

The Invitational Week 51: Look Back in Inker — our 2023 retrospective, Part I

Enter or reenter our Week 1-25 contests. Plus winning picture captions.

[PAT MYERS](#)

AND

[GENE WEINGARTEN](#)

DEC 21, 2023

When Chia Pets go rogue



A runner-up, by Diana Oertel of San Francisco, in our Week 49 caption contest. See the rest of the winners (and six other pictures) below.

The New Contest

A year ago this week, we announced that The Style Invitational, just axed by The Washington Post in one of its dumbest moves ever, would be getting

its name shaved by a word, and would restart, almost without interruption, in The Gene Pool, straight from Week 1518 to Week 1. This week and next we'll look back on the 50 contests we've offered you since then, beginning this past January. And you'll get a chance to enter one or more that you missed, or give them another try.

For Invitational Week 51: Enter any or several of our 2023 Invitational contests from Week 1 through Week 25, except for Week 2 (duh, predictions for 2023).

So much to choose from! (Click on the contest from two weeks later to see the results.) Be sure to read the directions on each contest itself, not just these thumbnails, but *your entry must be sent to bit.ly/inv-form-51, NOT THE FORMS FROM THOSE WEEKS!* Feel free to send in different contests on a single form. Please also [take a look at this link](#) for a few extra (but important) directions.

[Week 1](#), poems about people who died in 2022 (not 2023)

[Week 3](#), “joint legislation”: Wordplay on congressional names.

[Week 4](#), Questionable Journalism: Choose a sentence from an article or ad, then follow it with a question it might humorously answer.

[Week 5](#), a “circle of hell” and a punishment to fit the crime

[Week 6](#), captions for any of seven varied pictures

[Week 7](#), a funny idea for an audacious new artwork

[Week 8](#), “pokes,” old jokes told as rhyming poems.

[Week 9](#), use all the letters in a movie title to name a new movie

[Week 10](#), enter any contest from our first year, 1993

[Week 11](#), a picture made by the Dall-E AI tool

[Week 12](#), Mess With Our Heads: “Bank headlines” that reinterpret real headlines

[Week 13](#), what would be worse than a second Trump term

[Week 14](#), make up new words using letter sets from the NYT Spelling Bee game

[Week 15](#), snappy answers to stupid questions

[Week 16](#), “breed” two horses nominated for the 2023 Triple Crown races and name the foal to refer cleverly to both parents’ names

[Week 17](#), make some funny art using toilet paper and/or tubes and send us a photo

[Week 18](#), “breed” two inking entries from Week 16 to name a “grandfoal”

[Week 19](#), write song parody lyrics that are “sung” by a certain politician

[Week 20](#), four-line poems about current events in the form of a clerihow or “poed.”

[Week 21](#), tell how a scene in literature/movies/TV could be made more realistic

