

## The Style Invitational

By the Empress

### Style Invitational Week 901: Dead letters - our obit-poem contest for 2010

By [The Empress](#)  
Saturday, January 1, 2011

#### Week 901: Dead letters

*Edwin Newman, grammarian:*

Edwin Newman past away  
But if he would of seen this rhyme,  
He'd of crawled right out of his dark grave  
And died a second time.



(Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

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On this first day of 2011, we pause a moment to look back at those we lost in 2010 - and to write funny poems about them. It's our eighth annual Dead Letters (or Post Mortems) contest: *Write a humorous poem about someone who died in 2010*, as in the example above by Washington Post Resident Elegist-in-Doggerel Gene Weingarten. It doesn't have to rhyme, though good rhymes tend to be funny. Short poems are more likely to get ink in the print paper, but especially good longer ones will get virtual ink on washingtonpost.com. Song parodies are not forbidden. There are many lists of "notable deaths 2010" and such online.

Winner gets [the Inker](#), the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a Flarp Noise Maker, a little nothing machine the size of a yo-yo on which you push buttons to create various electronic noises, ranging from froglike to sick cat. The whole thing sounds kind of anemic, actually. Donated quietly by Dave Prevar.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted [Style Invitational Loser T-shirt](#) or yearned-for [Loser Mug](#). Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after [Style Invitational Loser magnets](#). First offenders get a smelly, tree-shaped air "freshener" (Fir Stink for their First Ink). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Jan. 10. Put "Week 901" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results to be published Jan. 30. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's results is by Brendan Beary; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Jeff Contompasis.

#### Advertisement Report from Week 897

in which we asked you to "translate" a sentence appearing in The Post into "plain English"; we also allowed the occasional not-really-a-translation if it was funny enough. Funny can trump a lot in Invite Land.

#### The winner of the Inker

Sentence in The Post: "The positions the Obama administration is taking today are not the traditional positions of most Democrats."

Plain English: They're trying out alternatives to "fetal." (*Danny Bravman, Chicago*)

2 the winner of the [turkey carcass hat](#): "If you are out and about in a kilt, then remember to show some decorum."

PE: And decorum is the only thing you'd better be showing. (*Dion Black, Washington*)

3 "Our biggest sweater sale of the year!"

PE: "Nobody bought our sweaters!" (*Dave Prevar, Annapolis*)

4 Obama: "Our success depends on our willingness to engage in the kind of honest conversation and cooperation that hasn't always happened in Washington."

PE: "We're doomed." (*Kevin Dopart, Washington*)

#### A B in PE: Honorable mentions

"I'm absolutely a person who has not let ego run amok," Winfrey says.

Plain English: "... as you will learn in this month's article about me in my personal magazine, O, and on several shows premiering on the Oprah Winfrey Network." (*Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.*)

"We clearly have to continue to provide the message to the Afghan people about why we're here and what it is that we want to do," Petraeus said.

PE: "Can somebody tell me why we're here and what it is that we want to do?" (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase*)

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PE: Please, please, for the love of God, buy one of our ^%&%% cars! (*Craig Dykstra, Centreville*)

