

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.

Center Times article: [UTSW community's creative expression celebrated through annual art show - CT Plus - UT Southwestern](#)