

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

Crappe diem: Winning 'Bad days in history' headlines

BY PAT MYERS

In Week 1121, we asked for you to sum up a "bad day in history" with an irreverent headline, a la many of the 365 headings in the conveniently titled "Bad Days in History," the new book by D.C. popular historian (and long-ago Style Invitational flunky) Michael Farquhar. While Michael's book cites a specific event that happened on April 4 of some year, April 5 of another year, etc., we're sometimes a bit vaguer for our purposes here. Not getting ink because Miss Lizzie Borden was actually acquitted of murdering her stepmother and father with a hatchet in 1892 — one story maintained she went all Pony Express because she was denied a second cup of tea — we still liked Jeff Hazle's headline: "**Hacking Attack Takes Down Service Provider.**"

4th place

Since Legos Hadn't Been Invented Yet. . .

1400: The conqueror Tamerlane decides that ancient Egyptians shouldn't have had all the fun. So he orders the construction of a pyramid to be built from the heads of 90,000 of his fallen enemies in the ruins of Baghdad. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

3rd place

Too Much English on It

Sept. 23, 1999: The Mars Climate Orbiter spins out of control in the Martian atmosphere because NASA used the metric system while its contractor used the British Imperial system. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

2nd place and the signed copy of "Bad Days in History":

Abyssinia, Suckers!

Feb. 7, 1910: Virginia Woolf — wearing a fake beard — and friends masquerade as turbaned Abyssinian royalty and are given a red-carpet tour of HMS Dreadnought by an unsuspecting British admiral. (Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial

It Ain't NASA, Sorrowfully So

Oct. 31, 2014: The privately financed Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo craft, VSS Enterprise, breaks apart in midair, killing one pilot and seriously injuring another. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Bad har days: honorable mentions

There Goes the Neighborhood!

66,002,015 B.C.: The giant Chicxulub asteroid that God sent earthward crashes into the Yucatan peninsula and exterminates most plant and animal life on the planet just so those ratty little lemurs can eventually evolve into a species that will worship Him, along with 4,000 years of religious warfare. (Scott Warner, Hagerstown)

The Hemlock Maneuver

399 B.C.: Socrates is condemned to death — for "corrupting the youth of Athens" — by drinking poison. (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg, Va.)

Encumbered by Heavy Trunks

218 B.C.: Most of Hannibal's elephants die while crossing the Alps. (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

Monk Takes Leek in Middle of Battlefield

6th century: According to legend, Saxons are slaughtered after the future Saint David advises the Welsh to place a plant on their helmets to distinguish friend from foe. (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

His Future at Stake

Spring 1444: The Turks claim 13-year-old Vlad Dracula as a royal hostage. In addition to the Turkish language, his captors teach him how to impale small birds and mice, perhaps figuring: It keeps the kid busy, so where's the harm? (Lawrence McGuire)

They Failed to Appreciate the Gravity of the Situation

May 23, 1618: In the Second Defenestration of Prague, two Catholic regents were ejected from a third-story window after telling local residents what their future religion would be. This event not only caused the Thirty Years' War, but also reminds us that defenestration wasn't a singular occurrence in Prague. (Bryan Brady, Germantown, a First Offender)

What Was He Sinking?

Aug. 10, 1628: Sweden's King Adolphus wants the world's most powerful warship, and no one dares tell him that its double gun decks



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1125: The song remains the sa

Papa's Got a Bra[nd New Bag]: The latest from the Godmother of Soul.

Blue Mo[on]: What Mrs. McDonnell was singing on her way out of court.

Sooo Not a Loser Susan Schearer of Winchester, Va. — "I love reading your column even though I never enter it" — tells the Empress that she listens to Sirius XM in her car. The one-line screen for the satellite radio displays the title of each song, but only as much of that title as will fit on the screen, sometimes producing "funny to hysterical results." Susan's idea, then: **Supply a real song title that has the end or beginning — or, what the heck, both — chopped off and describe it**, as in Susan's examples above, or maybe give it some new lyrics (ooh, we'll do anything to sneak in yet another opportunity for song parodies). You can't add or change punctuation. As always, longer entries have to be worth knocking someone else's entry off the page. On the other hand, we're not so sure how many songs out there will work for this contest.

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a heavy glass globe labeled "Souvenir Snowman." When you shake it, you get not "snow," but some grayish threads of yuck. And also ceramic grass and, floating around, a little ceramic hat, scarf, buttons and carrot. It's a Florida souvenir snowman, see. Brought back from a Florida gift shop by Nan Reiner.

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for Loser Mug or the ardently desired "Whole Fools" Grossery Bag. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet designed by Bob Staake: either "The Wit Hit the Fan" or "Hardly Har-Har." First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or, if you were born in the 19th century, fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday night, June 1; results published June 21 (online June 18). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest. Include "Week 1125" in your e-mail subject line or it might be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/InvRules. The headline for this week's results is by Brendan Beary; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Dave Prevar. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev. "Like" the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/inkofday.

