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April 23, 1997

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IWU Computer Science Major Wins Poetry Prize

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--An Illinois Wesleyan University computer science major has won this year's Academy of American Poets College Prize.

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Isaac Spear, a junior from Charleston, Ill., won the award. His prize was announced today (April 23) at IWU's Honors Day convocation.

The winning poem, *Ongoing Construction Outside My Window*, was in the form of a pantoum, a verse form consisting of an indefinite number of quatrains with the even lines of the quatrain being repeated as the odd lines of the following one. The poem's repetition makes complex ideas seem simple and understandable.

Honorable Mention certificates were awarded to Amy Pollitz, a sophomore majoring in elementary education from Wheaton, Ill., and Adam Oldaker, a sophomore theatre major from Homewood, Ill.

James McGowan, professor of English, has coordinated the contest since its inception in 1980.

McGowan said he thought that the last two years had been the best for IWU poets, adding: "This year, though, was even better."

There were a record 42 entries this year, McGowan said. "Eighteen of the 42 contestants were in the running for the award," he added. "I wish we could have awarded more Honorable Mentions, but the contest rules specify only two."

Contest judges were: McGowan, Alison Sainsbury, assistant professor of English, and Brian Burt, an adjunct instructor of English.

The winning poem, *Ongoing Construction Outside My Window*, appealed to Burt because, "It worked in a way that expressed sophisticated emotions in a simple manner. My initial reaction was that I liked it--the poem grew more and more on me as I read it over."

The Academy of American Poets was founded in 1934 to support American poets at all stages of their careers. It is the largest organization in the country dedicated to poetry. In addition to the College Prizes, the Academy offers the Tanning Prize, which is the largest (monetary) annual literary award in the United States, and other prestigious awards, including the Walt Whitman Award.

The College Prize competition, founded in 1955 with 10 schools, has more than 150 colleges and university participants. Many prominent American poets won their first recognition with an Academy prize, including Sylvia Plath, Tess Gallagher, Robert Mezey, and George Starbuck.

Poetry Prize/2

The prize programs are locally administered by the institutions at which they are offered. Each prize is supported by interested donors of the university, the university or college, or through anonymous gifts made through the academy.

Illinois Wesleyan's prize is sponsored by Ms. Louise A. Sipfle in memory of her father. Arthur William Hinnners was a university trustee from 1924 to 1945, and many of his children attended IWU. The Arthur William Hinnners Poetry Prize carries a \$100 award.

Several hundred IWU students--members of the class of 1997 and others who have earned scholastic and activity honors--were recognized at the Honors Day Convocation. Outstanding Senior awards were conferred. Students were recognized for membership in about 15 honor societies in disciplines, ranging from sociology and marketing to nursing and political science. Inductees into Phi Kappa Phi, the national scholastic honorary society for juniors and seniors, also were recognized, as well as students who have been awarded about 17 named scholarships. The School of Fine Arts recognized student accomplishments in performance, production, art, and other fields. Students who have distinguished themselves in student government, media, and special events also were honored, as well as men and women varsity athletes.

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 1,900 students in a College of Liberal Arts, College of Fine Arts, and a four-year professional School of Nursing. A \$15 million athletics and recreation center opened in the fall of 1994; and a \$25 million science building opened in the fall of 1995. The \$4.6 million Center for Liberal Arts--a facility housing 60 faculty offices, six classrooms, and other facilities for social science, humanities, business and economics, and interdisciplinary studies' faculty--is slated to open next fall, as well as a \$6.8 million residence hall, accommodating about 118 students. The Carnegie Commission for the Advancement of Teaching promoted Illinois Wesleyan to a "Baccalaureate I" institution in 1994, a classification that places it among 161 highly selective National Liberal Arts Colleges in the annual *U.S. News & World Report* rankings.