

# The Invitational Week 24: Your (B)ad Here

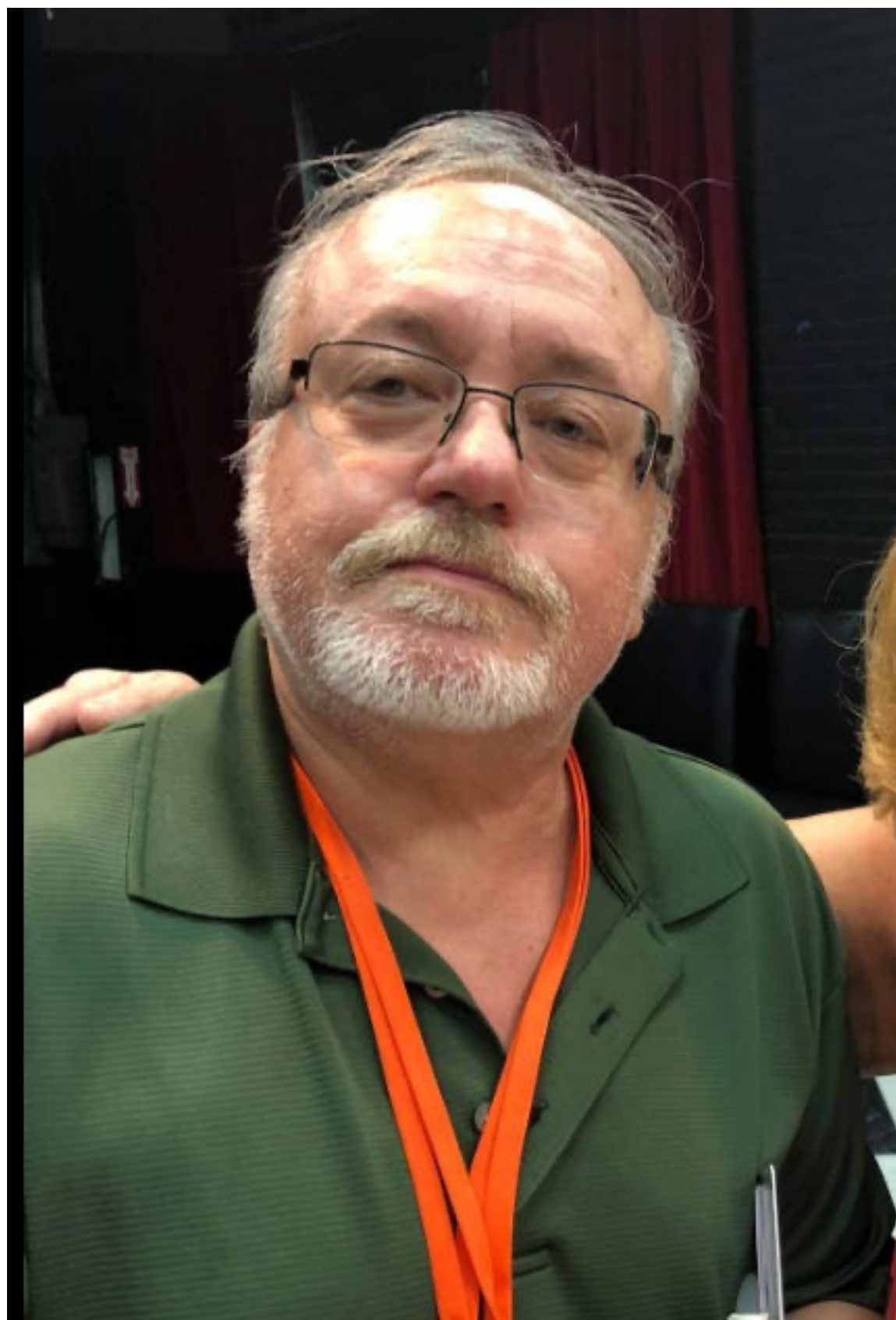
Tweak an ad slogan to use it for another product. Plus caption contest winners. And a salute to the Father of Loserdom.

