

# Creative drive gives varying results

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Writing, for some, is the clarification of life. And life for the entrants of the Texas A&M Spring 1985 Writing Contest is varied — from English to petroleum engineering. But they all take the risk and they write.

The first place winner in the short story contest says she almost didn't enter. Kimberly Trant had her story in an envelope, ready to go, but on the last day for entries decided to blow it off. Her husband took the story and entered it anyway.

She wrote the story, "I Can Still Count," for a creative writing class she took in the summer, Trant says. She was pregnant at the time and says she "needed a course that I could miss some but still keep up — a course where they didn't lecture every day." So she tried creative writing.

Trant, a senior journalism major, says the story idea originally came from an article written for a journalism class. Her grandmother, who is in a

nursing home, had been the subject of a personality profile written as a journalism assignment.

"I already had this framework and I took that story and fictionalized it a little bit — so it's all really based on truth — that's my grandmother in the story," she says.

Trant says that writing acts as a catharsis for her.

"There are some things you can't deal with, so you write about them," she says. "Instead of sitting down and trying to deal with them — you just write."

Trant's grandmother had a stroke seven or eight years ago.

"Half the time everyone thinks she's just gone," Trant says. One day while visiting at the nursing home her grandmother told her "I can still count."

"She kept on telling me that — I can still count," Trant says. "I thought there must be some reason for her telling me this — is she totally off her rocker or is she trying to tell me something. And I hated to

think she was totally off her rocker."

Therese Norris, who wrote the first place poem, also drew from personal experience for her entry. Norris, a graduate student in physiology of reproduction, lived for four months in Kabul, Afghanistan, which is the subject of her poem, "Kabul 1974."

Her uncle worked in the State Department and was stationed there when Norris went to visit him. Her parents had sent her to Kabul as a high school graduation present.

Like Trant, Norris wrote her winning entry in a creative writing class. She took the class at Virginia Polytechnic Institute where she did her undergraduate work. She says VPI is similar to A&M in many ways. The college has a corps of cadets and is located in a town much like Bryan.

Her poem documents the observations of a 16-year-old American girl in Afghanistan, Norris says. She hopes her poem will give others insight into what it's like to live out-

side this country.

A lot of Americans don't ever get a chance to go overseas and see the world — to see what it's really like in another country, she says.

Norris says her poem may "get a bunch of Islamic people mad at her" because of the negative view presented of the Muslim religion. She says she believes Islam is a repressive religion towards women. The religion is demanding and puts constraints on its believers, she says.

"Men have more freedom, in that they are the master of women — that is what their religion dictates," she says. "Women are to be their servants."

When she lived in Kabul, Norris was stared at a lot. She says this was because the religion didn't allow the men to look at Muslim women.

"It was not considered proper to stare at their own women so they always looked at foreign women," she says. "I also lived in Turkey and that was true there too — same reli-

gion."

The Islamic people viewed foreign women as prostitutes because they travel, Norris says. The Muslims' whole idea of American women came from James Bond movies and Playboy, she says.

When she originally wrote the poem, Norris had footnotes explaining the Islamic words. However that proved to be too cumbersome to the reader because they had to look up and down. The words are spelled phonetically in the second version. This enables the reader to read the poem smoothly. Norris also explains the words in context.

Professors from A&M's English department judged the creative writing contest. They divided the task, three taking the short stories and three taking the poetry. They read the entries and selected a list of top contenders. The winning poem and the winning short story were the only entries appearing on all three judges' lists; the other finalists' names appeared on two. ♪



## Kabul, 1974

Therese Norris

In every section of the city-  
in Waz̄er and Sheri-now,  
in Car-tā-say and Car-tā-char-  
the mullah calls the faithful.  
Five times a day.  
Face Mecca.

In the bazaars:  
pots, pans, bartering,  
carcasses of chickens and lambs,  
hordes of flies.  
Outside the tea shops  
the aroma of chārs  
competes with the stench  
from the jū-ē,  
a roadside sewage ditch.

At the arena  
thousands watch b̄sh-kā-shē.  
Teams of riders and horses  
fight to place a goat skin  
in a dirt circle.

Down Dar-la-mān  
buses, lorries and taxies  
rush past houses  
with ten foot walls.  
Walls are like a woman's shā-dra.  
To discourage curious eyes.

Allah made woman  
to be man's servant.  
A man divorces his wife  
by saying "I divorce thee"  
three times.  
A woman that travels  
is a whore.

Five times a day  
the mullah calls  
for the faithful  
to submit to Allah.