

# The Invitational Week 55: Tour de Fours — Be STUD-ly

Give us a new word or phrase containing 'DUST' in any order of letters. Plus we bring out our dead of 2023 in verse.

[PAT MYERS](#)

AND

[GENE WEINGARTEN](#)

JAN 18, 2024



These lookalikes died in 2023, but one of them did not bomb Cambodia. See Dave Zarrow's tribute to his dad below, among this week's obit poems.

## **This week's Invitational: The Great DUST-up**

It happened so fast that we didn't notice, but in last Week's Invitational, Loser Duncan Stevens gobbled up his 1,000th (and 1,001st) blot of Invite ink. Duncan, who's a lawyer for the FDIC, came to The Invitational in 2012 after people liked the song parodies he wrote for retirements and such at the office; he dipped his feet into the Invite pool for a few inks a year, then suddenly zoomed to the top reaches of the [Loser standings](#), spattering up the Invite with more than a hundred blots every year — a figure he's easily passed for seven years straight — and winning the whole contest twenty-six times, most notably with his song parodies, but also every other challenge we've tossed in front of the Loser Community. (Here's a link to [“The Style Invitational Runs on Dunc’n,”](#) a collection of his first 500.)

The “reward” we give to 1,000-ink Losers is an offer to both choose the next contest and to guest-judge the results. Some among [the previous seven](#) have agreed to do the Czar's and Empress's work for them; others have sanely declined. Duncan, you might be stunned to hear, also has a non-Invite life; there are the two kids who've grown from toddlerhood to adolescence with a Loser Daddy, and the distance running and bicycling, and the Ultimate tournaments, and [LearnedLeague](#), and the church choir, and even some stuff he does for the government. So Duncan opted sensibly for just Part 1: to select the contest. It's a perennial — our twentieth running, each with a different letter block.

**For Invitational Week 55: Come up with a new term or multi-word phrase that includes the letter block DUST — for DUncan STEvens, see — in any order but with no other letters between them** (spaces between words are okay). Like these examples. The first two are by Duncan himself, the third is by The Czar:

**GO DUTSH:** Show up to the date so drunk that you can't manage to pay the bill.

**EXODUST:** “Yo, Pharaoh, this place is filthy! We’re outta here.”

**ST. DUFUS:** He was martyred by kissing a wall socket.

**Click here for this week’s entry form**, or go to **bit.ly/inv-form-55**. As usual, you may submit up to 25 entries for this week’s contest, preferably all on the same form.

**Deadline is Saturday, Jan. 27, at 9 p.m. ET.** Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, Feb. 1. **Please see the entry form for formatting directions.**

The winner gets the ever-useful **Dial-an-Excuse wheel**, which offers five different “reasons” for each of dozens of wrongs. Turn to “Forgot Birthday,” say, and choose from Classic, “Later surprise planned”; Mundane, “Preoccupied at work”; Extenuating, “Mercury in retrograde”; Farfetched, “Gift stolen at gunpoint”; and Sob Story, “Childhood birthday trauma.” Donated by the inexcusable Steve Smith.





We'll use this when we forget to mail it out to you: This week's prize.

## Reader's Die-Jest: Celebrating the ex-folks of 2023

In [Week 53](#) we asked you to commemorate in verse someone who died in 2023. As our obit poems do every year, they salute both the big names on the In Memoriam reel and those who didn't get their moment of fame till their remarkable demise.

*Third runner-up: Confectioner **Bob Born** (1924–2023)*

Bob Born would talk about the tricks  
 He learned producing candy chicks.  
 But now in his eternal sleep,  
 He isn't gonna make a Peep.

*(Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.)*

*Second runner-up: Actress **Gina Lollobrigida** (1927-2023)*

Gina Lollobrigida

Made erections rigida. (*Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.*)

*First runner-up: **Henry Kissinger** (1923-2023) and **Ray Zarrow** (1920-2023)*

Henry Kissinger and my Dad both died in '23;

Each of them managed to hang around for at least a century.

In public Dad was sometimes asked if he was Henry the K,

(Or Howard Cosell, but that's a story for a different day,)

Ol' Dad was super friendly, he would always say hello ta ya,

And never in his hundred-plus would he have bombed Cambodia.

