



The Washington Post

Entertainment

Style Invitational Week 1109: Fictoids of Columbia — tell us some fake D.C. trivia

Plus Dead Letters — winning poems about the dearly (and not so dearly) departed of 2014





Would we tell you that “Anacostia” means “River of the Floating Corpse” if it weren’t true? Duh. (Bob Staake for The Washington Post)

By Pat Myers January 29 [Follow @PatMyersTWP](#)

(Click [here to skip down](#) to the winning poems about people who died in 2014)

In the native tongue of the Powhatan tribe, “Anacostia” means “River of the Floating Corpse.”

The precocious Pierre L’Enfant (a.k.a. “Peter the Kid”) was 6 years old when he laid out Washington’s system of avenues and boulevards.

In the wake of the Citizens United decision, the D.C. Council voted to impose a sales tax on congressional elections.

In the tradition of the Invitational’s promulgation of totally bogus trivia — but of course totally counter to the reputation of Washington as a place where you’ll always hear the truth — 183-time Loser Mark Raffman suggests this latest round of fictoids: **Tell us some humorously untrue “facts” about Washington, D.C., and the surrounding area.** We realize that out-of-towners — not to mention out-of-countries — are at something of a disadvantage this week. But the jokes don’t have to be terribly local; jokes about the federal government are welcome as well. (However, they may not include references to politicians creating “hot air.” Ever again.)

Winner gets the [Inkin’ Memorial](#), the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives two books, by different authors, titled “The Book of Useless Information,” 2006 (“The harmonica is the world’s most popular instrument”), and “The Book of Totally Useless Information,” 1993 (“Why do we call 12:00 p.m. ‘noon’?”). In the Google era, these might as well be titled “The Useless Books of Information,” except to inspire our fake-trivia contests. Donated by Cheryl White.

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 Feb. 9; results published March 1 (online Feb. 26). You may submit up to 25 entries per contest. Include “Week

1109” 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 Beverley Sharp; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Jeff Contompasis. 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.

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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.

[And from The Style Invitational four weeks ago . . .](#)

TOMB IT MAY CONCERN: THE RESULTS OF WEEK 1105, OUR ANNUAL OBIT POEM CONTEST

Week 1105 marked our annual contest for poems about those who died in the previous year. For 2014, along with the many for Marion Barry and Joan Rivers and Mickey Rooney, numerous Losers turned to those who’d put themselves in the running for Darwin Awards for stupidity.

4th place:

Peng Fan, chef:

A Chinese chef was making soup in Foshan, so it’s said;

This dish required a cobra, so he first chopped off its head.
In retrospect, he should have picked a less exotic item,
'Cause (holy smoke!) the head survived just long enough to bite him.
Now poor Peng Fan is very dead.
Perhaps Confucius should have said:
“Make sure your main ingredient
Is more or less obedient.”
(Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

3rd place:

When **Joseph Shivers** blessed the world with spandex,
All other workout clothes turned into Brand X,
And that was hailed as something truly beauteous,
Not least among admirers of the gluteus.
Yet, sometimes in this land of sloth and plenty,
I wish that hindsight weren't 20/20.
(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)

2nd place and the outhouse-motif S&P set:

Roger Easton, GPS inventor:
His loved ones pray that as he roamed the sky
In search of angels waiting,
He heard, “Your destination's here on high”—
And not “Recalculating.”
(Melissa Balmain, Rochester, N.Y.)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKIN' MEMORIAL:

The radium wristwatch fell quickly from grace
When it poisoned the women who painted its face.
They ingested the poison while sharpening tips

Of their brushes by twirling the points with their lips.

But **Mae Keane** found that yucky, and quit the third day,

Then lived ninety years more before passing away.

So this last of the radium girls made her mark

As the first one to die and not glow in the dark.

(Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

THE METER'S EXPIRED: HONORABLE MENTIONS

Joan Rivers:

“Can we talk?” cackled Joan. “That old coot,

The Almighty, is really a beaut!

So, you’re God? Okay, bub,

Then don’t dress like a schlub.

Lose the robe! Shave the beard! Get a suit!”

(Nan Reiner, Alexandria, Va.)

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Marion Barry (I):

It’s a humorist’s gift that continues its giving

Even well after the subject stops living.

He set himself up (other pols fail by half):

That's why he's forever our Mayor for Laugh.

(Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Marion Barry (II):

The Mayor for Life's honorific is "late,"

But odds are next poll, he'll still capture Ward 8.

(Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.)

Bob Hall:

A Globetrotter trick was to put up a finger

And set there a b-ball and spin it.

But now "Showboat" Hall spins a different way:

Though he trotted the globe, he's now in it.

(Christopher Lamora, Los Angeles)

Wojciech Jaruzelski was the Kremlin-backed PM

Who locked horns with Solidarity in a Cold War stratagem.

Both he and Lech Walesa were deliberate and smart,

But when it came to politics, the two were Poles apart.

(Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

Mickey Rooney:

"You'll die shortly," he was told,

Ever since he was a kid,

And though he lived till he was old . . .

That's exactly what he did.

(Robert Schechter, Dix Hills, N.Y.)

