

The Style Invitational

Week 572: The Limerixon



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**In my youth, the church candles I'd light.
To the pastor I was always polite.
I looked solemn each minute
But my heart wasn't in it.
I was more of an acolyte lite.**

This week's contest salutes—and perhaps joins in—the bizarrely ambitious project of Chris J. Strolin of Belleville, Ill., to compile limericks featuring every last word in the dictionary. Chris has a Web site called OEDILF.com, which now officially stands for “The Omnificent English Dictionary in Limerick Form.” The OEDILF currently contains more than 600 limericks, by Chris (including the one above) and many other contributors—but all the words he’s included so far begin with *aa-*, *ab-*, *ac-* or *ad-*. (Chris is not a man in a rush; he fully expects the project to take generations.) **For this contest, supply a limerick based on any word in the dictionary (except proper nouns) beginning with *ai-* through *ar-*.** (Don’t worry, there are hundreds of words to choose from even in a standard desktop dictionary.) The limerick can define the word, or simply illustrate its meaning. Losers who e-mail their entries will receive details on how to submit them to Chris’s site as well. As always, the Empress is partial to exact rhymes and good meter; no, “now” does not rhyme with “renown”; “week” does not rhyme with “tweaks.” The lighter the verse, the stricter the rules here.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins both an alligator-claw back scratcher, donated by Kevin Cuddihy of Fairfax, and an alligator-head letter opener donated by somebody. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Aug. 30. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address

and phone number with your entry. Contests are 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. Results will be published Sept. 19. 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 was sent in by Tom Witte of Montgomery Village and also by Stephen Dudzik of Olney. The idea for this week's contest came from Seth Brown of North Adams, Mass.

Report from Week 568, in which we asked for plays on book titles. The Empress specifically permitted groaner puns, and groaner puns are what you delivered, in enormous quantity and to a breathtaking extent—breathtaking in the way that a kidney stone is breathtaking. Consider yourself warned.

- ◆ **Fourth Runner-Up:** What did Sophocles ask his suspiciously fat dog? **Et a Puss, Rex?** (Ken Gallant, Little Rock)
- ◆ **Third Runner-Up:** How's your wife's Spanish? **Lame Is Her "Habla"** (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
- ◆ **Second Runner-Up:** Who was the model for the Mona Lisa? **The Da Vinci Coed** (Andy Bassett, New Plymouth, New Zealand)
- ◆ **First Runner-Up, the winner of a pair of shot glasses from the Hard Rock Cafe of Singapore:** What's the definition of success for a crash test dummy? **Vroom! The Belt Holds** (Chris Doyle)
- ◆ **And the winner of the Inker:** Did you hear that the school system demanded a PC version of the Harper Lee novel? **Tickle a Mockingbird.** (Wayne Rodgers, Springfield)

◆ **And a Library of Honorable Mentions:**

- There's a new chain of fitness centers: **Ab Salon, Ab Salon** (Deb Parrish, Fairfax Station)
- What category did Mrs. Reagan get on celebrity trivia night? **Nancy Drew Mysteries** (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)
- Who leads your list of supermodels? **I, Claudia** (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- What was Buckwheat's terse review of "Shrek"? **Donkey Otay** (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)
- What was the original title for "Gilligan's Island"? **The Odd Asea** (Joseph Romm, Washington)
- What's Joe Theismann's memoir called? **QB VII** (Greg Arnold, Herndon)
- E.B. White wrote three classic children's books, but his "Elements of Style" co-author, William Strunk Jr., wrote just one: **Horton Hears a Whom.** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)
- How did James Joyce tell off his critics? **You Wussies.** (Jonathan Kaye, Washington)
- What did the Bolsheviks call the proletariat, the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia? **The Three Moscow Tiers** (Richard Lempert, Arlington)
- How did the famous Mr. Universe commute from Prince William County? **Atlas Slugged.** (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- When Dad's on the stump, Barbara's an alert listener. What's Jenna? **One Sis Noddin' Off.** (Chris Doyle)
- What do you get when you cut your finger while slicing your pastrami sandwich? **The Scarlet Pumpnickel** (Ben Schwalb, Severna Park)
- What did the police use to take the Bobbitt member to the hospital? **Peter Pan.** (Jon Reiser)
- What command did the bloodthirsty king give to his joustier? **Tenderize the Knight!** (Deb Parrish)

