

The Style Invitational

THE WASHINGTON POST

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 739: Lies, All Lies



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Dan Quayle was second runner-up in the 1959 Greater Indianapolis Spelling Bee.

So many candidates, so little scandal! Instead of chasing the trail of White House-hired burglars, political reporters have been reduced this year to spinning out stop-the-presses controversy stories over John Edwards's haircut and Hillary Clinton's millimeter of cleavage. Beyond the campaign, to be sure, the Invitational has profited handsomely from one person's tragic men's room misadventure (see numerous examples below).

But it's time for some new revelations, suggests Emerging Loser Chuck Koebel of Houston. And if these politicians won't furnish them, we'll have to make them up ourselves. **This week: Give us some humorous fictional revelation about a current or past political figure.**

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a presumably somewhat old "Politics Is a Drag" refrigerator magnet set featuring Bill Clinton's head on a youthful undressed body (nuhnuhno! We mean there's this undressed male body with Bill Clinton's head Photoshopped onto it. You people!) along with a variety of dresses, high heels, handbags and frilly hats.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called that 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, Nov. 19. Put "Week 739" 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 Dec. 8. 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 Kevin Dopart. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Russell Beland.

REPORT FROM WEEK 735

In which we invited you to enter any Invitational contest from Week 681 to Week 731, but were restricted to only one entry per contest. Not surprisingly, it was mostly the maniacally obsessive Invitationalists who methodically perused these old contests and sent in entries for dozens of them.

4 Week 684: Spell a word backward and define the result: S.T. Eliot: A poet known for his scatological humor (e.g., "Let us go now, you and I, but not standing right next to each other") (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

3 Week 724: Brief verses summing up books, plays or movies: "The Canterbury Tales": When that April with rain makes England mossy, 'Tis good to make a road trip with one's posse. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

2 The winner of the horny-goat-weed tonic and tea: Week 688: Six-word stories: "Goodbye, John. I believe the dog." (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

A LONG LIST OF PRIORS

684: Spell a word backward and define the result: Frowd: A man with elevator shoes. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

686: Things to be thankful for: Be thankful people don't have tails, or you'd have to wag every time the boss walked in. (Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.)

688: Six-word stories: "Hear tell you're the fastest gunsli —" (John Shea, Lansdowne, Pa.)

I've never had a fourth date. (Tom Witte)

691: New clues for a filled-in crossword puzzle we supplied:

AUD: _____ doody, the pile of scrap left after a crash on the Autobahn. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

698: Job interview questions: From the applicant: "So what would you say if I told you my 'green card' has a picture of President Franklin in it?" (Russell Beland)

From the applicant: "So on my time card, would March Madness count as sick leave or religious observance?" (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

700: Presidential candidates' slogans: Jeb Bush: Mom Says I Get to Go Next (Mike Cisneros, Centerville)

702: Unreal facts: The spoon and the fork were both adaptations of the previously invented spork. (Russell Beland)

In addition to fear, dogs can also smell unresolved control issues with your mother. (Brendan Beary)

A camel can actually pass through the eye of a needle when cut into 2.4 billion individual pieces. (Doug Pinkham, Oakton)

704: Celebrity license plates:

Larry Craig: TRAPRJON (Don Kirkpatrick, Waynesboro, Pa.)

Larry Craig: FOOTLOOS (Edmund Conti, Raleigh, N.C.)

705: Analogies: Jim's prospects were bleak, like a Miss America contestant whose talent was gangsta rap. (Brendan Beary)

708: "Breed" two Triple Crown-eligible horses and name their offspring: Giant Sequoia x Deliberately = Tree to Get Ready (Brendan Beary)

Seeking Affairs + Take It All Back = Senator Larry (Laurel Gainer, Great Falls)

Saint Paul + Seeking Affairs = EpistleInHisPocket (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

712: "Breed" two of the horses named in Week 708:

Crepe de Meth + Popular Mechanics = Plumber's Crack (D.L. Williams, Bethesda)

Wyatt AARP + Orion's Belt = Old Man Quiver (Roy Ashley, Washington)

714: Company "mergers": Halliburton merges with Blackwater to form Allied Casualty. (Ira Allen, Bethesda)

719: International sports team names: The Barlow (Canada) Underachievers (Russell Beland)

723: Cocktails: The Kerrigan: Nehi and club soda on ice. (Eric Murphy, Ann Arbor, Mich.)

