

# Style Invitational

BY PAT MYERS

## Report from Week 958

in which we asked for wellerisms, wordplays (named after a Dickens character) that take the form of a quotation followed by something that usually makes the reader see a different meaning in the quote:

**THE  
WINNER  
OF THE  
INKER**

**"God bless us every one!" said the president of the Allergic Rhinitis Society as the banquet began.** (Jason Russo, Annandale)

## Well . . . er: Honorable mentions

"Heads will roll," vowed the bulldozer operator before clearing a row of port-a-johns. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

"Well, it's a growth industry," said the oncologist. (Kathye Hamilton, Annandale)

"Your paintings pass with flying colors," said the art show curator to Jackson Pollock. (Dixon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.)

"Now I can retire in peace," said the old mechanic, admiring the new hydraulic lift in his home garage. (Andrew Ballard, London, a First Offender)

"You can count on me for model behavior," my daughter said just before she put her fingers down her throat. (Ward Kay, Vienna, Va.)

"Abandon hope, all ye who enter here!" roared the Devil as he raised his arm to reveal his fiery pit. (Dudley Thompson, Cary, N.C.)

"Tourists are never right," fumed the

**2 Winner of the little bobble-butt bucking horse:** "Give me a ballpark figure," Greta said, asking the vendor for six hot dogs with the works. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

**3** "No, I'm not free tonight!" responded the indignant prostitute. (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

**4** "Drop dead," ordered the pilot as the Ashes to Ashes plane flew lazy circles over the target zone. (Dan Steinbrocker, Los Angeles)

D.C. commuter who was blocked on a Metro escalator. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

"There I was, at my wit's end," said Mrs. Robert Benchley after her husband expired. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

"Ctrl-Alt-Del!" the cowboy ordered the shoemaker. (Fazli Sameer, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, a First Offender)

"Temper, temper!" Sir Gawain admonished the smith. (Ann Martin, Bracknell, England)

"Don't forget your stub," said the Saudi Sharia Court parking lot attendant. (Kevin Dopart)

"Your problem is monumental," said my Jamaican psychiatrist. (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

"Here I am, at your service!" he said with a grin as he filed past his ex-wife's coffin. (Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

"That's a perverse payment system," complained the poet's agent to the publisher. (Jerry Deily, Charlottesville, a First Offender)

"I'm going postal," said Tipper, confiding her divorce plans. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)

"You are dismissed," said the doctor after Chaz Bono's successful surgery. (Barbara Turner)

"Not by the hair of my chin, chin, chin," said Gov. Chris Christie when asked whether he'd run for president. (Mark Wales, Washington, a First Offender)

"The accident left her looking quite homely," said the Munchkin forensic investigator. (Trevor Kerr, Chesapeake, Va.)

"This is untenable," sniffed the makeup artist as he worked on the Bo Derek wannabe. (Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

"All she does is yak," lamented the Sherpa about his wife's cooking. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

"I must deserve you," said the waitress as she transferred plates to the correct table. (Jeff Contompasis)

"I feel so weak — I'm totally distressed," said Sampson. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.; Jeff Loren, Manassas)

"We are reaching out or hands to brothers and sisters of every creed," proclaimed the TV evangelist, who eagerly accepted all denominations. (Susan Thompson, Cary, N.C.)

"Let us repair to the courthouse," said Richard Burton to Elizabeth Taylor in 1975. (Mae Scanlan)

"Keeping geese has some painful aspects," mused the farmer, rubbing the seat of his pants. (Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.)

"A man is known by the company he keeps," said Ken Lay. (Jason Russo)

**Next week: Out of Network, or Channel Crossings**



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## THIS WEEK'S CONTEST: WEEK 962

# Questionable journalism

**"They also spent the most time in elite undergraduate and law school settings."** (Washington Post, March 5, in an article about the current Supreme Court)

**Q. I've heard your lab rats are the healthiest, but why do you say they're the smartest on campus?**

Here's a contest we've run at least nine times already, but not for more than two years. It was requested by Biggest Loser Ever Russell Beland, who, incredibly, seems to have found life outside the Invite and hasn't had an entry published since his 1,505th blot of ink 30 weeks ago. **This week: Take any sentence (or a major part of it) that appears in The Post or in an article on washingtonpost.com anytime from now through March 19 and supply a question it could answer.** For stories and ads in the print Post, include the page number; for online articles, please copy part of the story or the URL of the page where you found the sentence. More guidelines for this contest (e.g., what's a "major part") appear online in the Style Conversational, the Empress's weekly column, at [washingtonpost.com/styleconversational](http://washingtonpost.com/styleconversational).

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives — directly from India, where it was picked up (gingerly) by Loser Beverley Sharp — a very pretty little blank-page journal of paper made with cow dung (it's very fibrous, evidently). We will accept snail-mail entries to the Invite only if they are on cow-dung paper.

**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](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, March 19; results published April 8 (online April 6). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include "Week 962" in your e-mail subject line or it might 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](http://washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational). The revised title for next week is by Kevin Dopart; the subhead for this week's honorable mentions is by Samuel Enriquez of Annapolis, a First Offender. Join the Style Invitational Devotees on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](http://on.fb.me/invdev).



**STYLE CONVERSATIONAL** Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at [washingtonpost.com/stylconversational](http://washingtonpost.com/stylconversational).



ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

**POST-'IDOL' STRUGGLE: Like other winners, Studdard has had trouble finding his niche.**

## POP CD REVIEW

### Ruben Studdard LETTERS FROM BIRMINGHAM

By now, we've learned not to expect much from "American Idol" winners, almost all of whom seem to follow the same career trajectory: a hope-filled debut, a failed second album, a demotion to a minor label and, finally, twilight years (which, for "Idol" contestants, begin sometime around age 27), spent performing on the county fair circuit.

Ruben Studdard has a Luther Vandross voice in an Usher world, and he's struggled since his Season 2 win, never quite



figuring out how to merge the two into something that sounds effortless.

His new disc, "Letters From Birmingham," isn't much help: It's an awkwardly executed concept album about relationships told, at least

theoretically, through a series of romantic letters.

Any resemblance between "Letters From Birmingham" and Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter from Birmingham Jail is neither coincidental nor, considering that the latter is a historic plea for social justice and the former is an album about Ruben Studdard's desire to make sexy time, appropriate.

"Birmingham" intersperses sung-spoken letters charting the deterioration of a relationship between moony slow jams and uptempo soul tracks decorated with handclaps and horns. The slow songs recall the '80s (where some of them, like a waterlogged but not unpleasant cover of

Bobby Brown's "Rock Wit'cha," actually originated) and the brisker soul songs recall the '70s (like the sublime "Do It Right," which features Chrisette Michele, and recasts Studdard as an unlikely heir to Superfly).

"Birmingham" strains hardest during its nominally contemporary tracks, but at least many of its misses are interesting: "Pure Imagination" reinvents the "Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory" standard as a bedroom jam, complete with some of the most unintentionally unsexy lyrics in memory. "What you see will defy explanation," Studdard promises. What girl could resist?\*

— Allison Stewart