

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Faux-star reviews: Ink from Week 1477

BY PAT MYERS

In Week 1477 we asked for creative user reviews for eight items advertised at *walmart.com*. (See more — including a discovery in the bread's ingredient list — at wapo.st/invite1481.)

4th place:

Standard shoehorn: Nice product — and it works even better on your shoes after you've buttered your toast with it. Five stars! (*Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.*)

3rd place:

Great Value white sandwich bread: Whenever I want a laugh, I just go down to my local Whole Foods, display this bread prominently in my cart, and watch the horrified expressions as I stroll the aisles. (Sometimes I'll even bring in a package of Twinkies!) No better fun to be had for 88 cents! (*Karen Lambert, Chevy Chase, a First Offender*)

2nd place and the book 'How to Rule the World':

Duck brand silver duct tape: Whoops! I was invading another country and accidentally bombed a nuclear reactor! Used this tape to patch things up, though, so we're all good. — Vlad666 (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna*)

And the winner of the Clowning Achievement:

Digital alarm clock: Love this thing! I hit the Snooze button in the morning and bingo, I sure do! Not sure what the other buttons are for. (*Bill Cromwell, Keswick, Va.*)

Always Low Prizes: Honorable mentions

DIGITAL ALARM CLOCK Lasted only a few days — in fact, literally fell apart. How on earth did the manufacturer not realize that users would throw it against the wall on a Monday morning? (*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Karen Lambert*)

Works okay, but needs a "this end up" label or the time reads all funny. (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring*)

Love it! My son thought I should just use my phone, but it's too much trouble to go down to where it's charging in the kitchen every morning to turn off the alarm. Five stars! (*Terri Berg Smith, Rockville*)

STANDARD SHOE HORN

Check before you order — turns out there is only one per package. Don't they know most people have two feet? (*Bill Cromwell, Frank Mann, Washington*)

I bought a pair and my feet slipped right in, but they got pretty uncomfortable after I walked around awhile. Not a great accessory. Two stars. (*Rob Cohen, Potomac*)

My sister and I wished we'd bought one of these years ago, when we chopped off our heels to try to fit into a glass slipper ... (*Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf*)

Versatile! We have a small sofa, and when my amply proportioned in-laws came to visit, this handy device helped me get them both seated and pried back out! (*Drew Bennett, Rogers, Ark.*)

I'm a music enthusiast and love learning new instruments. But just like the limoncello I bought last week, it hardly made any tone at all. (*Jon Ketzner, Cumberland, Md.*)

As an older-than-usual prolific mother, I have so many kids that I don't know what to do. A lady from social services recommended this product to get them all inside our tiny home — and it works much better than starving and whipping. Five stars! (*Lawrence McGuire*)

GREAT VALUE WHITE SANDWICH BREAD

A "Great Value" given its nuances of taste, texture and toastability. "Enriched" with enough calcium propionate preservative to give it the shelf life of a canned ham. An excellent vehicle for classic grilled processed cheese. Pairs perfectly with either a Grape or Orange Kool-Aid. (*Drew Bennett*)

Good texture, but too spicy! Two stars — MPence1959 (*Jesse Rifkin, Arlington; John Hutchins, Silver Spring; Sam*



BOB STAAKE/ILLUSTRATION FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1481: Mess with our heads

Real headline: **Burger King Says Russian Operator 'Refused' to Close Hundreds of Restaurants** (*Washington Post, March 18*)
Bank head: **Manager Maintains That Keeping Them Open Provided Greater Punishment**

Terrapins Heating Up at Perfect Time
Plus Decorative Snake Arrangements and Other Secrets of a Reptile Brunch to Remember

James Chases Scoring Mark but Keeps Eye on Legacy
'Giant Peach' Survivor Wonders if Obsessive Womanizing Will Endanger Sequel Deal

The Empress, who used to write headlines five nights a week before hopping merrily onto the Style Invitational throne, plays this game constantly when she reads the paper, and brings it to the Invite about once a year: **Reinterpret some actual headline (or a major part of it) by adding a bank head, or subtitle, as in the examples above; the top one's by Bob Staake Himself.** The headlines may be from **any publication, print or online**, dated March 24-April 4, 2022. Include the source and date of the headline; see details on the entry form and in this week's Style Conversational.

Submit up to 25 entries at wapo.st/enter-invite-1481 (no capitals in the Web address). **Deadline is Monday, April 4;** results appear April 21 in print, April 24 online.

Winner gets the Clowning Achievement, our Style Invitational trophy. Second prize receives a pre-2017 vintage **Hillary Clinton Boogie Diva**, a large doll of a smiling senator who, when you squeeze her cuff, "gets down and funky" with her dancin' arms and knees (her blocky feet stay put) as she sings a bouncy but lame parody of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee" ("Land where my husband lied/And I stood right by his side/Now it's my time to shine"). See her in action at wapo.st/invite-hillary. Donated by Loser Kathleen Delano.

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, "A Small Jester of Appreciation" or "Close, but Ceci N'est Pas un Cigare." First Offenders receive only a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their

first ink). See general contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/inviteFAQ. The headline "Faux-Star Reviews" is by Jon Gearhart; Jeff Contompass 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.

