

# Style Invitational Week 1518: The Style Expirational

After 29¾ years of mayhem and mania, our ink runs dry. This week: Some greatest hits.

By [Pat Myers](#) and [Gene Weingarten](#)

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(Bob Staake /For The Washington Post)



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**M**any, many years ago — in a previous century — a top editor of The Washington Post walked into the office of the Czar of The Style Invitational. The office was, as always, a cluttered mess, which offended this elegant man who wore three-piece suits and carried a pocket watch on a fob. That day, the editor was on a mission. He disapproved of this new addition to his Sunday paper, and dourly warned his coarse and rumped underling: “I will not permit you to make your contest a repository of bathroom humor.” The Czar met his boss’s eyes. “Sir, you may rest assured that I will not make The Style Invitational a suppository of bathroom humor.”

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The editor shuddered almost imperceptibly, and departed, with maybe just a hint of a smidge of a smile. He secretly appreciated moxie, and in time he became one of The Style Invitational's biggest supporters.

And that's because Mr. Fob appreciated, despite the jokes about excreta and the risqué innuendo and the silly prizes, that the Invite had also become ... sophisticated. Right from the beginning in 1993, through 11 years of the Czar and then 19 years of his usurper, the Empress, the Invitational gleefully mixed vulgarity with urbanity, involving political commentary and jokes that assumed the reader's familiarity with literature, history, science and the news of the day. Rude, sometimes, but smart-rude.

As the Earth traveled around and around the sun — 29.75 times — management changed, sensibilities changed, sensitivities changed. The Invitational had thrived on the forbearance of a series of slightly nervous but ultimately trusting editors. That all ends today, quite suddenly, in this final week. We are done.

By “we,” of course, we mean not just ourselves but the Loser Community, the more than 5,000 very funny people who've gotten ink over these past 1,517 weeks, in more than 55,000 published entries, willing to work hours on end for a cheesy form of glory, and for silly trinkets.

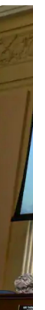
And so we devote this page to some of The Style Invitational's most memorable entries (in no particular order), which we've chosen from hundreds nominated in the past few days by Invite Losers and fans.

It's our last laugh.

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### **This week in The Style Conversational: You be the judge!**

In the Empress's final supplementary column, readers can choose their favorite Ask Backwards entries from Week 1514, whose results would have run this week. And the E tells how to enjoy classic Invite ink, stay with the Loser Community, and maybe even enjoy new contests. See [wapo.st/conv1518](http://wapo.st/conv1518), beginning late afternoon Thursday, Dec. 8.



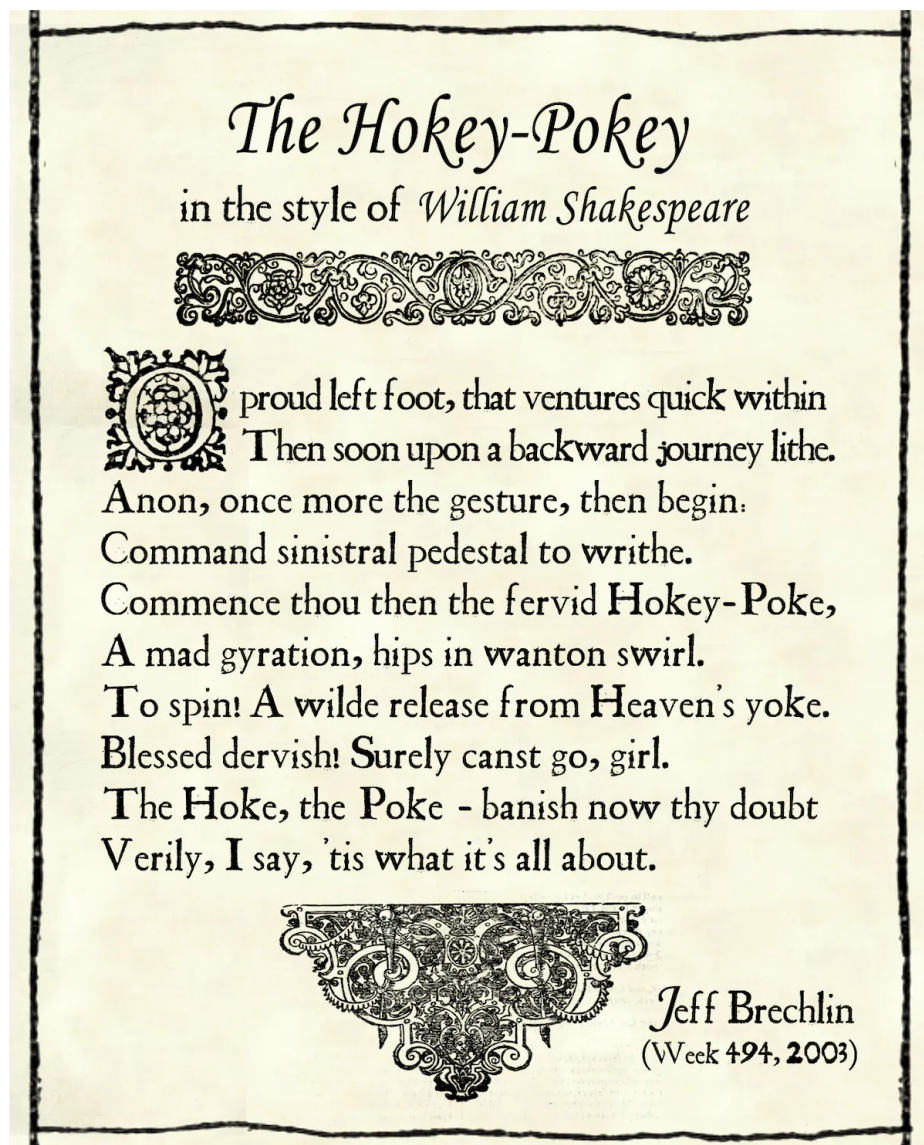
## The kook's tour: Readers' favorite Style Invitational entries

