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[ The Washington Post ]

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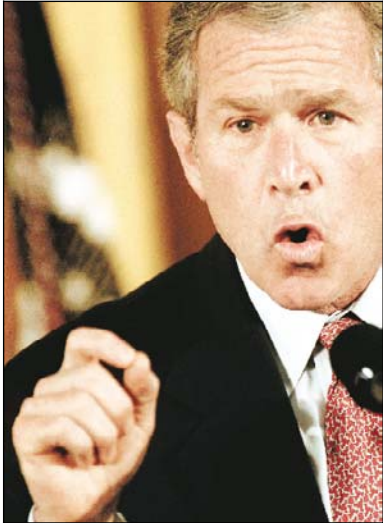
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# Style

SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 2003

**F**

*Humor  
Advice  
Personals*



BY FRANK JOHNSTON—THE WASHINGTON POST

**Unhappy with artifice, President Bush uses a rhetorical style that tends to avoid memorable imagery, says a former White House speechwriter.**

**Essay**

## George Bush And the Words Of War

By KEN RINGLE  
*Washington Post Staff Writer*

The challenge is one of achieving the proper oratorical tone. How does a leader like President Bush address a crisis in such a way that he inspires and unites his people while sowing fear in his enemy?

Whatever one thinks of his Iraq policy, even the president's supporters concede that he has been less than Churchillian in employing his speeches effectively to marshal national and international opinion against Saddam Hussein. In fact, the more he talks, the more support around the world appears to slip away. Why?

"Every president has his own oratorical style," says Stephen Wayne, a presidential scholar and professor of government at Georgetown University. "Bush's is concrete and conversational, much the way he talks. It suits him . . . but it lacks the idealistic language of a Kennedy . . . the sort that seizes the imagination."

Bush's oratory has "improved since he's been in office," says James C. Humes, a professor of language and leadership at the University of Southern Colorado and a former speechwriter for Presidents Nixon and Ford. "But he's not happy with artifice" and "tends to avoid the sort of imagery that made Churchill's speeches so memorable."

Bush has sent our armed forces to

See ESSAY, F2, Col. 1



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**H**ard to believe, isn't it? The Style Invitational, which began as a disreputable little newspaper contest with crummy prizes and no sense of decency, has now become a disreputable little 10-year-old newspaper contest with crummy prizes and no sense of decency.

The contest began humbly on March 7, 1993, with a challenge to redress a cultural affront and rename the Redskins. The winning entry, by Douglas R. Miller of Arlington, was suitably contrarian: "Call them the Baltimore Redskins—No, don't move the team, just change the name and let Baltimore worry about it."

That was 495 contests ago. In the interim, The Style Invitational—run autocratically by a mysterious, reclusive figure known only as "The Czar"—has staked out a position as the least Washington Post-like feature ever to weasel its way into The Washington Post. It is sometimes subversive, occasionally mean-spirited, frequently rude, often immature, always arrogant, and at times just about inexcusable. We are not sure why it has survived; it's possible Donald Graham does not read the inside of the Style section.

Over the years, The Style Invitational somehow managed to launch the international stardom of cartoonist Bob Staake, an otherwise negligible talent whose scramble-featured characters suggest the work of a blind man.

Calling itself "the last pure meritocracy on Earth," and stubbornly resisting complaints of favoritism, the contest has also made minor celebrities of a handful of fiendishly clever and uncommonly persistent readers. These include Chuck Smith of Woodbridge, Russell Beland of Springfield, Tom Witte of Gaithersburg, Chris Doyle of Burke, Stephen Dudzik of Olney, and, of course, J. Ha—Jennifer Hart of Arlington, The Style Invitational's most decorated woman.

The contest for this week is to submit new entries to any of the old contests mentioned below, and try to beat **The Very Best of the Past 10 Years**. There's the usual deadline of a week and a day, and the usual e-mail address, [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com). (Just call it "Week 496," Roman numerals are now history.) The prize, in honor of our Tin Anniversary, is a dented tin cup imprinted with the illustration above.

If you're reading this, Don, there's nothing

much below. Nothing to see here. Just move on along to Book World.

