

Entertainment

Style Invitational Week 1168: Asterisky business — give us some nerd humor

Plus our winning 'Wait Wait . . . Don't Tell Me'-style quiz questions from Week 1164

A

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A convention of dendochronologists might be a tree-ring circus — but how about the explanations to a string of erudite jokes? We're banking on your Nerddiness Appreciation for Week 1168. (Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers March 24 Follow @PatMyersTWP

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the winning “Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me”-style quiz questions.)

Why da heck is a convention of dendochronologists* such a hoot, anyways? Because it's like a tree-ring circus!

*Dendochronologists date events by studying growth rings in trees. (Chris Doyle)

Why did the chromosome blush when the DNA polymerase* came into the room? He caught her with her genes unzipped!

*DNA polymerase causes the double helix of the chromosome to “unzip” so the gene can be replicated. (Mohamed Alesh)

This is a contest we've done just once before, 13 years ago: **Tell us an original joke whose punch line can't be understood without knowledge — not necessarily scientific — that most of us don't have (which you'll supply with a concise explanation)**, as in the examples above, which got ink back in 2003.

Winner gets the [Inkin' Memorial](#), the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives, in keeping with specialized knowledge, "[The Ultimate North Carolina Quiz Book](#)," a 1999 volume that will tell you 500 more things about North Carolina than you used to know. (What is the highest incorporated town east of the Mississippi? Beech Mountain, N.C.) Found somewhere by Loser Pie Snelson. Who is not from North Carolina.

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for [Loser Mug](#), the older-model "[This Is Your Brain on Mugs](#)" mug or a vintage Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of our lusted-after Loser magnets, "[Magnet Dum Laude](#)" or "[Falling Jest Short](#)." First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" ([FirStink](#) for their first ink). Email entries to losers@washpost.com. Deadline is Monday night, April 4; results published April 24 (online April 21). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest. Include "Week 1168" in your email 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 Jesse Frankovich; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Beverley Sharp. 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; follow [@StyleInvite](https://twitter.com/StyleInvite) on Twitter.

🗨️ **The Style Conversational:** The Empress's weekly online column, published late Thursday afternoon, discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at bit.ly/conv1168.

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

HAR CHOICES: OUR WINNING 'WAIT WAIT'-STYLE QUIZ QUESTIONS

In Week 1164 we honored (a.k.a. totally ripped off) NPR's comedy quiz show "Wait Wait . . . Don't Tell Me" and asked for multiple-choice questions about real events or trivia. The Empress asked longtime Washington Post writer Roxanne Roberts — who's also a longtime "Wait Wait" panelist — for her fave among this week's inking entries: It was Kevin Dopart's "11/11/11" (especially his wrong answers). More from Roxanne in [this week's Style Conversational](#).

4th place

The power of public prayer in America was tested in an unusual way by whom?

- A. The mayor of Jackson, Miss., who tweeted, "I believe we can pray potholes away."
- B. A high school principal in Lubbock, Tex., who opened a football pep rally with a citation from Psalm 55:15: "Let death take my enemies by surprise."
- C. The driver of a Greyhound bus to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, who announced, "Lord, I forgot my glasses; please watch over this trip," and then offered to let any riders off before continuing.

Answer: A, per wjtv.com (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

3rd place

Some schools do their utmost to protect their students — as when, in 2010, an English headmistress did what?

- A. She discouraged abductors by issuing every child a stun gun.
- B. She changed the school uniform to a padded "marshmallow suit" to cushion the kids against bumps and bruises.
- C. She ordered black bars placed over the children's eyes in yearbook pictures, thus ruining the photos for child pornographers.

Answer: C ([The Daily Mail](#)) (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf, Md.)

2nd place and the barf bag decorated with the word for "vomit" in various languages:

What went wrong when an Iowa farmer recently ran unopposed for the local school board?

- A. He resigned immediately after being elected, explaining that he hadn't realized the job would involve going to meetings.
- B. No one voted in the election — even *he* didn't.
- C. He lost as a result of a campaign by neighborhood kids who encouraged voters to write in SpongeBob SquarePants instead.

