

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 771:
Groaner's Manuals



For the Department of Transportation:
"Our Way Is the Highway"
"The Straight Poop: How to Write Style Invitational Entries"

Primordial Loser Elden Carnahan, having committed Style Invitational ink for more than 15 years, has thought it wise of late to make himself more useful to his church. Elden's current project is to prepare a sort of operations manual for Laurel Presbyterian, and so for advice he immediately turned to his fellow Losers on the Losernet e-mail group, at least for the title of the guide. The best, from Andrew Hoenig of Rockville: "Calvin and Jobs."

Elden suggests we broaden the search. **This week: Come up with a humorous name for a guide or manual for, or a book about, a particular enterprise or organization,** as in the examples above.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives one of the finest prizes we have ever awarded: an authentic (according to the package) Zulu mcedo sent directly from South Africa, courtesy of Loser Robin Diallo of Dakar, Senegal. A mcedo is a, well, it's a round little protective cap of woven grass that looks like a large acorn with a hole at one end. It's worn below the belt.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. 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, July 7. Put "Week 771" 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 26. 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 results is by John O'Byrne. This week's Honorable Mentions name is sort of by Roy Ashley.

REPORT FROM WEEK 767

in we asked you to find a sentence appearing in that week's Post or on [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com) and supply a question that it might (in a very odd world) answer:

4 **Sentence in The Post:** You have to do some digging and think outside the box in the Washington area this year.

Question: What was Whiskers the Cat's advice on coping with the local kitty litter shortage? (Roy Ashley, Washington)

3 The time had come, France conceded.
What is the complete text of the chapter on World War I in "A History of Europe, Abridged" (later repeated as the chapter on World War II)? (Christopher Lamora, Arlington)

WHAT IN NO WAY CONFER HONOR?

"She touched a lot of people," said Theresa Gropelli, 43.
Why did Theresa's ancient ancestor adopt such an unusual surname? (Russ Taylor, Vienna)

Cautionary reports about their mercury levels limit us both to ordering them no more than weekly.
AI, is it true that you and Tipper are so concerned about global warming that you've taken to snacking on thermometers? (Mike Ostapiej, Tracy, Calif., a First Offender)

In actuality, it was like 40 below zero.
Senator Feinstein characterized the Clinton-Obama meeting in her living room as "warm" — was that really true? (Christopher Lamora)

The firefighter won, and the general apologized.
What happened during the argument that nearly doomed the reunion of the Village People? (Russell Beland)

"I didn't think I would see it happen in my lifetime."
What did Sen. Obama say when Sen. Clinton finally conceded? (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

That's the hurdle.
Why is this finish-line ribbon so thick? (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

"Come on," Nurse Frosty urged, shaking her head as my husband rose to go with me.
What's today's installment of The Post's new Porn of the Day column? (George Vary, Bethesda)

It's been a year and a half.
What have the last 11 weeks been like for your dog? (Russell Beland)

The ripple effects are already being felt.
What's happening at 5 p.m. on Skid Row? (David Komornik, Danville, Va.)

It's all about the kids, making sure they are engaged.

What do families do for fun at the Yearning for Zion Ranch? (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

Since 1994, state and federal authorities have poured these millions into rejuvenating the famous bivalves and the centuries-old industry that relies on them.

Does Nevada really spend tax dollars on Botox for prostitutes? (Mike Fransella, Arlington)

The situation . . . should make same-sex couples think twice about walking down the isle.
Is it true that conservative activists on Catalina Island have threatened to push honeymooning gay couples into the ocean? (Christopher Lamora)

"That's what you call a shellacking!"
At the Alexandre de Paris hair salon, what do they say about Cindy McCain's coiffure? (Christopher Lamora)

In the District, no major heat-related problems were reported, but officials opened four cooling centers.
What was the D.C. government's response to the last blizzard? (Russell Beland)

"I feel like a 1,000-pound bear has been lifted off my chest."
What did the dazed hiker in Glacier National Park say when rescuers pried a 1,000-pound bear off his chest? (Mae Scanlan)

Alternate spellings include "qat."
What might you find in the Porn Spammer's Glossary? (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

"I'll be glad when it's back on."
What was Tom Arnold's reaction when he finally saw his first wife without her dress? (Russell Beland)

They actually use the inside of their eyes to push food down into their throats.
What separates champion competitive eaters from, say, your in-laws? (Kevin Dopart)

About 51,000 couples, half the gay couples in California, are projected to wed over the next three years.

