

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 652: Ask Backward

17 percentage points	Fruit of the Lame	Pyramus and Frisbee
Absolutely not in a Metro car	Bruce Springsteen-Goldfarb	The California Raisinets
Definitely Not Control-Top Pantyhose	Angelina Jolie's pinkie	Rock-Paper-Scissors for Dummies
Brown v. Board of Zoning Appeals, Gaithersburg	The things that you're liable to read in the Bible	Maxwell's Alabastrite™ Ball Peen Hammer



BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Once again, you are on "Jeopardy!" Above are the answers. You supply the questions to as many as you like. Fortunately, you don't have to tell the Empress some allegedly amusing fact about yourself, as you would have to tell Alex Trebek. Just as fortunately, the Empress does not have to give you thousands of dollars for losing. She will, however, give you the following for losing:

Winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets the excellent volume "You Have Head Lice!," an easy-reader book with lots of good photos, donated by Brendan Beary of Great Mills, who wonders what the exclamation point is supposed to signify. Perhaps the first word of the title should be "Congratulations."

Other runners-up win a 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 by e-mail to Losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, March 13. Include "Week 652" 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 humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published April 2. 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 was sent in by both Steve Langer of Chevy Chase and Tom Witte of Montgomery Village, and maybe some others.

REPORT FROM WEEK 648

In which we asked for silly questions to ask the poor people who man the phone lines for consumer product information, an activity pursued regularly by Washington Post Magazine metaphysics columnist Gene Weingarten. And in an honor granted previously only to phenomenally amusing former Post columnist Bob Levey, Gene himself was permitted to choose this week's winner and Losers from among a list of 74 finalists.

4 To Pampers: "It says 'for up to 25 pounds.' Isn't that... kind of a lot of poop?" (Brenda Ware Jones, Jackson, Miss.; Dan Seidman, Watertown, Mass.)

3 To Blue Cross: "After a night of heavy drinking, I woke up to find an image of Muhammad tattooed on my chest. Do you think you might cover tattoo removal in this one case? It might be a pretty big health issue for me if I don't do something." (Fred Dawson, Beltsville)

2 The winner of the wall hanging of an angel with Christmas lights on her head: **To The Washington Post:** "I'm wondering about your name. I mean, you don't really deliver the paper by mail anymore. Wouldn't it be more accurate to call yourselves The Washington Guy Driving a Minivan?" (Russell Beland, Springfield)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

1 To Unilever Corp.: "Why do your Dove Bars taste like soap?" (Kevin Dopart, Washington)



HONORABLE MENTIONS

Depends: "Do you have a similar product, but one that is maybe more like For Sure?" (Russell Beland)

Maytag: "Hey, since you've got these repair guys sitting around doing nothing, could you send one over to my house to fix my Amana?" (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

Quikrete: "You know, youse guys ever thought of putting a chart on the bag to say how much concrete you need to sink a 200-pound, um, object? And youse could package it with a special extra large bucket, 'cause some people got big feet to go along with their big mouths, ya know what I'm sayin'?" (Brendan Beary)

Morton's Kosher Salt: "Is it okay to put this on ham?" (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Lockheed Martin: "Yes, I'm calling about your F-22 advanced air superiority Raptor fighter. I see here that they are going to sell for about \$200 million each, and I'm just wondering if you have special financing plans, or maybe a manufacturer's rebate?" (Russell Beland)

Head & Shoulders: "My hair looks great, but I don't think my shoulders look any better at all. Am I doing something wrong?" (Roger Dalrymple, Gettysburg, Pa.)

Lysol: "Your label says your product kills 99.9 percent of germs in 30 seconds — but what about that 0.1 percent? Isn't that tough little booger the one I should really be worried about? What do I use to kill HIM?" (Douglas Frank, Crosby, Tex.)

Northwest Airlines: "I know you guys fly from Miami to Chicago, 'cause that's northwest. But how am I going to get back? Do I need to make a reservation on Southwest? But then how do I get east?" (Jeff Brechlin)

Alpha-Bits: "Every box of your cereal has some squiggly pieces that don't look like any recognizable letter. Are you trying to

sneak Arabic letters in, thereby aiding and abetting terrorists within our borders by providing them a healthy balanced breakfast?" (Brendan Beary)

Meow Mix: "My kitten seems to like your product, but when I try to make her ask for it by name, like you say, she doesn't get the 'Mix' part at all. Should I try another brand?" (Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)

Pez: "Please help! Something appears to be lodged in his throat!" (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

Riverside Press: "About your big book with the Shakespeare plays? Well, in that 'Julius Caesar' one, some guy says, 'The clock struck three,' and that's stupid because they didn't have striking clocks back then. And so I was wondering if you could fix that." (Ken Rosenau, Washington)

Scope: "I have a recipe that calls for creme de menthe, but I'm all out and was wondering what the equivalent amount of Scope would be." (Art Grinath)

Audubon Society: "Hi, we get mourning doves at our bird feeder, and I was wondering if you had any good recipes. My husband likes spicy dishes, if that helps. Thanks!" (Jeff Brechlin)