[PAT MYERS](#)

AND

[GENE WEINGARTEN](#)

JUN 15, 2023



Elden Carnahan, 1952-2023, Hall of Fame Loser, Keeper of the Stats, and the founder of what's become known as the Loser Community.

If you are a fan of The Invitational, which you presumably are, because why the hell are you here if you are not, unless you are an idiot, so assuming you are a fan, there is someone who particularly deserves your gratitude.

It is not us, Pat Myers or Gene Weingarten; we are simply functionaries, drones, absurdist purveyors of rude and crude humor, disreputable vulgarians, etc. The person you most need to thank for the literally unprecedented endurance of this ridiculous humor contest is a man named Elden Carnahan. Elden's role has been kind of like Plato's, the chronicler of Socrates (a man who may not even have existed), or that of James Boswell, 9th Laird of Auchinleck, the comically coiffed Scottish biographer who decided Samuel Johnson's life's work was worth publicizing. We do not wish to compare The Invitational to Johnson's seminal *Dictionary of the English Language*, but there are certain parallels that cannot be denied. Elden Carnahan was a master chronicler.

In the spring of 1993, Elden snapped open his Sunday Washington Post, saw this brand-new rude contest — in Section F — that trafficked shamelessly in wildly edgy humor and realized Something Special and unpardonable was going on, right there in Katharine Graham's newspaper, something she evidently hadn't noticed and would have otherwise killed instantly.

Elden began to enter the contest, brilliantly, becoming one of its early stars with his wry, cynical takes on life both current and historical, going on to score more than 500 blots of ink over the years. But far more importantly for The Invitational, it was he who made the Invite into a competition among thousands of devoted contestants, and it was he who brought these same people — before we even had an internet — into what we now call a social community, one that continues to thrive in its thirty-first year.

Only a few months in, Elden happened to notice someone from his own town — Laurel, Md., but he liked to call it Nether Scaggsville, after a neighboring village — among the week's winners. And so he looked through the phone book

(remember?) and decided to give that guy a call, and while he was at it, dial up a few of the other funny people who'd gotten ink that week, and suggest they all have breakfast somewhere.

That began what would become the monthly Loser brunches ([No. 247 is this Sunday](#) in Gaithersburg, Md.), all coordinated by Elden, and eventually annual summer and winter parties as well as whole vacation trips as far afield as Las Vegas. Elden even started up a snail-mail newsletter — Depravda — for the crowd that called itself the Not Ready for the Algonquin Roundtable Society, and finally the comprehensive website [NRARS.org](#).

But what Elden did for The Invitational, the thing that ensured its excellence week after week, decade after decade, was that he turned it into a competition, a continual battle among its most devoted contestants to rise in the standings — standings that the NSA statistics nerd compiled and elaborated on meticulously, every single week, for 29 years, until finally turning his enormous role ([the stats AND the social events AND a complete archive of every contest](#)) to a whole team of Losers as his body began to fail him. The annual “Flushies” awards of Loser of the Year, Rookie of the Year, and many more have kept a cadre of world-class humorists willing to work for trinkets. The top Invitationalists could have worked for *Saturday Night Live*; instead they've worked for prizes like fossilized weasel dung and gopher drool. Because Elden gave them a cheesy fame, and, more important, a family.

Elden died this week of a brain tumor, at 71. (A memorial service in a couple of weeks or so will be announced soon.) Please raise a glass for him, preferably something a little sour, but not bitter, with a funny but un-ignorable, slightly bizarre aftertaste, say, fermented cranberry juice with fig-infused vodka.

We don't want to get maudlin here — Elden would have had no patience for that — but he was a man with an indefatigable devotion to something others might have dismissed as a triviality. He was a zealot, in the best possible way. We owe him an enormous debt. And we wish he were here to enter this week's contest — it's right up his alley.

