

Literary Supplement

Second Place

untitled

she is gone
forever
from this side of life
and I kneel
and touch my head
to the cold
black wall
of eternity
and cry

by Yasushi Ohki

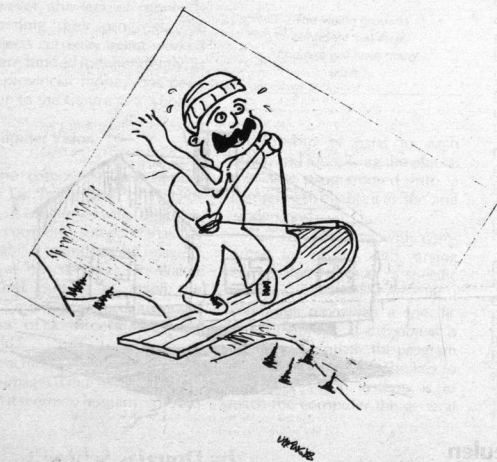


Third Place

Janitor

They're like the tides, you know, the tides of some
great dirty ocean, like the one I crossed.
They rush through, here and gone on sneaker feet,
Roaring like angry sea-gods loosed from hell.
I just stand and wait for them to leave.
My wife once stood and watched the empty beach
and waited for the tide. (She had the sweetest
smelling hair to run my calloused fingers
through.) But that was much too long ago.
Before me now the empty hallway waits,
and all its driftwood, garbage from each shore
the sea has touched. (Can you believe the stuff
they toss away? And all these cigarette
butts on the floor. I wonder if they've ever
seen the sea?) A little boy once, waiting
to become a man, would wander down
the sandy stretch, collecting treasures. Now
I stoop to gather broken bottles. When
the tide comes in again I will go home.

by Kim Aippersbach



JUDGE'S COMMENTS: LONG POEM

Thanks for asking me to judge the Long Poem Category of the Gateway Literary Contest. It was an interesting experience.

The entries seemed to divide up roughly into two bunches, the not-very-good and the good, which made the first cut rather easy and the final choice rather difficult. As it is I had to tie two people for third place.

What was wrong with the not-very-good poems? Basically: not enough attention to poetic language and rhythms, too much attention to didactic explanations. Whether the didacticism is about God's plan for the universe or someone's lost love, the effect is the same: the reader feels preached-to and therefore irritated. A poem should be a flavour-bud which explodes in the reader's

mouth. The winners and almost-winners had that quality of immediacy and directness which involves the reader, and they also had the ability to leave spaces in the work for the reader to do her or his own augmentation of the imagery. They were careful with their word choice and use, and didn't embellish or overembroider. They had discipline without rigidity.

Entering a contest can be a way of advancing as a writer, by measuring oneself against a definable set of criteria. The comments regarding my choice imply and define my criteria. I hope that both successful and unsuccessful entrants find in these criteria some principles to help them continue to develop and improve their work.

Candas Jane Dorsey

First Place

O

I was on a toboggan, standing up,
like a California surfer, like Frankie Avalon
flying straight out down Lynch's Lane
all the way from Old Man Downey's house
riding the blue-white snow, over the first
boy-built bump, rope-tied tightly
around my mitt like a bronco buster's grip,
and Cec shouting words I thought were curses
because he'd never made it from the top
and I was going to,
the hill and snow and toboggan and me
all one like a postcard from Austria,
over the last high bump, bracing for the sharp bend,
where Lynch's Lane twists into Bannister's Road
shooting through the air with a grin
frozen on my face, the letters E-S-S-O
growing bigger and bigger until I dived into the

O
a perfect bulls-eye, and woke up the next day
singing Old McDonald had a farm

E I E I O
and Cec said he was glad I wasn't dead,
but I knew darn sure he was just glad
I was stopped by the truck
and not still surfing all the way
through the O and around the world.

by Carl Leggo