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Style Invitational Week 1473: Sign Right Here

Give us a message for a road sign or barbecue marquee. Plus obit poems for ex-folks of 2021.

By [Pat Myers](#) January 27, 2022 at 10:07 a.m. EST



Click [here](#) to skip down to the winning obit poems



Created on the highway sign generator at [atom.smasher.org](#), an inking entry from Week 672 by Art Grinath ([atom.smasher.org](#))

REST STOP CLOSED
CROSS LEGS
NEXT 23 MILES (*Sue Lin Chong*)

ENTERING NYC
INCREASE
SPEAKING SPEED (*Phil Frankenfeld*)

This week we return to a contest we did 15 years ago, when we were tickled by this goshdarn newfangled website where you could type in a message for a highway sign and ding! you get a photo! Loser Every Year Since Year 1 (that would be 29 of them) Stephen Dudzik alerted the Empress that the very same site, [atom.smasher.org](#), is still around, looking much as it did in 2006. **This week: Write a funny message for the overhead highway sign** (like the one above by Art Grinath from Week 672) **and/or the barbecue joint sign pictured below.** Maximum length for either sign: 4 lines, 19 characters per line including spaces and punctuation, but shorter might be better. You can make your own pictures with the sign generators, but you don't have to for the contest; just send us the text. (IN ALL CAPS, PLEASE.)



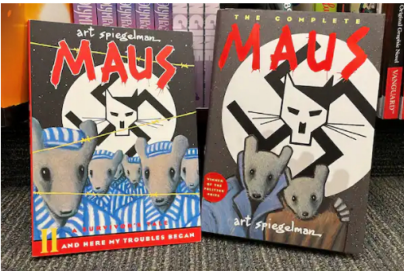
Submit up to 25 entries at [wapo.st/enter-invite-](#)

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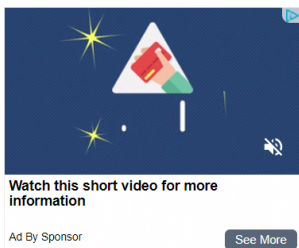




Your other option. (atom.smasher.org generator/atom.smasher.org)

1473 (no capitals in the Web address). Deadline is Monday, Feb. 7; results appear Feb. 27 in print, Feb. 24 online.

Winner gets the [Clowning Achievement](#), our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives, so usefully in midwinter, [Derriere Repair Anti-Chafe Balm](#), a soothing cream that, we suppose, is a step up from other skin pamperers we've given out, [Anti Monkey Butt](#) powder and [Boudreaux's Butt Paste](#). Donated by baby-smooth Dave Prevar.



Other runners-up win their choice of our [“For Best Results, Pour Into Top End” Loser Mug](#) or our [“Whole Fools” Grocery Bag](#). Honorable mentions get one of our [lusted-after Loser magnets](#), [“A Small Jester of Appreciation”](#) or [“Close, but Ceci N'est Pas un Cigare.”](#) First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air “freshener” ([FirStink](#) for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at [wapo.st/inviteFAQ](#). The headline “Grave Ribbery” was sent in by both Kevin Dopart and Jeff Contompasis; Gary Crockett wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. 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](#); and follow [@StyleInvite](#) on Twitter.

The Style Conversational: The Empress’s weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. See the 2006 sign messages in this week’s Convo, published late Thursday, Jan. 27, at [wapo.st/conv1473](#).

[And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago ...](#)

Grave ribbery: Our obit poems for 2021

In [Week 1469](#) we asked you to commemorate those who died in 2021. Along with the celebrities, the Loserbards also recounted the unusual demises of some otherwise unknown folks. Several Losers couldn’t resist celebrating the famed mathematician Jacques Tits, but not in an inkworthy way. (I’ll share a few in The Style Conversational.)

4th place:

Spencer Silver (1941-2021), co-inventor of *Post-it Notes*

In times gone by, we’d have a thought—

Some name or date or debt—

But, lacking a convenient spot

To jot it, we’d forget.

