



CAROLYN HAX

# Destination wedding plan leads to trouble

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

**Dear Carolyn:**  
We've been saving really hard for a family trip to Europe. We plan to go for three weeks in March 2011. We're just now starting to book places.

On Saturday, my husband's sister announced her engagement and Caribbean destination wedding — in April. We don't have enough money for both, and I'm upset because we've been really sacrificing for this vacation. It's our last big trip before our oldest goes to college. It's also his sister's second wedding, but I really don't see the family accepting our choice of family vacation over wedding. Any advice?

Richmond

Ugh. Another item for the why-the-destination-wedding-concept-is-loathsome pile.

There are two answers. There's the one that works in a functional world, where you go to Europe and your in-laws understand completely, knowing that a destination wedding means some people can't come. You just can't dictate the way others use their money and vacation time.

Then there's the answer for a dysfunctional world, where your husband's self-absorbed and punitive sister makes him pay. And if that's the case, the parents will side with her just to avoid crossing her.

If you don't live in a functional world, then you should still go ahead with your trip. It just means bracing for fallout.

One way to prepare is to have a compromise handy; say, your husband goes to the wedding solo, just for the weekend. Expensive still, but less so, and it would show a willingness to wave the flag.

**Dear Carolyn:**  
Why all the hate for destination weddings? You're assuming the sister will be put out if they don't attend. I'm going to a destination wedding because I want to, and the couple have made it clear that if you can't attend for whatever reason, no problemo. Isn't it their wedding and their choice?

Va.

I covered that with my functional-world answer. If the couple are good sports, then fallout is a non-issue. I agree it's the couple's call.

It's when the people hosting the D-Wed aren't so cool about it — and so many aren't — that it starts to reek.

D-Weds also present people with a tough choice. The brother may want to be there; witnessing a loved one's wedding is important to a lot of people. D-Weds set the entry bar really high for guests to attend, meaning some people inevitably miss an event that matters a lot to them — elderly relatives, for example, who aren't up to the travel, or close friends who are broke. Exclusion is built in, and exclusion is almost always a problemo, which points to not choosing exotic weddings lightly.

**Destination weddings:**  
Aaaargh. I'm a travel professional. When destination weddings were first developed, the idea was that people were going to have to travel to get to the wedding, so why not travel to a fun destination? With family members at all four corners of the states, everyone could meet in a neutral setting to celebrate. It was understood that not everyone would be able to attend. These weddings were intimate affairs for small groups.

Anonymous

A reasonable idea, until unreasonable people made it their own. Thanks.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on [www.washingtonpost.com/discussions](http://www.washingtonpost.com/discussions).

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or [tellme@washpost.com](mailto:tellme@washpost.com).



NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

# THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

## REPORT FROM WEEK 883

Our perennial contest in which we presented you with a random list of items and asked how any two of them were alike or different:

**THE WINNER OF THE INKER**

The difference between a dental appointment and a Real Housewife of D.C.: For one you use a phone to make it; the other uses a moan to fake it. (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

**2** winner of the book "Five People Who Died During Sex, and 100 Other Terribly Tasteless Lists": The difference between a dental appointment and the Nobel Prize: Sometimes you have to wait for a dental appointment. — B. Obama, Washington (John Glenn, Tyler, Tex.)

**3** Water balloons vs. the New York Yankees: No matter how many needles you stick in them, or how big you pump them up, the Yankees never actually explode. (Steve Offutt, Arlington)

**4** A dental appointment vs. a Real Housewife of D.C.: For the first, the problem might be TMJ; for the other, it tends to be TMI. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

## WIT'S THE DIFFERENCE: HONORABLE MENTIONS

**Montezuma's revenge and Arlington National Cemetery:** Fixing things will take someone who knows where the bodies are buried. (Ellen Raphaeli, Falls Church)

**A dental appointment: Laughing gas. A Real Housewife of D.C.: Gaffe-ing lass.** (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

**Chicken lo mein and a dental appointment:** With either, you try to avoid it if you're a chicken. (Craig Dykstra)

**Montezuma's revenge and Arlington National Cemetery:** One includes cramps; the other, Gramps. (Kevin Dopart)

**Montezuma's revenge and a Real Housewife of D.C.:** If those were his only two choices, Obama probably still wouldn't welcome the Real Housewife to a state dinner. (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

**The Nobel Prize and a Real Housewife of D.C.:** By the rules, neither can be shared by more than three people. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

**The difference between a dental appointment and the Nobel Prize is that several Englishmen have Nobel Prizes.** (Pam Sweeney, St. Paul, Minn.)

**The difference between school lunches and Montezuma's revenge: About two hours.** (Art Grinath; Craig Dykstra)

**An Elizabethan sonnet and a Real Housewife of D.C.:** With the Real Housewife, nobody's comparing her to a summer's day. To Summer's Eve, maybe. (John Kupiec, Fairfax)

**Arlington National Cemetery and your friend's nose:** They're both tasteless places to picket. (Joshua Kaplowitz, Arlington)

**Your friend's nose is like an Elizabethan sonnet: Both will be finished after 14 lines.** (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

**The New York Yankees and Montezuma's revenge: With either, stained pants are a good indication of a day with lots of runs.** (Kevin Dopart)

**School lunches and Gulf Coast beaches: With the first, the sandwich stinks; with the other, it's the sand which stinks.** (Kevin Dopart; Mae Scanlan)

**School lunches and Arlington National Cemetery: Each contains items labeled with expiration dates.** (Kevin Dopart)

**Venn diagrams are like a Real Housewife of D.C. in that you're hoping that the subjects touch each other so you can learn more about them.** (Jim Reagan, Herndon)

**Next week: Left-Oeuvres**

Online discussion Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at [washingtonpost.com/styleconversational](http://washingtonpost.com/styleconversational).