**Bad ideas for Christmas toys (Dec. 18, 1994):**  
**The Learn-About-Puberty Chia Pet.**  
(Paul A. Alter, Hyattsville)

**Inept Valentine's Day sentiments (Feb. 27, 2000):**  
**My darling, when assisted by highly supportive undergarments and, after factoring in the inevitable results of pregnancies combined with a genetic disposition toward excess weight in the hips and buttocks, for which you must be held blameless, you are still a strikingly lovely woman when compared with others in your age group.**  
(Ben F. Noviello, Fairfax)

**The start of a pretentious sentence (May 12, 1996):**  
**"As Jesus Christ once said, and rightly so—"**  
(Mike McKeown, Reston)

See INVITATIONAL, F4, Col. 2

### TELL ME ABOUT IT® *Advice for the Under-30 Crowd*

By CAROLYN HAX  
*Washington Post Staff Writer*

**Carolyn:**  
**About a month ago my boyfriend and I ended a long-term relationship. We were always close friends, and we wanted to keep it that way. We haven't talked for the past month to facilitate the "getting over it" process. But what I've realized in that month is that I'm angry at the way he treated me in our relationship, and frankly I don't want to be friends with him right now, maybe ever. I feel guilty about this, and I feel like I should work it through with him, but we're**

**not dating anymore, my time to get mad at him for his actions is over. Should I talk out how I'm feeling with him, or forget about it—and him?**  
*Virginia*

Or (c) leave it all in the oven to cook. In the relationship, you were "close friends"; a month out of it, you're an angry victim; two months out, what? You don't know yet. You're dealing with raw feelings here. Given that you've already established this time-off process, you might as well use it.

If you stay angry, speak up.

See TELL ME, F3, Col. 1

### LIFE IS SHORT | *Autobiography as Haiku*

**I** was not at all prepared to fall in love again at 58. Certainly not the crazy, adolescent puppy kind. Where you project all that is bright and pure on the other, then adore accordingly. I place photos in strategic places around the house, smiling and aching as I walk by them. Plan visits and count the days between. In some groups of older folks, they have a pact not to talk about their grandchildren. Now that I have my first, I can see why.



PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**Tom Hillegass**  
*Alexandria*

**I** love and cherish my two daughters. Tonight, the younger is dancing in a performance of "The Vagina Monologues" at the University of Maryland. I'm not there with my wife and her friends to see it. My daughters do not, in fact none of the women in my life, understand why I'm not going. There are some things a father need not know, and maybe should not know. I'm thrilled that she can revel in (and reveal) her femininity, but if you don't mind, I'll stay home and smoke a cigar.



**Scott Reilly**  
*Derwood*

Find a way to give insight into your life in under 100 words. Authors of selected entries will be notified and paid \$100. Send text (accompanied by a daytime phone number) via e-mail ([lifeisshort@washpost.com](mailto:lifeisshort@washpost.com)), fax (202-334-5587) or surface mail (Style, Life Is Short, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071).



# The Style Invitational: The First Dreckade

## The Prizes: Why Not the Worst?

From the very beginning, *The Style Invitational* has scoured the planet for only the finest of garbage to award to its first-prize winners. These have included:

Lace panties that play “You Are My Sunshine”; size 72 men’s white briefs; Vietnamese Snake Wine containing an actual four-foot-long snake; kangaroo jerky; an antique 1911 wooden rat trap; “smorked beef rectum,” a fine vacuum-packed lunch meat from Japan; “Love Ewe,” an inflatable sheep; a genuine (unused) colonoscopy swab; a Marilyn Monroe wall clock with swinging-hip pendulum; a peck of pickled peppers; a set of barf bags imprinted with copy from romance novels; a big gob of owl puke guaranteed to contain mouse or insect bones; a three-piece mariachi band made from taxidermized frogs; an oral surgeon’s demonstration model of the human mouth, complete with gingivitis, a malignant tongue tumor and various oozing lesions; a can of fish anuses; and a costume of a nine-foot-tall, mammoth-breasted, hippo-hipped woman with billowing skirts worn in a performance of Rabelais’ “Gargantua” that can be worn only while standing on a ladder.

And The Czar’s favorite of all time: A copy of the Sept. 20, 1995, issue of *Playboy* magazine, in Braille. Nope, no pictures.



## Putting You At Our Trebek And Call

One of the oldest continuing contests: We supply *Jeopardy!*-style answers, you give us the questions.

**Answer: Saddam and Eve. Question: Name two people famous for not having any brothers-in-law.**

(Sue Lin Chong, Washington; April 26, 1998)

**Answer: The Heimlich Manure. Question: No, honey, I was not embracing that woman. She was, um, choking, and I was . . .**

(David Genser, Arlington; July 11, 1999)

**Answer: Those paper toilet-seat covers. Question: What do redwood tree parents threaten their children that they will become if they don’t absorb all of their nutrients?**

(Sue Lin Chong, Washington; June 16, 2002)

**Answer: The Hero, Robert McNamara. Question: If a big sandwich and Robert McNamara fell overboard, in which order should they be saved?**

(Tom Witte, Gaithersburg; May 5, 1995)

**Answer: Colon Powell. Question: Who is America counting on to eliminate waste in government?**

(Elden Carnahan, Laurel; May 5, 1995)

**Answer: Time, Newsweek and Scrooge McDuck. Question: On the day he refused to pay the ransom for his kidnapped uncle, whose three bills did Donald Duck receive in the mail?**

(Chuck Smith, Woodbridge; Dec. 15, 1996)

## When the Bills Came Due

A biennial contest challenges readers to take names of real congressmen and craft legislation in their names.