[Week 22](#), captions for seven more pictures

[Week 23](#), fake trivia about the weather

[Week 24](#), tweak an ad slogan to use it for another product

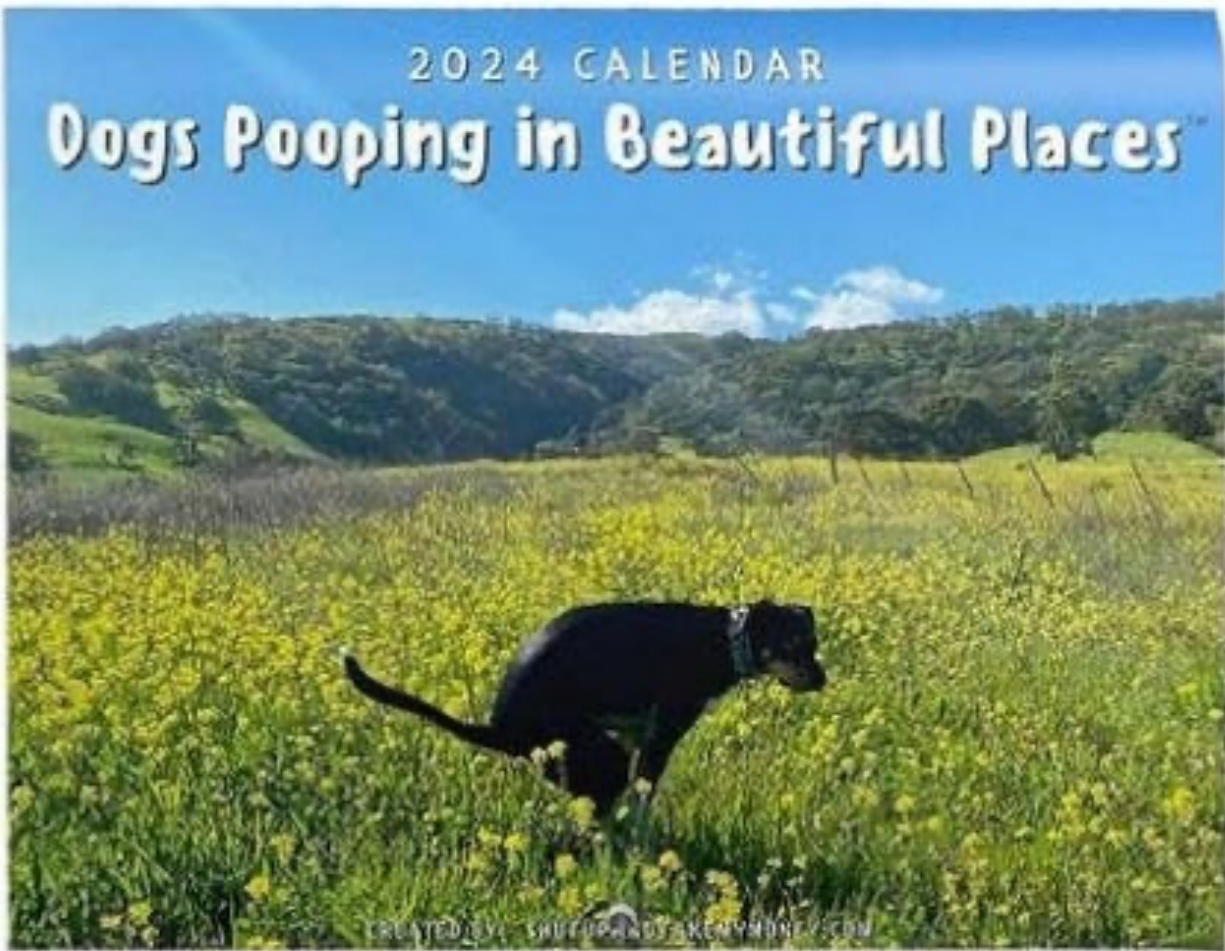
[Week 25](#), create a new word by adding F’s to an existing word and/or changing letters to F.

(Hey, guess what we’ll be running *next* week!)

[Click here for this week’s entry form](#). Or go to **bit.ly/inv-form-51**. As usual, you may submit up to 25 entries for this week’s contest, preferably all on the same form. [Check this list](#) for a few special directions for specific contests, plus some other secret messages.

Deadline is Saturday, Dec. 30, at 9 p.m. ET. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, Jan. 4.

The winner gets to welcome 2024 with this excellent photo calendar.



When especially pretty nature calls. This week's prize.

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

Art Jestoration: Captions from Week 49

In [Week 49](#) we once again presented a motley collection of pictures and asked you for captions.