2 *the winner of the silly multicolor beanie with spinner:*

"When the choice is between destroying or being destroyed, it's better to destroy."
For the sake of scansion, what line did Paul Simon later replace with "I'd rather be a hammer than a nail"? (Russell Beland, Springfield)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

I don't know if I should say something, let it roll off, or what.
"Isn't that the neighbors' baby up on the roof?" (Beverly Sharp, Washington)

Why does the Advocate project a three-year drop in California gay sex? (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

It was the third such evacuation in four months.
Are you sure you're constipated? (Jay Shuck)

The older we get, the more interested we are in (a) food and (b) sadism.
Which proposed new tagline did AARP reject immediately? (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)

No experience is needed.
What's the one good thing about dying? (Beverly Sharp)

The grapes were crushed.
Who wasn't happy to see Prohibition end? (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)

But Obama supporters said he needed to do more.
Don't you think his admission of youthful drug use will hurt his chances? (Russell Beland)

Consider the fat panda:
Half-cooked dumpling, doughy child of destiny.
Are there any lesser-known Chinese dishes one should try? (Marc Boysworth, Burke, a First Offender)

Eight sports pages, including three full baseball pages, but not one story about the Stanley Cup finals.

Why do I love the Washington Post sports section? (Michael Gaffney, Cabin John, a First Offender)

You're nothing, and we're going to treat you like the nothing you are. And don't ever hope to think that you have a chance of being treated differently.
Can I have a T-shirt? (Steve Offutt, Arlington)

Next Week: The Events Described Herein Are Entirely Fictitious, or It's Unreal



Week 771's runner-up prize, er, garment.

A Family Confronts Its Slave-Trade Roots

TRACES, From C1

"I wanted to make sure the film was being accountable to black people, to issues that black folks have been talking about and thinking about forever," says Brown, who has a master's degree in public policy from the University of California. "I was also very aware that I could be seen as the Uncle Tom or the mammy or the mascot." She dispelled that fear by focusing on a long-held professional goal: "to keep the conversation about race going."

With Browne's polite but insistent on-screen prodding — and the on- and off-screen support of Brown and other experts on race relations — the film follows 10 DeWolf descendants as they discover ugly details of family history, discuss their complicity, attempt to understand the raw suffering of the enslaved Africans and, at the end of the journey, hash out their varying degrees of enlightenment.

Directed by Browne, the documentary — part history lesson, part encounter session — provides a window into the awkward and painful consciousness-raising of a set of privileged white Northerners, as well as a gauge of the distance between black and white America. (As the director points out, the slave trade was outlawed 200 years ago, but where's the official apology from the U.S. government?) And the entire project, it turns out, began with a simple booklet.

Browne received a record of DeWolf history from her grandmother, and more shocking to her than the mention of slave trading was her realization that she had buried her previous knowledge of the family business. In that way, the director says, her behavior mirrors "white Northern amnesia" about slavery.

The first-time filmmaker invited 200 DeWolf descendants to come with her as she filmed a path of discovery from Rhode Island to Ghana to Cuba, sites along the transatlantic slave-trade route used by their family's fleet of ships from 1769 to 1820. (Congress outlawed the slave trade in 1808). Nine of her relatives decided to join the journey.

Why, though, would Browne choose to publicize her family's past?

"If you really believe that all members of society are equal, it makes sense to deal with the grief that arises from our shared history," the director says.

Against the backdrop of an elaborate Independence Day parade, the DeWolf descendants, ranging in age from 32 to 71, gather seaside in Bristol, which bills itself as "the most patriotic town in America."

They learn that that the slave trade was the cornerstone of Northern commercial life for about 200 years, forming the economic engine behind the early nation and the subsequent Industrial Revolution. They also learn that a family nurse



BY AMISHADAI SACKTKEY — PBS VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

DeWolf family members and Ghanaian Beatrice Manu, right, watch a river ceremony where centuries ago, captive Africans were taken for their last baths before leaving their homeland. "Traces of the Trade," about the family's role in the slave trade, airs tomorrow.

ery rhyme, "Adjua and Paulemore," describes two child slaves given by James DeWolf to his wife as a Christmas gift. DeWolf, whose local rum distilleries supported his slave trade, would become one of the richest men in America, as well as a U.S. senator.

The group visits slave forts in Ghana, where their ancestors traded rum for captured Africans, many of whom had been baptized by Christian missionaries, stripped of their birth names and confined to crowded dungeons beneath the living quarters of their captors.

The family's journey coincides with Panafest, a festival attended by many people of African descent in search of their ancestral roots. One of the DeWolfs, Dain Perry, reports that his attempts to draw a black woman into conversation at a slave fort were rebuffed, an experience he calls humbling.

"She said she was hoping not to see any white people there," Perry, 64, says by phone from Boston. He adds that he and his wife, Constance, 60, an African American friend he married after the film's journey, have appeared at more than 60 public discussions on race relations — work he describes as a "ministry." (The couple donate their speaking fees to the film's outreach efforts.)

The film's escalating tension peaks in Cuba, where the DeWolf ancestors transported African slaves to work on plantations that supplied sugar cane to the DeWolf distilleries in Bristol.

