN, M.D.,
AND MEHMET OZ, M.D.
King Features Syndicate, Inc.

At last, we've got solid proof: You can renew and revitalize the DNA embedded in your cells to make improvements in your own health and live a longer and healthier life. And you don't have to take questionable supplements (some good ones are mentioned later) or make a late-night agreement with someone who smells like sulfur to get it done. By adopting a handful of beneficial lifestyle habits, you'll actually be practicing cutting-edge gene therapy!

So let us introduce you to the amazing — sound the trumpets — telomeres. They're the caps on the ends of your genetic material (like the plastic tips on shoelaces) that are designed to keep each cell's strings of DNA from fraying. Telomeres start out fresh and long, shrinking a bit every time one of the cells they're attached to divides. That's normal. But health missteps also shrink your telomeres. They shrivel further and faster when your system is assaulted by inflammation, toxins and negative stress. For example, obesity seems to accelerate telomere shortening (or aging) by 30 percent or more. Smoking speeds it up by a whopping 18 percent! When telomeres are super-short, cells die prematurely or become what one telomere researcher calls "zombie cells" — weak, ineffective, but still living. And bringing short, skippy telomeres to the party is associated with an ever-growing list of health problems: heart disease, high blood pressure and

clogged arteries, diabetes, breathing problems like emphysema, arthritis, brittle bones and dementia.

But the big news, according to our friends at the University of California San Francisco and California's Preventive Medicine Research Institute, is that you can do more than just protect these essential tips on your genetic material; you can reverse telomere shrinkage and make them longer! Longer telomeres can help you avoid those health hazards by helping cells duplicate and repair previous damage.

How do we know you have that much control? In a new case study of 35 guys with early-stage prostate cancer, 10 upgraded their diet, got regular physical activity, practiced stress management every day and spent more time with friends and loved ones. Twenty-five other men stuck with their usual habits. After five years, the first group's telomeres were 10 percent longer on average; that's the equivalent of a 20-year-younger RealAge for a 55-year-old! And the guys' telomeres were even longer if they were super-conscientious about making healthy lifestyle changes. The men who didn't make any lifestyle changes saw their telomeres shrink 3 percent.

Ready to do a little at-home gene therapy? Start here:

No. 1: Remove the Five Food Felons from your diet: added sugars and sugar syrups, saturated fat, trans fats and any grains that aren't 100 percent whole. Replace with plant-based edibles such as vegetables, fruit and plant-based proteins like walnuts, beans and tofu. And we do

believe that supplements like DHA, lutein, zeaxanthin, vitamin D-3, calcium and half a multivitamin twice a day are a good insurance policy against an imperfect diet.

No. 2: Move for at least 30 minutes daily, heading for a goal of 10,000 steps or more! If it's too hot, too cold or too dark outside, whether you're at the gym, home or office, take a spin on a stationary bike, march in place or stride on a treadmill. To cement this habit, make it an everyday activity, maybe while you watch your favorite (recorded?) TV show. And we know what that is.

No. 3: Take time to relax daily. Guys in this study devoted an hour a day to managing stress. Don't have 60 minutes to spare? There's good evidence that even five minutes of tension-melting meditation can make a big difference. Find a quiet spot, sit comfortably, shut your eyes and pay attention to your breathing. Add progressive muscle relaxation, tensing and releasing muscle groups from your toes up to your head.

No. 4: Minimize exposure to harmful toxins such as first- and secondhand smoke and BPA-laced receipts. You can learn more about telomere-saving techniques at www.sharecare.com.

Mehmet Oz, M.D. is host of "The Dr. Oz Show." and Mike Roizen, M.D. is Chief Wellness Officer and Chair of Wellness Institute at Cleveland Clinic. To live your healthiest, tune into "The Dr. Oz Show" or visit www.sharecare.com.

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