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Style

Style Invitational Week 942: A singular contest — there's only one entry; plus the improved-on Edward Lear limericks



(Bob Staake/For The Washington Post)

By **Pat Myers**

October 21, 2011

A contest to come up with a new modeling clay to be endorsed by Homer Simpson. Winner: Doh. (Ralph Kass)

A contest to name a medical practice that specializes in treating only elephantiasis and elephant man's disease. Winner: Pachydermatology. (David Garratt)






It's often a gamble to put forth a new contest that a reader suggests. The way it often goes: Someone comes up with a funny joke or observation, then fires it off to the Empress, saying, "This would make a great contest!" Sometimes it does. Sometimes not so much, once you've used up that particular joke. This week, in a contest we did once before, in 1999: **Give us an idea for a contest for which there's likely only one good entry** (which you also supply, duh), as in the inking entries above from Week 317.

Winner gets [the Inker](#), the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a deck of playing cards promoting Abell Pest Control; the faces of the numbered cards feature photos of various menacing-looking insectoid critters.

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" (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 31; results published Nov. 20 (Nov. 18 online). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include "Week 942"



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in your e-mail subject line or it may be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at washingtonpost.com/styleininvitation. The revised title for next week is by Jeff Contompasis; this week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Gary Crockett.

Report from Week 938

in which we showed you [115 limericks by Edward Lear](#), the 19th-century grandfather of the genre, and asked you to use the first two lines of any of Lear's poems and supply your own Lines 3, 4 and 5 to create what we now would consider a funny, clever limerick (Lear's own were, to put it charitably, not). This contest drew far more entries than for any of our previous limerick contests — more than 1,500. And perhaps 20 percent of them were very good; the Empress spent large and equal amounts of time hemming and hawing (maybe a little more hawing) to choose the ones below. (The link on the first line of each limerick goes to the page containing Lear's original.

The winner of the Inker:

[There was an Old Man of Jamaica,](#)

Who suddenly married a Quaker;

For that's how it ends

If you start off just Friends:

She may press you one evening to take her. (*Hugh Thirlway, The Hague*)

2. Winner of the [Doody Head game](#)

with the hat and the “doodies” you toss onto it:

[There was an Old Person of Burton](#)

Whose answers were rather uncertain,

For his words were all jumbled:

“Know I don't, dear,” he mumbled,

“Which butt makes your fat look less skirt in.” (*Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.*)

3. [There was a Young Girl of Majorca](#)

Whose aunt was a very fast walker;

But the girl would insist

They instead dance the twist,

For the girl was a very fast torquer.

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

4. [There was an old man at a casement](#)

Who held up his hands in amazement:

“My not wearing pants

Explains all their rants,

And, perhaps, what that one woman's gaze meant.” (*Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif., a First Offender*)

Lear-misses: Honorable mentions

[There was an Old Man who said, “How](#)

Shall I flee from that horrible cow?”

(Though I don't mean to tattle,

He didn't mean cattle —

His wife was one ornery Frau.)

(*Brendan Beary*)

[There was a Young Lady whose eyes](#)

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[There was a young lady whose eyes](#)

Were unique as to colour and size,
And whose cheek held her nose —
So she soon got to pose
For Picasso, to no one's surprise.
(Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

[There was an Old Man in a tree,](#)

Who was horribly bored by a bee;
He carelessly slipped as
He spelled "eucalyptus,"
So he lost the bee due to ennui.
(Steve Langer, Chevy Chase, Md.)

[There was an Old Person of Ischia,](#)

Whose conduct grew friskier and friskier.
When looking for sex,
He would call up his ex
(And her mother, which frankly, was riskier).
(Stephen Gold, Glasgow, Scotland)

[There was a young lady of Troy,](#)

Whom several large flies did annoy,
This Helen, in fright,
Closed the windows up tight:
Trojan horseflies might well be a ploy.
(Courtney Knauth, Washington)

[There was an old man on some rocks,](#)

Who shut his wife up in a box.
He would make a big deal
Out of each morning's meal:
He'd eat bagels and she would get locks.
(Harvey Smith, McLean, Va.)

[There was an Old Person of Tartary](#)

Who divided his jugular artery,
Then died on the spot.
"I don't think, thus I'm not . . ."
Was the man's parting shot of Descartesery. (Chris Doyle)

[There was an old person of Tring](#)

Who embellished his nose with a ring.
That's not odd to me;
Since the young folk I see
Have embellished their, well, everything.
(Mae Scanlan, Washington)

[There was an Old Derry down Derry](#)

Who loved to see little folks merry.
He declared, "It's such fun
When you jog with a gun!"
So he's planning to vote for Rick Perry.
(Gary Crockett, formerly of Texas)

[There was an Old Man of Peru,](#)

Who never knew what he should do
Till his wife said, "D'you see,
Dear, that this bit of me
Fits together with that bit of you?" (Hugh Thirlway)

[There was an Old Person of Bangor,](#)

Whose face was distorted with anger.

