

# The Style Invitational

Week 623: Try to Remember



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**Mnemonic to remember the recently revised presidential line of succession: Vacuous Harry “studies” Shake-speare’s tragic dramas — “Antony,” “Hamlet” — in a college library: He’s hoping to entice erudite vixens.**

**This week’s contest:** Even though he fauxpadly addressed his suggestion to “the Czarina,” the Empress was eventually able to unruffle her feathers, resetttle her tiara, etc., and try out the contest idea sent by John McNamara of Rockville. John notes that since the line of presidential succession was revised by the Senate this year (the secretary of homeland security moves up from 18 to eight heartbeats away), we had better come up with a way to keep this crucial information straight. (For the record: Next in line, of course, is the *Vice president*, followed by: *House speaker*; *Senate president pro tem*; the secretaries of *State*, *Treasury* and *Defense*; the *Attorney general*; and the secretaries of *Homeland security*, the *Interior*, *Agriculture*, *Commerce*, *Labor*, *Health and human services*, *Housing and urban development*, *Transportation*, *Energy*, *Education* and *Veterans affairs*.) **So give us an original mnemonic for this or some other list that someone might want to remember.** Note: We did this contest once before, in 1995 — as will be noted by *eight* perennial Losers who got ink for Week 115 and still blot regularly. So don’t send us old, stale, Internetted stuff, please. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives a tequila-flavored lollipop, complete with worm inside, donated by Mike Connaghan of Alexandria, AND a really ugly one of those squeezey plastic change purses, this one green and imprinted with a white mouth, from the Rio Grande Credit Union of Denver, via DavePrevar of Annapolis.

Other runners-up win a 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](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Aug. 22. Put “Week 623” 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.

Entries 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, whuh-oh, Sept. 11. 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 Mark Eckenwiler of Washington.

**Report from Week 619**, in which we sought poems containing, in order but not necessarily adjacently, four or more successive words on the WordCount.org list of most frequently used words in the British National Corpus, a collection of clearly very diverse Brit writings: A rare Blind T-Shirt goes to Brendan Beary of Great Mills for a superb entry we cannot print here because it contains Word No. 62830 and we are only six pages away from KidsPost.

- ♦ **Third runner-up:** [WordCount words Nos. 5106-5109 are marked with asterisks] **Said Sigmund to comely young Eve,\***  
**“Some mistakes\* will be made on our trip.**  
**At restaurants,\* I do believe,**  
**You’ll be kissing this Freudian’s lip.\*”** (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
- ♦ **Second runner-up:** [6190-6193] **A longing would-be mommy, once her baby was conceived,\***  
**Protested\* that her nausea was not to be believed.**  
**She blamed her morning sickness\* on the mildew in her house**  
**Instead of on her gag-inducing dumb fat toxic\* spouse.**  
(Brenda Ware Jones, Jackson, Miss.)
- ♦ **First runner-up, winner of the Porky Pooper jelly bean-ejecting pig:** [5096-5100] **“An eraser’s called a ‘rubber,’ ”\*\* wrote the lovely, lissome lass.**  
**Her “British English” essay\* just ran rings\* around the class.**  
**But hear me, all good Christians,\* that poor girl learned all too late**  
**As a pregnancy\* preventer, her eraser wasn’t great.** (Brendan Beary)
- ♦ **And the winner of the Inker:**  
[1365-1368] **Cross\* your right arm over now!**  
**Get on your bottom,\* mister!**  
**My mouth’s so close, I’ll eat\* your foot!\***  
**(Don’t freak. We’re playing Twister.)** (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)

- ♦ **Honorable Mentions:**  
[8-11] **“Is” is what is; it\* is\* not what was.\***  
**When I\* said “it depends,” I said it**  
**because**  
**“Was” ain’t included when I say “there**  
**is”**  
**Concerning that woman, that Lewinsky**  
**Ms.**  
**(W.J. Clinton, New York)**  
(Fred S. Souk, Reston)
- [372-376] **“Society\* seemed\* kind,”\*\* began\***  
**God,\***  
**“But then morals hit bottom.**  
**So I wreaked some havoc on**  
**Gomorrah and Sodom.”**  
(Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)
- [402-405] **It’s a very hard\* job\***  
**Among\* George Bush’s staff\*:**  
**You must nod while he talks**  
**And try hard not to laugh.**  
(Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)
- [418-421] **He’s run\* me quite ragged (though**  
**there’s surely no malice)**  
**With “special!”\* demands that could**  
**land me in traction,**  
**So as a result\* I will hide his Cialis,**  
**And soon he’ll be back to all talk**  
**and no action.\***  
(Chris Doyle)
- [548-551] **The state’s Mohels Union\* was one**  
**person too large,**  
**With its total\* too high in December.**  
**The solution was clear, so the fellows**  
**in charge**  
**Made a motion and then cut\* a**  
**member.\***  
(Seth Brown)
- [3190-3195] **“Please do not harm\* me,” Joseph\***  
**cried\* to his brothers.**  
**“We have been like your servants\*,”**  
**they cruelly replied.**  
**“Your dreams have dismissed\* our**  
**importance to others.”**  
**They did not suspect\* that the dreams**  
**had not lied.**  
(Marleen and Lorraine May, Rockville)
- [6025-6028] **This morning my wife ordered me:**  
**“Pete!\***  
**Stem\* upright!\* Pump\* it more! More!”**  
**(Filling up her bicycle tire**  
**is such a tedious chore.)**  
(Peter Metrinko)

- [6428-6431] **Because of the public’s**  
**jumping\* perceptions,\***  
**Adjusted\* propaganda\* is needed**  
**So let’s try some new deceptions —**  
**The press will be easily stampeded.**  
**(K. Rove, Washington)** (Peter Metrinko)
- [Anti-Invitational: backward from 11479-11476] **Ukrainian\* chickens,\* instinctive\***  
**notoriously,\***  
**Know when the kitchen is working**  
**laboriously:**  
**They’ll be Chicken Kiev, prepared oh so**  
**gloriously.** (Peter Metrinko)
- [12558-12561] **The day poor Elvis\***  
**strained to death while sitting on the**  
**potty,**  
**No shotgun\* was found in the room, just**  
**drugs that made him dotty.**  
**Post-mortem rubble\*-sifting showed**  
**not one sign of foul play.**  
**The write-up, a formality,\* just said,**  
**“King Died Today.”** (Michelle Stupak)
- [13327-13330] **Fuel prices leap up by bucks\***  
**incremental.**  
**My AC’s control switch? A thing**  
**ornamental.\***  
**The prosperous merchants of OPEC\* —**  
**sans liquors —**  
**Rejoice, while I swelter in nothing but**  
**knickers.\*** (Mark Eckenwiler)
- [14208-14211] **Pausing\* to think of a nice little verse,**  
**I came up with garbage that just made**  
**me curse.**  
**And, angered,\* I tore up the works I had**  
**wrought\* —**  
**A loser\* I am, but a poet I’m not.**  
(Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)
- [38515-38518] **The standardized tests**  
**are dumbed down to the point**  
**Even stragglers\* can’t get them wrong:**  
**“ ‘Sophocles,\* ‘carburettor,\***  
**‘Aristophanes\*’:**  
**Which of these doesn’t belong?”**  
(Brendan Beary)
- [86795-86798] **Low-numbered words from WordCount**  
**Can make poems without an absurd**  
**count.**  
**But for high-numbered ones to ring**  
**true,**  
**You need a high tolerance for**  
**multilingualism\* and tangency\* (in case**  
**of a word from a dialect of Carniola\*)**  
**And the not quite workless\* form of**  
**poetry called clerihew.**  
(Dan Seidman, Watertown, Mass.)

Next Week: Keep the Empress Employed, or Enl@rge yuor c1rculatiOn!



BY RICKY CARIOTI — THE WASHINGTON POST

Jay Justice of Baltimore polishes his 2002 Old School Chopper at the East Coast Sturgis in Little Orleans yesterday.

## A Roaring Good Time

RALLY, From D1

N.Y., near Buffalo. Fat Bob just laughed. After a few loud minutes they cut their engines and got another beer.

Yes, it was a bike rally — but perhaps not the kind you were expecting if you had watched too many movies about outlaw bikers or seen too much marketing about the new, upscale motorcyclists. Something else was going on here.

By yesterday morning, as thousands of riders thundered onto the campground in this tiny hillside town between Hancock and Cumberland, and more emerged blinking from their tents and campers where they had spent the past two days, it sure looked like a bike rally.

Chrome gleamed in the pitiless sun on the midway field where the big machines were parked in long, kickstand-tilted ranks. Fenders hawked leather accessories, tattoos, jewelry, knives, spare parts and T-shirts with naughty slogans. Bands played rock-and-roll from two stages. Men were as proud of their beer bellies as not a few women were of their uncovered breasts, and both admired one another’s tattoos. Beer was \$2 to raise money for the Orleans Volunteer Fire Department, or you could bring your own. The two-wheeled parade was laden with coolers and ice bags stacked like pillows.

This was the second annual East Coast Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, music festival, campout and four-day party. It is when Little Orleans loses its identity to a much more famous small town: Sturgis, S.D. The annual summer Sturgis Motorcycle Rally draws hundreds of thousands of bikers to that gorgeous western riding country near Deadwood and Mount Rushmore. It is a biker’s mecca, and most make at least one pilgrimage in their lifetime.

But since Sturgis is too far for some East Coast riders to make the trip regularly, a bike event promoter named Ken Appel, 45, decided he’d bring Sturgis here. He owns the campground on Apple Mountain. He charged bikers \$45 for four days, \$35 if you could make only Friday through Sunday. Last year, the first year, Little Orleans wasn’t sure what to make of so many bikers descending on the community, and local merchants may have been nervous, according to volunteer fire chief Dave Yonker. But the crowd turned out to be so mellow and polite — and so willing to spend money — that this year Little Orleans was looking forward to it, Yonker said.

Appel estimated 5,000 or more would attend by weekend. In addition to spending untold dollars on gas and supplies, the bikers will raise an estimated \$3,500 for the fire department in beer purchases, Yonker said, and they raised \$1,000 for the local Little League via a charity ride Friday, Appel said.

There were biking competitions scheduled for yesterday, including a slow ride — the last person across the finish ride wins, but you lose if you go so slow you have to put your foot down. A demolition derby was to be held late in the day, using surplus Hondas from the U.S. Secret Service Uniformed Division that still bore the agency’s insignia.

So, yes, it was a bike rally, with all its attendant iconography of skulls and leather and pierced and painted flesh and grim-looking road warriors, lean dudes in leather vests, wraparound shades, heavy boots and black helmets trailing long, almost delicately braided ponytails. That was one extreme. And there was the other extreme, as well, the marketer’s fantasy of prosperous looking men in polo shirts and pre-faded jeans riding BMWs or other top-of-the-line models costing \$25,000 and up.

But the extremes are not where biking is at now. In fact, in America, does anything really dwell at the extremes, except in advertising and image? East Coast Sturgis was the vast middle — middle-aged people with middle-class jobs and a median number of kids who might even grow up to be bikers, too. They were here to enjoy the cocoon of not being extreme, of existing in a crowd where everyone shared the same passion.

As Appel promised on his Web site, “Four fun-filled days and nights of living the biker lifestyle. . . it’s like a feeling, a feeling you get when you leave your worries behind. . . I think this event probably grew out of that feeling. Everybody coming here to the mountain to get away from the hassles.”

Appel banned gang colors from the event and said more than once: “Zero tolerance for attitudes.” Friday night was peaceful, and Saturday was shaping up that way.

Everybody was unfailingly polite and almost utopian in their outlook. Maybe it was the beer. It was like an encampment of grateful Deadheads, only with different stimulants of choice. (Maryland Natural Resources Police did arrest one biker outside the campground for alleged possession of marijuana).

Scratch a leather-faced road warrior and you’d find a sentimentalist inside, a romantic. A happily married man, a dad, a guy who has to get up Monday morning and go to work. Fat Bob.

Fat Bob is not his name. That’s the name of one of his first bikes, more than 20 years ago, which he memorialized in big blue letters on his belly. Now Thomas Sinenx Jr. is a 42-year-old forklift operator for Wal-Mart from Dover, Del., at East Coast Sturgis to celebrate his 21st wedding anniversary with his wife, Sherrie, 42. She sells classified ads for the Delaware State News and rode down on the back of his bike.

“Coming here was our gift to each other,” Thomas Sinenx said.

Strapped to the side of his bike was a spear-like pole with antlers on top from a deer he had shot. It’s an artifact of his Indian heritage, he said, and his tattoos — a

bird, a black panther, an eagle, “Mom” — are also part of his presentation.

“I’ve been riding for 30 years and I’m proud of who I am,” he said.

Sitting around the same campfire were bikers from all over, new friends. There was Scott Herald and his girlfriend, also from Upstate New York, and Herald’s father, Luther, 67, a retired truck driver who rode up from Morton, Tex. They had planned to go to the “big” Sturgis in South Dakota but ended up not having enough time and money for the trip.

