

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Perish and publish: The obit poems

BY PAT MYERS

Week 1261 was our annual contest for poems about people (and the occasional animal) who died last year. Whoever sent the one for Don McLean: It's not his day yet.

4th place

Moses Ndlovu (died in Plumtree, Zimbabwe)
 "A selfie with that elephant would really be a coup!
 "I'll drive him from the shrubbery to get a better view!"
 The charging bull was happy to oblige — not only that:
 It was a photo-finish (and in 30 seconds — flat.)
 (Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

3rd place

Nélio José Nicolai, inventor of caller ID:
 Of all people, you knew how the system should work —
 See the name and decide: friend or foe, gem or jerk.
 A small child could do it, or even a pup!
 So why, when Death called, did you ever pick up?
 (Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

2nd place and the X-ray motif socks:

The immigrant from Ghana who died rescuing neighbors from a Bronx apartment fire:
 Emmanuel Mensah never knew His native land was dung.
 We need more "wretched refuse" just like him
 And less from Donald's tongue.
 (Beryl Benderly, Washington)

And the winner of the Lose Cannon:

Hugh Hefner:
 The women he led astray,
 Used for their T&A,
 Bedded and tossed away,
 Might find this funny:
 He's met his Maker; She
 Issued an apt decree:
 He'll spend eternity
 Dressed as a bunny.
 (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Fails from the crypt: Honorable mentions

Kim Jong Nam, older brother of Kim Jong Un:
 Said Kim Jong Un to Kim Jong Nam,
 "You're not our father's heir. I am!"
 Said Kim Jong Nam to Kim Jong Un,
 "Who cares? I'll live abroad, have fun!
 Life will be one long vacation."
 (Till brotherly assassination . . .)
 (Hugh Thirlway, The Hague)

Roger Ailes
 Now the CEO of Fox
 Does his lying in a box.
 (Jesse Frankovich, Grand Ledge, Mich.)

Ken Kaiser, major league umpire
 This arbiter of strikes and balls was fearsome, bold and stout.
 At those who dared protest his calls: "You're outta here!" he'd shout.
 When fans cried, "Kill the ump!" he scoffed, ignoring their entreaties,
 Until at last, his mask he doffed,
 done in by diabetes.
 Yet now on Heaven's field of dreams, eternity he passes,
 Behind the plate, with angels' screams:
 "Hey, umpire! Get some glasses!"
 (Mark Raffman, Reston)

Don Rickles
 Based a career on the idea that it tickles
 To hear really rotten things said to someone who isn't you.
 (Max Gutmann, Sunnyvale, Calif.)

Stanislav Petrov, missile controller who ignored a false-alarm nuclear attack:
 In '83, with Cold War tensions high,
 A Russian, at his button, didn't use it.
 Though sirens screamed to let the missiles fly,
 The truly big know when they shouldn't lose it.
 There wouldn't be a smithereen still left of
 Our world today, if not for Comrade Petrov.
 (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

Thomas Starzl, organ transplant pioneer:
 He gave a ray of hope to those whose chance was but a sliver.
 But if he questioned "What am I?"
 Of course we knew: swapped liver.
 (Kevin Dopart, Washington)



New contest for Week 1265: Parody for the course

Driver's Ed (to "Tonight" from "West Side Story")
Turn right! Turn right! My knuckles turning white
From spending the last hour in this car.
Red light! Red light! That parking spot's too tight!
How the hell did we make it this far?
Today I had my introduction to driver's ed instruction,
And now, half-dead of fright,
It's au revoir, I'm off to calm my nerves in the bar,
Good night!

This week's contest was suggested by Almost to the Hall of Fame Loser Mark Raffman, who suggested a new category for song parodies: **Write a song relating to a class or course of instruction, or to school in general,** as in Mark's example above, which the Empress hopes is not about a 16-year-old. Since our last parody contest, this past summer, was about science and technology, we don't want songs just about what's taught in a class, but something referring to schools/teaching/learning itself. Will this contest be free of political humor? Hmm, are there poli-sci classes?

Submit up to 25 entries at the website wapo.st/enter-invite-1265 (all lowercase).

Winner gets the **Lose Cannon**, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a natural-toned cotton tote bag advertising the Spanish juice bar chain Fit Food, with the slogan (in English) "Dirty mind, clean body" — imprinted with a photo of two half-lemons, their, er, perky ends bodaciously facing the camera; one of them bears a ring piercing. Donated by Roy Ashley, who picked it up in Madrid.

