

Style



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Style Invitational Week 927: Drive-by shoutings — Burma-Shave signs; plus winning faux-chemical names

By Pat Myers, July 08, 2011



Bob Staake/For The Washington Post (/)

The Empress was besought recently to give another go to a contest we last did 12 years ago: It's for mini-poems written in the style of the old Burma-Shave ads, which used to appear on pre-interstate roadsides as a series of six little signs, a few words at a time, either promoting the shaving cream or serving as a PSA to drivers, as in "Big mistake / Many make: / Rely on horn / Instead of / brake. / Burma-Shave." Last time we asked for welcome signs to states or towns; this week we'll stay closer to the original purpose:

Write a very short four-line "poem" promoting a product or company, or offering advice to drivers; the poem

must rhyme, in ABAB or ABCB rhyme scheme. A fifth, non-rhyming line may state the product name or a conclusion. Don't make the lines more than three or four words each unless they're very short.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a cloth ball cap from Cluster Springs Sanitary Services Portable Toilet Rentals of Middle of Nowhere, Va. (a.k.a. Danville); the embroidered slogan on the back says, "You dump --it, we pump --it."

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Donated by Loser Dave Komornik of Danville, who brought it up on a visit to Washington.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (Fir Stink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, July 18; results published Aug. 7 (Aug. 5 online). Include "Week 927" in your e-mail subject line, or it may be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with

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your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational. The

revised title for next week's results is by Tom Witte; this week's honorable-mentions subhead is by chemical engineer Jeff Contompasis.

Visit the online discussion group [The Style Conversational](#), where the Empress discusses today's new contest and results along with news about the Loser Community. If you'd like an e-mail notification each week when the Invitational and Conversational are posted online, write to the Empress at losers @ washpost.com (note that in the subject line) and she'll add you to the mailing list. And on Facebook, join the lively group Style Invitational Devotees and chime in.

Report from Week 923

in which we asked for new chemical terms: By far the most frequent submission was for "palinium"; we include two. Alas, the terms "honoring" presidential candidates are all for Republicans; there just weren't any good Obama-themed entries.

The winner of the Inker:

Binladium: When combined with lead and immersed in water, it almost instantly disappears. (*Christopher Lamora, Guatemala City*)

2. Winner of the football made entirely of Bubble Wrap:

Platitudinum: A metal that becomes more dull each time it is used, yet somehow is never discarded. (*Beth Baniszewski, Cambridge, Mass.*)

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3. **Marionbarium:** Highly reactive with alcohol and other substances. Difficult to purge from the system long after peak effectiveness. (*Marcy Alvo, Annandale, Va.*)

4. **Madoffium:** Catalyst capable of turning liquid substance, overnight, into absolutely nothin'. (*Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf, Md.*)

Byproducts & residue: Honorable mentions

Palinium: Its magnetic properties decrease by half every year, but never entirely dissipate. (*Elden Carnahan, Laurel, Md.*)

Palinium: A rigid, polarizing substance that appears to glow brightly when examined from the right side but appears to be a black hole when viewed from the left. (*Bill Nilsen, Arlington, Va., a First Offender*)

Greecium: A substance unable to stabilize because of its weak bonds. (*Lawrence McGuire*)

Tachygiftcardium: What symbiotic organisms give off in late December. (*Ira Allen, Bethesda, Md.*)

Nordegrenium: Reacts violently with iron. (*Mark Eckenwiler, Washington*)

Led: A heavy metal. (*Dixon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.*)

Pepconium: Theoretically capable of great bursts of energy, it becomes inert when in contact with water. (*Elden Carnahan*)

Sulaimonoxide brownate: Activated by silver. Decomposes in hot water. (*Marcy Alvo*)

Newtium: Heavy element found often in Iowa and New Hampshire. Bonds frequently but not permanently. Attracted to precious metals and gems. Emits an inaudible buzz. (*Russell Beland, Fairfax, Va.*)

Abbottabadite: One explosive compound. (*Mark Eckenwiler*)

Bieberium: An element of little substance or weight; apparently harmless by itself, but added to any volume of shelium produces an earsplitting squeal. (*Andy Bassett, New Plymouth, New Zealand*)

Weinerium: Volatile element that expands, flashes and then self-destructs. (*Nancy M. Lawrence, Annandale, Va.*)

Ryanide poisoning: A toxic reaction exacerbated by inadequate medical care. (*Kathy El-*

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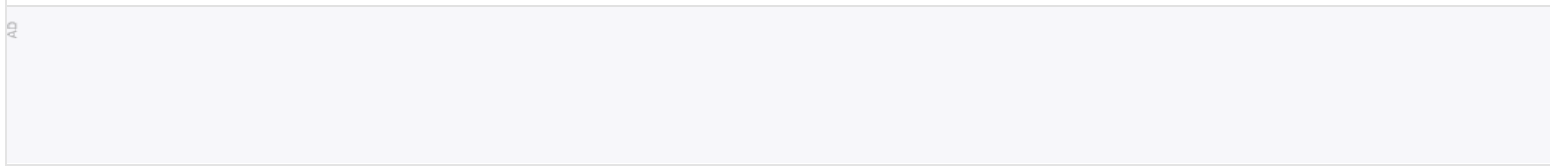
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Sellulose: Superabsorbent substance that sucks value from whatever it touches; commonly used as home insulating material in the past decade. (*Larry Gray, Union Bridge, Md., a First Offender*)

Arsenice: Especially in those genes. (*Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.*)

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Cantonite: Causes headaches in married women. (*Craig Dykstra, Centreville, Va.*)

Jockabromide: Common substance found in locker rooms that never fails to yield 110 percent one day at a time. (*Ira Allen*)

Silicone bimboxide: Compound that causes swollen protuberances on the upper torso. (*Dixon Wragg*)

Tatanium: New marketing name for silicone. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

Alumnium: The metal used to make class rings. (*Matt Monitto, Myrtle Beach, S.C.*)

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Stromtium 90: Reproductive agent that remains potent throughout an exceedingly long half life. (*Ira Allen*)

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