

# the president's prize literary awards

On April 3, the cream of York's literary crop was announced in the annual President's Prize literary competition. With prizes in poetry, prose fiction, playwriting and screenwriting, the President's Prize is the campus' most coveted literary award. Reproduced here, *Excalibur* is pleased to present the winners in the poetry and prose fiction categories. We regret that, due to their length, we are unable to print the playwriting and screenwriting winners.

Ken Dancyger, the judge in the screenwriting category described the "spectrum of submissions," for his category.

"Most were dramatic," he says. "Some of the ones that were not chosen tried to be funny. (But) comedy is the hardest thing to write." He described the losing entries as failing to "fulfill their goals."

The winner, Roger Black's *Logos*, was "very visual, very dramatic," Dancyger said. "It had an emotional impact. It fulfilled the goals it set for itself."

Anthony Stephenson, who judged the playwriting category says there "weren't a hell of a lot of entries. I think there were half a dozen or so." Stephenson looked at the entries "in terms of character development, action, dialogue and thought . . . the kinds of ideas the script(s) expressed."

"The winners had very interesting characters," said Stephenson. *Wake Me Gently*, by Todd Vercoe, is about an Irish wake where the dead is present in his coffin and Ileana Estakis' *Forks and Fingers* tells the story of a black woman living in the Bahamas. In the latter, Stephenson described the "very accurate reproduction of a Bahamian dialect."

Elisabeth Harvor, the judge in the prose fiction category, was impressed with the "poetic energy" in Kahana's piece "It's Gleaming Surface" as well as his ability to "deal with a child's ambiguous feelings towards her parents" without making it sentimental.

However, Harvor was "disappointed in the ending. I felt the last three lines should go, the girl should skate beyond the story. Jonathan caught the nostalgic feeling of the true freedom of childhood but the ending seemed to ask the reader, 'did you get the point?'"

Harvor said she received "good, honest stories and hopes, in the future, to be able to give honourable mentions."

Unfortunately, Louise Holey, winner in the Poetry category for "To Julie Campbell," and the category judge, Don Coles, were unavailable for comment.

by HOWARD KAMAN  
and HEATHER SANGSTER

They slipped over the streets, through the ether-blue murk of early morning. She couldn't keep her eyelids from closing, so she let them, and leaned her head against the window. The vibrations jiggled her awake. Now she had to hold her eyes shut to fall asleep and escape the chill edges of cold that touched her, under the huge parka. It was mysterious to have been bundled up in it, in the hush of the dark hallway, knowing that her father was still asleep upstairs. She dug in the pockets now, touching coins in one pocket and loose mints and twisted kleenex in the other. She could feel the skirt of her skating dress crushed under her thighs.

"Judy, honey, don't go to sleep," her mother said, peering at her in the rear-view mirror, smiling, and Judy sat back against the back seat, looking out the window at the passing houses. Most of the housefronts were still dark; a few windows were lit up as if a light had been left on all night. She frowned and said quietly, "I'm not."

While they waited at a stop light Judy's mother held her hand across the gap between the back and front seats. When Judy let the hand go her mother asked was she nervous. No.

bathroom mirrors, where they leaned forward to make themselves up. Girls lolled their legs and arms everywhere, banging their skates against metal. Judy reached to her mother for her skates.

"Give me," she said, pointing.

"Would you like some help there?" asked her mother.

"I can do it," she insisted. Her mother let the skates go. Judy shoved her feet into them, twisting them against the floor, grabbing the laces all the way loose, and then pulling them into a tight mess. Her mother sighed an unrestrained sigh.

"Let me help," she said, reaching forward.

"Shut up! Shut up!" Judy whispered, pulling away. She kicked at her mother's hands.

"You . . . listen!" Her mother grabbed her arm. Warm shame made her feel a scene beginning, and her vision got cloudy. Judy scowled and retreated, blinking. "Never mind," she said. "Okay. Shut up," she added softly.

Her mother tied her skates properly. Judy felt her feet squeezed, watching the strain break her mother's expression. As it became an ugly curl in her upper lip, Judy felt the boots pin one of her feet, frighten-

# its gleaming surface

ingly for a moment, inside the skate. Then she tipped herself onto her feet and hobbled until she got her balance.

"Un . . ." she started.

"Do you have to go to the bathroom?"

"Maybe . . ."

"You better, then."

"Mom."

"You better."

She sat on the toilet playing the toes of her skate in some wet toilet paper. She cut the shape of her routine into it: line, squiggle, swoosh swoosh, come arounnd, hoop, straight all the way down, squiggle back, spinnn, spiiin, up, aaannd . . . stop. She skated her blade into a stop. Lutz camel spin, hold it in, streamline, dig, and tuck. She shook the white muck off her guard, and flushed the toilet.