Other runners-up win our "You Gotta Play to Lose" Loser Mug or our Grossery Bag, "I Got a B in Punmanship." Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "We've Seen Better" or "IDiot Card." First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). **Deadline is Monday night, Feb. 19 — you get an extra week!** Results published March 4 (online March 1). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline for this week's results is by Beverley Sharp; Tom Witte wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](https://www.facebook.com/on.fb.me/invdev).

THE STYLE CONVERSATIONAL The Empress's weekly online column discusses the new contest and results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.

Joseph Nicolosi, "conversion therapy" advocate:
 To the man who insisted that gays could be "cured":
 Although homophobes liked you a lot,
 Many thousands of others just wished, rest assured,
 You'd converted from bonkers to not. (Melissa Balmain)

Monty Hall (I)
 The costumed contestants on "Let's Make a Deal"
 Would hope that their luck didn't flee;
 With choice of a door, Monty Hall would reveal
 A prize or a "zonk." As for me,
 I watched every day as a youngster with zeal;
 I heard every joyful "Whoopee!"
 To pay him my final respects,
 should I kneel
 At Grave Number 1, 2, or 3?
 (Matt Monitto, Bristol, Conn.)

Monty Hall (II)
 When Monty opened up his eyes,
 he learned that he was dead.
 He found himself in paradise. And then Saint Peter said:
 "Care to trade your paradise for what's behind that cloud?"
 "A deal?" said Monty. "Sure, why not?" The angels cheered out loud.
 Saint Peter moved the cloud aside,
 then Monty praised the Lord,
 For who the hell needs paradise when you can drive a Ford?
 (Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

Haruo Nakajima
 The actor who portrayed Godzilla
 Hence shall act as coffin filla.
 (Jesse Frankovich)

Della Reese of "Touched by an Angel"
 "Della Reese," said Saint Peter, "I think I can find
 You a role that goes well with that Bible you're clutching:
 You will be Heaven's first angel assigned
 To watch out for and stop inappropriate touching."
 (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

Sue Grafton planned to finish,
 But she died, her goal unmet:
 To name her murder mysteries
 Using all the alphabet.
 So sad that she completed
 Only twenty-five. You see —
 Her literary legacy
 Is only A toY. (Mary Erickson, Columbia, Md., a First Offender)

Columnist Jimmy Breslin
 New journalism told it down and dirty:
 For Jimmy Breslin, now it's finally -30-. (Ira Allen, Bethesda)

More obit poems in the online Invite at wapo.st/invite1265.

Still running — deadline Monday night, Feb. 5: our contest for creative Yelp reviews. See wapo.st/invite1264.

Sportswriter Frank Deford
 Frank Deford swore
 There was more than the score
 That made sports such a wide world of wonder.
 So his praises be sung,
 Though his buzzer has rung,
 And the final count: Frank is six under.
 (Seth Tucker, Washington)

Zbigniew Brzezinski, foreign affairs adviser:
 When you're waiting in line at those ol' Pearly Gates
 To enter the kingdom of light,
 And they look up your name in the Book of the Fates,
 Here's hoping they've got it spelled right. (Duncan Stevens)

Johnny Hallyday, French pop icon:
 France's Elvis — may he rest in peace.
 Mais oui, il a quitté l'edifice.
 (Mark Raffman)

Stubbs the Cat, "mayor" of Talkeetna, Alaska:
 For years, Alaskan tourists made a mandatory beeline
 To meet Talkeetna's mayor: such a well-connected feline.
 "Alas!" Alaskans mourn, "he could have gotten votes aplenty
 If he were in the running for VP in 2020." (Beverley Sharp)

