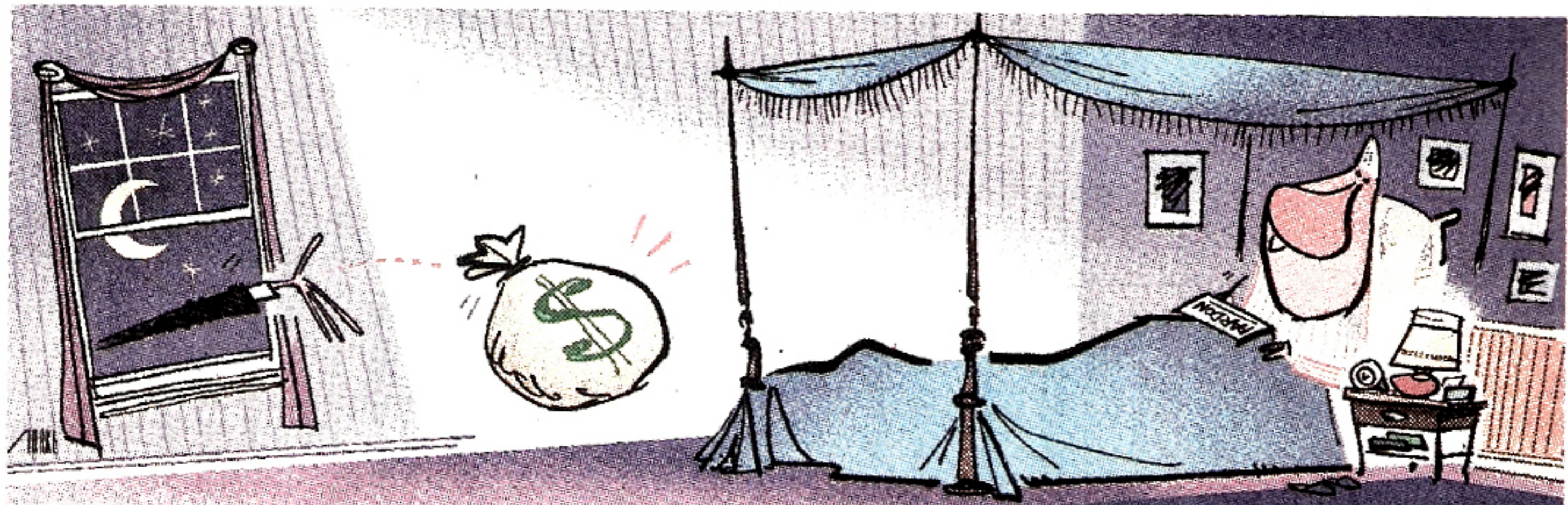


The Style Invitational

Week LX: Things Could Be Verse



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**Of all the nights Bill Clinton stayed awake,
That last one really took the cake.
It must have been some humongous itch
That made him go and pardon Rich.**

This week's contest: Take any story in today's Washington Post and rewrite it into a rhyming poem of no more than eight lines. Be sure to include the headline, section and page number of the story upon which your poem is based. First-prize winner gets a digital electric nose cleaner "for the picky person," which would be valued at \$5.99, if it still worked.

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 shockingly ugly "The Uncle Loves Me" T-shirt. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312; by e-mail to losers@washpost.com; or by U.S. mail to The Style Invitational, Week LX, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. Deadline is Monday, March 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 subject field. Contests will be judged 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.

REPORT FROM WEEK LVI,

in which we asked for examples of overkill, to name a problem and offer an absurdly drastic solution.

For those of you keeping score at home, literally hundreds of entrants submitted entries ending with the solution "Bomb Iraq." Many dozens offered solutions involving the word "pardon." Many more dozens offered solutions involving stealing White House furniture.

◆ Fourth runner-up: *Problem: Young people don't appreciate America's freedoms. Solution: Force them to chant the Pledge of Allegiance every day.* (Russell Beland, Springfield)

◆ Third runner-up: *Problem: Can't seem to win a Loser T-Shirt. Solution: Put an infinite number of monkeys in front of an infinite number of computers with an infinite number of e-mail accounts.* (Monkey No. 92835; Bill Santiff, Owings, Md.)

