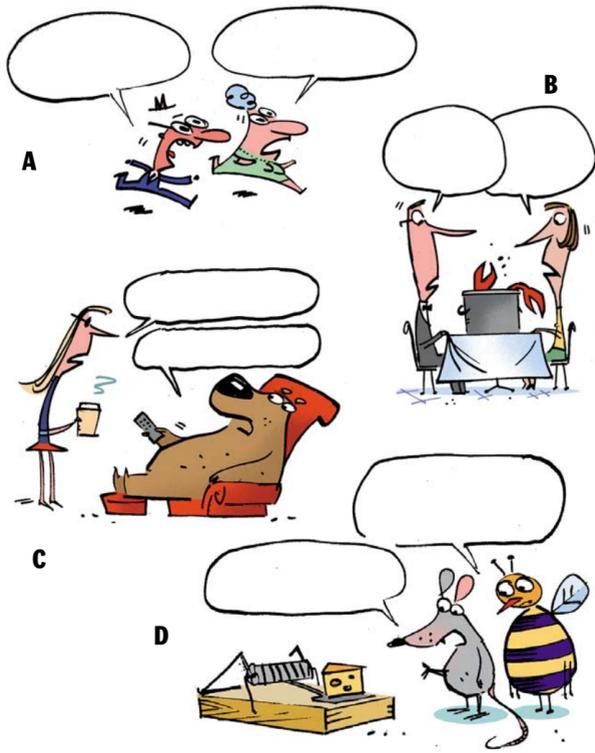


The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 680: Rendered Speechless



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Bob Staake is a big-shot picture person. (You may have seen his work on the Sept. 4 New Yorker cover, a feather in the cap of graphic artists second only to publishing cartoonists in *The Style Invitational*.) But words? Eh. You can do it better. This week: Provide dialogue to fill the balloons in any of these cartoons. Please send text only; don't physically send us little pictures.

Winner gets the Inker, the official *Style Invitational* trophy. First runner-up gets a special prize, suggested by Peter Metrinko: lunch with the Empress at the so-apropos-to-the-results-below Waffle Shop in Alexandria, whose awning famously displays the sign pictured at right. If you can't make it — if you live in Wanneroo, Australia, for example — you may have a Loser T-shirt.

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, Sept. 25. Put "Week 680" 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 Sept. 24. 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 Brad Alexander of Wanneroo, Australia. Next week's Revised Title is by Brendan Beary of Great Mills.

REPORT FROM WEEK 676

In which we asked you to create and define new words containing the letters A, L, E and F, contiguously but in any order: Among the more than 3,000 suggestions, the most common were "Faleure: Being eliminated in the first round of the spelling bee" and "E-flatus: Spam." Also lots on the subject of Mel Gibson: "melfeat," "melafela," "melfauxpas."

- 4 **Afletic:** Being able to make "Gigli" and still walk with your head held high. (Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)
- 3 **Halfaleak-halfaleak:** How Tennyson charged johnward in his old age. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)
- 2 **The winner of the genuine alligator meat and the chocolate "Moose Droppings": Self-leapfrog:** A popular Zen Buddhist game. (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)



AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER
AFL-eio: The United Farm Workers. (Fran Pryluck, Amisville, Va.)

