

## The Invitational Week 94: Asterisky Business

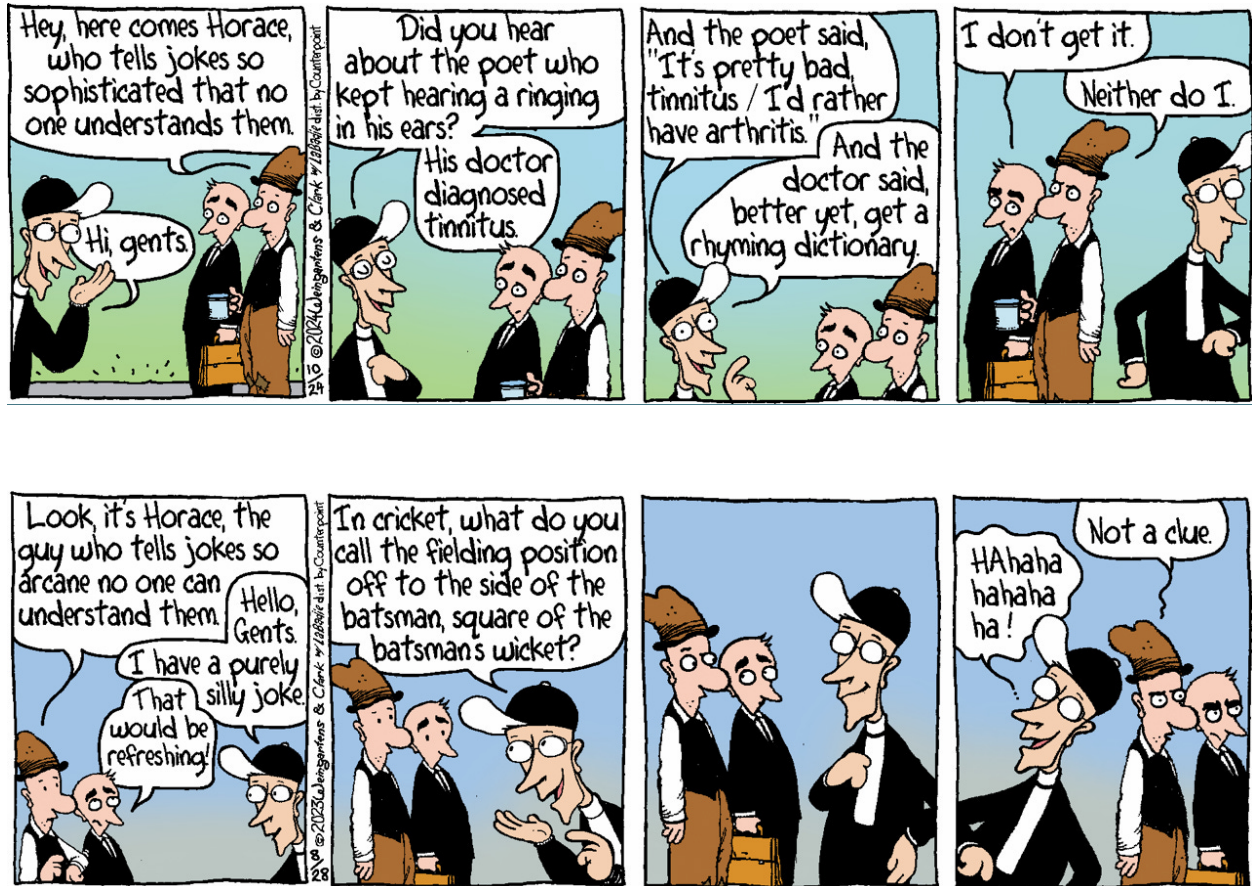
Put words in Horace's mouth: Tell us a joke that not everyone will get. Plus winning haiku on the news.

[Pat Myers](#)

and

[Gene Weingarten](#)

Oct 17, 2024



**“Barney & Clyde” art by David Clark.**

**Asterisk, first cartoon:** Medically, “tinnitus” is not pronounced “tin-EYE-tis,” like arthritis; the suffix “-itis” refers to an inflammation, which is not what tinnitus is. The preferred pronunciation is “TIN-it-uss.” Ergo, the poet was in error.

**Asterisk, second cartoon:** In cricket, a “silly” is a fielding position that is very close to the batsman and considered foolish because of the risk of being hit by the ball or bat. Ergo, Horace presented this as a “silly joke,” which was technically correct, if obnoxious.

**Hello!** In today’s new Invitational, we once again ask you to do Gene’s work for him, in return for tepid and grudging attribution in teeny writing between the panels of his

syndicated newspaper comic strip, “Barney & Clyde,” which is about a friendship between a billionaire and a homeless man. Today’s topic is overly sophisticated humor, in which you have to come up with jokes that will be attributed to the recurring character Horace, who tells jokes so arcane that nobody understands them; to be understood, they require asterisked explanations, as in the examples above.

**Backstory:** Horace is named for Horace LaBadie, a funny, urbane, erudite man from Dunellon, Fla., who is a co-author of the strip, and whose clever efforts at scripts are occasionally rejected by Gene because only eleven people, max, will understand them.