- What do you get when you leave the top down on your Plymouth during a storm on the Puget? **The Sound in the Fury.** (Russ Beland)
- What's it called when your kid takes back the Elvis record you bought him? **The Return of the King** (Andrea Rowan, Potomac)
- What's that new Evel Knievel bio? **Of Human Bandage.** (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)
- Did you hear about the monks who've started working as dogcatchers? **The Brothers Carry Mutts Off.** (Joan M. Sieber, Alexandria)
- What does the Michelin guide to Massachusetts recommend? **The Boss, Tony Inns.** (Chris Doyle)
- What was your employee number at the Mustang Ranch? **Crotch 22.** (Russell Beland)
- What did Khrushchev say when he met Kennedy? **I'm a K, You're a K** (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)
- What did Monica call her autobiography? **The Book of Job** (Russell Beland)
- How do you cheer for someone who sits on his butt all day? **Go, Ass-Callus!** (Chris Doyle)
- What was even more upsetting than the hanging? **The Executioner's Thong.** (Chris Doyle; Tom Witte)
- What's the guide they're giving out to NBA players about groupies? **How to Avoid Pro Bait** (Peter Metrinko, Plymouth, Minn.)
- How did Alexandra ask Nicholas for a night of kinky sex? **Wear the Wild Thing, Czar** (Chris Doyle)
- And Last:** What 1931 bestseller needs no smart-alecky setup? **"Boners: Being a Collection of Schoolboy Wisdom, or Knowledge as It Is Sometimes Written."** (Chris Doyle)

Next Week: Murphy's Lore, or Eric the Wed

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Wedded to Their Ill-Conceived Plans

With all the lists, notebooks and Web sites that people use to plan weddings, they still keep getting the proper order of events backward. And Miss Manners isn't even counting the widespread notion that consummation should occur before committing to courtship, and house-holding before becoming engaged.

She is referring to other practices that have become commonplace:

- Deciding where to be married and planning a string of related events before determining if the couple's families can or will spend the amount of time and money they would have to in order to have the expected pleasure—or perform the duty—of attending a relative's wedding.
- Finding the site for the reception and then dealing with its limitations when composing the guest list, rather than first figuring out who should be invited and finding a place that will accommodate them all.
- Choosing the bridesmaids' dresses before hearing the bridesmaids' views about what will suit each of them and what each can afford, and telling them what parties to throw without being asked.
- Selecting the wedding presents without waiting to see what the guests might care to give, and then letting the guests know what to buy without being asked.
- Throughout all the planning, making decisions without having accumulated the money to pay for their results.

These upside-down approaches lead to much of the ugliness now associated with weddings. It is only the beginning when the bridesmaids find out what they have implicitly agreed to wear without having been given any warning or say, and deliver their opinions after the fact.

When the invitations go out, those who could reasonably expect to be invited ("reasonably" meaning relatives, friends and those who issued invitations to their own weddings, not office colleagues and other volunteers) but who were cut because of space limitations are, with good reason, hurt.

Then there are the people who are invited but who calculate what attending would involve. In a mobile society, wedding guests are used to

having to travel, as the principals rarely live all in the same place. It is something else altogether, however, to be issued an entire holiday package, planned by others but at the guests' expense.

Furthermore, guests are likely to be targeted when the couple deals with the gap between their resources and their plans. A myriad of nasty little schemes for profiting from the guests has arisen, as if marriage conferred a license to beg.

Presents are preselected and announced by the couple—if, indeed, they don't ask for cash. Three or more rounds can be expected—for an engagement party, any number of showers and the wedding—and the registries show that these are not to be trivial.

To avoid this sort of trouble, the couple need only turn their planning notebooks upside down, so that they fit their plans to the people they should invite and the money they can spend, instead of the other way around.

Dear Miss Manners:

I was ready to leave a parking space this morning. I was belted in and my engine was started. A young woman stepped into the space between my car and the car next to mine and began a cell phone call. It was unsafe for me to pull out, so I waited until she finished. Fortunately, it was only a couple of minutes.

Since then, I have examined the alternatives to waiting had she taken longer. Would exiting my car, excusing myself for interrupting and asking her to please move have been acceptable? Do you recommend any more expeditious action?

If those are the only alternatives that came to mind, Miss Manners congratulates you. You might even have been forgiven for honking and watching her jump.

