




The Invitational Week 1— Dead Letters

The post-Post humor contest barely skips a beat as the Czar & Empress begin with the annual obit poems.

Gene Weingarten 
3 hr ago

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Hello. Gonna try to get this right today. For those of you who got confused or waylaid by Tuesday's post, the blame goes entirely on the shoulders of Dan Stone, who has the most ridiculously macho name in human history, and whom I will hereby re-name Biff Wellington. Biff is my guru at Substack, and though he was technically not responsible for any of the confusion, he has agreed to publicly take full blame because it is apparently important that Substack writers do not look like incompetent idiots.

Submit a question for future chats [here](#)

Today we make history, in the sense of somehow instantly reviving the Invitational, the most brilliant humor contest in the history of the written word, destroyed by The Washington Post, for reasons nobody intelligent has been able to articulate. It's back. It's here. It is newly unfettered by corporate prudishness. And it is run by its two giants of newspaper vulgarity, Pat Myers, the Empress, and myself, The Czar. We are already fighting over the quality of entries; things will go splendidly. Pat and I are not romantically involved, but if this were a sitcom the sexual tension would be unbearable.

Before we begin, a brief intro. One of the most interesting infatuations of the media in the last month has been the sudden, startling birth of Artificial Intelligence, specifically websites like ChatGPT, which is sort of astonishing in the things it can do in seconds. If you ask it to write a sonnet to your significant other, it will, and with at least a minor degree of skill. It has the Webload's degree of information, which it can process almost instantaneously. If you ask it a question about yourself, it will generally deliver reasonable answers.

I entered the site and asked this: "What scandal involved Washington Post writer Gene Weingarten?"

This was the response: "In 2008, Gene Weingarten was suspended without pay for three months after he was found to have plagiarized passages from an article written by another journalist. Weingarten apologized for his actions and vowed to never do it again."

It was fascinating! Humiliating! And totally wrong! I have never been accused of plagiarism, never was suspended. Never apologized.

So clearly, there are still some bugs in the AI system. I doubt if it is possible to sue a machine for libel, but what if it is?

—

Okay, so there will be some questions today, but not many. That starts next week. In the meantime, here is a photo of a 1950s-era clock I just bought and restored (I do that.). The question is, how does it work? The dial is glass. It is electric. There are no gears directly connected to the hands. HOW DOES IT WORK?





Okay, the Invitational.

It's the start of a new year, but more important, the end of an old one. In December, a few months short of its 30th anniversary, The Washington Post pulled the plug on its weekly humor/wordplay contest The Style Invitational, a pioneering exercise in seditious comedy in a mainstream publication, fueled by thousands of great humorists — the collective noun is the Loser Community — who shared their vast talent in return for trinkets.

Sounds like a great deal, sign me up!

✓ **Subscribed**

But thanks to Substack — and to those of you who've subscribed to The Gene Pool — boing! It's back right here, nimbly named **The Invitational** to avoid any pissy lawsuits. It's run, judged and written jointly by Gene, its founder and Czar for its first 11 years, and by Pat Myers, who reigned as Empress for the next 19. So bring out your ~~dead~~ vast talent for a contest the Invite had been doing every January: **Write a witty poem of no longer than eight lines (plus an optional title) about someone (or something?) who died in 2022.** Here's [a list that might help you](#), but you can use any ex-being.

Here's a winning eulogy from 1998 by 27-time Loser Charlie Steinhice:

Jacques Cousteau (1910-1997):

The knit cap lies empty on the deck,
The once-proud ship feels like a wreck.
At his request, his last remains
Will now become the ocean's gains.
With tear of eye and roll of drum,
We feed the sharks. Farewell, old chum.

And you should also check out [last year's Style Invitational winners](#). (Even better, see the results of previous Invitational obit poem contests: Go to the [Master Contest List](#) at NRARS.org, search on "Dead Letters," then click on the links to the results.)