A DICTIONARY OF ALF-BAKED IDEAS

- Afleccch:** Enough with the duck already! (Joe Newman, Bethesda)
- Alfa-elf:** Santa's go-to guy. (Russell Beland, from vacation on Assawoman Bay, Md.)
- Angleface:** What Picasso used to call his models. (Peter Metrinko)
- Babelfavoritism:** A din of inequity. (Chris Doyle)
- Carafelbow:** A repetitive-stress disorder of middle-class winos. (Fred S. Souk, Reston)
- Copafelt:** Groped. (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)
- Deaflect:** Ignore a question by pretending not to hear it. "Bush can't deaflect as well as Reagan either." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)
- Dieflagrante:** To go out with a smile on your face. (Steve Fahey, Kensington)
- Deaf-lien:** A Gallaudet. (Chris Doyle)
- Do-Re-Mi-Fa-Le-So-Ti-Do:** How it was clear at rehearsal that the Three Tenors had had too much vino. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)
- Eiffelated:** Given a warm "bonjour" at La Paris Hilton. (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)
- EL-A-F-ingX:** The Los Angeles airport as seen from gridlock on the 405. (Ira Allen, Bethesda)
- E-laffer:** lol, lmao, rotfl, rotflol, rotflimao, llal, lois, lola, lolol, lolol, lshimp, lshmbib, lshmsb, ltic, ltip, lub, etc. Anything but "haha." (Erik Agard, Gaitthersburg)
- Elefanta:** Peanut-flavored soda. (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)
- Felafelass:** Mideast slang for cellulite. (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)
- Faleactor:** A bad guy who's dyslexic. (Mae Scanlan)
- Halfethanasia:** Mercy beating. (Kevin Dopart)
- Heelfart:** That embarrassing sound your shoe can make on a polished floor, usually in a room with the acoustics of an echo chamber. (Peter Metrinko)
- Heflation:** The increasing age difference between the arm candy and the arm. (Jay Shuck)
- Hermaphroditefallacy:** Some drivers are men. Some drivers are women. Therefore some drivers are both men and women. (Chris Doyle)
- Inhalefibber:** Clinton, duh. (Chris Doyle)
- Leafonomics:** The belief that money grows on trees. (Michael Peck, Alexandria)
- Lefadallite:** Where you toin to get to the Brooklyn Bridge. (Joe Newman)
- Lifelay:** Spouse. (Ross Elliffe, Picton, New Zealand)
- Navelfap:** The sound made by two middle-aged bellies during lovemaking. (Peter Metrinko)
- Nippleface:** What would be way too mean to call someone with bad acne. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)
- Palefake:** Michael Jackson. (Elwood Fitzner)
- Peaflamer:** Evidence that schoolrooms are getting more and more dangerous. (Peter Metrinko)

- Preflax:** Food. (Elwood Fitzner)
- Reflamingo:** To put back your yard art after your snooty guests leave. (Russell Beland)
- Shelfacade:** Den decor featuring sets of impressive-looking books you've never read. (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)
- Specula-fetish:** Something that will likely limit your dating success. (Kevin Dopart)
- Towelfare:** Treating yourself to the hotel's linens. (Tom Witte)
- Veranda-elf:** The more refined cousin of the garden gnome. (Peter Metrinko)
- Wife-language:** What you'd understand if you really loved me. (Kevin Dopart)

Next Week: The News Gets Verse, or Scanning the Headlines



BY DAYNA SMITH — THE WASHINGTON POST

Her Fate Hanging Like a Chad, Dacek Copes

DACEK, From D1

"We need to clean house here, to reassure people and to try to restore our reputation," says council member Howard Denis, a Republican who served with Dacek and is on the council committee that will question her and Election Director Margaret Jurgensen tomorrow. "I do think they should appear on Monday in sack cloths and ashes and fall on their swords."

County Executive Doug Duncan and council President George Leventhal, both Democrats, want both women fired. Leventhal uses the words "absolutely unacceptable and unconscionable." Is Nancy Dacek, then, Montgomery County's own Theresa LePore? LePore was the infamous elections chief responsible for the butterfly ballot in Palm Beach County, Fla., during that unforgettable, interminable presidential election year of 2000.

Dacek considers the question during a break last week in the tally of absentee ballots. She's standing in a corridor of elections board headquarters, a converted middle school in Rockville that retains the old metal lockers and bilious green wall tiles. She has clear, pale blue eyes, behind wireless glasses perched on the end of her nose, and a short, tousled haircut. Her coral-colored sweater came from Chico's, she reveals, when she learns even the *Style* section is interested in her now.

