



Entertainment

Style Invitational Week 1128: Drone for a loop – devilish uses for nanocraft

Plus winning rhymes of advice on airplanes, chewing
and more



Bob Staake's idea for the Navy's new CICADA micro-drone: Give Grandma a hand with candle-blowing. (Bob Staake for The Washington Post)



By **Pat Myers** Editor and judge of The Style Invitational June 11, 2015
[Email the author](#)

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the results of Week 1124, short poems of advice
in five categories)

**A swarm of CICADAs: the perfect birthday gift for people who
could use a little discreet help in blowing out the candles.**

**Geography classes in Cleveland would have international CICADA
contests: Who can drop a micro-drone into Kim Jong Un's bed?**



If you're impressed (a.k.a. creeped out) by the prospect of having your
porn-book order [delivered directly to
your front porch from the sky](#), now
there's something that can impress
you even more: A few weeks ago, the



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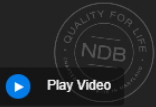


Ink Small: This week's micro-prizes for micro-drone ideas (but not micro-ideas). Sorry, the Empress's coffee mug is there only for scale. (Pat Myers/The Washington Post)

Pentagon's Naval Research Lab showed off its latest cool gadget: [a micro-drone that can fit in your hand](#) yet can be dropped — by the thousands — from 57,000 feet up, undetectable by radar, to deliver “payloads to precise waypoints.”

Described by Phys.org as basically “[a paper airplane with a circuit board,](#)” and named pseudo-acronymically for

a swarming insect that seems to appear from nowhere, the CICADA currently is outfitted with just a few sensors. But of course it won't be long until the little bugsters — already costing only a few hundred dollars — can carry cameras, deliver micro-packages . . . what else?



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This is what Longtime Loser Jeff Brechlin was wondering. The eternally childlike Jeff, whose obit promises to name him as the author of the Style Invitational-winning and wildly viral [Hokey Pokey Sonnet](#), suggested this contest: **Give us some novel uses for a CICADA micro-drone, assuming that anyone can get one, and that it can have a micro-camera, micro-grips, etc.** Entertaining scenarios may be described in up to 75 words.





Winner gets the [Inkin' Memorial](#), the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives, in the vein of this week's contest, our [Micro Twofer](#), consisting of a keychain with a little plastic piece of sushi (brought back from Japan by Cheryl Davis) and an inch-tall white ceramic coffee mug, advertised as Squirrel Coffee Cup (from Bruce Alter).

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for [Loser Mug](#) or the ardently desired “Whole Fools” [Grossery Bag](#). Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet designed by Bob Staake: either “[The Wit Hit the Fan](#)” or “[Hardly Har-Har.](#)” First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” ([FirStink](#) for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or, if you were born in the 19th century, fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday night, June 22; results published July 12 (online July 9). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest. Include “Week 1128” 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/InvRules. The headline for this week's results is by Brendan Beary; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Jon Gearhart. Join the lively 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.

^ **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.

[And the winners of the Style Invitational contest posted four weeks ago . . .](#)



- 2 Oprah Winfrey picks prison memoir for her book club 
- 3 **Review**
The best science fiction and fantasy to read this month 
- 4 **Analysis**
Do the dismal box-office returns of 'Solo' signal a problem for Star Wars? 
- 5 **Perspective**
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


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RHYMES & MISDEMEANORS: THE WINNING SCOLDS FROM WEEK 1124

In Week 1124, the Empress sought short poems of advice in five matters. Most of them weren't nearly as good as this week's inking entries, although the Empress did get a laugh at one that rhymed "mouth" and "uncouth" (but not at "leviathan"/"moron," which was simply moranic).

4th place:

Don't recline your airplane seat:

I snore, I pass gas, I rattle;
My row-mates have fled — it's me only;
They said they could not stand my prattle,
So please do lean back — I'm so lonely! (Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.)

3rd place:

Don't chew with your mouth open:

Thy beauty causeth every head to turn.
Thy comeliness could launch a thousand ships.
But suitors will be few till thou dost learn
To masticate with firmly closed lips. (Nan Reiner, Alexandria, Va.)

2nd place and the zombie garden gnome:

Use your parking brake:

If you drive all the girls at school wild
With your daredevil ways and they've smiled
At your fast-moving pace,
Use your "parking" brake, ace,
Or your "accident" might be a child. (Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

Don't recline your airplane seat:

Though the flight attendants are quite rude,
Their nastiness is outdone by their food;
We're packed in like sardines but with less room
In cabin air that's piped in from a tomb,
Our bags have been mishandled by their handler,
The inflight feature features Adam Sandler.
This flight has lots of things you can put down;
Your seatback isn't one of them, though, clown.
(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

The versed advice yet: honorable mentions

CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING

To light one match is better than
The darkness just to curse.
But if that match should light the rest,
You're gonna need a nurse.
(Cory Cusack, Chevy Chase, Md.)

