

## The Style Invitational

### Week 560: The 97.5-Meter Dash



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

#### Synchronized drywalling is approved as a demonstration sport.

The promised retractable roof on the main stadium is "upgraded" to "the absolutely amazing invisible retractable roof."

#### When champions bite their gold medals, chocolate squirts out.

Longtime Loser John O'Byrne of Dublin called the Empress's attention to the "Post Mortem" humor column by Rob McKenzie and various sidekicks in Canada's National Post. A recent column noted that this year's Olympic Games in Athens are a few months away but eons behind schedule, and suggested some time- and cost-saving measures, including those listed above. You have to admit that they're pretty good, considering that this McKenzie guy is from, like, Manitoba, but we know that Team Invitational can leave those examples in the dust, as long as your palms are greased Olympically with magnets and shirts and the Little Pooping Man and the fabulous prize described below.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins "The Breast Book," a fascinating look at the concept of the breast in Western culture. It (the book) is roughly the size and shape of a brick. It would look better stacked, of course, but we have just the one copy. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week.

Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312 or by

e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com). Deadline is Tuesday, June 8. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or you risk being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published June 27. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified.

**Report from Week 556**, in which we asked you for "hybrids" of animals. Great ideas submitted by too many of you: skunks x badgers = stinking badgers ("We don't need them"); camel x ocelot = camelot ("flourished for one brief shining moment"). And of course lots of entries featuring the shih tzu.

◆ Fourth runner-up: **Cicada x elephant = cicaphant**: Even after 17 years, it never forgets how nice you are. (Greg Arnold, Herndon)

◆ Third runner-up: **Emu x quail = email**: a fast-flying bird that propagates rapidly, is monitored obsessively by humans, and often carries a virus. (Allan Moore, Washington)

◆ Second runner-up: **Barbary ape x Chihuahua = barbarhuahua**: an extremely inquisitive, persistent, noisy little bird. (John Sullivan, Long Beach, Calif.)

◆ First runner-up, the winner of the Super Duper Reindeer Pooper jellybean dispenser: **Monarch x woodchuck = princechuck**: A pitiable drone that remains near its mother in its immature stage for years and years and years. (Jack Cackler, Falls Church)

◆ And the winner of the Inker: **Lion x crocodile = lioncrock**: An enormous fish that got away. (Greg Pearson, Arlington)

#### Honorable Mentions:

**Swift x porpoise = modest porpoisal**: a mammal that sensibly maintains its population level by eating its young. (Jack Cackler)

**Cardinal x carrier pigeon = cardcarrier**: a creature that feels safest going along with the flock (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

**Condor x Morgan = condomorgan**: a Trojan horse. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

**Chamois x cheetah = chamois sosa**: shares habitat with newly discovered species, the corked bat. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

**Cardinal x Shar-Pei = cardsharpei**: one of the dogs playing poker. (Chris Doyle)

**Wombat x elephant = womant**: a creature that can lift many times her own weight but won't tell you what that weight is. (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)

**Cuckoo x kinkajou = cuckookajou**: a waddling animal with whiskers, tusks, and yellow matter custard dripping from its eye. (Bird Waring, New York)

**Badgers x gnu = badgnus**: travels fast, on or underground; often unearthed by pesky hounds. (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

**Elkhound x batfish = whatzitz**: a bizarre creature with wings, scales, antlers and paws; thought to be related to the platypus. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

**Donkey x Homo sapiens = a wise ass**. (Arthur Litoff, York Springs, Pa.)

**Scottish terrier x tapir = scotchtapir**: Uses sticky traps to ensnare its prey. (Steve Shapiro, Alexandria)

**Aardvark x dace x nightingale = aarddaccenight**: a creature that subsists on beetles. (Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)

**Afghan hound x bandicoot = talibandicoot**: The female of the species is not allowed out of the nest. (Brendan Beary)

**Lark x king salmon = larriking**: An odd-looking bird that never stops squawking—and doesn't know when to stop spawning. (Jack Cackler, Falls Church)

**Monarch butterfly x sea anemone = arch enome**, which has PLANS for the coral reef, yes, grand plans indeed, mwahahaha! (Mark Young, Washington)

**Cheetah x shrew = billary**: the Clinton family mascot. (Russell Beland)

**Unicorn x tick = unick**: an animal with a useless horn. (Scott Slaughter, Mount Airy)

**Green iguana x gila monster = green monster**: a huge animal that looks like it could swallow up anything, yet can't seem to stop ordinary flies from sailing over its head. (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)

**Mite x otter = kindashuda**: a creature that keeps looking at its own tracks. (Russell Beland)

**Canary x ibis = canabis**: A puffin that can fly really, really high. (Chris Doyle; Joe Cackler, Stanford, Calif.)

**Aardvark x platypus x Tyrannosaurus rex = aatypus rex**: a creature that can mate only with its mother. (Kirsten Andersen, Los Angeles)

