

The Invitational Week 47: Oh, for Namesakes!

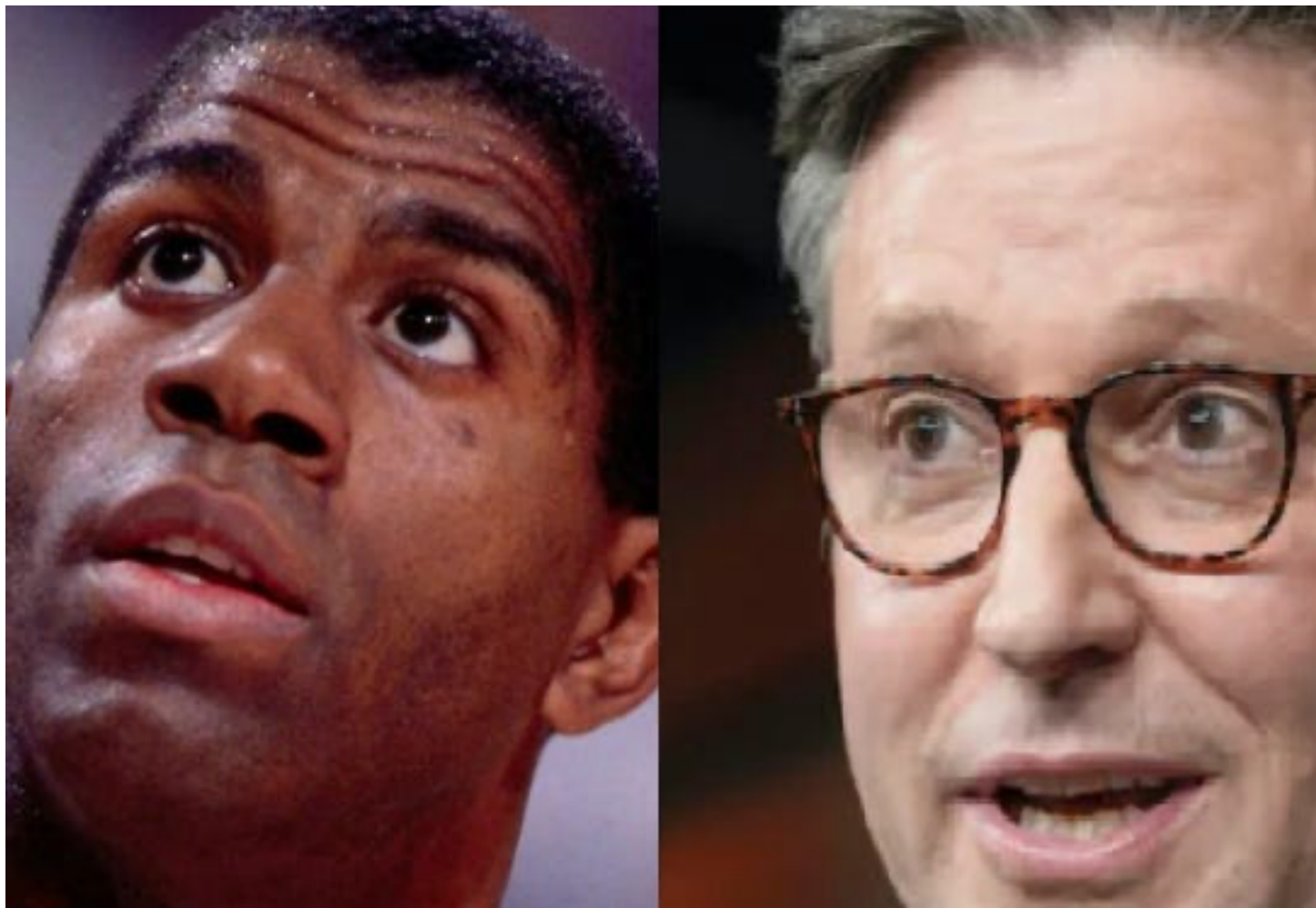
Compare two people who share part of a name. Plus winning ideas for catalog gift items.

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AND

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The difference between Laker Magic Johnson and Speaker Mike Johnson? See below in this week's Invitational contest.

Happy Thanksgiving! So sorry that you don't have any better place to be right now. We'll do our best to entertain you.

This week's Invitational: Har Monikers

The difference between **Marie Antoinette and Marie Curie**: Marie Curie had a good head on her shoulders. (*Peter Metrinko*)

Seth Thomas vs. Clarence Thomas: Seth wanted time to move forward. (*Jack Cackler*)

Cynthia Nixon had sex in the city; **Richard Nixon** screwed the whole country. (*Robert Schechter*)

Magic Johnson vs. Mike Johnson: One is famed as a highlight of the Dream Team, the other for highlighting [his teen's "dreams."](#)

Here's a contest we haven't done in more than a decade. So many new names to play with! **For Week 47: Humorously compare two people who share some element of their names**, as in the entries above; the first three are from Invitational contests in [2004](#) and [2012](#). The element doesn't have to be spelled exactly the same, but don't make it a stretch.