724: Brief verses summing up books, plays or movies: The Crying Game: Kill a soldier, woo his girl — it really isn't cricket. He bows the maiden over, and then finds her middle wicket (Andy Bassett, Picton, New Zealand)

727: The effects of moving The Style Invitational to Saturdays:

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

Week 707: Write something using only words used in "The Cat in the Hat": I sat on the pot. I gave that man a bump — kind of little kicks — and then bent to show my hand. He said I looked for bad tricks. In my fear I said yes so that they would tell nothing and my mother would not know. Now I stand in shame. But I did not want to hook up! I do not do you-know-what! Man, I wish I had gone at home. — L. Craig, Washington (Anne Paris, Arlington)

What had been a friendly rivalry between Bob Staake and Richard Thompson degenerates into a downward spiral of betrayal, revenge and death. (Perry Beider, Silver Spring)

729: Sentences in The Post translated into "plain English": Original: "Isn't it better to tell you what I really believe than to change my positions to fit the prevailing winds?" Plain English: In the latest poll, 53 percent listed "sincerity" as "very important." (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

730: Ways to waste time: Walking the length of the Great Wall of China while singing "99 Billion Bottles of Beer on the Wall." (Drew Bennett, traveling in Beijing)

Primaries. — H.R. Clinton (Kevin Dopart)

731: Ridiculous food preparation methods: Freeze slices of pimiento with liquid nitrogen, load them into bullet casings, and use them to shoot the pits out of green olives. (Eric Murphy)

See more Honorable Mentions at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

Next Week: So, Should I Drive Like Your Brother? or Car and Drive!

710: A photo featuring household gadgets:

"Good night, Mr. and Mrs., Mrs., Mrs. and Mrs. Warren Jeffs." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)



The Wall Still Stands For the Grief Of a Nation

WALL, From C1

and singing about war. You think of Iraq as he sings a haunting refrain: "Looks like they'll be building another wall / Looks like they'll be building another wall."

And on another day, people are reading the names in the rain. Participants in a ceremony will spend 65 hours calling out all the names in the chronological order of their deaths.

Memorials provide a way to tell the story of war to people who were there and people who were not. Explain a past. Trigger memories. Remind people of what happened, what was lost: Youth. National honor. Life.

The Wall is a place where people leave parts of themselves behind.

"I have always believed that each visitor helps complete that circle that I intended with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial," Maya Lin, designer of the Wall, says in a statement about the memorial's 25th anniversary. "Each one of us, when we visit, puts ourselves into the time and the memories held within its walls. And, in a way, we complete the piece."

Two men in leather biker pants and jean vests walk west and stop. They are John "Re-run" Wincz, 59, and Tony Vetuschi, 61.

"Can you see? That's not it. One hundred twenty-seven, you said, 12 E?"

"I'm counting the dots."

"I don't see it."

"There! You've got it! Let me get a picture. Wait — there is too much sunshine."

"Let me get closer. But if I get down, you are gonna have to help me get back up."

They got up early in the morning, hopped on their motorcycles in New Jersey and rode down I-95 in 36-degree weather. Came down to get a picture of an MIA flag in front of the Wall to send to a family back in Jersey, "for a brother we never knew," Vetuschi says.

The gray reflections of Wincz and Vetuschi are mirrored in the Wall. But when they look into the Wall, they see their younger selves. See war's loss.

"Not only is it loss of life," says Wincz. "I was 19 when I got to Nam. I felt like I was 50 when I left. One of the losses of war was my youth."

Vetuschi got to Vietnam when he was 19. He stayed for two tours. "When I was 21, they were calling me an old man. On my second tour, I remember New Year's Eve. There were a whole bunch of new guys. I looked at them and thought: What the hell are they celebrating for? Do they know what they are in for?"



PHOTOS BY MANNIE GARCIA — BLOOMBERG NEWS



Mementos left at the Wall are collected and stored off-site by the National Park Service.

Vetuschi says when he got back to the States, what was happening in the country was crushing. Protesters were yelling against the war, people wouldn't even hire Vietnam vets. There was shame, few parades. There was war's trauma. Messed-up heads. The struggle to explain what they had to do in war. Vetuschi had been to hell.

A park ranger makes a pencil rubbing of the name Vetuschi came to collect. "Take that home and coat it with shellac," the ranger says. "Or if you have an old lady, borrow some hair spray."

