

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 667: Questionable Journalism



ABOVE AND RIGHT, ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

It's really just the two kids I worry about.

In the team sitting-still contest, how do you think your lineup of a lead paperweight, Francisco Franco and two kids will fare?

Time again for a recurring contest that, if you're anything like the Empress, will warp your newspaper reading long after the deadline because you won't be able to stop playing this game: **Take any sentence that appears in The Post or in an article on washingtonpost.com from today through June 26 and supply a question it could answer.** Please cite the date and page number of the article you're using (or if you're online, include that section of the article). The example above is from today's Ask Amy column.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets a half a coffee mug (it's a semi-cylinder) promoting, in big block letters, the Halflytely Bowl Prep Kit, courtesy of the fully prepped Phil Frankenfeld of Washington.

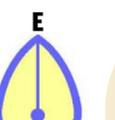
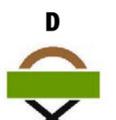
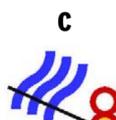
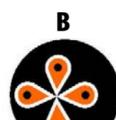
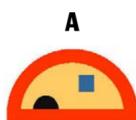
Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called this week) get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, June 26. Put "Week 667" 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 16. 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 Honorable Mentions name is by Laurel Gainer of Great Falls. The Revised Title for next week's contest is by Chris Doyle of Forsyth, Mo. **Correction:** We incorrectly reported last week that Mark Eckenwiler was the first to hound the Empress about a Week 666 contest. Actually, it was Kevin Dopart, who began the hounding on Nov. 11, 2005, as he proved with documents that he probably had notarized.

REPORT FROM WEEK 663

In which we asked you to explain pictographs concocted by Invitational cartoonist Bob Staake: As expected (and hoped for), the interpretations were all over the place, although just about everyone wrote in to note that Picture A was a solar igloo and E signified the Avocado Pit and the Pendulum.

4 **Picture B: The ball Barry Bonds hit for No. 715 already had the asterisk printed on it.** (Ira Allen, Bethesda)

3 **Picture C: "See, your chart says that Aquarius is in conjunction with Motel 8 — tonight's the night, baby!"** (Douglas Frank, Crosby, Tex.; Bill Moulden, Frederick)



2 **Winner of the thinking-chimp sculpture: Picture A: When she noticed Perry spying down on her suspiciously from the transom, his fiancée threw her engagement ring back at him, box and all.** (Richard Kenney, Vienna)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

Cartoon D: Madame X awaits the firing squad. (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)

B'S ON THE RORSCHACH TEST

Picture A

Just to prove what a great salesman he was, Frank sold and installed a window air conditioner in an igloo. (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

Dominio's new Pepperoni-and-Post-It-Note pizza tended to go half eaten. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Oh, noooo, Mr. Bill! You shouldn't have tried to peek under the samurai's skirt! (Michelle Stupak)

Gertrude Ederle swims the English Channel. (Judith Cottrill, New York)

Florida road sign: "Caution: Short, elderly drivers next 218 miles." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

A Beetle parked two straight nights on a city street. (Deborah Guy, Columbus)

A West Virginia dental chart. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

Picture B

Even in a black hole, you can still use your Cingular cellphone. (Ira Allen)

Factory-irregular Communion wafers are the biggest seller at that local religious outlet store, Seconds Coming. (Mark Eckenwiler, Washington)

Mr. Butterfly's wild ride ends tragically at the bowling alley. (Kevin Dopart)

Elton John's contact lens. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

In response to complaints that "Steelers" sounded too negative, this new logo for the Pittsburgh Petunias was unveiled. (Beth Baniszewski, Somerville, Mass.)

The Sierra Club rejected as too pessimistic the logo of the butterfly on the 8-ball. (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

CBS executives were dismayed to find remnants of the NBC peacock on an image from Katie Couric's colonoscopy. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

Coffee is usually too old to reheat in the microwave after the mold has formed an advanced civilization. Or at least give it an extra 10 seconds. (Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.)