[Click here for this week's entry form.](#) Or go to bit.ly/inv-form-47. Please see formatting instructions on the form. As usual, you can submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same form.

Deadline is Saturday, Dec. 2, at 4 p.m. ET. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, Dec. 7.

The last time we did this contest, back in 2004, the prize was a pair of tasseled pasties. This year we're a bit tamer: **The winner gets a little bitty pair of earrings** that look as if two googly-eyed little bitty black cats have plowed straight through your earlobes.



And you thought it was cool how they could squeeze into boxes. This week's prize. (Temu.com)

Runners-up get autographed fake money featuring the Czar or Empress, in one of [ten nifty designs](#). Honorable mentions get bupkis, except for a personal email from the E, plus the [Fir Stink for First Ink](#) for First Offenders.

Catalogical Humor: The products of Week 45

[In Week 45](#) we asked you to come up with items that were only slightly more ridiculous than the actual content of such catalogs as Hammacher Schlemmer or The Sharper Image.

*Third runner-up: **The All-Purpose Stick:*** You can hike with it. You can roast marshmallows on it. You can write in the sand with it. You can use it to fend off muggers. Made of 100 percent wood, this stick does what sticks have always done —whatever you want them to do. \$350, shipping included. (*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.*)

*Second runner-up: **Digital-to-Cassette Converter:*** Looking for a more cumbersome, less durable way to store music? With this converter, you can toggle between fast-forward and rewind to find the start of your favorite songs just the way you did in your dorm room in 1975. Just plug in your phone, select a song or playlist from your library or streaming service — and it

records to a standard cassette (available separately). \$229.99. Genuine No. 2 pencil included! *(Terri Berg Smith, Rockville, Md.)*

First runner-up: This **potato-powered golf cart** provides environmentally friendly transport around your senior-living community. It takes just 47,000 average-size potatoes to go 400 yards. \$12,500, payable in three installments. *(Jon Gearhart, Des Moines)*

And the winner of the vintage Style Invitational **Whole Fools Grossery Bag:**

The E-Twirler Fork. Stick this ingenious utensil into your pasta, press a button on the handle, and *voilà* – the fork spins automatically. Just press the “off” button when your fork is sufficiently loaded. *(Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.)*

The Duller Image: Honorable mentions

Fake-Meat Rotisserie: Why let carnivores have all the fun? Take your turkey-shaped tofu and put it on a proper spit! This handsome stainless-steel marvel will be the showpiece of your indoor or outdoor kitchen. \$2,500 complete with cover. *(Leif Picoult)*

Marino wool slippers: These ultra-comfortable moccasins are made from the soft curly hair of Hall of Fame quarterback Dan Marino. Choose from black or gray. Quantities limited. *(Tom Witte)*

Bose Quiet Comfort Noise-Canceling Nail Clippers: Worried that everyone in the office hates you? Keep your disgusting personal grooming habits on the down-low with our industry-leading STFU technology. \$199 for toenail clippers, \$189 for fingernails, or save with the set for only \$349.95. *(Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.)*

The Trash Tracker: Put this single-use GPS in your garbage bag and watch your trash’s progress all the way to the landfill with the dedicated app. A fine civic education for all! *(Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.)*

Feel a little embarrassed about the noise your leaf blower is making? Our **SymphonySweep blower** masks the roar by blasting classical music over it. Entertain and enlighten the neighbors with a rousing “1812 Overture” as you round up that maple mess. *(Duncan Stevens)*

Palm Popcorn Popper: This miniature battery-operated popper fits in the palm of your hand! Conveniently popping five kernels at a time, you can watch a whole movie without ever having to leave your couch to get a snack. *(Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.)*

Lint Bank: Finally a safe place to put all the lint you extract from your bellybutton and elsewhere. This lock-tight safe, approved by the American Vault Association, keeps your lint where it should be — away from thieving hands. \$1,250 complete with two keys. *(Leif Picoult)*

GPS Smart Socks: Tired of losing socks in the dryer? Upgrade your laundry experience with the ultimate hosiery system: Receive precise real-time location updates with the easy-to-use mobile app. \$89 per pair. *(Jesse Frankovich)*

The AutoButterer: Never again tear apart a fresh piece of toast by trying to spread a cold pat of butter across it! This device applies a consistent layer of softened, warmed butter every time. Butter cartridges sold separately, just like printer ink. *(Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.)*

An electronic kazoo. It saves the effort of constant humming. *(Duncan Stevens)*

A Treasury of Hilarious 19th-Century Catalogues: Ludicrous undergarments. slippers to cure neuropathy, heated back-therapy stones! You won't believe the things those gullible rubes once bought from catalogs. Special prize included with the first 100 books purchased. *(Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.)*

For the ultimate in double-decker enjoyment: **A mechanical ice cream cone rotator**, so you don't have to lick around the center. \$47.95. *(Gregory Koch, Falls Church, Va.)*

Toothbrush bag: Designed with the philosophy to do one thing and do it well, this shoulder sling bag has a single small pouch perfectly sized to hold one manual toothbrush for all your travels. \$29.95, three for \$74.95. *(Sam Mertens)*

