

# The Invitational Week 79: The Farce of July

Give us new ways to celebrate Independence Day. Plus memorable 'Barney & Clyde' strips about dementia, penned by the Losers.

[GENE WEINGARTEN](#)

AND

[PAT MYERS](#)

JUL 04, 2024



This week's winning strip, by Mark Raffman. See the rest of the winners of Week 77 below.

**Hello. Today's new contest is based on ... today! Independence Day!** We at The Official Invitational Treehouse have been bothered by neighborhood fireworks in the last few days, but not as much as our dog and the other neighborhood dogs, who are even more bothered, making their displeasure known via shrieking, making our displeasure worse. It occurs to us that there has to be a better way to celebrate the Fourth than setting off explosive devices, amputating fingers, etc. Which leads to today's contest. **What are some better ways to appropriately celebrate the Fourth in the future?**

Such as:

— **The annual burning of the British Embassy.**

— **Eat a meal of at least 8,000 calories, including a bacon cheeseburger with fries and whipped cream, while chanting "USA USA!" Alternatively, consume a bald eagle. Same chant.**

— **Conserve your use of electricity by flying a kite, with a key attached, in a thunderstorm.**

— **Play the "1812" Overture, but instead of celebrating Napoleon's defeat, you pay homage to the new U.S. Emperor.**

**For Invitational Week 79: Give us a new, updated, colorful way to celebrate Independence Day,** as in the examples above. You can be very succinct, or you can talk about your idea more fully, as long as it's fun to read.

**Deadline is Saturday, July 13, at 9 p.m. ET.** Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, July 18. As usual, you may submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same form.

**[Click here for this week's entry form](#), or go to [tinyURL.com/inv-form-79](http://tinyURL.com/inv-form-79).**

**Formatting this week:** As usual, if you're submitting more than one entry, please write each entry as a single line (i.e., don't push Enter in the middle of the entry).

**This week's winner gets some happy socks.** Even if it's hard to smile these days, your ankles can.



**Runners-up get autographed fake money featuring the Czar or Empress,** in one of [eight nifty designs](#). Honorable mentions get bupkis, except for a personal email from the E, plus the [Fir Stink for First Ink](#) for First Offenders.

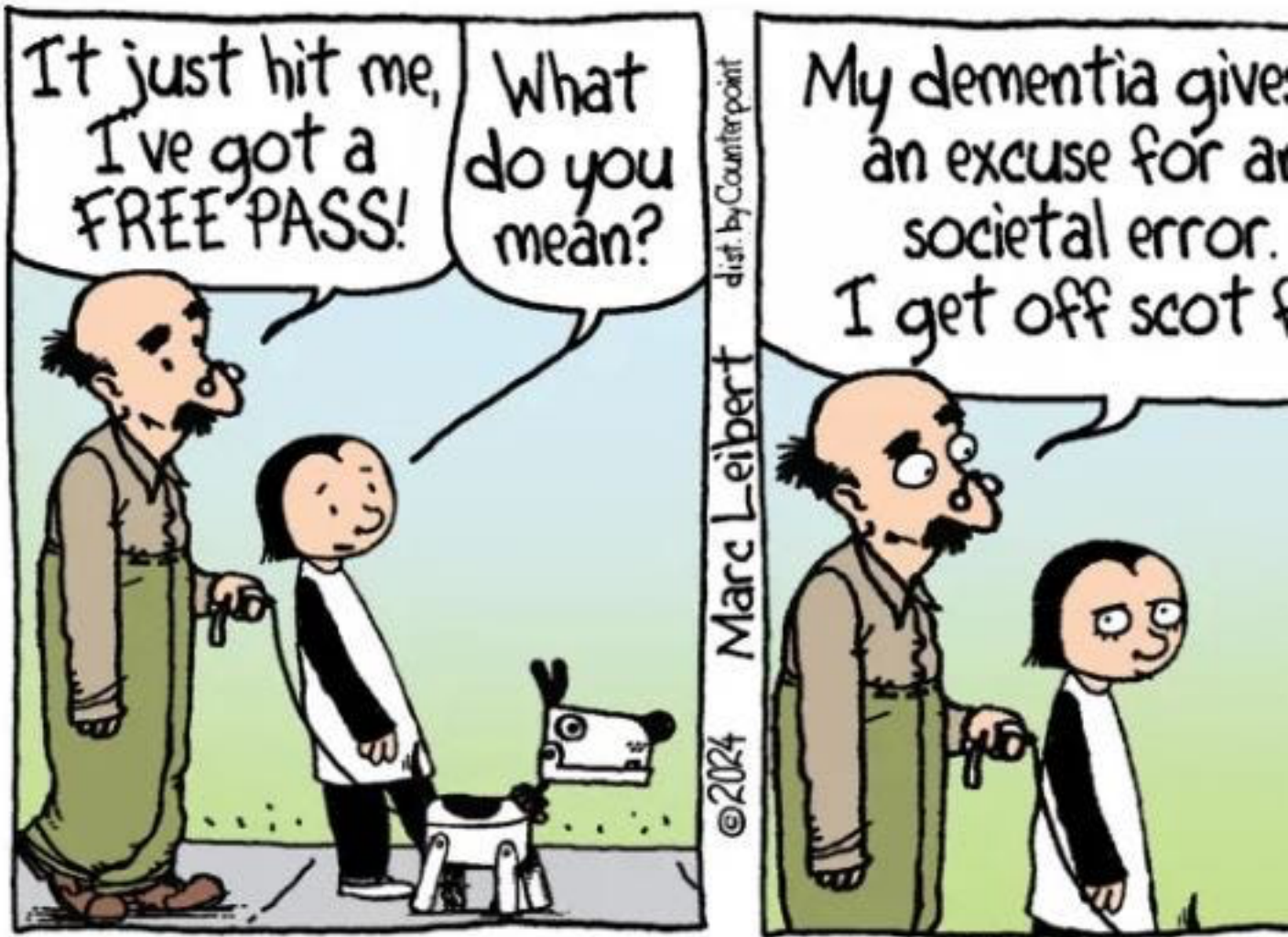
**Alz Stars: ‘Barney & Clyde’ scripts on memory loss**