Bayer: "I am taking your One-A-Day 50 Plus multivitamins, and I notice that they are 'high potency.' Should I not take them at breakfast, then? Because I don't know how potent I want to be at the office, especially now that I have that hot new boss." (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

Virgin Atlantic: "I'm flying to London for a band trip, but last night I went to third base with my boyfriend, but that's still a virgin, right? I can still use my ticket?" (Jeff Brechlin)

9Lives: "My cat just died. If I stuffed a little of your product into his mouth, do you think it would help?" (Roger Dalrymple)

Flintstones Chewable Vitamins: "The label says 'Keep out of reach of children.' So do I need to stuff them down my kid's throat while his hands are tied? Or do I have to shoot him with some sort of vitamin gun?" (Jay Shuck)

Miracle Whip: "On your label it gives a recipe for making a turkey sandwich: Spread bread with dressing; top with lettuce, tomatoes and turkey, cover with remaining bread slice. I wonder if you have a more detailed set of directions." (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

Deer Park water: "You know, our bodies are about 60 percent water. Can you guarantee that none of your water has ever been part of people? Otherwise, isn't your product pretty much cannibalism?" (Brendan Beary)

New York Yankees: "Is 'Yankees' short for 'Yankees suck'?" (John Kupiec, Fairfax)

General Motors: "I overheard my daughter tell her boyfriend that she was going to give him a Hummer, and I'm trying to find out how much this is going to set her back." (Jeff Brechlin)

Honda: "Yes, I'm thinking of buying an Odyssey. Since it's named after a 20-year voyage of horrifying deprivation and a near total loss of life, is that what I can expect? 'Cause my wife, Penelope, she swears a minivan can't possibly last 20 years." (Russell Beland)

Hertz: "You used to have those really cute ads with the football player running through the airport jumping over suitcases? How come you stopped running those? Whatever happened to that guy?" (Ken Rosenau)

Dell: "Are your computers Y2K-compatible?" (Jonathan Markoff, Vienna)

Next Week: *Across the Wide What? or Shenand'oh!*

In a Baghdad Cemetery, Eerie Echoes of the Past

GRAVE, From D1

er's head.

The man, dressed in rough, cheap clothes, can't think of where any British lady might be buried in this cemetery full of the remains of British soldiers and their Hindu and Sikh underlings, legions of what turned out to be a transient world empire. (Iraqis say Saddam Hussein would have bulldozed this bastion of Iraq's former British rulers long ago if it weren't for the presence of the Indians.)

The last visitors here were a group of Britons who came several months ago and found and cleared one tomb, the grave keeper says. Vaguely art deco, the bathroom-size, domed tomb encases the bones of Lt. Gen. Stanley Maude — "Dead of cholera whilst commander of the Mesopotamia expeditionary force," the English engraving on the sides notes.

In March 1917, Maude said: "Our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators," a statement still famous among older Iraqis, at least. Maude was then head of a British army that was closing in on Baghdad and about to overthrow Ottoman rule here. The British saw Ottoman support of Germany in World War I as a threat to their own survival, and they needed Iraq's oil for their war effort.

Maude assured Iraq's Arabs of "a future of greatness" but succumbed to cholera six months later.

Bell, a singular, gentle-born woman who had already established a name through Arab travels and scholarly writings rivaling those of any man of her time, arrived soon after. She stayed on for the rest of her life, as Oriental secretary to British governments, carving out and creating modern-day Iraq as much as any single person.

Bell sketched the boundaries of Iraq on tracing paper after careful consultation with Iraqi tribes, consideration of Britain's need for oil and her own idiosyncratic geopolitical beliefs.

"The truth is I'm becoming a Sunni myself; you know where you are with them, they are staunch and they are guided, according to their lights, by reason; whereas with the Shi'ahs, however well intentioned they may be, at any moment some ignorant fanatic of an alim may tell them that by the order of God and himself they are to think differently," she wrote home.

She and her allies gave the monarchy to the minority Sunnis, denied independence to the Kurds in order to keep northern oil fields for Britain and withheld from the Shiite majority the democracy of which she thought them incapable.

"The object of every government here has always been to keep the Shi'ah divines from taking charge of public affairs," Bell wrote.

She confided in her father her greater hopes. "You are never to repeat — because officially I may not hold these opinions — that from the very beginning I've felt certain



HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Gertrude Bell, above, served as Britain's Oriental secretary in Iraq, and complained at the time of Sunni-Shiite conflicts, which to this day bedevil U.S. efforts to create a democracy there. Along with many of her compatriots, Bell is said to be buried in a Baghdad cemetery, right.

that if ever we succeed in setting up an orderly Arab independent Kingdom here we shall drive both the French and the Zionists into the Mediterranean. Of course they will all want to come in with us. And it will happen."