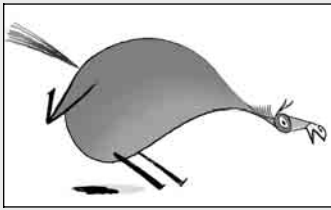
**The Goode-DeGette-Enzi-John-Quigley Act to reduce ladies’ room lines at sporting events.** (Ernie Staples, Silver Spring, Dec. 8, 1996)

**The Stabenow-Jay-Israel-Keller bill to overturn the not-guilty verdict in the Simpson case.** (Dave Zarrow, Herndon, Dec. 31, 2000)

**The Watt-Eshoo-Dunn-Furse-Leahy Pork Barrel Protection Act.** (Carol Vance, Washington; April 18, 1993)

**The Cantwell-English-Read Dyslexia Research Funding Bill.** (Jacki Drucker, Arlington, April 25, 1993)

**The Cole-Porter-Musgrave-Turner Act awarding Eminem a Medal of Freedom for his contribution to the field of music.** (Chris Doyle, Burke, Jan. 26, 2003)



## Crying Foal

The annual contest in which readers “mate” any two Kentucky Derby-eligible horses, and name the foal.

**Mate The Toy Man with Hail the Hero and name the foal F.A.O. Schwarzkopf.** (Susan Reese, Arlington; May 25, 1997)

**Mate Yeti with White Bronco and name the foal Abominable Slowman.** (Larry Marcus, Avon, Conn.; May 25, 1997)

**Mate IsleEmailYou with Ideal Cut and name the foal You’ve Got Mohel.** (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park; May 6, 2001)

**Mate Milwaukee Brew with Silver Blur and name the foal Pabst Smear.** (T.J. Murphy, Arlington; May 7, 2000)

## Hyphen the Terrible

An occasional contest in which readers make new words by mixing and matching beginnings and ends of hyphenated words in any story in the newspaper.

**Easy-lis-choly:** that sad feeling you get when you hear a Stones song in the elevator. (Susan Reese, Arlington; Nov. 1, 1998)

**Testimo-stitute:** An expert witness who will say anything if the fee is high enough. (James Pierce, Charlottesville; Sept. 1, 2002)

**Mo-ronto: 1. The Lone Ranger’s mentally challenged companion; 2. Home of Prime Minister Jean Cretin.** (Chris Doyle, Burke; Nov. 25, 2001)

**Pro-zakstan:** A country that is always at peace. (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg; March 16, 1997)

**Sex-nipulativeness, the ability of women to control men simply by not wearing bras.** (Robin D. Grove, Columbia; Dec. 9, 1997)



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## INVITATIONAL, From F1

Revised, upbeat modern-movie endings to classic films (Nov. 12, 1995):

“**Citizen Kane**”: The reporter discovers that Rosebud was Kane’s sled. He rescues it from the furnace and uses it to enter the Olympic luge event, winning a gold medal. (Jerry Podlesak, Arlington)

An elegy for someone who died in 1997 (Nov. 30, 1997):

**Jacques Cousteau:**  
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.

(Charlie Steinhice, Chattanooga)

A well-known story as retold by a famous person (Aug. 18, 2002):

Hamlet and Ophelia were a good couple. Claudius and Gertrude were evil. Polonius was good and so was Horatio, but Laertes was evil. Clowns good, gravediggers evil. Then there was Fortinbras. We had a Fortinbras at Delta Kappa Epsilon. He was a major-league bunghole.

—George W. Bush

(Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

Good idea/bad idea (April 9, 1995):

**Good idea:** Showing pictures of your kids at a private party.  
**Bad idea:** Showing pictures of your privates at a kids’ party.

(Ira Moskowitz, Lanham)

Explain the differences between any two items on a list (July 19, 1998):

**The difference between a human navel and a 1998 VW Bug:** In the case of the navel, most people would rather have an innie. In the case of the Bug, most people would rather have an Audi.

(Russell Beland, Springfield)

**The difference between a chain saw and Marion Barry’s brain:** With a chain saw, you can actually HEAR the buzz.

(David Smith, Greenbelt)

Put part of a word in quotes and redefine it (March 5, 2000):

**G“angst”er:** Someone torn by inner conflict, and bullets.

(Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

What politicians say and what they really mean (May 2, 1996):

**What they say:** I don’t believe in polls. **What they mean:** My polls tell me to say I don’t believe in polls. (Frank Bruno, Alexandria)

A question that should never be asked at a presidential debate (Nov. 26, 1995):

**What is the most ethnically offensive word or phrase you have ever heard, and will you please use it in a sentence?**

(Meg Sullivan, Potomac)

Ideas that never made it off the drawing board (July 14, 1996):

**Singing mammograms.** (Dudley Thompson Jr., Rockville)

**The Slim-Fast Blimp.** (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

Euphemisms (Aug. 16, 1998):

**Undressing someone with your eyes:** “Checking out Lois Lane.”

(Joe Kobylski, Gaithersburg)

A makes about as much sense as B (Jan. 21, 1996):

**Telephone sex makes about as much sense as eating a menu.**

(Steve Cohen, Reston)

“Whuh-oh” lines (Sept. 6, 1998):

**From your new next-door neighbor:** “I never could have afforded to buy this house on my own. My old neighbors chipped in to buy it for me.” (Philip Vitale, Arlington)

Tabloid headlines written using only the keys on the left side of the keyboard (Dec. 27, 1998)

**BRETT FAVRE WEDS BART STARR AFTER 16 BEERS!**

(Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

Something you’ll never hear an 8-year-old say (Jan. 17, 1999):

“Nana, will you spit on your hankie and wipe the gravy off my face?” (Beverly Miller, North Clarendon, Vt.)

Poem about a current news event (April 21, 2002):

**The male panda’s aggressively randy behavior:**  
Mei Xiang, I am so very sorry  
My advances to you were too crude.  
Though your well-rounded haunches still thrill me  
I will try now to act more subdued.  
Could we possibly catch us a movie?  
And you’ll be my sweet, sweet bamboo.  
Please forgive me, my dear one and only  
Or I’ll have to go courting a gnu.

(Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

Attention-grabbing first lines of a dissertation (March 7, 1999):

In order to purge all traces of phallocentrism from this project, I have castrated myself. (David Genser, Arlington)

Dumb letters to the editor (Dec. 13, 1998):

**URGENT, HAND DELIVERED:** Do not let them bury the people whose pictures you showed in Sunday’s obituaries! Most of them look like they are still alive! (David Genser, Arlington)

Expressions that rely on the reversal of two words or phrases (May 16, 1999):

**I’d rather have bliss with two sisters than a cyst with two blisters.** (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

**Not all men kiss their wives goodbye when they leave their homes, but all men kiss their homes goodbye when they leave their wives.** (David Kleinbard, Washington)

Spoonerisms (Aug. 20, 1995):

**How is adoration of a pop group like a PBS documentary on an obscure European country? One is Beatlemania; the other is “Meet Albanian!”** (Steven Papier, Wheaton)

Old and new concerns for baby boomers (Jan. 24, 1999):

**Then: Getting out to a new, hip joint. Now: Getting a new hip joint.** (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

Great ideas for avant-garde art (Dec. 24, 1995):

**Exhibit consists only of notice awarding artist grant for the exhibit. It is mounted on the wall with masking tape.** (Fred Dawson, Beltsville)

**A woman advertises a major speech on health care reform. When the 10,000-seat arena fills up, she stands at the lectern clearing her throat, ta-tapping the mike, and saying “Hello, hello, is this thing on?” for hours until the entire audience gets embarrassed and leaves.** (Tom Gearty, Arlington)

Bad poetry (Feb. 23, 1997):

**The world’s great mathematicians assembled for a lecture  
To hear a rising star prove the Taniyama Conjecture.  
And the young man astounded those who did hear him  
By also casually proving Fermat’s Last Theorem!  
And for this achievement, everlasting glory and acclaim  
Will forever go to, y’know, what’sname.**

(Charlie Steinhice, Chattanooga)

Really bad excuses for moral lapses (April 10, 1994):

**You are not guilty of DUI if you thought someone else was driving.** (Helen Sheingorn, Washington)

See INVITATIONAL, F5, Col. 1

## Just a Certain Clinton His Eye

The birth of *The Style Invitational* coincided almost exactly with the inauguration of William Jefferson Clinton. It was a match made in heaven.