**Here are the results of Results of Week 77**, in which we asked you to come up with scripts for Gene's "Barney & Clyde" comic strip, centered on a key storyline involving Cynthia Pillsbury and her grandpa Ebenezer, her best friend, who is entering the early stages of dementia. Cynthia is the only family member who knows of his problem, and has taken steps to disguise it from others. They are a team.

This was a controversial contest. Some longtime, highly skilled Losers did not participate because they were reluctant to make jokes about dementia. Understandable. But many of the submitted entries were remarkably good, finding humor in unexpected and unexplored areas, particularly beauty. This week's winner, by Mark Raffman of Reston, Va., appears at the top of this Gene Pool; it's amazingly timely and astute and scary as hell. Mark wins a signed print of his strip.

The illustrations are by the great David Clark, the regular "Barney & Clyde" artist and co-creator, who turned these strips out in record time. (*Such* record time — literally minutes — that we are wondering if we overpay him.)

***First runner-up, by Marc Leibert, Travis Air Force Base, Calif.:***



*Second runner-up, by Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.:*

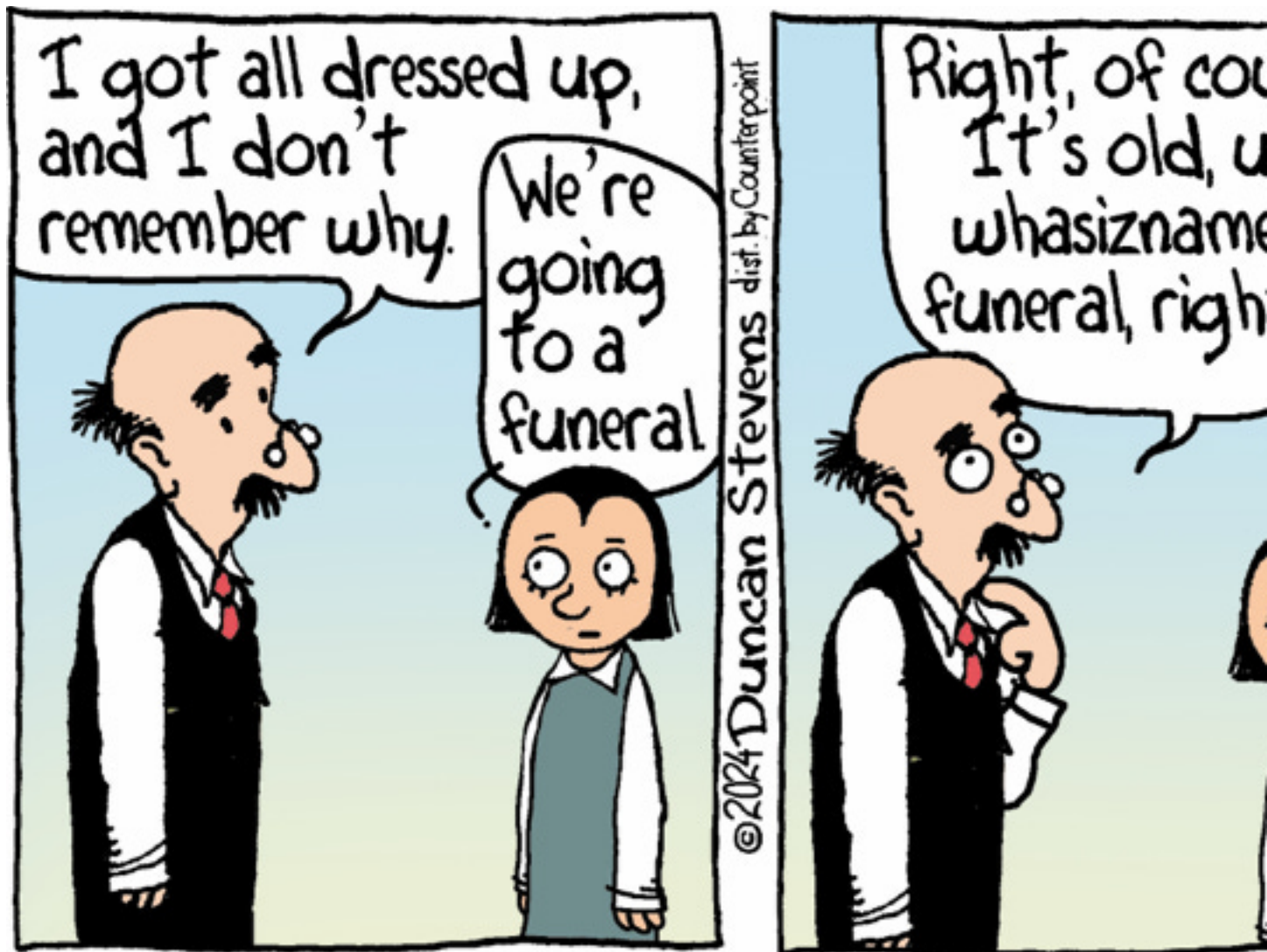




©2024 Leif Picoult dist. by Counterpoint



*Third runner-up, by Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.:*



## We Almost Forgot These: Honorable mentions

*Panel 1: Grandpa:* I found my comb in the dish cabinet.

*Panel 2: Cynthia:* Your socks were in the office desk drawer.

*Panel 3:* [They look at each other, suppressing a laugh.]

*Panel 4:* [Both smiling] *Grandpa:* Old age is hilarious — I just wish I remembered it more.

(*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.*)

---

