

JUDGE'S COMMENTS

The three winning poems have one thing in common. Each powerfully conveys emotion to involve the reader in a memorable experience.

The first place haiku is a compelling expression of joy. The poet's exuberance in welcoming spring by jumping a creek is so strong that the action is quickly repeated. There is also an instinctive need to repeat the jump while it is still possible. After all, the spring creek won't last forever and may soon be reduced to a rivulet or dry summer bed. In a way, the poet reiterates (to paraphrase Heraclitus) *you can't step into the same river twice*. This is truly living in the present before the moment is gone. To support the hurried movement, a dash, strategically placed at the end of line two, gives the poem just what it needs to *jump* the reader forward to the final line. All this is done in a mere nine syllables.

In the second place haiku, sadness, though not directly stated, is clear. The passing of geese overhead represents either a sense of loss in the fall or a sense of renewal in spring. Here, both options are possible. There is an understanding, if we consider this a fall haiku, that the poet is lamenting a dying or dead relationship in keeping with the perception of loss we feel when geese migrate away. Considering this a spring haiku, we may see the poet feeling the pain of the lost relationship even more because the geese are renewing their commitment by returning.

As with the previous haiku, the use of simple language and minimal punctuation is important. The use of the ellipsis is perfect to express the poet's trailing off into reflection before the realization expressed in the concluding lines.

The pause created by the second line ending as it does is precisely executed to set the reader up for the third line's punch. In ten syllables, the poet expresses one of the saddest moments I have read in a haiku recently.

Finally, optimism leaps from the third place haiku. Something as innocuous as kite flying is brilliantly used to express the poet's hope that a better future lies in the hands of children. The poem dictates that we see differences, through color, as bright and beautiful things all working together in the same space. Different skin colors or perhaps the LGBT rainbow flag colors are suggested. As with the previous two winners, minimal punctuation is employed to good effect. A single comma placed midway pauses the flow of the poem before its dramatic conclusion. Coming in at thirteen syllables, this haiku is longer than the first and second place winners but is no less evocative.

LeRoy Gorman is author of two dozen poetry books and chapbooks and is editor of *Haiku Canada Review*.

The Betty Drevniok Award

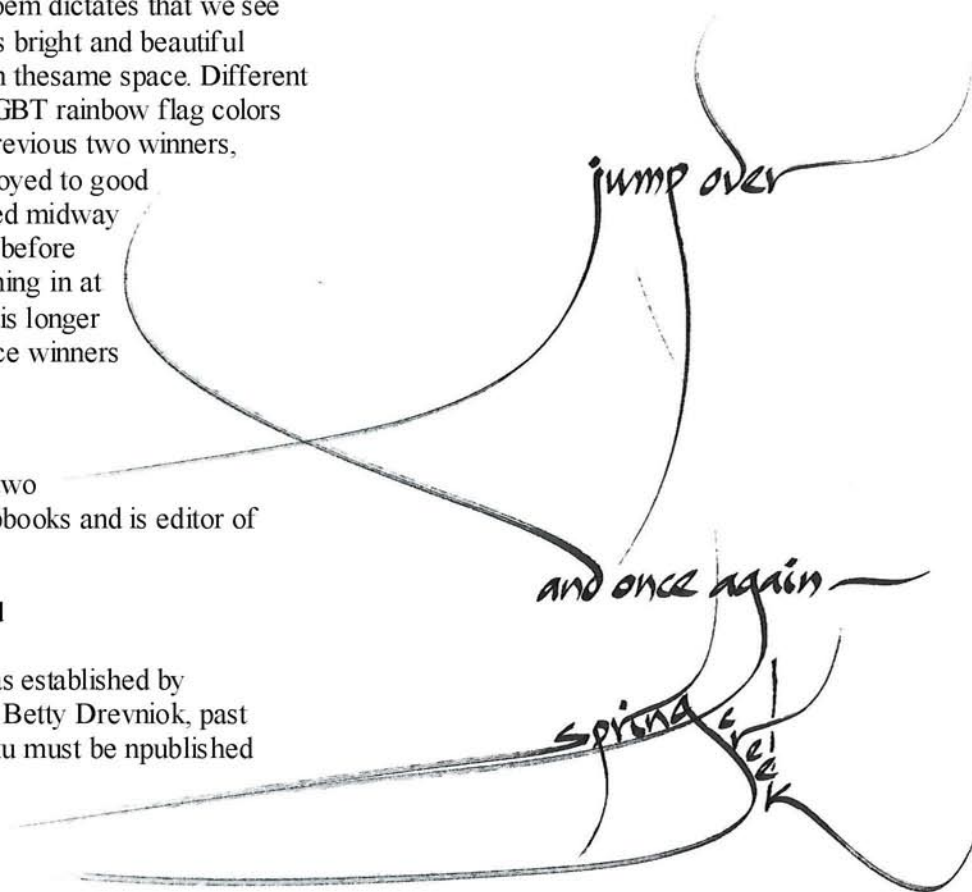
Held annually, the award was established by Haiku Canada in memory of Betty Drevniok, past president of the society. haiku must be unpublished and not under consideration elsewhere.

Please submit by email:
claudiaradmore@gmail.com

If **no** email, send 3 poems to:

Claudia Radmore
49 McArthur Ave.
Carleton Place, On
K7C 2W1

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calligraphy: H. Masud Taj