

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Prez clippings: The re-speech

BY PAT MYERS

In Week 1421, just as we'd done for his predecessor four years earlier, we invited you to pick and choose some words from President Biden's inaugural address and rearrange them to make lines from an "alternaugural" speech, or any other writing. The Empress thanks Loser Todd DeLap for running her shortlist of entries through a program he made to flag ineligible words (yup, there were some).

4th place:

McConnell versus Pelosi!

Tomorrow night, the adversaries will battle under the Capitol Dome for the soul of democracy. Who will triumph and who will be humbled? See the American Dream come to life in a crucible of personal violence! Things will get ugly! And God bless America. (Only \$108 — call today!) (Hannah Seidel, Alexandria)

3rd place:

They say that I am fragile and can't face the work ahead. They tell us all that Kamala will lead the way instead. But I am equal to the tasks, and very strong, my friends. The toughest days I can endure, and I don't need Depends. (Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore)

2nd place and the hand boiler:

Of all my predecessors, one stands out as a president of profound conviction. In fact, I believe his greatest one still lies ahead. (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

And the winner of the Cloning Achievement:

My fellow Americans: As you know, Vice President Pence and I have been close friends for many years. Today, I want to tell you something. We are more than just friends — much more. In fact, he is the one and only love of my life, and the two of us will be entering into a state of total domestic union. Yes, as of tomorrow, we are becoming husbands. (George Thompson, Springfield)

Average Joe: Honorable mentions

All good things must come to an end. And it's a good thing that no-good things do also, like President You-Know-Who. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

This is a desperate time. We see bitterness, resentment, anger. We see domestic division, civil strife, factions at war. In place of peace, love and joy, we have shouting, swearing and weeping. And that was just on the first day of work from home! (Steve Smith, Potomac)

On watching the speech: What are these long words I hear? That was a clear and completed thought. The new president will believe reality? And he is not shouting or swearing? What a treat! (Sarah Walsh, Rockville)

Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for... What, Speaker Pelosi? That

New contest for Week 1425: Picture this — a caption contest

Bob Staake himself couldn't tell you what they're doing or saying in these pictures, but you can tell him, in our umpety-umpteenth-plus-one caption contest: This week: Write a caption, either descriptive or in dialogue, for any of the cartoons above.

Be kind to your trusty Empress and format your entries like this: Begin each entry with "Picture A," "Picture B," etc. (no, not with the quotation marks, silly), then follow it on the same line with your caption. This will let the E sort out all the Picture A captions together before blithely rejecting yours. TIA.

Submit up to a total of 25 entries at wapo.st/enterinvite-1425 (no capitals in the Web address). Deadline is Monday, March 8; results appear March 28 in print, March 25 online.

Winner gets the Cloning Achievement, our new Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a totally plain black and white analog wall clock, except that it runs counterclockwise, as do the numbers. Sooo much easier than a time machine. Donated by Wise-to-Clocks Dave Prevar.

Other runners-up win their choice of our "For Best Results, Pour Into Top End" Loser Mug or our "Whole Fools" Grocery 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 "Prez Clippings" is by Chris Doyle; Jesse Frankovich 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/conv1425.



Just don't let it make you late with your contest entries. This week's second prize.

was said before? By whom? Do not harsh my moment, woman! I thought I came up with something profound! (Bill Dorner, Indianapolis)

It's unity I long for, come what may, Division, strife, and hatred I reject. But Washington is difficult today, And yet I have the country to protect. When "let us work together" can't get through, Then "put it up your bottom" has to do. (Mark Raffiman, Reston)

At last, I have the elusive, sacred thing of power I have sought for many long years. Triumph! I am the master! My own! My precious! (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

Has he left yet? Should I start the oath? I hope never to see his [blue word] like again. Period. (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

Don't stop thinking about tomorrow. Don't stop, it will before-long be here. It will be better than before. Yesterday's not here. Yes, it has left. — Speed-would (Poto)mac (Duncan Stevens)

My fellow Americans, I promise with all my heart to stand behind women, but they clearly don't like it. (Kevin Dopart)