**Condor x leech = condoleecha**: a creature known to produce prolonged bleeding from whatever crosses its path. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

**Newt x anaconda = nanaconda**: a snake that squeezes your cheeks until you suffocate. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

**Chinchilla x brown bear = chillbro**: the peacekeeper of the herd (a tropical subspecies is **chinchilla x mongoose = chillmon**) (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

**Sandpiper x penguin = sanguin**: the Brown Bird of Optimism (John Held, Fairfax)

**Halibut x viper = butvipec**: a creature native to Germany that is often abused by other species. (John Held)

**Bumblebee x beaver = bumblebeaver**: a creature busier than itself. (Danny Bravman, Potomac)

**Hen x trout = chickenout**: an animal that's afraid to cross the road. (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls)

**Ewe x manatee = ewemanatee**: a two-legged creature that elicits an exclamation of surprise when spotted ("Oh!"). (Seth Brown; Chris Doyle)

**Mammoth x zebra = mammothbra**, an animal that tends to have a diet abundant in dates. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

**Bushbaby x cassowary = bushuary**: a species once threatened with extinction, but now spreading through Middle America. (Ross Elliffe, Picton, New Zealand)

**Wallaby x marten = walmart**: a fast-propagating creature that invades an ecosystem and displaces all other species. (Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)

**Badger x appaloosa = persistent loosa**: leaves a pungent trail of ink. (Phil Frankenfeld)

**Rhode Island Red x tern x right whale = right tern on rhode whale red**: a mutation of the road-crossing chicken. (Greg Arnold)

**Porcupine x soldier ant = porcupinesol**: a pet that keeps its own cage sparkling clean and fresh. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

**Caribou x booby = caribooby**: A deer with a rack that every hunter wants a shot at. (Chuck Smith)

**Junco x gibbon = junchon**: a creature that flies high but often crashes spectacularly. (Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)

**Onager x anaconda = onanaconda**: a creature with a declining population level. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

**Cheetah x ocelot = cheetalot**: a cat with a mate that doesn't understand it. (Bird Waring)

**Panda x gopher = pander**: an animal with an annoying but effective mating call: "Oh, Mei Xiang, you look so lovely tonight. Allow me to rearrange the leaves in your cave! Those reeds are very slimming for you! Perhaps they have also helped you with yesterday's headache?" (Mark Young, Washington)

**Airedale x anchovy = aichovy**: a creature that travels quickly past other animals, always in groups of three or more. (Dave Zarrow)



PHOTOS BY DUDLEY M. BROOKS—THE WASHINGTON POST

## Leading a Dance, and A Life of Distinction

THRESHOLDS, From D1

a passage from an inspirational text. "Black men should be especially conscious that negative thoughts and images undermine self-esteem," he says.

**Introducing Paul Reid Gibson Bailey . . .** "In order for black men to prosper and take our rightful places in society, we must have the courage to surmount our fears."

**Introducing Stephen Kyle Washington . . .** "Despite the injustices we have all endured, and continue to endure because of the color of our skin, there is an insurmountable joy in being black."

The scene at Arlington's Crowne Plaza Hotel has been playing out for decades. Black social groups have held beautillions, or black male versions of high-society coming-out cotillions, as a passage into an elite—some might say elitist—cadre of young men.

David Steven Spruill believes beautillions are needed now more than ever. Spruill is a fourth-grade teacher and founder of the Gentlemen's Institute, a sort of fraternity that has inducted nearly 100 youths into its Young Gentle-

men's Circle through annual beautillions since 1998. Usually beautillion candidates are in their teens, but Spruill decided to start them earlier because of the crisis facing young black boys today.

"There are so many things that are chipping away at the self-esteem of our African American young people," he says. "We need to uplift the culture."

Giving recognition, building self-esteem and teaching boys the Old World requirements of a gentleman is one way to fight those challenges, Spruill says.

What's uplift to some may be elitist to others. And any black tradition that both mimics old southern gentility and excludes some black people is bound to have contradictions.

"It's almost like a Western schizophrenia of trying to blend two worlds," says Paul Hill Jr., a Cleveland sociologist who has studied male rites of passage around the world. "The beautillion has to do with the regeneration and the perpetuation of that class from an elitist perspective. The question is how do you reconcile class and culture in a way that is in the best interest of the whole community?"

Responds Spruill: "That kind of elitist mind-set is a thing of the past." Children are children, regardless of what their parents have, and all children deserve recognition.