**Panel 1:** *Cynthia:* The doctor told me to take away your car keys.

*Grandpa:* Tell him to get his own car.

**Panel 2:** *Cynthia:* No, Grandpa. It's just ... he says it's not safe for you to drive.

*[Grandpa stares into the middle distance.]*

**Panel 3:** *Grandpa:* Well, I guess you can drive me places now.

*Cynthia:* Grandpa, I'm 11 years old.

**Panel 4:** *Grandpa:* In my day, that was old enough to drink, work, and drive.

*Cynthia:* Let me guess—and you did all three in a snowstorm.

*(Leif Picoult)*

---

**Panel 1:** *Cynthia:* Grandpa, it's time for your medicine.

*Grandpa:* What's it for?

**Panel 2:** *Cynthia:* The doctor says it slows memory loss.

*Grandpa:* Some things I'd rather forget.

**Panel 3:** *Cynthia:* Like what?

*Grandpa:* Like the time a cop caught your grandma and me buck naked in the back of a Chevy.

**Panel 4:** *Cynthia:* Now I want to forget that, too.

*(Leif Picoult)*

**Panel 1:** *Cynthia:* Grandpa, I've heard that older people sometimes remember long-ago stuff but not recent stuff.

*Grandpa:* True. I can't remember what I had for dinner today.

**Panel 2:** *Cynthia:* That might be because it's not dinnertime yet.

*Grandpa:* Ah, that could explain it.

**Panel 3:** *Grandpa:* Well, I can't remember what I had for lunch.

*Cynthia:* Grandpa, we haven't had lunch yet either.

*Grandpa:* You got me again.

**Panel 4:** *Grandpa:* Anyway, to your point, I do clearly remember the Cuban Missile Crisis.

*(Leif Picoult)*



---

**Panel 1: Grandpa:** How much do you get from the tooth fairy when you lose a tooth? **Panel 2: Cynthia:** I've lost all my baby teeth by now, but it varied.

**Panel 3:** *[Silence.]*

**Panel 4: Grandpa:** So you don't know how much an upper denture plate is worth? **Cynthia:** Let's check the bathroom sink first.