She and her mother left each other at the hallway into the arena. Judy accepted a quick kiss and then wobbled down the cement tunnel to join her club on a bench at rinkside.

Much later — years — she thinks of all this, and realizes that she has a sort of amnesia. Or, rather, that there are gaps in what she knows. That she has questions about the whole thing. For instance, how had her coaches been entrusted with little girls' legs and torsos? They were not medical — they were real estate agents and computer repairmen and cosmeticians; how did they

know what to do, instantly, when your calves tightened up or you turned over on your ankle? She thought of their faces: her own parents had had less dependable faces, and vague, complicated expressions. She had spotted her coaches sometimes, throughout the city, their nylon jackets surprising her in the aisles of the IGA, or flipping the pages of a *Playboy* next to her as she waited for her father at the barber shop. But it was weirder to see them in plain clothes; then her imagination ran. What were their homes like? Did they break ashtrays or glass sculptures in arguments, screaming? Did they screw in the living room with the drapes open?

Why were they at the rink early in the morning? What was their interest in it, she wanted to know. What would have been their interest in anything? How did people stop and settle and arrest their lives in that city? Why do people do what they do? What was she doing?

If she had a daughter, they might go skating on a pond in the country. They would find a farmer's field somewhere. To get there they would drive fast through the late morning, with the heat blasting out of the vents. They might take off their jackets in the car, and they might stop for donuts.

week for the colour comics. On Sunday morning they all ate breakfast in their pyjamas. She could smell the sleepiness of flannel and the sharp smell of grinding coffee. The warm imagining of her skin soft against the inside of her nightdress made her shudder with delight.

Mr. Jaekin shakes her by the elbow, bending into her face, and she jumps up. Her stomach hurts. Next, he says, Ready? She nods. Good, he says, smiling, clamps his hands on her shoulders, rubs the back of her neck with his thumbs.

Deanne clatters to a stop in front of them, where they stand at the boards. Mr. Jaekin reaches over Judy's shoulder to slap Deanne on the back, the nylon of his jacket sleeve rubbing against her cheek. Way to go honey!, he says. Deanne beams, blows whew!, waves up to the stands happily. Mrs. Tomlinson in tight pants comes over. Way to be Deanne, she says. Good skate. She and Mr. Jaekin talk above her. She is surrounded by big adult bodies. The PA announcer's voice mumbles and it sounds like her name. She has to skate now! She is trapped! Get away! Move your legs! She pushes away, hitting Mrs. Tomlinson in the pec.

Oooh! Laughing. Hold it! Judy isn't you — I said next. Get her! Strong arms grab her from the gap in the boards. Liz steps out, Liz's music starts.

Sometime later she is shoved in the back. Go, Judy. You. Now. She is cold. Her name rings loudly in the whole height of the arena, and tinny in her ears. She steps to the gap in the boards. The ice is vast.

She steps onto its gleaming surface, touching one blade down and then the other. She has forgotten how to skate. No she hasn't. She pushes off, to the middle, stops, remembers to wave. The music leaps from its opening notes, swerves into a tune.

Her arms swung, her legs pumped, picking up speed. What had stopped? All was quiet and still except the breeze on her face and the shhhhk of her blades cutting the ice as she took the corners. Had her tape snapped? No, it was there, ba-ba BAAing above her. All she was aware of now were her working legs and the speed with which she was completing laps. Her eyes were wide; she saw herself going around and around, skating out her three minutes.

Judy thought about it. What was the fear? It was stupid. She told the thing to herself again. What was there to be afraid of? In the telling, it was nothing. Meaningless, she assured herself.

by JONATHAN KAHANA

I look at these photographs, no longer

of figures gawking but of the land behind, around.

A log catches my shadow. I know

that icy edge of sun: stones, cold and heavy as marbles,

damp underneath, clack clacking dark dead crab and wrack.

Beyond, watery horizon. To wait upon

that edge: my heels can feel what that surf would do;

next to it my shoulders

know themselves suddenly by waves' weight.

Closer, a tangle of beach logs: so

many reaches, pumps, bends of thighs;

or how the flame is hot, the way it rounds me round

it; the way just watching I

know the coldness of the coastal rain, how many days these

would warm me through.

In another, a cirque: rocks and snow.

It is not these cold globs that sink

footfall, nor the dry stone I could rest

upon, lichen peeling itching under my weight, easing the wind, but what

lies between.

Edges are only for distances. In the reed's slice, the cliff's

give, in this wide white

stretch I can come

walking, can

watch the land meet like snap

in the bone.

## to julie campbell

by LOUISE HOOLEY