“I’ve been riding since before I can remember,” Scott Herald said. “My dad’s a biker, I’m a biker and my kids will be bikers. It’s a friendship and a fellowship.”

Sitting by the same fire were brothers-in-law from Ellicott City, Bill Trogler, 53, a Department of Defense employee, and Terry Felt, 46, a truck driver and rigger. They, too, had been headed to big Sturgis but changed their plans. Trogler has already made that trip once.

“To me there’s nothing more relaxing than riding a motorcycle on old back roads,” he said.

Campfires gleamed throughout the woods, while classic rock songs blasted from the stage. In one clearing, a tall man drinking an excellent microbrew from Vermont beckoned visitors into the golden circle of old friends and new machines.

He was Dave Blake, 46, a ski-lift technician at the Stratton Mountain Resort in Vermont, and he explained his presence at East Coast Sturgis this way: “I have a new bike and I wanted to ride 572 miles one way so I could have a beer.”

He rode down with Peter Davis, 47, a firefighter from near Poughkeepsie, N.Y., while their wives drove in a car with beer and other supplies. It was 90-plus degrees the whole way, and the wind in their faces felt like gusts from a furnace.

“Ninety percent of the fun is getting there,” said Davis, resorting to a clichéd phrase among bikers.

Even in that heat?  
“No, it [stunk],” he confessed. “But the *principle* of it was fun.”

The meaning and appeal of biking changes as you get older. Terry Rhoads, 47, a cable splicing technician with a telephone company, started riding when he was 16 because he liked the tough image, “the I-don’t-give-a-[hoot] kind of thing.” At East Coast Sturgis, he was shirtless, wearing devil horns glued onto his bald head and showing some tattoos.

Now he appreciates the less tangible rewards of riding. “When you’re out on your motorcycle you’re free, the wind in your face. . . when you have problems and [stuff], ride, just ride. Think your problems through.”

Rhoads and his friends from Essex, including Bob Ikema, 50, and Audrey Barnes, 41, were serving spaghetti to anyone who passed.

A young woman who called herself Gypsy stopped by, selling beads. If you bought a string for \$5 and were interested, Gypsy would bare her breasts for you. Rhoads and Ikema bought beads and requested the display.

In a body art booth, some women had their breasts painted with Harley-Davidson logos and other designs. “It ain’t a thing, it’s just [breasts],” Gypsy said later.

This somehow seemed to fit with that segment of biker culture that is partial to magazine covers with chicks on bikes. But there was another feminine influence coming into its own. While some women said their place was behind their man on his bike, others highlighted that they had their own bikes and could ride just as well on their own.

“I got tired of too many bad relationships” with the guys who were driving, said Barnes, a field inspector with a public utility whose boyfriend stayed at home. So three years ago she got her own bike. She said she has successfully raised her daughter through high school and now it’s mom’s time to be born free, and born to be wild. She was wearing a Harley T-shirt and had a long blond ponytail.

“I wanted to be on the front, I wanted to be in control,” she said. “I haven’t been anywhere and this was someplace I definitely wanted to go. . . We all have jobs, we all have responsibilities, but we all have a ton of good fun.”

By late afternoon, the riders had spent hours on the midway, checking out each others’ hardware, the expensive bikes with machine-tooled accessories, the antiques, the regular old runabouts, parked side-by-side with no discrimination.

Charles Reese, 49, owner of a financial services brokerage in Baltimore, was showing off his Honda Rune, a rare model, worth about \$34,000 with all the extras.

“Spielberg bought one for Tom Cruise,” he said.

He’s planning to ride to Alaska next year for his 50th birthday.

“You think about the Old West and guys getting on a pony and kicking it cross the country,” he said. “This is my pony.”

Next to him was John Asher, 49, foreman for a utility contractor, owner of a humbler but still impressive Harley. He’s riding to the big Sturgis next year for his 50th birthday. He started riding in the 1970s, but then gave it up when he settled down and had a family. He and his wife raised a son, 19, and a daughter, 17. A few years ago he got his Harley and he was a biker again.

“I’m going through a second childhood,” he said. From the stage, between bands, the P.A. system was playing Led Zeppelin, people were dancing and watching the motorcycle competitions, new arrivals roared onto the field, the air smelled like beer and fried food.

The pony, the second childhood, the wind in your face, the sound of engines in the woods, riding in front not in back — it was all the call of the wild to people who wanted to be.