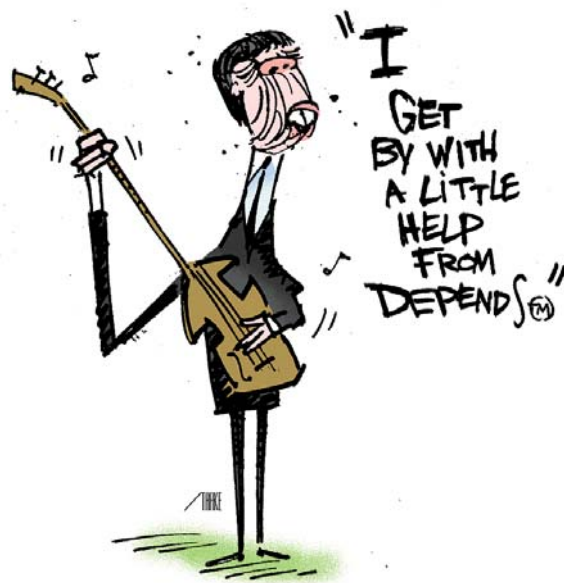


The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

**Week 681:
Ticket to Write**



Having spent her tykehood immersed in now-ancient Mad magazines, the Empress has long been partial to clever song parodies. One problem with parodies: They're not much fun to read if you don't know the song; in past contests, geezers were mystified by a spoof of "Hey Ya," ungeezers by a take on "Begin the Beguine." So we turn to a corpus with which every reputable person of any age is intimately familiar. **This week: Write a jingle for a business (or its product), organization or government agency, set to a Beatles song.**

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives a hefty jar of Sultan's Paste (For Strength), a Turkish blend of honey and 41 herbal products that, according to the package, "has been formulated from the original recipe the ottoman Sultan's Referres to on their harem lives." It was donated by the suspiciously strong-looking Phil Battey of Alexandria.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called this week) 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 Tuesday, Oct. 3. Put "Week 681" 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 Oct. 22. 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 Honorable Mentions name is by Tom Witte of Montgomery Village.

REPORT FROM WEEK 677

In which we asked for poems based on articles in *The Post* or on [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com) from Aug. 28 to Sept. 4: Great week. The editors liked these so much that, as part of their continued effort to liven up the paper to attract more readers, a memo is reportedly in the works announcing that all news copy henceforth will be written as rhyming doggerel, including the stock listings.

- 4** "Castles With Too Much Overhead" I inherited a castle and I thought I was in heaven. But now I see this fairy tale jumps right to Chapter 7. (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)
- 3** "Adrian Fenty for Mayor" (editorial) Cropp and Fenty, Fenty and Cropp, One's gonna rise, and one's gonna drop. Linda and Adrian, Adrian, Linda, One's through the doorway, one's out the window. Twelfth of September, voters aplenty Are making a choice. We're betting on Fenty. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

- 2** The winner of the gross fake ear: "Ex-Colleague Says Armitage Was Source of CIA Leak" Leaky squeakity Richard L. Armitage, Second at State, feels a Morsel of shame: More office gossip than Neocon-spiracy, Seems he's the source of the Valerie Blame. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)



BY JULIA EWAN — THE WASHINGTON POST

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

"Autocrat Leads an Oil-Rich Country" The president of Kazakhstan Is not the world's most kindly man. He pockets bribes, he steals elections, Smiles at puppy vivisections, Yet he suits us to a T. What could fuel this bonhomie? What elusive lubrication Smooths away our confrontation? Shall I name the substance that Makes us love this autocrat? Shall I let the word intrude? That would be . . . crude. (David Smith, Santa Cruz, Calif.)

SCOOP DOGGEREL DOGS

"SAT Records Biggest Score Dip in 31 Years" and "Pope to Debate Evolution With Former Students" Results of this year's SAT Show steep declines in problem-solving. The pope explains, infallibly: It's no surprise — we're not evolving. (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

Mayoral candidate Adrian Fenty is quoted about the police chief: "There's no way [Charles H.] Ramsey is probably going to serve another term." The key is in the "probably": It makes the sentence mean, "The chief will go, unless he stays; there ain't no in-between." For rhetoric this slippery it takes cojones plenty — There's probably no way the voters can't not go for Fenty! (Brendan Beary)

"Couric Sheds 20 Pounds in Doctored Publicity Photo" At CBS, some teenybopper Took Ms. Couric's photo, cropped her, Lopped her, chopped her, Photoshopped her Down to size. And no one stopped her. Katie Couric didn't thank her: Weightiness becomes an anchor. (David Smith)

"Polygamist Agrees to Face Sex Charges in Utah" I won't fight Utah's petition That leads to my extradition, Though some thought I'd try to flee. Isn't that so big o' me? (Russell Beland, Springfield)

"Nicotine Up Sharply in Many Cigarettes" Higglely piggledy Modern-day cigarettes' Nicotine levels are Up quite a bit. P.R.-instinctively, Spokesmen aren't speaking — 'cause

Smoke-screening habits are Quite hard to quit. (Anne Paris, Arlington)

"Gibbs Unhappy With All Phases" Poor Joe could not believe his eyes, His team had gotten burnt! The offense blew, the defense too, And special teams? They weren't. (Roger Dalrymple, Gettysburg, Pa.)

