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California Polytechnic State University

Feb. 25, 2003

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cal Poly Names Winners of Creative Writing Contest

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- A Cal Poly English graduate student from Portland, Ore., and an English senior from Ventura were named first-place winners in the university's annual Creative Writing Contest.

Graduate student Marc Cohen won first place in the fiction category for an excerpt from a novel titled "Flapper," focusing on a teenage girl who falls in love with a troubled young man. The unfinished novel is a superb comic rendering of the power of self-determination, according to Kevin Clark, Cal Poly poetry writing professor and director of the Creative Writing Contest. Cohen is in his second quarter at Cal Poly, and wrote the excerpt while living in San Francisco.

Senior Mike Clearwater, who took honorable mention in the contest last year, won in the poetry category for his poem "Combustion Engine," an impressionistic depiction of the way motor vehicles hold a critical place in our psyche.

"Both winning works are exceptional for their imaginative power and their odd comic sensibility," Clark said. "Marc Cohen employs a remarkably persuasive voice to pull you into his characters immediately. Despite their weirdness, we like the strange folks who populate the story."

"Mike Clearwater is no surprise," Clark said. "In my poetry writing classes, Mike has demonstrated great promise from the get-go. He depicts oddball chaos and then brings unity to it. That's not easy."

Garrett Milner, an English senior from San Clemente, took second place for his fiction titled "Find Rest, O My Soul," and Nicole Biggers, an English senior from Healdsburg, who earned second place in the contest last year, won third for "Christmas in the Californios, 1833."

Marnie Parker of San Luis Obispo was the second-place poetry winner for "The Splitting of Coral," and Bethany Thomas of Cayucos took third for "Virgil Among the Bees." Thomas also received an honorable mention in fiction for "Galahad and the Fisher." Both Parker and Thomas are graduate students in English.

Mollie Small, a physics senior from Pismo Beach, won an honorable mention in poetry for "Cleanup in Aisle 6."

"I think all of these writers have immense potential," Clark said. "Outsiders may not think of Cal Poly as a place for artistic creativity, but these young authors prove otherwise. I feel lucky to be among such talented students."

The writers will receive cash prizes and will have their work published in Byzantium, the campus literary magazine. In addition, the winners will read from their works at 7 p.m. April 26 in the Sandwich Factory on campus. The public is invited to the free reading. Refreshments will be served.

For more information, contact Clark at 756-2506 or kclark@calpoly.edu

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