Now, thanks to Silver, we can scrawl

That date or debt or name—

And, having stuck it on a wall,

Forget it just the same. (*Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.*)

1 Art Spiegelman sees the new ban of his book ‘Maus’ as a ‘red alert’

2 Analysis

How Miranda went from ‘Sex and the City’s’ most relatable character to ‘And Just Like That’s’ most frustrating



3 Analysis

Why did Spotify choose Joe Rogan over Neil Young? Hint: It’s not a music company.



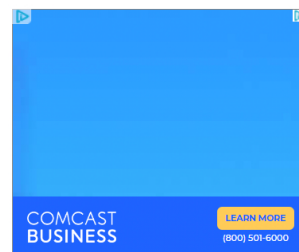
4

Isolation, gaslighting and ‘tremendous hypocrisy’: ‘Secrets of Playboy’ grapples with Hugh Hefner’s legacy



5 Review

In ‘We Need to Talk About Cosby,’ W. Kamau Bell proves we need to go beyond separating the art from the artist



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3rd place:

Prince Philip (1921-2021)

The consort, loyal to the bone,
Leans back on his celestial throne,
And thinks, "Though death is far from dandy,
Thank the Lord I'm done with Andy." (*Stephen Gold, London*)

2nd place

and the [bleating rubber chicken](#):



G. Gordon Liddy, *Watergate "plumber"* (1930-2021) Said the angel, "There's nothing been taken,
But a noise just now caused me to waken!"
Said Saint Peter, "Don't fear,
Nothing happening here,
It's just Liddy – another botched break-in." (*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:

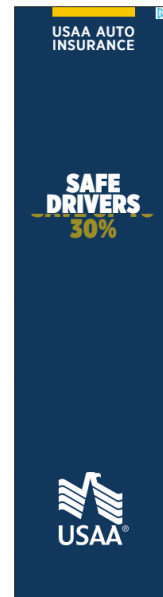
Betty White (1922-2021), Ed Asner (1929-2021), Gavin MacLeod (1931-2021), Cloris Leachman (1926-2021)

One played Sue Ann, then Rose, with ease,
The next, Lou Grant, then Lou's reprise,
Murray turned Stubing — anchors aweigh!
While Phyllis became Frau Blücher — "neigh!"
We wish for these four friends of Mary
A peaceful road to Tipperary,
And along that road, with song and dance,
We wish them seltzer down their pants. (*Jeff Rackow, Bethesda, Md.*)

Lite biers: Honorable mentions

An unnamed 39-year-old man in Spain

Were dinosaurs ferocious as they roamed the Earth? You bet!
But now it's common knowledge: they no longer pose a threat.
Or do they? Even though you may not see them coming at you,
A guy in Spain got swallowed by a stegosaurus statue!
It seems he dropped his cellphone down the monster's throat (bad luck!);
He jumped in to retrieve it, and he died 'cause he got stuck.
No passersby were present (when you need them most, they vanish!),
So no one heard a stegosaurus yelling "#%\$%#" in Spanish. (*Beverly Sharp, Montgomery,*

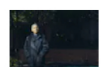


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Ala.)

Rush Limbaugh (1951-2021), radio host

No friend to women or people of color,
His listeners outraged and aggrieved.
Ash Wednesday he left us to go meet his Maker;
Boy howdy! Was She ever peeved! (Diane Lucitt, Ellicott City, Md.)

Michael K. Williams (1966-2021), actor in “The Wire”

Soft whistling greets the dawning day.
The duster swirls; he’s on his way.
Up in heaven, harps stop strummin’.
Saint Pete’s nervous: “Omar comin’.” (Diane Lucitt)

Felix Silla (1937-2021), actor (To the “Addams Family” theme)

His costume was a killa, more hair than a gorilla,
As played by Felix Silla, the Addams Cousin Itt.
When visitors would meet ‘im, although they never seed ‘im
They’d scream as he would greet ‘em, the Addams Cousin Itt.
[snap snap] Boy’s [snap snap] voice [snap snap] annoys.
His costume was a rare piece, a TV made-to-scare piece;
May he now rest in hairpiece: the Addams Cousin Itt. (Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)

