

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

The levity was dry: 'Pie' splices from Week 1172

BY PAT MYERS

Week 1172 was one of our word-bank contests: to write something using only the words in the song "American Pie"; you could add punctuation but couldn't use a word more often than it appears in the song. (The entry deadline was the day before Ted Cruz dropped out of the presidential race.) Outstanding stuff here; I don't want to think about how much time these people used on this contest. The Empress thanks, enormously, Loser Gary Crockett, who ran these entries through a validating program he'd created to make sure there weren't any words that aren't in the song or were used too frequently.

4th place

"To love me well with your candlestick, Oh Jack! Be nimble — but not that quick." (Danielle Nowlin, Fairfax Station)

3rd place

We all watched on the news when that bad man — Oh-James, who long ago played on the field — went Broncin'. How did his bride die? We know how! So, when we saw the verdict, we all screamed and cried (well, most people . . .). But before long, he stole and got caught, and was tried, and now he is off the streets for good. And that's only just. (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

2nd place and the mug depicting Princess Leia as Rosie the Riveter:

One time, I did write "you" in place of "you're" and the "word lovers" caught it and went off on me. Those people? There just not well. (Jeff Shirley, Richmond)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial

The Quartet Looking for the American Crown

On the left:
The Queen — bride of a man we recall; did write a book; knew sergeants died.

The Pink-oh — off the Marx; children admire him.

On the right:
The Jester: in tune with American rage; can fire every one; fat hands; foul.

And last, **the Bible Lover's Man**: not American-born; singin' "no levee"; no friend, no chance.

The verdict: not good. (Mary Kappus, Washington)

Jesters on the sidelines:

Honorable mentions

Do you remember all the fallout from that time when **Miss Jackson revealed something** real quick in her half-time dance on air while just about every American watched? Now that was a news flash! (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

The space people came down from above and my "can" was (well, you know what they do). I clenched and cried but, good news! I'd dreamed it! Man, I can never be drinking perfume again before night time. (Jeff Shirley)

"Admire my hands!" said the man on the stage. No. Just No. (Todd DeLap, Fairfax)

I was looking for some one who can teach me: **What is that "broncin' " word?** I asked three people and all I got was: — "Hell if I know." — "Just 'broken,' but more so, maybe?" — "Come off it, son — you been drinking?" (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

It was so sweet when the Dancin' Candlestick died, the cast of the play sang "Be Our Ghost." (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

He: "Every time we made love, I saw to it that we practiced what the Holy Father and the church said to, and now we have ten children — all born in the last eight years!"

She: "He was into rhythm and I got the blues." (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

Jester: "What can I do for you?"

Jack: "Whiskey."

Jester: "We have Bad Luck Whiskey, Deep Do Do Whiskey, Ole Gym Shoes Whiskey, and Die Slow and Lonely Whiskey."

Jack: "Well?"

Jack: "Hell with it, make it a can of Carnation." (Jeff Shirley)

The one you were born from is



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1176: Let 'er RIP: Write an obit line

Ms. Johnson had spent three decades as a successful executive in the cable television industry. The funeral service hours will be next Saturday, sometime between 7 a.m. and 6 p.m.

A lifelong Redskins fan, Mr. Smith wanted his ashes spread on FedEx Field, just short of the goal line.

Every January The Style Invitational runs a contest for poems in memory of particular notables who have died in the previous year. New Loser John Hutchins, who's clearly caught the Invite bug, wrote to the Empress to suggest another idea: **This week: Write a humorous line or two for someone's obituary — either for a particular person (dead or not) or for a fictional or generic one, as in John's examples above.**

NEW: No more emailed entries! Instead, submit them at this website: subpl.at/INVITE1176. It's super-easy.

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Speaking of Shriveled Beings No Longer With Us: Second place receives a pair of ceramic California Raisins figurines, part of that weird 1980s promotion featuring Claymation fruit depicted as blues singers. Donated by Sam Laudenslager.

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for Loser Mug, the older-model "This Is Your Brain on Mugs" mug or a vintage Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "Magnet Dum Laude" or "Falling Jest Short." First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). Deadline is Tuesday, May 31 (for this obit contest, an extra day for Memorial Day); results published June 26 (online June 23). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest. See contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline for this week's results is by Danielle Nowlin, Jon Gearhart and Jesse Frankovich; Danielle did the honorable-mentions subhead, too, as did William Kennard. "Let 'er RIP" is by John Hutchins. Join the Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev. "Like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/inkofday; follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.



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

Raisin. The Dead: These 1980s ceramic things, second prize for this week's obit-line contest.

so fat, she could be used as a levee! (Jesse Frankovich)

"Holy hell, that's some good grass, man! Now for more whiskey ..." "No, no — time for church, Father James!" (Brendan Beary)

I came, I saw, I couldn't Be for that man. I wouldn't. We just can't have that you-know-who

As our crown god, for me and you. There was a dig about his hands; So be it. His, a jester dance. That man is for the birds, write I; The Devil's own. For him, bye-bye. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

Music of the Met: People die singing, and they take a long, long time to do so. (Kevin Doport, Washington)

Me: "Did you just flash the bride?" **My friend:** "Well, I wouldn't have, but I saw her admire my hands." (Mark Raffman)

Helter-me, skelter-me, Satan, the King of Hell, Down in the flames with the Most dark of men, Is he as foul as that Rage-touched-American Man who could make the place So good again? (Jesse Frankovich)

He helter and clenched her can, but she screamed and kicked him in the bells. "Buck you!" he cried. (Frank Osen)

Miss: "Jack, take me now and make me shiver with delight!"