**For Invitational Week 94: In a Q&A riddle or other fairly short form, write a “Horace” joke that requires hifalutin or specialized knowledge to understand,** as in the “Barney & Clyde” examples above. (This is similar to the results of our [2016](#) and [2002](#) Asterisky Business contests. You can use them as a guide.) **Follow your joke with a brief explanation,** as in Duncan Stevens’s Asterisky Business winner from 2016:

**Q. Why were the French tourists in D.C. embarrassed when they took their toddlers to the National Zoo?**

**A. The kids started yelling, “Seal! Seal!”\***

**\*The French word for seal is *phoque*.**

In this case, **you do not have to write it all out as a completed comic strip script;** just the joke and its explanation will suffice. We’ll draw some of the good ones, with Horace telling them.

**Formatting your entries this week:** We’re **NOT** exhorting you as usual to submit each entry as a single line. Just write them up in some form we can figure out.

**Deadline is Saturday, Oct. 26, 2024, at 9 p.m. ET.** Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, Oct. 31. 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-94](https://tinyURL.com/inv-form-94).

**The winner gets,** apropos of the sophisticated humor we seek this week, a pair of toilet earrings. We will call them the Hoity Toities.



And the lids are *down!* We are just so hifalutin.

**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.

**Meanwhile, send us questions or observations, which Gene hopes to deal with in real time today. You do this, as always, by sending them to this here button:**

[this here button](#)

**'Ku Cards: The news haiku of Week 92**

In [Week 92](#) we asked you to write haiku — which we described as any poem with three lines of 5, 7, and 5 syllables — about subjects in the news. Rhymes were welcome, but unnecessary.

***Third runner-up:***

I bet Trump is mad

The Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

Let in Foreigner.  
(Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.)

**Second runner-up:**

Late last Thursday night  
Millions saw the Northern Lights  
In their Facebook feeds.  
(Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore)

**First runner-up:**

Patriots player  
[Accused in woman's assault.](#)  
And he's a "safety"?  
(Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.)

**And the winner of the [Light poetry journal tote bag featuring the "Vote" haiku:](#)**

**Pouty Trump Cancels '60 Minutes' Interview**

60 Minutes is  
The amount of time it takes  
To cook a chicken.  
(Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

**Hai Crimes: Honorable mentions**

Democracy shakes  
Like a self-driving Tesla  
Veering off the road.  
(Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.)  
"Migrants take Black jobs,"  
Trump said. So, to balance things,  
Just vote for Harris.

(Neil Kurland, Elkridge, Md.)  
*Woman Caught Smuggling 748 Pounds of Cold Cuts*

Our Southern border  
Letting in bad guys? Just a  
Load of bologna.  
(Marni Penning Coleman, Falls Church, Va.)

Putin, Orban, Xi.  
Each is what Trump wants to be:  
Grand Theft Autocrat.

(Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)  
TikTok's sued by states  
Because it's so addictive.  
What's next, Häagen-Dazs? (Pam Shermeyer)  
Mayor indicted!

New York might no longer be  
The Adams Apple.  
(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Winning Commanders

Show the difference between

[Daniels](#) and [Daniel's](#).

*(Kevin Dopart, Washington, D.C.)*

Trump's bad at lying,

So he chose a running mate

Who's better at it.

*(Jesse Frankovich)*

A discovery!

Christopher Columbus was

[A wandering Jew.](#)

*(Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.)*

Now open! Trump's Place!

Management reserves the right

To serve just himself.

*(Connie Akers, Radford, Va.)*

As an irritant

A grain of sand makes a pearl

But Ted Cruz makes squat

*(Jeff Shirley, Richmond, Va.)*

At a Trump rally,

[Elon showed](#) White men *can* jump.

It's just they shouldn't. *(Jesse Frankovich)*

[Russian bombers use](#)

Elon Musk's Starlink dishes.

Does X mark the spot?

*(Pam Shermeyer)*

Dems hope to see this

Slogan in '28: Keep

Kam and carry on. *(Chris Doyle)*

If Trump gets caught in

A Florida hurricane

Would he go hair-borne? *(Neil Kurland)*

My beautiful Court

Says Presidents are immune.

Nyah nyah nyah nyahhh-nyah.

*(Michael Stein, Arlington, Va.)*

Or 'Aim Higher'?

When 45's butt

Is targeted by some nut

Does Pence say, ["So what?"](#) *(Kevin Dopart)*

[Qantas Interruptus](#)

An explicit film

On "the Flying Kangaroo"

Had some [hopping mad](#)

*(Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)*

[“A Bar Song \(Topsy\)”](#) —

Billboard’s top hit for three months

(You don’t know it, right?)

*(Jesse Rifkin, Arlington, Va.)*

Since it’s a witch hunt

Just throw some water on Trump

He’s melting, melting ... *(Neil Kurland)*

*The headline “ ‘Ku Cards” was submitted by both Chris Doyle and Kevin Dopart; William Kennard wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.*

**Still running — deadline 9 p.m. ET Saturday, Oct. 19:** our Week 93 contest, the perennial Ask Backwards, in which we give the “answers” and you write the questions. Click on the link below.