Eat candy like Van Halen with your own AI-enabled **M&M's color sorter**. *(Kevin Dopart, Washington, D.C.)*

Calgon Autonomous Stroller: Send your colicky bundle of joy on a walk around the neighborhood from the comfort of your own bathtub. \$4,995; pictured Chardonnay not included. *(Jesse Frankovich)*

Driverless Tricycle: When you put your child on a Robo-Trike, you also place them in the highest percentile of kids who'll grow up already prepared to not drive the driverless cars of the future. Each Robo-Trike arrives with a personalized waiver of liability and neck brace. *(Frank Osen)*

Do you value the coziness and tradition of a **warm, woolly cardigan**? If so, you'll surely treasure this cardigan emblazoned with the message "I Love Cardigans." *(Tom Witte)*

125 HP propeller beanie: We've updated this historic headgear with an engine powerful enough to have you aloft in seconds. Why play with drones when you can be one? *(Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)*

Deluxe Nose Hair Braider: Turn a grooming turn-off into a triumphant turn-on. Simply select your desired setting on this rechargeable device — French braid, Dutch braid, Milkmaid braid, or Micro braid — and press the "twirl" button. Within seconds, your nostrils will dare to show some flair. \$175 with illustrated manual. *(Leif Picoult)*

Cellulite-Busting Vibrating Toilet Seat: A flawless bottom can be yours — simply take a seat and let the vibrations do their job while you do your business. Also helpful with irregularity! *(Judy Freed)*

Is your snotty coffee-gourmet neighbor coming over and all you have is ground java in a bag? Using a patented food-grade glue, **The Coffee Ungrinder** will make them into "whole beans" — they'll never know. \$395 — free shipping if you order before Dec. 10. *(Leif Picoult)*

Finger-Shaped Nose Picker. Keep your hands clean and use this unique tool to reach all corners of your nostril. Tiny spring mechanism provides realistic flick action! *(Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.)*

This **talking electronic poodle** walks around your house and even poops out batteries when it's time to replace them. \$195. *(Gregory Koch)*

Identifart Handheld Gas Analyzer: Never wonder who dealt it again. Great for cars, elevators, and yoga classes. \$400 with discreet case. *(Jesse Frankovich)*

Tall and Slim Foundation Garment: This full-length bodysuit uses a patent-pending system that pushes your gut flab down through your legs and into your feet. Instantly, you are thinner *and* taller. *(Dan Steinbrocker, Los Angeles; Jon Ketzner)*

Salute your roots with a “**Real Men Love Parsnips**” T-shirt. Color choices include parsnip and off-parsnip. *(Tom Witte)*

Protective House Blanket. Afraid of weather damage to your vacation home while you’re away? Simply throw on our exclusive House Blanket to encase your entire home. Please specify Chalet, Villa, or Mansion size. *(Rob Cohen)*

American Classic Lawn Dart Tips: Don’t you wish you could show your grandchildren the *real* lawn darts, the ones with those THWACKing metal points you enjoyed as a kid? While they’ve been illegal since 1988, you can give them that same experience with these weighted steel tips. Fit them right onto those little pillowy things they sell today, and voila, it’s 1963 again in your back yard. Legal as far as we know, but disclaimer included. *(Jon Ketzner)*

This **non-electric thermite exothermic toaster** is perfect for when you want a fresh hot Pop-Tart in the bathtub. *(Kevin Dopart)*

Solar-powered microwave: Love backpacking but hate beef jerky and trail mix? Now you can enjoy your favorite hot foods without the hassle of building a fire. Runs up to five minutes on four hours of charging. S’mores were never so easy! Shipping weight 20 pounds. *(Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore)*

Gas Bibs: Line the opening of your car’s gas tank with one of these disposable paper inserts before filling up, and when you’re done they’ll catch that last drip from the fuel nozzle. Pack of 20; sign up for refills by subscription. *(Sam Mertens)*

Batteryless remote: Never run out of batteries or get off the couch again when you poke the TV with this really long stick. *(Sam Mertens)*

Don’t look to unsanitary Southeast Asian factories for **civet poop coffee**. Use **beans from all-American *Felis catus* excreta**, made in Manhattan by New York’s finest alley cats. 59.95/lb. plus shipping. *(Kevin Dopart)*

Pencil sharpener sharpener: Sure, you use a sharpener to keep your pencils pointy, but what about when it gets dull? Enter our sharpener sharpener, which will have your sharpener sharpening like new. *(Sam Mertens)*

TP Maker: Don't recycle those old newspapers, magazine, junk mail, and wallpaper samples — now you can make your own toilet tissue from scrap paper just lying around your home. This ingenious device will cut those papers into crisp 3-inch squares, perfect for use in the lavatory. Purchase of the TP Maker constitutes an acceptance of all responsibility for its use. *(Jon Ketzner)*

The headline "Catalogical Humor" is by Beverley Sharp; Jeff Contompasis wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.

Still running — deadline 4 p.m. ET Saturday, Nov. 25: **Our Week 46 contest for "air quotes"** — **words within other words.** [Click here](#) for details.