## MUSIC REVIEW

# Guillon in fine voice at French Embassy recital

Countertenor Damien Guillon sang sweetly in a program of baroque solo cantatas, at the French Embassy on Thursday. Betraying none of the petulant, acidic tone that afflicts some artists of his voice range, Guillon offered rounded high notes, delivered in sensitively sculpted phrases and projected with enough heft to fill the intimate hall. If his lower register occasionally segued from falsetto to a more natural baritone, those moments didn't distract from the lovely fabric of sound or concentrated engagement he brought to the program.

One might have thought that a recital entitled "Italian Cantatas From the Time of Farinelli" belonged at the Italian Embassy. But the focused acoustics of La Maison Francaise paid dividends in bringing out the subtle features, not only of Guillon's voice, but of the harpsichord and cello continuo writing. Secular cantatas dealing with the vicissitudes of love, by Antonio Vivaldi and Nicola Porpora, were rich in wafting lyricism and tricky passages of coloratura — which Guillon invested with emotion and a clean finish — and a sacred cantata by the seldom-heard Leonardo Leo supported its text of self-reflection and repentance with some evocatively agitated instrumental writing.

Kevin Manent-Navratil's elegant harpsichord work was especially striking in two keyboard sonatas by Domenico Scarlatti, offered between a pair of cantatas, where beginnings and ends of musical paragraphs were given well-gauged rhetorical emphasis. Celist Claire Graton dispatched Francesco Geminiani's Sonata No. 2 for Cello with assured technique and an attractively throaty, no-nonsense tone.

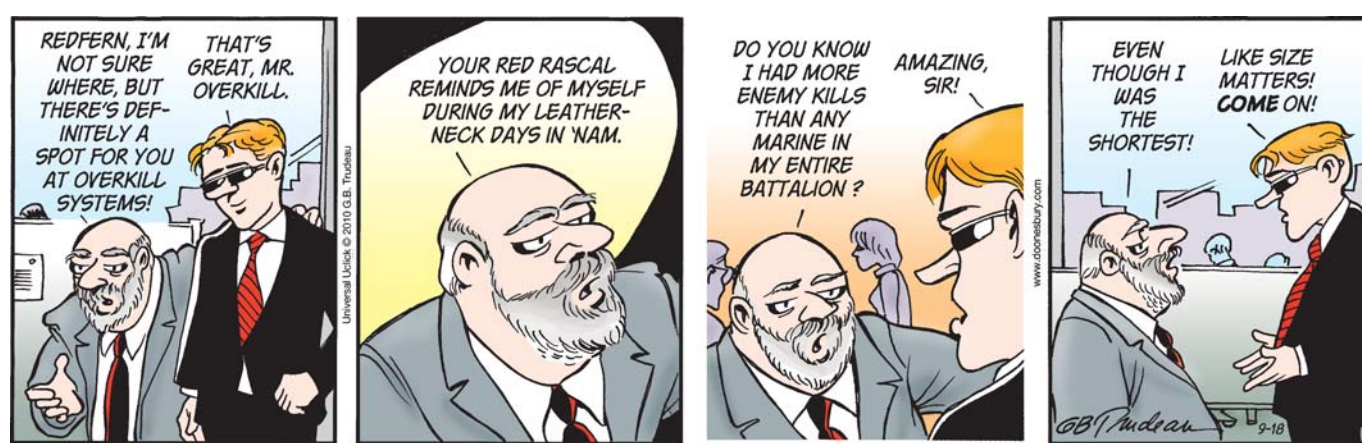
— Joe Banno

## IMOGEN QUEST BY OLIVIA WALCH

Winner of The Post's "America's Next Great Cartoonist" contest.



## DOONESBURY BY GARRY TRUDEAU



## CUL DE SAC BY RICHARD THOMPSON



## THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

# Week 886: Look both ways



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**DOPI IPOD:** An MP3 player with a bong app for enhanced music appreciation.  
**KRAPARK:** Dog "recreation" area.  
**NIPPIN:** Placeholder after a new piercing.

This one, we think, is going to be a challenge: Give us a new term that's a palindrome — i.e., it's spelled the same in both directions — and define it.

as in the examples above by Bob Staake and by 151-time Loser Craig Dykstra, who suggested this contest. While we sometimes bend the rules a bit on contests, it really has to be a palindrome, not a sort-of palindrome. Note that the term may use existing words or be a word you make up, as long as it's clever, funny, etc. What we like.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place wins a very strange marionette of a fluffy pink animal whose head is an elephant and whose body is sort of like a cartoon cat's, with vertical stature and nice long humanoid legs and arms. It also has a bright pink tail that, we found, can end up, when the puppet's strings are jiggled, on the front side of the marionette, making it look less like a tail and more like a, well, non-tail. Donated by Loser Dave Prevar, who wrested it away from a little girl at a craft fair.

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 Loser Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly, tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their First InK). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Sept. 27. Put "Week 886" 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 to be published Oct. 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 results (more entries from previous contests) is by Jeff Contompasis; this week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Tom Witte.

The green pages.

Did you know? The Washington Post is printed using recycled fiber.



NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST