

ABA BJ Puzzle of the Week: 6/24/10

Swift Punishment

“What has this crazy man done with our puzzle?” readers asked weakly.

If you caught the pun in that sentence, then you are already familiar with the word gadgets called “Tom Swifties.” For the answers to all questions, please read on.

Swifties are a special kind of pun, an offshoot of the “Wellerism,” according to *www.fun-with-words.com*. (Wellerisms were named for Sam Weller, the comical valet of Dickens’ *Pickwick Papers*.)

• • •

Tom Swifties were named for the young hero of multiple series of kids’ books, called “Tom Swift,” and later, “Tom Swift, Jr.” The science-based stories, printed by multiple publishers over the years, have been ground out since the early 20th century by firms called “book packagers.” The books were sort of a scientific version of such children’s serials as the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew. They became known, especially in earlier formats, for formulaic prose that relied on extravagant adverbs and other literary embellishment to inject something that passed for drama. Along the way, imitating this for fun became something of an art.

• • •

Some Swifties are outright groaners of puns, some are quite subtle. The website, *www.fun-with-words.com*, has hundreds of examples. Here are a few:

“Don’t you know my name?” asked Tom, swiftly.

“I couldn’t believe there were 527,986 bees in the swarm,” Tom recounted.

“I only have diamonds, clubs, and spades,” said Tom, heartlessly.

“I manufacture tabletops for shops,” said Tom, counterproductively.

“I have a split personality,” said Tom, being frank.

• • •

“We wonder, could you come up with banking-specific Tom Swifties?” we asked, curiously. A few:

“My net interest margin has plunged to 0,” said CEO Tom, disinterestedly.

“Where is that list of our branches?” asked Tom, rooting around in his desk.

“Today we’re going to discuss the bank’s OREO,” said Tom, sandwiching the meeting into his schedule.

• • •

Your challenge is to come up with your own prize-winning banking-specific Tom Swifty. One will be selected as best by our panel of judge, and we’ll publish the best entries on the website *www.ababj.com* in The Puzzle Vault. Fax up to three Swifties, with name, bank, title, and e-mail, by 5 PM, July 1, to 212-633-1165, to participate in a drawing for a \$25 Amazon certificate. The winner will be announced in July. Good luck! scocheo@sbpub.com

My Swifty: