

The Style Invitational

Week 564: Redefine Print



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Flabbergasted: Appalled over how much weight you have gained.

Carcinoma: A valley in California known for its heavy smog.

Bustard: A very rude Metrobus driver.

This week's contest is a simple, no-twists repetition of a classic Invitational from 1998: Redefine any word from the dictionary, as in the examples above (by Michelle Feeley, Tom Witte and Christopher Hapner, respectively), which were among the 50 losing entries printed. No, we won't run those results again, but if you are so pathetically unlucky as to coincidentally submit the same definition that someone else got ink with six years ago—of *all* the possible words in the dictionary and *all* the possible funny redefinitions of those words—well, you've turned to the right page, Loser.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins a paint-by-number set of either the Mona Lisa or Julia Roberts; we're not quite sure. The Empress can only hope that the Loser who wins this fine prize donates it back to us—finished and signed, of course—so that she can palm it off again.

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. Deadline is

Tuesday, July 6. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks 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 July 25. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Chris Doyle of Forsyth, Mo.

Report from Week 560, in which we asked for suggestions to cut corners on the impending and still beleaguered Olympic Games in Athens: Bronze Medal for The Entry That Half of You Sent In: Replace the Olympic Flame with a Zippo lighter/tiki torch/flashlight with construction paper. Silver Medal for The Entry That the Other Half of You Sent In: Award winners the pyrite medal. And the Gold Medal for The Entry That Every Single Person Sent In: Have all the athletes compete as they did at the original Olympics: in the nude.

◆ Third runner-up: **Require athletes to share their performance-enhancing drugs with the construction workers.** (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

◆ Second runner-up: **Save on security costs: Ban foreigners.** (Russell Beland, Springfield)

◆ First runner-up, winner of "The Breast Book": **Instead of releasing the doves in the Opening Ceremonies, have the badminton players whack some shuttles into the air.** (Peter Metrinko, Plymouth, Minn.)

◆ And the winner of the Inker: **Replace the Opening Ceremonies with the Closing Ceremonies.** (Marc Leibert, New York)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

Instead of using expensive electronic devices, have someone from the stands come down and say, "One-Mississippi, Two-Mississippi . . ." (Brian Feldman, Chantilly)

Play all the national anthems nonstop. Everyone will have to stand up all the time—no need for seats. (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)

Cancel the quarry contract, and have the masons use those stones lying around the Parthenon. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

Appoint the Oracle at Delphi chief judge for all events, obviating the need for actually holding them. (George Smith, Frederick)

Have the relay racers simply throw the batons from one to another instead of wasting all that time running it around the track. (Dean N. Alterman, Portland, Ore.)

No need to introduce every last little country in the Opening Ceremonies: Just group them as "Coalition" and "Evildoers." (Milo Sauer)

Make "Return to Ruin" the official Olympic theme, and shun contemporary "finished" construction in favor of a retro, roofless, wall-less, sanitation-less decor. (Josh Tucker, Kensington)

Present kazoes to the winning athletes so they can play their own national anthems. (Stephen Litterst, Ithaca, N.Y.)

Not only should the athletes be naked, everyone should be naked. They'd save a bundle on security wands, though it would put a dent in the sales of those little pins. (Bruce Schuckman, Annandale)

Do it like the NBC coverage, and hold just the events that the Americans have a shot in. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Restrict women's gymnastics to women—that is, females who have actually entered puberty. Then flip a coin between the two remaining contestants and you're through. (Thad Humphries, Warrenton)

After a lengthy Socratic debate on the real importance of the fifth ring, sophists win the vote and the Olympic committee accepts Audi's donation of 1,000 flags. (Nicolas Clutterbuck, Buenos Aires)

Instead of obtaining a recording of each country's national anthem, just play "We Are the World" at every medal ceremony. (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)

Reduce the number of paid Olympics officials so it's only twice the number of athletes. (Chris Doyle)

Run all the track events on treadmills. Not only would they free up field space, but they could be hooked to generators to light up the soccer stadium. (David W. Kleeman, Chicago)

Bribes to contractors will have a 5 percent courtesy fee deducted. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Cut TV costs and raise ratings hugely by replacing those cloying "up close and personal" features with Three Stooges shorts. (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

In off hours, use the Olympic pool as a wishing well. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Lower taxes. (*G.W.B., Washington*) (Daniel Mauer, Silver Spring; Jack Cackler, Falls Church)

Save space and ensure record times in the 100-, 200- and 400-meter dashes by holding them on the archery field. (Andrea Palmer, Redmond, Wash.)

