

Style Invitational

BY PAT MYERS

Report from Week 948

in which you were invited to enter any of the previous year's Invitational contests, with possible updating of the subject matter. A number of space-consuming entries appear in the online Invite at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.



For Week 927, Burma Shave-style highway signs:

**P i k a t a r g t
L o d o u r g n;
U s o u r b u l e t s,
H a e s o m f u .
W n c h s t e r.** (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

2 Winner of the book of entries from old New York Magazine Competitions:

For Week 898, predictions for next year (for this week's contest, 2012):

Oct. 4, 2012: In a feeble "Wag the Dog" attempt, Obama invades Uzbeki-beki-bekistan. (David Genser, Poway, Calif.)

3 From Week 910, slightly alter an ad slogan to be used for someone else:

Rex Grossman: Takes a sacking and keeps on lacking. (Larry Gray, Union Bridge, Md.)

4 Week 893, 25-word stories: "I have some distressing news," said Dr. Stone. "During your last exam, I found a lump in your breast." Sally frowned. "But . . . you're my dentist." (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

Week 904, move a letter from the beginning of a word to the end: Ubarf: The result of a terribly botched recipe. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

Week 912, a two-word phrase in which one word appears in the other word: Basement basemen: The Orioles' infield. (Larry Gray)

Week 916, make up a "bank head" to follow an actual Post headline:

Post headline: Happy to take fight on the road

Bank head: Misnamed dwarf seeks vengeance on evil queen (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

Week 917, current-events haiku: Skins Game

Weekly, meekly, they Gently lift fresh defeat from Victory's frail jaws. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

Week 918, neologisms based on 13-letter terms: Cashingtonian: A lobbyist. (Jeff Contompassis, Ashburn)

Week 921, "Little Willie" verses: Willie, chef extraordinaire, Cooked his little sister Claire. Mom and Daddy hardly missed her: "Be a dear and serve your sister." (Matt Monitto, Elon, N.C.)

Week 932, Your Mama jokes: Your Mama's so fat she can occupy Wall Street all by herself. (Judy Blanchard, Novi, Mich.)

Week 936, alter a foreign-language phrase: Caveat preemptor: Do it to them before they do it to you. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

— Me plus ultra: Donald Trump's epitaph. (Dixon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.)

Next week: Putting the SAT in satire or Connect the dolts



STYLE CONVERSATIONAL

Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at washingtonpost.com/stylconversational.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Week 952: Dead Letters

Osama bin Laden has passed away, been taken by his Lord, Shuffled off this mortal coil, fallen on his sword, Moved to otherworldly realms . . . Wait, this doesn't work. Niceties need not apply! He's dead — good riddance, jerk.

With the happy New Year, we pause a moment in solemn reflection on those whose lives were lost last year, and then we turn to the Style Invitational so we can write funny verses about them. In our ninth annual Dead Letters contest: **Write a humorous poem about someone who died in 2011**, as in the example above by Washington Post Poet in Residence (though some among the unenlightened think of him as the Po' Wit in Residence) Gene Weingarten. It doesn't have to rhyme, but it should be amusing. Short verses are more likely to get ink in the print paper, but the best longer poems will be published in the online Invite. Song parodies are permitted. You can find lists of "notable deaths 2011," etc., online.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a teeny-tiny electronic device called the Annoy-a-tron. You stash it somewhere and turn it on, and it emits a short beep . . . every few minutes. Donated by Loser Kevin Dopart, who annoys us every, well, less often than that.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet. First Offenders get a tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Jan. 9; results published Jan. 29 (Jan. 27 online). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include "Week 952" in your e-mail subject line or it may be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational. The revised title for next week is by Dixon Wragg; the subhead for this week's honorable mentions is by Chris Doyle. Join the Style Invitational Devotees on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev.

With further redo: honorable mentions

Week 896, if one company ran another: If Victoria's Secret ran Starbucks, you'd be served by bra-istas. (Lois Douthitt, Arlington)

Week 898, predictions for next year: April 20, 2012: After 72 days as a Wizard, a shamefaced Kris Humphries tries to annul his contract. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Week 899, backward crossword: TOETOTOE: Better than sleeping nose to toe. (Roger Dalrymple, Gettysburg)

Week 900, "Dear Blank" letters: Dear Jimi: I like you, but I don't like you that way. — Sincerely, The Sky (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)

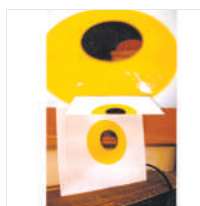
— Dear Rick Santorum: Dude, have you actually read my book? — Sincerely, Jesus (David Genser)



Week 945, edible art: **The M&Mpress, a re-creation of Bob Staake's cartoon in 3,100 M&M's in seven colors.** (Craig Dykstra)

POP CD REVIEW

Guided by Voices LET'S GO EAT THE FACTORY



Before getting back together to play a festival in 2010, Guided by Voices had been broken up for six years, having ended life as politely and uneventfully as it

had begun.

The band's first post-reunion disc boasts 21 tracks in 42 minutes (not a record, even for GBV). Some of the songs are great. Others aren't even songs, they're outlines of songs or snippets of conversation buried under psychedelic noises.

Even for fans used to frontman Robert Pollard's haphazard approach to music delivery, "Factory" is a frustrating listen. Too many promising songs, most of which hew fairly closely to the shambolic chug-chug-chug of GBV's '90s heyday, get suffocated in their cradles after little more than a minute.

It's not unexpected: GBV only created a slightly lesser version of the already slight albums it always made — the ones that sounded half-finished or as if someone had poured glue into the mixing board.

"Factory" isn't the band's first disc to fall short of its best work, or even of the promise inherent in its song titles. Tracks like "How I Met My Mother" or "Spiderfighter" aren't the worst ones here, but they're the most disappointing.

— Allison Stewart



BEOWULF SHEEHAN

Guided by Voices (Robert Pollard, Tobin Sprout, Greg Demos, Mitch Mitchell and Kevin Fennell) reunited in 2010.