Repeated attempts to use www.googleearth.cn failed to pinpoint the location of China's Office of Internet Censorship. (Jeffrey Contompasis, Ashburn)

Picture C

The gurgling rapids made Frosty wish he'd attended to his needs before attempting the tightrope crossing. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

The earliest known proof of baseball yet discovered, this Shawnee pictograph indicates that a ball will carry to left field at Pittsburgh's Three Rivers Stadium. (Andrew Hoenig)

No sooner had Calista Flockhart gotten her breast-augmentation surgery done than she was run over by a truck. (Elden Carnahan)

"As you'll observe, the brush strokes in this work are characteristic of the Era of the Sevens." (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

The new Adidas Iorgnette. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village; Douglas Frank)

Howls of delight burst forth in a Rehoboth nightclub when the hat and gloves come off and Mister Peanut administers a mock caning to Gumby and his two pals. (Wilson Varga, Alexandria)

Patridos Phallos led off the opening ceremonies at Athens Olympics as the host country's flag bearer. (Ned Bent, Oak Hill)

Picture D

It is extremely rare to die of seasickness on an ocean cruise. But when you do, they honor you with a green coffin. (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

In exchange for agreeing to do "2001," the monolith was promised a chance to direct. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Donald Trump's plan to do well by doing good: the Your Ad Here Memorial Ribbon. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

Mary was pleased to discover that Jesus's halo conveniently changed color when his diaper needed attention. (Elizabeth Molye, Falls Church)

The new, improved High-Water Superdome. (Ben

Aronin, White Plains, N.Y.; Eric Murphy, Ann Arbor, Mich.)

These days, Space Invaders always make sure to carry their green cards. (Hamdi Akar, Broad Run)

My astronomical IQ tells me that an egg with an upside-down antenna in the middle comes next. — M. Vos Savant (Jeff Bridgman, Falls Church)

Picture E

The first ultrasound ever taken of a woman's biological clock actually ticking inside her uterus. (Andrew Hoenig; Betsy Storck, Dayton, Md.)

I have nothing against nudity, but couldn't she do her leg lifts indoors? (Jay Shuck; Steve Langer, Chevy Chase)

Sen. Barbara Mikulski's favorite dress pattern, originally designed by Coco Chanel for J. Edgar Hoover. (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

The keyhole on a gynecologist's door. (Jeff Brechlin)

Ow! That's supposed to be a rectal thermometer, not a bladder thermometer! (John O'Byrne)

It's an egg timer, of course. (Russell Beland)

He looked at me with a jaundiced eye . . . (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

In a shortcut to catch up with Honda, GM creates a gas gauge that never shows Empty. (Cecil J. Clark, Asheville, N.C.)

Even before hatching, ostriches are programmed to hide their heads in the sand. (Ross Elliffe, Picton, New Zealand)

All the pictures: An Eskimo woman in an igloo (A) tries to fan (B) her husband's ardor, which has been flagging (C) of late, in the hope of getting impregnated (E). These are scenes depicted on the storyboard by the director's chair (D); the movie is, of course, "Nanookie of the North." (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

Next Week: A Thousand Times?! No! or P.S. de Résistance

Filmmakers' Warmup Pitches

SILVERDOCS, From D1

jects of their documentaries reflect a sophisticated worldview: a firsthand account of Afghanistan's bloody history; Siberian shamans; a world-traveling hitchhiker who has logged 62,000 miles; Dominican kids who are Civil War reenactors; local governments seizing private property; and a Slovakian inventor who may have invented the parachute. They've got ambitions and they think they know how to get there. "I'm just trying to finish my film and shop it to the festivals," says one filmmaker, Kimberly Cooke, 36, from the University of Florida. They know from Sundance and Slamdance, from Project Greenlight and Telluride, from grant proposals and distribution plans.

Still . . . yesterday was a first. And first times are always fraught with tension.

"Was I nervous?" says New York University doctoral candidate Wazhmah Osman, whose film "Postcards From Tora Bora" details her family's escape from and return to Afghanistan. "Absolutely. It's my first pitch. . . . It's trial by fire."

It is a trial, of sorts, though this is not a competition. No best-of-show will be awarded, no prizes to be won, only experience to be gained. It's not likely that someone will snare a distribution deal here. But hope springs, as Osman admits: "You want to go for everything [while you're here], money, getting signed. . . . It's a great opportunity."

It's an opportunity to be seized in a minimum of time. "When you pitch a story," the Discovery Channel's Steve Burns tells them, "you've got one chance."