Sixty years to the day

Since it *had* stuck that way;

His mom warned him, but he'll never thank her. (*Eric Fritz, Silver Spring, Md., a First Offender*)

[There was a Young Lady of Clare](#)

Who was sadly pursued by a bear.

The end of this story

(Which could have been gory):

Their cubs have blue eyes and blond hair. (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

[There was an Old Lady whose folly](#)

Induced her to sit on a holly.

She stuck there and died,

And her family cried,

But as Christmas decor she looks jolly. (*Dixon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.*)

[There was an Old Person of Philae,](#)

Whose conduct was scroobious and wily;

He hates people's guts,

So it drives them all nuts

When his e-mails are signed with a :). (*David Goldberg, Pinckney, Mich.*)

[There was an Old Person of Philae,](#)

Whose conduct was scroobious and wily;

[He QBed the Skins](#)

To a measly five wins.

And now Minnesotans aren't smiley. (*Jonathan Hardis, Gaithersburg*)

[There was an old person from Gretna](#)

Who rushed down the crater of Etna,

Crying, "Fie, you volcano!

Won't catch me today! No,

You want this old bird, but ain't get'na." (*Nan Reiner, Alexandria, Va.*)

[There was a Young Lady of Ryde,](#)

Whose shoe-strings were seldom untied.

She'd once prayed in fun,

"Thy will be undone."

"We're a frayed knot," the voice said. "Denied." (*Judy Blanchard, Novi, Mich.*)

[There was a Young Person of Smyrna,](#)

Whose Grandmother threatened to burn her

A Mozart CD,

Saying, "Now maybe we

Can hear something besides Tina Turner." (*Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.*)

[There was an Old Man of Peru,](#)

Who watched his wife making a stew;

She said, "Don't be a jerk —

Have a bowl before work,

And alpaca nice lunch for you too." (*Brendan Beary*)

[There was a Young Lady whose nose](#)

Was so long that it reached to her toes.

When Pinocchio walked by,

He said, "Wow! What's the lie
I must tell if I want one of those?" (*Robert Schechter*)

There was a Young Lady of Clare,
Who was sadly pursued by a bear;
(That's the kind on The Street).
Her account's now petite.
She's rethinking the old "laissez-faire." (*Allen Clark, Arlington, Va., a First Offender*)

There was an Old Man of Quebec,
A beetle ran over his neck.
"Fahrvergnügen!" he cried out
As the bystanders pried out
His body from under the wreck. (*Stephen Dudzik, Olney, Md.*)

There was an old man of Berlin
Whose form was uncommonly thin;
He looked, I won't lie,
Like an umlauted i,
With neither a grin nor a chin. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

There was an Old Man of Marseilles,
Whose daughters wore bottle-green veils,
Which they'd bought yesterday
Near the beach in Marseilles
Where they dined upon buttery sneilles. (*Steve Langer*)

There was an old person of Sparta,
Who had 21 sons and one darter.
EPA soon objected:
"That fish is protected!"
Now he's jailed and a Tea Party martyr. (*Courtney Knauth*)

There was an Old Person of Cromer,
Who stood on one leg to read Homer;
He's the lone man I've seen
Ever christened Eileen,
But in his case, it's not a misnomer. (*Brendan Beary*)

There was an Old Man with a nose,
Who said, "If you choose to suppose
That its length might suggest
I am equally blessed
Somewhere else, that's a yes. Check my toes." (*Chris Doyle*)

There was an Old Person of Chili
Whose conduct was painful and silly.
He would jabber about,
But no words would come out.
(He was channeling Milli Vanilli). (*Christopher Lamora, Guatemala City*)

There was an Old Man of Columbia,
Who was thirsty, and called out for some beer;
The brew caused this crime
Of an idiot rhyme,
With each line getting dumbia and dumbia. (*Ira Allen, Bethesda*)

There was an Old Man on a hill,
Who seldom, if ever, stood still.
Whence came the devotion

To perpetual motion?

His twice-daily Dexedrine pill. (*Sheila Blume, Sayville, N.Y.*)

[There was a Young Lady of Parma,](#)

Whose conduct grew calmer and calmer;

When he said things had changed,

She replied, "You're deranged:

There's no second term, Mr. Obama." (*LeRoy LaRoche, Potomac, a First Offender*)

[There was a Young Lady of Norway,](#)

Who casually sat on a doorway.

To each passing bounder,

She'd quip, "Quarter-pounder?

If so, come on in — have it *your* way!" (*David Smith, Santa Cruz, Calif.*)

[There was a Young Lady of Ryde](#)

Whose shoe-strings were seldom untied.

But her corset, it's said,

Was untied instead

By young men who had come to ride Ryde. (*Bob Kloczek, Fairfax Station, a First Offender*)

[There was an old man from the Isles](#)

Whose face was pervaded with smiles.

He spent his time mergin'

With every young virgin

In sundry positions and styles. (*Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.*)

[There was an Old Man of Coblenz,](#)

The length of whose legs was immense.

But even immenser

Was [oops, The Post's censor

Informs me this might give offense].

(*Chris Doyle*)

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 (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: Mash: The Retread, or Doubled Oeuvre



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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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