During a family discussion about white responsibility, Elly DeWolf Hale expresses concern for Brown, the co-

producer — prompting Brown's unplanned appearance on camera.

"The entire truth is that in this moment you're just a good person to me," says the co-producer, clasping the hands of Hale, who appears close to tears.

"Of course I'm angry at white people," Brown continues calmly on-screen. "I think white people have been cowards and have chosen to give up their integrity and their humanity for so long. Anybody who's alive or who's paying attention should be [angry]. And the fact that white people are not [angry] means that they're not paying attention."

Brown elaborates by phone from California. "My mother talks about one of her cousins, a former slave. He had scars on his ankles and wrists where the shackles used to be. He ate from a trough. To people who tell me, 'Get over it, it's ancient history,' I say, 'I can touch the hand of my mother who touched a slave.'"

Over lunch at a cafe on Manhattan's Upper West Side, Browne, who lives in Boston, criticizes white Northerners who deny having systemic or economic privileges rooted in the slave trade. "My parents or grandparents weren't even here then" is a common refrain, she says.

"Even if you entered this land of opportunity from a boat at Ellis Island, you had access to privileges not available to African Americans," says Browne, who is also descended from Irish immigrants. "Some people think that their ancestors pulled themselves up by their bootstraps, but no, actually there were a lot of government handouts for the white middle class, like the G.I. Bill and home loans."

The personal cost of making the film? "To go through the slave pavilions [in Ghana], that is a very difficult thing, and I learned that I am not as indestructible as I think," says co-producer Brown. "The grief that comes up . . . it would have been nice to have had an African American ally."

"I work around the clock," the director says, "and I can only wonder if there is a piece of white guilt that I have not let go of."

Browne says she has received hate mail — from white people who fear making financial reparations for slavery, a subject the film raises.

"It is a lot to ask black Americans to love white people, to forgive them," adds the director, a "preacher's grandkid" who identifies as Buddhist, Episcopalian and more.

"The accumulated rage passed down through the generations, well, that needs an outlet," she says. "The people who deserved it didn't receive it, so how do we figure out how to honor and welcome those feelings and make up for the mistakes that were made without putting up our own brick walls?"

She sighs. "Maybe when white people, in word and deed, do everything in their power to apologize to black Americans, step two would be for black Americans to decide whether or not they wanted anything to do with that."

The "P.O.V." documentary Traces of the Trade: A Story From the Deep North (90 minutes) airs tomorrow night at 11:30 on Channel 26.

Music

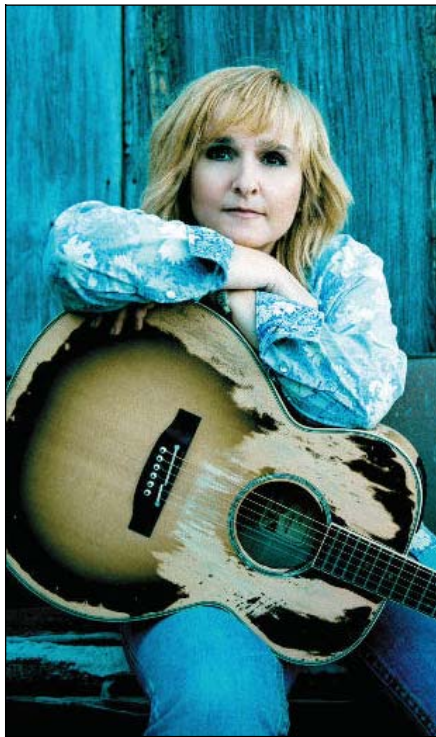
The Stories of Her Life, Sung From the Heart

Melissa Etheridge was in a chatty mood on Wednesday night at DAR Constitution Hall, noting that "My job . . . is to tell you my story." And tell stories she did: The concert was structured as a chronological history of her life, from her move out of Kansas ("California") to her early relationships, which were both passionate ("Don't You Need") and tumultuous ("Bring Me Some Water"), to a more stable, mature love ("Mercy"), to her recent battle with breast cancer ("I Run for Life").

Even though she didn't mention her cancer until midway through the 2½-hour show, her survivor's spirit shone through all night: She found the silver lining in every anecdote, and every unhealthy relationship was described as a good learning experience. Close to the end of the night, she captured her revived outlook on life: "We don't start living / until we almost die" ("The Universe Listened").

Her songs are memorable not because of any especially catchy hooks but because she takes common experiences and breaks them down to their most basic emotions. The overwhelmingly female crowd's loud singalongs echoed back her passion on such hits as "I Want to Come Over" and "Come to My Window."

— Catherine P. Lewis



BY DANNY CLINCH

Melissa Etheridge took the audience on an autobiographical journey.