

The Style Invitational

Week 557: Oh, for Namesakes!



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The difference between Prince and Prince Charles is the former figured out pretty fast that his life is mostly just symbolic.

The difference between Jessica Simpson and Bart Simpson is that Bart is less cartoonish and artificial.

The difference between Hank Aaron and Aaron Spelling is that when Hank made an error, he didn't name it Tori.

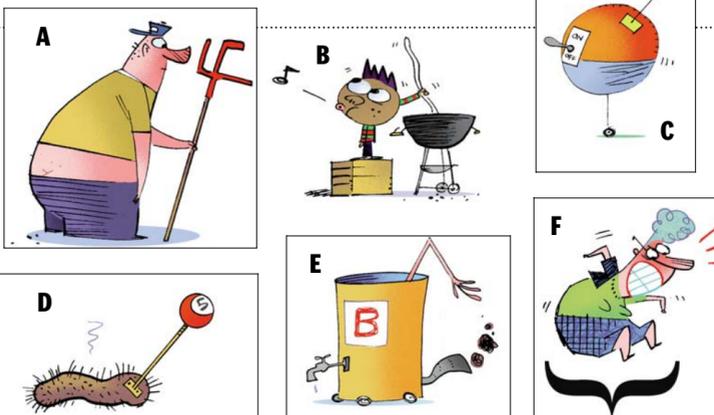
This week's contest was suggested by inveterate Loser Russell Beland of Springfield (my, doesn't "Russell" look nice as a middle name there): Take two people, real or fictional, who share some element of their names and explain the difference between them, as in the examples above.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins a pair of genuine gold-sequined and tasseled pasties, complete with a bottle of liquid latex to stick them on with. The Empress found them in a Washington Post wastebasket; the back of the package advertises something called "Showgirls: A Titilating [sic] Experience."

Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week.

Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312 or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. Snail-mail entries are not accepted. Deadline is Monday, May 17. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or your risk 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 will be published June 6. 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 contest is by Roy Ashley of Washington.



Report from Week 553, in which we asked you what was going on in these pictures. Lots of repetition, but a good dose of variety, too. Clever but submitted too often: The boy in Cartoon B whistles while he woks; the lady in Cartoon F is on the horns of a dilemma, or taking a mustache ride at the county fair. And, of course, lots of Home Proctology Kits for Cartoon A.

◆ Third runner-up: **Cartoon D: Paramecium Fats lines up a tough combination shot.** (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.; Paul Kondis, Alexandria)

◆ Second runner-up: **Cartoon A: Ross Ruiz was caught red-handed cheating in the International Dowsing Championship, ironically losing his No. 1 ranking.** (Milo Sauer, Fairfax; Steve Fahey, Kensington)

◆ First runner-up, the winner of "Ben Wicks' Book of Losers": **Cartoon F: An aging Bette Midler performs an interpretive dance to "The Wings Beneath My Wind."** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

◆ And the winner of the Inker: **Cartoon A: As Karen held up a hand in protest, Barney confronted her with the fact that she had taken this Atkins thing too far.** (Allan B. Moore, Washington)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

Cartoon A
When his caddie suggested this 4-iron, Tiger Woods realized he had hired the wrong guy. (Chuck Smith)

Rehearsing for the Whittier High School Christmas pageant, shepherd Dick Nixon complains that his staff is not a crook. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

Gomer Pyle's distant cousin Hermann always had to stand in the back row at the Nuremberg Rallies. (Laura Shumar, Lafayette, Ind.)

Even before he bonked his nose, Buddy Hackett knew his audition for Mel Gibson was a long shot. (Joe Cackler, Falls Church)

Cartoon B
Little Romano tests his prototype Macaroni Grill. (Michael Fransella, Arlington)

I understand the Invitational's need for a token minority character, but did he have to be preparing food while whistling Dixie? (Niels Hoven, Berkeley, Calif.)

Alvin learns the fine art of snake charring. (Ry Schwark, West Linn, Ore.)

Even when he was a kid, there was always something suspicious about some of the tails Jayson cooked up. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Cartoon C
Jupiter's Earth Probe discovered only trace elements of sulfur in the Blue Planet's atmosphere, not enough to sustain life. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

This is a visual depiction of Googling a description of a Mars rover from English into Estonian, then back to English. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

Cartoon D
It's the little deuce poop. (Frank and Cindy Curry, Kingwood, W.Va.)

