



Style

# Style Invitational Week 958: Do weller with wellerisms

**Correction:** An earlier version of this article misstated the submission deadline and publication date for the week 958 contest. The correct submission deadline is Feb. 20, and entries will be published March 11 (March 9 online). This version has been updated.

By **Pat Myers**  
February 9, 2012

**“We’ll have to rehearse that,” said the undertaker as the coffin fell out of the car.**

**“It was a night to remember,” said John Bobbitt’s ER surgeon.**

It’s called a wellerism, after two witty characters named Weller in Dickens’s “Pickwick Papers.” It’s a sentence that starts with a quote, often a short proverb, and goes on to include some sort of wordplay on something in the quote. Stuart Rogers of Toronto saw the first example above in a recent contest from [A.Word.A.Day](#); he figured that the Invitational Losers might do better. Or weller. So, in honor of Dickens’s bicentenary this month, let’s give it a try. This, like the similar [Tom Swifty](#) genre, is a pretty easy contest to come up with *something* for; the trick is to make it novel, perhaps timely, and especially clever.



Winner gets [the Inker](#), the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a trophy that’s arguably even nicer: [this little pewterish bucking horse](#) whose hindquarters are on a spring; it’s basically a bobblebutt. Donated by Such a Loser Craig Dykstra.



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

**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 tree-shaped air “freshener” (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or fax to 202-

334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Feb. 20; results published March 11 (March 9 online). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include “Week 958” in your e-mail subject line or it may be ignored as spam. Include your



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real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at [washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational](http://washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational). The revised title for next week is by Kevin Dopart; the subhead for this week's honorable mentions is by Brad Alexander. Join the Style Invitational Devotees on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](http://on.fb.me/invdev).

#### Report from Week 954

in which we asked for jokes ending "... and then the fight started." Not all that surprisingly, only a few entries transcended the "Lockhorns"-type mean-spouse digs that the genre is known for.

#### The winner of the Inker

**Mechanic:** "Your car's engine is in bad shape. But it's kind of hard to explain."

**Customer:** "Go ahead. I'm an engineer."

**Mechanic:** "Well, lady. Basically Mr. Vroom Vroom is verrry sick ... And then the fight started ... (*David Genser, Poway, Calif.*)

#### 2. Winner of the books "Go to Hell" and "Fart Proudly":

**Religious guy:** "What will save this country is the Peace of God."

**Secular guy:** No, no, we need a peace based on rational principles of self-preservation."

And then ... (*Ann Martin, Bracknell, England*)

#### 3. Barack Obama: "I ..."

And then the fight started. (*Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.*)

4. "Turn right at the next corner," Siri said, but my car's navigation system interrupted and said, "Turn left."

If Siri had eyeballs, she would have rolled them. "Dashboard lady," she said, "where did you get your maps? Did Vasco da Gama have a garage sale?"

And then ... (*Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.*)

#### Joust kidding: Honorable mentions

Watching schoolkids go by, a Southern Baptist groused to the man next to him, "I can't believe the clothes they allow children to wear."

"And don't get me started on the swearing and blasphemy," the man replied.

"Yup," seconded the Southern Baptist. "You'll never see *my* children involved in such sinful activity."

"Mine, neither," replied the man enthusiastically, "Praise Allah."

And then ... (*Art Grinath, Takoma Park, Md.*)

I noticed that some people at the movie didn't see where the bad guy was hiding, so I helpfully swirled my laser pointer at the bush on the left ... (*Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.*)

Wife: "Just look at all these wrinkles! I'm so depressed! I want a facelift."

Husband: "Wouldn't an iron be cheaper?"

And then ... (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

Woman, waving her diamond ring: "Look, I'm engaged!"

Co-worker: "Well, if you let a guy ride the clutch enough times, he'll eventually get it right." ... (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

Woman: "Ewww, what do people see in necrophilia?!"

Husband: "I don't know, but I can relate."

And then ... (*Chuck Smith, Woodbridge, Va.*)

with Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen  
may never end



5 Perspective  
Carolyn Hax: A kiss-and-don't-tell  
with an ex-boyfriend's buddy



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“My shrink thinks I’ve hated my mother since the day I was born!” my wife informed me.

“Hey, a lot of people started hating her that day,” I said. . . . (Robert Schechter)

“Do I still float your boat?”

“If my boat were the Costa Concordia.” . . . (Chuck Smith)

They’re celebrating their fifth-anniversary at dinner. As they start on dessert, they suddenly say, simultaneously, “I have something important to tell you.” Again they say simultaneously, “You go first.”

So, once more at the same time, they tell each other: “I just found out I’m pregnant.” / “I just found out I’m sterile.” . . . (Elizabeth Miller, *Vienna, Va., a First Offender*)

The sign said it was a country music club, so I asked to hear some music from the country of Pakistan. . . . (Jerry Birchmore, *Springfield, Va.*)

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 — and you can vote for your favorite among the inking entries, since you no doubt figured the Empress chose the wrong winner. 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](mailto:losers@washpost.com) (note that in the subject line) and she’ll add you to the mailing list. And on Facebook, join the far more lively group [Style Invitational Devotees](#) and chime in.

**Next week: Twits’ twist, or A sick crew’s wisecracks**



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#### Pat Myers

Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post’s page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. [Follow](#)

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