Madame Butterfly? "Ohhh, I don't think so," she says with a wave of her hand. She sounds amused and fatigued. But not defensive, nor defiant. "It's fine. I'll cut out the articles myself and save them for my grandchildren."

She accommodates a photographer's request to stand outside by a sign for the elections board. It's as if she knows the role she is being assigned by the public and the media: She knows there's no use fighting the spotlight, so she might as well use it to show she has nothing to hide.

Since everybody's asking, No, definitely not, she does not think she should lose her job. A subordinate, operations manager Paul Valette, has claimed responsibility for the actions of unidentified members of his staff who failed to ensure that voter access cards were included in the packages sent to each polling place. Without the ATM-style cards, voters could not use the touch-screen voting machines. The cards eventually arrived, but nearly 12,000 voters had to fill out paper



BY KEVIN CLARK — THE WASHINGTON POST

Nancy Dacek, president of the Montgomery County Board of Elections, tallies votes with other board members in Rockville after Tuesday's botched election. She is to face a public hearing over the voting mixup tomorrow.

ballots; an uncounted number could not take the extra time and left without voting, effectively disenfranchised. The provisional ballots will be tallied starting tomorrow, right after the council hearing.

At this point, Dacek's position is this: She is eager to get to the bottom of the problem and fix it but refuses to let herself or her staff be scapegoated. "We're not looking at 'the buck stops here,' we're looking at putting out an outstanding election in November. . . . The fact is we have another election" in less than eight weeks, she says. "To have all these experienced people let go without due process and at this time would leave the whole department in shambles."

She shrugs off the vitriol. "This whole issue has become politicized," she says. "It's not that upsetting to me, because I'm used to the politics."

Friends say Dacek is a strong woman with a wry take on the world, and she's not likely to wilt now. "She's a fair, honest, no-nonsense kind of person, and she's tough," says council member Marilyn Praisner, a Democrat, an old ally from the early 1980s, when Dacek was president of the county's Council of PTAs and Praisner was elected school board president.

Yet it is Praisner who is hauling Dacek and Jurgensen before her

management and fiscal policy committee this morning. Praisner says she is not in favor of dumping Dacek now: "Changing horses in mid-stream never works."

Dacek "is almost like a female Will Rogers," says Peggy Erickson, another Democrat who is a friend and Dacek's former council chief of staff. "She has common sense and is level-headed. . . . She is also the mother of five children, including four girls. I think there's a lot of preparation there for facing life. She is a classy lady."

Dacek was raised in Cleveland, graduated from Wellesley in political science and got a master's in education at Case Western Reserve. In Cleveland, her husband Ray, a utility tax lawyer, was active in local Republican politics. Their children went on literature trips before they were old enough for school.

The family moved to Montgomery County in 1974 when Ray Dacek took a new job. Think the lady can't handle pressure? You try uprooting teenage girls from their lives and moving them halfway across the country. When she ran for the county school board in 1982, *The Washington Post* summed up her resumé to date as "housewife," that loaded label that overlooked what a woman with two degrees and five kids and PTA political savvy might know about negotiation, strategy and coalition-

building. She lost. In 1990, she decided to run for the county council, along with her friend and mentor, the late Betty Ann Krahnke.

They were the first Republicans elected to the council in 20 years. The Democrats promptly redistricted, so Krahnke and Dacek would have to run against each other in 1994. But Dacek outsmarted the Dems. She just moved — from Potomac to Darnestown, and the feisty Republican duo won again.

"I'm one of a vanishing breed I guess, a moderate Republican," Dacek says. She considers herself a fiscal conservative who battled Democrats on budget issues, but she is also a slow-growth opponent of the intercounty connector. Duncan, an advocate of the connector, backed Dacek's opponent in 2002, and after 12 years on the council, she was unseated.

