

The Style Invitational

Week XCV: No Rest for the Query

If God is good, how can He permit evil?

I'm not even going to dignify that with an answer. By the way, I'd have that mole checked out.



BY BOB STAMME FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Which came first, the chicken or the egg?
What is the sound of one hand clapping?
What is art?

If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make any noise?
How many angels can dance on the head of a pin?
If God is good, how can He permit evil?

This Week's Contest: Above, six supposedly unanswerable questions. Answer any of them in the voice of any famous person, living or dead. (Or, if you wish, as yourself.) First-prize winner gets a souvenir of Texas, a genuine ceramic Texas "short beer" mug. It holds about a half-gallon. It's worth \$20. First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. U.S. mail entries have been canceled due to rabid, spit-flying fanaticism. Deadline is Monday, Nov. 26. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and telephone number. E-mail entries must include the week number in the subject field. Entries will be judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Thos. Witte of Gaithersburg.

REPORT FROM WEEK XCI,

in which we asked you to write poems about Osama bin Laden. The results were extraordinary, so we allotted extraordinary space.

◆ Third Runner-Up:
You claim you're a shoo-in in Heaven, bin Laden,
Fat chance with the paths of vengeance
you've trodden,
If Paradise glory you somehow attain, though,
May your 70 virgins all choose to remain so.
(Courtney Knauth, Washington)

◆ Second Runner-Up:
"Osama" as a verb—what would it be?
Transitive, surely. Certainly active.
To inflict pain and then to flee?
To rip one from the land of those who live?
Or could it be to cower and to shirk,
To hide oneself inside a deep, dark cave,
Appearing rarely and then just to lurk
Long enough to insanely rant and rave?
If we can but learn to look at him and laugh,
While not forgetting those whose lives he took,
We shall have cut the healing time in half.
But lest we think to let him off the hook,
To quote a poet drawing no more breath,
We would but love him better after death.
(Jean Lightner Norum, Charlottesville)

◆ First Runner-Up:
Cursed Twin Towers
Mock no more my undersize
Genitalia.
(David Landau, Arlington)

◆ And the winner of the cloth sweaters for soft-drink glasses:
If killed he's a martyr, to try him is harder,
So recycle bin Laden as soon as we've won.
He'd certainly make a fine woman's garter,
Yes, recycle bin Laden, whose days are near done.
Osama bin Laden with potatoes au gratin
Or make a silk purse of his sandy sow's ear,
We're short of menhaden, try Osama bin Laden
Let's turn this mess into things we don't fear.
My neighbor could use a new mat for his mud
room,
And I need a new set of mandolin strings.
My sister has asked for a burgundy whisk broom,
Compost for her garden and 10 million things.
Let's recycle bin Laden and welcome the day
We reincarnate him the American way.
(Patricia Helmetag, Annapolis)

◆ Honorable Mentions:
There once was an Arab so brave
That he hid himself in his cave.
"Fellow Muslims," he said,
"It's great to be dead"
If MY name's not on the grave.
(Jane Springrose, Bradenton, Fla.)

Caves have but one door
For entering and leaving.
Great plan, mastermind.
(Joe Neff, Oreland, Pa.)

Higgledy piggledy
Saudi Arabia.
Land of Osama bin
Laden, a thug.

Ultrafanatical
Killer of innocents.
Soon to be spotted and
Squashed like a bug.
(Chris Doyle, Burke)

A terrorist known as Osama
Encouraged a suicide bomber.
This murderous plan
Isn't in the Koran.
So in Hell it's "Osama, meet
Dahmer."
(Chris Doyle, Burke)

Allah hangs his head in shame,
His son Osama is to blame.
Scorned the teachings
of his father:
Love? Compassion?
Couldn't bother.

Evil sows, then evil reaps,
Osama sinned, and Allah weeps.
(Jackie Binder, Charlottesville)

As a leader, Osama is flunking.
Overhead, bunker busters are
thunking.
The Taliban's tired of bombs
being fired,
But Osama is busy...
spelunking.
(Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

Madrasahs in Quetta and Aden
Inculcate the poor and
downtrodden.
Spew hate for the West
Get to graduate summa
cum Laden.
(Chris Doyle, Burke)

Later,
Hater.
(Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

Osama bin Laden, you son
of a witch,
May your tonsils develop a
seven-year itch.
May your nose be twisted
in such a manner
That your nostrils whistle "The
Star-Spangled Banner."
(Howard Tenenbaum, Silver Spring)

Let me not to even justice for war crimes
Admit impediments. The Taliban
Should pay, so say these fourteen lines of rhymes,
Alone on desert isle like Caliban.
But oh! Osama, what shall be his fate?
Suffer the slings and arrows of a righteous fortune?
Be diced with Ginsu knives and used as bait?
Torn limb from limb on rack with cruel torsion?
Americans might ask, "What serves the dead?
To kill the Afghan people left and right;
To bear a brave new world of waxing dread,
Or keep alit five thousand points of light?"
Two towers sank that Tuesday in September.
We have a choice: Dismember or remember.
(Tom Campbell, Highland Park, Ill.)

A lunatic man named Osama
Showed a page to his best
"See, they all say I'm queer
But I'm profiled right here
Under 'Abnormal Psyches'
in JAMA."
(Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

Osama the grievous, demonic
and lowly,
Misguided, he thinks his
warped mission holy.
Now, imagine God's anguish and
roaring decree:
"Listen here, twit, you ain't
workin' for Me!"
(John Bauer, Gaithersburg)

There was a rich devil,
bin Laden,
Who set out to do some jihadin'.
He did so much ill
With his three hundred mil
in Gehenna he's gonna be
roatin'.
(John Held, Fairfax)

Though moderate Muslims are
noddin',
It's taken too much of a proddin'
For us to get them
To truly condemn
The evil Osama bin Laden.
(Chris Doyle, Burke)

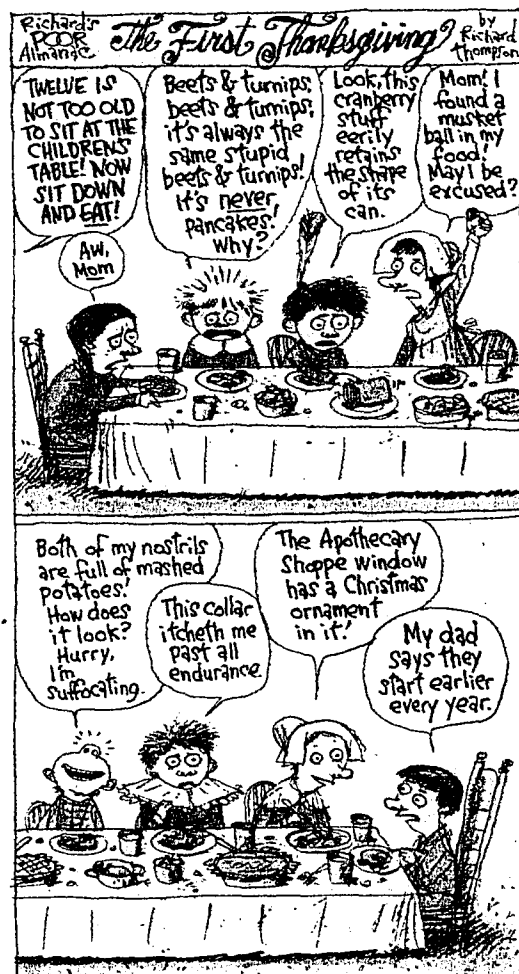
Bin Laden will pay for his role
Bombing D.C., New York and
the Cole.
Though he hides in his warren,
We'll bust his cave door in
A game of high-stakes
Whack-a-Mole.
(Greg Arnold, Herndon)

The pointing fingers,
tabloid news,
You moved us all beyond it.
Take center stage with my
regards.
Sincerely, Gary Condit
(John Griessmayer, Roanoke)

You needn't look too far to see
My feelings for Osama.
Just take a peek beneath the flap
In back of my pajama.
(John Griessmayer, Roanoke)

I saw a man, bowed down
with shame,
Who said, "Bin Laden is my name,
And I was mighty till the day
That I torqued off the U.S.A.,
Which then proceeded to amass
The force required to smoke my [tail]
While all I had to guard my can
Were wackos from the Taliban.
They shanghaied troops who'd
cut and run
From a B-2 or even -1.
First Uncle Sam came after me
With planes we couldn't even see,
Achieving his initial goal
Of knocking out my air control.
'Twas not the end, for by and by,
The Spectres came from out the sky
And many troops who marched
by feet
Were turned into hamburger meat.
So now I find myself bereft
Of troops and goods, there's
nothing left
Except a thousand psychopaths
Who are not known for taking baths.
And Special Ops—now, here's
a shock—
Is on its way to clean my clock.
Perhaps I'd better find some jerk
To carry on my wicked work.
But who would step in eagerly
When they'd get blown to hell
like me?"
(Bryan Fortson, Herndon)

Oh to rid the world of Bin Laden
would be so sensational
And to accomplish this I can think of
nothing quicker
Than to tell him he's won in The
Style Invitational
But he must hold his breath till he's
received his bumper sticker.
(Marleen May, Rockville)



BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Neither side vulnerable

NORTH		EAST (D)	
♠	KQJ92	♠	8653
♥	AQ2	♥	1097
♦	KQ	♦	A82
♣	J87	♣	1042
WEST		SOUTH	
♠	104	♠	A7
♥	Q85	♥	J643
♦	1054	♦	J9763
♣	AK965	♣	Q3

The bidding:

East	South	West	North
Pass	Pass	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	Pass	3 NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: ♣ 6

Experts are uniquely vulnerable to one weakness: Opportunity may knock only once, but the temptation to try to make a contract the hard way—and make the newspapers—is always pounding at the expert's door. I've known experts who have such a bad case of the New York Times Syndrome that they always sit South so

it'll be easier for columnists to immortalize them.

In today's deal from a major team event, one South at 3NT won the first club with the queen and declined to do anything brilliant: He simply led a diamond next. This play might have worked—West might have led from a four-card club suit—but East took the ace and led another club, and West ran four clubs. Down one.

The declarer at the other table was no hero, either, but before committing himself to a diamond play, he cashed five spades to see the discards. East followed four times and then threw the eight of diamonds. West let go of two diamonds without pain but then paused before throwing a third diamond.

It required no brilliance for South to deduce that West was guarding the queen of hearts and also couldn't afford to throw a club. South therefore cashed the ace of hearts and led a club, and after West cashed four clubs, he had to lead a heart from the queen, giving South his ninth trick.

Playing for brilliancy often leads to a silly result, but I admit to some sympathy for the second South. After all, any oaf can make a contract by forcing out an ace.

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Next Week: Dumb Assembly Required

UMBRELLAS MUGS T-SHIRTS SWEATS GLOBE PAPERWEIGHT