*Four of Elden's 594 blots of Invite ink:*

**You can do anything if you want it bad enough. That is why we see so many people who can fly.** — *From a contest for spoofs on inspirational quotes, 2003*

**Due to a transcription error, the Indian prime minister's wife at Tuesday's White House dinner was incorrectly described as wearing "a sorry ensemble."** — *Imagined newspaper corrections, 2005*

**Botox clinic: For That Frosty Mug Sensation!** — *Repurposed product slogans, 2004*

**A Chicken in Every Garage: Dan Quayle** — *Campaign slogans, 1993*

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## **And now to Invitational Week 24:**

**When it rains, it pours:** Longtime slogan for Morton's Salt.

**When it pours, it reigns:** A good slogan for Goodyear Tires.

**I'm Lovin' It:** McDonald's

**I'm Glovin' It:** American Association of Proctologists

Here's a contest suggested a while back by Loser Al Lubran: **For Invitational Week 24: Alter a slogan that's associated with one business or organization and apply it to another one;** it can be good or bad — either an appropriate slogan or a comically inappropriate one — but it has to be some variation on the original, not the original one itself (we did that contest more than once already; see Elden's "Frosty mug sensation" above). If it's not totally obvious what the original product and slogan were, include both, as in the examples above. But please, for sorting purposes, **write each of your entries on a single line;** we'll turn them back into two lines for you.

**[Click here for this week's entry form](#), or go to [bit.ly/inv-form-24](http://bit.ly/inv-form-24).** As usual, you can submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same entry form. See more formatting directions on the form.

**Deadline is Saturday, June 24, at 4 p.m. ET.** Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, June 29.





Win this week's contest and take this crab hat away from this little girl.

**This week's winner** receives a stylish and eye-catching (perhaps literally) crab hat, donated by Longtime Loser Dave Prevar and modeled above by the Empress's neighbor Ms. Kennedy Matthews, who is going to be 4 (but the hat can fit a larger head).

**Runners-up** get autographed fake money featuring **the Czar** or **Empress**, in a variety of designs. Honorable mentions get bupkis, except for a sweet email from the Empress, plus the **Fir Stink for First Ink** for those who've just lost their Invite virginity.



The latest in our series of Legal Tinder. Photoshopping by Valerie Holt.

## Picture Diss: Winning captions from Week 22

In [Week 22](#), our second such contest in the Substack era, we invited captions for any of the pictures below. Numerous Losers said that Picture A — or, less humorously, Picture B — was a good example of “resting bitch face.”





A beagle and a West Highland white terrier.

**Winner of the Bob Ross stickers:** “Dude, you have to break free from the ritualistic practices of the anthroparchy!” (*Kevin Dopart, Washington, D.C.*)

“Uh, Bailey, it doesn’t say ‘Best in Show.’ It says you had a rabies shot.” (*Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase, Md.*)

“Not sure if I can trust that handshake without a quick butt-sniff first.” (*Lori Petterson, College Park, Md.*)

“Sir, I served with Snoopy. I knew Snoopy. Snoopy was a friend of mine. Sir, you are no Snoopy.” (*Jeff Shirley, Richmond, Va.*)

“Everyone’s constantly asking me who’s a good dog. Do you happen to know?” (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

“Believe me, I did not have sexual relations with that leg.” (*Kevin Dopart*)

“Gimme four !” (*Stu Segal, Charlotte, N.C.*)

“Is it because I’m a West Highland White? Because believe me, I don’t see color.” (*Jon Carter, Fredericksburg, Va.*)



Anonymous portrait of Isabella I of Castile, Queen of Spain, c. 1491

**First runner-up:** Sadly, Margaret was born 400 years before Ex-Lax was invented. (*Terri Berg Smith, Rockville, Md.*)

**Second runner-up:** “Why do you think I’m not amused? I am amused. You amuse me. You are an amuser. Need I go on?” (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)

“Dear, can you please explain this copy of *The 120 Days of Sodom* that I found under the bed?” (*Tom Witte*)

Go to the RennFest and get dressed up, he said. It will be a blast, he said. (*Jean S., Herndon, Va.*)

[Billie Eilish](#) can trace her ancestry back more than five hundred years. (*Jesse Rifkin, Arlington, Va.*)

Beneath the facade, Agnes was a party animal at heart. (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)

Thus began the age-old question: “Why the long face?” (*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.*)

“Mr. Giuliani, it appears you're sticking with the same old story.” (*Jeff Rackow, Bethesda, Md.*)