The lamest possible four-line poem about the budget deficit (Feb. 8, 1998):

**Bill Clinton has fixed the federal budget deficit.  
For that he deserves wonderful gifts for Hanukkah.  
It is obvious to me that such a great man  
Could never have had relations with Monica.**

(David Sherman, Arlington)

Take any line from today’s *Washington Post* and make it the answer to a question (Feb. 15, 1998):

**A: “Well, we’re glad to be here,” astronaut Bonnie Dunbar replied from the shuttle. Q: Has President Clinton ever made inappropriate advances to female astronauts?**

(Dave Andrews, Williamsburg)

Punishments for Bill (Nov. 8, 1998):

**For his entrances, “Hail to the Chief” will be replaced by that striptease bump-and-grind theme.**

(Jason Zweiback, Livermore, Calif.; Sandra Hull, Arlington)

**From now on, after sex he has to “cuddle.”**

(Brian Broadus, Charlottesville)

**Secret Service agents get to wear “I’m With Stupid” T-shirts.** (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

A passage constructed from letters on the right side of the keyboard (Dec. 20, 1998):

**Populi: Lyin’ pol, jumpin’ plump nymph.  
Pol: You imply I’m loopholin’? Look—no loin link, no union.  
Populi: Hmmmph. Only play. Poo on you.  
Pol: No humpin’, no lyin’.**

(Barbara Collier, Garrett Park)

Tabloid headline from the left side of the keyboard (Dec. 27, 1998):

**Wet Areas Are Grease, Dress Wearer Attests!  
Wet Areas Are Seed, Swears Dress Tester!** (Eric Lenning, Reston)

Aliases celebrities can use when checking into hotels (Sept. 29, 2002):

**Bill Clinton: Mr. John Smith and daughter.**

(Russell Beland, Springfield)



# Scenes From the Life of a Misbehaving 10-Year-Old

INVITATIONAL, From F4

New Mafia-type expressions (April 28, 1996):  
**Poured gasoline on someone and lighted a match: "Escorted him to the smoking section."** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

**Hiding out: "Rentin' the old Kaczynski place."** (Moe Hammond, Falls Church)

Ruin a famous line by adding to it (Aug. 26, 2001):  
**Towards thee I roll, thou all-destroying but unconquering whale; to the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake, I spit my last breath at thee. Moby, I've had it up to HERE with you.** (Cynthia Coe and Ray Aragon, Bethesda)

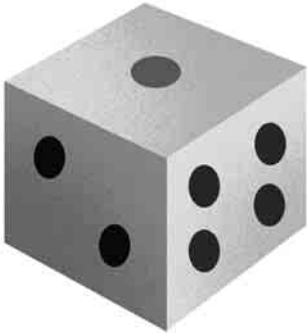
**Jesus wept buckets.** (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

A sign of a dire condition, and then a sign of further deterioration (June 10, 2001):

**Sign you are oversexed: Your wife pretends to be asleep when you enter the bedroom. Sign you are really oversexed: Your wife pretends to be asleep when you enter the delivery room.** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

What Neil Armstrong should have said when he landed on the moon (Aug. 7, 1994):

**"One hundred eighty-seven thousand six hundred forty-four bottles of beer on the wall . . ."** (Stu Segal, Vienna)



Explain the illustration (Oct. 28, 2001):  
**After the tragic accident with the trash compactor, there were only 100 Dalmatians.** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