The Style Conversational: The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. See this week's at wapo.st/conv1481.

Mertens)

I'm not eating this stuff. The crusts are still on it! — Billy (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase*)

All the negative comments on this bread reflect a "woke" sensibility that should not be tolerated. Why should this bread be ashamed of its color? All bread matters. — VaGov2022 (*Mark Raffman, Reston*)

Super convenient to store — can be compressed to 1/100th its original size! (*Art Grinath, Takoma Park*)

Your bread saved the day! We left a trail of crumbs through the woods to help us find our way home, and they were so tasteless that even the birds wouldn't touch them. We got home in record time! Many thanks, Hansel and Gretel (*Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

'LION MANE' COSTUME FOR CATS

I can't afford a security system, so I wanted to turn my cat into a resentful, bitter-at-everything, revenge-seeking hellbeast, and this was just the thing! I feel so much safer now. (*Duncan Stevens*)

To "Memory":

Help me! They all laugh when I go out

In this comical fright wig. It's a bloomin' disgrace.

I remember when I had a morsel of pride.

Now I dare not show my face. — Grizabella (*Frank Mann*)

I really wish the washing instructions had said you should remove it from the cat first. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

WHISTLE WITH LANYARD Coupled with an orange vest, this item has made my walk to work in the city a breeze! Just blow the whistle, hold up your hand while crossing the street, and act like you know what you're doing. (*Scott Richards, Hollywood, Md.*)

20-QUART CLEAR PLASTIC BOX WITH LID

I've purchased several of these to store my clothes that WILL fit again as soon as I lose that last 15 pounds. They hold up after years of use! (*Robyn Carlson, Keyser, W.Va.*)

Because it's clear, I can see inside it while I think outside it! That was one of those thoughts right there! Was that clear? Five stars, I think. (*Gary Crockett*)

And Last: I have a pile of Style Invitational clippings dating back to 1993. Thanks to this bin they'll be easy to find when I need to put down a dropcloth, light the charcoal grill or housebreak a puppy. Thanks, Sterilite! (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

More reviews in the online Invite at wapo.st/invite1481.

Still running — deadline Monday night, March 28: Our contest for fake definitions for obscure words like "fankle." See wapo.st/invite1480.

L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY RICH NORRIS AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

'THE FINAL FRONTIER' BY GARY LARSON and AMY ENSZ

ACROSS
1 Country that's about 24 times longer than its average width
6 Vendor's wagon
14 Online access cos.
18 Nixon's older daughter
19 It established Congress
20 PDQ in the ER
21 Satisfied with one's work in the transporter room?
23 Miles' "Sideways" love interest
24 NFL official
25 Conger catchers
26 Daring deed
28 Informer
29 Setting for searches
31 Black
34 Big mess
36 Title book in a classic computer game
37 Brezhnev of the USSR
40 One who gets in
42 Detain Dr. McCoy?
47 Sends, in a way
48 Cover letters?
51 One may be painted
52 Fancy topping
54 Mangy mutt
55 Apple product
56 Opening tempo of Dvorak's "New World Symphony"
58 — gratia artis: MGM motto
61 End of a warning
63 Weave
66 "Be silent," in music
68 Arch type
69 Phaser, slangily?
73 Tiny
74 Katniss' ally in "The Hunger Games"

76 Surpasses
77 Forward pass
79 No. with two dashes
80 Ski weekend destination
82 Pluck
84 Flamenco shout
85 Heineken brand named for a Mexican city
87 Recurring
90 Actor Beatty

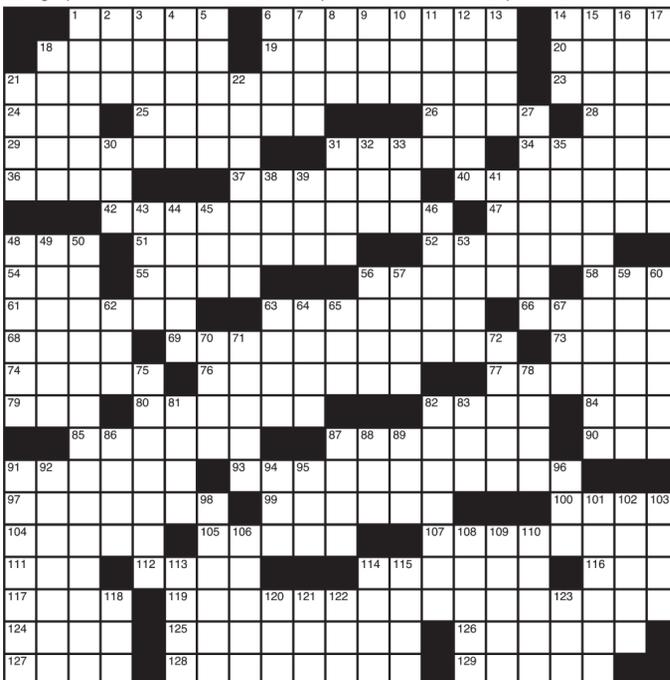
91 Warm sign-off
93 DNA sample from Kirk's chief engineering officer?
97 Beverly Cleary title dog
99 Defrauded, say, with "on"
100 18-wheeler
104 Frontier home
105 Either Zimbabwi
107 Creme-filled Drake's cake
111 Bobby of the Bruins
112 Contents of some banks
114 Gloomy
116 Wedding promise
117 Newton, e.g.
119 Masseuse trained in massage techniques from Spock's home planet?
124 Fabled loch
125 Observing lions in the wild, maybe
126 Sign up

