

# The Style Invitational

## WEEK 282: TAKING SNIDES

Actual News Item:

### Fire Destroys Boyhood Home of Novelist Thomas Wolfe

Snide Comment:

I guess now he really *can't* go home again.



BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**This week's contest** was proposed by Pat Myers of Fort Washington, who wins the Gee Whiz-r!, a plastic whistle that produces a piercing noise that "shatters glass, makes poodles yap uncontrollably." Your challenge is to take any story anywhere in today's Post

and append to it a single snide observation. You can be reacting to a headline or the text of the story. No need to clip the story—just tell us which page it is on. First-prize winner gets a hatmaker's severed human head, a value of \$30.

First runner-up gets the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up receive the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Winners will be selected on the basis of humor and originality. Mail your entries to the Style Invitational, Week 282, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071; fax them to 202-334-4312; or submit them via Internet to this address: losers@washpost.com. Internet users: Please indicate the week number in the "subject" field. Also, please do not append "attachments," which tend not to be read. Entries must be received on or before Monday, Aug. 17. Important: Please include your postal address and phone number. Winners will be announced three weeks from today. Editors reserve the right to alter entries for taste, humor or appropriateness. No purchase necessary. Today's Ad No One Notices was written by Jonathan Paul of Garrett Park. Employees of The Washington Post and members of their immediate families are not eligible for prizes.

### REPORT FROM WEEK 279,

in which you were asked to write treacly inspirational poetry. Terrific winners. As usual with poetry, there was some fairly heavyhanded editing for rhyme, meter, content, logic, humor, etc.

◆ First Runner-Up:

**Yesterday upon the road I met a man with half a leg.  
He looked at me with half a smile, held out a hand to beg.  
"Good sir," said I, "half a leg is naught at which to sneer.  
Why, Holyfield became the champ with but a half an ear.**

**"With merely half most any man can most anything attain,  
Look how high Dan Quayle did rise with only half a brain.  
There's no limit to the future of one who has but half.  
Having half a liver didn't mute Edith Piaf!**

**"Half a loaf is all one needs to keep intact one's soul.  
See how low John Bobbitt's sunk since he was rendered whole.  
So that stump of yours, my privileged friend, is really quite a boon."  
At which he half removed his pants, and gave me half a moon.**

(Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

◆ *And the winner of the framed photograph of William Howard Taft on the back of a very beleaguered-looking horse:*

**A saddened young trichina worm  
Sits in waste abuzz with with flies.  
"How can I ever save the world  
Stuck here, in this?" he cries.**

**But soon he got his break in life  
By way of too-rare pork  
When he entered someone's body  
On the meat upon her fork.**

**Then the lass went shopping  
At her local grocery store.  
She bought a nice fresh cantaloupe  
(She could afford no more.)**

**Later, in her kitchen  
Her intestines made their purges.  
And as her gut was speared by pain,  
She let go her recent purchase.**

**The bag landed on the counter  
Out the window flew the melon**

**It fell twelve stories through the air  
And conked an escaped felon.**

**The woman's pain receded  
And soon she bought a Ford.  
'Cause for the nasty felon  
There was a nice reward.**

**Alas, the crook had no such luck;  
In fact, his time was up. He  
Breathed his last, but his kidneys  
Saved a starving orphan's puppy.**

**Because the puppy didn't die,  
The orphan kept his hope.  
His faith in God was strengthened.  
He grew up to be the pope!**

**So remember life's great lesson:  
To yourself be true.  
Whether you're a pontiff  
Or a squirmy worm in poo.  
(Niels Hoven, Silver Spring)**

◆ Honorable Mentions:

**The young boy found a quarter  
Outside a grocery store.  
But instead of buying candy  
He gave it to the poor.**

**It was sent to help a family  
That was strapped 'cause times were hell.  
The father dropped it in a telephone  
And got a job that paid him well.**

**For years that noble daddy scrimped  
For his daughter's college day,  
And in that school she met her husband  
Who, as a boy, gave that quarter away!**

**In married bliss they thrived  
And soon started a clan.  
Their little girl grew up to cure cancer,  
Their little boy became U.S. ambassador to Iran.**

**So folks, just don't be greedy,  
Share that excess quarter.  
I know because this tale is true,  
I'm that noble father's daughter!**

(Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

**Do you know someone who is glum?  
Why not relieve his sadness  
With a balloon of helium?**

**Do you know someone who is suffering from  
substance abuse?  
Why not take him to lunch  
And let him order anything he wants, even  
dessert of chocolate mousse?**

**Do you know someone who is filled with  
tedium?**

**Why not show up at his doorstep with a mop  
And wash his linoleum?**

(Susan Keevan, Bethesda)

**There's always one kid at the playground  
Whom nobody wants on his team.  
So this kid slumps, beat, on a lonely seat  
And nurses a shattered dream.**

**There is always one pup in the pet store  
That nobody wants to take home.**

**So it curls up tight in its cage at night  
And moans to itself, alone.**

**There is always one poor homeless wanderer  
Who has neither family nor caring.  
Each day is the same; no one speaks his name,  
So he roams like a loose ball bearing.**

**There's a place where every soul's wanted.  
In a rainbow of kindness and care.  
May his spirit soar when he sees, on the floor,  
A celestial Welcome mat there!**

(Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

**A lonely but misguided youth  
Lacking the will to live,  
Decides at last to end it all,  
With pills and booze and laxative.**

**The deed is interrupted  
Fam'ly members intercede.  
They place him in professional care  
To convalesce at his own speed.**

**The endless days drag on and on.  
What must he do before he's freed?  
One day he finds a Reader's Digest  
And in boredom starts to read.**

**First, "Laughter, the Best Medicine"  
Then "Life in These United States."  
He grins and turns the pages,  
And learns new words like "denigrates."**

**Then, the month's selections:  
Tales inspiring and true.  
Folks who beat their problems.  
And emerged, remade, anew.**

**The message never wavers:  
"You can do it if you try!"  
He then reads of a lonely youth . . .  
And soon he starts to cry.**

**This ride called Life can have a way  
Of playing a wry jest.  
That lonely little boy is me,  
Publisher of Reader's Digest.  
(Greg Arnold, Herndon)**

Next Week: **Expressing It Nicely**