The Style Invitational

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.

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
Mortem) contest. Write a humorous poem about
someone who died in 2010, as in the example above by
Washington Post Resident Elegant-in-Doggerel Gene
Wennigarten. 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 Flap
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 seagull. The whole thing sounds
kind of ironic, 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 listed after Style Invitational Loser
magnets. First offenders get a smellly, tree-shaped air “freshener” (For Stink for their First
Ink). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washingtonpost.com
or by fax to 202-334-4311. 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 subtree is by Jeff Conotomops.

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. Fanny can
trump a lot in Invite Lund.

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 Brauman, Chicago)
2 the winner of the turkey-carcass-lift: “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. (Don 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 Dopeart, 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
Breechlin, Engin, 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,” Petreus said.
PE: “Can somebody tell me why we’re here and what it is that we want to do?” (Gary
Crockett, Clarksburg, Calif.)

Buy your next BMW with zero down, and no processing fee.
PE: Please, please, for the love of God, buy one of our “%&%&% cars! (Craig Dykstra,
Covenant)