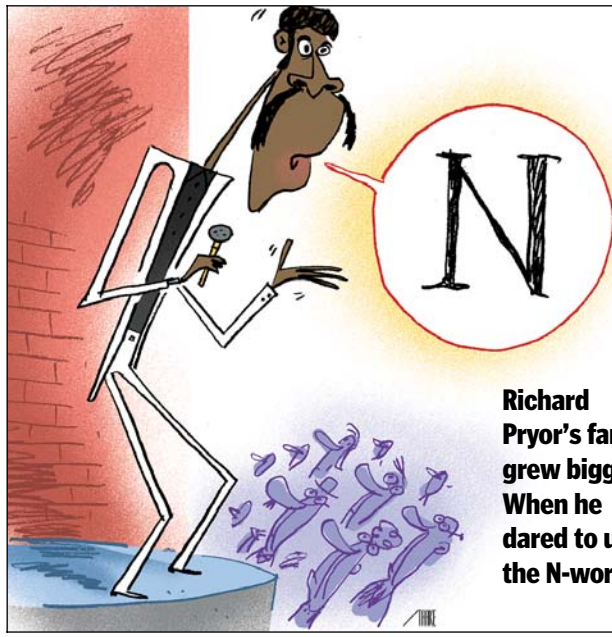


The Style Invitational



Richard Pryor's fame grew bigger / When he dared to use the N-word.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 643: The Post's Mortems

What more uplifting way to stride off into the New Year than to stomp our feet into the old, with some doggerel about dead people? It's Year 3 of Dead Letters: **Give us a rhyming poem about some notable who died in 2005**, as in the example above. Okay, the example doesn't technically rhyme, but then again, the Empress doesn't always technically follow the rules, even her own. As always, poems of more than four lines had better be dead-raisingly brilliant.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives "Treasure Trove of Ideas," a handsome set of DVDs from the government of Hong Kong, somehow parted with by Mark Eckenwiler of Washington. This box set includes hits such as "Patent Strategy," "Let's Talk About Copyright" and "Freed Riders of the Economy."



BY JULIA EMAN — THE WASHINGTON POST

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt, like the one above. 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, Jan. 9. Include "Week 643" 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 humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published Jan. 29. 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 Tom Witte of Montgomery Village.

REPORT FROM WEEK 639

In which we asked, as a counterpart to the Service Employees International Union's contest for sensible ideas to improve the lives of everyday Americans, some, well, less-than-sensible ideas. Some entries were actually sensible, but only in a Loserly way; many people, for example, suggested a device to reroute telemarketing calls to other telemarketers. However, they made our Do Not Ink list.

- 4** Implant earphone jacks in all infants at birth to allow for more convenient iPod connectivity as toddlers. (Robin D. Grove, Woodbridge)
- 3** Establish collection points where people would deposit their old toothpaste tubes. There would be community vises to squeeze out the last little bits, which will be put in new tubes and distributed to people who can't afford toothpaste. (Bruce W. Alter, Fairfax Station)
- 2** The winner of the bottle of genuine gold (flakes): To make sure 911 calls are processed correctly, institute a computerized screening service: "Welcome to 911. Please listen carefully, as some of our menu items have changed. If you have a murder in progress to report, press 1; for assault with a deadly weapon, press 2; for a fire covering more than 1,000 square feet, press 3. . . ." (Andrew Cook, McLean)

1 AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

Deliver a piece of dog poop in each bag along with The Post. That way, all those people won't have to wander the streets collecting their own. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

HONORABLE MENTIONS

- We should make every month 30 days long. That would make life so much simpler. Of course, we'd have to figure out how to slow down the Earth a bit so that each year is 360 days. Maybe rocket engines.** (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- Increase the Points of Light to 2,000.** (Cecil J. Clark, Asheville, N.C.)
- Packages of cookies should have a hidden pouch, so if someone eats the last cookie there would still be one in the pouch. Then there could be packages with a hidden pouch and an extra-special hidden pouch, so if someone eats the last cookie and someone else eats the last cookie and the hidden-pouch cookie, there will still be a cookie in the extra-special hidden pouch.** (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)
- Put serial numbers on socks so they are easier to match up.** (Douglas Frank, Crosby, Tex.)
- Outfit all your employees with an electronic morale meter that delivers a shock if morale falls below a given chirpiness level. Smiling staff mean higher sales!** (Martin Bancroft, Ann Arbor, Mich.)
- Create a coin called the Soda. Its value will always be tied to that of a soda in vending machines, so no matter how much the price of soda increases, you can always buy one with this coin.** (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)
- Build cars so that if they are moving and the turn signal is on, the car automatically turns that way after three minutes.** (Douglas Frank)
- Pre-Maid Cleanup Service: They tidy up your house just enough so you're not embarrassed when the maid comes the next day.** (Joel Ross, Herndon)
- Develop remote controls for ATMs so your money can be ready and the drawer open as you drive up.** (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