"New Candies are Sweet and Sour and Gross" The trend in children's candy tends to fill me with alarm, A gummy Band-Aid filled with "blood" that you tear off your arm! But to really freak your parents out, here's all you need to know: The prank works even better when they're on an HMO. (Joe Newman, Bethesda)

"O'Malley Seeks \$200,000 Principal Bonuses" O'Malley wants to change the rules: His way to cure the onuses Of working in our direst schools Is massive signing bonuses (A principal deserves a bounty For working in Prince George's County). And though a pun should be abhorred, I couldn't let the hint rest: A frugal principal who scored Could live upon the interest. (David Smith)

"Japanese Women Catch the 'Korean Wave'" A Tokyo she who wants a him Prefers a him who's surnamed Kim. (Bruce Alter, Fairfax Station)

"Snyder Adds New Star to His Lineup: Cruise" The amusement potential is kinda right: It's Napoleon playing with dynamite. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Nation in Brief, Sept. 3

To catch the guy who robbed the bank, The cops were all on watch, Till the satchel with the money Went kablooy! in his crotch. A dye pack with a fuse was in The money he'd demanded; And so the cops saw his distress And caught him red-umm, -handed. (Brendan Beary)

"Medical Practices Blend Health and Faith" For "rhythm only," this I share: You'd better say another prayer. (George Smith, Frederick)

"Rejected as a Planet, Pluto Has a Space in People's Hearts" Twinkle, twinkle, planetoid Out so far in inky void Rocky core with ice enlocked Your planethood has been revoked. Despite the fact you have a moon Your reputation they impugn. But take some comfort in their crime — They'll all be dead in one year's time.* (Paul VerNooy, Wilmington, Del.) *One year on Pluto is 248 Earth years.

"Jennifer Folta Weds Michael Teitelbaum" Folta and Teitelbaum each made a vow The priest and the rabbi drew raves. Mixed marriages seem to be quite common now, Though their ancestors spin in their graves. (Rob Kloak, Springfield)

More Honorable Mentions appear at www.washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

Next Week: Limerick Smackdown!, or Two Aces in a Doggerel Fight

The Best Medicine, Minus the Humor

Laughter Therapy: Plenty of Giggles But No Punch Lines

By ANITA HUSLIN
Washington Post Staff Writer

Ho ho. Ha ha ha. Ho ho! Ha ha ha! HO HO! HA HA HA!!! The bright yellow flier promised "a joyful after-work tuneup with therapeutic effects," and so a half-dozen stressed-out Washington types are standing in the George Washington University Center for Integrative Medicine waving their arms in the air and chanting a warm-up in this evening's "laughter therapy" class. "Ho ho. Ha ha ha," they say, in unison. The instructor — a tall, angular man with somber gabardine trousers, gum-soled shoes and a crisp blue dress shirt — smiles at his charges. Surely this is not what he had in mind? How's he going to put some juice into these mechanical guffaws?

Maybe: So the chicken walks into the library . . .

But there's no chicken joke, no guy in a bar with his dog. Not even a halfhearted knock-knock joke. No lawyers or light bulbs or blondes. There's nothing funny here.

Never mind that. Laughing is good for you. It supposedly opens your arteries, if you believe the research from the University of Maryland; boosts the immune system, according to a Loma Linda University scientist; relieves stress; teaches you how to breathe like a baby. And you don't need Dave Chappelle to achieve these benefits.

So here we are, in a roomful of people practicing mirthless laughter.

"Ho ho. Ha ha ha." Laugh leader Siddharth Shah, who is a physician and psychotherapist, clasps his hands at his waist. He has counseled and treated humanitarian workers responding to disasters and violence, and treats patients here in his psychotherapy practice. The laugh class is one in a series of periodic sessions, which participants pay \$10 to attend. He looks pretty serious.

"I do a little bit of this in the shower every day," he says. "And when I do a session like this, it's as good for me as it is for the people who are doing it."



From left, Washingtonians Pav Singh, Robert Zarr, Bella Dinh-Zarr and Lorraine Wodiska laugh it up to relax and de-stress.

