Judge’s comment: I went through over a thousand poems looking for poems which travelled, paid attention to form and really made words work. Eventually I reduced a long list of 101 poems to 26 which I was determined to pick out and by this time I was very excited because the winning poems were telling me loud and clear which they were!

Myra Schneider

Short Poem First Prize Winner: Carolyn King

Souvenir

They remind me of home and the wastepaper basket under the desk brimming over with shredded poems –

the ones I sometimes wish I hadn’t thrown away, as they gnaw at my heart and stick in my craw like little glass splinters under my skin.

He shakes his head. I’m crying now; begging him not to reject the tiny misshapen form.

He tosses it, still warm, in my direction. “Mine?” I ask. But he’s already back at the glory-hole, the glare of mass production Murano-style.

And I shall carry it home swaddled in cotton-wool, as tenderly as I carried home my first-born from the hospital.

I’m used to this – unflappable; stroking the flattened head, meeting the glassy stare, pressing my lips to the rara avis; whispering “We shall fly!”

Editors’ note: *November Journal* is a sequence of 30 14-line poems, one for each day in November, reflecting on events and memories of events in the poet's life. These extracts can only give a flavour of the whole.

**November Journal** (extracts)

**Names As Building-Blocks (1 November)**

The new carer has a way of saying a name
so lovingly that she evokes all that is most beautiful
about that person, conjures Brian or Jack
into a warm presence. They are *there* – and *there* ... 

**Huachinango (2 November)**

When Mother came home from Mexico, words
were her best souvenir. Even then, so long ago, it was the sound
which gave her mind delight. I’m sure she always ate
red snapper because she loved its name – huachinango.
...

**In The Beginning  (29 November)**

Get it clear in your mind. Get it down. Words.
It’s words which have the energy, given their own space,
to let go. Take off. Like kids. Or swallows.
We don’t always know where they’re going but ...

**Early Train On St. Andrew’s Day (30 November)**

Once I waited in the bitter wind to file past
his skull and little finger. Women had great candles,
stood barefoot, or inched forward on their knees.
This was the day the children were late home, happy
from a bun-feast for their House-saint.
A friend’s birthday too. Each day echoes.
Frost covers the fields; sheep congregate in a patch of sun.
Nearby two kids are chatting. Politics and Economics do connect,
really, the girl assures the boy. At Music College, he begins.
I miss the music, said Mother recently, grandsons away.
Cloud has piled itself on a high wind-shelf, is streaked
with early sun. It looks like Tiepolo. I’d like to go back
to those churches in Venice, I tell my husband.
*I didn’t appreciate them when I was young...*

an excerpt of the poem was first published in *Scintilla*, 2008