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How do I love thee? I've counted the ways:
One less now you've set my apartment ablaze.
You're a smokin' hot mama, but not all that bright,
And I kick myself now, having asked for a light,
For you kindled the match with the cover untucked,
And my roommates and I are now royally homeless.
(Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

Don't play with fire. But if you should,
Make sure the matchbook's closed but good.
So listen up (I sound like Mom!):
Confine your flames to match.com.
(Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

Some people think that unions have no sense of obligation;
They'll shut the mines, close down the docks, and woe betide the nation.
Yet the Manhole Workers Union boss, quite loudly (to my liking),
Continually reminds his men, "Close cover before striking."
(Richard Lempert, Arlington)

DON'T RECLINE YOUR AIRPLANE SEAT

Do not recline your airplane seat. It's risky;
You're apt to spill the guy-behind-you's whiskey.
If you're appalled by road rage on the highway,
Just wait till you're a victim in the skyway. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

You have a pair of tonsils but don't know it
Until they get inflamed, and then they'll show it.
All an appendix ever does is fail,
And use an ashtray, you could go to jail!
Regard your seat-back button the same way,
A useless vestige of a bygone day.
Its only purpose is to cause a fracas,
Till planes evolve with pallets that can stack us. (Frank Osen)

Don't recline or I will ask the stewardess if maybe
I could switch my seat with 14-D—the colic baby. (Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.)

If you are seated in the seat
That's currently before me,
I

that only makes it worse for all
behind whose space is also small,
and then, of course, they each repeat
your action so they, too, appall
the one behind with space too small;
so don't recline your airplane seat.
(Marcus Bales, Cleveland, a First Offender)

DON'T CHEW WITH YOUR MOUTH OPEN

Last night, good buddy, as we dined,
This thought, unspoken, crossed my mind:
"What makes you think that I've a
Wish to see the way saliva
In your mouth combines with chicken
When it's chewed? It makes me sicken."
But some things simply can't be said,
And so I wrote this poem instead. (Robert Schechter)

Beside the sight of mangled munch the last half-hour I've spent:
When I suggested "seafood lunch," that wasn't what I meant. (Nan Reiner)

Close your mouth while you chew — it's the least one can do,
For it's true there is no fascination
Finding out you've been smacked by some ort that's been hacked
Through an act of inept mastication. (Barry Koch)

There are one or two activities that others shouldn't see;
May I mention, quite discreetly, one that's just occurred to me?
You'll know what I am hinting at (unless you're really crass),
But some things simply can't be said,
And so I wrote this poem instead. (Robert Schechter)

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There are one or two activities that others shouldn't see;
May I mention, quite discreetly, one that's just occurred to me?
You'll know what I am hinting at (unless you're really crass),
If told its starting syllable is M-A-S, that's "mas-",
And "-ation" is the ending; so that now I'm sure that you
Have got it. . .
("Mastication"! — keep your mouth closed when you chew!)
(Hugh Thirlway, The Hague)

Your teeth like tombstones marking graves;
Your tongue in motion, making waves:
And though this poem may not rhyme
CLOSE YOUR &%#\$* MOUTH.
(Todd DeLap, Fairfax, Va.)

USE THE PARKING BRAKE

If you should use your van for "something" other than just driving,
Remember now this little tip to guarantee surviving:
Make sure the parking brake is pulled, 'cause ultimately your goal
Is safety first — in other words, to rock and not to roll.
(Frank Mann, Washington)

Pull up your brake
When parked on a hill.
If you don't stop your car
Trust me, something else will.
(Ellen Ryan, Rockville, Md.)

On My Failure to Use the Parking Brake in the Swiss Alps
When I stopped and we yodeled
My poor Audi got totaled.
(Mike Gips)

(To the tune of "I Left My Heart in San Francisco")
I left my car in San Francisco,
High on a hill, for all to see.
I failed to set the parking brake – a knucklehead mistake –
And as it rolled, could only stare... in despair.
My Porsche rots there in San Francisco
Beneath the brown and rusty sea,
And when my paycheck comes, where does this go?
To my insurance company. (Nan Reiner)

STOP TO SMELL THE FLOWERS

A rose by any name would smell as fine;
That (more or less) was Shakespeare's famous line.
But all the rose's scent is in the flower;
The roots have no such aromatic power.
So take my counsel, friend (it wouldn't hurt):
Get sniffing while you're still above the dirt.
It's pointless smelling roses, it's been found,
When you, like them, are planted in the ground.
(Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Better stop and smell those posies,
Ere they tag one of your toesies. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

The busy self-indulgent fella
Will not learn what bliss is
If he never takes the time to smell a
Flower named narcissus. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

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Violets are blue, roses are red;
You can smell neither when you are dead.
Daisies are white, daylilies orange;
Ummm...
Whatever — time's a-wastin'. (Brendan Beary)

At last I've cleared my inbox; that must have taken hours!
What's this — another message? It tells me: "Smell the flowers.
Don't wait; it's too important." More deadlines I must meet?
I know not what it's asking. Could I just hit "Delete"?
I scowl and tap my smartphone, for somewhere there must be
An app that I can download to do this chore for me. (Nan Reiner)

Still running — deadline Monday: Our TV series spinoff contest.
See bit.ly/invite1127.

0 Comments



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 @patmyersTWP

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