THE STYLE CONVERSATIONAL The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.

and shallow hold will make it unstable. On its maiden voyage the Vasa tips over less than a mile from Stockholm and goes straight to the bottom. (Chris Doyle)

And Covet Thy Neighbors, Ass

1634: London's royal printers publish an edition of the Bible containing the misprint "Thou shalt commit adultery." (Frank Osen)

The High Cost of Urban Renewal

July 29, 1644: By the time of his death, Pope Urban VIII's lavish spending on military and artistic endeavors has resulted in crippling debt for the Holy See. (Jeff Contompasis)

Another Blowout for the Patriots

Dec. 16, 1773: Locals, dressed "in honor of" Native Americans, ruin a franchise's assets. (Kevin Dopart)

Louis Gohmert Could Have Told 'em It's Flat

1826: President John Quincy Adams recommends an expedition to the North Pole to prove Earth is hollow and establish contact with a race of mole people. (Frank Osen)

Texas Is Messed With

Feb. 23, 1836: Santa Anna's army of 1,500 Mexicans surprises the fewer than 300 "Texians" defending the Alamo. (Rob Huffman)

But He Kept Us Out of War

March 4, 1849: President James Polk's term ends, but his elected successor, Zachary Taylor, refuses to take the oath of office on a Sunday. So it falls to David Rice Atchison, president pro tem of the Senate, to serve as president for one day. He later recounts that he spent most of the day asleep. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills) [While Atchison maintained it, his promotion doesn't seem to be the case.]

Cache a Fallen Czar

April 30, 1918: Bolsheviks secretly move Nicholas II and his family to a "house of special purpose" in Yekaterinburg, where they will be held for 47 days before being

executed. (Chris Doyle)

Extreme Sugar Rush

Jan. 15, 1919: A huge storage tank ruptures in Boston's North End, flooding the area with more than 2 million gallons of molasses. (Jeff Contompasis)

And Sometimes the Early Bird's an Idiot

Dec. 10, 1927: Johannes Fibiger wins the Nobel Prize for Medicine, based on his theory that cancer is caused by worms. (Frank Osen)

Close but No Cigar

April 19, 1961: A CIA-backed paramilitary group is defeated at the Bay of Pigs. (G. Smith, Alexandria)

A 6-Foot Pit Stop

Sept. 5, 1970: Formula One driver Jochen Rindt is killed in practice for the Italian Grand Prix. (Larry Gray, Union Bridge, Md.)

Parasites Lost

February 1992: Twenty-seven lab samples of anthrax go missing from a U.S. Army research facility. (Mark Raffman, Reston)

You Want Fires With That?

Feb. 27, 1992: A 79-year-old woman suffers severe burns from a cup of McDonald's coffee. (G. Smith)

Society of Fiends

December 1997: Quaker Oats Co. agrees to settle a lawsuit alleging the company fed radioactive oatmeal to developmentally handicapped children as part of a university experiment. (Mark Raffman)

Braking Bad

July 16, 2003: An 86-year-old driver plows into a crowd at a Santa Monica, Calif., farmers' market, killing 10 people and injuring 70. He later said he had confused the brake and accelerator pedals. (Mark Raffman)

Still running — deadline Monday night, May 25: Our contest for short poems of advice. See bit.ly/invite1124.

POST PUZZLER

BY ALAN ARBESFELD © 2015 CROSSINERGY SYNDICATE LLC

ACROSS

1 Discounts, and then some

11 Put away

15 Popular snack since 1912

16 ___ land

17 Whole alternative

18 Revue bit

19 Old Ford named for an Italian city

20 Calendar abbr.

22 First mate?

23 Spanish babies

26 Less taut

28 Slate or Salon, for short

31 1945 satirical novel

33 Losing line in tic-tac-toe

34 Suit material

35 Red head?

36 Nonsense

38 Swing voter (abbr.)

39 Schlepper

40 Examine again, as a patient

41 Robitussin target

43 Shout in a strip

44 "Shoulda listened to me!"

46 Municipal regs.

47 Mud on the table

48 Golden Horde member

50 Serve and get nothing in return

51 Summer hrs.

53 They may be put on the rack

57 Carroll's "slyth" thing

59 Ongoing sagas

62 Silent star Jannings

63 Sweat-free

64 Confident leader?

65 Tenant's tenants

DOWN

1 Chimney buildup

2 Cube creator

3 Lascivious look

4 Bounding along

5 Where it's at

6 Astronomical rings

7 Ad ___

8 Anagram and homophone of a cartoon shriek

9 Isn't wrong?

10 Clark with a 1965 #1 hit

11 Mercedes models

12 Acts like

13 Proximo player in "Gladiator"

14 Paper impressions

21 Stone Age tool

24 Physicist Fermi

25 Record an exit

27 ___ consequence

28 Disengages

29 "Stay tuned"

