DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Yearly departed: 2020 obit poems

BY PAT MYERS

Week 1417 was our annual contest for poems about those who died in the past year. Numerous verses about the artist Christo ended "That's a wrap" or reported that Kenny Rogers knew when to fold 'em.

4th place:

Whitey Ford (1928-2020)
Bob Gibson (1935-2020)
Phil Niekro (1939-2020)
Tom Seaver (1944-2020)
The way they'd pitch the ball,
And with perfection flirt,
Would hold us in their thrall,
And batters disconcert.
But now they've hit the wall,
For no one can avert
The Umpire's final call:
"Outside and in the dirt."
(Mark Raffman, Reston)

3rd place:

Katherine Johnson (1918-2020), protagonist of 'Hidden Figures'
Katherine G. Johnson, the NASA computer,
Mathematician ahead of her time.
Lived a long life to a hundred and one,
Speaking numerically, died in her prime. *(Ellen Haas, Alexandria, a First Offender)*

2nd place and the mask that accidentally says 'crotch' in Hebrew letters:

Frank Carney (1938-2020), co-founder of Pizza Hut
In keeping with traditions old,
Once boxed, he was delivered cold.
(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:

Michael Sexson (1966-2020), treasure hunter
Michael Sexson, 53, had read of buried treasure;
Set out with just some clues, and an acquaintance, for good measure.
They didn't find the gold. Soon, cold and hungry, they got lost,
But searchers finally brought 'em down the mountain to defrost.

Now most folks, being reasonable, would kiss this quest goodbye;
But not *these* two! In just one month, they made a *second* try . . . ,
Bad choice. At least the *pal* survived ('cause later they were found),
But Michael (like the gold) has now been buried underground.
(Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

Passing: Honorable mentions

James Randi (1928-2020), magician and debunker
James Randi was the enemy of mystics and clairvoyants.
The so-called supernatural he looked on with annoyance.
He sniffed at paranormal claims and often proved them phony.
And what about the afterlife? His ghost says it's baloney.
(Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore)

Jim Lehrer (1934-2020), newsman and moderator of many presidential debates
Though you might well have wanted, if given a choice,
To put off that heavenly chime,
It wasn't to be — an ethereal voice
Spoke up: "Jim, you've exceeded your time."
(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Whitlow Au (1940-2020), pioneer in understanding the echolocation of dolphins and whales
No matter their region or nation,
All dolphins and whales in creation
Revere Whitlow's name
And agree he became
The first ape to speak fluent Cetacean.
(Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

Herman Cain (1945-2020), politician who died of the coronavirus
Herman Cain, a mask-forgoer,
Should have been a better-knower.
(Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

Bill Withers (1938-2020), singer-songwriter
Bill Withers left some legacy:
"Ain't No Sunshine," "Lean on Me."
His hits are an impressive list; I
know I know I know I know
I know I know I know I know
I know I know he will be missed.
(Bruce Niedt, Cherry Hill, N.J.)

Chuck Yeager (1923-2020), test pilot
A brash young Chuck Yeager once flew up so high
He found himself passing through heaven.
He tried on some wings and then left with a cry:
"I'll take those when I'm 97."
(Bob Kruger, Rockville)

Don Larsen (1929-2020) pitched a World Series perfect game
In 1956 the Dodgers couldn't hit or score
As Larsen left them in a batting drought.
The men who took the field that day have all passed on before;
Now Don himself becomes the final out. *(Matt Monitto, Bristol, Conn.)*

Regis Philbin (1931-2020), TV host
In light of Philbin's rapid rise
Down here in showbiz, no surprise
That up in heaven true prestige is
Getting booked on "Dead! With Regis." *(Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.)*

Jack Sherman (1956-2020), guitarist for the Red Hot Chili Peppers:
Our eyes grow red, our tears amass,
It stings when Chili Peppers pass.
(Danielle Nowlin, Fairfax Station)