Answer: B ([Des Moines Register](#)) (Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial:

A London resident showed his love for Burger King how?

- A. He officially changed his name from Simon Smith to Bacon Double Cheeseburger.
- B. He held his wedding in the Burger King on Tottenham Court Road, complete with the presiding official dressed as the King, and the couple exchanging onion rings with their vows.
- C. He stole the Burger King statue from a local restaurant, and demanded free Chicken Fries for life as the "king's ransom."

Answer: A, per [Time.com](#) (Larry Gray, Union Bridge, Md.)

Losing Wait: honorable mentions

Recently an Australian writer was surprised to find what in her email's junk folder?

- A. An offer for a senior-citizen discount at Trump University.
- B. A message telling her that she had won a \$150,000 prize from Yale University — and it was real.
- C. Two hundred emails containing no porn ads, Viagra offers or Nigerian scams whatsoever.

Answer: B ([Sydney Morning Herald](#)) (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.)

Public Enemy Number One? In Al Qunfudhah, Saudi Arabia, a shop selling camel urine was shut down because it was actually selling:

- A. Camel urine.
- B. Scott's Liquid Gold wood cleaner.
- C. Shopkeeper urine.

Answer: C ([The Daily Mail](#)) (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

The driver of a tractor-trailer that rolled out of a Minnesota parking lot, crossing the street and striking a tree and a parked car, was:

- A. The truck's owner's 5-year-old son, who started up the semi when his father went to the restroom.
- B. The truck owner's Labrador retriever, who managed to put the truck in gear.
- C. The truck owner's ex-wife, who thought his girlfriend was sleeping in the cab.

Answer: B ([fox9.com](#)) (Melissa Yorks, Gaithersburg, Md.)

11/11/11 was recognized as the date ...

- A. Most evocative of same-sex couples, according to the California Association of Numerologists.
- B. Most closely resembling corduroy, according to the Corduroy Appreciation Club.
- C. Most like a fence, according to Donald Trump's Veterans Day remarks at the New York Military Academy.

Answer: B ([gothamist.com](#)) (Kevin Dopart)

A New Jersey state agency recently refused to release records about the death of a dolphin in a local river for what reason?

- A. The request violated the dolphin's privacy.
- B. The request misspelled "dolphin" as "dalfin."
- C. The dolphin had been used in an anti-Chris Christie campaign ad, as a contrast to an unnamed "whale."

Answer: A ([nj.com](#)) (Duncan Stevens)

It's not just for smoking anymore: Which of these marijuana-related products recently hit the market?

- A. Grass-fed chicken: "boneless breasts from the happiest ranch on Earth."
- B. Canna-Biscuits: Treats for man's best stoner buddy.
- C. Champot: "Gee, Your Hair Smells Mellow."

Answer: B (canna-pet.com) (Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

After a hunt in Florida in February that killed 106 invasive Burmese pythons, what were zoologists surprised to find inside one snake's stomach?

- A. An entire fawn.
- B. Twelve alligator purses.
- C. A Mickey Mouse costume from Disney World.

Answer: A (WFLA.com) (Tom Witte)

Someone was recently elected and sworn in to the East Chicago, Ind., city council despite what impediment?

- A. He lives in Florida and has never lived in Indiana; he was put on the ballot without his knowledge as a prank.
- B. He is in jail on a murder charge, awaiting trial.
- C. He's a border collie.

Answer: B (Chicago Tribune) (Duncan Stevens)

From ho-ho to uh-oh: People in an Alberta town saw Santa do what un-Santa-like act last Christmas Eve?

- A. He replenished his gift supplies by robbing a jewelry store at gunpoint.
- B. He upgraded his sleigh by stealing a car in broad daylight.
- C. He went on a rant about how he was going to build a wall around the North Pole.

Answer: A. (Reuters) (Xin Yu, Fitchburg, Wis.)

As we near the 2016 Olympics in Rio: How does coffee relate to the Games?