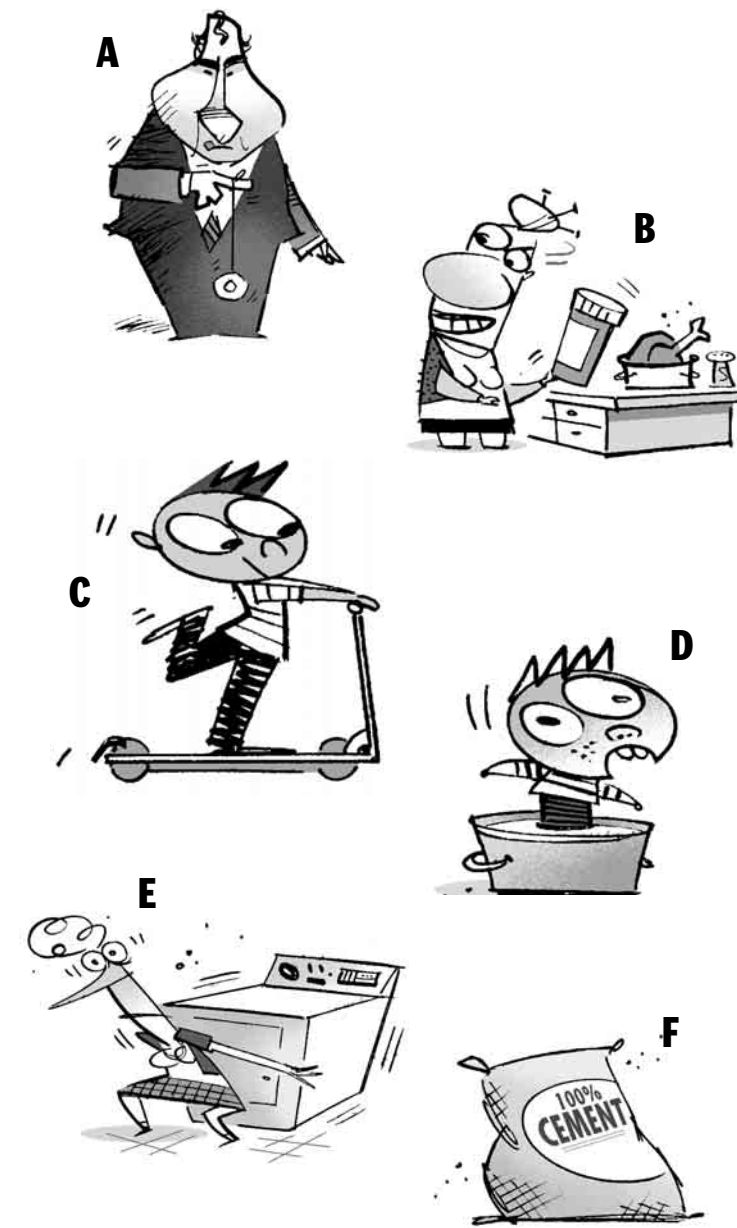
A passage about a politician, created entirely from the letters in his name (July 29, 2001):

**Fiddledy diddledy,  
Johnny F. Kennedy  
Hero at thirty-three,  
Hat in the ring.  
Idol, Lothario,  
Egalitarian  
Rake or a leader?  
Joker or king?** (Chris Doyle, Burke)

Cutesy signs for men's and ladies' restrooms (Jan. 14, 1996):

**At a Catskills resort: "Ladies" and "Germs"** (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

**At the Burning Tree Club: "Men" and "Exit"** (Susan Reese, Arlington)



Create a story around these illustrations (Feb. 11, 2001):

Once upon a time there was a wonderful, happy little boy (C) who lived with his mommy, who loved him very much. His daddy (A) also claimed to love him, even though he was consistently late with his child support and Mommy couldn't afford to have the washer fixed and she had to agitate the wash herself (E). Well, the judge said that the little boy had to spend every other weekend with his daddy and that cheap floo—, uh, lady he married. The lady didn't like having a little boy running around, and decided to make sure he would never run around her house again. She pretended to be nice to the little boy all day, and then put sleeping pills in his dinner (B). After the little boy went to sleep, she mixed up a batch of cement (F) and when the little boy woke up he was (D) cemented into a big washtub! And he was never able to run around and play again. Wasn't it too bad that he got fooled by that lady his daddy married and actually ate something she cooked? Now, did you remember to put your toothbrush and toothpaste into your backpack? Daddy will be here any minute to pick you up. (Sarah W. Gaymon, Gambrells)

Give us the setup to this punch line: "No, you moron, you were supposed to wear it." (July 14, 2002):  
**Explorer No. 1 (returning from bushes): You were right, profethor. The pith helmet therntainly came in handy!"**  
**Explorer No. 2:** (William Zamojcin, Vernon, Conn.)

Change a famous quote by one letter (Jan. 25, 1998):

**Michael Jackson: "Here's looking at your kid."** (Meredith Robinson, Springfield)

Aliases celebrities can use when checking into hotels (Sept. 29, 2002):  
**Barbara Walters: Faye Swift** (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

Bad ideas for useless products (July 30, 1995):  
**Seeing Eye giraffes** (Blair Thurman, Reston)

Update an expression for the new millennium (Dec. 3, 2000):

**Old expression: What goes around comes around. New expression: RE:Fw:Fw:Fwd:Fw:Fwd:FWD:Fw** (Twyla Vernon, Verona)

Dumb questions (June 1, 1997):

**Excuse me, does this pharmacy carry that "date rape" drug?** (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Washington Post headlines from the year 2050 (Dec. 24, 2000):

**Great and Benevolent Galactic Ruler Reveals Anal Probes Were 'Just for Fun'** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)



Why this cartoon might be offensive (Oct. 27, 2002):

**Using a miniature hand-held steamroller to kill babies before collecting their blood in a bucket is fine, but it is insulting to suggest that such a workman would not be wearing the proper safety goggles. Union men are not all incompetent.** (Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