Jack: "Miss? I do not know you, and what is more, James and I, we've been happy lovers for a while."

Miss: "Oh. My bad." (Jeff Shirley)

I was a king, but you kicked me out. Now you have Satan made mortal. Who is laughing now? (J. Boehner, Cincinnati) (Todd DeLap)

"How come you got ten years for just a broken light on your Chevy?"

"Oh, well, there was some more: I 'borrowed' that truck; I was high and had been drinking; and I was caught with what turned out to be the sergeant's bride." (John Hutchins, Silver Spring)

"We used to make love all day long," the bride said to her friend. "But now the only real chance I have is when he tells me, " 'Half-time maybe ...' " (Chris Doyle)

In my teenage years, I was in a band. I was high on grass and into drinking. And practiced in love as well — every night a pickup! Do my children know that? No! They only take me for a fat father from a played-out generation. (Mark Raffman)

People die every day, but for some who we admire for the music they made . . . man oh man, could we slow it down some? It is as if God got lonely and went looking for one hell of a rhythm-and-blues band. (Craig Dykstra, Centerville)

And Last: Miss My-years (that's how you spell it, no?): If I read the paper and you have not used one of my own again, just know that this'll make me die inside. (Jesse Frankovich, who gets to live inside at least one more week)

Still running — deadline Monday night, May 23: Our contest to create new words totaling 13 Scrabble points. See bit.ly/invite1175.

SUNDAY CHALLENGE

BY BRUCE VENZKE © 2016 CROSSYNERGY SYNDICATE LLC

ACROSS
1 Stable area
6 Expect
11 Deviated
13 Went after flies
15 Scary story
17 Smog-battling org.
18 Far from favorable
19 Degree for altys.
20 "The First Lady of Song"
22 It's just a matter of time
23 Worms event of 1521
24 Coasts
29 Changes prices, perhaps
30 Some paint finishes
31 Be unsettled
32 High school safety org.

33 "___ Peak" (Brosnan film)
35 Actor Depardieu
37 Scuttlebutt from "with-it" sources
40 Meaningful spans
41 Utter drivel
42 Cato's existence
43 Kiddie ___
44 TV sleuth who was for hire
48 Winter follower, on some calendars (abbr.)
49 Troublesome predicament
52 Barrel builders
53 Lines up
54 Mean-spirited
55 Skater Protopopov and designer Cassini

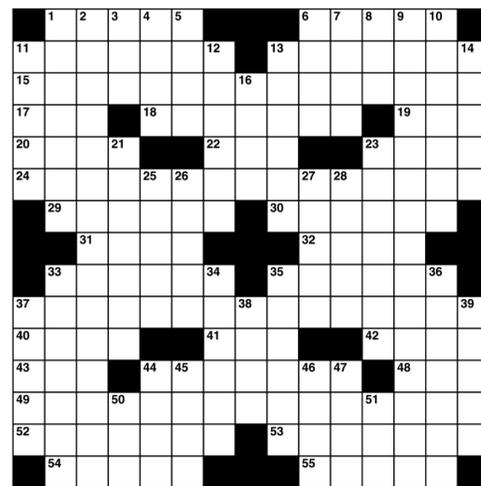
DOWN
1 Metal fastener
2 Experiment in living apart
3 Bern sight, as class
4 "The Harp" constellation
5 Main part
6 Bristlelike appendages
7 Engage in
8 Bar fig.
9 Salad bar selection
10 Money handlers
11 Unadulterated
12 Furniture pieces

13 Squad car sounds
14 Red ink entries
16 Mariposa lily
21 Doesn't cut, as class
23 Risk taker's thought
25 Famed Chicago Cubs third baseman
26 Osmonds' hometown
27 Makes more comfortable
28 Show surprise
33 Snack food brand
34 Put in bold type, say

35 Affects strongly
36 Autocrats
37 Don't pay a lost wager
38 Daughter of Hägar the Horrible
39 Migratory shorebirds
44 Timetable, briefly
45 Combustible funeral heap
46 Overseas currency since 2002
47 Mass transit mode
50 Econ. indicator
51 Vacation souvenir

