

The Style Invitational

Week XXI: Everyone's a Critic

If William Faulkner reviewed a Quarter Pounder With Cheese for *The Washington Post*:

Through the arches, between the yellow-line parking spaces, I could see them flipping. They were flipping along the counter and I went inside. Lester was working in his apron by the straw dispenser. They took the beef out and they were flipping. Then they put on the cheese, and he flipped and the other flipped. Then they went on, and I went along the counter. Lester came away from the straw dispenser and we went along the counter, and they stopped and we stopped and I looked past the counter while Lester worked in his apron.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

If Dave Barry reviewed escargots for *The Washington Post*:

The French have given the world many fine things—Catherine Deneuve, snotty waiters who talk like they are always throwing up, those mincing little dogs they groom to look like topiary at a Fire Island disco, etc.—but until I got to taste *escargots* (literally, “boogers in a shell”) I did not have a full appreciation of the French, their culture, their mores, their uncanny ability to make the entire rest of the world seem normal by comparison, and in this I am including the great nation of Togo, where they eat raw goose feet for breakfast. (Come to think of it, “Raw Goose Feet for Breakfast” would be an excellent name for a rock band.)

This Week's Contest was suggested by Stephen Dudzik of Silver Spring. Stephen, who was trying to help *The Washington Post* find a replacement for retiring restaurant critic Phyllis Richman, suggests that we try out some great writers, living or dead. Your challenge is to adopt the style of a famous writer and review any of these dishes: a Quarter Pounder With

Cheese; poached salmon in tarragon butter; SweetARTS; escargots; vanilla ice cream; or vacuum-sealed smoked beef rectum. First-prize winner receives a vacuum-sealed package of “smoked beef rectum,” imported from Japan, a \$1,600 value. It's the second time this particular prize has been awarded; for some reason, the original winner declined it.

First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable *Style Invitational Loser Pen*. Other runners-up win the coveted *Style Invitational Loser T-Shirt*. The *Uncle's Pick* wins the yet-to-be-designed but soon-to-be-coveted “The Uncle Loves Me” T-shirt. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com, or by U.S. mail to *The Style Invitational, Week XXI*, c/o *The Washington Post*, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. Deadline is Monday, June 26. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and a daytime or evening telephone number. E-mail entries must include the week number in the message field. Winners will be chosen on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of *The Washington Post*. Editors reserve the right to edit entries for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. No purchase required for entry. Employees of *The Washington Post*, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes.

RESULTS FROM WEEK XVII,

in which you were asked to rewrite well-known statements the way George W. Bush might have uttered them. This proved difficult. There were more than 2,000 entries, but most didn't quite understand the wondrous thing that is a Bushism. A Bushism is not merely a Spoonerism (“the hirsute of pappiness”) or a malapropism or a Freudian slip, and it certainly is not a politically blunt bon mot (“Give me liberty to give them death”). A Bushism is a magnificent pratfall of the cerebral cortex, in which a lifetime of experience and learning and intuition comes hurtling out upside down and backward, wearing its underpants on its head.

- ◆ Third Runner-Up: **“It ain't over till the fat lady eats.”** (John Kammer, Herndon)
- ◆ Second Runner-Up: **“If I have seen further it's because I have stood on the shoulders of giant ants.”** (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)
- ◆ First Runner-Up: **“I, George Walker Bush, do solemnly swear I will execute the president of the United States . . .”** (Chris Doyle, Burke; Joseph Romm, Washington)
- ◆ And the winner of the facade tile from the set of “Beverly Hills, 90210”: **“It's Al Gore and me. Eye to eye. Toe to toe. Guano a guano.”** (David Genser, Arlington)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

- ◆ **“The whole country is going to hurl in a handbasket.”** (David Genser, Arlington)
- ◆ **“I believe in the sanctimony of human life.”** (Steve Wennberg, York Springs, Pa.)
- ◆ **“Criminals should just get their desserts.”** (Mike Genz, La Plata)
- ◆ **“Politics makes strange bedwetters.”** (David Genser, Arlington)
- ◆ **“When someone offers you drugs, just say, ‘Not right now.’”** (Sandra Hull, Arlington)
- ◆ **“It's the stupid economy.”** (Robin D. Grove, Laurel)
- ◆ **“The NRA won't support me if I denounce gun violence, and the voters won't support me if I do. It's a real Colt .22.”** (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)
- ◆ **“Is the pope a Cadillac?”** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)
- ◆ **“You have to break a few eggs to make a chicken.”** (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)
- ◆ **“My fellow Americanites . . .”** (Ben Aronin, White Plains, N.Y.)
- ◆ **“More fun than shooting a barrel of monkeys.”** (Brad Cooper, Washington; Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

“Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, that middle part of the thingy before you get near the end.” (Russell Beland, Springfield)

“Been that. Done there.” (David Genser, Arlington)

“We have nothing to fear but fear we must.” (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)

“All wind broke loose.” (Kevin Marshall, Alexandria)

“I believe our children are the furniture.” (David Genser, Arlington)

◆ The Uncle's Pick:

“That is a thing with which I am down.” (Russell Beland, Springfield)

The Uncle Explains This is a gentle jibe at the careless if colorful patois of America's youngsters, who have borrowed some expressions from the rap (or so-called “hop-hop”) generation. I am told that one of these expressions is “I am down with that,” which means, in more conventional language, “I heartily approve.” By rephrasing the expression in more syntactically correct and understandable terms, the author provides a template for proper speech while underscoring how George W. Bush does not always have his “stuff together,” as the kids might say.

Next Week: Employing Irony