(*Dave Zarrow, Skokie, Ill.*)

*And the winner of the **pooping-dog toothpaste dispenser**:*

**Among the dozens of trailblazers within their race, gender, ethnic group, sexual orientation, or religion who died last year:**

Hooray for their firsts in [pro bowling](#), [car racing](#),

And [tap dancing](#), [sailing](#), and [MBA-chasing](#),

In [riding on horseback](#) and [superintending](#),

In [modeling](#), [judging](#), and [perp-apprehending](#),

In [violin playing](#) and [movie directing](#),

In [signs-of-volcanic-eruption detecting](#),

Plus many more fields! And let's hope till we're bursting

That folks of all kinds soon will need no more firsting.

(*Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.*)

## Urnable Mentions

*Daredevil **Robbie Knievel** (1962-2023)*

Off-road riding, damned near flying,

Up till lately, death-defying:

Robbie Knievel, Evel's son

Has passed away—his life is done.

Over chasms deep and wide

And rows of vehicles he'd ride.  
His closing exploit, final stop:  
A three-foot gap, a six-foot drop.  
(David Franks, Washington County, Ark.)

**Stockton Rush** (1962-2023), *CEO of the OceanGate adventure-touring company*

Taking tourists to view the Titanic,  
Stockton Rush, like his name, sounded manic,  
He said, "**Safety's a waste!**" and dispatched them posthaste,  
In small pieces, throughout the Atlantic.  
(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

**Al Jaffee** (1921-2023)

For fifty-five years, the cartoonist Al Jaffee  
Drew every Mad magazine back-cover Fold-In.  
Determined as always to have the last laugh, he  
Now lies in a grave he can LOL and be cold in.  
(Chris Doyle)

II. "This casket is too small, and soon the service will begin:  
I'm sorry, Mr. Jaffee, but I'll have to fold you in." (Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.)

III. The mourners file past with tear in eye,  
And one asks, "Al, friend, why'd you have to die?"  
Faintly, a voice—the merest of suggestions:  
"To get away from **all your stupid questions.**"  
(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

*Confectioner* **Bob Born** (1924–2023)

In tribute to Bob Born, let's bury a Peep,  
Then dig it up after a twenty-year sleep.  
The miracle chick will defy natural laws

And be just as edible as it never was.  
(*Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.*)

**Doyle Brunson** (1933-2023), *Hall of Fame poker player*  
A heart the size of Texas, that is what this legend had;  
A club is where he played the game that made him oh so glad.  
A spade was used for digging in his cemetery plot—  
A diamond is forever, but Doyle, he was not. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

**Emil C. Gotschlich** (1935-2023), *vaccine creator*  
Though shots of his vaccines may not delight us,  
They beat meningococcal meningitis. (*Melissa Balmain*)

**Miljenko “Mike” Grgich** (1923-2023), *winemaker*  
In sleepy Napa Valley, U.S.A.,  
Mike Grgich made a tasty Chardonnay.  
The vintage opened many people’s eyes,  
When —*sacre bleu!*— in France, it won first prize.  
And just like that, to Napa vintners raced,  
With local farms and businesses displaced.  
Today, on cars and tourists Napa chokes,  
With no place left to live for just plain folks.  
While over in Sonoma, locals share  
Relief that Grgich didn’t settle there.  
(*Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.*)

**Dick Butkus** (1942-2023), *Hall of Fame linebacker*  
Dick Butkus earned a lot of fame  
For playing hard and taking aim  
At anyone who ever came  
Upon him in a football game.  
And never felt a bit of shame  
For having such a funny name. (*Jesse Frankovich*)



**Theodore Kaczynski** (1942–2023), *the “Unabomber”*

Kaczynski's gone, perhaps to meet his Maker,  
Alone—as he preferred. The undertaker  
(Perhaps to not invoke his Luddite ire)  
Cremated Ted with good old-fashioned fire,  
Then packed his dust and fragments up to go,  
And sent him off to Texas, and below.  
And—not to add a spoiler to this ode—  
The box they sent him in did not explode. (*David Franks*)

**Harry Lorayne** (1926-2023), *magician and memory whiz*  
His amazing feats of memory would instruct and entertain;  
It sure would be ironic to forget Harry Lorayne.  
(*Elliott Shevin, Efrat, West Bank*)

*Businessman* **Charlie Munger** (1924-2023):