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 But she died, her goal unmet:
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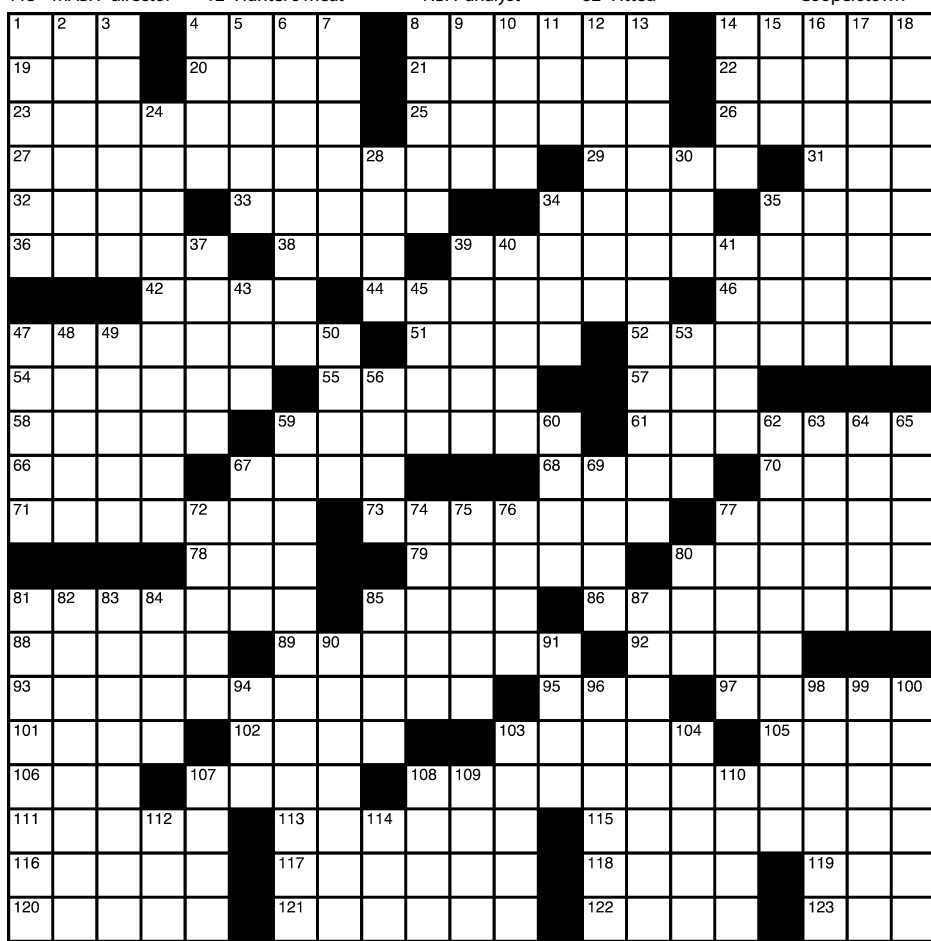
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L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