[CLICK HERE FOR THIS WEEK'S ENTRY FORM.](#)

The good news: We'll run the results in just two weeks instead of four; they'll be right here in the chat on Thursday, Jan. 19. And you still have eight days to enter: **Deadline is midnight Friday, Jan. 13.** The bad news: There will be just one trinket, for the winner. But it's a glorious one:



Two genuine 45-rpm singles that would have been in the record store bin marked “Misc.”: One is a 1962 recording of the character actor Walter Brennan singing “White Christmas” – or more precisely, he talks about snow in his Grandpa Amos voice from the sitcom “The Real McCoys” while the Johnny Mann Singers croon; the other is “Gallant Men,” a patriotic recitation recorded by Senate GOP leader Everett Dirksen that reached No. 29 on the Billboard charts in 1967. Just the discs, no jackets. Donated by Loser Steve Smith from his own collection of whatever.

Meanwhile, The Post was so quick to shut down the Invite that the results of its Week 1515 contest — to which more than 200 readers submitted some 1,200 entries — never ran. Till now. They were judged jointly by the Czar and the Empress, mostly in consensus and occasionally with a little compromise, but no longer with censors, except their own “taste.”

The joke’s on EU: European ‘sister cities’

The challenge in Week 1515 was to create humorous “joint ventures” between real cities and towns in Europe and Eurasia.

Third runner-up: The Vienna-Riel-Pickel Crisis Management Center (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.) (*combines towns in Austria, Netherlands, Germany*)

Second runner-up: The Dublin-Tundra Book of Jokes About What *She* Said (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.) (*Ireland, Russia*)

First runner-up: The Motherwell-Cannes-Loos-Hermanli-Dingle Gender Reassignment Clinic (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park, Md.) (*U.K., France, France, Bulgaria, U.K.*)



And the Winner of the lilliputian Belly Button Duster: The Telme-Vassa-Matta International Dial-a-Granny Hotline (Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.) (*Turkey, Finland, Russia*)

Share

Bayer-Leigh-Göttin: Honorable Mentions

The Manisa-Bismal chapter of Misanthropes Anonymous (Ash Sharman, Fairfax, Va.) (*Turkey, Turkey*)

The **None-Of-Yur-Biz-Ness-Bank**, with branches only in Zurich and the Cayman Islands (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.) *(Italy, Turkey, Russia, Albania, Germany, Hungary)*

The **Sassari-Ikisu** 10-step program for drunken mistakes (Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.) *(Italy, Turkey)*

The **Vigo-Puke-Turin** Pub Crawl Club (Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.; Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.) *(Spain, Albania, Italy)*

The **Supa-Calla-Frajga-Listec-Espoo-Ala-Doshnicë** website of atrocious lyrics (Jesse Frankovich) *(Estonia, Italy, Croatia, Bulgaria, Finland, Italy, Albania)*

The **Unkel-Spitz-Kokkola-Alovera-His-Noo-Cardigan** Institute for the Prevention of Uncomfortable Family Gatherings (Frank Mann, Washington) *(Germany, Austria, Finland, Spain, France, Estonia, Wales)*

The **Hell-Nozno-Fiore-Like-Ah-Wim-Ens-Carn** Elizabethan Platitude Fair (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.) *(Norway, Slovenia, Italy, Bosnia, Germany, Austria, France, Ireland)*

The **Como-Vertou-Aarhus** Center promoting neighborly friendship (Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.) *(Italy, France, Denmark)*

The **Menden-Herten-Naples** Support Group for Nursing Mothers (Joy Rains, Bethesda, Md.) *(Germany, Germany, Italy)*

The **Dublin-Belli** Krispy-Kreme European Headquarters (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.) *(Ireland, Turkey)*

The **Zwetti-Balzan-Pecs** Very Intense Fitness Center (Dave Airozo, Silver Spring, Md.) *(Austria, Malta, Hungary)*

The **Ancin-Yur-Pance** Fidgety Kids' Club (Jon Gearhart, Des Moines, Iowa) *(Spain, Russia, France)*

The **Toome-Much-Pornuse** Institute for the Blind (Jesse Frankovich) *(U.K., Germany, Estonia)*

The **Salamis-Ham-Provo-Lone-On-Rye-Holden-Mayo** Made-to-Order Sandwich Shop (Mark Raffman) *(Greece, Netherlands, Serbia, Ukraine, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Ireland)*

The **Sad-Broken-Com-Pany** Twitter Employees Union (Mark Raffman) *(Ukraine, Sweden, Turkey, Russia)*