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Loser Alan Hochbaum at the Museum of Illusions, Atlanta

Jim always volunteers to hold a table for the gymnastics team. (*Kevin Dopart*)

As the twister blows through the diner, Luke considers the pros and cons of having eaten those pancakes and scrapple. (*Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.*)

She knew this would be a short date when he insisted on demonstrating the advantages of stapling his shirt to his pants. (*Jon Carter, Fredericksburg, Va.*)

Some restaurants only make you sing for your supper. (*Neil Kurland, Elkridge, Md.*)

“I’ve got to remember to put more glue on my yarmulke before my next livestream.” (*Jon Gearhart, Des Moines*)

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Pompeo Batoni, “Susannah and the Elders,” 1751 (a seriously unfunny Old Testament story)

**Third runner-up:** “Look, I unsubscribed after the trial offer. Why won’t you marketers leave me alone?” (*Pam Shermeyer*)

Inspectors were finally satisfied that Helen wasn’t a man in drag, but said she had to leave the premises for her now indecent state of undress. (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.*)

“Sorry, cash only — I don’t accept bull testicles as a form of payment.” (*Tom Witte*)

A young Pompeo Batoni was crushed when his teacher stamped a near-failing grade in the corner of his painting. (*Duncan Stevens*)

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Peter Paul Rubens's drawing of his new wife, Helena Fourment, c. 1631.

Agnes was worried she'd be too conspicuous at the opera if she wore just one glove. (*April Musser, Georgia*)

Uneasy lies the head that wears the plunger. (Jesse Frankovich)

Before the invention of tinfoil, conspiracy theorists used less effective methods to ward off alien signals. (*Frank Mann, Washington, D.C.; Terri Berg Smith*)

[Carol Kane](#) stars in "All the Queen's Pawns." (*Jean S.*)

Madame de Pompadour was not a favorite at the French court. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

"Hey, my eyes are down here." (*Jeff Rackow*)

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“Meat Violin,” a painted sculpture by Alexander Reisfar

Tonight’s special: Minuet steak. (*Jeff Rackow*)

“The chef assures you this one will be less stringy.” (*Judy Freed; Kevin Dopart*)

Afterward, the critics varyingly described the performance as “tender and raw,” “jerky and disjointed,” “well past its tipping point” or “offal tripe.” The musician shrugged: “Live and loin.” (*Pam Shermeyer*)

It takes a rare set of chops to cut it in the New York Filetharmonic. (*Jon Gearheart*)

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“Hamlet Showing His Mother the Ghost of his Father” by Nikolaj Abildgaard.  
1778

“Behold, the moon shines bright in such a night as this!” (*Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.*)

“I don’t care *who* you are — you could be the Duke of Earl and you’d still have to pay.” (*Jeff Hazle, San Antonio*)

