

# The Style Invitational

## THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

### Week 762: Look This Up in Your Funk & Wagnalls

**Pomade-Pop:** A new soda that hasn't cut much into Coca-Cola's market share.



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**Microhabitat-microwave:** A dorm room appliance on the last day of spring break.

**Perforated-perimeter:** The end of American civilization, according to Lou Dobbs.

Here's a game we've played in the past with the alphabetical headings in the phone book: This time we turn to what may be another imminently obsolete reference volume. **This week: Supply the pair of terms listed at the top of a page of any print dictionary to indicate the first and last listings on the page, and define that hyphenated term.** You may reverse the order of the terms. Please cite the dictionary you're using; the examples above are from Webster's New World, second and fourth editions. Note: After the embarrassment of riches known as 4,000-plus horse-name entries for Week 759, the Empress has decided she's embarrassed enough. This week, please limit yourself to your 20 best entries.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a truly marvelous photo book, "Toilets of the World," a 255-page color travelogue of facilities high-tech and very low, the starkly practical and the opulently whimsical, such as a Tokyo restaurant's red human-mouth-shaped urinal that swings from side to side while music blares, forcing the hapless urinator to sway in time with the music lest he miss the, well, mouth. Try that after a few glasses of sake. Donated by Loser Kevin Dopart.

**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 Magnets. 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, May 5. Put "Week 762" 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 will be published May 24. 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 Michael Baker of Elkridge. This week's Honorable Mentions name was submitted by both Tom Witts and Michael Turmiasky. We belatedly mention that the Week 758 contest was suggested independently by Russell Beland and Anne Paris.

## REPORT FROM WEEK 758

in which we invited readers to regroup words (or words that are embedded in other words) appearing in the Gettysburg Address into their own passages:

The Empress received impassioned protests from two readers who were appalled that we would make light of a sacred text (one demanded that we cancel the contest). The premise of this exercise

**4** What is this "we the people"? They say "we shall over-come" but what can they do? Ha. It is "we the government," we who are in power. The people endure what we do. Sure, they might go to war and even act nobly. But what is so great in that? In the end, this is what I say: So? Gag on this. Eat me. — R.C., Undisclosed Location (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

**3** "O God! O! O! O! O God! O God! O! O!" "I'll have what she did." — Harry & Sally Burns, New York (Randy Lee, Burke)

**2** the winner of the alligator-head coin bank:

He: Can we go?  
She: Hon? Do I have a fat end now?  
He: No.  
She: Sure?  
He: Sure.  
She: It is larger. It is altogether not little. It is as large as a van.  
He: No, it is so little.  
She: It is AS LARGE AS THE EARTH!  
He: Forget it.  
She: Ew!  
He: Now what?  
She: Now this bra is not fitting.  
He: What a struggle! Finished now?  
She: I have aged. Will men gag and not proposition me?  
He: I will proposition. I will remember the lace bra.  
She: That will work.  
He: Can we go now? (Anne Paris, Arlington)

was that, in this digital age, the noblest sentiments risk being edited into "quotes" ranging from the malicious to the just plain silly. Well, we can at least assure you that we have malice toward none. As for the latter quality, those letter-writers are exhorted — please! — to stop reading right now.

## AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

Al, Bert, Ed, Vance and Nat all remember their lives long ago.

Al: We did rough work and did not rest. Now we do a task and get all ill.

Bert: We ate and ate, and did not get full. Now we eat even a little ort and get fat.

Ed: Or use the can to get a little rest and go poo — never a struggle! Now we are in-continent.

Vance: Our lives are all but over. We should ease into our final years.

Nat: No! We are not finished! We all have a little power in the hose, an ember in the member. It is not the end for us. Come on — live large! (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

## LITTLE NOTED NOR LONG REMEMBERED: HONORABLE MENTIONS

**Did Ono and her tin ear end the great Four? And thus The Who remaining, heir to the great, unfinished task? No — it led to freedom, which led to the new. In a sense, she gave us R.E.M. So get over it, people.** (Russ Taylor, Vienna)

**It is fitting and proper that people ask whether I will govern as nobly as the men who have come before me. And to these people I say: "By God, I shall be on the take and be living large as I can for as long as I can. Ha-ha! Is this a great nation, or what?"** (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