The **Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlantysiliogogoch-Morzeczyn** Speech Therapy Center (Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.) *(Wales, Poland)*

The **Friesen-Hell** consortium to have Russia join NATO (Barbara Turner) *(Germany, Norway)*

The **Hornie-Olde-Manne** seniors dating website (Al Lubran, Rockville, Md.) *(Slovenia, Denmark, France)*

The **Olde-Lazy-Bastardo** oral history project of grandmas' husbands (Leif Picoult) *(U.K., Poland, Italy)*

The **Tomsk-Dich-Ande-Herry** Club for Ordinary People (Leif Picoult) *(Russia, Ukraine, France, France)*

Jax-Pratt's Lean Cuisine (Laura Clairmont, Venice, Fla.) *(France, England)*

The **Karen-Going-To-Mana-Ger** Customer Relations Training Center (Mark Raffman) *(Finland, Austria, Norway, Serbia, Spain)*

The **Puke-Dover-Andover** Motion Sickness Clinic (John Winant, Annandale, Va.) *(Albania, England, England)*

The **Otta-Askim** Sadie Hawkins Dance (Karen Lambert, Chevy Chase, Md.). (Norway, Norway)

The **Budapest-Banne** airport Hare Krishna removal service (Dave Ferry, Purvis, Miss.) (Hungary, France)

The **Loket-Dem-Gams** Workplace Harassment Clinic (Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore, Md.; Chris Damm, Charles Town, W.Va.) (Czech Republic, Netherlands, Austria)

The **Grimm-Repa** Funeral Home (Chris Doyle) (Germany, Serbia)

The **Hannover-Fist-Monay-Luzen** Cryptocurrency Exchange (Chris Doyle) (Germany, Albania, France, Latvia)

The **Last-One-A-Rottenegg** International Ponzi Scheme (Drew Bennett, Rogers, Ark.) (Germany, Norway, Latvia, Austria)

The **Bogas-Hamburg** Impossible Meat packing plant (Jesse Frankovich) (France, Germany)


The **Az-Hole** Road Rage Clinic (Drew Bennett) (Estonia, Sweden)

The **Inchmore-Cockwood** Erectile Dysfunction Clinic (Laura Clairmont) (Ireland, England)


And Last: The Bourne-Toulouse Invitational Devotees Group (John Winant; Eric Nelkin, Silver Spring, Md.) (England, France)

The headline “The Joke’s on EU” is by Jesse Frankovich; Jesse also wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.


Banter and share humor with the Losers and the Empress in the [Style Invitational Devotees](#) group on Facebook; join and the Devs will anagram your name every which way.

 10 likes


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 67







67 Comments



Write a comment...

- **Jon Ketzner** Writes Jon's Substack 41 min ago


I would like to nominate Chesley " Sully" Sullenberger as Speaker.

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1 reply
- **The Style Invitational** Writes The Style Invitational 43 min ago

Sometimes, when the ex-person wasn't a public figure, I didn't seem the point to hurting the person's family by mentioning their name. Like this winner back in 2015 by Kathy Hardis Fraeman: Woman who accidentally killed herself while adjusting her bra holster":

She got herself a push-up bra

That had a single fatal flaw.

It didn't just support her charms;


This bra was meant for bearing arms.

But holster bras should not be trusted,

Since bras are always readjusted.

Sad to say, dear gun-nut crazies,

"Push up" now refers to daisies.

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65 more comments...



Hello.

This here is what you get, and why.

GENE WEINGARTEN DEC 16, 2022 74 76 0 0



The Gene Pool, Day One

Hi. Welcome to this thing, The Gene Pool, whatever it turns out to be. One thing it will be is honest, untethered to a corporate entity. So I am going...

GENE WEINGARTEN JAN 3 39 62 0 0



What do you want to talk about in our first chat?

Hello. I know you are all excited — orgasmic, actually — about the reincarnation of my chat and the Invitational, so I am urging you to calm dow...

GENE WEINGARTEN DEC 29, 2022 18 192 0 0



Figuring out how to do this chat...

Sorry for all the confusion over where to find the chat. Let's make this simple: Click here for the chat, where you originally started posting questions...

GENE WEINGARTEN JAN 3 6 0 0

