

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 749: Opus 266, No. 3



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Here's a contest we've run twice before: to take a word in common usage and create a new definition for it. This contest, dating to 1998, has proved so popular that many of the printed entries from Week 266 and Week 564 are still in wide circulation today. For instance, the Sunday comic "Opus" by Berkeley Breathed (syndicated, totally coincidentally, by The Washington Post Writers Group) devoted both the Dec. 9 and Dec. 16 strips to such definitions as "abdicate: give up all hope for a flat stomach" — every one of which was a Style Invitational entry from Week 266. (That one was by Tom Witte of Montgomery Village, in one of the more than 900 blots of ink he's dribbled over the years.) Breathed (rhymes more or less with "death head") did write "Style Invitational" on a newspaper in one panel of the Dec. 9 strip (but not the next week's), though he didn't give a hint what that phrase might mean.

In any case, seems it's time to give people like Berkeley Breathed some new humor to use in their creative work. This week: **Take any common word or two-word term beginning with any letter from A through H and give it a new definition.** You can see the results from Weeks 266 and 564 at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational.

Winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a truly distinctive, um, artwork called "The Many Moods of Farrah," a sort of shadow box (suitable for wall hanging) into which are crammed 12 heads — in full winged coiffure — of genuine 1977 Barbie-type Farrah Fawcett-Majors dolls. While their skin tones differ slightly, their expressions display the identical degree of vacuity. To add to the creepiness of it all, the clear lid of the box has some sort of slash in it. Donated by Samart Kantaweat of Arlington.

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, Jan. 28. Put "Week 749" 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 Feb. 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 revised title for next week's contest and this week's Honorable Mentions name are both by Russ Taylor.

REPORT FROM WEEK 745

In which we asked for suggestions on how to make life go faster, and how to make it go slower:

4 To make life go faster: Set your TiVo to skip all the shows, too. (Ben Aronin, Washington)

3 To make life go slower: Contract out airport security to the DMV. **To make life go faster:** Contract out airport security to Blackwater. (Mike Pool, Vienna)

2 Winner of the promotional pop-up punching bag: **To make life go faster:** Skip showering. **To make life go slower:** Get stuck on the Metro next to someone who is making life go faster. (Dan Ramish, Vienna)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

To make life go slower: Take a time machine back to when your parents or grandparents were children, and then walk with them to school and home again, in the snow, uphill both ways and without shoes, and be grateful for it. (Christopher Lamora, Arlington)

TEMPUS FUGITIVES: HONORABLE MENTIONS

TO MAKE LIFE GO FASTER: Make telephones work only if you push the buttons as fast as the system does when you use auto-dial. (Bill Spencer, Baltimore)

In the Olympic biathlon, switch from cross-country to downhill skiing, and let the athletes shoot at each other. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Include property settlement and visitation rights in the marriage vows. (Ellen Raphaeli, Falls Church)

Before you take your pickup to the car wash, load your clothes, dishes, dog and kids in the back, each with the appropriate soap applied. Proceed. (Roger Dalrymple, Gettysburg, Pa.)

Admit that you are powerless, believe in a power greater than yourself, and leave the other 10 steps to alcoholics who have more time on their hands than you do. (David Kleinbard, Jersey City)

Create a series of Books on CD read by professional auctioneers. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Fertilize grass so it's more exciting to watch. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

Binary Sudoku. (Robert W. Sprague, Alexandria)

Reply to all e-mails, regardless of context and merit, with "OK." (John O'Byrne, on vacation in Vienna, Austria)

TO MAKE LIFE GO SLOWER: Add a baseball halftime show. (Russ Taylor, Vienna)

Play charades in the dark. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

Once a proud nation, you could add an unrelated clause to every sentence you speak. (Jeff Brechlin)

Marry a gay person of the opposite sex. (Jeff Brechlin)

Require Olympic contestants to travel to the Games from their home countries using only the skills they will use in the event they are entering. (Rick Haynes, Potomac; Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Play 20 Questions with Alberto Gonzales. (J. Larry Schott, Gainesville, Fla.)

The best way to make time seem to go really slow is to start a fast. (Russell Bland, Springfield)

Do your grocery shopping at the Giant next to Leisure World. (Peter Ostrander, Rockville)

To make sex last longer: The woman would close her eyes, and the man would have to guess the EXACT COLOR of her eyes — as she defines it — before proceeding. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

If everybody would just do 30 mph in the left lane, the way I do . . . (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

Require all area drivers to be on the roads each weekday from 6 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 7 p.m. For ironic humor, call this program "Rush Hour." (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

FASTER/SLOWER PAIRS: **To make life go faster:** replace Metro escalators with water slides.

To make life go slower: replace Metro UP escalators with water slides. (Steve Langer, Chevy Chase)

To make life go faster: When having trouble falling asleep, count rabbits.

To make life go slower: Count sheep, but use Roman numerals. (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

To make life go slower: See how far you can go with the needle on E.

To make life go even slower: Ride with someone who likes to see how far he can go with the needle on E. (Larry Yungk)

Next Week: We Err the World, or Atlas Mugged



PHOTO BY LARRY YUNGK

Running the gamut from A to A: "The Many Moods of Farrah," this week's second-place prize.

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