**What did the OB say to the father? Heir, heir!** (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)

**Hey, Ma . . . So, Father and I had a little struggle, and, er, he is rather dead, we might say. So . . . we ought to get together, no? I am free at seven. — Oedipus** (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

**He gave me a proposition and a large note. I gave devotion.**

**It is work, even for a dedicated ho. But I shall never forget His Honor (or what might remain of it). — Ashley D., New York** (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

**Here is an aged gag: Ye ma-ma so fat, she can use rope for her bra lace!** (Kevin Dopart)

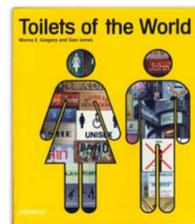
**"O no! THIS is the proper position? Forget it! I'll not endure it! OW! OW! OW! OW!" I struggled and gave birth. Fie on men, who can never conceive.** (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

**A member of the government who shall proposition men, and score in a rest place, might have his work finished in the end.** (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

**Yea, her ma is sure large. Her end is equal to that of four people.** (Susan Thompson, Cary, N.C.)

**Seven years ago, we conceived a final resting place for civil liberty. The world will little note, nor long remember, the proposition that all men are created equal. We are now dedicated to the unfinished work remaining before us — that the government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall perish from this earth.** (Richard Arnold, Rockville)

**Not long ago, the people of this nation gave me the honor of a position in government. It is rough that the people remember me now for an act that might cause the nation to gag and say "ew." In an honored work-place. On the rug. Hey, I might get to score a-new in that place, if she can endure in the field. — W. J. Clinton, New York** (Anne Paris)



**The second-place prize: Required bathroom reading.**

**In under a year, our nation will be led by an ill, aged POW (come on, he can not even remember who is who in the world); or her, from NY (who ought to use a little lace on her bra); or that B.O. bro (now, what did he ever do?), who is so new that he might forget to end the war. Hey people, this is**

**it. We get the government we should have, not what we long to have. But for sure, it will not be as poor and altogether low as it is now.** (Kevin Dopart)

**Next Week: What Kind of Fowl Am I, or The Horse You Wrote In On**

# Lifetime Payments for the Cost of War

WAR, From C1

have the luxury of hitting the remote and turning the volume low as you hear another report of U.S. soldiers killed, Iraqis killed, insurgents, roadside bombs, corpses. Or change the channel, skip the carnage. Or watch, and listen, because something — you don't know what — draws you in.

You wonder what war feels like to those who have survived it in their homelands, have written about it, have made it their mission to always remember so that others will never forget.

"The soldiers walked around the neighborhood, knocking on all the doors, telling people to leave. Those who refused were shot dead right on their doorsteps," Loung Ung wrote in her book "First They Killed My Father."

Ung escaped Cambodia as a child when Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge stormed into Phnom Penh in April 1975. She fled with her family.

"Yesterday," she wrote, "I was playing hopscotch with my friends. Today we are running from soldiers with guns. . . . Pa whispers that from now on we are to give the soldiers anything they want or they will shoot us. We walk from the break of day until the dark of evening. When night comes, we rest by the roadside near a temple. We unpack the dried fish and rice and eat in silence. Gone is the air of mystery and excitement; now I am simply afraid."

Ung now lives in Cleveland, where she owns a Belgian beer bar and an Italian restaurant. So far from war, you say. But she says no. "When I hear politicians talk about war ending or not ending, my first thought is, it is really too bad so few of them have personally experienced war," Ung says. "We are ruled by a group of many armchair soldiers. War doesn't end."

The idea for a second book she wrote was prompted by Bush's 2003 "mission accomplished" announcement. At that moment she thought, "Oh my gosh, there are people who believe this and think this is true." But I know 25 years after my war, it doesn't end just because the guns have fallen silent, doesn't end just because peace treaties have been signed. It doesn't end in my life. It is too bad so many people talk about it without having firsthand experience of it."

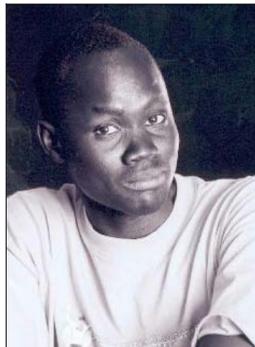
Her war goes on, living as if it were a close relative who remem-



Guerrillas follow Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot, whose totalitarian regime devastated Cambodia.