Bob Dole (1923-2021), senator, defeated presidential candidate, Viagra spokesman

After Dole lost his battle with Bill,
Many thought he was over the hill.
Then, a comeback surprising:
His star began rising,
All thanks to a little blue pill. (Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore)

Ron Popeil (1935-2021), infomercial pitchman:

“Grim Reapers should try it! It slices! It dices!
Mortalit-O-Matic! Buy four!”
His scythe, it would seem, for its purpose suffices—
“But wait!” Sorry, Ron, there’s no more. (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Betty White, Ed Asner, Gavin McLeod

Sue Ann and Lou and Murray died,
And with the loss of them,
The newsroom has gone quiet now
At WJM.
Our loss is heaven’s gain, though, for
I’m sure they’ve gone up there –
Unlike that hat of Mary’s that’s
Still hanging in midair. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

Maki Kaji (1951-2021), “father of sudoku”

I. For years, Kaji-san,
We strove to fill your boxes.
Now you fill your own. (Bill Dorner, Indianapolis)

II. I’m positive he met his fate
At either 1 or 3 or 8.
(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1932-2021)

South Africa will be beneficiary of
affirmative action

5 Public education is facing a crisis of
epic proportions



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He opposed segregation, as everyone knows,
A barrier-breaker at heart;
Yet his heavenly home's nowhere near his old foes;
Let's just say that they're quite far apart. (*Duncan Stevens*)

Hal Holbrook (1925-2021), actor

The Samuel Clemens one-man show:
His signature conceit.
Now off to heaven watch him go;
That's where the Twains shall meet. (*Duncan Stevens*)

Eric Carle (1929-2021), children's book writer and artist

I. The very hungry caterpillar
Binged on ice cream, cake and pie
And yet emerged a butterfly –
A second life after feeling yucky!
(His creator wasn't quite so lucky.) (*Frank Mann, Washington*)

II. In Eric's final chapter
There's a plot that makes some squirm.
The spoiler: it's no butterfly,
Just a very, hungry worm. (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

Rush Limbaugh

Young Rush dodged the draft, claiming pain to his aft—
A cyst on his rear was his pass;
Spent the rest of his days in a venomous haze,
A race-baiting, bile-filled mass.
So we now bid adieu to this noxious yahoo
With the charm of a boil on the ass. (*Duncan Stevens*)

Bernard Madoff (1938-2021), swindler

[Shandeh](#) to his people, betrayer of their trust,
His clients left with [bupkis](#) but loathing and disgust,
And after all the [tsuris](#), and livelihoods destroyed,
Now Bernie's in another place — he's [ganef](#) to the void. (*Mark Raffman*)

Lou Ottens (1926-2021), inventor

Lou Ottens invented the compact cassette,
A most innovative utensil
That gave you your music in minimal space
And new use for your Number 2 pencil. (*Elliott Shevin, Efrat, West Bank*)

Samuel E. Wright (1946–2021), actor and singer

The voice of Sebastian, that crab so renowned,
Went from “Under the Sea” to under the ground. (*Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.*)

Alan B. Scott (1932-2021), pioneer of botox

Admirers did their best to mourn him, though it
Was hard for them to find a way to show it. (*Melissa Balmain*)

Walter Mondale (1928-2021), vice president

This great had his day -- his spirit looms large,
A heartbeat away, but never in charge.
And who'd contradict this veepish obit:
That bucket he kicked? 'Twas filled with warm spit. (*Mark Raffman*)

Michael Collins (1929-2021), astronaut

Michael Collins (1930-2021), astronaut

He flew to the moon on Apollo 11.

"Remain in the ship," ordered Mission Command.

In April, his soul reached the surface of heaven,

Where God Herself granted "permission to land." (*Bob Kruger, Rockville*)

Carla Wallenda (1936-2021), high-wire walker

The last living child of Karl Wallenda

has closed out her act without further addenda.

The Flying Wallendas have no more agenda

for her, though she once left the firmness of terra

and glided as high as the highest Sierra.

