

The Style Invitational

Week CXIV: Letter Rip



BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This Week's Contest was suggested by Jonathan Paul of Garrett Park: Give us the beginning of a letter to the editor that is certain never to see print. First-prize winner gets a T-shirt produced by the town of Battle Mountain, Nev., promoting itself as being "Dubbed the Armpit of America by The Washington Post Magazine." It's pretty ugly.

First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. U.S. mail entries are no longer accepted due to

rabid, spit-flying fanaticism. Deadline is Monday, June 17. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and telephone number. E-mail entries must include the week number in the subject field. Contests will be judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post.

Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Stephen Dudzik of Olney.

Report from Week CXX,

in which we asked for political haiku. We received an indignant letter from one woman who claimed that by not requiring a "seasonal" word, our definition of haiku showed shocking ignorance of, and cultural insensitivity toward, the Japanese culture. Research reveals that there is a spirited debate among haiku experts about precisely what constitutes their art; in general, the consensus seems to come down on the side of the greatest liberality. Few demand the seasonal word. Or, to put it succinctly: Haiku is strangled / When too many rules are sought / So nyah nyah, lady.

◆ Second Runner-Up:

John F. Kennedy
Camelot mystique
Masking a philanderer
We didn't know Jack

(Chris Doyle, Burke)

◆ First Runner-Up:

James Buchanan
Preceded greatness
A cleanshaven president
But he had a beard

(Roy Ashley, Washington)

◆ And the winner of the elephant dung paperweight:

Al Sharpton
You can lose the weight
But you can't lose the baggage
That's the skinny, Al

(Daniel Horner, Washington)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

Michael Dukakis
Short Greek governor
Massachusetts Miracle
Then his campaign tanked

(Stephen Dudzik, Olney; Cindi Rae Caron, Lenoir, N.C.)

President Clinton
Was unable to re-dress
The stain on his name

(Diane Morgan, Williamsport, Md.)

Richard Nixon
He had it all taped
But the thing he should have taped
Was his big fat mouth

(Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Grover Cleveland
Both his home and girth
Truly Buffalonian
Woe his youthful bride

(Steve Fahey, Kensington)

Zachary Taylor
His name has five syllables
Zachary Taylor

(Lex Friedman, Waltham, Mass.)

James Garfield
He got shot, was fine
Until doctors tried to help
Did not have nine lives

(Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

WPA
NIRA TVA
OK FDR!

(Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

Dan Quayle
You say potato
And then I say potatoe
Call the whole thing off

(Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

Next Week: Jeopardy!



ANN LANDERS

Dear Ann:

I recently completed my master's degree, and my husband is giving me a big party to celebrate. The guest list will include students, professors, co-workers, neighbors, friends and immediate family. I have decided not to invite my older brother, "Nate."

Nate is mentally ill, and when he stops taking his medication, he can become violent. Two months ago, he attacked my grandfather and made terrorist threats against the police department and FBI. Criminal charges were dropped so he could seek medical treatment. When Nate has his illness under control, he is gentle and mild-mannered. On other occasions, however, his behavior is frightening. Several years ago, Nate threatened to kill my entire family, and I am scared to death of him.

My mother is upset because we refuse to include Nate at the party. I don't think it's wise to have an unstable, possibly dangerous person in my home, and it is too soon to let him come in contact with my children. I told Mom Nate needs to be on his medication for at least six months before I will invite him over.

I love my brother, Ann. If you think I am out of line, I will listen to you, but I have small children and must put their safety first.

Troubled Sister in New Jersey

It would be stressful for everyone, including Nate, if he were to attend your party. You would do him no favor by inviting him to a big bash before his illness is under control. Limit his contact with your children, but remember, he needs his family. And please let him know you love him.

Dear Ann:

My mother-in-law sees nothing wrong with giving my children candy, chocolate and sugary sodas. Whenever they see her, they whine and beg for sweets. The result is a ruined appetite, a sugar rush and a headache for me.

My children are under 5 years old. There is no reason for them to have sugary treats. I want them to learn good eating habits. When I ask my

mother-in-law to stop, she says, "Grandchildren are for spoiling." She is undermining my authority as a parent by telling the children, "Your mother won't let you have candy, but I'll give you some anyway." They think she is just wonderful and I am cruel.

My husband agrees with me but will not stand up to his mother. My children love their grandparents, and I don't want to deprive the in-laws of their grandchildren, but this is becoming a serious problem. Please tell me what to do.

Sugar-Free in Texas

Your mother-in-law is vying for your children's affection the only way she knows how. Unless this happens every day, try not to make it a big issue. Feed the children a nourishing meal before visiting the in-laws. They will be less hungry, and the treats will not spoil their appetite.

Start now to teach your children about proper nutrition. Explain that sugary things may taste good, but too much can be harmful and will not help them grow strong muscles and bones. In time, they will tell Grandma, "No, thanks," when offered junk food.

Dear Ann:

My 16-year-old daughter received an invitation to a baby shower for a classmate. The father is a 21-year-old family friend who is well-off and has promised to be a responsible father. My daughter knows we disapprove of sex at such a young age, but I am afraid she will think having a baby is wonderful if she attends this elaborate shower. Should we permit her to go?

Confused in Ohio

Talk to your daughter about your concerns. Explain that a baby shower is temporary entertainment, while having a child is a full-time, permanent position. She is old enough to understand the difference. Then let her attend.

To find out more about Ann Landers and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com

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TODAY'S HOROSCOPE | Sydney Omarr

ARIES (March 21-April 19) News received concerning relative "on the road." Focus on family, home and marital status. If single, you will encounter future mate. If married, there will soon be addition to family.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) Element of luck rides with you. Focus on humor, intellectual curiosity. You could win a contest. Keep up-to-date concerning fashion news. Sagittarian plays outstanding role.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) You will be at right place at crucial moment almost effortlessly. Judgment and intuitive intellect honed to razor-sharpness. Scorpio, another Gemini play featured roles.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Look behind scenes; obtain story behind the story. Gain indicated via written word.

What you feared turns out to be laughing matter. Gemini, Virgo will figure prominently.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Lucky day! You win friends and influence people. Favorable domestic adjustment turns gloom into happiness. Question of marital status looms large. Aries, Libra dominate scenario.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Do not equate delay with defeat. Time is on your side. Perfect techniques, streamline procedures. Mystery will be solved to your advantage. Pisces, another Virgo play key roles.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) Pressure on due to added responsibility. Look beyond the immediate. You receive more recognition and money. Love relationship grows hot and heavy. Capricorn will play dramatic role.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Mysterious assignment highlighted; you could be dealing with classified information. Be wary of "industrial spies." You exude vibrations of sex appeal. Aries represented.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Take initiative in making change that could mean going into business for yourself. Be positive concerning legal rights, permissions. Marital status figures prominently.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Work close to home if possible. Keep health resolutions that include diet, exercise and nutrition. Attention revolves around purpose, direction and need for meditation.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Lunar position accents creativity, style and variety of experiences.

Many will be attracted to you; keep standards high. Be ready for change, travel. Gemini plays role.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) Land, property will be evaluated. Stick to facts, not fantasy. You will get fair deal, but don't trust to luck. Taurus, Leo and Scorpio natives will play unorthodox roles.

IF JUNE 9 IS YOUR BIRTHDAY: You are sympathetic to underdog, often are better at helping others than promoting your own cause. You are idealistic and passionate in love. You will travel overseas. Aries, Libra persons play major roles in your life, could have these letters in names: I, R. During this cycle, you make fresh start in different direction and seriously consider going into business for yourself. July most memorable!

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