



# The Washington Post

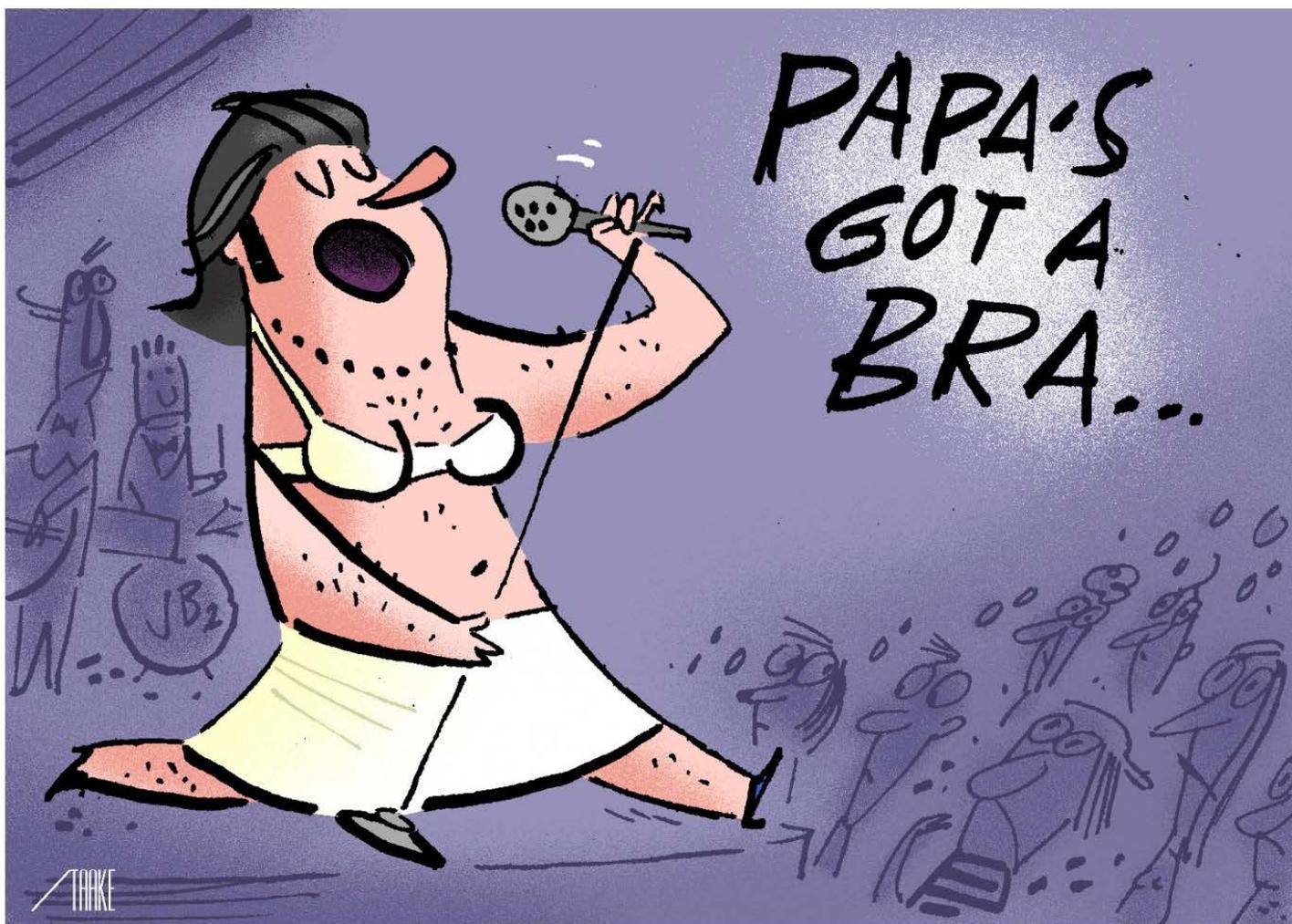
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Entertainment

## Style Invitational Week 1125: Songs without end (or beginning) — clip a tune's title

Plus irreverent headlines for a chronicle of 'bad days in history'





(Bob Staake for The Washington Post )

By Pat Myers May 21 at 11:53 AM  [Follow @PatMyersTWP](#)

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the results of the “Bad Days in History” contest)

**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](mailto: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](http://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](https://on.fb.me/invdev). “Like” the Style Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at [bit.ly/inkofday](http://bit.ly/inkofday).

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**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](http://wapo.st/styleconv).

[And from the contest posted in The Style Invitational four weeks ago . . .](#)

## **CRAPPE DIEM: THE WINNING 'BAD DAYS IN HISTORY' FROM WEEK 1121**

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, Md.)

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, Sorrily 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.)

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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, Md.)

## **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. (Beverley 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, Va.)

## **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, Md., 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 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)

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### **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, Va.)

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### **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](http://bit.ly/invite1124).**

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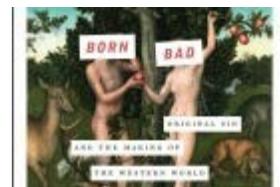
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