- 79 Shade-tolerant garden plant
- 80 Old schoolmaster's disciplinary tool
- ACROSS
- 1 Code
- 4 "Rubáyát" poet
- 8 Regional UN headquarters since 1946
- 14 Slather
- 19 Lead-in for carte or mode
- 20 "... la France!"
- 21 Brought up
- 22 Jobs creation
- 23 Australian island state
- 25 Mysterious
- 26 Capricious notions
- 27 Aply named therapist?
- 29 Misfortunes
- 31 Like many a tree at
- Christmas
- 32 Friendly
- 33 Self-described "King of All Media"
- 34 Largest continent
- 35 Frat party wear
- 36 Electric car brand
- 38 One of the Gershwins
- 39 Aply named dietitian?
- 42 Capital with a Viking Ship Museum
- 44 With no exceptions
- 46 Sharp
- 47 Pull a fast one on
- 51 Small test
- 52 Mangabeys, e.g.
- 54 Thought of but not shared
- 55 Goes back to the front, perhaps
- 57 URL ending
- 58 King's domain
- 59 Ties off in surgery
- 61 Cats native to much of the Americas
- 66 Unit on the set
- 67 Mexican coin
- 68 Prominent Dumbo feature
- 70 Mine access
- 71 TV's Buffy and Faith, e.g.
- 73 Moral consideration
- 77 Set of furniture
- 78 Startling word
- 115 Scotty on the Enterprise, e.g.
- 116 Slowly, in music
- 117 Spicy cuisine
- 118 Kerfuffles
- 119 Rowboat propeller
- 120 Brinks
- 121 Many-sided evils
- 122 Fail miserably
- 123 Cook in a wok
- DOWN
- 1 Snitch on
- 2 Tick away
- 3 Short races
- 4 Office
- 5 Knee revealers, and then some
- 6 Earhart's art
- 7 Grim character?
- 8 Tiny amount
- 9 Bring home
- 10 Word on Santa's checklist
- 11 Former NHL forward
- 12 Hunter's meat
- 13 Aply named editor?
- 14 Makes the cut
- 15 Dashboard letters
- 16 Afterword
- 17 Supremely powerful
- 18 Amends, as corporate earnings
- 24 Aply named sommellerie?
- 28 Spring
- 30 USA Patriot Act, e.g.
- 34 Including everything
- 35 Check (off)
- 37 Take ... enjoy the pool
- 39 Lose one's temper
- 40 Quzo flavoring
- 41 Mountain chain
- 43 Pot top
- 45 Greenish blue
- 47 Elicits an "Ouch!"
- 48 "Inside the NBA" analyst
- 82 Fitted
- 49 Japanese port
- 50 Kardashian matriarch
- 53 Monstrous Tolkien creations
- 56 They may be inflated
- 59 Aply named barber?
- 60 Labor Day mo.
- 62 Aply named policewoman?
- 63 Loathing
- 64 Information on a spine
- 65 Spirited mount
- 67 TA's boss
- 69 Word of regret
- 72 Kindle download
- 74 Relative of a knock
- 75 "I copy"
- 76 Gorbachev's land: Abbr.
- 77 Lines of clothing
- 80 Winter malady
- 81 Prepare, as eggs
- 82 Fitted
- 83 Agreeing
- 84 Himalayan pack animals
- 85 Wacky
- 87 World's largest snake by weight
- 90 Serious competition
- 91 To be, in Bavaria
- 94 "Glee" actress
- 96 Move from window to aisle, say
- 98 Done with
- 99 Tone deafness
- 100 Boat shoe brand
- 103 Corn breads
- 104 Goad
- 107 Warner or Ringling follower
- 108 Don Juan's love land: Abbr.
- 109 In ... land
- 110 Game of world conquest
- 112 Had a bite
- 114 Williams in Cooperstown



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Answers to last week's puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | Feb. 4: This year you open up to new ideas that greatly appeal to you. You will become more open and less judgmental over the next year. You draw others toward you and often encourage them to become more involved in what they care about. If you are single, you easily will find many companions, some of whom you will enjoy immensely. If you are attached, the two of you interact with a great deal of happiness. Others admire your style as a couple. Libra can be very charming.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
 Reach out to others and deal directly with each person. Fatigue could be a problem when dealing with someone who is on top of their game. One-on-one relating anchors you and your inner circle.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
 Stay levelheaded, and understand that you have limitations, just as everyone else does. When you reach out to a loved one at a distance, you are likely to hear good news. Consider playing it low-key today.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
 Your creativity emerges once more. Relate to others on a one-on-one level. You will discover that a lot is going on with those close to you. Take a stab at getting through some paperwork.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
 You could feel as if you can't turn a situation around quick enough. Allow greater give-and-take between you and someone else. You are likely to discover how easily you relax when you are around this person.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
 Your position could be more solid than you realize. Make an effort to reach out to a partner or loved one who often seems closed down. This person might be lonely or depressed. Your call will help this person break free of their mood.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
 Be aware that you can avoid a problem by tapping into your self-confidence. You often don't respond in the way that others expect you to. You express a uniqueness that forces people to rethink their approach. Expenses could add up if you are not careful.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
 Your ability to draw in others emerges. You might want to get

closer to a certain group of people. Your ability to hang out and not get triggered by others comes out. Your fatigue might be stopping you from accomplishing as much as you'd like.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
 Communicate what is bothering you when out meeting up with friends. You quickly will discover that you want to make an extra effort to have others understand your desires. Take the time to talk through a problem.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
 Relax and make a point of joining several friends. You'll find one person very exciting and invigorating. You might not want to share everything that you are thinking and feeling, even with a partner.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
 Be aware of your image within your community. You seem to be more easygoing and carefree than usual. A friend seems to push you in a certain direction. Be aware of this person's energy.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
 You will be able to gain a deeper perspective by not projecting yourself and your thoughts into complex situations. Instead, relax and don't push so hard to take charge of a project. Do not forget to check in with an older relative.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
 You seem to be able to understand where others are coming from. A fiery person could make all the difference in how you react. Once you deal with this person's energy, you might want to be more laid-back.

Answers to last week's puzzle.