From left, Alephonsion Deng, Benson Deng and Benjamin Ajak, survivors of Sudanese massacres in the 1980s.



bers what you remember, someone who was there when the most horrible thing in your life happened, and knows all the details.

"The thing I still feel on my skin and in my heart is the experience of hiding in a bomb shelter," Ung says. "The fear that invades your body, that sets your mind ablaze even when the bomb doesn't hit. Fear. When I was hiding in a bomb shelter, everything is quiet except for the whizzing of cannons and rockets overhead. We are all counting under our breath, hiding from the bombs that were thrown by invisible people. They don't know you. You don't know them. You are counting and counting and waiting.

"When it doesn't hit, there is a moment of disappointment. You know it won't stop. . . . When you are in war, there is no relief."

In Sudan, the attack on Alephonsion Deng's village came without warning. "Explosions, horses and camels chasing people, shooting, screaming, crying: It was like the end of the world," he wrote with Benson Deng, Benjamin Ajak and Judy A. Bernstein in "They Poured Fire on Us From the Sky: The True Story of Three Lost Boys From Sudan."

"I watched as the invaders tied the arms and legs of their captives

and put long ropes around their necks. They led them from the village on a line blindfolded so they didn't know the place they were going. "Drowning them in the river," a person cried. "They don't want to waste bullets."

Alephonsion Deng ran and hid. He could not return to his village to look for his family. Someone told him there was no one left alive except for the enemy. So he and other boys — tens of thousands of boys who fled massacres between 1987 and 1989 — walked countless miles across Sudan, without parents, walking barefoot at night, with wounds on his feet.

Almost 20 years later, Deng lives



South Vietnamese refugees flee advancing communist forces in April 1975.

in San Diego and works as a filing technician at a hospital. The memories of war reside with him, like a piece of him.

"The consequences of war? What can I tell you?" Deng asks. "The war experiences are not so much fun. I always tell people everybody hates war. You can't really benefit from it."

The war takes everybody equally.

"Our ancestors fought certain wars and nobody won," he says. "There is victory, but nobody won. There are wounds and sorrows and pains that remain in individual hearts that will never be healed until the individual dies."

Wars are eternal, he says. "Looking at the American war or any other war, it will not be easy. You cannot set a date: 'This will end.' What about the wounds created? What about people with vengeance? Who will repay? Who is responsible for those things? . . . Whether it be the Iraqi war or the war in Darfur or wars in the rest of the world, the experiences are the same. The pain the same. The same wounds."

Bich Minh Nguyen left Vietnam in the spring of 1975. Her sister was 2. She was 8 months old. Her father was trying to get out of Saigon before the communists came.

"Everyone in Saigon knew the war was lost, and to stay meant being sent to re-education camps, or worse. The neighbors spoke of executions and what the Communists would do to their children; they talked of people vanished and tortured," she wrote in her memoir, "Stealing Buddha's Dinner."

Her father received word that the Americans were airlifting children out of the country in Operation Babylift. Two thousand children were flown away. But the first flight crashed, she wrote. And her father decided there must be an-

other way, though time was running out.

"All around us people were running, dropping suitcases and clothes, trying to flag down cars," she wrote. Desperation, repeated over and over in war. "A full panic had hit the city, the kind that sent people racing after airplanes on the runway, that made people offer their babies to departing American soldiers."

They escaped Saigon on a boat and sailed to the Philippines, then transferred to a U.S. ship heading for Guam. From there, they flew to Arkansas, then on to Grand Rapids, Mich. Landing in a foreign world.

All of Nguyen's thoughts of war are shaped through her father. "He talked about it very rarely," she says.

She sees war's wounds on him. "He fought in the South Vietnamese army. He had three brothers. One was killed," she says. "We had to leave my mother behind." Her father had to make a quick decision to get his family out of Saigon and her mother did not know that they had left. (Her mother survived.)

"It is a story I've seen and heard in so many other families: how it tears families apart and results in many years of separation. . . . Part of moving forward is not looking back."

Nguyen lives in Chicago and teaches at Purdue University. She speaks of "how privileged most of us are as Americans."

She is 33, the age of her father when he left Vietnam. But in her Americanness, she cannot fathom a war like the one she escaped.

"What if one day I had to get up and leave every single thing behind," she says. "And I had to leave this country by boat and find some way to get out because if I didn't I would go to a concentration camp. It is hard to imagine."

It is war.