He spent his life investing  
And made a bunch of cash.  
He and Buffett crushed the game,  
Developed quite a stash.  
But those heady days are over,  
He has nothing left to learn.  
And for once in Charlie's lifetime  
He won't get a return.  
(*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.*)

**W. Jason Morgan**, *plate tectonics geophysicist* (1935–2023)

Dr. Morgan, an underground great,  
Closely studied each underground plate  
Until meeting his underground fate. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

**Fred la Marmotte** (died Feb. 2, 2023), *the Punxsutawney Phil of Quebec*

Ironic that on Groundhog Day,  
Fred la Marmotte drew his last breath

And the only shadow that he saw  
Was that of the Angel of Death. (*Elliott Shevin*)

**Alice K. Ladas** (1921–2023), *co-author of “The G Spot”*

Higgledy piggledy,  
Alice K. Ladas was  
Known for her book that was  
Centered around

Touting a spot that is  
Nonascertainable.  
(Now that she's gone, she's as  
Hard to be found.) (*Jesse Frankovich*)

**Douglas Lenat** (1950-2023), *artificial-intelligence pioneer*

He made AI more commonsense,  
Then Doug Lenat departed hence  
To death's bourn, where, it's said, he lingers  
With six or seven extra fingers. (*Frank Osen*)

**Art McNally** (1925-2023), *NFL Hall of Fame referee*

The doctor stood beside the bed:  
“There is no pulse. McNally's dead.”  
”Replay the tape,” the nurse replied,  
“To verify he really died.”  
She played the tape back in slo-mo  
To watch the patient's fading glow,  
Then faced the doc with upheld hands:  
“The ruling on the gurney stands.” (*Rob Cohen*)

**Yevgeny Prigozhin** (1961-2023), *mercenary leader who led a rebellion against Russia's president*

The death of Prigozhin was shocking and sad;  
His days were cut short when he turned against Vlad.

When tangling with tyrants (I firmly opine):  
Be careful! You're Putin your life on the line.  
(*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

**Mary Quant** (1930-2023), *mother of the miniskirt*

Mary Quant

Knew what we want:  
Skirts so far from maxi,  
They make it impossible to gracefully get out of a taxi. (*Melissa Balmain*)

**Pat Robertson** (1930-2023)

A leading televangelist and avid Bible thumper.  
Just scratch one of his followers — you're sure to find a Trumper.  
At bashing foes and gaining wealth he clearly was adept.  
So what was the reaction up in heaven? Jesus wept.  
(*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

**Joseph Smith of Sumner County, Kan.** (*died Jan. 21, 2023, age 30 or 32 depending on the source*)

Joe and dog Lucille went to hunt in his friend's truck,  
He put his dog in the back seat with his friend's gun like a schmuck.  
The dog stepped on the trigger and shot his owner dead.  
The man today would be alive if he'd just used his head.  
What's the moral to be learned from this? Well, let me be quite blunt:  
If your dog likes "riding shotgun," better let her sit up front.  
(*Jon Gearhart, Des Moines*)

**Unnamed Woman in New Zealand** (*died May 12, 2023*)

The patient was homebound and just out the door  
When dropped from a stretcher, face down on the floor.  
She fell from a ledge (which was quite a surprise!);  
Then hit by the stretcher, which caused her demise.  
So always take care when you're out on the town:  
An accident might turn *your* life upside down. (*Beverley Sharp*)

*Embryologist* **Ian Wilmut** (1944-2023)

Sir Ian Wilmut cloned Dolly the sheep

A feat that was truly a dilly.

He's gone now forever, he sleeps the Big Sleep

We will not see his like again ... will we? (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

**Jim Brown** (1936–2023), *running back*;

**Fred White** (1955–2023), *drummer*;

**Shecky Greene** (1926–2023), *comedian*;

**Vida Blue** (1949–2023), *pitcher*

Jim Brown, Fred White, and Shecky Greene, and also Vida Blue?

I do not think that we could bear to lose another hue! (*Jesse Frankovich*)

*The headline “Reader’s Die-Jest” is by Jesse Frankovich; Jon Gearhart wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.*

**Still running** — deadline 9 p.m. ET Saturday, Jan. 20: **Our Week 54 contest for edgy alphabet-book couplets. Click on the link below.**