

The Invitational Week 73: Our Typo Humor

More fun with headlines. Plus 'Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me'-style questions — and Peter Sagal weighs in with his favorites.

[PAT MYERS](#)

AND

[GENE WEINGARTEN](#)

MAY 23, 2024



Hello.

This is a snake. It represents the winner of the 71st Invitational, chosen by Special Prosecutor Peter Sagal, host of NPR's comedy quiz show "Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me."

But wait, wait... First, a headline. This week, Jeff Contompasis becomes the ninth Loser in The Invitational's 31-year, 1,591-contest history to have been awarded 1,000 blots of ink.

JefCon, a 59-year-old engineer from suburban Northern Virginia, is a testament to Loserly persistence: He began entering the Invite in 1997 but didn't get his first ink until 2004, for a contest for some conservative humor to balance our usual leftist swill ("What's the difference between a conservative commentator and a liberal commentator? One is called a conservative commentator; the other is called a commentator"). But then he really caught the Invite bug, and he's entered the contest every single week since December 2008 — winning the contest sixteen times and runnerupping sixty.

The honor offered to our thousand-inkers is to guest-judge the contest of their choice.

Jeff's contest of choice: It's a variation on our "Mess With Our Heads" contest, one we haven't done since 2018. **For Invitational Week 73: Change a headline in an article or ad in a print or online publication dated May 23-June 1, 2024, by:**

(a) adding or subtracting one letter; or

(b) substituting a letter; or

(c) transposing two letters; and/or

d) changing spacing or punctuation;

and then add a "bank head," or subtitle, that reflects the altered headline, as in these examples from the 2018 contest ([full results here](#)):

For the first time, the ~~Met~~ Mets will perform opera on Sundays

After lousy season, players hope for more success with different kind of tragedies (*Dave Airozo*)

~~Crude~~ Crud stockpiles fall for a fifth week

Experts fear end of yard sales if shortage worsens (*Frank Osen*)

Target tries to entice seasonal ~~workers~~ porkers

Call goes out early for store Santas (*Jeff Contompasis*)

You may shorten a more complex headline, and you may capitalize each word of the headline if that will help your wordplay. Tell us where you found the original head (we'd appreciate the URL) and what its real wording was! **Important formatting note: Strikethroughs do *not* transmit on our Google Forms**; see [this week's entry form](#) for what to do instead. As usual, you may submit up to 25 entries for this week's contest, preferably all on the same form.

Deadline is Saturday, June 1, at 9 p.m. ET. Results will run here in The Gene Pool on Thursday, June 6.

The winner gets — courtesy of JefCon himself — **the truly handsome oversized picture book *Life-Sized Animal Poop***, by John Townsend. Each page, or double-page spread for your larger beasts — or four-page foldout for a dinosaur coprolite — features fun facts about a particular animal and an artsy painting of its particular product. It even comes with a glossy poster of the whole array.

African Lion

PANTHERA LEO

Lions are at the top of the African food chain, as they hunt large prey and eat nothing but meat. When lions hunt together, they can kill and eat large buffalo or zebra.

About $1 \frac{3}{4}$ inches
(45 mm)



Think of the newspaper bag you'd need to pick up a 29 1/2-inch-long poop. A two-page spread from this week's prize.

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

Multi-Bull Choice: The 'Wait Wait' questions of Week 71

In **Invitational Week 71**, we challenged you to write us some "Wait Wait ... Don't Tell Me"-style questions about some Ridiculous but True event, recent or historical. Peter Sagal read ~~your many hundreds of entries~~ about 20 finalist entries we flagged for him, as a courtesy, and he immediately eliminated a half dozen or so *that his show had already run*. Such as the fabulous one about the Chinese zoo whose "pandas" were actually **chow chow dogs dyed black and white**.

We gave Peter more entries, and awarded him two votes, and the Czar and Empress each got one vote apiece. This has never been done before and represents the most amazing voluntary abandonments of royal power in human humor history since the abdication of King Edward VIII.

Fortunately we were in agreement with Peter's choices for the winner and runners-up except that he failed to appreciate one entry that he deemed "too gross" — and that, of course, we see as a badge of honor. So Rob Cohen, below, gets first runner-up. Rob, Peter Sagal has officially and forever declared you "too gross." You are welcome. Also, inexplicably, Peter did not find the third runner-up too gross. We don't know why, but are not giving him a second pass at it.

Third runner-up:

At Our Blessed Lady Immaculate church in County Durham, England, a priest stunned worshipers with an Easter sermon claiming what?

- A. That after everyone had drunk four full cups of wine, the Last Supper turned into a drunken matzoh-throwing food fight.
- B. Christ had an erection when he died on the cross.
- C. Joseph took the dog in the manger to a gravel pit.

Correct answer: B. (*Frank Osen, Pasadena, Calif.*)

Second runner-up:

A man in Chicago made what basic mistake when trying to rob the safe in a muffler shop?

- A. Loading the safe onto his moped, only to topple over immediately.
- B. Not asking workers if the safe had anything in it before spending thirty minutes jackhammering an empty box.
- C. Leaving his phone number with the shop's workers so they could call him when the manager—the only person who knew the safe's combination—returned to work.