- A. Starbucks, the sponsor of this year's U.S. uniforms, will place its Siren logo (and a handwritten name) on each item.
- B. Coffee has been ruled a legal performance enhancer for Olympic swimmers.
- C. In 1932, Brazil couldn't afford to send a team to the Los Angeles Olympics. So it loaded a ship with the athletes and coffee, selling the coffee at ports along the way. But they made only enough money to enter the water polo team — and they were disqualified for beating up the referee.

Answer: C (NPR "Weekend Edition Saturday") (Lela Martin, Midlothian, Va.)

So, Sir Mix-A-Lot of "Baby Got Back" fame: What do you know about chiropractors?

- A. A Connecticut chiropractor was charged with assault after he applied a series of electric shocks to an assistant, allegedly to punish her for badmouthing other staff members.
- B. A chiropractor in Maine became extremely popular when his pelvic adjustments started giving women intense sexual pleasure. Police investigated the office on charges of prostitution, and now he must have a female witness present during any procedure.
- C. A California teacher is suing her chiropractor after a neck adjustment gave her the ability to swivel her head 270 degrees. Though it doesn't hurt and has proved useful, her new ability terrifies students and has parents referring to her as Ms. Exorcist.

Answer: A (Connecticut Post) (Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.)

The spectacular fountain show in front of the Bellagio casino in Las Vegas is accompanied by which ironic song?

- A. Kenny Rogers's "The Gambler" ("know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, know when to run").
- B. The Shaker song "Simple Gifts" (" 'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free...").
- C. "The Money Song" from the musical "Avenue Q" ("...Give us your money! All that you've got! Just fork it on over...").

Answer: B (Perry Beider, Silver Spring, Md., witnessed it firsthand. Here's a [clip from YouTube](#).)

What was memorable about a wake for a gangster killed in a shootout in Puerto Rico?

- A. In the coffin, the man’s hand was holding a pistol — which went off during the wake.
- B. Police made the man’s killers sing hymns at the funeral home while mourners paid their respects.
- C. The deceased was posed sitting upright at a table playing dominoes, with a drink nearby and holding a condom.

Answer: C (mysanantonio.com) (Dave Prevar, Annapolis, Md.)

What went wrong when an Illinois man shoplifted various electronic items from a Walmart last year?

- A. He came back to the store with the items to ask how to use them.
- B. He called the cellphone company, asking how to get a number assigned to a stolen phone.
- C. A repo man took his car while he was in the store, greatly slowing his getaway.

Answer: C (Lake County News-Sun) (Duncan Stevens)

Which of these fatal accidents occurred while someone was taking a selfie?

- A. An Indonesian man fell into an active volcano.
- B. An American tourist fell off the Eiffel Tower.
- C. A Flint, Mich., man fell in a small vat of water.

Answer: A (Wikipedia, “[List of selfie-related injuries and deaths](#)”) (Melissa Balmain)

Those amazing little girls: Which of these is true?

- A. A woman in Manhattan discovered, to her horror, that her 6-year-old had found the \$12,000 Keith Haring sketch she was about to have framed and had colored it in with crayons.
- B. A child psychiatrist blamed anxiety to explain why a fourth-grader in Virginia said she heard voices at night. Finally a dentist figured out that a filling that the child had gotten overseas was picking up radio signals.
- C. After six months of treatment for an apparent sinus infection, a 5-year-old girl in California blew a safety pin out of her nose and said she’d forgotten to tell her mother she put it there.

Answer: C (UPI) (Ellen Raphaeli, Falls Church, Va.)

The men’s rooms at Louisville Metro Hall, a city government building, have been plagued by what problem?

- A. The prank of dropping horse droppings in the weeks before the Kentucky Derby.
- B. Obscenities written on the mirrors with pink liquid soap.
- C. “Mass quantities of boogers” on the walls around the urinals.

Answer: C (wtky.com) (Kevin Dopart)

Still running — deadline Monday night: our perennial compare-and-contrast contest. See bit.ly/invite1167.

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