

## **Father**

by Ted Kooser

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Today you would be ninety-seven  
if you had lived, and we would all be  
miserable, you and your children,  
driving from clinic to clinic,  
an ancient, fearful hypochondriac  
and his fretful son and daughter,  
asking directions, trying to read  
the complicated, fading map of cures.  
But with your dignity intact  
you have been gone for twenty years,  
and I am glad for all of us, although  
I miss you every day--the heartbeat  
under your necktie, the hand cupped  
on the back of my neck, Old Spice  
in the air, your voice delighted with stories.  
On this day each year you loved to relate  
that at the moment of your birth  
your mother glanced out the window  
and saw lilacs in bloom. Well, today  
lilacs are blooming in side yards  
all over Iowa, still welcoming you.