

The Betty Drevniok Award Results 2009

First Prize

autumn light

just this much

to go on

Francine Banwarth

Dubuque, Iowa

Second Prize

mountain clearing

a hawk carves

all the rest

Scott Mason

Chappaqua, New York

Third Prize

farmer's scythe

a harvesting song

in each sweep

an'ya

La Pine, Oregon

Honourable Mention

endless rain

in my mother's kitchen

the snap, snapping of beans

T.A. Carter

Ottawa, Ontario

a heat wave

the butterfly

fans its shadow

Natalia L. Rudychev

Des Plaines, Illinois

autumn foliage past its peak—

the pathway home

in sepia

Scott Mason

Chappaqua, New York

meadow pond

our blades slice figures

on the moon

Catherine J.S. Lee

Eastport, Maine

*retirement home—
each time the heron comes
another goldfish gone*
elehna de sousa
Salt Spring Island, British Columbia

*foreign airport—
a baby's cry
takes me farther from home*
Michael Dylan Welch
Sammamish, Washington

*they all hush
when she walks past
—sparrows in the hedge*
Liz Fenn
Wellsville, New York

*cattails in moonlight--
no such
urges at my age*
Bill Pauly
Dubuque, Iowa

Judge's Comments

Each of the three prize-winning haiku immediately struck me as idiosyncratic. In the case of the first, the poem seems almost effortless, completely pared down and lacking in embellishment or artifice. The poet began with the phrase “autumn light,” followed by the simple commentary “just this much to go on.” This was a poem I felt “in my bones.”

The second place poem possesses a sense of timelessness, and its greatness hinges on the poet's choice of the verb “carves,” which gives us as well the pleasantly repeated “c” sound.

The third place poem also has an ageless quality. I could almost imagine it being written in the time of Basho.

Of the poems selected for Honourable Mention, the first four give us clear images of season and in each case heighten our awareness through the skillful use of sound, sight and touch. We can hear the “snap, snapping of beans” and the scrape of skates on ice; we can see the sepia of late autumn foliage and the bright colours of the butterfly; and we can feel on our skin the blistering heat of a summer day and the exhilarating cold of a winter night.

The last four haiku are closer to senryu and evoke an emotional response. They give us a moment to reflect on the passage of human time, our connections to home and family and those occasions of joy and sensuality that come and eventually pass us by.

It was a pleasure judging this year's Betty Drevniok contest, and I congratulate all the winners. There were of course many other poems that I would like to have selected but was unable to because of the necessity to choose. To their authors, too, I offer a tip of my hat.

Angela Leuck

Angela Leuck is vice president of Haiku Canada and the author of *Flower Heart* (Blue Ginkgo Press, 2006).