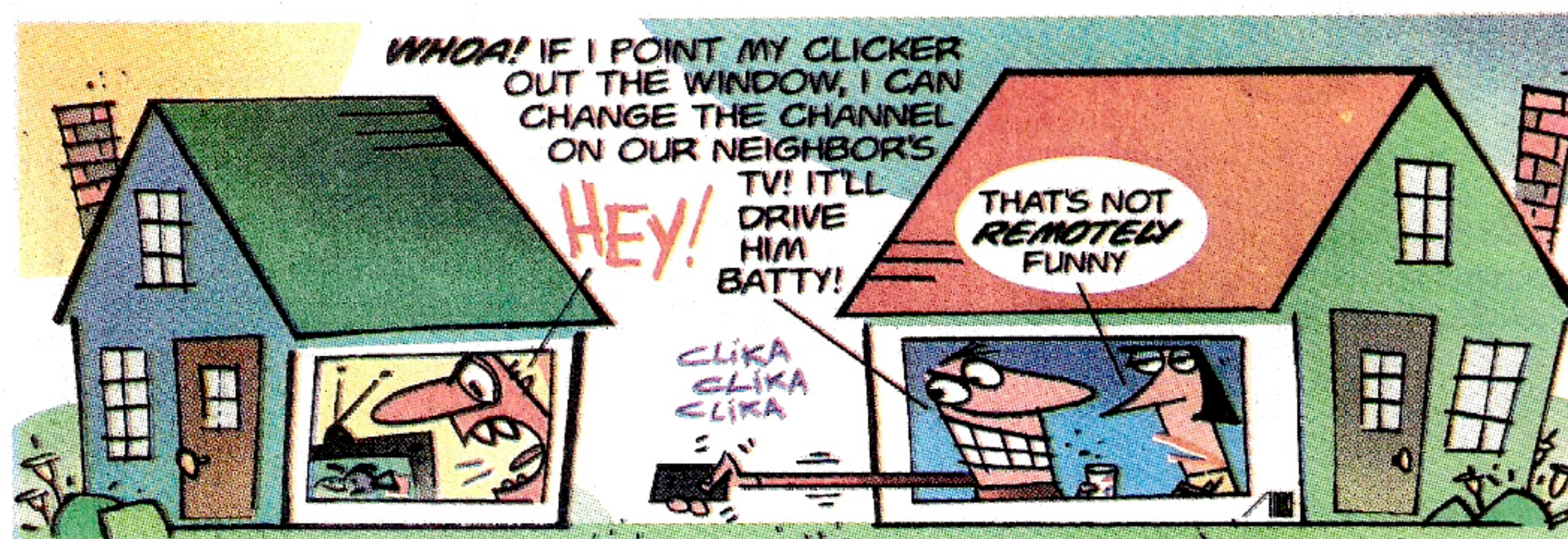


The Style Invitational

Week LXXIV: Adverbiage



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Teacher: In Revolutionary France, the guillotine was controversial.

Student: It was?

Teacher: Yep. People were sharply divided.

Did you hear about the necrophiliac who was barred from the cemetery? He was gravely concerned.

This week's contest is a variation of the classic Tom Swifty joke. ("My arm is shrinking," said Tom witheringly.) You have to come up with a witticism or a joke by making a pun out of an adverb. Unlike Tom Swiffls, however, your adverb must modify not a verb but an adjective—as in the examples above. Yes, it makes for a whole different game. First-prize winner gets a genuine framed 1930s-era country store display of Susquehanna Bucktails Spinning Lures and Spoons for Shad and All Game Fish. It is worth \$60.

First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. 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 LXXIV, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. Deadline is Monday, July 2. 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. Entries may be edited 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. There is no revised title for next week's contest because no one improved on the original.

REPORT FROM WEEK LXX,

in which we reported that The Uncle of The Style Invitational was missing, and asked you to supply the follow-up news story. But first, a milestone to report: With today's published entries, Chuck Smith of Woodbridge shuffles into The Style Invitational Hall of Fame. The Style Invitational Hall of Fame, located in Elizabeth, N.J., is open to all persons who have been published in the Invitational at least 500 times. At present, Mr. Smith is the only member of The Style Invitational Hall of Fame.