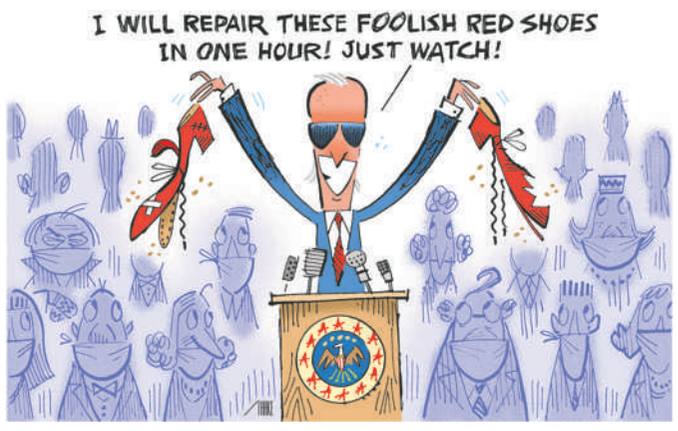
Larry Tesler (1945-2020) created computer cut, copy, paste, undo editing functions
For Larry Tesler, words of praise:
Mortality Ctrl-X short his days.
His shortcuts for a large text Ctrl-C
Kept online writers from getting sloppy.
How useful are the tools he's given
In the fast-Ctrl-V world in which we're livin'.
There is no doubt, it must be true,
Our thanks to him are not Ctrl-Z.
(Ken Kaufman, Derwood)

Too-bold animal photographer
Though warned 'bout a gator at rest by a lake,
Someone wanting a pic makes a most grievous flub.
This gal steps too close, knows at once her mistake,
Blurting, "Guess I won't ever do that again . . ." [Glub.] *(Chris Doyle)*

Four various selfie-takers
It happened in Colombia, in Turkey and Australia;
Photographers were done in by their own paraphernalia.
The selfie sings a siren song, a "come-and-get-me, friend!" call;
But photos of yourself should NEVER be the be-all, end-all.
(Beverley Sharp)

More honorable mentions in the online Invite at wapo.st/invite1421.

Still running — deadline also Feb. 8: Our contest for songs for and about work. See wapo.st/invite1420.



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1421: Alternaugural Address '21

Four years ago in this space, the Empress invited (that *is* what we do) the Loser Community to compose a sentence or more that used only words appearing in the 2017 presidential inaugural address. The man who delivered those 1,433 words is now gone from Washington, but we're still here. And it seems only fair that we welcome President Biden to Loserdom as well, and this time we won't be worrying that he could explode into a tweet-rage. (That didn't happen in 2017, to our relief. But it might have!)

This week: Write a humorous passage — a "quote," an observation, a joke, a dialogue, a poem, anything — using only words that appear in Biden's inaugural address. For consistency, please use the White House's transcript, which you can find at **wapo.st/biden-address** or by Googling. You may use a word only as many times as it appears in the speech; for example, you may use "history" up to seven times, and "hope" up to four, but "bottom" only once (and "carnage," blessedly, not at all). You must use the whole word as it appears ("testing" but not "test") but you may change capitalization and punctuation however you like. (Use the hyphenated "once-in-a-century" and "swearing-in" as separate words.) You may attribute your "quote" to someone else.

Handy-dandy tool! Thanks to Loser Todd DeLap, we've also published an alphabetical list of all 2,500 or so words in the speech, along with the number of times each is used. Check out **wapo.st/invite-list-1421**.

Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1421 (no capitals in the Web address). **Deadline is Monday, Feb. 8**; results appear Feb. 27 in print, Feb. 24 online.

Winner gets the Clowning Achievement, our new Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a classic **"hand boiler,"** which, relax, doesn't boil your hand; it's a steampunk-looking plaything consisting of two feather-light glass bulbs with a tube coiling decoratively between them. When your hand warms the bottom bulb, the rise in gas pressure makes red liquid snake through the coils to the top bulb. Donated by Dave Prevar.