◆ Second runner-up: *Problem: President tends to mangle words during speeches. Solution: Electrocutation lessons.* (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)

◆ First runner-up: *Problem: You're afraid the public will forget you after you're gone. Solution: Pardon Timothy McVeigh.* (Mark Early, Arlington)

◆ And the winner of the first ladies coloring book: *Problem: You're worn out from dealing with an obstinate toddler, a self-centered preteen and a rebellious teenager. Solution: Have another innocent baby.* (Saria Brewer, Mitchellville)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

Problem: Bank officials won't listen when you ask for a loan. Solution: Wear a ski mask when asking. (Martin Goff Jr., Springfield)

Problem: Wife nags you about leaving dirty underwear strewn around your bedroom. Solution: Leave your dirty underwear strewn around her best friend's bedroom. (Jim W. Pond, Holliston, Mass.)

Problem: Stubborn particles stuck between your teeth. Solution: Hold a woodpecker up to your mouth and let it go to town. (Clarence Johnson, Beltsville)

Problem: The Baltimore Orioles and the Montreal Expos. Solution: The Montreal Orioles and the Washington Expos. (James J. Winebrake, Harrisonburg, Va.)

Problem: Illiteracy. Solution: Ban books. (Sandra Hull, Arlington)

Problem: Baldness. Solution: Chia Pet implants. (Joe Braxton, Manassas)

Problem: Not enough students signing up for English 472: Shakespearean Themes and Motifs. Solution: Call the course English 472: Lust, Greed and Stabbings. (Mike Genz, La Plata)

Problem: Your husband's conduct has turned your surname into a synonym for pathological lying, debauchery and thievery. Solution: Use your maiden name, which is only synonymous with graft and influence peddling. (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)

Problem: You want to lose weight and meet new people. Solution: Get yourself thrown into a Turkish prison. (Don Kapinos, Lorton)

Problem: Unsightly paunch. Solution: Gain 300 pounds and become a sumo wrestler. (Bob Sorensen, Herndon)

Problem: Shipwrecked. Solution: Forget about patching the hole in the boat and instead get the Professor to build a television broadcasting center to send a help message. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Problem: Button missing from shirt. Solution: Start up buttonexchange.com. (Mike Genz, La Plata)

Problem: People who have more than the maximum number of items in the express line. Solution: Have them roll a boulder up a hill while birds pick at their exposed livers. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Problem: Might carry only 48 states in next election. Solution: Burglarize opponent's party headquarters. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Problem: Global warming. Solution: Nuclear winter. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Problem: Runny nose. Solution: Sniff Super Glue. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

Problem: People get mad when you smoke cigars. Solution: Move to Cuba. (Martin Goff Jr., Springfield)

Problem: Antiquated equipment makes it difficult to count everyone's vote quickly and correctly. Solution: Let five political appointees choose the next president. (Mark Early, Arlington)

Problem: Inclement weather. Solution: Go on an expedition to the farthest reaches of the Amazon, find a butterfly flapping its wings—and stomp on it. (Rod Ewing, York, England)

Problem: You didn't vote for the new president. Solution: Move to Europe, like me. Any day now. Really, I am going. (Alec Baldwin, Hollywood; Emily Samuelson, Leesburg)

Problem: You just can't get a date with anyone. Solution: Try a less popular species. (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

Problem: Milk carton "sell-by" date lists next day. Solution: Take first available jet to California to gain a few hours. (Phyllis Kepner, Columbia)

Problem: Face doth mock you. Solution: Cut off nose. (Phyllis Kepner, Columbia; Bruce Alter, Fairfax Station)

Problem: Menstrual cramps. Solution: Pregnancy. (Deborah Rotter, Fairfax Station; Linda Early, Washington)

Problem: Kids' music is too loud. Solution: Have them turn it up until your eardrums burst. (Wei-Hwa Huang, North Potomac; Sandra Hull, Arlington)

Problem: Weather forecast includes chance of hail. Solution: Strategic Hailstone Defense System. (Bruce Reynolds, Holland, Mich.)

Problem: Costs and delays mount for Wilson Bridge replacement. Solution: Buy and install the Brooklyn Bridge, for less. (William McGhee, Rockville)

Problem: Wet-blanket ombudsmen. Solution: Take gratuitous shots at them in print. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Problem: Too many defense lawyers. Solution: Lawyers who lose get a percentage of the sentence. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Problem: Straight hair just won't hold a curl. Solution: Bring your curling iron into the shower with you. (Sandra Hull, Arlington)

Problem: Construction crews making too much noise early in the morning. Solution: Nerf hammers. (Lisa Anamateros, Stephens City, Va.)

◆ The Uncle's Pick: *Problem: Insecurity. Solution: Whenever anxiety strikes, loudly chant an affirmation—like "I like me, I really like me!"—until the fear passes.* (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)

The Uncle Explains: *My word, could you imagine loudly chanting anything so ungrammatical?*

Next Week: Canine Fashion