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Many readers cited "The Hokey-Pokey Sonnet" as their favorite entry ever; the contest was to write some set of instructions in the style of a famous writer.

**Underachiever's Midlife List of Goals:** Win the admiration of my dog. (*Jean Lightner Norum, Week 413, 2001*)

**Neologisms containing POLE:** Gestapolemics: Calling your political opponents Nazis. (*Chris Doyle, Week 889, 2010*)

**Change a movie title by one letter:** Four Weldings and a Funeral: A man attaches a set of rocket engines to his Chevy and momentarily achieves his dream of driving a flying car. (*Gary Crockett, Week 871, 2010*)

**"Joint legislation" by current members of Congress:** The Traficant-DeLay-Akaka Roadside Port-A-Pot Act (*Carole and Stephanie*

*Dix, Week 5, 1993)*

**Change a word by one letter:** Sarcasm: The gulf between the author of dry wit and the recipient who doesn't get it. (*Tom Witte, Week 278, 1998*)

**Two words differing by one letter:** The difference between genial and genital: It's okay to greet your neighbors with a genial wave. (*Brendan Beary, Week 670, 2006*)

**Good/bad/ugly jokes:** *Good:* You get to spend a summer's day at a beautiful beach. *Bad:* It's awfully crowded and noisy. *Ugly:* It is June 6, 1944. (*Beverley Sharp, Week 1058, 2014*)

**Something you don't want to hear after getting married:** "Now that's a coincidence. My birth mother's name was Clytemnestra de Nunkyhaven, too!" (*Jennifer Hart, Week 229, 1997*)

**"Da"- limericks:**

The dachshund, each hair and each wart of it,  
Serves for the wags to make sport of it.  
With a sharp, pointy snout,  
He is squat but stretched out.  
And that is the long and the short of it.  
(*Mae Scanlan, Week 777, 2008*)

**"Fa-" limericks:**

A physicist/humorist, Nell,  
Had a comedy show where she'd tell  
Of her spreadsheeting gaffes;  
It drew thousands of laughs  
Because farce equals math times Excel.  
(*Matt Monitto, Week 1033, 2013*)

**Then and now:** *Then:* Mayberry and Opie. *Now:* Mayberry and opioids. (*Bruce Carlson, Week 1242, 2017*)

**Only-in-Washington pickup lines:** "Babe, why are you wasting your time with an assistant to a deputy secretary, when you could be with *me*, a deputy assistant undersecretary?" (*Dan Steinberg, Week 519, 2003*)



**“Breed” two racehorse names and name the foal:**

Cloud Man x Extra Fifty = Meatierologist (*Jonathan Paul, Week 914, 2011*)

Perfect Saint x Caribbean = Francis of a C Sea (*Danielle Nowlin, Week 1170, 2016*)

Life on the Road x Villainous = RV Weinstein (*Steve Langer, Week 1400, 2020*)



Above, *Sophie Crafts's* winning video parody from Week 1440, 2021. If you can't see it, [click here](#).