He may have a bird in the hand, but his mind is on the bush. (*Jon Gearhart, Des Moines*)

“Sorry, dear. The bird removal guys said they’d be here sometime between dawn and dusk.” (*Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.*)

Having already lost his feet, and ready to lose his thumb, Harry wondered what appendage the bird would eat next. (*Judy Freed*)

Isolde discreetly checks Tristan for plague boils before she agrees to kiss him. (*Sarah Walsh, Rockville, Md.*)

Lancelot and Guinevere were completely unaware of the [Pac-Man](#) [ghosts](#) coming up from underground to eat them. (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.*)



Second runner-up:

Even cannibal sheep won't eat muttonhead. (*Dave Prevar, Annapolis, Md.*)

"I asked for a head of GREENS." (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore; Dan Steinbrocker, Los Angeles*)

"Technically we're herbivores, but he did consume a lot of weed in his day." (*Duncan Stevens, Washington, D.C.*)

"Oh, it's a see-Czar salad!" (*Jesse Frankovich, Laingsburg, Mich.*)

"I thought 'Garten salad' was just a typo." (*Jeff Rackow, Bethesda, Md.*)

"Compliments of [Ms. Lakshmi](#)." (*Lee Graham, Reston, Va.*)

Eric Shansby's cartoon originally accompanied Gene Weingarten's 2018 Washington Post column ["Misadventures of an Adventurous Eater."](#)



From the 2023 Christian Cowan fashion show in Paris; the model ended up crashing into guests in the front row.

The winner of the [inflatable antler ring-toss headdress](#):

Fortunately, Carrie Fisher vetoed George Lucas's original plan for Princess Leia's hairstyle. (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

Third runner-up:

“Welcome to the second annual Pro Bowlers Association Fashion Week.” (*Lee Graham*)

“Dall-E, draw a woman wearing a ball gown.” (*Pam Shermeyer, Lathrup Village, Mich.*)

At the paleontology conference, an aide displays an amazing find: the Sphinx’s hairball. (*Jesse Rifkin, Arlington, Va.*)

“Omigod, those boots are ridiculous!” (*Jonathan Jensen; Jesse Frankovich*)

On the planet of Grammaron, it’s a big deal when a girl gets her first period. (*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.*)

The California Prunes campaign failed to increase sales. (*Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.*)

A bad choice for a charades teammate. (*Neil Kurland, Elkridge, Md.*)

Jane was beginning to regret not waxing her eyebrows. (*Leif Picoult*)



“Look, I found a keister egg.” (*Jesse Frankovich*)

Susannah had heard of a snow globe, but not a moon globe. (*Duncan Stevens*)

After getting her first iPhone, it took little time for Inge to discover online lesbian porn. (*Chris Doyle, Denton, Tex.*)

Clementine was in for a real surprise when she ordered a cup of Joe. (*Beverley Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.*)



Gene meets future Gene. (*Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, Md.*)

(Too many people to credit offered up: “No, you pull MY finger!”)



A sworded affair. (*Jeff Hazle, San Antonio*)

“Mmm, your skirt smells so clean — do you use wood ash or stale urine in your wash water?” (*Pam Shermeyer*)

“Hm, I see the entry wound, but no sign of that broken lance tip.” (*Jeff Contompasis*)

“Figuratively! I meant you could *figuratively* ‘kiss my arse’!” (*Jeff Rackow*)

“Thou wore thy magnetic underpants again, didn’t thou, Sir Winslow?” (*Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.*)

There’s nothing worse than an awkward hug at the end of the knight. (*Jesse Frankovich*)

Sir Plushbottom and Sir Headley soon realized they’d forgotten their horse costume. (*Ed Gordon, Austin, Tex.; Kevin Dopart, Washington, D.C.*)

“Confirmed, Sir Calligan, that sneak attack scared thee shitless.” (*Sarah Walsh*)

In the early days, it was difficult to pants a fellow knight in armor. (*Dave Prevar*)



First runner-up: When Chia Pets go rogue. (*Diana Oertel, San Francisco*)

Tim was initially unclear on what being a hedge fund manager entailed. (*Duncan Stevens*)

Some climate-conscious European towns have replaced the tar-and-feathering of oil industry executives with more eco-friendly sap-and-leaf-molding. (*Kevin Dopart*)

The New York Giants have been without a mascot since Jolly Green was arrested for trademark infringement. *(Kevin Dopart)*

The headline “Art Jestoration” is by Chris Doyle.

Still running — deadline 9 p.m. ET Saturday, Dec. 23: **Our Week 50 “next year in review” contest for events to happen in 2024.**