The desk on which Iraq took shape was kept for decades afterward at the British Embassy on Haifa Street. Over the past three years, U.S. forces first lost control of Haifa Street, and the British Embassy, then won the route back with great fanfare by American generals in 2005, and now have, without fanfare, again ceded it to the insurgency. "HAIFA STREET IS CONDITION RED. DO NOT USE HAIFA STREET," a sign at the Green Zone's Assassin's Gate warned last month.

Britain's diplomats, back-seat partners to the Americans in this latest Western invasion, have long since withdrawn inside the Green Zone.

In much the same spirit as Bell, American diplomats last year typed the draft of Iraq's new constitution on computers at the U.S. Embassy in the Green Zone — in English, not Arabic, according to those involved in the negotiations.

The outcome of America's overturn of order in Iraq was far from what Washington envisioned when it opened the gates to democracy: effectively turning over Iraq to the country's long-suppressed Shiites, whose most cohesive groups are religious parties.

As February came to a close, private armies of those parties battled Sunni Arab men outside Sunni mosques. Baghdad was under 20-hour curfew, the airport was closed and the roads to other provinces were cut off.



BY OMAR FEKEKI — THE WASHINGTON POST

Bodies piled up in the city's morgues. The civil war talked about for months seemed nearer, if not already here.

With the same audacity with which Britons built a nation out of three provinces, unhappy Americans mull whether to keep it, let it fall back into three parts, or let civil war sort it out.

Even before this upheaval, nostalgia for Bell, and for the stronger hand Britons were seen as wielding during their rule here, had become something of a fad among Americans. Bell's name pops up often in conversations with U.S. officials, apropos of nothing except a measure of disorder and despair.

"Gertrude, where are you now?" a visiting official said, sighing in the dark hold of a C-130 on a night flight from southern Iraq to Baghdad.

"Was she pretty?" a congressman visiting Baghdad asked keenly, his interest and sense of romance piqued by what he said was a rapt conversation about Bell at a Washington dinner party.

In fact, Bell was not pretty; her features were too roughly carved and her age too advanced by the time she took up nation-making in Iraq.

But she was feminine: Requests for London fashions mingled with accounts of meetings with Arthur Balfour, T.E. Lawrence and Winston Churchill in her letters home to her family.

The photos she sent home show a Baghdad vastly different from, and far more beautiful than, today's city, where rubble and shattered windows from bombing go unrepaired and blast walls from what the U.S.

Embassy says is a multi-billion-dollar concrete boom encase all in an ugly gray.

In Bell's Iraq, camel caravans make their way across the desert, wooden dhows ply the Tigris and Euphrates, and palms stand before rugged, crumbling forts and wooden vilas.

"Oh, you should see Lady Cox playing leapfrog in the water!" she wrote her father, recounting summer swims in the Tigris with the wife of Iraq's British ruler, Sir Percy Cox, in more innocent, less-polluted days.

Tea parties were held on the lawn, under palm trees, with Persian carpets laid out in the garden on long, slow afternoons.

The names and families have held through the decades. Bell's Baghdad landlord was from the Chalabi family, the key minister in the Iraq government was Jafar, and Britain's nemesis in Iraq was a scowling young Shiite cleric named Sadr.

"The villain [sic] of the piece is Saiyid Muhammad Sadr, the son of old Saiyid Hasan Sadr," she wrote home. "... Saiyid Muhammad was the man who first received us, a tall black bearded alim with a sinister expression. At the time you and I paid our call, Saiyid Muhammad was little more than the son of Saiyid Hasan, but a month later he leapt into an evil prominence as the chief agitator in the disturbances. He has still a certain amount of influence and it's a hand to hand conflict between us and him. He is in a black rage and I feel as if we were struggling against the powers of evil in the dark. You never know what Shi'ahs are up to."

"Father, isn't it wonderfully interesting to be watching over the fortunes of this new

state!" she felt optimistic enough to tack on.

Resisting grumbling from Churchill — "I hate Iraq. I wish we had never gone to the place," he said in 1926 — Bell's camp ensured that Britain and its military would have say over Iraq's government and oil for decades to come. London installed a foreign Sunni sheik, Faisal, as Iraq's king in a rigged plebiscite with a Hussein-style, 96 percent yes vote.

To suppress Shiite and Sunni tribal revolts that followed, Britain pioneered air assaults on villages and the use of artillery shells filled with poison gas.

Though Iraq was given formal independence in 1932, the monarchy ensured British dominance until 1958, when mobs tore the young King Faisal II limb from limb.

"For a hundred years, they'll talk of the Khutan riding by," an Iraqi official told Bell one day on a horseback jaunt through Baghdad, using the name — Lady — by which Iraqis knew Bell. "I think they likely will," Bell records herself answering, quietly satisfied.

She killed herself in 1926, taking an overdose of sleeping pills in her bed on a hot summer night in Baghdad.

At the British cemetery in today's Baghdad, the hundreds of graves of the British empire make searching for her grave futile, and the open metal bars of the cemetery gates make it dangerous. Visitors leave with her grave not found and, ultimately, not too closely sought.

Staff writer Thomas E. Ricks contributed to this report.