**Neologisms totaling 14 Scrabble points:** Buphoon: An ill wind from Washington that blows nobody any good. (*Stephen Dudzik, Week 1402, 2020*)

**“Balliol rhymes,” mini-verses about people:**

My name is Lady Liberty.

I welcome you, if you should be

With bulging purse, and you're from Norway.

Otherwise, back out the doorway.

(*Nan Reiner, Week 1372, during the Trump administration*)

**Song parodies about the news:**

To "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas":

Have yourself a gerrymandered district,

Draw some artful lines;

Make it look like 12 exploding porcupines.

Have yourself a gerrymandered district,  
Slice and dice the votes:  
Safe seat, even if they catch you screwing goats.  
Once we'd choose folks who stood for us;  
"Go do good for us," we said —  
Threw out those who were abusing us.  
Now they're choosing us instead.  
Draw it up so you can't be defeated,  
Be you saint or heel,  
'Cause John Roberts says that this is no big deal,  
So have yourself a seat no one can ever steal.  
(Duncan Stevens, *Week 1339*, 2019)

**What to do with the 14-mile supercollider tunnel:** Just rename it the Martha Washington Monument. (*Michael Sweet, Week 35*, 1993)

**Good/bad ideas:** *Good idea:* Give her a bowl of irises. *Bad idea:* Give her Ebola viruses. (*Frank Osen, Week 1091*, 2014)

**Signs of spring in Washington:** In a lighthearted, festive mood, Metro riders read the Economist instead of Congressional Quarterly. (*David Genser, Week 209*, 1997)

**Bad product endorsers:**

John Wayne Bobbitt for Microsoft. (*Chuck Smith, Week 52*, 1994)

Lorena Bobbitt for Johnson Wax. (*Larry Yungk, Week 783*, 2008)





"Et Tu, Brood X," by Kevin Dopart and Deborah Hensley: The winner of our Week 1435 contest for art using real cicadas, 2021.

**Bad things to say in a job interview:** *Applicant:* "Say, those girls in the photos on your desk, are they seeing anyone, well not the fat one, but those other two?" (*Russell Beland, Week 698, 2007*)

**New sports:** Marrython: The only endurance sport where you try not to reach the finish line. (*Melissa Balmain, Week 1444, 2021*)

**"Dear xxx" notes:** Dear President Lincoln: Please note change to "87" for conciseness. Sincerely, Copy Editor (*Beverley Sharp, Week 900, 2011*)

**Rearrange the words of a movie title:** "The Kwai on the River Bridge": Barbara Walters narrates a moving story of two lovers saying goodbye above the Seine. (*Roy Ashley, Week 1008, 2013*)

**Explain part of the Constitution**

(to "Maria" from "West Side Story")

Militia! They say I can have a militia.

With muskets for my men,

Straight from the 18th cen . . . tury.

Militia! But I don't see any indicia

That I can't keep in stock

A Luger or a Glock, or three.

Militia! Some grenades strapped around my forehead,

And an AR-15 for my sorehead.

Militia . . . and maybe a warhead . . .

(*Nan Reiner, Week 1293, 2018*)

**Cynical takes on platitudes:**

You can do anything if you want it bad enough. That is why we see so many people who can fly. (*Elden Carnahan, Week 531, 2003*)

Never say die. I've tried, and it doesn't actually make people die. (*Tom McCudden, Week 531*)

**"Song parodies:**

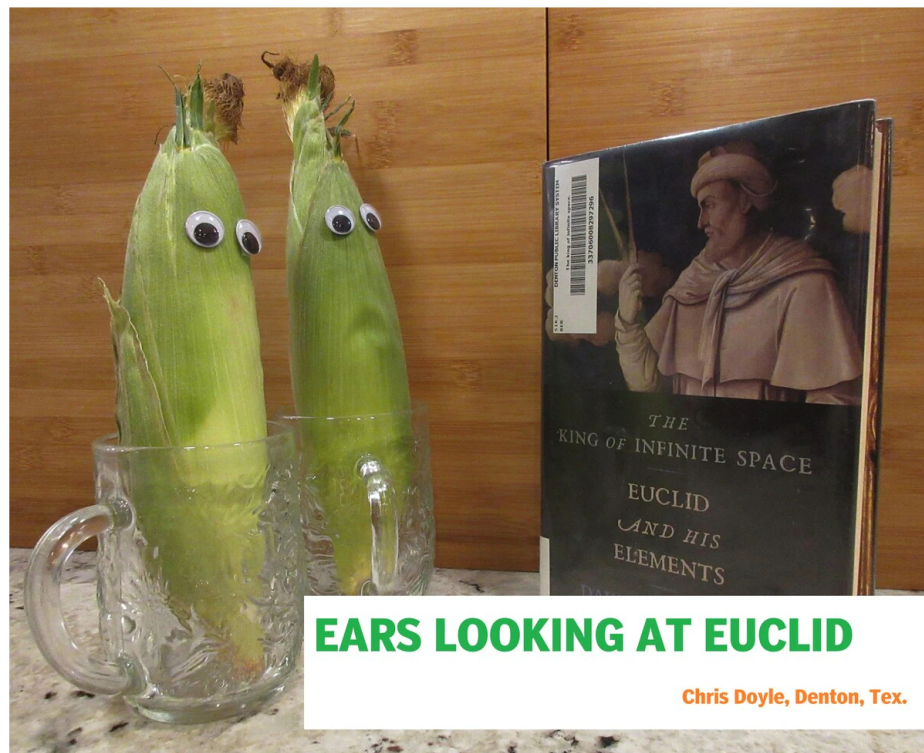
(To "Be Our Guest")