127 De Matteo of "The Sopranos" say
128 Uncalled-for
129 Candy mogul H.B. —
DOWN
1 Makes with skill
2 Gender-specific pronoun
3 Less cordial
4 Flax fabric
5 High nester
6 "Easy to Be Hard" musical
7 Song and dance
8 Unnamed degree
9 Cocktail party staple
10 "Bad Moon Rising" band, briefly
11 Adjust in a garage
12 Flight by night
13 Connections
14 School of thought
15 Allure of boldly going where no man has gone before?

16 Pony up the service charge, say
17 Museum pieces
18 Wee
21 Cup part
22 Bayou, perhaps
27 Poet who used the name Old Possum
30 Abbr. often after a comma
31 Carbon compound
32 Storage spot
33 Horatian work
35 Sports org. name since 1910
38 Historic time
39 It's a wrap
41 Big name in jeans
43 Elevator name
45 Grazing area
46 Barely enough
48 News exclusives
49 Clears of data, as a PC
50 Happy Meal toy replica of Captain Kirk's ship?

53 "A Death in the Family" author James
56 Wonderstruck
57 "Buenos ..."
59 Flea market deal
60 Did salon work
62 Allow
63 Latin "behold"
64 Bygone deplatory brand
65 First word in all but one "Seinfeld" episode title
67 Cause of inflation
70 Everglades deposit
71 Wheel connectors
72 Play delayers
75 Gave in (to)
78 Start of a classic accusation
81 Fabled racer
82 Flapjack cooker
83 Dorm overseers, for short
86 Wilcox daughter in "Howards End"
87 Tabloid couple

88 Sign-off letters before L
89 Nice season
91 Blow away
92 "Ambition should be made of ... stuff": "Julius Caesar"
94 EMT skill
95 It's found in banks
96 Immigrant's subj.
98 Tighten the strings of, maybe
101 Safe to have
102 Example
103 Composer
106 Bogus
108 Church official
109 Nemo's creator
113 Makeup line
114 Galahad et al.
115 Action movie weapons
118 Screening org.
120 Heal
121 CIO partner
122 Dundee denial
123 NY rival



3/27/22

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Answers to last week's puzzle below.

HOROSCOPE

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

Happy Birthday | March 27: You are innovative and independent. You are a sensitive person who appears blunt, bold and aggressive. In fact, you put your loved ones first. This year is the last year of a nine-year cycle, which is why you will wrap up things and let go of people and situations that are no longer relevant in your world.

Moon Alert: There are no restrictions to shopping or important decisions today. The Moon is in Aquarius.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
This is an excellent day to enjoy the company of friends and groups. Yes, you're ready to schmooze. You have something to say, and you intend to be heard.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
People notice you and some know personal details about your private life. Fear not, with powerful planets at the top of your chart, you are blessed. Even though you might be low-key, you can still negotiate with bosses, parents and VIPs.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
You're eager for adventure, which is why you feel restless. You want to explore new turf, travel, see new places and learn new things. Relations with people from other cultures will be friendly. Romance might blossom.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
Keep your pockets open, because gifts, goodies and favors from others will come your way. You look good to others, plus you have the advantage when negotiating shared property and financial matters.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
Despite your desire to explore and learn, your main thrust is to get along with others. To do this, you will have to go more than halfway. This simply requires cooperation.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
You might have to work on behalf of someone else or perform a service for someone. (Be helpful. What goes around, comes around.) This is also a good day to get better organized and deal with pet-related details.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

This is a wonderful day to socialize with others online or in person. Enjoy family and the friends in your bubble, especially children. Sports events, fun diversions, travel opportunities and the enjoyment of the arts and music will please you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
This is the perfect day to cocoon at home and relax. Admittedly, increased chaos and activity on the home front might be daunting. Nevertheless, relations with others are warm and friendly, which is why you also might enjoy entertaining.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
You appreciate the beauty of your daily surroundings almost as if you are seeing them through new eyes. Likewise, relations with daily contacts are warm and supportive. Nevertheless, you have strong views that you want to share.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
You are working hard to boost your earnings lately, and many of you have been spending money as well. The cash is flowing. You might think about what you own and what you owe, because at a deeper level you want to define some basic values.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
Things tend to go your way because the Moon is in your sign. This is something that happens for two days every month, and when it does, your luck is slightly better than all the other signs. Expect sudden changes.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
Grab every chance to enjoy solitude in beautiful surroundings, especially with good food and drink, because you need some downtime today. You need to relax and make time for yourself so you feel grounded and in the present.

Answers to last week's puzzle.



3/20/22