*(Sam Mertens)*

---

**Panel 1: Grandpa:** You probably never had a chance to watch old broadcast TV.

**Panel 2: Grandpa:** Back then, the TV had tubes in it. The picture could get fuzzy and sometimes it was hard to follow.

**Panel 3: Cynthia:** But you watched anyway, and still enjoyed it.

**Panel 4: Grandpa:** Sometimes I feel like one of those channels.

**Cynthia:** I receive you just fine, Grandpa.

*(Sam Mertens)*

---

**Panel 1: Grandpa:** I don't drive anymore. I used to love it.

**Panel 2: Grandpa:** There's nothing like cruising in first, then shifting to neutral at the light, then straight to second for a quick start.

**Panel 3:** *[Grandpa smiles nostalgically. Cynthia eyes him skeptically.]*

**Panel 4: Cynthia:** You never actually drove a stick-shift, did you?

**Grandpa:** Hm. I guess not.

*(Sam Mertens)*

---

**Panel 1:** *[Ebenezer and Cynthia sit in a medical exam room. A doctor shows him a photo of an apple.] Doctor:* Now this part of the cognitive test is based on familiar image recognition. What's this?

**Ebenezer:** Banana.

**Panel 2:** *[Doctor and Cynthia look concerned; he shows a second image, a*

*horse]* Doctor: And this?

Ebenezer: Banana.

**Panel 3:** [*Doctor, extremely worried, shows a bicycle.*] Doctor: And, and this?

Ebenezer: Orange.

[*Cynthia's expression has changed to a sly smile.*]

**Panel 4:** Ebenezer: Why the worried look, doctor?

Doctor: Mr. Pillsbury, your responses are extremely ...

Ebenezer: But orange you glad I didn't say "banana" again?

(Kevin Dopart, Naxos, Greece)

---

**Panel 1:** Cynthia, eyeing Ebenezer's laptop: You buying a ticket?

Grandpa: Yep. Going to Paris. Wanna go while I can still remember it.

**Panel 2:** Cynthia: Can I join you?

Grandpa: Sure, kiddo.

**Panel 3:** Cynthia: There's just one thing.

Grandpa: Yeah?

**Panel 4:** Cynthia, looking at the screen: I don't think Greyhound goes to France.

(Leif Picoult)

**Panel 1:** Grandpa: Promise you won't give my boxes to the FBI.

**Panel 2:** Cynthia: What boxes?

Grandpa: The ones in the bathroom.

**Panel 3:** Cynthia: Why would the FBI want your old National Geographics?

Grandpa: I can't tell you. National security.

**Panel 4:** Cynthia: You have to stop watching Fox News.

(Mark Raffman)

**Panel 1:** Grandpa to Cynthia: How do people remember things?

**Panel 2:** Cynthia: Sometimes they write stuff down—you know, make a list.

**Panel 3:** [*Grandpa stares at Cynthia.*]

**Panel 4:** *Grandpa:* How do people remember where they put their list?  
(Neal Starkman, Seattle)

---

**Panel 1:** [*Cynthia and Grandpa are in the panel, with Satan halfway in from the side*]

*Satan:* Say, gramps, how about you sell your soul to me and I'll cure your dementia?**Panel 2:** *Cynthia:* No, Grandpa, don't do it!

*Satan:* Don't listen to her!

*Grandpa:* Can I ask a question?

**Panel 3:** *Grandpa:* If today I lack legal capacity to enter into a contract, can I void the sale when my capacity is restored?

**Panel 4:** *Satan (turning away):* Never mind.  
(Mark Raffman)

---

**Panel 1:** [*Grandpa is eating a sandwich. Cynthia looks at him inquisitively.*]

*Cynthia:* If a genie let you wish to change any one thing in the world, what would it be?

**Panel 2:** [*Grandpa has stopped eating, looks at her.*]

*Cynthia:* I don't mean like world peace. I mean something small, maybe not even something anybody would notice right away.

**Panel 3:** [*Grandpa begins to return to his sandwich.*]

*Grandpa:* I'd make all the twist ties on loaves of bread from the store go the same way.

**Panel 4:** *Cynthia:* Really? You answered that fast. How long has this been bugging you?

*Grandpa:* Since I started trying to open this lunch meat bag a half-hour ago before I gave up and just ripped it open.

(Sam Mertens)

---

*The headline “Alz Stars” is by Roy Ashley; Dave Prevar wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.*

**Still running — deadline 9 p.m. ET Saturday, July 6:** our Week 78 contest to sum up a historical event in a rhyming couplet. Click on the link below.