Names for the high school football team in a real city:  
**The Eutaw (Ala.) Puddytats** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington, Nov. 13, 1994)

**The Assinippi (Mass.) Guard Dogs** (Karla J. Dickinson, Springfield, Nov. 13, 1994)

**The Weehawken (N.J.) Loogies** (Helene Haduch, Washington, Feb. 23, 2003)

The difference between any two items in a list we supplied (Sept. 8, 2002):

**The difference between the Pennsylvania Dutch and a mole on one's butt is that in a Pennsylvania Dutch neighborhood, there's probably no crack.** (Chris Doyle, Burke)

Cinquains, revoltingly precious poems in successive lines of two, four, six, eight and two syllables (June 16, 1996):

**Bob Dole,  
Old but virile;  
Tyrannosaurus Sex,  
O, dark, rapacious veloci-  
Rapture!** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

**Oh dear,  
Sylvia Plath,  
Down went your spirits, and  
Up went the gas, and now life you  
No hath.** (Christine Tabbert, Woodbridge)

Phrases from a foreign-language English phrasebook that would be of no help to persons visiting the United States (Dec. 1, 1996):

**"You puny American, I am here to overthrow your government and thrust your nation into chaos. Myooo ha ha ha! May I borrow from you a dime for the parking meter?"** (Jacob Harley, Landover)

New elements for the Periodic Table, with their symbols and properties (Feb. 1, 1997):

**Canadium (Eh): Similar to Americium, but a little denser. Much more rigid. Often called Boron.** (Joel Knanishu, Hyattsville)

**Innofensium (Pc): Precisely equal numbers of electrons, protons, neutrons, leptons, quarks. Completely inert, utterly useless, but smells like a rose.** (Irwin Singer, Alexandria)

Sentences you don't want to hear the end of (Nov. 15, 2002):

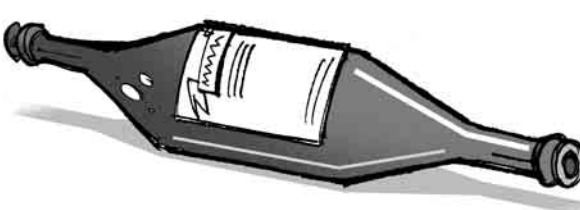
**"Sir, uh, me and your daughter . . ."** (Bill Chang, Ithaca, N.Y.)

Lines you wouldn't want to hear after getting married (Aug. 24, 1997):

**"Now that's a coincidence. My birth mother's name was Clytemnestra de Nunkhaven, too!"** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

Mottos for the backs of the state quarters (Sept. 7, 1997):

**Missouri: "This is the back of the quarter."** (Bob and Lydia Faulkner, Washington)



What is this object? (July 9, 2000):

**A handy product for drunks on teeter-totters.** (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

Annoying Nerdspeak (July 1, 1999):

**One should not say "Today is my birthday," since a person has only one birthday, the very day he was born. More properly, one should say "Today is the ANNIVERSARY of my birthday." Assuming, of course, it is the anniversary of one's birthday.** (Beth Baniszewski, Columbia)

**Whenever a woman tells me that she loves me with all her heart, I patiently explain that the heart is an autonomic blood pump incapable of emotion, and that her statement is therefore without meaning. No woman has made that mistake with me twice.** (Joseph Romm, Washington)

Poets, consisting of one line of six one-syllable words, one line of three two-syllable words, one line of two three-syllable words, and a final line containing one six-syllable word. There must be at least one rhyme (July 21, 1996):

**Mom, a Jew. Pop a WASP.  
Easter, Pesach, Christmas.  
Communions, tallises,  
Psychoanalysis.** (Roger L. Browdy, Kensington)

Propose a use for the 14-mile long, 15-foot wide tunnel for the aborted supercollider project (Nov. 21, 1993):

**Just rename it the Martha Washington Monument.** (Michael Sweet, Rockville)

## The Third Best Contest Results Ever

*Creating sports verbs to describe the results of games featuring the names of real pro teams (Nov. 16, 1997):*  
**Chargers Max Out Cards** (Mike Hammer, Washington)  
**Bears Raze Cubs** (Jose Cortina, Centreville)  
**Crafty Yankees Hand-Carve Rockers** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)  
**Blues Marooned by Reds** (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)  
**Rockers Lack Talent to Handle Jazz** (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)  
**Detroit Embarrassed by Pacers** (Sandra Hull, Arlington)  
And the winner: **Jets Bomb Mariners; Sharks Devour Crew** (David Genser, Arlington)

