

BY PAT MYERS

Report from Week 901

our annual contest for poems about people (and the occasional animal) who died in the previous year: We had an especially strong group of, um, cryptograms to choose from this year: See more fine poems in our Web-only supplement at www.washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.



BOB STAAKE

**THE
WINNER
OF THE
INKER**

4-foot-3 actress Zelda Rubinstein and 7-foot-7 Manute Bol:

One can hardly compute that like Zelda, Manute Was seen just for his size at the start. Their success was their pride, but last year, well, they died Just six months and a yardstick apart. (Christopher Lamora, Guatemala City)

2 Winner of the Flarp electric noisemaker:

Humbledly, fumbledly, Theodore "Ted" Sorensen, Kennedy speechwriter's Put on the spot. Pressed for the author of "Profiles in Courage," he Characteristically Counsels, "Ask not." (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

3 Alexander Haig:

St. Peter pulled General Haig to one side, "Considering things from your prior profession,

This bit of advice I'm compelled to provide: You're VERY far down in our line of succession." (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

4 Elizabeth Post, etiquette expert:

Mrs. Post regrets that she is truly quite unable To accept your generosity and grace your dinner table. Seems a pressing invitation couldn't be ignored; The honour of her presence was requested by the Lord. (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

Further adieux: honorable mentions

Leslie Nielsen:

O, Leslie of the platinum mane, Although you've flown too early, Your wit won't cease to entertain. You'll be remembered, Shirley. (Roger Stone, Gaithersburg)

The inventor of the neutron bomb, which destroys people but not buildings:

Sam Cohen invented the famed neutron bomb; His demise, of course, mourned by his spouse. It should also be noted, if only in passing, He was also survived by his house. (Mike Hammer, Arlington)

Alas, Richard Holbrooke has met his fate, The one thing he couldn't negotiate. (Steve Ettinger, Chevy Chase)

Sen. Robert Byrd:

He mastered Senate rules as well as country violin, So Bobby Byrd would always know which tune was gonna win. When Bobby got to Heaven's gate, Saint Peter tossed his notes Because he knew that Bobby Byrd already had the votes. (Gary Welsh, Potomac)

Soaps actress Helen Wagner:

To Helen Wagner our hats we do doff. As the world turned, dear Helen got off. (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

Sens. Ted Stevens and Robert Byrd:

The Heavenly Senate got Stevens and Byrd, Now freshmen *angeli politici*. In bids to make "pork" a more biblical word, They've just filibustered Leviticus. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)

Ali Hassan al-Majeed:

"Chemical Ali" was hanged

for gassing all those Kurds, A major crime against the law of war, So now it's time to say goodbye and tell him "Sarin-ara — You just can't cut the mustard anymore." (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

George Steinbrenner:

Ty Cobb, Jackie Robinson, Roy Campanella! Frustration is eating poor George to no end: Just look at those great Hall-of-Famers in Heaven, And Steinbrenner there with no money to spend! (Brendan Beary)

Higgledy piggledy,

Bob Guccione was Fond of exploiting the Feminine bod. Men, even atheists, Glancing at Penthouse, would Involuntarily Whisper, "My God." (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

Senior-citizen porn actress Juliet Anderson

Higgledy piggledy, Juliet Anderson Lived out her golden years Working in porn. Proving (for once) that your Marketability Doesn't depend on the Year you were born. (David Smith, Santa Cruz, Calif.)

Paul the Octopus, World Cup hero:

To a fallen octopod: Peace be with you; go with God. Your predictions caused a fuss; Bless your suckers! (. . . That be us.) (Beverly Sharp)

Next week: What's the good news, or Pollyannals

ONLINE DISCUSSION Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.

This week's contest

Week 905: Anticdotes

Now that the Invite is back to its Sunday roost, we honor our neighbor The Washington Post Magazine, specifically its "Editor's Query" for readers' anecdotes. While the Magazine requires that the recollections be true, the Empress asks only the opposite. And that it be funny and that she not get sued: **Give us an untrue anecdote responding to one of these past Editor's Query topics: Fifty words or so max!** Tell us about:

- A time when you misunderstood an advertisement.
- The moment you knew you were in love.
- A time you should have said yes.
- A time when a piece of clothing changed your life.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a colorful medical poster depicting various types of ulcers, including that of the eye, donated by Jeff Contompasis (he gave up the poster, not the eye).

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet. First Offenders get a smelly, tree-shaped air "freshener" (Fir Stink for their First Ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Feb. 7; Results to be published Feb. 27 (Feb. 25 online). Put "Week 905" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it may be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See more rules at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational. The revised title for next week's results is by Tom Witte. The honorable-mentions subhead is by Nan Reiner. Tom Witte contributed the term "cryptograms."

QUICK SPINS

The Dirtbombs PARTY STORE



Derrick May's techno masterpiece, "Strings of Life," is a wedding cake of a song — expertly constructed, incredibly sweet, absolutely monumental. But in the hands of a rock band like the Dirtbombs, a tune this delicate turns into a slop of icing and a rubble of crumbs.

That's exactly the point of the Dirtbombs' new album, "Party

Store," a nine-song caper in which the Motor City quintet transposes one of Detroit's native pop dialects (techno) into another (garage rock). With "Strings of Life," the band replaces crystalline synthesizers with out-of-tune guitars. Drum machine patterns turn into drum-kit clatter. It's a messy declaration of hometown pride.

Which is to say, the songs on "Party Store" that work best are the songs that don't really work at all. Cybotron's "Cosmic Cars" goes strangely grunge; DJ

Assault's "Tear The Club Up" becomes an apocalyptic pep-rally chant; and the intricate percussion loops of Carl Craig's "Bug In the Bass Bin" devolve into an incoherent drum solo. It's hard not to see it all as a clever metaphor for Detroit's 20th-century decay — and it's even harder not to shout along.

— Chris Richards

AUDIO ONLINE To hear songs from this album and the original techno versions, go to washingtonpost.com/clicktrack.



BRIAN ALESI

THE DIRTBOMBS: "Party Store" will be released Tuesday.