Other runners-up win their choice of our "For Best Results, Pour Into Top End"Loser Mug or our "Whole Fools" Grossery Bag. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "No 'Bility" or "Punderachiever." First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at *wapo.st/InvRules*. The headline "Yearly Departed" was submitted by both Chris Doyle and Jesse Frankovich"; Dave Prevar wrote the honorable-mentions subhead. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at *on.fb.me/invdev*; "like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at *bit.ly/inkofday;* and follow @StyleInvite on Twitter.

The Style Conversational: The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. See this week's at *wapo.st/conv1421*.

A "hand boiler," almost too nifty to be a prize.

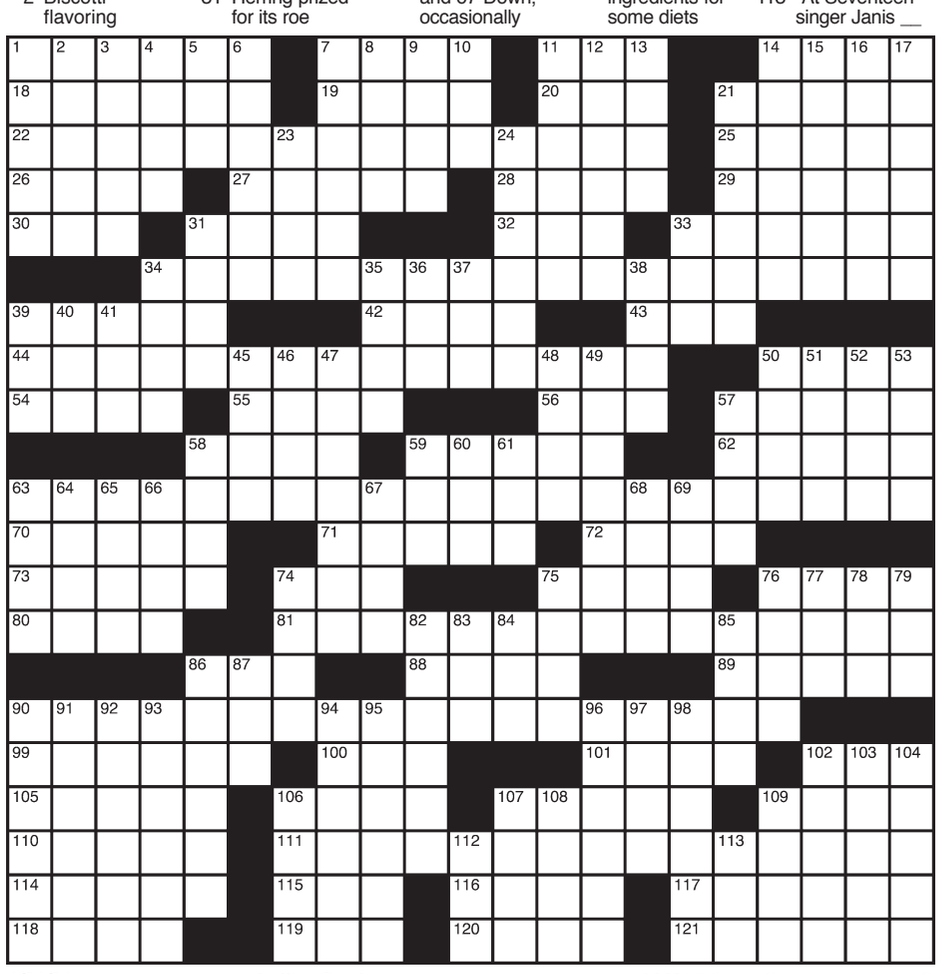
L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

