

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 730: Time-Wastes For Everyman



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Along with his entry for Week 726, Loser Russ Taylor of Vienna marveled at the amount of brainpower that must have gone into compiling the database at OEDILF.com, which now includes more than 43,000 limericks defining words in the Oxford English Dictionary — and it's not even finished with the C's. "The OEDILF makes me think that there is a contest in describing activities that make entering The Style Invitational seem like a constructive use of one's time." Okay, seems as good a waste of effort as anything else.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives the Float'n Firefly toothbrush, which besides containing a snow-globish thing in its handle, encourages extensive brushing by flashing red lights in your face for a full 60 seconds. What lovelier way to enjoy the peace of the early morning, now that Howard Stern is no longer on the free airwaves?

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called that 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 Monday, Sept. 17. Put "Week 730" 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. 6. 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 Phil Frankfeld of Washington. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Bruce Alter of Fairfax Station.

REPORT FROM WEEK 726

In which we sought limericks featuring words beginning with cl- through co-:

4 If complacency strikes, you may find That you're not the industrious kind. Though your life could be better, You're not a go-getter. But so what? It's okay, you don't mind. (John Shea, Lansdowne, Pa.)

3 Does my constant repeating suggest That I'm senile or totally stressed? I forget what I've said And it fills me with dread . . . Does my constant repeating suggest . . . (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

2 The winner of the Swedish 2006 year-in-review and the Polish translation of Candace Bushnell's "4 Blondes": At Communion, my soul staves off danger All thanks to that kid from the manger. If I nibble the Host While forgetting the Ghost, I'm just a poor wafering stranger. (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

Though we opened to critics' acclaim, My play died in three days. I'm to blame, Since the title, so vital to any recital, Was "Closed for Repairs" — no one came. (Chris Strolin, Belleville, Ill.)

AABBA'S B-SIDES

Cox was a cocky young coxswain Who because of his heart took digoxswain. He kept all his meds in (And also his Keds in) The boxswain which Cox kept his soxswain. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

"If I said that I hadn't a clue, 'Then, Watson, just what would you do?' 'Well, Holmes, I confess, 'I would probably guess' 'Which is why, Watson, I am not you.' (Richard English, Partridge Green, West Sussex, England)

At the precinct, I stopped up the flow on All the urinals, toilets and so on. But they've none to accuse. As I left them no clues — And the cops have got nothing to go on. (Scott Campisi, Wake Village, Tex.)

The Donald's a whiz with a reel And a shark when he's closing the deal. His slippery morays And conger-line forays Appear in "The Dart of the Eel." (Chris Doyle)

I'll be very direct and succinct: No, the coelacanth isn't extinct. Its existence belies The alleged demise Ichthyologists formerly thinct. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

To clap is a signal of joy, But the clap is a downer, my boy. You go from erotic To antibiotic And pray for the pills you employ. (Jack Held, Fairfax)

As control freaks, we tend to dress neater, And you'll find our suggestions concreter. (A note to the editor: Don't leave out the credit, or Forget to check tone, rhyme and meter.) (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

Body bags, toe tags galore! An examiner, medical? Sure! If your morgue's small in size,

Hire one of our guys — Check the buys at the coroner store. (Bob Dvorak, Saugerties, N.Y.)

"She's commando!" the paper reported. The pictures were certainly sordid. Her life's in a rut: She's going bare-butt. Britney's poor brain must have shorted. (Dan Colilla, Pittsburgh)

Said the captain, "I think there's a sick tie "Tween this half-eaten foot and this licked eye. "Arrest this guy Dahmer "And once we get calmer, "See what's left of the corpus delicti." (Michael Turniansky, Pikesville, Md.)