Never drive a 5-speed slug just after they've salted the roads. (Art Grinath)

Even at the Inn at Little Washington, \$5

for a single herb-encrusted cicada nymph appetizer seemed a bit excessive. (Robin Grove, Chevy Chase)

First Runner-Up wins a hairy slug with a billiard ball attached to it via toothpick, donated by Steven Dudzik of Olney. (Ezra Deutsch-Feldman, Bethesda)

Cartoon E
The bloodmobile has gotten a little aggressive on collections. (Art Grinath)

Soylent Blue turns out to be people, too. (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls)

"What's all this fuss about reducing faucet fuel emissions?" wonders Emily Litella. (Mary Ann Henningsen, Hayward, Calif.)

As we've long suspected, Russell Beland does his best work in the can. (Milo Sauer; Dave Komornik, Danville, Va.)

Cartoon F
Landing on her feet after her departure from the National Zoo, Lucy Spelman takes a job with Sea World. (Jeffrey Scharf, Burke)

The "braces for impact" you hear so much about. (Dan Steinberg, Falls Church)

The Strayer College basketball coach didn't think she'd actually win the NCAA Tournament, but she jumped for joy just to be in the bracket. (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

Years after she's lost her perky good looks, Penelope Pitstop is furious that Snidely Whiplash's mustache doesn't have a touch of gray. (Jim Reed, Wales, Wis.)

[upside down] **One of those games at the penny arcade: the calipers are about to grab a prize.** (Carolyn Bassing, Takoma Park)

Margaret was furious when she found out that it was all a fluke. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

The federal marshal assigned to Justice Scalia performs the flamenco on a reporter's notebook. (Chris Doyle)



PHOTOS BY GERALD MARTINEAU—THE WASHINGTON POST

The view from the bottom: Kayakers on the Potomac have the best perspective to take in the grandeur of the gorge.

Potomac Gorge: A Gap in Washingtonians' Knowledge

GORGE, From D1

bottom of the gorge." But you can tell he's not sure. He hasn't ever really thought about it.

On a remote trail nearby, a birder who gives his name as Tom says he doesn't think of the place as a gorge. Never mind that the river is rushing through rocky channels nearby.

"A gorge, you think of a small canyon," he says.

This is the kind of thinking that bedevils Stephanie Flack, head of the Nature Conservancy's Potomac Gorge Project. She knows that most people don't have any inkling that the Potomac Gorge is a gorge. It's too stretched out, too hard for a person to appreciate fully.

"It's sort of like you can't see the nose on your face," she says.

The gorgeness of the gorge is like all things in Washington, a complicated matter, subject to debate, second-guessing, bureaucracy and jurisdictional jealousies. It's impossible to state with confidence that the Potomac Gorge is really a gorge, and even if it is, it might not be *the* Potomac Gorge, but rather merely a Potomac gorge. What's certain is that it's in an unusual place. Most gorges hang out in the boondocks. This one's practically right in town.

It appears to be that very rare thing in nature: a secret urban gorge.

Human beings are a naming species. We like to put a label on everything of value, particularly everything that has a physical presence. There's a presumption that if we don't give something a name it probably doesn't exist. The case can be made that all the Potomac Gorge lacks in its quest to be viewed with awe and wonder is an official designation, in the same way that the only thing the scarecrow in "The Wizard of Oz" really needed was a diploma.

Obviously this is partially a semantic issue. Many people are quite aware of the Potomac River, and they know about places like Great Falls, Mather Gorge, Carderock, the C&O Canal, Scott's Run, Turkey Run, Little Falls, Fletcher's Boat-house, the Billy Goat Trail, and so on. There are lots of familiar place-names in the Potomac Gorge—except "Potomac Gorge."

The term does not appear on any well-known maps. There are no signs informing a traveler that he or she is entering the gorge. This is one of the things Flack wants to change. She'd like to put up signs saying something like "Welcome to the Potomac Gorge," and she's enlisted a local artist, Mary Belcher, to create a lovely color illustration of the gorge and its historical and natural highlights.

But for now, the gorge is unheralded, existing in a patchwork of public and private lands. Just figuring out which part of the National Park Service controls which part of the gorge can take years of careful research. The river has fractured the landscape and carved out a braided

streambed, full of islands and side channels, while government bureaucrats have divided up the gorge into separate federal, state, regional, county and city parklands.

There is one stretch of the gorge that is so indisputably gorgelike that it is actually called a gorge. Mather Gorge extends just below Great Falls for about a mile, and has sheer vertical cliffs on either side of a narrow channel. This is the part that fits the Webster's definition of a gorge: "a deep, narrow pass between steep heights."

Below Mather Gorge the river twists and turns and tumbles, and there's still excellent whitewater, but the valley widens, and the river does its carving in a calmer manner, almost ponderously in a few places, as though considering whether to send the entire erosional project to a committee.