He's obsessed! He's obsessed!  
"Build a wall," he says. "No jest!  
There's disorder at the border  
And I know what's for the best!"

"They do rapes! They do crimes!  
They drink beer with sliced-up limes!  
And their culture's undesired!  
Don't believe me? Then you're fired!"

"It's a sport to deport  
The burrito-eating sort;  
If they're born here, send them back with all the rest!"  
Do people think he's vile?  
(Dems cast a knowing smile)  
'Cause he's obsessed! He's obsessed! He's obsessed!  
(*Mark Raffman, Week 1139, 2015*)



## EARS LOOKING AT EUCLID

Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.

From our contest to put googly eyes on something and take a photo. (Chris Doyle, Week 1281, 2018)

**Bogus trivia about winter:** Phi Kappa Rho fraternity at the University of Northwestern Maine canceled this year's "yellow-snow" name-writing contest because college students no longer know how to



use cursive. (*Mark Raffman, Week 1360, 2019*)

### **Poems based on the anagram of someone's name**

*EDGAR A. POE to EGO PARADE*

Once upon a dark convention, full of fear and apprehension,  
After many strange and hateful speakers from the GOP—  
Came the climax, pessimistic, altogether chauvinistic,  
With an empty, egotistic pledge to fix things by decree:  
“Only one knows how to do it, and of course that one is ME!”  
Quoth the ravin’ Donald T. (*Jesse Frankovich, Week 1186, 2016*)

**“Secrets”:** During boring meetings, I pretend everyone present is  
naked. And good-looking. And female. And a kangaroo. (*Art Grinath,*  
*Week 633, 2005*)

**Bogus derivations of words:** America: Concatenation of the Spanish  
*amé* and *rica*; rough translation: “I love the wealthy.” (*Jeff*  
*Contompasis, Week 1194, 2016*)

**And Last: New doctrines:** Carnahan’s Rule of Three: The longer one  
works to bring ironic Talmudic allusion and elegant Chaucerian wit to  
one’s entry, the greater the likelihood the winner will feature “drool,”  
“snot” or “poopy.” (*Elden Carnahan. Week 69, 1994*)

## **So: What to do with those 29 clown heads?**

Last week we showed a bowlful of 29 disembodied little clown heads  
that will no longer be made into Clowning Achievement trophies and  
asked what to do with them. Many Losers ignored the specific  
requirement that the suggestions not be proctological. These three win a  
head, though not the trophy.

**Make a diorama** of the heads attending the funeral of The Style  
Invitational and call it the Clowning Bereavement. (*Jesse Frankovich,*  
*Lansing, Mich.*)

**Truck nuts for tricycles.** (*Don Norum, Charlottesville, Va.*)

**Petition Congress for one square foot of space** on the National  
Mall for a Style Invitational Memorial. It’d be like the Vietnam  
Memorial, except instead of a powerful minimalist tribute to the lives of

thousands of lost soldiers, it'd be a bunch of creepy little clown heads on sticks. (*Laurie Brink, Mineola, N.Y.*)

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By [Pat Myers](#)

Pat Myers is the "Empress" of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's famed contest for clever, edgy, wacky humor and wordplay. In the role since 2003 – 900-plus contests ago – she writes the column and is its only judge. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. [🐦 Twitter](#)



By [Gene Weingarten](#)

Gene Weingarten, a writer and editor for The Post from 1990 to 2021, has won two Pulitzer Prizes. They were not for putting poop jokes in The Style Invitational. . [🐦 Twitter](#)