Answer to Sunday, May 15

F	L	A	T	B	U	S	T	E	D	E	T	A	S
A	U	R	A	L	S	P	A	C	E	T	H	R	O
Z	I	G	Z	A	G	R	U	L	E	H	E	I	R
E	G	O	T	A	O	I	M	M	E	N	S	E	
D	I	T	C	H	U	M	P	D	R	A	T	S	
L	E	F	T	I	S	T	S	G	O	P			
S	A	F	A	R	I	L	E	I	C	A	T	O	
K	C	A	R	C	H	I	D	E	L	I	L	T	
U	C	L	A	H	I	T	T	B	O	N	E	S	
L	O	L	H	U	G	I	T	O	U	T			
L	L	A	M	A	H	A	R	R	H	O	D	A	
C	A	P	I	T	A	L	A	F	R	D	A	N	
A	D	A	M	M	I	S	D	I	A	L	I	N	G
P	E	R	E	A	F	T	E	R	T	A	S	T	E
S	S	T	S	H	E	A	D	M	A	S	T	E	R



HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | May 22: This year you are able to come to terms with others' changeability and their willingness to take risks. You might be conservative compared with the majority of people, but your tolerance becomes even stronger than in the past. If you are single, your capacity to give others space often proves to be a gift. Be careful, as you could meet someone who shows signs of jealousy and possessiveness. If you are attached, you find that your significant other defines himself or herself more clearly than in the past. Even though you project yourselves in different ways, you have very similar issues. SAGITTARIUS processes information even faster than you do!

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
You might feel as if you are a baseball player, as so much is being thrown at you. You could witness someone starting to unravel because of a recent misunderstanding. Know that this situation did not develop from spiteful intent.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
One-on-one relating is highlighted. You'll be able to resolve an issue that has been building. You understand what has happened and can get past the problem. Allow more forgiveness and you will be stronger emotionally and physically.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
You'll notice a difference in a partner who has been difficult as of late. You will enjoy yourself, whether he or she joins you. In fact, if you enjoy yourself, this person will want to join in. Be more creative in how you approach a personal matter.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
You are full of energy and will want

to develop a better health and/or exercise routine. Be sure to schedule a checkup in the near future. Try to avoid going to extremes for now. Indulge in a little laziness. Share what is on your mind.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
You generally have more fun just being by yourself, but if you are with a partner, laughter seems inevitable. Use caution with spending; otherwise, you could go overboard. Be imaginative in making choices that affect more than just you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
You are coming from a secure mental position, so be imaginative in your choices and try to take a solid risk. If you never take risks, you'll never get anywhere. Doing so will infuse your life with excitement.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
You no longer need to be so reflective. If your sixth sense points to a new beginning, do not hesitate. Come fall, you will be entering a very lucky period. It is time to clear your life of what no longer works for you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

How you deal with a personal matter could change from how you initially thought you would handle it. In fact, you seem to be able to manifest a lot more flexibility than usual. A friend supports you in your ventures; this person is lucky for you.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
You probably feel better than you have in a long time. Being centered might be instrumental to your well-being and that of an important relationship. You have lofty dreams that you might find difficult to manifest.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
You might want to play it cool during the next 24 hours. Your vision of what could happen seems to be changing, as the situation keeps taking twists and turns. Reach out to someone at a distance about whom you care a lot.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
As always, others count on your loyalty and friendship. It might be difficult to change your plans at this point, but you will want to accept an invitation that takes you away from the here and now, even if just for a short while.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
You have a unique capacity to bring others together. You often speak of a special friend who is at a distance and of whom you see very little. Caring naturally emanates from one of you to the other. Express yourself clearly and with care.

Should old letters remain private?

Ask Amy

AMY DICKINSON

Dear Amy: My parents divorced when I was 10. My paternal grandma was the only constant during that tough time.

We wrote each other letters and, especially through my early teens, she was the one person I thought I could pour my heart out to when everything around me was constantly changing.

My father remarried when I was 12, and the relationship between my stepmother and me has had its ups and downs over the years so that may be tainting my feelings on this, which is why I am asking your advice.

My grandmother passed away in 2014 at age 92 (I am 44).

My stepmother informed me this past Christmas that she and my dad had read all the letters that my grandmother had kept that I had written her as a child/teenager. She asked me if I wanted to have them.

I didn't know what to say at the time, except that those letters were written during some very hard times in my life and that I

didn't want to read them right now. I have no recollection of what I said in them, but I was embarrassed that my private thoughts and feelings as a child had been laid wide open for two people I had not spent very much time with in my life.

It has been a few months since this revelation, and now I am very angry and upset.

Why would they read letters I had written to my grandmother without handing them over to me first? Am I wrong to feel that my privacy has been invaded, in the extreme?

Did those letters belong to my grandmother? Should they be available for anyone to read after her death? Or should those letters have been given to me, unread, since I am still alive and I wrote them?

No More Letters

No More Letters: My understanding is that, legally, the letters you sent to your grandmother were her property — to show, sell or donate to a library. However, you, as the writer, would own the copyright;

they could not be quoted from or published without your consent. So, after your grandmother's death, you still own your thoughts and expressions, but her estate owns the letters themselves.

I am currently going through my mother's house (these chores can take years). If I found a bundle of letters written to her by my daughter, I would definitely read them. However, your question does bring up the sensitivities involved. And so, yes — as a parent, I would read them, but should I? Probably not.

Your father and stepmother don't seem to have shared any comment or judgment about these letters. Either they are being sensitive to you now (in offering to return them to you without so much as a peep), or perhaps your letters aren't as revealing as you remember them to be.

Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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