



Photos by Sean Poston and Mark Ylen

John Higgins and Catherine Heising won first prizes in the Lane County Literary Guild Contest. Higgins won his award for poetry and Heising won in the short story contest.

## Two writers recognized for talent

By Birgit Schreiber-Sivesind  
Emerald Contributor

Two University students have been rewarded for their writing talent by the Lane County Literary Guild, which awarded them first-place prizes for poetry and fiction during the Eugene Celebration in September.

John Higgins, a sophomore in journalism, and Catherine Heising, pursuing a master's degree in fine arts were the two recipients of the awards.

Higgins' award-winning poem, "Childhood in a War Zone" was inspired by a 9-year-old Nicaraguan boy he met in that country during a visit Higgins made there in February 1988 as part of a Witness for Peace delegation.

The boy became a hero in his village after warning of an impending Contra attack.

Capturing human emotions and human experiences on the page is a goal Higgins said he hopes to carry into a career as a journalist.

"Journalism needs more context, not just facts," he said. "What does it feel like to live in Nicaragua? What does it feel like to live in a terrorist state

every day of your life?"

This human impact and human toll is what Higgins tried to capture in his award-winning poem, which he said was his first "serious" award he has ever won for his writing.

Higgins wrote the first version of the poem in a poetry workshop at the University during spring term last school year. The workshop was instructed by Garrett Hongo, associate professor in English and a former Pulitzer Prize nominee.

"I liked him because he really wanted to write from deep feeling," Hongo said of Higgins. "He wasn't afraid to engage in difficult content matter and felt comfortable sharing it with others in the class. I appreciate the sharing of emotion and experience."

Higgins' plan is to pursue writing creatively while working with journalism, possibly in the area of broadcasting.

Heising was not expecting that one of her two entrees would win, but her short story "On the Way Home" won first place in the fiction category.

Heising graduated from the University of California at San Diego in 1980 where she majored in Biology and minored

in visual arts.

Heising said she has written other fiction pieces she believes are better than the award-winning one. She says the reason why she won was because she took the step of entering, and entering the right story.

"The reason I picked that one is because it had something to do with Oregon," she said, saying it had to do with living in the country. "And I knew I could read it in front of an audience if I had to."

Like Higgins, she too was given the opportunity to read her work at the Hult Center in front of approximately 200 people.

"So many writers have to be alone to write," she said. "There's the writer and the computer. Then to face all those people and read was very difficult."

The annual Lane Literary Awards is a joint effort of *What's Happening*, the Lane Literary Guild and the Lane Arts Council. Higgins' poem "Childhood in a War-Zone" and Heising's short story "On the Way Home" alone with other award winner's poetry and fiction can be read in *Pacifica Literary Magazine*.

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