

## **PATH Poet Scores a Literary Hat Trick**

Pathology Research Assistant Jennifer Wang won the top three prizes in the Professional Division of the "Open Verse Poetry" category in the 2022 On My Own Time (OMOT) Competition. This is the third year that Jennifer has been awarded OMOT honors for her poetry.



### **First Place Award**

#### *Riding the Elevator with a Nobel Prize Winner*

The typical trip up to the sixth floor of work  
Is interrupted by a Nobel Prize winner,  
A rare occasion he is actually in the lab.  
I shuffle silently and wrack my caffeine-fueled brain for  
An insightful comment on innate immunity  
Or a unique question about tumor necrosis factor- alpha,  
But the bell dings and I blurt out, "I like the way you speak."

This poem came from two prompts from Rattle Magazine's open mic. One was to write a demi-sonnet, and the other was "someone says something strange to you in an elevator". I decided to make myself the person who said something strange because it does feel awkward to be in an elevator with a Nobel Prize winner. The inspiration for the comment was actually my partner who didn't know what else to write in the guest book after the celebration honoring Dr. Beutler's Nobel Prize win.

### **Second Place Award**

#### *Tragedy in Comedy*

I don't really get comedy,  
But tragedy, I understand.  
So you'll have to excuse me  
For being sad at the occasion  
But not the man.  
We say he was gone before his time,  
And I think about when  
He would have finally, truly apologized.  
We say death comes in threes,  
But I'm thinking of 15,881 gone in one day  
And how many I knew.  
Maybe some people laugh during tragedy,  
But in this case, I just feel rage,  
In remembering the joke:  
A callous attempt to extract comedy from tragedy  
And for what, profit? Attention? Art?  
You'll have to excuse me  
If I don't make a tribute  
Because I already tossed my lagoon pillow  
Into a funeral pyre I created  
The day I saw that tweet  
And decided I didn't need to take a joke.

This poem was a response to Gilbert Gottfried's death. Many friends posted homages, but all I could remember was his awful jokes about the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, which took the life of someone I personally knew. This poem is a reminder that you don't have to canonize people who have died.

### **Third Place Award**

*Notes for November 8, 2022*

We won't forget  
Our 19 children and 2 teachers of Uvalde gone  
To be with our 10 younger siblings from Santa Fe  
And our *abuelos* and *abuelas* from El Paso.  
We won't forget  
The 14.6 out of 100,000 would-be parents,  
Some reluctant but had all other options  
Legislated away.  
We won't forget  
Our 5 trans sisters who departed last year  
And the 18 from the year before—  
And after adding both up,  
There are more bills trying to erase them  
And the children who have yet to be themselves.  
We won't forget  
The 246 who tried to keep from freezing  
Like the rest of us huddled in the dark  
And did not live to see more messages about  
Conserving A/C and rolling blackouts  
In the name privatization and Bitcoin mining.  
We won't forget  
The 86,765 and counting  
Sacrificed for the economy  
And anti-affordable healthcare  
That's really a lingering effect of the Red Scare.  
We won't forget  
Clinton Allen, Sandra Bland, Botham Jean,  
Atatiana Jefferson, and many more  
Failed by those who are supposed to protect,  
Who could not protect  
The children and teachers at Uvalde.  
When it's November 8, 2022,  
And you have a lot to do at work  
And don't want to wake up early  
Or take a late lunch  
And maybe you don't have the car today  
And it's a hassle to take the bus  
Or call a Lyft or Uber,  
Please don't forget.

This poem was a response to the shootings in Uvalde and Beto O'Rourke's Tweet that "We won't forget". I haven't forgotten other lives that have been lost due to mass shootings and other problems in our state that have cost innocent lives, but sometimes the motivation to vote does fade on Election

Day when I'm busy or have trouble getting to a polling place. This poem is a reminder that I must keep voting in every election, no matter what.

The annual employee art competition is sponsored by the Business Council for the Arts. While the traditional art entries are judged against other entries from within UT Southwestern, the literary arts entries were judged regionally among submissions from companies across North Texas that participated in the OMOT competition.

Jennifer will read her poem at a reception hosted by the Business Council for the Arts on Oct. 11 at the AT&T Performing Arts Center.