- Just have Windows boot directly to the blue screen.** (Evan Golub, New Carrollton)
- Extend the science of bathroom "scrubbing bubbles" to toilet tissue.** (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)
- Self-scratching Kenny G. albums.** (Art Grinath)
- Why just fortune cookies? Why not fortune meat loaf! Fortune clam chowder! Fortune PB&J sandwiches!** (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)
- Make all locks keyed alike so that if you can't find your keys, can simply ask to borrow one from anyone on the street.** (Evan Golub; Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)
- In bags of frozen vegetables, put a little sticker on every pea and carrot to show the country of origin.** (Thomas L. Schwarz, Burke)
- People who take more than four pennies from the take-a-penny cup should have one more super-glued to their foreheads.** (Fil Feit, Annandale)
- There should be stronger glue on the back of Post-its so they don't practically fall off things all the time.** (Russell Beland)
- We should make a deal with terrorist organizations that we'll never go to war against them and we'll leave their countries if they just agree to turn over all their suicide bombers to us. We'll let the suicide bombers blow up some old, condemned buildings. And they'll get their date with Allah — because their deaths were keeping us infidels out of their countries.** (Peter Metrinko)
- Make the spring and autumn time changes happen at noon so we don't have to get up in the middle of the night to adjust all our clocks.** (Russell Beland)
- Can't we move Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday to some weekend in April? That'd create a nice**

- three-day weekend to fill the gap between Presidents' Day and Memorial Day, and more people would go to the parades for King than in, sheesh, the middle of January.** (Peter Metrinko)
- Citizens who pledge to support staying the course in Iraq will receive a button with the acronym WIN (Whip Iraq Now) in bright blue letters.** (Cecil J. Clark)
- The Service Employees International Union should divide the \$100,000 grand prize into 200,000 prizes of 50 cents each, thereby making many more everyday Americans feel good about themselves.** (John O'Byrne, Dublin)
- Anti-Invitational:* **Home heating costs so much, and we use so much energy on it, and the homeless sometimes freeze to death. So what we need is a simple way to warm the Earth up a few degrees. But how?** (Russell Beland)
- In a special guest appearance, the Uncle of The Style Invitational weighs in with The Uncle's Pick:* **Equip every car with a razor-sharp spear protruding from the steering wheel toward the driver. Such a device would make every driver wish to avoid any sudden stop, and thus all drivers would be inclined to drive much less recklessly.** (Steve Shapiro, Alexandria)
- The Uncle Says:* **What a thoughtful idea for everyone to drive gently in the New Year! The spear should be well padded, though, to ensure safety for all.**
- And Last:* **You mean things aren't perfect the way they are? — G.W.B., Washington** (Kevin Mellema, Falls Church)
- Next Week:* **Whassa Motto Wid You, or Attack of the Killer Dumb Mottos**

TODAY'S HOROSCOPE

Holiday Mathis

- Aries (March 21-April 19)**
There's much to be said about the process of elimination. You discover what you want by getting rid of what you don't want. Start with your closet, using it as a metaphor for your life!
- Taurus (April 20-May 20)**
Old friendships are the deepest. Circumstances that have kept you apart from a friend from the past have changed. If you make the effort to reconnect, you'll be greeted with an outpouring of loving emotion.
- Gemini (May 21-June 21)**
The stars want you to be bold. You could suddenly decide you're not afraid to be vulnerable. As a result, that invisible, untouchable part of you is about to be seen and hugged.
- Cancer (June 22-July 22)**
Stick with a winning strategy and change a losing one. It seems like no-brainer advice, and yet it's amazing how easy it is to forget. When you get stuck, as you will this afternoon, pause to identify what's working and what isn't.
- Leo (July 23-Aug. 22)**
Your personal life seems to be spinning off in a strange direction. Who do you believe controls your fate? It's time to have a heart-to-heart talk with this person, especially if it's you. (By the way, it should be you.)
- Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)**
Well-adjusted people form attachments to others. So, it's always a tricky issue — how attached is too attached? Lately, you feel someone is Superglued to you. You'll have to be the one to decide if it's healthy.
- Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)**
You'll be put into a position to defend your personal space. Maybe the better way is to agree to share. Welcome the invasion. Ask if there's anything else you can do for the intruder. This person will soon be running for the hills.
- Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)**
Lately, it feels like society's emphasis on intimacy is a bit much. Just thinking of all that sentimental closeness turns your stomach. Don't worry, you're not alone in thinking that indiscriminate openness can be downright icky.
- Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)**
Every time you're near a special person, you get a funny feeling inside. Is it love? Should you act on it? Not today. But keep observing your emotions: They reveal something about who you would like to become.
- Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)**
Financially, you've been holding back. That stops now. You'll make more as you resolve to do so. Don't worry about the "how" right now, just concentrate on creating the feeling that you deserve abundance.
- Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)**
The more interested in others you are, the more attractive you will be. Tonight is the perfect date night because you are consumed with curiosity about your companion, not worrying a bit about how he or she perceives you.
- Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20)**
When someone fails to meet an obligation, you're the one who picks up the slack. Let this someone know this cannot happen again or the negligence may become a habit.
- TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (JAN. 1):**
Wisdom is your special astral birthday gift this year. Intelligent choices this month save you from wasting your time and anyone else's. You get right to the point and progress rapidly, especially in matters of the heart. Ego aside, you connect deeply, so February and March are extra sweet. Leos and Sagittarians lavish you with attention.