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at MissManners@unitedmedia.com or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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DEAR ABBY

Dear Abby:
I have a friend I'll call Cameron. Cameron is a very judgmental person. My mom watches her every summer.

Mom doesn't like the fact that Cameron is always saying how dumb and stupid people look as she sees them pass by. Mom is going to talk to her and tell her to straighten up or she can't come over next summer. If that happens, I know Cameron will ask me why she can't. What do I tell her? If I tell her the truth, I'm afraid she'll be mad at me and not want to be my friend anymore. I don't want to lose my friendship with her because she makes me laugh.

Worried in Denver

When your mother talks to your friend about her behavior, she'll be doing the girl a favor. If Cameron feels the need to ask you why she's no longer welcome, you should tell her the truth. Her behavior is obnoxious. People who act that way usually do it because they think it makes them look superior. In actuality, it's a tip-off that the person is insecure.

Dear Abby:
After my separation and divorce, I had a relationship with a man I'll call "Austen." He was in financial trouble and asked me to take out a loan of \$15,000 for him, since I have good credit. He claimed that if he could get himself "straightened out," we could have a brighter future.

After two years of emotional abuse, I finally ended the relationship. It has been several months, and he is consistently late making the monthly payments. Last month, he told me that since I won't resume the relationship, I can go to hell and said not to call him again.

I am now stuck with the burden of paying off the loan. Any ideas how to persuade Austen to fulfill his responsibility?

Feels Like a Sucker, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Unless his name is on the loan document, the financial responsibility is all yours. Consider what happened to be very expensive tuition in the school of experience. I'll bet you don't make that mistake again.

Dear Abby:
I am a 33-year-old mother of two. I have been in a relationship with a married 41-year-old man for four years.

About a year and a half ago, he filed for divorce and had her served with the papers. She signed them, but she signed in the wrong spot. He went back to his lawyer's office and got new papers for her to sign, but for some reason he has not pursued it.

The lawyer's office finally sent a letter saying that they're going to dismiss the case if he doesn't come back and file to have her served by the constable. I told him I would give him the \$350, but he hasn't taken me up on my offer. What do you think I should do?

Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired

For openers, forget about marrying him. He's still married. The problem isn't that the man has a lack of money; what he lacks is motivation.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

“Who's that playing with Minnie?” I asked Mabel, our club manager. Minnie Bottoms is our senior member. Her old bifocals make her mix up kings and jacks, usually to her opponents' chagrin.

“That's Minnie's baby sister, Lotta,” Mabel replied. “She's only 79. She's here visiting.”
A duplicate was in progress, and since the Bottoms sisters were about to play against Cy the Cynic, I sat down to watch. Minnie usually makes mincemeat of Cy. Sure enough, Cy landed at a strange 3NT—North's raise was inexplicable—and Minnie, West, led the eight of clubs. Cy welcomed the appearance of dummy's king.

Lotta Bottoms also wore bifocals—held together with adhesive tape. She peered owlishly at dummy and followed with her jack. Cy

then called for a heart from dummy. “It's not your lead,” Lotta murmured. “My king won.”

“Oh boy,” Cy groaned. They got it straightened out, but when Cy played his ace of hearts, Minnie dumped her king! Eventually, Lotta got in with her jack and led her last club, and Minnie ran the clubs. Down two.

“Your sister defends like you, Minnie,” Cy said resignedly, “only more so.”

“All I did was signal high from a doubleton,” Minnie quavered.

“And I know enough to cover an honor,” Lotta added.

Cy threw up his hands in despair.

If East doesn't get rid of her jack of clubs, the clubs are blocked. If West doesn't throw her king of hearts under the ace, she must win the next heart. Either way, Cy would be safe.

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Both sides vulnerable

NORTH		EAST	
♠ A 7 4 2	♥ Q 10 7 5 4 2	♣ K	♦ K 10 9 8 3
♠ J	♥ K 6	♣ A Q 9 8 4 2	♦ J 9 3
♠ 10 8 7 3	♥ A 8		♦ Q J 6
♠ A Q 9 8 4 2	♥ 10 7 6 3		♣ J 5
SOUTH (D)			
♠ Q 6 5	♥ A 8		
♠ A 8	♥ K 9 2		
♠ 10 7 6 3	♥ 10 7 6 3		

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 ♦	2 ♣	2 ♥	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 NT(!)	All Pass

Opening lead: ♣ 8



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