"SPORTSCAST" By PAUL COULTER

ACROSS
1 Apollo's home
7 Cartesian concept
11 Edwards, in Calif.
14 Spitting sound
18 Early ball game score
19 His given name was spelled with horseshoes in the show's intro
20 Former French coin
21 Ride, but not in a nice way
22 The troublesome soccer player __
25 Fragrant root used in perfumes
26 Actor Morales
27 Covent Garden architect Jones
28 Sprightly
29 Chop finely
30 "Sure"
31 Biol. and chem.
32 Genetic "messenger" initials
33 Many a Degas
34 The bombastic archer __
39 The Destroyer, in Hinduism
42 Appearance
43 2020, por ejemplo
44 The frugal lacrosse goalie __
50 Printer function
54 Mideast gulf port
55 Unassuming
56 Dash lengths
57 Point a finger at
58 "Downton Abbey" title
59 Open, as a bottle
62 Fisherman with pots
63 The daredevil baseball pitcher __
70 Beat, e.g.
71 Scolds, with "out"
72 Live wire's opposite
73 First name in mystery
74 Pro
75 Vintner's prefix
76 European auto
80 Back talk
81 The politically ambitious sprinter __
86 Nintendo debut of 2006
88 "Dies __": hymn
89 Power source
90 The lucky football receiver __
99 Masterful
100 Feverish, maybe
101 Judge
102 Marienbad, for one
105 Sting
106 Single chip, perhaps
107 In pieces
109 Big name in cosmetics
110 Pig out
111 The foolhardy hockey player __
114 Astrological ram
115 Part of HMS
116 Coatrack parts
117 Kvetch
118 Principal, for one
119 Magazine VIPs
120 "Dilbert" intern
121 Scornful smiles

DOWN
1 Contrived
2 Biscotti flavoring
3 Go back over
4 Mythical trickster
5 Biloxi-to-Mobile dir.
6 Sawbones
7 Mischievous
8 Slow party, say
9 MIT Chapel designer Saarinen
10 Dean's email address ending
11 For the __
12 Early hr.
13 On a tight schedule
14 Louisiana's county counterpart
15 Request help from
16 Halloween charity
17 What history repeats?
21 Whopper topper
23 Condo, e.g.
24 Ship's-keel constellation
31 Herring prized for its roe
33 "Piano is not my forte," e.g.
34 Reindeer in "Frozen"
35 "Don't worry about me"
36 Polite address
37 __ canto
38 Dinghy drivers
39 Org. funded by FICA
40 "If I __ to do it again ... "
41 "__ seen worse"
45 Apple variety
46 Prefix with byte
47 Mediterranean sailing vessel
48 Milk source
49 Authorize
50 Passel
51 City WSW of Bogotá
52 "Absolutely!"
53 Unhip type
57 Honk
58 The America's Cup trophy, e.g.
59 One-eighty
60 With "and" and 67-Down, occasionally
61 Brain and spinal cord: Abbr.
63 "__ bien!"
64 "Today" co-host Kotb
65 Floor coverings
66 LAX listings
67 See 60-Down
68 One of three seen in Wood's "American Gothic"
69 Managed care gps.
74 "Tosca" tune
75 Make the first bid
76 Aroma
77 One often talked down to?
78 Brian of ambient music
79 Env. contents
82 Salmon serving
83 Fla. NBA team
84 Italy's equivalent of the BBC
85 Muslim leader
86 Omelet ingredients for some diets
87 "The Addams Family" cousin
90 Algerian quarter
91 Look up to
92 Astronomy Muse
93 Consumed greedily
94 Squealed
95 Sites for vows
96 Birthplace of Solidarity
97 Muralist José María __
98 Moon of Saturn
102 Gunk
103 Reggie Miller, for his entire NBA career
104 Australia's __ Rock
106 "Hard Road to Glory" author
107 Cool drinks
108 "We have met the enemy and he is us" toon
109 "My treat"
112 Antipollution org.
113 "At Seventeen" singer Janis __



1/31/21 xwordeditor@aol.com ©2021 Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Answers to last week's puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY MADALYN ASLAN