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ASK AMY

Dear Amy:
I've been sexually involved with an "unhappily" married man since March. I love him deeply, and he tells me he loves me.
But because of my daughter's interference, his wife found out about us and issued a restraining order on me to stay away.
I've contested it, and he is begging me not to show up to court because things will come out.
I don't want to lose him. He says he'll work out ways to see me.
I just don't know what to do.
In Love and Confused

And people wonder why our court system is so backed up. If there is a restraining order against you, then your choices are

to contest it or violate it.
If you violate it, you could end up in jail. Your boyfriend seems willing to have you risk jail time rather than risk face time with his wife.
What a weasel.
FYI, I looked up "weasel" in the dictionary and learned that a weasel feeds on mice and rats and is able to suck out the contents of an egg without destroying its shell. A weasel is sly, cunning and sneaky.
Of course, you sound like something of a weasel too. Under other circumstances, this might have been a match made in heaven, but as it is, you need to find another hobby.

for another woman.
Now I am in a serious relationship. They are still together.
He is constantly hitting on me, and I tried everything I could to give him the message that I want to be left alone (even though I still like him).
What should I do?
I threatened him, begged him to leave me alone and nothing has worked.
Now I feel so stupid and I am losing the last drop of self-respect I have because I am letting him get to me in that special way he has of getting to me.
Lost in Head Games

There are "head games" and then there is sexual harassment. Either he is harassing you and

you don't like it, or he is "getting to you" and you don't like yourself.
If this guy is harassing you at work and you'd like for him to stop, you should notify your manager or office Human Resources professional. Sexual harassment in the workplace is extremely serious and you are both compromising your jobs (if he turns you in for "threatening" him, for instance).
It sounds like you don't want him to stop, however, and — well — that's just sad.
Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611. © 2006 by the Chicago Tribune. Distributed by Tribune Media Services

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Turning Over a New Leaf

How can anyone who keeps electronic records know the excitement of beginning a new year?
It is not that Miss Manners fails to understand the advantages of having a checkbook that adds, a birthday list that nags and an appointment calendar that warns. The only one whose charm eludes her is that on-line diary, the blog.
A proper diary, if it has anything interesting in it at all, comes with a lock and key and is kept in the underwear drawer, under the underwear. Miss Manners would have thought that the risks are obvious when you confide to untold numbers of strangers your opinion of your boss, your classmates or your spouse. As anguished bloggers are shocked to discover, these risks are:
1. Not everyone who reads it is a stranger. Some are classmates, parents, bosses and spouses.
2. No one who reads it feels any compunction about passing on the information to where it might cause damage. And why should anyone, when it is the person most affected who has gone public?
But all that might do is ruin someone's life. Today Miss Manners happens to be dwelling on the poverty of a life in which there are no fresh notebooks.
Even the most fastidious people (of whom you can well imagine Miss Manners herself to be one) find that as a year ends, there are corrections in the margins of the checkbook, arrows on the appointment calendar where dates were mis-entered or changed and entries in the address book that are thick with whited-out numbers. As

on snow that has been too long frozen onto the ground, black squiggles are marring the white background.
And then comes New Year's, with its offering of fresh, untouched books. They may come with gilded edges, leather covers and ribbon bookmarks, but their finest attribute is shared by the humblest bundles of stapled paper and cardboard. They are empty and full of promise:
This year there will be no lapses and no mistakes. Such illusions give us the strength to go on.
Rhapsodies aside, etiquette's only legitimate interest in the matter of social records is that people keep them, in whatever medium they choose, in order to stay out of trouble. Or if they find themselves incapable of doing so, that they marry people who are willing to do it for them.
The essential records are:
An appointment calendar that contains all social, business and holiday commitments, to eliminate the crimes of forgetting an engagement or wriggling out of one by claiming not to have realized that one would have to work or be out of town.
An address book that contains not only correct names, but preferred forms of address, to eliminate the insult of forgetting a married lady's choice of surnames and the ugliness of dropping honorifics entirely for fear of addressing an envelope with one that the addressee finds objectionable.
An entertainment book that contains the allergies, special diets and preferences of one's regular guests, to eliminate the possibilities of poisoning them as well as the bore of listening to them recite their require-

ments after each invitation.
A book of presents given and received, in order to avoid the humiliation of having the same idea twice about the perfect present for someone, especially if the object in question is one that that person gave you.
Perhaps you begin to see why Miss Manners wants to add aesthetic pleasures to these tasks. Besides, New Year's morning is a time that calls for only the very quietest of thrills.
Dear Miss Manners:
My husband and I attend football games in the Northeast in an un-domed stadium. As the season progresses, it can get quite cold. Although it is a sign of respect to remove caps during the playing of the National Anthem prior to sporting events, must one remove a winter hat placed on the head for warmth or as protection from the elements?
How many verses?
No, that is not a factor when it comes to showing respect for the National Anthem. Miss Manners was wondering just how much discomfort this was going to cost you. The answer is that winter hats count as hats, which should be removed, but fortunately earmuffs do not.
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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