Vetuschi laughs. He married but has long since been divorced. "One of us was too hard

to live with," he says.

"I got to get an old lady now?" he says to the ranger. "Can't I just go out and buy some hair spray?"

At either end, the Wall begins at a point mere inches high, where the onlooker stands taller than it. As one walks toward the center, the person seems to steadily decline. The Wall grows higher and higher, taking on a greatness, until it stands higher than any man. And the onlooker stands diminished by "any man's death."

Andrew Smith, a tourist, is standing close to the Wall, measuring the losses of war. "A lot of people dead," Smith says. "A generation lost, basically. They can't come home. Obviously, they are not setting up families. War leaves mental illness. Troops come back shell-shocked. Violence in the home. Depression. Angry with the state, if the war is not one they feel they know what it was about. Some of them joined the Army to get education or to get out of poverty. They go to war and see friends die. They feel it's a waste of life, if they can't see the purpose of the war."

He stands back. "The Wall is pretty daunting, really. It's stark. A very simple memorial, but very powerful. Each life in it. It spells out how futile war is."

Earl "Butch" Hovermill, 60, served in Vietnam from 1969 to 1970. He was a rifleman and a mortar man. His first station was at the DMZ — the demilitarized zone. He was 21 when he went. He is now a park ranger, explaining the Wall to tourists.

Hovermill has been working the Wall since not long after the day it was unveiled. In more than 20 years, he has seen much.

"This is not a wailing wall," he says. "There is a lot of healing that goes on here. Coming down here is part of the healing process for the veterans."

A tourist interrupts Hovermill and asks him the difference between the crosses and the diamonds etched between the names. "You see, when we get the remains back, they change the cross to a diamond," Hovermill says. The diamond signifies death. His fingers press against the Wall. And stop at a name with a cross. "You see, he is still missing. In the event he were to come home alive, they would put a circle around the cross, the medical symbol for life. That has not happened yet. I'm sure if that were ever to happen you would hear about it. It would be news."

A man interrupts Hovermill: "My brother is up there. January 6th. He was one of the early ones."

"He's got a lot of good company up there," Hovermill says.

Good company.

Some veterans can't do it, can't make it all the way down to the Wall. Their emotion holds them back. "Some will stand at the tree line," Hovermill says. "It's as close as they will get because they lost so many friends. We call them tree-line veterans."

You see them in the middle of the night. Standing about 100 yards from the Wall, back in the trees, feet pressed against the grass, unable to move closer. Too many friends inside the Wall.

PHOTOS See a photo gallery of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and watch video of this week's reading of names from the Wall at washingtonpost.com/style.

Music

Alas, 'See Ya' Came Early For Sia Fans

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, dedicated 25 years ago, is engraved with more than 58,000 names. "Not only is it loss of life," a visitor says of the Wall's meaning. "I was 19 when I got to Nam. I felt like I was 50 when I left. One of the losses of war was my youth."

Between songs at her 9:30 club concert Thursday night, Sia acted like a kindergartner. The Australian down-tempo artist, known for her work with the band Zero 7, danced around in piles of stuffed animals in the silly, joyous way most people are too inhibited to do outside of their apartments.

But when the blonde with the pageboy haircut stepped up to the microphone, she transformed into an intense vocalist who made only one mistake all night: exiting the stage after only 60 minutes (not her fault — the club had to get ready for its late show, Superdrag).

Sia (last name: Furler) had a breakthrough single as a solo artist with 2005's "Breathe Me," which was featured in the series finale of HBO's "Six Feet Under." In performance, "Breathe Me's" mournful cello contrasted with tinkling piano notes in a haunting arrangement. Sia sounded vulnerable, letting notes catch in her throat and singing such lyrics as "I am small / I'm needy / Warm me up."

But that ethereal persona stepped aside for the soulful sound of her new album, "Some People Have Real Problems," available stateside in January. She previewed about a half-dozen of the new cuts, all full of dig-deep vocals similar to Joss Stone's. The best was a song titled "Lentil," which began as a waltz and blossomed into a chorus with the wailing refrain, "I never meant to let you down."

What Sia sometimes lacked in precision with sustained notes, she made up for with commitment and sincerity. But when the song ended, Sia went back to child's play and skipped around the stage.

— Rachel Beckman



BY KASIA WERTAK

Sia: A childlike lilt at the 9:30 club.