For many miles below Great Falls the gorge remains an unusual landscape, one in which the river has scoured down to the bedrock, forcing plants and animals to cope with the thinnest layer of sediment and the ravages of floodwaters. There

says.

Unlike many natural wonders, the gorge doesn't have a singular postcard vista, other than those at Great Falls. In fact, the best view of the gorge is from the water, with a paddle in your hand (providing you know what you're doing). The most vocal advocates for the gorge have been paddlers, including those who in 1993 formed the Potomac Conservancy. Matt Logan, president of the conservancy, says many people have never truly seen the gorge. "You don't see it from the bridge as you're sitting in traffic on the Beltway," Logan says.

It might not necessarily be a great thing for the gorge to get more glory. Richard Wiegand, who worked with Flack on the Potomac Gorge Site Conservation Plan, worries about the human pressure on the ecosystem. People might trample rare plants. But he and Flack think people might also treat the gorge better if they recognize how precious and unusual it is. "If we don't get the local people to appreciate what they have, it's much easier to lose it," Wiegand says.



At the vantage of Chain Bridge, the Potomac Gorge is more like half a gorge.

are bedrock terraces that become like Midwestern prairies, and sure enough they have grasses and other rare plants not normally seen in the mid-Atlantic. Botanists consider it a wonderland. They look for big blue-stem, wild false indigo, prairie red-root, Canada milk vetch. They have found scores of rare species in the gorge, many of them threatened by invasive weeds and vines and ivies that in some cases have crept right down out of the back yards of gorge residents.

Retired geologist E-an Zen, formerly with the U.S. Geological Survey, says the gorge is really a "gorge complex."

"It is not a simple gorge. It is a whole series of gorges nested into each other," he says.

Scott Southworth, a geologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, is not quite so certain that the Potomac Gorge is a true gorge. There are places where it's like half a gorge: Tall bluff on one side, ancient river terraces gradually ascending on the other.

"It's an asymmetric valley. The true gorge is quite symmetric," he

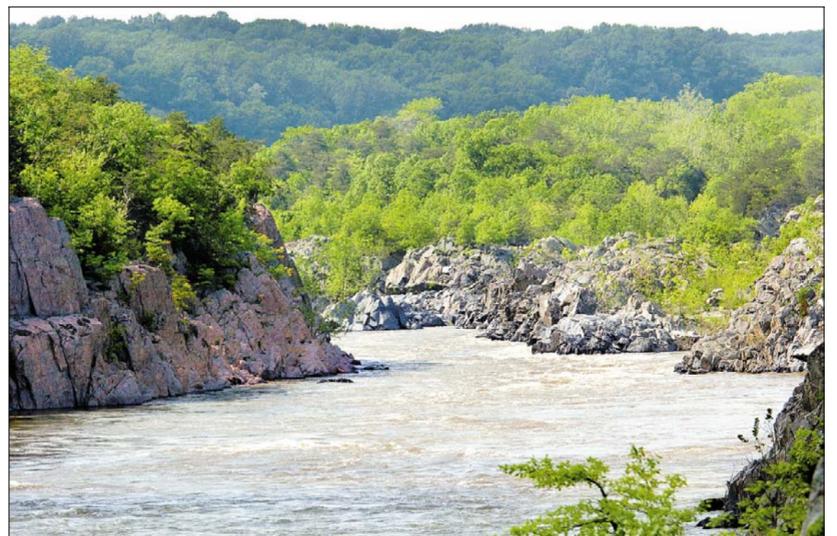
A truism of park use is that people rarely venture more than 150 yards from their cars. They go to places that appear on maps and have official designations. You can imagine what would happen if Congress one day designated the Potomac Gorge National Monument. Tourists would pass the word: "They just opened up a new gorge in Washington!"

And some would show up and feel cheated. They'd look out over the river and say: That's not a gorge, that's a gulch.

One day recently, Walt Bartman taught an art class near Old Angler's Inn, his students perching their easels on the towpath or down by the river where the kayakers put in. The scenery is like something out of the Hudson River School of painting. The canal is placid, but everything else is tormented, the product of natural violence.

"It's an emotional landscape," Bartman said. "You can read the symbolism here—the water's really controlled the design."

He doesn't call it a gorge. His students don't call it a gorge. But they all agree it's gorgeous.



Unlike Potomac Gorge, Mather Gorge, above, is on the map. It extends for about a mile just below Great Falls.

Next Week: Love the Tiny Tail Stain! or Naively Hint at Toilets