Correct answer: C. (*Leif Picoult, Rockville, Md.*)

First runner-up:

A Texas man wearing a kilt was arrested for what?

- A. Disturbing the peace by playing his bagpipes nonstop for three hours on a street corner.
- B. Taking items for sale at antique stores, sticking them up his anus, then returning them to the shelf.
- C. Indecent exposure after he repeatedly passing gas, causing his kilt to billow and exposing his otherwise uncovered derriere.

Correct answer: B. (*Rob Cohen, Potomac, Md.*)

And the winner of the “Wait Wait” mug signed by Peter himself:

In 2022, a cobra made news for what?

- A. Traveling 1.7 miles at 93 mph while attached to the person it bit as he was boarding the Jebel Jais zip line in the United Arab Emirates.
- B. Dying, after biting an 8-year-old boy who bit it back. (The boy was fine.)
- C. Vibrating to death after it swallowed a sex toy.

Correct answer: B. (*Frank Osen*)

Truly Ridi-Q-lous: Honorable mentions

Killed treacherously by Earl Sigurd the Mighty, how did the 9th-century Scot Mael Brigte get posthumous vengeance upon him?

- A. As Sigurd tried to drink from the skull of his vanquished foe, a piece dislodged and choked him.
- B. His decapitated head was strapped to Sigurd's saddle as he rode home, and his buckteeth cut Sigurd's leg and caused a fatal infection.
- C. Sigurd's men looted bagpipes from the field of battle and played them all day.

Correct answer: B (*Sam Mertens, Silver Spring, Md.*)

In a 2016 survey of 1,000 Americans, 80 percent said they favored -mandatory labels on any food containing what?

- A. CO₂
- B. H₂O
- C. DNA

Correct answer: C. (*Laurie Brink, Mineola, N.Y.*)

What distinguishes the \$822 stonewash jeans sold by the fashion house

- Jordanluca?**
- A. They resemble chaps by being both assless and crotchless.
 - B. A large stain in the front makes it look as if the wearer has peed in them.
 - C. They are sold with interchangeable codpieces in three pastel colors.

Correct answer: B. (*Frank Osen*)

Some epicures visit Sardinia to sample Casu Marzu, a delicacy consisting of what?

- A. Salt-brined, caramelized worm castings.
- B. A stew of fermented Etruscan shrews.
- C. Pecorino cheese filled with live maggots.

Correct answer: C. (*Frank Osen*)

Following a crashing sound, the hole in a Canadian woman's roof was determined to be caused by:

- A. Her teenage next-door neighbor sailing through it while bouncing on his backyard trampoline.
- B. Frozen chunks of human excrement that had flown through the sky.
- C. Santa's aim was off and he missed the chimney.

Correct answer: B. (*Judy Freed, Deerfield Beach, Fla.*)

Some things like to live where the sun *don't* shine in the Sunshine State, resulting in a Florida man having to have:

- A. 150 live bugs removed from his nose.
- B. A live baby python removed from his rectum.
- C. Two baby sea turtles removed from his stomach when the eggs he was smuggling hatched en route.

Correct answer: A. (*Kevin Dopart, Naxos, Greece*)

What did a cafe in Kinston, N.C., do when a customer left her credit card behind?

- A. The manager added a \$50 "gratuity" to the customer's bill, then called her to say he'd found the card.
- B. It helpfully posted unredacted photos of the front and back of the card on a local Facebook page, causing the card to immediately run up thousands of dollars in charges.
- C. The cashier quickly ran out and shot one of the tires on the customer's car so she couldn't drive away.

Correct answer: B. (*David Franks, Washington County, Ark.*)

In 1908, German Gen. Dietrich von Hulsen-Haesler died of a heart attack at a party. What immediately preceded it?

- A. Clad in a pink tutu, leotard, and ballet tights, he danced around the room with leaps and pirouettes.
- B. He ate four bowlfuls of wiener schnitzel, two of which were others guests'.
- C. He got into a frenetic argument with a French diplomat over which language was more beautiful.

Correct answer: A. (*Neal Starkman, Seattle*)

A budget hotel in Fukuoka, Japan, rents rooms at around a dollar a night! How?

A. The guests also serve as the hotel's staff, meaning they have to do things like check people in, make beds, and vacuum the hallways.

B. The guests agree to have the hotel livestream every moment of their stay except going to the bathroom; the innkeeper hopes to make the money back with ads on his YouTube channel.

C. The guests compete in nightly sumo matches against professional wrestlers, all for the entertainment of staff and other guests.

Correct answer: B (*Leif Picoult*)

The U.S. Navy was recently ridiculed for tweeting what on X?

A. A video of the official Navy anthem that was titled "Anchors Away."

B. A photo of an officer shooting a rifle with the scope mounted backwards and the lens cap still on.

C. A recruitment ad featuring Village People lookalikes singing "In the Navy."

Correct answer: B. (*Jonathan Jensen, Baltimore*)

What surprised attendees of the funeral service in England for comedian Rod Hull, famed for performing with an emu puppet?