Glenn Close, who's a popular star, Went into a Hollywood bar. They told her, "My dear, You can't smoke in here." And so it was Close, no cigar. (Mae Scanlan)

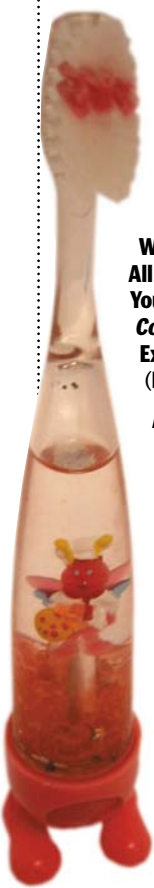
The philosopher rolls in his grave; Two millennia's wisdom and they've Put it inside a cookie You crack for a lookie: "Confucius say: Oh, just behave!" (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

I'm a wonderful son of a gun. Ascertainable flaws? I have none. I'm handsome and tall, Just the greatest of all. (So reports a committee of one.) (Chris Doyle)

Father John's an unfortunate bearer Of news that, by rites, should be rarer. Seems a test will reveal He's a father for real, The result of a clerical error. (Chris Strolin)

Coprophiliacs, welcome! It's true That the Invite appreciates poo. And because you're well versed, You may find yourself first, But we know you'd prefer Number Two. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

This week's prize: Your smile will be dazzled.



How he preached of revolt loud and true, But a coward was he through and through. When the brave went ahead And achieved what he'd said, He'd absconded. Yes, he flew the coup. (Harvey Smith, McLean)

Armed with "facts," Mr. Tenet would stress: "There's a threat we must quickly address. "Send the troops, let's attack! "Take us into Iraq!" Was it counterintelligence? Yes. (Scott Campisi)

The verses of one William Cowper Are thought, for their time, sower-dowper. Well, I tackled "The Castaway" Once, and it fast away Put me right into a stowper. (Mae Scanlan)

Though he sailed Spraddle Creek with bravado, The asthmatic yet fierce despicable Succumbed there at dockside To CO While mooring at Vail CO. (Chris Strolin)

One from Down Under, and pronounced accordingly: When you dance the Brazilian samba, All over your partner you clamba. You're lithe and you're supple Combined as a couple. Exotic. Erotic. Caramba! (Ross Elliffe, Picton, New Zealand)

And Last: Some fame that is finite and fleeting, A shirt with a Loser-themed greeting, A magnet so thin It's as light as a pin — Can't believe it's for these we're competing. (Chris Strolin)

If your appetite for limericks is merely whetted (rather than soaked through), see more Honorable Mentions at www.washingtonpost.com/style/invitational.

Next Week: We Get a C-Section, or A Day Early, a Dollar 15 Short

In Interpreting the Candidates, de la Vega's Accent Is on Perfection

INTERPRET, From C1

cast live in Spanish, on Univision, the highest-rated Spanish-language television network in the United States. It will take place at the University of Miami. Univision is not saying how many viewers it expects, but the network's nightly news program gets an audience of 1.5 million, according to Univision.

The voice of New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton will be done by a woman, of course.

The art and technology of simultaneous interpretation — not translation, that's for printed words, not spoken ones — is a central wrinkle of this candidates forum. It will go down in history as

the pioneering debate in Spanish where . . . speaking Spanish is forbidden! More on that in a minute.

"You need to live that person, and act that person, when you are interpreting for them," de la Vega says by telephone from Miami, where he is the president and founder of Precision Translating Services.

The sound of those vocal cords is familiar to many. For Univision, de la Vega, 58, says he has rendered the pronouncements of every president since Ronald Reagan, plus countless celebrity guests on the network's variety shows.

"When [Attorney General] Alberto Gonzales resigned, I was Alberto Gonzales's voice," de la Vega

says. "Then, about an hour and a half later, President Bush went on the air and talked about that topic, and I was President Bush's voice."

He assigned himself the role of Obama, because, he says, "I like him, I like his platform."

To prepare, he has been studying a DVD of Obama's public speaking and debate performances, absorbing characteristic vocabulary, verbal ticks, inflections. Interpreters for the other candidates, also working for de la Vega's company, have been doing the same. (Nobody needs to bone up on the Republican candidates yet. Only John McCain said yes to Univision's invitation for a GOP debate, so it's on hold.)