I would like to thank the deep state, and especially my master, George — I will not say the last name, for it's better that you be a power in the darkness for now — for watching over me and the way your shadow forces manipulated and manufactured the vote. That

was the only reason I was elected — without you, I would have lost by a lot! (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

But that's not all! If you call now, you will also get every campaign promise you see here, with my personal guarantee. But you must ask now. This deal will not last long! (Eric Nelkin, Silver Spring)

God bless! That woman from George-a is foolish, full of fantasy and lies. Take that raging person's behind out of this place. That is all I ask. (Duncan Stevens)

Good husbands know the paper should always be put on with the front end hung forward. (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

It's great to be in Washington and let me tell you, those so-called patriots, their mothers are so ugly even the virus would not land on them. Thank you, thank you, I will be here all January. (Jeff Shirley, Richmond)

Once, there were people in the stands shouting support. But under my watch the sons of Washington have been the pits. The press was all over us: They said that our name, our red-face chief and our song supported racism. Next came the story about how we treat women co-workers. But everything is different now! Well, I am still here. — D. Snyder (Steve Smith)

The one-time Patriots leader prevailed again? Cometh on! (Matt Monitto, Bristol, Conn.)

And Last: This is the first time in many weeks that I have put together any good words for this paper. Perhaps I will get an "And Last" out of it. (Elden Camahan, Laurel)

More honorable mentions in the online Invite at wapo.st/invite1425.

Still running — deadline Monday night, March 1: Our neologism contest based on the New York Times Spelling Bee game. See wapo.st/invite1424.

L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

"START THE MUSIC" By MARK McCLAIN

- ACROSS 1 Short-legged hopper 5 Untidy types 10 25% of doce 14 Period 18 River in Tuscany 19 Tiny island nation near the equator 102 Port alternative 106 Bar accessory 20 Stew 21 Mom-and-pop business 22 Fallon predecessor 23 Became aware of, with "to" 24 Victor's wife in "Casablanca" 25 Cobbler fruit 26 Summer cottage, perhaps 29 Eruptive speaker 30 Fell in pellets 31 Result 33 Musician's gift 34 Fitness ratio: Abbr. 36 Lake south of London 37 Have something 40 Oklahoma's top crop 44 Handle 46 Dairy-based quaff 47 Phobia lead-in 48 Prior conviction, e.g. 52 One of the ones that "say so much," in an Elton John hit 54 Brewpub choices 55 Pitchers that can't throw? 56 Peachy-keen 58 Coronary chambers 59 Name of the Baltimore Ravens' mascot 60 Programmer's problem, perhaps 61 Drinking noise 63 Facebook count 64 Iberian landmark that's an insurance company logo 68 Put back to zero 71 Villainous look 72 Half a game fish 73 Reverence 76 Unfitting 77 Dusk, poetically 78 Not treating nicely 80 Fussbudget 81 Some fort components 84 Personal exam?

- 121 AOL and Comcast 122 "Beau..." 123 Moms in a glade 93 One covering the bases 95 Online notes 96 Symbolic uncle 98 The other way around 102 Port alternative 106 Bar accessory 108 Commonsense approach 112 Showed the courage 113 Credit union seizure 114 Carpenter's machine 115 Concerning 116 "Let Me Ride" Grammy winner 117 Champagne spec 118 One who shows the way 119 Yemeni city 120 Leave in

- 21 \_\_\_ Lee 27 Saw things 28 Bonnie with 10 Grammys 29 Luxury watch 32 Jamaica's Ocho \_\_\_ 34 Bud, for one 35 \_\_\_ wear 38 Immortal army leader 39 Draped garments 40 Sub alternative 41 Image in a religious painting 42 Foil alternative 43 Pack animal 44 Starting point 45 Colgate rival 47 Moving around 49 1964 Civil Rts. Act creation 50 "Return of the Jedi" beings 51 MYOB word 53 Lama 57 "The Honeymooners" surname 60 Popular long shot

- 61 Title for Richard Starkey 62 Montana motto metal 64 Email option 65 Professional charges 66 Piazza de Ferrari city 67 God with a hammer 68 Fedder, perhaps 69 Computer that was retired in 1955 70 Topping for chicken enchiladas 73 Quite dry 74 Half of a dinner pairing 75 Poaching targets 78 Cartoon explosion sound 79 With no changes 80 Key letter 82 Do a garden chore 83 Czech or Serb Inuit craft

