

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

You gotta bereave: Top obit poems

BY PAT MYERS

Week 1313 was our annual contest to commemorate with humor (but not malice, except for the truly malice-deserving) various personages who met their expiration dates last year. Clearly many people in the Loser community discovered a list of Darwin Award contenders.

4th place:

ALAN ABEL (1924-2018), practical joker extraordinaire: Alan Abel loved a hoax And spent a lifetime fooling folks; He staged his death in 1980, Then trashed his obit with much gaiety. So this time did the public scoff and Demand a peek inside the coffin? (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

3rd place:

UNWISÉ CABDRIVER IN INDIA: Prabhu hopped outside to pee and let the engine idle. What followed many people see as close to suicidal: "He snapped a selfie with a bear," the Indian police's Official said of this affair. "Now Prabhu rests in pieces." (Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)

2nd place and the dried scorpions with a make-them-glow flashlight:

RICHARD DeVOS (1926-2018), co-founder of Amway: Said Saint Peter, "Can't let you in now, Rich, alas. Though I'm sure that you think this is urgent, But you haven't yet reached our Cloud Nine Elite class, So go sell some more laundry detergent." (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

And the winner of the Lose Cannon:

STEPHEN HAWKING (1942-2018): In heaven, maybe, Stephen Hawking Can be found upright and walking, Asking God with great respect, "Was my cosmology correct?" (Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

Bring out your dud: Honorable mentions

ZAIM KHALIS KOSNAN, inexperienced snake collector: In Selangor, Malaysia, on a morning bright and sunny, A biker met a 12-foot snake and thought, "He's worth some money!" He caught the thing, but in the end, the python was the victor, 'Cause poor ol' Zaim didn't know he'd captured a constrictor. He marveled at his trophy; he was more than slightly pleased, Until the snake attacked him! (He was more than slightly squeezed.) A python is a deadly thing, a cousin of the boa; So just be sure you know your snakes, 'cause Zaim is no moah. (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

AMOS OZ (1939-2018):

Amos Oz Is . . . Sorry. Was. (Louis J. Phillips, New York, a First Offender)

SIR ROGER BANNISTER (1929-2018), who ran the first sub-4-minute mile:

When Oxford's track results were read The single digit voiced was key For no one cared what else was said Apart from this: "The time was 3. . . ." (Jeff Contompassis, Ashburn)

German serial killer EGIDIUS SCHIFFER (1956-2018), who accidentally electrocuted himself in his cell during a solo sex act:

Self-cleaning ovens are nice. Self-driving autos are thrillers. But the most helpful device? Self-killing serial killers. (Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

PAUL ALLEN (1953-2018), co-founder of Microsoft:

Yes, you're dead — not a twitch, though we plead and entreat; We complain of a glitch, hit Ctrl+Alt+Delete. Now you've had your last breath, tell us, what have you seen? Can you tell us if Death might be, say, a blue screen? (Duncan Stevens)

STEPHEN HAWKING:

Stephen Hawking has passed (not before growing old); Now we've lost him forever



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1317: Punku 2: Haiku with puns

There's a pattern where Trump talks big, but then gives in. SOTU with his speech. (Duncan Stevens)

Rich straight white men rule. Looks like America's been Grabbed by the passe. (Seth Tucker)

We're back with a contest we introduced two years ago. We're still calling it Punku, though the Empress was informed last time that the name was already taken by micropoet Demi Newell ("Believe it or not/ I was addicted to soap/ But I am clean now"), who had created a #punku hashtag years earlier.

This week: Create a haiku containing a pun or similar wordplay, as in the examples above; the first is by Loser Duncan Stevens, who wrote to remind the E that we hadn't punked in a while; the second is a runner-up from our 2017 contest.

By "haiku" we mean — You purists, please chill a minute — Just 5-7-5.

In other words: three lines, with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, five in the third. You may also add a title. The subject matter is wide open as long as the entry is clever/funny; rhyming is welcome. Historically, references to current events tend to get more ink, though I do like to mix in some less topical humor. Submit entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1317 (all lowercase).

Winner gets the **Lose Cannon**, our Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives **The Sorry Button**, a palm-size puck-looking electronic thing; when you push down on the top, it produces one of a dozen varied recordings of people saying "sorry" — some sincere-sounding, others sarcastically eye-rolling (as well as a sound can roll its eyes). Donated by Loser Dave Prevar to the Empress, who of course has no use for it because she is never sorry.