A. The eulogy was delivered by an emu-costumed puppeteer holding a Rod Hull puppet.

B. When the coffin was carried into the church, sounds like beak-pecking were heard in the coffin.

C. When the coffin was opened at the viewing, a live emu jumped out.

Correct answer: B; Hull had arranged the prank himself. (*Dave Prevar, Annapolis, Md.*)

A French inventor of pills to make flatulence smell less offensive has added what new scent?

A. Chanel No. 5.

B. Roquefort cheese.

C. Aphrodisiacal ginger, released just before Valentine's Day.

Correct answer: C (*Frank Osen*)

A major snack food company recently commissioned a giant statue of what?

A. A 19-foot-high celery stick with ranch dressing pouring down from the top, commissioned by Hidden Valley and erected (ahem) in Wintersberg, Calif., “the celery capital of America.”

B. A rotating neon Moon Pie, 13 feet in diameter, temporarily located on top of the Chattanooga Bakery’s new distribution center until the new Moon Pie visitor center is opened in downtown Chattanooga.

C. A 17-foot statue of three fingers dusted in orange and holding a Cheeto. The “Cheetle” was erected in the village of Cheadle, Alberta, but PepsiCo Foods Canada was expected to tour it to several Canadian cities.

Correct answer: C. (*Ann Fisher, Marquette, Mich.*)

A day care center in Billings, Montana, closed after what happened?

A. The children were taken on a field trip to the local chicken-processing plant.

B. An employee posted a video of the children fighting, with the caption “Fight night already starting.”

C. A teacher left children unsupervised, telling them, “Don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.”

Correct answer: B (*Frank Osen*)

Despite its dangers, you can’t deny that technology has improved our standard of living in truly important, transformative ways. Which of these items is now available for purchase?

A. A refrigerator that asks, “Do you really need that?” if you reach for items you store on a certain rack.

B. A special sippy cup that evenly distributes a mix of cereal and milk into your mouth, for that proper crunch.

C. A remote-controlled aerosol deodorant. Stand back, raise your arm, and let the spray find its way.

Correct answer: B (*Judy Freed*)

How did a resident of Brighton, England, choose to commemorate her recently deceased pet?

- A. She legally changed her name to Fluffy Shih Tzu.
- B. She erected a 20-by-60-foot billboard in front of her house and painted her late cat Daisy on it.
- C. She had her hamster stuffed and mounted as a pole-dancing stripper in a pink thong.

Correct answer: C. (*Duncan Stevens, Vienna, Va.*)

What service does the Diaper Spa in New Hampshire provide?

- A. For \$1,500, men and women can spend a day of pampering in an adult-size nursery with toys and an adult-size crib “to take care of the little one inside of you.”
- B. Women who don’t have babies of their own get to dote on spa-provided ones, cooing to them and rocking them in ergonomic Herman Miller chairs — until the little ones inconveniently cry, spit up, poop, etc., at which point they’re conveniently whisked away and replaced with a margarita.
- C. Parents-to-be wear diapers until they are nearly full, to understand the discomfort their babies will suffer if neglected.

Correct answer: A. (*Dave Prevar*)

Miami continues to be distinctly different from other American cities, including its police department, which recently unveiled its first:

- A. Rolls-Royce squad car.
- B. Floodproof amphibious squad car.
- C. Fleet of pastel squad cars with palm tree decals.

Correct answer: A. (*Kevin Dopart*)

Charlie Chaplin won third place:

- A. In a Adolf Hitler lookalike contest.
- B. In an Oliver Hardy lookalike contest.
- C. In a Charlie Chaplin lookalike contest.

Correct answer: C. (*Kevin Dopart*)

A Sacramento porch pirate managed to steal a package using what innovative method?

- A. He did a series of somersaults across the front yard, deftly grabbed the box from the porch, and rolled away.
- B. He stuffed himself inside a giant trash bag, walked up to the the porch, dropped the package inside, then waddled off.
- C. He brazenly walked up to the porch and took the box, waving a sign at the security camera that read: “Your security camera seems to be working.”

Correct answer: B. (*Judy Freed*)

In 1726, what did an Englishwoman named Mary Toft convince clergymen and doctors, including the doctor of the King of England, that she could do?

- A. Sing from her “nether partes.”
- B. Give birth to rabbits.
- C. Leave her body and travel to other cities, lands, and even heaven.

Correct answer: B. (*Jon Gearhart, Des Moines*)

A young man applying for a job at Subway left red-faced after his mom did what?

- A. Walked into the interview to remind him he hadn’t taken his vitamins that morning.
- B. Held up a sign in the window to tell him his parole officer was waiting outside.
- C. Fell asleep in her car outside the store, accidentally hit the gas pedal, and crashed into the shop.

Answer: C (*Leif Picoult*)

The headline “Multi-Bull Choice” is by Jeff Contompasis; Jesse Frankovich wrote the honorable-mentions subhead.

Still running — deadline 9 p.m. ET Saturday, May 25: our Week 72 “tailgater” contest for rhymes pairing one line of a Beatles song with one line of your own. Click on the link below.