◆ Second Runner-Up:

Uncle Found, Faces Charges

... Friends and fans of the missing Uncle held a rally at police headquarters to protest the slow pace of the investigation into his disappearance. The neatly dressed, polite crowd carried signs that read, "Golly, We Know You Are Awfully Busy, and That Police Work Is Difficult Under Any Circumstances, and That You're Doing the Best That You Can, but Please Help Us Find That Dear, Sweet Man." And: "Please Honk Once, Lightly (So Long as That Won't Distract You From the Important Job of Driving Carefully) if You Support Our Wish for Greater Police Assistance in Finding the Uncle . . ." (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)

◆ First Runner-Up:

Medical science declared itself baffled Sunday after an autopsy revealed The Uncle to be the first known fatal case of constipation . . . (Dave Zarrow, Herndon; Judith Cottrill, New York)

◆ And the winner of the five "The Uncle Loves Me" T-shirts:

PERSONALS PLUS

Disillusioned gentleman ISO sympathy. I recently discovered my view of the world has been terribly flawed, and my professional colleagues have been snickering behind my back for years. I thought I held a position of importance; apparently, I was just being indulged. I have dropped out of sight, left my wife, and am now in the process of reevaluating my life. I'd like the comfort of an old-fashioned, plain-spoken woman. Sense of humor a minus. (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

... Maryland Police confirm that the missing man, stopped for a broken taillight while on his way to weekly Bible study, was taken into custody by Prince George's County homicide detectives for "routine questioning." The Uncle is reported to have declined to contact his family, or his employer, and to have waived the right to consult an attorney during his 11-day interrogation, during which time he freely confessed to several unsolved murders. He is being held without bond. (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

... In related news, the Nubile Young Secretary of the Style Invitational was also reported missing, and . . . (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Ah, Uncle, we hardly knew ye! (*The author explains: "We hardly knew ye" is frequently used to eulogize our closest friends, whom we obviously knew quite well but whom we lament we shall know no further.*) (John Kammer, Herndon)

Appreciation

The Uncle knew that laughter is the best medicine, even though his humor ran more to the placebo type. He had a dark side, but mostly showed his ecru side. He looked like everybody's grandfather and he probably was, in his home state of West Virginia. Newspaper ink ran in his veins, and ironically a paper cut killed him as newspaper ink doesn't clot well. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

KidsPost

Where in the World Is The Uncle? Usually, when an older man who isn't related to you asks you to call him Uncle and offers to be very nice to you, it's a good idea to run away and tell a grown-up you trust. But sometimes it's okay, like with The Uncle of the Style Invitational. He's a nice man. That's why everyone is so worried that he's gone missing. Do you think you know where he is? Send in your ideas! (Brian Foster, Fairfax)

Several newspapers around the country reported receiving long, rambling manifestos today that were signed, mysteriously, "The Uncle." The writer claimed that he was hiding in a shack in Montana and would not reenter society until the name "Hoover Dam" was changed to "Hoover Darn." (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

The Uncle emerged from seclusion today and announced he has legally changed his name to :-). Reporters are already referring to him as the symbol formally known as colon hyphen right parenthesis. . . . (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Appreciation

The Uncle had a heart as big as the great outdoors and a prostate to match. He was a gentleman and kept his hands to himself around the ladies—often wearing flowing caftans to disguise the fact. Few people know that he wasn't really The Uncle, but actually a second cousin twice removed. Some considered him a jerk, others a pompous gasbag. The truth lay somewhere in between. If he could make one person laugh his day was complete, even if it was a forced, high-pitched, uncomfortable laugh. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

In a stunning development reminiscent of a previous scandal, The Washington Post today revealed that one of its writers, The Uncle, who was reported "missing" several weeks ago, never really existed. He was, instead, the fictionalized creation of employees of the Post. The Pulitzer Prize committee declared itself shocked, inasmuch it had been planning to award . . . (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)

The Uncle of the Style Invitational was found dead today in his bathroom, still grasping the entry that quite literally made him laugh himself to death. According to police, the joke was "only mildly amusing" but "certainly in impeccable taste." (David Moore, Bowie)

Next Week: Balloonacy