

# The Style Invitational

## THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

### Week 691: Haven't Got a Clue



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**47 Across Actual clue:** Aeneas' foot ailment?  
**New clue:** It caused Helen's face to sink a thousand ships.

Here's a crossword that appeared in the Nov. 18 Washington Post. The clues to the words ranged from ooh-clever to ah-that's-funny to nothing-special. **This week: Make all the clues ooh-clever or at least ah-that's-funny, even the little words.** Offer as many as you like (please indicate the number and direction for your clue) and we'll use the best clue for each word, and maybe some alternates. As with many crosswords, you can offer a clue whose answer encompasses two or more of the words in the puzzle. Regular Losers will notice that this is basically a mega-"Jeopardy!" contest.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives two tiny tins of Healthy Desserts™, in the Carrot Cake and Berry Cobbler flavors. These were on the "giveaway table" here in the Style section, and the Empress, who's famous for snarfing up any comestible within reach, grabbed them along with a third can, Pumpkin Crumble, which she sampled. It was, by far, the most tasteless, bad-textured dessert she had ever tried; even though the can advertised "less than 100 calories per serving" (not to mention "Healthy"), she was astonished that any human being would eat this stuff. It wasn't until she saw a recommendation in that next day's Food section that she realized that it was, ahem, dog food. It turns out that "Dog Treat" does appear on the can, off to the side at the bottom, in white lettering approximately the size of a flea.

**Other runners-up** win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called this week) get a lusted-after Style Invitational magnet. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@waspost.com](mailto:losers@waspost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Dec. 11. Put "Week 691" 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 Dec. 31. 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. This week's Honorable Mentions title and the new contest were both suggested by Kevin Dopart.

## REPORT FROM WEEK 687

In which we asked for jokes in the classic form "What they said / what they were thinking":

- 4** "Do I blame the president for replacing me? Heavens, no!" ["... Will I exorcise the buffoon in my memoir? Absolutely!"] (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)
- 3** "As you can see, we made a small, delicate incision in the patient's left atrial wall." ["Oops."] (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)
- 2** The winner of the rubbery Grow a Boyfriend and Grow a Girlfriend figures: "Sure, I'll be happy to feed your cat for a few days." ["Sure, I'll enjoy looking through all your drawers."] (Drew Bennett, Alexandria)



## AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

"Oh, no, I didn't even notice that zit on your nose until you pointed it out to me." ["... Rudolf."] (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

## SUB-TEXTS

"How can I help you?" ["How can I get rid of you?"] (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

"What fragrant perfume." ["Why don't you just wear Magic Tree Car Air Fresheners as earrings?"] (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

"Your call is important to us" ["... though not so important that we'd pay someone minimum wage to answer it."] (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)

"We're about to experience some minor turbulence." ["Dang. Where's the page about 'loose wing'?"] (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

**Telemarker:** "How are you doing this evening?" ["I'm not eating dinner, so why should you?"] (Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.)

**Guy:** "Stunning necklace!" ["Stunning bazongas!"] (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

**Mechanic:** "We've figured out that it's the manifold..." ["... benefits of bilking you."] (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

"A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle." ["Ugh, I look so fat."] (Roy Ashley, Washington)

"To be, or not to be?" ["Methinks I'll go with 'be.'"] (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

"The Gallaudet math department stands behind you 110 percent, President Fernandes." ["In base 3."] (Peter Metrinko)

"So let's give a welcome to Macaca here. Welcome to America, and the real world of Virginia." ["I just welcomed myself into the real world of imminent unemployment."] (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

"I live in a condo in Georgetown." ["... with my parents."] (Chris Doyle)

"Hi, can I buy you a drink?" ["Hi, will you sleep with me in exchange for a vodka and cranberry?"] (Michael Levy, Silver Spring)

"What do you think?" ["And then maybe you'll shut up?"] (Kevin Dopart)

"You were awesome!" ["The sex was gratifying, but I must stifle my articulation lest I divulge our intellectual incompatibility."] (Ned Bent, Oak Hill)

"Don't worry, Senator, you'll find a job on K Street." ["You know that Burger King near 15th?"] (Peter Metrinko)

"I don't understand what those women see in him." ["He won't give me the time of day."] (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

"Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned." ["... especially the lies I'm about to tell you."] (Chris Doyle)

"Think about what I just told you." ["Because I'm going to repeat it several times to help in the reflection process."] (Chuck Smith)

**At a meeting:** "That's a great question." ["... because for once, I actually have an answer."] (Kevin Dopart)

**Bob Dylan:** "I was thinkin' 'bout Alicia Keys, couldn't keep from crying." ["Who the @\$% is Alicia Keys?"] (Greg Johnson, Reston)

"We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal." ["Good thing my plantation slaves won't be reading this."] (Howard Wachspress, Springfield)

"You've put on weight? I couldn't tell." ["Fall asleep on the beach and Greenpeace will push you back into the ocean."] (Dennis Lindsay, Seabrook)

"Now, this mammogram won't hurt at all." ["Just pretend that your breast is caught in the freezer door."] (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

"I don't want to ruin our friendship." ["You're ugly."] (Tom Witte)

"I have not yet begun to fight!" ["... but I HAVE begun to wet my pants."] (Jeff Brechlin, Steve Fahey)

**George Bush, August 2004:** "Our enemies... never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we." ["Our enemies... never stop thinking about new ways to harm our country and our people, and neither do we."] (Kevin Dopart)

**And Lasts:** "Winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy." ["... which is worth a big six bucks, while I get piles of money to copy somebody's e-mail and put it in the paper."] (Drew Bennett)

"I've had jokes printed on 59 different occasions in The Style Invitational, which is a weekly humor contest in The Washington Post, and quite difficult to crack, if I may say so." ["It's about time I thought of a better pickup line."] (John O'Byrne)

"Thanks — it's just what I wanted!" ["She's gonna call this prize The Tackiest Knickknack Ever Manufactured."] (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

**Next Week: Making Short Work, or The InVitational**

## Chase-Lloyd House: Golden Years & Silver Doorknobs

HOUSE, From D1

She is waving her hand for dramatic effect. "We'll be living on synthetic vitamins — OH!" She freezes. "That reminds me."