Shah leads the group through the cellphone laugh, where they walk around the room and giggle like they're talking on the phone; the lion laugh, where they lift their arms like paws and roar; the lawn-mower laughter, which has a couple of crank-up laughs and then full-bore guffaws. Now they're gasping for air, and one woman is shaking and starting to cough. They finish the set with a free-form bout of chuckles, snickers, chortles and giggles. It tapers down to a few snorts and hiccups, and then the expiration of a sigh. Hahahahohohaaaaamm.

Humor, after all, is a reaction to the absurdity of life. So the idea of a roomful of people standing around laughing for no reason is kind of funny. Sort of. But as a concept, laughter without humor is not new. It started out as grunting noises emitted by primordial man when he was tickled, as a part of chasing and play, if you buy into the evolutionary tale mapped out by Robert

Provine, a neurologist and psychologist at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. After language and humor developed, the bipeds' grunting noises evolved into the ululations we now call laughing.

But according to Provine, who has done field research on the subject, 80 percent to 90 percent of the times people laugh, nothing funny was said. People laugh to be agreeable. Or because they're nervous. Or trying to attract the opposite sex.

Sometimes it's because they're high. In the early 1800s, promoters such as P.T. Barnum and the young Samuel Colt sold patrons a snort of nitrous oxide, then watched them stagger about, giggling and guffawing uncontrollably, to the amusement of themselves and others.

Maybe there's something to the idea of dispensing with the humor. Thousands of people in 40 countries belong to laughing clubs. (In his early efforts to begin one more than a decade ago in India, founder

Madan Kataria tried telling jokes but ran out of them quickly.) Senior centers in Rockville and Howard County embrace the practice. Even the Pentagon has created laughter clubs to energize its ranks.

The late Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review* for 30 years, introduced the idea to Western medicine after falling ill in 1964. Stricken with a degenerative connective tissue disease in his spine, he hired a nurse to read him funny stories and watched Marx brothers films to distract himself from the pain. He discovered that 15 minutes of hearty laughter could produce two hours of pain-free sleep, and in his 1979 book, "Anatomy of an Illness as Perceived by the Patient," he credited laughter with reversing his illness.

Ten years later, an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* concluded that for patients with chronic illnesses, "laughter has an immediate symptom-relieving effect" on patients

with chronic illnesses . . . an effect that is potentiated when laughter is induced regularly."

Humor as inspiration for laughter may not be necessary. But as much as laughing is a human impulse, so is the instinct to have something to laugh at. Turns out the people in the class, unbeknownst to their instructor, have been thinking funny thoughts.

June Jackson envisions her grandmother trying to stuff herself into a corset. Samit Shah conjures a funny scene from "The Lion King." Lorraine Wodiska simply looks at the other people around the room, waving their hands in the air and cackling, and cracks up.

Catherine Bernard, a Bethesda psychologist, is having a hard time getting into things, until she starts thinking about a Seinfeld episode. "You want to be my latex salesman?" she blurts out and starts sputtering with laughter.

Don't get the joke? Don't worry about it. Humor is optional.

BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

West dealer
E-W vulnerable

NORTH
♠ A 9 5
♥ 7 5 3
♦ Q 9 5 2
♣ A 6 2

WEST
♠ Q 10 6 3
♥ Q J 4
♦ A K J 8 3
♣ 4

EAST
♠ J 8 7 4
♥ K 10 9 8
♦ 10
♣ Q 7 5 3

SOUTH
♠ K 2
♥ A 6 2
♦ 7 6 4
♣ K J 10 9 8

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥	2 ♣
2 ♥	3 ♣	All Pass	

Opening lead: ♦ K

Like many people of my advancing age, I find that my memory isn't quite what it used to be. And like many people, I operate on the theory that if I can't remember something, it couldn't have been too important. That approach can come to grief at the bridge table.

In today's deal, South risked a skinny two-level overall and survived when North had a fair hand with club support. Nevertheless, the resulting contract of three clubs was no lay-down. West cashed the K-A of diamonds and led a third diamond, and East ruffed dummy's nine and shifted to hearts. South took the ace and saw he could get home if he picked up the trumps. Then he could pitch a heart on the queen of diamonds, losing only one heart.

So South next cashed the king of trumps and led another trump. Alas, West discarded, and East's queen was sure to win. Down one.

How can South know to play East for the queen of trumps?

South must have forgotten the bidding, but it's usually important enough to remember. South can get an inferential count of the East-West distribution. He knows that East had one diamond and West had five. South also knows that East had four hearts to bid hearts but West needed three to raise. Moreover, neither East nor West has five spades since neither player bid spades; each defender has four.

South therefore places East with 4-4-1-4 distribution. After South takes the ace of hearts, he leads a trump to the ace and returns a trump to his jack, knowing the finesse will win.

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