

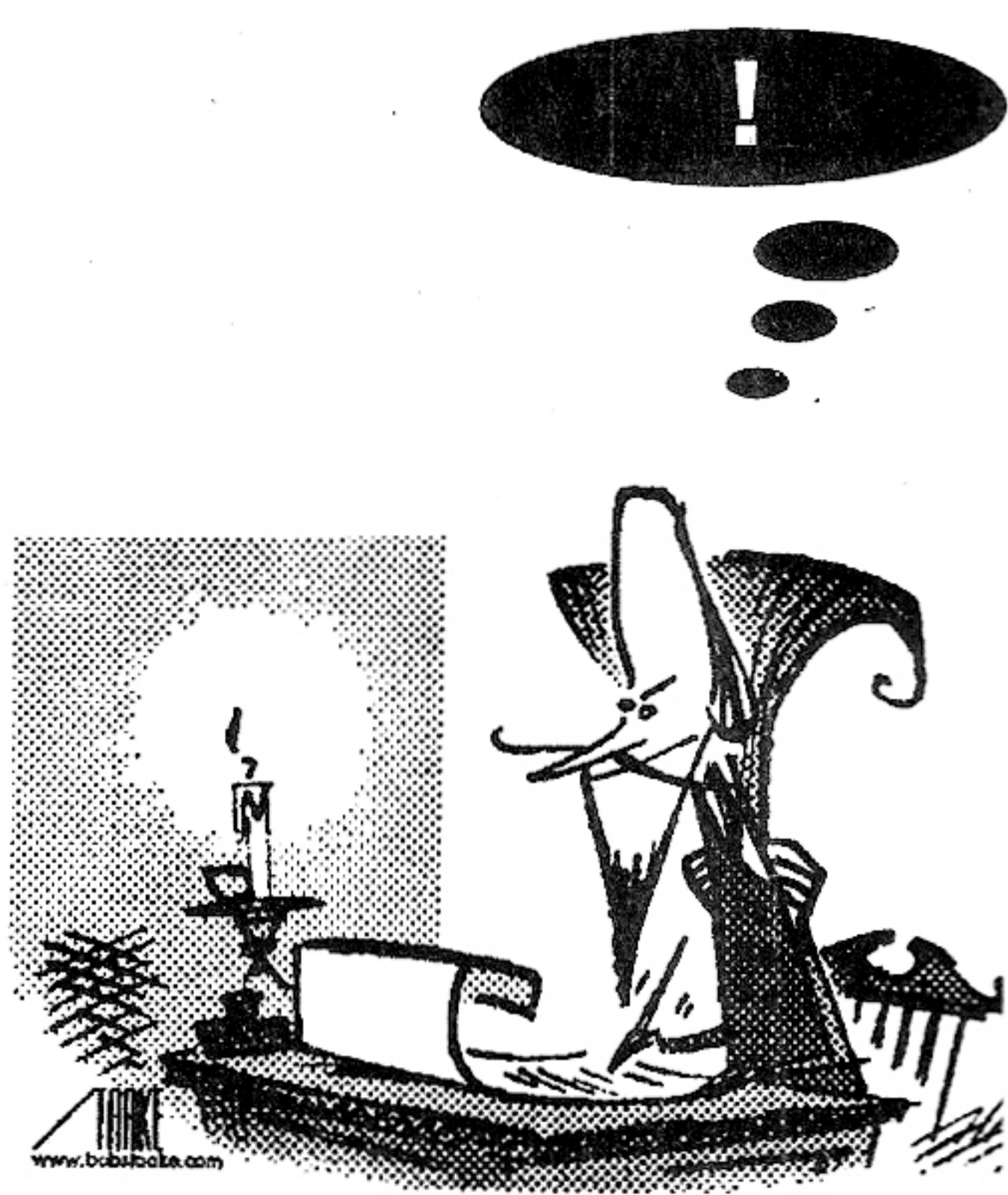
The Style Invitational

WEEK 293: THE VERSE OF AMERICA

*People in love,
Fooling around.
A black shoulder
Swept the ground.*

*A droopy nose
Held in the teeth
Picked up and kissed.
It's only me!*

*It really was difficult
To see who was who.
How bad a thing
Did I do?*



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This Week's Contest was suggested by Kelli Midgley-Biggs of Columbia, who wins a new, improved name. Kelli is now Katharine M. Butterfield, Esq., of Potomac. Katharine observes that just as art may be found anywhere, so may poetry. She proposes that you take any story in today's Washington Post and create a poem or a song by stringing together various phrases from that story. Each phrase must be at least two words long. You may use your own punctuation and line spacing. We created the above poem entirely from phrases in today's Miss Manners column. Your poems may or may not rhyme. Make sure that you tell us which story your poem is taken from. Because we think this one of the best contest ideas ever, we are also sending Katharine a fine present: a can of Oregon Jack Rabbit Milk ("can cause old maids to fall in love, confirmed bachelors to propose, and the married to swing"). First-prize winner gets a t-shirt and ceramic coffee mug celebrating 25 years of Mr.

