

Style Invitational

BY PAT MYERS

Report from Week 1030

a contest for cinquains: Originated a century ago by the melancholy, ill-fated Miss Adelaide Crapsey, the cinquain is a five-line verse with two syllables in the first line, four in the second, then six, then eight, then two. Among the thousand-plus entries, the Empress received a number from people who clearly didn't realize that the Style Invitational is a humor contest: Some were dead-serious "poetic" gushings associated with the Crapsey form; others were screedy rants decrying avaricious profiteers in the banking industry. But most people got it, and some people aced it:

THE WINNER OF THE INKIN' MEMORIAL

Weiner —
"Carlos Danger"! —
Rears his head in hubris.
Doesn't need our votes, he
needs a
New bris. (Nan Reiner,
Alexandria)

2 Winner of the Pukin' Paul solar-powered bobblehead:

Michael Bloomberg took flak
From New York's Big Gulpers,
But won't issue any mayor
Culpas. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

3 "Redskins":
Never has a
Word been so abhorrent
To so many, but so valued
By one. (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

4 Putin
As president
Controls all the ground that
His political rivals are
Put in. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)

"I have
Established a
Charity for Russian
Radiation victims," said Cher
Nobly. (Chris Doyle)

Oh, doom!
They told me so,
But it was long ago.
It turns out it's not who you know!
It's whom. (Neal Starkman, Seattle)

An old
Smith-Corona
Manual neither Saves
Nor Deletes, nor Games, but it's just
My type. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

Abbreviated Anthem
Oh, say,
Can you see by
The early light of dawn?
Flag flies! Fort stands! We win! You
lose!
Rock on! (Randy Arndt, Clarksville, a
First Offender)

A place
So desolate,
So dark no sun shines there —
Deep, deep. A place for you to put
This job. (Mark Raffman, Reston)
Lincoln.
Night on the town.
Good play, good seats, good view.
What else could a president want?
Act Two. (Jim Blizzard, Alexandria)

One day
All of mankind
Will learn to live as one.
But today, that's MY parking space,
Jackass. (Craig Dykstra)

Weiner's Stump Speech
"I may
Not speak softly
(It's not my New York style)
But you sure know I carry a
Big stick." (Robert Schechter)

My dog
Knows if you want
A friend in Washington,
Don't court a member of Congress.
They bite. (Linda Neighborgall, Falls
Church, a *First Offender*)

Impress
Post editors?
Craft insightful letter.
Impress discerning Post Empress?
Poop joke. (Stan Capper, Waldorf, a
First Offender)

Style Invitational Want Ad
Writers:
Here's your dream job!
You pick your own hours.
Each new week brings a fun
challenge!
(Pay? Uh . . .) (Beverley Sharp,
Montgomery, Ala.)

Still running — deadline Monday night: our annual Limerixicon contest, this year for limericks prominently featuring a word beginning with "fa-": See bit.ly/invite1033

At a seaside resort:
You can get burned by a sun of
A beach. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)
I can't
Help but wonder
How much Danger we would
Have known if Weiner's wiener were
Wee-er. (Danielle Nowlin, Woodbridge)
Let's sing
"New York, New York"
If the voters there choose
Weiner as mayor: Start spreading
The ewws! (Chris Doyle)
Shakespeare,
Quite unshaken
By claims that someone else
Wrote his plays, said: " 'Twas I who
wrote
Bacon!" (Brian Allgar, Paris)

McDonnell on the Move
Bob'll
Start to wobble;
Clinging to his job'll
Flee to somewhere free from
squabble:
Kabul. (Nan Reiner)



PAT MYERS/THE WASHINGTON POST

We like our grotesque finger puppets the way we like



BOB STAKEY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 1034: What's to like?

"I like my women like I like my gas: natural."
"I like my men like I like my court: superior."
"I like my men like I like my acorns: buried."

It's a well-worn trope, to be sure. And it's such a simple formula that the above examples were actually composed by a computer at the University of Edinburgh. Okay, they're not thrillingly funny, but it's a British computer and British humor sometimes eludes us. Besides, the deposed Czar of the Style Invitational, the Empress's predecessor, has bet her a lunch that she'll get a classic set of results out of this contest he suggested. So feed a Czar today: **Supply an original joke of the form "I like my [your choice] the way I like my [something else of your choice]: [some clever, funny parallel]."** Your parallel doesn't have to be just one word, as in the machine's examples. You may even substitute "like/like" with "something else A/something else A," as long as the general form is still clear. How to make your humor Invite-fresh? Take the advice of David Matthews, who helped develop the Scottish electrocomedian: As he told the Telegraph, "The holy grail for machine-generated comedy would be to include cultural references, but these are very hard to capture." Go capture some.

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives the two grotesque rubbery finger puppets pictured here, ably modeled by the infinitely agreeable Donna Peremes of the Style section staff. Donated by Loser Dave Prevar.

Another Invite milestone:

With this week's cinquains, the astonishingly clever wordsmith Chris Doyle has blotted up his 1,500th drop of Invite ink, joining only the legendary Loser Russell Beland (who's been holding at 1,523) in the Triple Hall of Fame. Chris, the chief actuary for the Defense Department before retiring some years ago, started Inviting in earnest in 2000 and rapidly saw his name in parentheses in contest after contest, using his ingenious punmanship in everything from limericks to obituary poems to situational humor (What to say when you realize your zipper's been open: "Sorry, I thought this was Casual Fly Day"). In honor of Chris's induction, I've asked him to list his 10 favorite entries from over the years. You can see them in my Style Conversational column at bit.ly/conv1034.

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for Loser Mug or the ardently desired Grossery Bag. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet. First Offenders receive a smelly, tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Aug. 26; results published Sept. 15 (online Sept. 12). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include "Week 1034" in your e-mail subject line or it might be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/inviterules. The subhead for this week's honorable mentions is by Tom Witte. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev.

STYLE CONVERSATIONAL Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at washingtonpost.com/stylconversational.