Replace photo finishes with quickly sketched finishes. (Art Grinath)

Instead of the pole vault mats and bar, just have contestants pair off on the runway in jousts. It won't save time, but it would be wicked awesome to watch. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Daily stadium giveaways: Friday, hard hats; Saturday, chamber pots; Sunday, first 2,000 fans get self-adhesive linoleum squares (available in Locker Room 5). (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

Hang a "Mission Accomplished" sign three months ago. (Jonathan Obee, Washington)

URGENT. CONFIDENTIAL. I can provide access to a dormant account in the Nigerian National Bank that holds sixty million US dollars which will help you fund your construction . . . (*Dr. William Ngama, Lagos*) (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

Third-place finishers now win bronze refrigerator magnets. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

A Swimmer Plunges Into Challenge

SWIMMER, From D1

ness of the water anymore, when his body rolls effortlessly, his arms stroke perfectly in sync and it feels like he was born in the water. He remembers when his trunk would twist, his legs would kick and the movement came naturally. But now he has only his arms to make it happen. Reaching Zen is harder now.

At age 6, Jason Pipoly was already pushing the edge, his father recalls, skiing black-diamond slopes in the Rocky Mountains near their home in Denver. At 11, he made his first attempt at swimming the English Channel, coming within four miles of the beaches of France, according to press accounts at the time. In college in California, he took up surfing and slept on the dunes of Ocean Beach. Tried road racing, too, he says, in Bando, where the French Grand Prix was once held.

So it wasn't really strange that he woke up early one winter morning in Colorado, where he was living six years ago, and decided that he had to see the sun rise over a frozen reservoir in the Rockies. He started his maroon Saturn and pointed it toward the horizon. He headed down the winding road that follows the Frypan River, driving fast, just for the thrill of it.

He doesn't remember seeing the icy patch on the road. As he rounded a turn, the car started to slide sideways. Instead of turning into the skid, as he knew to do, his reflexes took over and forced him to turn the other way. As the tires left the road and the car started to flip down the embankment, Pipoly saw a tree coming in his direction. He remembers closing his eyes.

"When I opened my eyes I said, 'Oh, I'm fine, I made it through,'" he says now, giggling a prescription bottle, his nails bitten down to nubs. The car landed on top of a tree in a ravine. Pipoly tried to move his legs but couldn't feel them. He tried to relax. He was rapidly losing blood. He was alone.

He wasn't sure how long he was there before the rescue team arrived. When they found him, his body temperature had dropped below 92 degrees. They cut him from his car and airlifted him to the hospital in Grand Junction. For 2½ days, he was strapped to a steel table that was rolled from side to side to ensure that his blood didn't clot and that his lungs wouldn't collapse.

Once he pushed the call bell to ask the nurse to stop the table, if only for a minute. She stopped it, but left him lying on his left side screaming in pain. He didn't ring for help again. After surgery on the third day he learned he would be paralyzed from the chest down for life. He was 28 years old.

Dressed in a gray T-shirt, tan shorts and black-and-white high-top boxing shoes, Pipoly is alternately intent and bored as he sits at the back of the hotel conference room and listens to a manufacturer rep's presentation about orthotics and prosthetics.

Two hours into the program, his head nods, and then finally he is called to speak to the audience of physicians, therapists, nurses and case managers. He is there to give his testimony about the reciprocating gait orthosis, a device made by the company, Hanger, that brought him here today.