Coffee products, sent to The Washington Post by the Mr. Coffee Corp. in a shameless effort to nail free publicity. We called the Mr. Coffee Corp. to snidely inform them that we are the humongously incorruptible Washington Post and we cannot be bribed for free product endorsements, at which point the Mr. Coffee Company promised also to send the winner of this contest a Mr. Coffee thermal carafe, a Mr. Coffee Commuter coffee maker, a Mr. Coffee Iced Cafe maker, a Mr. Coffee Cocomotion mug and a 12-cup Mr. Coffee drip coffeemaker! In return all we had to do was declare the Mr. Coffee Corp. to be the best run and most public-spirited commercial enterprise on the planet, featuring the best engineered home brewing products, which are available at suprisingly affordable prices, considering their world-class design and astonishing durability. This seemed like a good deal, so we snapped it up like gators at a luau.

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 292, 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, Nov. 2. 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. The executive editor of the Washington Post requires us to make it clear that we have in fact paid The Mr. Coffee Corp. for the merchandise supplied to our winners. He believes this information does not in any way blunt the above joke, and because he is the executive editor of the Washington Post, with the power to reassign us to a news bureau in some dank and hellish Third-World principality whose water supply contains amoebas the size of marshmallows, we do not question his judgment. This Week's Next Week No One Reads was written by Jean Sorensen of Herndon. Employees of The Washington Post and members of their immediate families are not eligible for prizes.

REPORT FROM WEEK 290,

in which we asked you to create new theories and rules to explain life.

- ◆ Fourth Runner-Up: **The size of the pepper mill is inversely proportional to the quality of the food in the restaurant.** (Mindors Weiskopf, Hollywood)
- ◆ Third Runner-Up: **The more holiday ensembles a woman owns (e.g., Halloween sweatshirt with matching ghost earrings), the more likely she is to wear them on her bingo night.** (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)
- ◆ Second Runner-Up: **The deeper the defendant's pockets, the more likely his wife was killed by the one person in 12 billion who shares his genetic profile.** (Brian Broadus, Charlottesville)
- ◆ First Runner-Up: **The less-known tobacco warning theory: The purchase of a suit with two pairs of pants guarantees you will burn a hole in the jacket.** (Charlie Myers, Laurel)
- ◆ **And the winner of the huge, framed reproduction of an Elvis stamp: The greater the number of multiple personalities you have, the greater chance that one of the irresponsible ones won't pull his weight with the household chores.** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

The older the boy, the more he shoves filthy clothes back into his dresser. The older the girl, the more she tosses perfectly clean clothes into the hamper. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

The better-looking the prostitute, the better the chance that she's a he. Not that I would know or anything. (Niels Hoven, Silver Spring)

Occam's Electric Razor Theory: The simplest way to shave is probably the best. (Mike Genz, La Plata)

The Newscasters' Circular Analogy Theory: A news reporter will describe an area devastated by a natural disaster as "looking like a war zone." That same reporter will describe a war-torn area as "looking like a tornado or hurricane hit." (Jerry Pannullo, Kensington)

The Crenelation Theory of Bad Luck: Whenever you step in dog poo, you're sure to be wearing waffle-soled shoes. (Ralph Scott, Washington)

The Look-What-I-Made Theory: The more gifted the parents say their child is, the more gifted the parents think they are. (Philip Vitale, Arlington)

The more whimsically pastoral the name of the subdivision (such as Whispering Hush-a-Bye Willow Acres), the more likely it contains yards full of junked cars and a pig-slaughtering facility. (Jennifer Hart, Arlington; Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

Access to your rental car fuel tank will always be on the side opposite the pump. (Greg Arnold, Herndon)

The way to make sure someone will answer the phone when you're calling is to take a huge bite of cheesecake. (Carolyn Bassing, Takoma Park)

The higher the hairdo, the louder the gum. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

You will be disappointed in your daughter's first boyfriend in the same way the Titanic was disappointed by the iceberg. (Russ Beland, Springfield)

The smaller the breasts, the more intelligent, sexy and exciting the woman. (Please see that this theory gets the widespread recognition it deserves.) (Susan Reese, Arlington)

The School Bake Sale Theory: The older the child, the more likely the mother will send Entenmann's. The younger the child, the more likely he is to bring in an impressive homemade coconut and truffle three-layer cake in the shape of a Teletubby. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

The more often you hear the recorded words "Your call is important to us," the less it is true. (Brian Broadus, Charlottesville)

The more guys you meet named "Saddam," the closer you are getting to Baghdad. (Brian Broadus, Charlottesville)

When attempting to turn off a lamp that has a three-way bulb, you always misjudge which setting it is on and end up making the room brighter. (David Genser, Arlington)

The number of potholes is proportional to the temperature of the cappucino in your lap. (Steven King, Vienna)

All supermarket foods with fat content over 50 percent are purchased after 10 p.m. by people wearing purple sweat pants. (Steven King, Arlington)

As you get to a more advanced age, words change their spelling. (Carolyn Bassing, Takoma Park)

The longer you've lived out of a suitcase, the more liley you will draw a customs inspector resembling Cindy Crawford. (Charlie Myers, Laurel)

Next Week: Another Contest, Duh