30 Infamous Bush coinage

32 Her looks could kill

34 Like elite tournament players

37 Ill-gotten gains

42 Became irritated

45 Green lights

46 Bay windows

49 Datebook entries (abbr.)

52 Good source of protein

54 Manitoba native

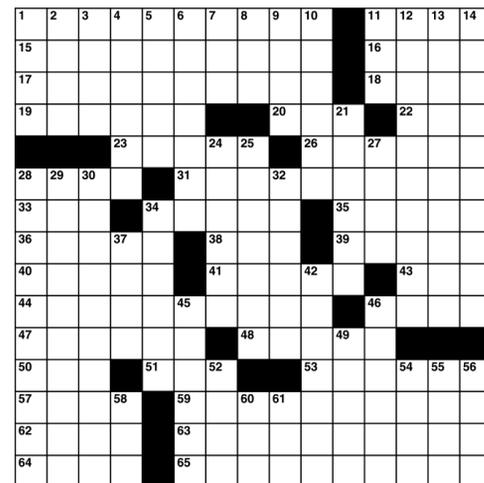
55 Relaxation

56 Indication of deflation

58 Pole worker?

60 Andrews, e.g. (abbr.)

61 D.C. insider



Answer to last week

S T A G E C O A C H S C O T
T A M A G O T C H I L A V A
A P O L O G E T I C A M E X
T A R S L I C K S T E R S
S E C T L O O H E C H T
L E M O N P I E L E A
A D M I R E S E M S E A M
N E O N A T E E P I C A R P
J A C K U M P E L A N D S
O R K A P I A R I S T
U S T E D N N E A S A P
P A U L O N E I L L V E E
E N D O A N N I E S S O N G
A T O P S C I S S O R I N G
R A R E T E S T S C O R E S

HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | MAY 24: This year you seem to draw in what you desire. Your personality and interest in others make you a sure-bet winner. Handling your friends and busy schedule will take a lot of talent, but all the activity will please you. If you are single, you may meet someone of significance now or in the next few months. You will know when you meet this person. If you are attached, the two of you might decide to take a class together or engage in a new mutual hobby. Learn to talk through problems rather than walk away from them.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Your optimism surges and will attract many people who want to be around you. Take some time to yourself to think through a problem.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

You might have a problem that involves a child or loved one. You'll be determined to have others understand where you are coming from.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

Reach out to someone you care about. Recognize your limits when dealing with a loved one. Meet up with friends, swap news and make the most of the moment.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

Be more sensitive and direct with someone. Join this person for a late lunch and pursue a mutual hobby. An older friend or relative may surprise you with

his or her actions.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

You could be surprised by news that heads your way. An unexpected visitor, a potential new opportunity or a unique event might delight you.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

Choose to say little for now. You need to understand what is happening with a loved one. Take time to be more observant. A snap decision won't be best. Be responsive, but wait to take action.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

Bring friends together for a fun ballgame or other happening. You might decide to initiate a Memorial Day barbecue or similar get-together, but whatever the event, the discussion will have an element of the unexpected.

How to help old friends who turn frail

Ask Amy

AMY DICKINSON

Dear Amy: We have old friends who have enjoyed life for most of their marriage. They traveled, socialized, attended many events and were always looking forward to something. Lately, however, it is breaking our hearts to see that they have given in to physical ailments and have stopped socializing, traveling and essentially remain in their house for most of the day.

We can see the gradual deterioration in the quality of their lives, but we are unable to help them. Is there any way we can help without appearing to interfere?

Concerned Friends

You are not powerless. In fact, at this stage of your friends' lives, you are extremely powerful. Your presence in their living room visiting with them could make a bigger impact on them now than it did back when they were your running buddies.

Please, attend to them. Do not judge them for "giving in" to physical ailments. Love them as they are and adjust your perceptions in order to enjoy their company now. Offer

practical help: driving, shopping, cleaning and home maintenance.

Too often, friends and family members stay away from older or infirm loved ones at the very time they need so much. Of course, it is very difficult to see loved ones change and start to fail, but my theory about this is that others' infirmities make all of us anxious about our own lives. So, deal with it.

If you can show up for your friends, you will not only continue to honor your long friendship by bearing witness to them now, but you will receive a lot in return. This is the real "heavy lift" of friendship. I hope you're up to the challenge.

Dear Amy: I am a lifelong bachelor, and I am dedicated to my pets.

Recently, my cat was a victim of an altercation with another animal. He could barely walk and had two large bites.

I immediately rushed him to my veterinarian, and the bill was not cheap, but my vet gives me time to pay it off.

A nosy neighbor, with whom I'm halfway friendly, heard about this and criticized me for spending too much money on my cat. We had some hot words

and I nearly assaulted him.

Since then he has tried to make amends, but I want nothing to do with someone who doesn't love animals. Am I wrong?

Animal Rights Ed

People are animals, too. Think about it — people make mistakes, behave badly, and butt in when they shouldn't. What I'm getting at is that people can sometimes act like Labrador retrievers.

I completely agree with you that your devotion to your animals is laudable, but most importantly it is your business. Considering how much joy your pets bring to your life, their health-care bills are a great investment for you to make.

However, when a human being makes a mistake, admits it and tries to make amends, the most humane reaction is to accept the person's apology and extend a hand to repair a friendship.

Amy's column appears seven days a week at www.washingtonpost.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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