Other runners-up win our "You Gotta Play to Lose" Loser Mug or our "Whole Fools" Grocery Bag. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "We've Seen Better" or "IDiot Card." First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). **Deadline is Monday night, Feb. 11;** results published March 3 (online Thursday, Feb. 28). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline for this week's results is by Bill Dorner; Chris Doyle wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the Style Invitational Devotees on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev. "Like" Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/inkofiday; follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

THE STYLE CONVERSATIONAL The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.



Robbed of first place? Push this button and get an apology.

(or so we've been told). But this genius discovered: black holes aren't so black. So perhaps he'll surprise us and find his way back. (Daniel Fleisher, Baltimore, a First Offender)

MAC MILLER (1992-2018):

At 26, a lost musician Far too young to part for heaven. A tragic way to dodge admission To the Club of 27. (Matt Monitto, Bristol, Conn.)

EDDIE CLARKE (1950-2018), Motörhead guitarist

I'm so surprised to see you go That all I have to say is ö. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

ANTHONY BOURDAIN (1956-2018):

Bull pizzle, cobra heart, maggot fried rice, Anus of warthog? He didn't think twice. There wasn't anything he wouldn't eat. Food for the worms now, the circle's complete. (Mark Raffman, Reston)

WILLIAM GOLDMAN (1931-2018), author of "The Princess Bride":

When life was irretrievable,

Did you say "Inconceivable!"? Did everything you've lived through seem

To be a dream wiffin a dream? And did you meet a Spanish guy Who told you to "prepare to die" And took revenge (a chilly dish)? What's that? Shut up? Well, as you wish. (Duncan Stevens)

Southwest Airlines founder HERB KELLEHER (1931-2018):

His business acumen was never doubted. Now he's aloft — unless he's been rerouted. (Frank Osen)

Actor JERRY VAN DYKE (1931-2018):

All those years of feeling second best, As the guy next door or late-late guest. But the Reaper came and nabbed you quick, To finally beat big brother Dick. (Steve Fahey, Olney)

Fiat chief SERGIO MARCHIONNE (1952-2018):

The Car Guys met him at the gate: "You got here much too fast, On every course we've ever seen, the Fiat driver's last." (Frank Osen)

10 PEOPLE

Twas quite a year of loss and pain As many people died again, Like politician John McCain, Margot Kidder (Lois Lane), John Mahoney (Martin Crane), Tony "Parts Unknown" Bourdain, Stephen Hawking (what a brain!) And five poor folks who ate romaine. (Jesse Frankovich, Grand Ledge, Mich.)

More honorable mentions in the online Invite at wapo.st/invite1317.

Still running — deadline Monday night, Feb. 4: our bogus-statistics contest. See wapo.st/invite1316.

L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| "RETIREMENT" By PAM AMICK KLAWITTER | 94 Words with bow or scarf | 127 Give one's address, maybe | 11 Floor support? | 51 Open, in a way | 91 Vital vessels |
| | 95 Winter glider | 128 Spot-on | 12 Mythical voyager | 53 Union setting | 92 Jun precedent |
| | 97 Amphibious assault troop carrier | 129 Took the deal | 13 Composed | 56 Rolls into a ball | 96 Contempt |
| ACROSS | 100 ___ bar | 130 Western Wyoming county | 14 "Arabian Nights" character | 57 Gorsuch predecessor | 98 Peak in France |
| 1 Baroque music family name | 103 Flow blocker | 131 Sign of alertness | 15 Contraction with two apostrophes | 60 Pole emblems | 99 Propellant developed to replace gunpowder |
| 5 Busy months for CPAs | 104 War hero/actor who played himself in "To Hell and Back" | 132 Hard rain metaphor | 16 Denim purchase | 61 Two-nation peninsula | 101 Do some craftwork |
| 11 Lays into | 107 Menu listing | 133 Email folder | 17 '60s antiwar gp. | 62 --- | 102 Sweater's comment |
| 18 AAA part: Abbr. | 109 Belgian diamond center | | 19 Red wine choice | 63 Shapely leader? | 105 Come out |
| 20 Head huggers | 111 The Mustangs of Dallas coll. football | DOWN | 21 With 67-Down, controversial MLB period | 67 See 21-Down | 106 --- |
| 22 Obeyed a triangular sign | 112 When doubled, a hip-hop dance | 1 Big do | 27 Heckler's input | 68 Specks in a river | 108 Pool toy |
| 23 Mountain dew source | 113 Friend of Pooh | 2 Spumante source | 28 --- | 69 Topples (over) | 109 Start of the fire? |
| 24 Reaches via plane | 115 Kinda-sorta cousin | 3 Forensic detectives, briefly | 34 Garr on screen | 71 Packaging abbr. | 110 Big-eyed baby |
| 25 Salad greens | 116 Dark side Darth | 4 "A Study in Scarlet" detective | 35 Slanted column | 72 Minor league baseball level | 116 Brandy bottle |
| 26 Royal title | 118 Item on the housekeeping checklist, or a hint to completing five puzzle answers | 5 Competent | 36 It's usually easy to see through | 73 "The Untouchables" studio (1959-'83) | 117 Crop unit |
| 29 Toyland notables | 124 Steep slopes | 6 Porridge | 37 DJ's collection | 74 Croaked | 119 The Hague's home: Abbr. |
| 30 Poet's palindrome | 126 Gather dust | 116 Dark side Darth | 39 Cartoon frame | 75 John in court | 120 Beatty and Kelly |
| 31 Common Market letters | | 118 Item on the housekeeping checklist, or a hint to completing five puzzle answers | 41 Perfect spot | 79 Photo tint | 121 Restrain |
| 32 ___ shall live your epitaph to make": Shak. | | 124 Steep slopes | 42 Saint-... Riviera resort | 82 Defunct carrier | 122 Thames campus |
| 33 One-time filler | | 126 Gather dust | 43 --- | 84 Opposite of fast | 123 Wreck reminder |
| 34 First-ranked competitor | | | 46 Transcript no. | 85 Hill staffer | 124 That, in Tijuana |
| | | | 48 Besides Jan., only month with two federal holidays | 86 Senior --- | 125 Abbr. on some business cards |
| | | | | 87 --- | |
| | | | | 90 Seat of the Bishop of London | |