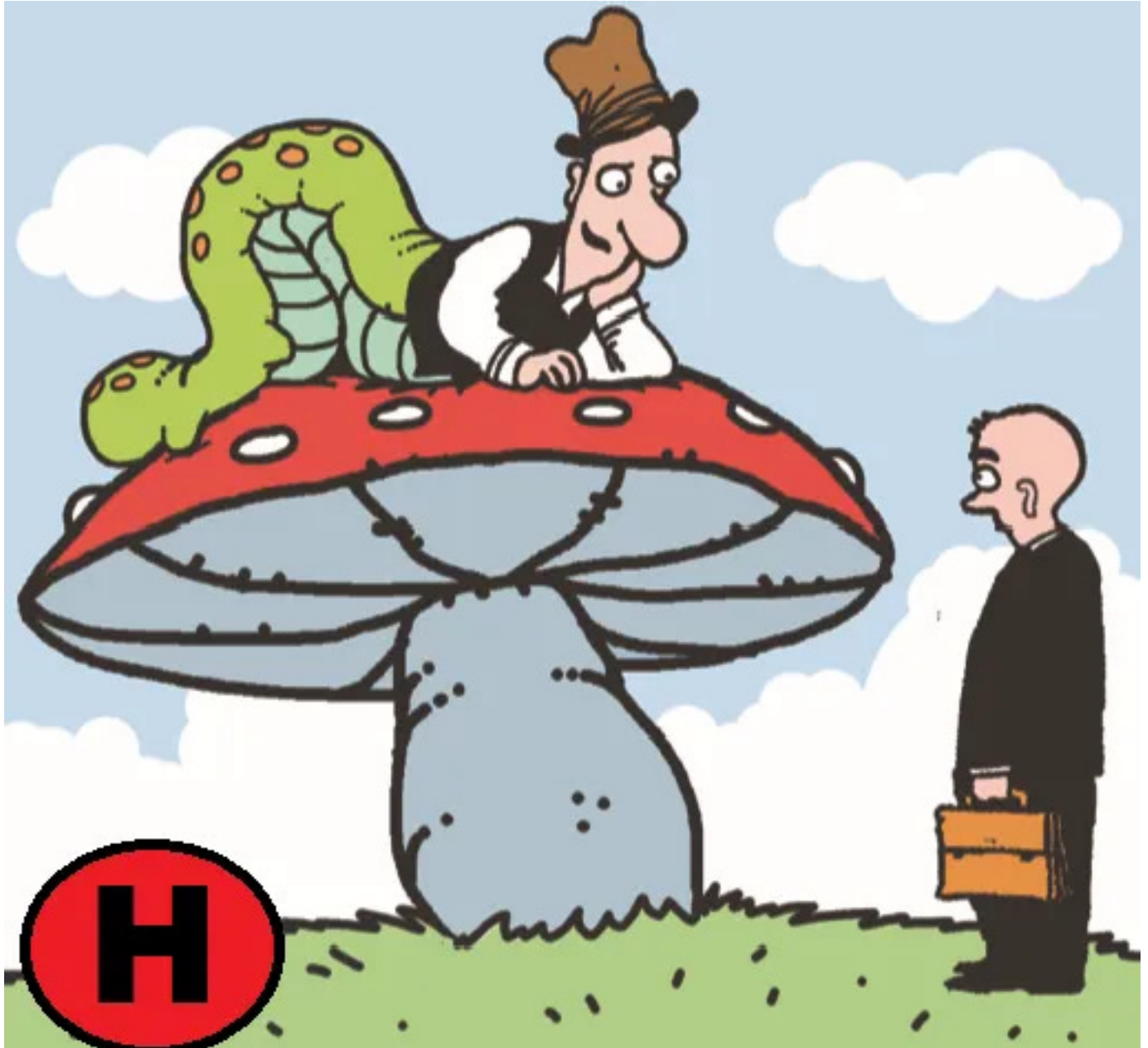
The origin of the phrase “how ’bout them apples” was discovered only recently. (*Neil Kurland*)

“Mom, that is no way to tell my pants are too tight!” (*Dan Helming, Whitemarsh, Pa.*)

“Actually, I asked for a piece of ice, but this’ll do.” (*Lee Graham, Reston, Va.*)

“I appreciate the testicular exam offer, but I’m just here for a sore throat.” (*Jeff Hazle*)

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A cartoon drawn for us by “Barney & Clyde” comic strip artist David Clark, featuring the title characters: billionaire J. Barnard Pillsbury and Clyde Finster of no fixed address. Gene writes the strip with Horace LaBadie.

“Told you you shouldn’t have rushed that covid vaccine through trials.” (*Jeff Contompasis*)

“Other than not being able to use a public bathroom in Arkansas, it’s great.” (*Kevin Dopart*)



“I’m feeling a little sluggish — you’ll have to drive yourself to work today, Frank.” (*Jon Gearhart*)

“Sure, most women are repulsed, but every now and then I luck into a kinky one.” (*Tom Witte*)

“Eat one of these and you can join me.” (*Neal Starkman, Seattle*)

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*The headline “Picture Diss” is by Jon Gearhart.*

**Still running** — deadline 4 p.m. ET Saturday, June 17: **Our Week 23 contest for bogus trivia about climate or weather.** [Click here](#) or type in [bit.ly/inv-week-23](http://bit.ly/inv-week-23).

See [more about The Invitational](#), including our 2,600-member Facebook group, the [Losers’ website](#), and [our podcast](#).