The device, which helps him stand and even take a few steps with the help of a walker, primarily is for exercise. Because of his spinal cord injury, he is dependent on his wheelchair.

Pipoly fidgets in his chair, trying to hold his right leg still as it bounces up and down sporadically. These muscle spasms are a daily part of his reality now.

He opens his talk with a joke about a farmer and his three-legged pig to warm up the crowd as they eat dinner, but it isn't until he begins to talk about some of his struggles after the accident that the sounds of forks clanging against plates stop.

"In the hospital I was thinking about all the things I wouldn't be able to do, and I remember pushing that morphine drip button just as much for that fear as for the pain that I was feeling," he says. "I would wake up and all that fear would just come down on me and all I wanted to do was go back to sleep again."

Even after his rehab, when he was supposed to resume his normal life, he would go to pull himself up from the bed and the realization would sink in and he would lie flat, staring at the ceiling.

Sometimes he would go for days without sleeping, he recalls, because of the muscle spasms in his legs. Some days he would miss work at a photo lab and stay in bed, daydreaming about all of the things he used to do. He would flip the remote and drift in and out of sleep, getting out of bed just to go to the bathroom.

Eventually he learned to drive again. Then he would make the short trip from his apartment to the liquor store, plop his money on the counter and retreat to his apartment to spend the day downing Left Hand Beer. Sometimes he smoked weed. Other days he snorted cocaine.

He never reached the proverbial bottom, he says wryly, until he ran out of drugs. For almost a year his priority was escaping the daily realities of his life.

The first Christmas after his accident he went to his



HANGER ORTHOPEDIC GROUP

Jason Pipoly became the first paraplegic to swim the Catalina Channel—21 miles from Los Angeles Harbor to Catalina Island.

mother's house. He was quiet and morose, showing little interest in anything but the television. Out of desperation, she took out an old videotape and popped it into the VCR. It was a tape of Jason, age 11, on "The Tonight Show."

"He almost made it across and he said he is going back to try to swim it again!" Johnny Carson tells the audience, by way of introducing the young Pipoly. In the interview, he recalls how the crowds had cheered and the television lights had followed his progress. He describes how close he came to matching the feat his father had accomplished as a grown man. He seems undaunted, determined to try again, determined to succeed.

After the holiday, Pipoly returned to San Antonio, where he had moved to be near his father. He started thinking about the sport he had drifted away from not long after his attempt to swim the English Channel. He started thinking about the water. A year and a half after his accident, Pipoly decided to try to swim again.

When he finally got up the courage to get into the pool, he found that all he could do was float on his back and move his arms around for about 30 minutes. He went home in tears. He went back the next day and stayed in the water for 45 minutes. After a week he started to swim on his stomach. Within a short time, he could swim a dozen pool lengths.

Three years later he reached the shore of Wissant, France. He had conquered the 21-mile English Channel in 13 hours 48 minutes. There were no camera crews. No cheering crowds. But a representative of the Channel Swimming Association was there to certify Jason Pipoly as the first paraplegic from the United States to successfully swim the Channel.

A year later, he became the first paraplegic to cross the 21-mile Catalina Channel, according to the Catalina Channel Swimming Federation. He gave up on the return leg of the swim, after spending 24 hours in the currents, fighting off physical and mental exhaustion.

For weeks after his accident, Pipoly had avoided the slight curb at the end of his driveway. Then finally he forced himself to confront it.

"I fell right out of the wheelchair, right on my face while my wheelchair is rolling down the street," he recalls. "This guy pulls up and he is totally freaked out." Then he saw that Pipoly was laughing, and "He's like, 'You nut!' I was laughing because I was thinking about how afraid I was."

It was the first time Pipoly had fallen out of his wheelchair. He's done it "a thousand times since then," he says.

