

THE BLACKENED BILLY VERSE COMPETITION – 2012

Entries for the Blackened Billy Verse Competition come from all over Australia and even from overseas. So, when the winners are announced, it is usually difficult to get all of them to actually attend the presentation. However, this year, almost all the winners were able to attend, which made for a very exciting presentation ceremony. The winner, David Campbell from Beaumaris, Vic, has won the Blackened Billy twice before, but this is the first time he has felt able to make the journey. So it was a very special meeting for the organiser, Jan Morris and the judge, Keith Jones to finally meet the man regarded as one of the best modern bush poets in Australia. David won with a poem entitled "A Father's Prayer", described by Keith Jones as a beautifully crafted piece of writing.

Val Wallace's poem, "The First Date" is a clever take on C.J. Dennis' style of writing. Keith Jones liked "the memories of old time dancing and courtship thrills of yesteryear. Third place went to a poem entitled "Would You Say Hello to Dad" by Terry Piggott. David Campbell's poem "A Father's Prayer", Result Sheet and Judge's Comments are attached.

Judge's Comments

It was my great pleasure to adjudicate on 217 entries for the Blackened Billy awards for 2012. While this number is down on other years, the standard of entries was again very high. It seems that creativity, humor, passion and sensitivity remain alive and well in Bush Poetry, and continue to be exemplified in the work of many writers. I have been fortunate to digest and appreciate these great skills from year to year.

This year's entries brought about another difficult task in arriving at final decisions on the place getters. I can fully empathise with other adjudicators throughout the Country in the many bush poetry competitions. It is not an easy task.

There were approximately 60 entries that were considered to be of high standard, and to arrive at the final 13 places was not easy. I found that eliminating many entries was a rather emotional decision. And I would only say to writers everywhere, to keep submitting this high standard to the various Bush Poetry competitions.

Many thanks again to the committee of the Blackened Billy organisation, headed by Jan Morris, for another well organised competition.

FIRST PLACE: A FATHER'S PRAYER by DAVID CAMPBELL, Beaumaris, Vic.

My immediate reaction on reading this entry was one of great pleasure. From the opening lines through the first stanza, I couldn't wait to read more. This is a structured, sensitive and beautifully crafted piece of writing. As the title suggests it is a prayer for hope and expectancy, for the good things in life for his daughter, just prior to her birth.

I am impressed by the usage of single linking nouns and verbs in each stanza to provide balance and stress sound in the creation of the father's prayer. This entry needs to be read in the manner in which it was written, with a strong degree of sensitivity and feeling.

Congratulations. A worthy winner of the Blackened Billy for 2012.

SECOND PLACE: THE FIRST DATE by VAL WALLACE, Glendale NSW.

I have not been an advocate for writer's attempts to try and emulate the great poets. However, in this entry written in C.J. Dennis style, I was suitably impressed by this ballad and the memories of old time dancing and courtship thrills of yesteryear. The writer has captured the scenes with great ability and flair. While not quite up to C.J.'s standard, the narrative does flow with good pace and meter. The descriptive and colourful moments are extremely entertaining throughout.

Congratulations.

THIRD PLACE: WOULD YOU SAY HELLO TO DAD by TERRY PIGGOTT, Canning Vale, WA.

Apart from the sensitivity of this ballad, I was impressed by the balanced pace and rhythm through to the conclusion. This is a story which relates to the bond between two mates, one of whom has suffered a stroke and is in the care of his daughter. The simple, but memorable prose to describe the daughter's cry for help for her father is quite moving. I was engrossed right from the excellent first stanza to the conclusion. Congratulations on the very fine entry.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

MILTON TAYLOR – Ginger Tom

BRENDA JOY PRITCHARD – The Colour in my Blood

TERRY PIGGOTT – A Changing of the Guard

DAVID CAMPBELL – A Stranger Walks Alone

MAX MERCKENSCHLAGER – Henry's Reply

DAVID CAMPBELL – Guilt

TRISHA PATTERSON – The Gravesite by the Creek

DAVID CAMPBELL – Home

MAL BEVERIDGE – On Three Moon Creek – Cania Gorge

NEVILLE BRIGGS – A Summer Storm