- 86 Stephen King's role as the minister in "Pet Sematary," e.g. 89 Would rather have 94 Support 96 Sweet-smelling pouch 97 Hold fast 99 Unmoving 100 Give up 101 Places to put coins 102 Enduring legends 103 It ends with the burial of Hector 104 Last movement of Beethoven's "Waldstein" Sonata, e.g. 105 Come to terms 106 Santa Anita numbers 107 86-Down, for one 109 Connect, in a way, with "in" 110 RSVP convenience 111 Strong desires 113 MLB stat

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Answers to last week's puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY MADALYN ASLAN

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | Feb. 28: Vibrant, alive and emotionally complex, you live in a vital and uncompromising way. This year, by investigating a new avenue in your work, you become even more successful. You receive major recognition. If single, be careful not to get too carried away with thrills and sensations. Your mate is around the corner in 2022. If attached, love is bliss and your partner helps you with your goals. Aries inspires you.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) Today blesses a commitment you make. Listen to suggestions. Others are competitive and a bit argumentative; focus on tolerance and cooperation. A partner has definite plans and ideas involving you.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) Today emphasizes a need for clarity. Make time to release stress and clear away clutter. Heed a hunch about the well-being of a cherished pet. Also, a new animal may find its way to your door.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) You can feel unusually scattered, uncertain and divided regarding matters of the heart. But Venus comes to the rescue. A healthy and loving relationship begins to deepen, and this restores you.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Communicate with family members concerning home improvements and repairs. Now would be a wonderful time to bless your dwelling, perhaps with a sage smudge. Visitors suggest interesting ideas and offer valuable insights during casual conversation.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Be tolerant of others' beliefs. It's not the time to be too forceful if debating politics. Anticipate some intriguing conversations and messages. Several short journeys are likely. It's a great time to catch up on current events.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) Today emphasizes money and purchases. Do not overextend yourself financially. Set funds aside to cover an unexpected expense. Consider new directions concerning budgeting. Financial brainstorming sessions offer valuable perspectives about security issues.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) A competitive spirit encourages you to be progressive and experiment today. An important relationship intensifies. Be aware of your own aptitudes. Do some soul searching to determine how best to be who you are and do what you can.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Your insight is keen; memories are vivid and poignant. Plan something reminiscent of childhood activities. You will savor quiet moments, cherishing chances to release stress. Intuitively you realize that a tranquil mind knows the right moments.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Today impacts your circle of friends and long-range goals. Reflect, but delay steering away from established associates or committing to a new direction. An invitation is extended to participate

in an organization. Think this through before acting.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Memories of grandparents or relationships with grandchildren are heartwarming, and any volatile situations with in-laws should settle down. It is also a wonderful day to combine business with pleasure.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Appreciation of beauty marks today. Employ art and music to heighten your connection to the heavens. Today is also perfect for travel or for enrolling in a study and learning program.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) Today reveals how family dynamics are shifting. Hidden facts come to light; a message from the spirit world arrives. Your attitudes and perceptions are in flux. Heed subtle signs and synchronicities.

Answers to last week's puzzle.

Grid of crossword puzzle answers including words like HORSE, JABBA, LEATHERS, AWARE, USE IT, DEADHEADS, INGOODSHAPE, AIR JORDAN, RUE, ETON, RYAN ROSS, SPRINGSTOMIND, EINE, SOSO, ADDRESS, STAG, ARTOO, SONE, ENTER, AGO, RAINRAINGOAWAY, EIFFEL, ETAT, SNEE, IMAM, FATED, NERO, CAVEDIN, OILY, ADA, NOTASINGLEONE, DEA, ALTI, VISAVIS, SETS, SHARE, EBRO, TENT, ONUS, AOPERS, LETTHINGSSSLIDE, APO, SOPUP, RANT, COMET, BEET, BORED, OMAN, ODES, ANIMALKINGDOM, ACRE, TATA, MAM, LUI, BLUEWHALE, HAPPYENDING, OVEREAGER, AMUSE, HUNCH, PARODIES, MOPED, SHEET