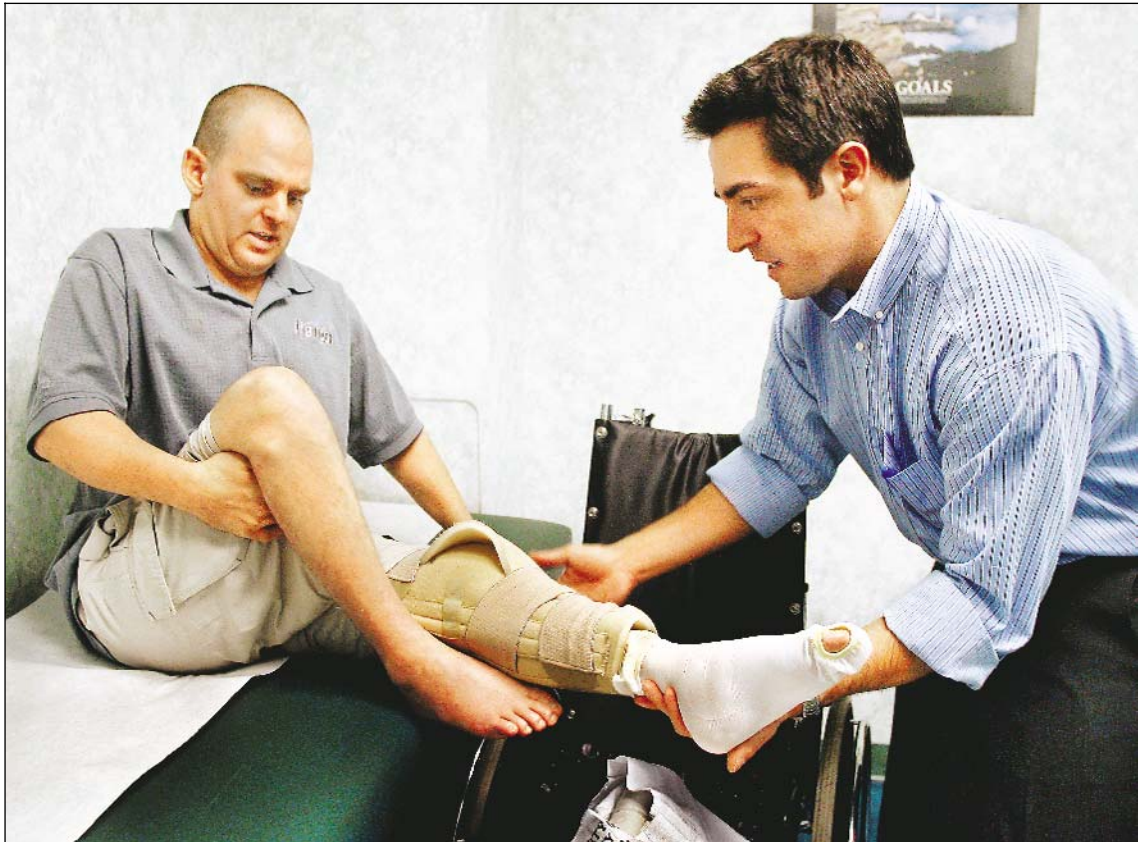
This spring, Pipoly moved to the District to train with his old coach, Mark Joyner, swimming coach of the 1984 U.S. Olympic pentathlon team, for a 24-mile race across Tampa Bay. He had trained all winter and was ready. Then one night, after returning from dinner to the townhouse he shares with Joyner, Pipoly had paused at the top of the stairs when one of the wheels on his chair started backsliding. Before he knew it he was tumbling down, bouncing on almost every step until he hit the bottom.

He was rushed to Howard University Hospital, where doctors splinted his broken left leg. Five days later, surgeons at Sibley Memorial Hospital put a rod in the leg, from the knee to the hip.

It would have been understandable if Pipoly quit at that point, but Joyner said that is not who he is.

"He has a high threshold for pain—his ability to tolerate discomfort, excessive training or overexertion," says Joyner. When Pipoly was younger, Joyner says, "when the other kids were fatigued he was always wanting to do more."

So with the Tampa swim out of reach, Pipoly began looking for a new challenge.



BY MICHAEL WILLIAMSON — THE WASHINGTON POST

Next Week: Deform of a Question, or It Disserves an Answer