Reaching into her pocket, she pulls out a handful of pills.

The women feel lucky to live here. They do. The food is fantastic: rack of lamb, roasted vegetables, individual pots of tea at every place setting, creme caramel made with gourmet vanilla. They have a bevy of servants — including cooks, maids, a gardener and handyman, and someone who does their hair every Monday — to wait on them. The house is run by a board of directors who, according to Chase Rideout's will, must be Episcopalian, although Chase Home itself is not affiliated with the church. Because Chase Rideout also created an endowment for the house, its eight residents are charged what they can afford. They put down a \$1,500 deposit, then pay on a sliding scale: Rents can be anywhere from \$200 to \$2,000 a month.

Each woman must also submit a doctor's report affirming that she can care for herself, and must interview with the board members, housing staff and the residents — to try to ensure that everyone gets along.

"And we're looking at their face as we're saying, 'You have to get along,'" says Molly Smith, the vice chair and CEO of Chase. "It's not an easy place to live. It's just so small, and... it's not for people who don't like women. And there are women who don't like women."

The waiting list is long. So yes, the residents tell themselves, they feel lucky. But they can also feel displaced, and isolated, and sad.

Like Regina Freit, who is 87 and has white, swirling hair and a breathless ardor to her speech. "I was an artist," she says, "but now I have Parkinson's." A couple of strokes have deprived her of her hearing and sight, which makes the dining room "difficult for me," she says, "because they say they

can't repeat." She shrugs unhappily. "They don't bother with me much."

"It's like high school," says one of the women who staff the house. "They can be very cliquish."

Ellen Spies came from Florida to live near her daughter. She is 86 years old, a Colonial history buff, and her daughter sold her on Chase as a chance "to live in a fantasy." One afternoon in her room, she worries, apologetically, "I talk too much. I'm lonesome, I guess."

Lorraine Thomason is 83 and grew up on a farm in Gaithersburg. She is the Chase Home's most recent arrival, has lived there only a few months, and already she misses baking pumpkin breads and pecan cream cheese pies in her own kitchen. Every weekday after breakfast, she excuses herself from the table and spends the rest of the day at the nearby senior center.

Madge came not quite two years ago. Her husband was a cryptographer during World War II, "and the other things he did," she says, "we don't talk about." She is rumored to know the truth about Marilyn Monroe's death and who "really" killed JFK. (Well? "I signed the Official Secrets Act," says Madge. "If I opened my mouth, I got shot.") Madge helped found Annapolis's first shelter for battered women.

Betty has lived at Chase for nearly eight years, longer than any of them. In 1999 she left a small cottage in Maine to be closer to her daughter, in Upper Marlboro. It was the 49th move of her life as a Navy wife. Her husband is buried at Arlington, and his portrait and ribbons she has hung over her bed. She has a quiet, watchful demeanor and wears the same pageboy haircut she had as a child. This winter, on her new computer, she plans to write Volume 3 of her autobiography — a project designed to fill the long, dark evenings. Every night, she says, "it's routine: Everybody eats their supper, gets in the elevator, goes to their rooms, and you don't see them again till the next morning. There's nothing on TV. There's nothing to do. There's no one to



PHOTOS BY MELINA MARA — THE WASHINGTON POST

**Regina Freit, Madge Chamberlin and Ellen Spies, from left, eat breakfast in style at the historic Chase-Lloyd House in Annapolis, a National Historic Landmark built in 1769 that is home to eight elderly women. "It's not for people who don't like women," CEO Molly Smith says. "And there are women who don't like women."**

talk to." For years, Betty staved off the loneliness with her best friend, Helen Stitzel, who lived across the hall. They arrived at Chase just a few months apart and became inseparable, celebrating their February birthdays together, doing laundry together every Monday. Each morning, Betty would magnify the crossword puzzle on her computer so Helen could read it, too, and they would solve it together.

A couple of years ago, Helen, who is 92, became ill and had to leave for a nursing home.

"After she moved out," Betty says, "I kind of fell by the wayside. I don't know. I just didn't find anyone that — I wouldn't say compatible, but — we just, we were very alike." She hesitates. "It's hard. I guess everyone finds it hard."

For several of the women at Chase, the biggest worry isn't

necessarily that they will die here, surrounded by people they don't always like.

The biggest worry is that they'll decline, and that wherever they're headed next will be worse.

The ambulance comes for Madge. Twice. She is taken away with a bad case of pneumonia, then is released too soon and is taken away again. She's now at a rehab center, trying to recover. Their fear now sits down in Madge's empty chair: What if she never returns?

There are fears that Regina may be going blind, and eye surgery may be in the offing.

Ellen's leg has begun bothering her, and she's using a cane when she leaves her room. She will soon be taken for X-rays.

And to the bottom of her computer, Betty has posted a yellow sticky bearing one word:



## "ANEURISM."

She's had one before. It's why she came to Chase. After Betty underwent heart surgery, her daughter Kim decided she should no longer live alone, so far from any of her four children. Reluctantly, Betty agreed, even though, she says, "I never wanted to leave my house in Maine." She still regrets giving up her car.

That first aneurysm changed everything about her life. Now another has appeared, and she worries about what this one might change.

In two hours, her daughter will pick her up and take her to see "the nice aneurysm doctor," as Betty calls him, at Johns Hopkins.

See HOUSE, D3, Col. 1