Besides, the woman clutching her purse in an elevator won't realize that these beautillion candidates are the sons of lawyers, business people and clergy, or that they just made the principal's list. And the people who cross the street when they see them coming could care less if they were members of the Jack and Jill social club.

Most of all there's this: Who else is going to do it? It's like Spruill told the parents at the beautillion last Sunday: "Someone has got to grow up and lead this nation, and trust me, your kids are the ones."

This January, Spruill tapped the boys from his class at Metropolitan Day School, the Afrocentric Christian academy where he teaches in Northeast Washington, to be part of the beautillion. (The school is an affiliate of Metropolitan Baptist, one of the city's oldest and richest black churches.) He selected seven boys based on their grades and "social achievements" as members of various clubs.

Spruill, a 40-year-old former Army drill sergeant and 16-year teacher, has spent the past four months showing the chosen boys how to do the Viennese waltz, how to use good diction and properly sit at dinner. They've practiced these new skills during "Gentlemen's Nights Out" all over

the city, with dinner at an upscale restaurant, "Gentlemen of Culture," a dance performance at the Kennedy Center, and "Gentlemen on the Greens," a day at the golf course with their dads.

People gawked at the group during these outings, Spruill says, because they are so unaccustomed to seeing black boys with such exquisite manners. But in the all-black, mostly affluent world the boys inhabit at church and school, Spruill says that kind of behavior is just expected.

"Peer pressure is an awesome thing," he says. "Because they've all accepted it, they support one another."

Eleven-year-old Omari Williams, a fifth-grader, signed up after seeing beautillion practice last year at Metropolitan. "I liked the way they danced, how smooth it was," he said. Omari wanted to learn how to be a gentleman, "a gentle man—like, gentle to the ladies."

Jesse Lyles, 10, joined the beautillion "to be known to society, so people can know that I'm a well-taught African American."

Joshua Moore, 9, known at school as "Mr. Testimony" because of his recent resurrection as a top scholar, says beautillion training has taught him to be a gentleman, who is a person who speaks the king's English, "correct English—not like those other black people," he said, mindful of the day's school lesson about Bill Cosby's recent controversial critique of black vernacular.

The boys spent months fundraising to cover the event, and sold close to \$5,000 in ads for the glossy beautillion program. And here it is, finally: The boys—young gentlemen—get to strut their stuff.

Brandon Fitzgerald glides over to little Miss Avonda Fogan, bows his head and offers her a gloved hand. "That's all right!" a motherly voice calls out from the audience ringing the dance floor. The boys and their partners glide and twirl their ballroom floor into seven little blizzards of pearls and white taffeta.

Later, the ladies line up in seats as the gentlemen simultaneously bow in a silver bracelet and charms.

Over the loudspeakers, Whitney Houston asks "Who Would Imagine a King" as the boys raise one gloved hand. Seven heads swivel in unison as they raise the other hand into a clasp, then pull their hands into their chest as though in prayer. They glide over to the sweethearts, then break into one final reverse-turn waltz step.

Years of recognition are flowing in the audience. "I was a debutante in 1966 and I remember how it changed my life," says Rosilyn King, whose grandson Brandon Fitzgerald was named King of the Beautillion and the group's valedictorian. She said the decorum and character lessons it instilled have stayed with her ever since.

The evening has put all the children on notice, says Claude Bailey, who works as general counsel for the Washington Convention Center and is Paul's father. "They've been given a set of challenges and expectations," he says. "Now it's much clearer and formalized."

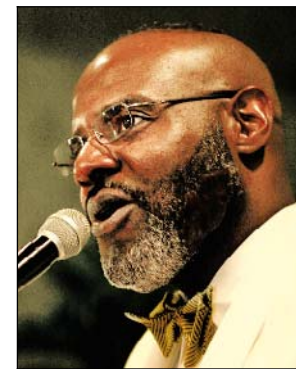
Jacob Walker I, a Justice Department lawyer and father to Jacob II, has high hopes for the group. "You see these guys down the road, you never know, they may be running for the same seat in Congress."

Seven heads bow as Young Gentlemen's Circle President Kevin Dancy, a 10-year-old fifth-grader, hangs medallions around their necks. He grips their hands, hugs each new brother and steps back behind the lectern.

"By the power vested in me, you are officially recognized as members of the Young Gentlemen's Circle," Dancy says, and a triumphant burst of horns rings out. "Gentlemen, take your bows."



Top, inductees lead a waltz at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Above, Stephen Washington, right, hugs Kevin Dancy, president of the Young Gentlemen's Circle. Right, teacher David Spruill put together the formal event.



Brandon Fitzgerald greets his mother, Risa Fitzgerald. The 10-year-old was King of the Beautillion and valedictorian.

Next Week: **Oh, for Namesakes! or Scoring With Moniker**