The passing of Carla willenda great era. (*Alex Steelsmith, Kailua, Hawaii*)

Donald Rumsfeld (1932-2021), secretary of defense

You should know your unknowns, Rumsfeld said;

It's the unknown unknowns you should dread.

But the biggest unknown

Could be in the known zone

If we knew if he knows he is dead. (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

Prince Philip

A lifetime of walking two paces behind,

Having promised, for better or worse,

That you'd follow wherever her footsteps would wind —

You finally got somewhere first. (*Beryl Benderly, Washington*)

Hank Aaron (1934-2021), longtime record holder for most career home runs

Haiku for Henry Aaron

With unique verse form:

Seven, five and five. (*Ken Kaufman, Derwood, Md.*)

Igor Vovkovinskiy, who stood 7-8 1/3

When Igor Vovkovinskiy died,

His undertaker measured, sighed,

Then ordered up a custom coffin

To send this near eight-footer off in. (*Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.*)

Spencer Silver, inventor of the adhesive on Post-it Notes

"So the thing is, whenever you glue it,

It doesn't take much to undo it."

How'd he drum up support

For a paste that fell short?

Paradoxically, just sticking to it. (*Coleman Glenn, Huntingdon Valley, Pa.*)

Willard Scott(1934-2021) and **Doug Hill** (1950-2021), meteorologists

Willard Scott and Doug Hill are now working together

On air up in heaven reporting the weather:

"Today we'll have sun and a cool, gentle breeze,

While in hell, yet again, it's 500 degrees." (*Chris Doyle*)

Charlie Watts (1941–2021), Rolling Stones drummer

A much-loved musician's departed,

And all of the world mourns the loss.

So bang the drum slowly and sadly,

For Charlie Watts now gathers moss. (*Brendan Beary*)

Michael Apted (1941-2021), documentary director

Michael Apted earned renown

For “7 Up” — But now? Six down. (*Seth Tucker, Washington*)

John Madden (1936-2021), NFL coach

John Madden loved football’s physicality.

Ironically, he achieved immortality

By putting his name

On a video game —

So much for corporeality! (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)

Salman Mizra, who used glue instead of a condom

I. With Salman and lady in need of protection,

Applying epoxy was sure to succeed.

This makeshift idea, on further reflection,

Accomplished its purpose; he never will breed. (*Matt Monitto, Bristol, Conn.*)

II. With no condom, but still seeking kicks,

This guy got himself into affix

By applying epoxy.

What a horrible proxy!

He got off, but just over the Styx. (*Frank Osen*)

Larry Flynt 1942-2021, Hustler magazine publisher

If you prefer to spend the night

(As is your First Amendment right)

Engaged in the pursuit of smut,

Entranced by pics of boob and butt,

Then celebrate the life of one

Who urged that it was harmless fun.

How melancholy to reflect

That just his tombstone’s now erect. (*Stephen Gold*)

Two unnamed drivers on Interstate 80 near Berkeley, Calif.

Driver One and Driver Two were on the interstate;

Their vehicles collided; they hopped out for a “debate.”

The fuss about whose fault it was (I think you will agree)

Became irrelevant when they got hit by Driver Three.

The needless loss of life (you must concede) was quite a bummer;

We sadly say goodbye to Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dumber.

It might be on their headstones, 'cause I’m sure they’d like to say:

“That other guy’s an idiot! I had the right-of-way!” (*Beverley Sharp*)

Still running — deadline Monday night, Jan. 31: our fictoid contest for fake trivia about money and the financial system. See wapo.st/invite1472.

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0 Comments

Gift Article



By 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. [Twitter](#)

Do Republicans love Donald Trump as they once did?

Analysis · Jan. 29, 2022



The moral calculations of a billionaire

Today at 6:00 a.m. EST



The world's oldest living land animal? At age 190, it's Jonathan the tortoise.

Today at 6:00 a.m. EST



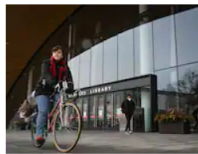
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BleacherBreaker