## The Second Best Contest Results Ever

*Bad advice to give to Washington tourists (May 15, 1996):*  
**Play a game of pickup handball at the unique, V-shaped black marble court on the Mall near the Lincoln Memorial!** (Paul Styrene, Olney)  
**Trinkets are awarded to anyone who can get the Secret Service agents guarding the president to laugh.** (Scott O. Christy, Alexandria)  
**No matter how hard you try, it's impossible to extinguish the Eternal Flame at JFK's grave.** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)  
**Prostitutes can be identified by their outfits: ordinary business apparel, incongruously accessorized by sneakers or running shoes.** (Stephen Dudzik, Silver Spring)  
And the winner: **Fun Fact! According to the Guinness Book, the youngest person ever to scale the White House fence unassisted was 8 years old!** (Phil Plait, Silver Spring)

## The Best Contest Results Ever

*Discarded first drafts of famous lines (April 30, 1995):*  
**"Once upon a time, there were four little rabbits, and their names were Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Adolf . . ."** (Jamal Jafari, Gaithersburg)  
**"Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. And believe me, senator, you're not friend of mine."** (Paul Moran, Falls Church)  
**"A rose is a rose, of course, of course."** (J. Calvin Smith, Laurel)  
**"You know how to whistle, don't you, Steve? Juthst thtick two fingerth in your mouf like thith and blow."** (Joel Knanishu, Hyattsville)  
And the winner:  
**"We hold these truths to be, like, du-uuh."** (Joseph Romm, Washington)

## And the 10 Best Individual Entries of All Time

- An underachiever's midlife goal (Sept. 2, 2001):*  
**Win the respect and admiration of my dog.** (Jean Lightner Norum, Charlottesville)
- Complete any real first line from literary fiction (Nov. 2, 1996):*  
**It was a bright cold day in April and the clocks were striking thirteen . . . but then, from that 32nd day of March, when the dazzling dame with the fine trio of knockers waltzed into my office and plunked down a D-note for me to find her husband, Ten-Fingered Louie, nothing about this case had added up.** (Susan Reese, Arlington)
- Jeopardy! (April 9, 2000):*  
**Answer: Lucy in the Sky with Diapers. Question: What song actually DOES contain the lyrics "The girl with colitis goes by"?** (Sandra Hull, Arlington)
- A political slogan that will never make it (June 28, 1998):*  
**"I Am Wanting Very Very Much to Be Your President of America."** (E.J. Lloyd, Fairfax Station)
- A question that should never be asked at a presidential debate (Nov. 26, 1995):*  
**"If elected, would you prefer to be assassinated by a Middle Eastern terrorist, an American right-wing extremist or a member of a fanatical religious sect?"** (Fred Dawson, Beltsville)
- Phrases from a foreign-language English phrasebook that would be of no help to persons visiting America (Dec. 1, 1996):*  
**"I am seeking employment. I have experience as both a flogger and a beheader."** (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)
- Deathbed words of people whose real final words are not known (June 26, 1994):*  
**Richard Nixon: "I am not dying."** (Peyton Coyner, Afton, Va.)
- Bad ideas for useless products (July 30, 1995):*  
**New lemon-yellow Ty-D-Bol** (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- Congressional joint legislation (April 18, 1993):*  
**The Traficant-Delay-Akaka Roadside Port-a-Potty Act** (Carole and Stephanie Dix, Gaithersburg)

**And the best entry of all time:**  
*1. A passage about someone, using only the letters in the person's name (April 16, 2000):*  
**Monica Lewinsky:**  
**Well, I was, like, a woman, y'know. William was, y'know, like, a man. So I'm, like, so lonely. Willie is, like, well, Willie. Anyway, a wink, some skin, "lookie lookie," we make some nookie.**  
**Willie says, "nice melons." I mean, like, wow! Willie was mine, I was Willie's. No one knew! So I'm, like, seein' Willie, only styly. Anyways, I'm, like, callin' Lin. So we yak 'n' yak. I'm like, well, me 'n' Willie, y'know? Lin's like, "Wow, Willie?" Anyway, now Lin knows. Once I was, like, "Lin, is a click on my line?" Lin says, "A click? No." Well, as we all know now, a click WAS on my line. Now, Ken comes in. Now I'm, like, NEWS! Monica mania! I'm like, a mess. Ken is, like, so asinine. Ken was on a mission. Ken is, like, soooooo my enemy! Lin was so sneaky. Lin is a swine. Oink oink. Willie? Well, I say Slick Willie will owe someone some alimony.**  
**Me? Well, now I'm like a well-known woman. Now I can make me some money. Way cool. Awesome.** (Richard Grossman, McLean, April 16, 2000)