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | Jan. 31: Charming, attractive and social, you have true star power. Despite covid-19, you can't hide yourself away, and you must be heard. This year, you are heard through your words and through not conforming to other people's expectations of you. A second career comes to most of you. If single, you're so admired and appreciated that you have the pick of the crop. If attached, trust and respect are key. Aries excites you.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Today's a good day to get organized for the coming week — and the new year. Redetermine your New Year's resolutions and write them down for the future. Plenty of inspiration combined with realistic expectations will work best.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
Romantic interludes have a surprise and fated quality. If lonely, you could connect with a true soul mate. Spiritual forces inspire creative expression. If you pursue your favorite art form with enthusiasm, you'll be rewarded with exceptional results.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
Transportation problems are solved. Short, impromptu journeys lead to unexpected delights and opportunities. Your emphatic expression of ideas and warmth will win the confidence of others. Your imagination and sensitivity inspire those less free and fortunate.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
Today promises much excitement and brings the ability to balance your ideals. Be receptive to the inevitable change in the air, and all will be well in the end. Identifying real values can be something of a challenge, but you do it.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
Opportunities arise that may open doors to a better life — pursue them. Avoid arguments or excessive stress connected to money. Humor and goodwill brighten intimate ties. Creative ideas, art and music bring pleasure.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
Today helps you develop your latent talents, be noticed by influential people and broaden your scope of activity. Accept all invitations. You accomplish much and are an inspiration to others. Verify appointments and use care in making promises.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
You will be reserved today; your childhood shyness is revived. Animal friends and nature become a bigger part of your life. Appreciate the advantages of privacy and cherish the quiet times. You acquire a deeper understanding of life's mysteries.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
A second opinion helps solve any problems. Renew professional contacts and update old applications. A second or third attempt at reaching any goal is likely to work out. Be persistent. Try not to veer away from long-range goals now.

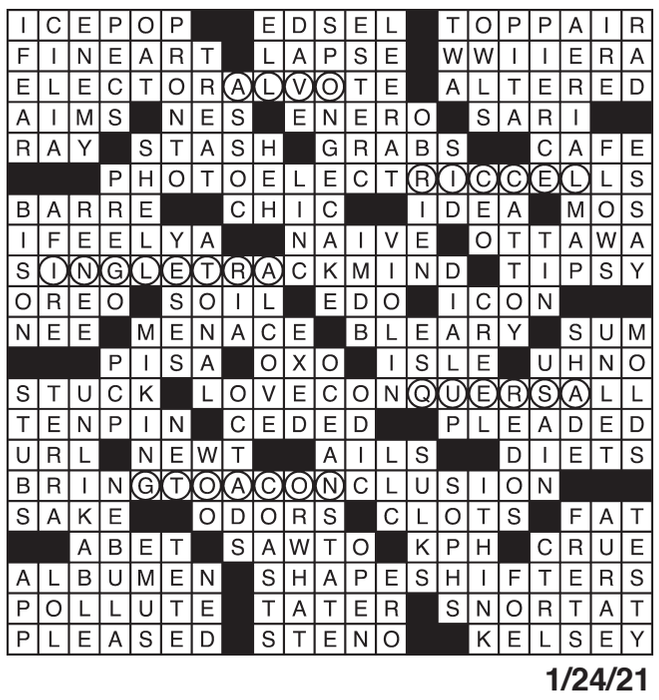
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
Your visibility is on the rise. It is difficult to keep any secrets today. You develop a deeper understanding of ongoing conditions at work or within organizations. Postpone decisions about the future. Events are unfolding that could change your attitude.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
Today promises a new twist regarding your social life. A get-together is not what you expected; a loved one is unpredictable. Be very considerate and correct in all dealings with others. Select a moderate, healthy diet.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
It's easier to make the right choices today. A vision of the future comes through dreams or meditation. Kind friends from the past are in touch. Communication with those you care for improves.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
Upkeep of your surroundings and attention to health are musts today. Be patient with family members and make your home peaceful and safe. Kindness is expressed by those who share your beliefs.

Answers to last week's puzzle.



1/24/21