

The Style Invitational

WEEK 243: VERSE THAN EVER

Of Diana 1961-1997

A shining light has dimmed now from our midst.
 Good Diana, plucked by avarice.
 We stand by too tolerant indeed
 Of paparazzi's ruthlessness and greed.
 So loved was she by masses—so enthralled
 We gave no pause when 'mercy, please' she called.
 But dry as sponges left out in the sun,
 We rushed to soak up ink when press was run.
 Precious breath, a people's princess born
 Endurer of devastation and of scorn.
 Undaunted by ordeal of royal divorce,
 Loving mother, tender, guiding force . . .
 . . . The princess, long for privacy did plead,
 At last, our fair Diana, finally freed.

WEEP YE FOR
 ROY LICHTENSTEIN
 HIS UNTIMELY DEATH IS A
 REAL KICK IN THE SPLEEN



BY BOB STRAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST; APOLOGIES TO ROY LICHTENSTEIN

This Week's Contest was inspired by the poem, excerpted above, that we received in the mail. It was written most earnestly by a New Hampshire woman named Shari, who shipped it to newspaper editors around the country in the hope that someone would print it. Congratulations, Shari, you made The Washington Post! Your poem inspired us to inaugurate a Bad Poetry contest. We have run a Bad Poetry contest before, but this poem got us thinking about how awful prose is made all the worse when it is mawkish and oversentimentalized. Accordingly, this week's contest is to write a rhyming poem of two to eight lines as a tribute to someone famous who died in 1997, the more awful the better. We will particularly value rhymes that thud, and extremes of emotion and sentiment. Here is a partial list of people who bit the dust: Mike Royko, Jacques Cousteau, Pamela Harriman, Jack Kent Cooke, James Michener, Duke Zeibert, Gianni Versace, John Denver, Mother Teresa, Roy Lichtenstein, Jimmy Stewart, Robert Mitchum, The Notorious B.I.G. First-prize winner gets a huge bronze-and-plastic duckpin bowling trophy awarded by the Optimist International Club to one Wally Powell in 1941. (Do we score the best stuff, or what?)

First runner-up gets the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up receive the coveted Style Invitational Loser's T-shirt. Honorable Mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Winners will be selected on the basis of humor and originality. Mail your entries to The Style Invitational, Week 243, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, fax them to 202-334-4312 or submit them via Internet to this address: losers@access.digex.net. Internet users: Please indicate the week number in the "subject" field. Entries must be received on or before Monday, Nov. 17. Please include your address and phone number. Winners will be announced three weeks from today. Editors reserve the right to alter entries for taste, humor or appropriateness. No purchase necessary. Beholde the eyre, ere ire are our heir / John Kammer pen'd it wolde fayr, e'er theyre. Next week: Biblical Ear Credit. Employees of the Washington Post and members of their immediate families are not eligible for prizes.

REPORT FROM WEEK 240,

in which you were asked to write elegant insults of famous people.

- ◆ Fourth Runner-Up: **He has something John D. Rockefeller and Howard Hughes never had—the ability to be the richest man in the world and boring at the same time.** (Russ Beland, Springfield, on Bill Gates)
- ◆ Third Runner-Up: **Guys like them put the "goober" in gubernatorial.** (Sandra Hull, Arlington, on Fife Symington and Jim Guy Tucker)
- ◆ Second Runner-Up: **His strong suit appears to be a polyester blend.** (Jean Sorensen, Herndon, on Bill Gates)
- ◆ First Runner-Up: **He doesn't have to worry about that anymore.** (Barry Blyveis, Columbia, on Woody Allen's comment that he wouldn't want to belong to a club that would have him as a member.)
- ◆ **And the Winner of the plastic Popeil doughnut maker: His influence doesn't spread, it metastasizes.** (Phil Frankenfeld, Washington, on Rush Limbaugh)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

- He is statuesque.** (Jerry Pannullo, Kensington, on Al Gore)
- The camera used to love her. Now she's suing for alienation of affection.** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge, on Elizabeth Taylor)
- He displays all the insouciance of a mortician doing the macarena.** (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y., on Al Gore)
- She makes up for being fat by being mean.** (Jeffrey Fenster, Bethesda, on Roseanne)
- He never met a blond, blue-eyed, non-Jewish, non-Catholic, non-handicapped heterosexual German he didn't like.** (Suzanne Fregly, Fort Washington, on Adolf Hitler)
- She is an entertainment legend who needs no introduction, but who will insist.** (David Genser, Arlington, on Diana Ross)
- He is Howard Stern without the subtlety.** (David Genser, Arlington, on the Greaseman)
- I am so glad we have her to tell us what is good literature. Now I don't have to depend on Reader's Digest anymore.** (Art Grinath, Takoma Park, on Oprah Winfrey)
- Oh, the perennial search for self!** (Patrice Kyger, Free Union, Va., on O.J. Simpson's quest to find the real killer)
- And he didn't even have to grow up!** (Bob Dalton, Beaumont, Tex., on Bill Clinton's growing up to be president)
- The depth of his character was perfectly**

captured by Mobius. (Bob Dalton, Beaumont, Tex., on Prince Charles)

As empty as Capone's vault. (Bob Dalton, Beaumont, Tex., on Geraldo Rivera)

How unfortunate that he did not have the opportunity to make Mother Teresa's funeral as entertaining. (Bob Dalton, Beaumont, Tex., on Elton John)

The ears have been unkind to him.

(Paul J. Crystal, Arlington, on Ross Perot)

Pants down, he has been the greatest president of the late 1990s. (Russ Horner, Arlington, on Bill Clinton)

How comforting it is to know that each of us, in his deepest, darkest hour of trial, can call for help by speaking a single name. Travolta. (Brian Broadus, Charlottesville, on John Travolta)

As an actor, he towers over Herve Villechaize. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel, on Steve Guttenberg)

He is such a magician, only he could turn two gold-digging bimbos into cultural icons. (Chuck Snowdon, Arlington, on Donald Trump)

He still rocks, but mostly in his chair.

(Tom Witte, Gaithersburg, on Keith Richard)

History will record his mastery of two kinds of timing: good and two. (Philip Vitale, Arlington, on Bill Clinton)

He is an inspiration for us all to consider early retirement. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon, on Mick Jagger)

Next Week: Can You Beat This?