Anastasia Tutik & Miguel Ramos

Two lovers loving on a balcony high.

Two lovers falling, unable to fly.

Their friends and neighbors now pay their respects.

A chilling reminder to practice safe sex.

(David Friedman, Arlington, Va.)

Edmund Abel, Mr. Coffee inventor:

The guy who changed our morning brew

Achieved a ripe old 92.

His secret? Till he shuffled off he

[Never drank a drop of coffee.](#) (Melissa Balmain)

Zeus, [world's tallest dog](#), you were a trouper!

Dog heaven's going to need a bigger scooper.

(Frank Osen)

[Greater the Flamingo](#) (the oldest known):

For eighty-three years since cracking his egg,

Flamingodom he'd been commanding,

And if he'd just tried the opposite leg,

He very well might still be standing. (Nan Reiner)

[Sheila MacRae & Ann B. Davis](#):

One played Ralph Kramden's pestered second spouse;

The other brightly kept the Bradys' house.

They each achieved a state we can't ignore:

No, Alice doesn't live here anymore. (Kevin Dopart)

The creator of the ["Where's Spot?"](#) books:

Where's **Eric Hill**?

Is he under the sofa? No.

Is he in the hamper? No.

Is he under the bed? No.

Is he in the coffin?

There's Eric!

(Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.)

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The two-faced cat named **Frank and Louie**

Always looked extremely screwy.

In feline heaven he arrives

Upon expending 18 lives.

(Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

Stephanie Kwolek, inventor of Kevlar:

Poly-paraphenylene

terephthalamide:

Thanks to Steph, we've got this stuff

to keep our guts inside. (Melissa Balmain)

Animator **Arthur Rankin Jr.:**

In "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer,"

He showed his craft devotion.

He's now become an example

Of permanent stop-motion.

(Howard Walderman, Columbia, Md.)

Countess Anne Dorte of Rosenborg (Denmark):

Cute as a button and common as coal, she wed into a royal clan.

Her husband, a prince, had to lower his rank to marry this nobody, Anne.

His kin, while noble, were **plain as potatoes**, there's no sugarcoating the truth —

What these blue bloods were lacking in the chin, they more than made up for in tooth.

Anne added **nice-looking heirs** to the line, proving when it comes to genetics,

It's smarter to dip outside the pool, if you want to enhance the aesthetics.

(George-Ann Rosenberg — no relation, Washington)

Alex Shulgin, inventor of Ecstasy,

Has moved from this life to the next to see

If euphoria there

Can begin to compare:

Is it better than drugs, rock and sex to see? (Mark Raffman)

Wakachichibu Komei,

The sumo wrestler, passed away.

And as he's buried by his kin,

The weight of it is sinking in. (Brendan Beary)

Mae Keane (II): A sonnet

In nineteen twenty-four 'twas all the rage:

A watch whose numbers glowed when all was dark.

Young women earned a decent living wage,

Detailing tiny digits on the mark.

These “radium girls,” to get a finer tip,

Would pass their paintbrush 'tween pursed lips a bit,

But Mae O'Donnell could not stand that sip

Of magic paint, so she was urged to quit.

What seemed ill luck for Mae at age eighteen,

Became the gift of life and happiness,

For soon thereafter radium girls were seen

With gruesome symptoms — death sometimes, no less.

Mae's brush with fate did point her way to heaven,

But not before she turned one hundred seven.

(Diane Wah, Seattle)

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Costco founder **Robert Craves**

Checked out — he's in the aisle marked "graves."

With all the products Costco stocks,

Let's hope they gave him one Big Box. (Frank Osen)

Talented? Shmalented.

Pretty **Bess Myerson**,

As Miss America

She was revered.

After a lifetime of

Judeo-pulchritude,

She'll be remembered as

Ed Koch's beard. (Nan Reiner)

Dental-implant pioneer **Per-Ingvar Branemark**:

Toothery-woothery,

Per-Ingvar Branemark

Showed how to make fake teeth

Stick in one spot.

Thanks to the implant's vast

Profitability,

My oral surgeon is

Buying a yacht.

(Valerie Matthews, Ashton, Md.)

With 16 wins, a record streak,

This horse was racing's greatest star.

Top jockeys heard the same critique:

“Your mount was close, but no **Cigar**.” (Chris Doyle)

King Joffrey from “Game of Thrones”

Schemity screamity,

Joffrey Baratheon

Slew for a throne at a

Murderous pace;

Died at his wedding, which

Later was named for the

[Thanato-cyanosed](#)

Shade of his face.

(Matt Monitto, Bristol, Conn.)

Arthur Valerian Wellesley

Puddily-wuddily

Eighth Duke of Wellington

Died just in time to be

Versified too.

Duke One, of course, triumphed

Napoleonically.

This duke has now met his

Own Waterloo.

(Chris Hansen, London)

We lost an artiste

When **Ruby Dee** ceased. (Nan Reiner)

Still running — deadline Monday night: Our contest for valentines. See bit.ly/invite1108.

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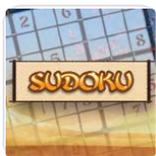


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