So it is in this tiny screening room in the headquarters of the Discovery Channel in Silver Spring. Up on the podium, they've got just a few minutes to take advantage of that opportunity, with the moderator murmuring into the microphone, "One minute left." They've got time for a short intro, a film clip, and then they have to stand and take it while six panelists from the Discovery Channel, Sundance Institute, PBS, Current TV, the Independent Television Service and an independent consulting firm ever so politely tear apart their work.

Jes Therkelsen steps up to the mic, all righteous indignation and controlled fury. At 26, he's one of the younger filmmakers here, an American University film student whose doc "Seize This!" takes on the convoluted legal terrain of eminent domain, the right of a government to seize private property if it's deemed to be for the public good. He has profiled a family in New London, Conn., some Pennsylvania Dutch and the Washington Sculpture Center, which is located on the same patch of land where the new baseball stadium will be built.

There is no doubt that this will be a film with a point of view. Perhaps too much of a point of view. The panelists ask Therkelsen about "balance" and getting the other side of the story, no matter "how distasteful that may be." And then Alyce Wyatt, the independent consultant with a cuddly vibe and an intimidating bio — including work for PBS, ABC's "20/20" and Nickelodeon, to name a very few — lowers the boom:

"It's important that you don't come across as smarter than your audience," Wyatt says. "Your audience may very well be stupid. . . . but you don't want to tell your au-



Matt Wittmer introduces a clip from his documentary to a panel of film executives. At right, grad students (from left) Jes Therkelsen, Anya Bernstein, Wazhmah Osman, Wittmer and Nada Tomisova chat after the presentations.

dience that they're stupid."

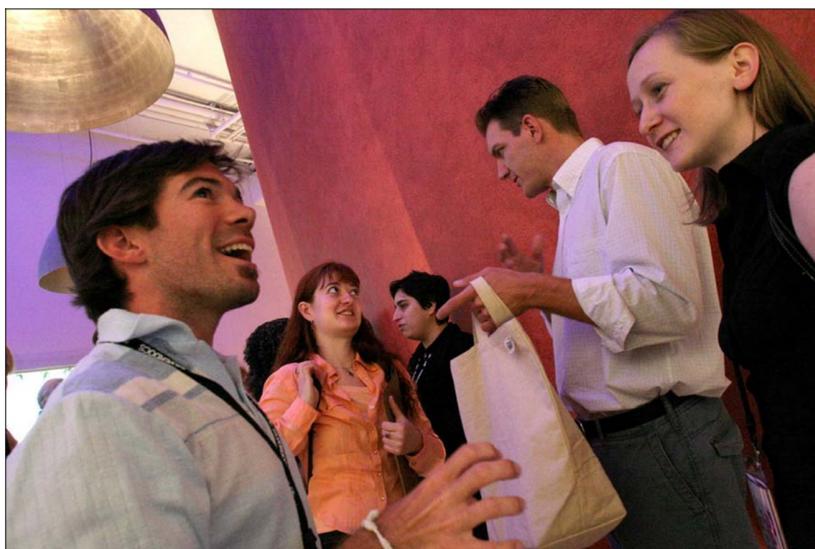
Wyatt, the students all will admit afterward, is the one they fear. She does not blow smoke. She does not mince words. She demands — Where's the aesthetics? — as if she were demanding to know where's the beef like in that old Wendy's commercial. Aesthetics are important. So is hooking the audience. Providing some "sensory" thrills. Painting pretty pictures while you're hammering home your point. It needs to feel "valuable," and new, like nothing you've never seen before.

Osman steps to the dais, and with a wave of her hand the clip of her film begins. There is Super 8 footage of her parents' wedding at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul. Children's drawings of guns that come to animated life. Pictures of her father in prison, hair gone gray at 33 after he was tortured and placed in solitary confinement. Osman herself, back at home in 2004, dressed in a *shalwar kameez* and head scarf, wiping away tears as she walks through the rubble of her birthplace.

The lights come up. Even the panelists are silent, for just a moment.

Then they begin to speak.

"I think you have a hit," Burns tells her.



PHOTOS BY NIKKI KAHN — THE WASHINGTON POST