"Even though he at times is a fast speaker," de la Vega says of Obama, "his enunciation is impeccable, and that makes it easier for the interpreter."

Obama can actually muddle through a bit of Spanish. On the air recently, he serenaded popular Los Angeles radio DJ Eddie "El Piolin" Sotelo with a few lines of a Mexican ballad.

But it would be muy malo for Obama to break into Spanish on Univision tomorrow night. Ditto for New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, who is Latino and bilingual; and for Connecticut Sen. Christopher Dodd, who became proficient in Spanish during a stint in the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic. When Univision proposed the event last spring, Dodd



BY YESIKA VIVANCO

"You need to live that person, and act that person, when you are interpreting for them," says Vicente J. de la Vega.

and Richardson immediately accepted and made it clear they would do the whole thing in Spanish. Supporters of the other candidates raised questions about that — los gringos and la gringa would have been so shown up, wouldn't they? — and Univision responded with an explicit ban on Spanish from the lips of the candidates.

Here are the linguistic acrobatics: Univision news anchors Maria Elena Salinas and Jorge Ramos will ask the questions in Spanish.

An interpreter will render the questions in English for the candidates, who will wear earpieces. (This is where Dodd and Richardson could jump in to answer without waiting for the interpreter!) Then candidates will answer in English. A team of interpreters will be sitting together at a table offstage. One interpreter will be assigned to each candidate, and each interpreter will have two television monitors, one showing his or her candidate and one showing the whole scene, according to de la Vega.

Viewers at home will hear only Spanish, but Univision will provide closed-captioning of the questions translated into English and the candidates' own English responses.

The forum is a sign of both the growing attention being paid to the Latino electorate and the rising status of Univision for reaching those voters. Nielsen Media Research just started including Spanish-language networks in the same ratings as English-language ones. For the week ending Sept. 2, in prime time, Univision was the top-rated network in any language for viewers ages 18 to 34.

De la Vega has been interpreting for 37 years. He also speaks French, German and Yiddish. He takes a method-school approach to the art. No bland, emotionless voice-overs for him — unless the speaker himself is bland and emotionless. He believes that you have to get into the part.

Say Obama sounds a little sar-

castic in rebutting Clinton. Or distraught about casualties in Iraq. Or amused by some crack by Richardson.

De la Vega will try to capture those nuances in his voice, and will even chuckle, if Obama chuckles. The other interpreters will do the same.

"It's vital. You do need to portray those emotions . . . or the lack of emotion of the speaker for whom you're interpreting," de la Vega says.

Simultaneous interpretations aren't perfectly simultaneous. There will be the slightest delay, from a fraction of a second to a couple of seconds, after the lips stop moving as the interpretation catches up. If the candidates get feisty and there are overlapping interjections, the interpreters will attempt to render that chaos, talking over each other on purpose. Their work is a fluid art, practiced live, with no second chances or time for dictionary consultation.

It's exhausting work, made somewhat easier in this case by the one-minute time limit on candidates' answers. To prepare, about an hour before showtime, de la Vega will meditate, to relax and clear his mind. He will not eat a heavy meal. Just an energy bar or two, and some almonds, which he finds give him the best lift. He drinks water at room temperature, because cold water will affect his vocal cords and change the quality of his voice.

He's ready with possible interpretations of the buzzwords of current political discourse:

No child left behind? Que no quede rezagado ningun niño.

Pathway to citizenship? Legalizarse.

First responders: Los primeros en responder.

Conditions on the ground: El estado del terreno.

Drawdown of troops: Retirar las tropas.

Afterward, he'll need a couple of hours to unwind.

"When you finish working and you're ready to go home, you turn the radio on and it's very difficult to stop mentally simultaneously interpreting what you hear on the radio," he says.

It will be another mission accomplished for Univision's voice of presidents. Who knows if the next president was in the room? Perhaps de la Vega will be called on to assume the next presidential voice as well. Unless it is the voice of a woman. Or a man who already speaks Spanish.

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