Desiring to stay involved in public life, she was interested in the state board of education, but her GOP contacts urged Gov. Robert Ehrlich to appoint her to the board of elections in 2003.

She refers to fellow board members Samuel Statland, a Democrat, and Robert Clark Jr., a Republican, as "the boys." The trio gets on well. They meet monthly and are charged with approving the \$3.5 million budget, hiring election judges, lobbying the legislature and

advising the professional staff. They pull virtual all-nighters together, and the boys tease Dacek her about her slow-growth zeal. "We know how to jerk Nancy's chain and we do, by saying we need another [Potomac] river crossing," Clark says.

"This is all political rhetoric," Statland says of the attacks on Dacek and Jurgensen. "Would you fire the chairman of a board of elections when she's in the middle of counting the vote and you have 60 days until the general election?"

Jurgensen, 53, works down the hall from the room where later tomorrow, after the council hearing showdown, counting will begin on those nearly 12,000 provisional ballots, those low-tech totems of election breakdown. She is the elections board's top paid staffer, earning \$113,000 a year. She came to Montgomery in 2001 from Omaha, where she was an elections director and, before that, a state legislative aide specializing in election matters. She aspired to elections work out of idealism, believing the right to change the government by the ballot "is one of the greatest aspects of living in the United States."

But this time, the pride of America turned into the disgrace of Montgomery, the state's largest jurisdiction, with 505,000 registered voters. Some candidates will remain in mathematical limbo until the provisional ballots are counted.

During a break in the absentee ballot tally Thursday, Dacek calls for everyone's attention. She has a statement to read. Looking down her nose through her glasses, she announces the board's unanimous vote of confidence in Jurgensen. "Hear, hear!" cry clapping elections employees.

Then it's back to counting. There is no similar, ritual declaration of confidence in Dacek, but it doesn't look as though she needs it. There is a sense of perspective in those pale blue eyes. Her ninth grandchild — a boy — is due soon, around Election Day.

Dacek does not expect to become another poster queen for derailed democracy.

She is convinced that in the end the identity of the Montgomery elections president during the bungled primary of 2006 will be little noted nor long remembered. A smooth general election in November may help lay the memory to rest.

No one pays attention to who's responsible for elections that don't go wrong.

BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

South dealer
 Both sides vulnerable

NORTH		EAST	
♠ K J 5 2	♥ Q 4	♠ A 10 8 7 3	♥ A 7 3
♥ K J 5 2	♦ 8 4	♦ K 10 9 6	♣ K 9 8 3
♦ 8 4	♣ A 5 4	SOUTH	
		♠ A 10 8 7 3	
		♥ A 7 3	
		♦ A Q	
		♣ 7 6 2	

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 ♠	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All Pass

Opening lead: ♣ Q

Cy the Cynic is a typical cynic: He thinks other people are no better than he is. That attitude gets him into trouble when he plays in duplicate events at my club.

At duplicate, your scores are compared with those of other pairs who play identical deals. The competition is spirited. Players try for every possible edge in the bidding and play.

Cy was today's declarer at four spades. North's bid of 2NT was a gadget many tournament fans use: North showed good spade support and opening values. South's rebid of three spades left room for slam investigation, but North signed off at game.

When West led the queen of clubs, Cy took the ace and went after his contract by drawing trumps, cashing the K-A of hearts and leading a third heart toward dummy's jack. West took the queen, not without a grateful sigh, and the defense cashed two clubs. Cy later threw his queen of diamonds on dummy's jack of hearts — not necessary since the diamond finesse would have won — and made four for 620 points.

When the results were posted, Cy and his partner got a bottom score. Every other South made six. "Ridiculous," Cy growled. "I gave myself the best chance for 10 tricks."

Since four spades was a normal contract every North-South would reach, Cy's safety play was wrong. At duplicate, he must try for two overtricks by cashing the ace of hearts and finessing with the jack. When the hearts break 3-3, Cy discards a club on the fourth heart and wins the diamond finesse.