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2/3/19 xwordeditor@aol.com

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Answers to last week's puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | Feb. 3: This year, you create a new beginning in your life, which could be exciting. You also could become very me-oriented, as your creativity soars and ideas spill out of you. If you're single, your charisma is multiplied and you have your pick of sweeties. You decide if you want to commit or play the field. If you're attached, please don't ignore your sweetie in this period of excitement. Remember, your relationship is a two-way street. A fellow Aquarius often grounds you in this spectacular year.

ARIES (March 20-April 19) You sense excitement surrounding you, especially when dealing with your friends. You've learned over the years how to handle surprising results and the unexpected. A friend might want to break past a barrier. Be willing to let go of certain unneeded ground rules.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) Break past boundaries and get to the basics of what needs to happen. You might create an adverse reaction. One-on-one relating is the key to solving a problem. You gain a perspective on how you can help someone get over a problem.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) You might be surer of yourself than you've been in a while. Your caring opens a loved one up to sharing more. You see an unusual opportunity. Don't worry so much — just head toward it.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Others make an impression on you. Still, you might not be sure about a decision and the way you want to handle an emotional matter involving a potential loved one or partner. Know what you want, then act on it, even if you don't have the support you want.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) You are a strong believer in working hard and playing hard. You have pushed to complete a lot of your work and fulfill certain obligations, and you need a break you'll enjoy. Go ahead and orchestrate a tension-releasing fun day. Others will happily join in.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Your playful side keeps trying to come through. You find that many of your friends and loved ones are tired and drawn. A partner decides to make the day livelier. You could really get into this person's plans and suggestions.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) Let your hair down and get past a self-imposed restriction. You might need more self-discipline, but right now isn't the time to begin. Instead, relax with a favorite loved one. What starts out mellow could become wild and out of control.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Stay on top of your obligations, but understand when to let go and relax. Stay close to home — invite a favorite friend or family member over. Many people delight to see you relax and have a good time.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) You might want to socialize and kick back. You could be exhausted by work, obligations or a certain set of demands. The best way to recharge your batteries is to reverse gears and raise the roof. By letting go, you allow yourself to breathe and rejoice.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) You have been very serious and efficient. You remain careful with, or at least aware of, your spending. Don't hold back for a change, and simply indulge a fantasy or two. Fulfill your vision of a happy day with others.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) You might have been dragging and feeling as though you can't complete as much as you'd like to. You might want to complete a project right now, but make sure you have an equal amount of time to enjoy yourself.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) You might want to settle down and vanish. You have worked hard. You have played hard. Allow a new beginning between yourself and a loved one. Take some quiet time to share and be present with this person. Both of you will anchor more easily than you thought possible.

Answers to last week's puzzle.

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