

# The Style Invitational

**THIS WEEK'S CONTEST**

## Week 676: Tour de Fours III



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

**malefactual:** What your husband becomes when it's his turn to change the baby  
**efflamatory:** describing incendiary blogging  
**trafle:** a dessert that's not kosher

Here's another installment in the Style Invitational Summer Neologism Series, sort of a Breeder's Cup for the word nerd. It follows the contests to coin a new word ending in -ion (Week 665) and combine two halves of different words (Week 671), and it precedes the one to change a word by one letter and define the new word (Week Not Sure Yet). **This week: Coin and define a word containing — with no other letters between them, but in any order you like — the letters L, E, A and F.** It can't be a new definition for a well-known existing word. You can add a hyphen for clarity.

This deluge of neologism must be like a big sampler of candies to Barbara Wallraff, whose "Word Fugitives" column in the Atlantic Monthly (as well as her recent book of the same name) focuses on coined words. In fact, Barbara's book contains a number of classic Invitational entries of past years; you know, maybe she's looking for new material.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives a can of genuine alligator meat "simmered in a Spirited Cajun Gravy," plus a bag of not-genuine Moose Droppings (really chocolates) donated by Elden Carnahan of Laurel.

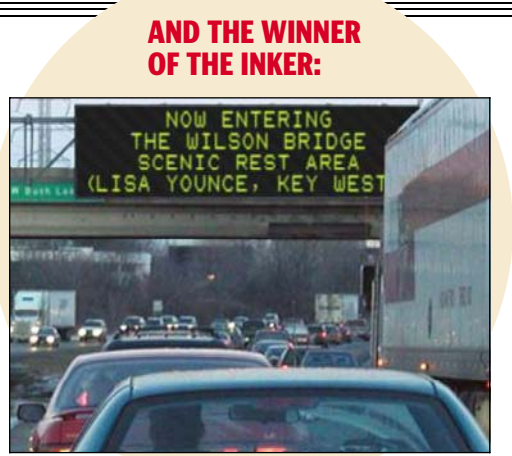
**Other runners-up** win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called this week) get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Aug. 28. Put "Week 676" 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. 17. 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 Tom Witte. The Honorable Mentions name is by Brendan Beary.

**NOTE:** It happened so fast, we couldn't keep up: Last Sunday, Loser Brendan Beary of Great Mills, yet another fine member of our nation's civil service, became the sixth member of the Style Invitational Hall of Fame with his 500th printed entry, joining the Fabulously Pathetic Chuck Smith, Jennifer Hart, Russell Beland, Tom Witte and Chris Doyle. Though Brendan dipped his toe into the ink as far back as 1996, he did not have more than four entries printed in any year until... 2003. And then — boom. Twelve in the previous two weeks, for example.

**REPORT FROM WEEK 672**

In which we asked you to compose overhead highway signs, of no more than three lines, 20 characters per line, that we could "write" on the electric sign on Atom. *smasher.org* (the winner is depicted here). Too frequently submitted for individual ink: "This Highway Paved With Good Intentions." "This Sign Intentionally Left Blank" and "If You Lived Under This Bridge, You'd Be Homeless."

- 4** ENTERING NYC INCREASE SPEAKING SPEED (Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)
- 3** REPORT PHONE-USING DRIVERS CALL 202-555-3147 (Mike Connaghan, Alexandria)
- 2** The winner of "The Worst Picture Ever Painted": HONK IF YOU'RE AN IMPATIENT MORON (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)



**AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER:**

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**AND A FEW MORE FOR THE ROAD**

- REST STOP CLOSED CROSS LEGS NEXT 23 MILES** (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)
- SHOW US YOUR HEADLIGHTS!** (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)
- IF YOU LIVED IN YOUR CAR YOU'D BE HOME BY NOW** (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.; Kyle Hendrickson, Frederick)
- HAVE YOU BELTED YOUR KIDS?** (Bird Waring, New York)
- WHATEVER YOU DO DO NOT LOOK IN YOUR REARVIEW MIRROR** (Bruce Alter, Fairfax Station)
- BRAKE! BRAKE! NEVER MIND. MY BAD.** (Kevin Mellema, Falls Church)
- END ROAD WORK I MEAN IT. END IT NOW!** (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)
- DO THIS DON'T DO THAT — CAN'T YOU READ?** (Stephen Litterst, Ithaca, N.Y.; Stephen Dudzik, Olney)
- BRINKS TRUCK SPILL AHEAD EXPECT DELAYS** (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)
- DETOUR AHEAD: HARBOR TUNNEL UNDER WATER** (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)
- NON-TEXT PORTIONS OF THIS MESSAGE HAVE BEEN REMOVED** (Jay Shuck)
- TUNE RADIO TO AM FOR POOR SOUND QUALITY** (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- KEEP KICKING YOUR BROTHER — DAD CANT TURN THE CAR AROUND** (Jonathan L. King, Washington)
- HITTING STATE INSECT. \$200 FINE** (Michael G. Peck, Alexandria)
- PUT DOWN THE PHONE NOW AND NO ONE WILL GET HURT** (Melissa Yorks, Gaithersburg)
- 3 CAR CRASH AHEAD 1 IS FLIPPED BEST VIEW LEFT LANE** (Michael Platt, Germantown)
- WASHINGTON 1 NEW YORK 229 WP: GLAVINE LP: ORTIZ** (Dan Seidman, Watertown, Mass.)
- 2 RDS DIVERGE, SORRY YOU CANNOT TRAVEL BOTH** (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)
- HEY YOU IN THE H2 PULL OVER SO WE ALL CAN SMACK YOU** (Michael Doughten, Arlington)
- ALL LANES EXACT CHANGE TOLL 1.95** (David Kleinbard, Jersey City)
- HONK IF YOU'RE IN AN UNMARKED CAR** (Lisa Younce, Key West, Fla.)
- YOU IN THE PORSCHE! YOU GONNA LET THAT PRIUS PASS YOU?** (Art Grinath)
- I'M JUST DOING THIS TILL I GET A GIG AS A BROADWAY MARQUEE** (Brendan Beary)
- IN CASE OF RAPTURE HELP YOURSELF TO UNATTENDED VEHICLES** (Alexander D. Mitchell IV, Baltimore)
- ORDER 8X10S NOW OF YOUR TRAFFIC VIOLATION PHOTO** (Kevin Dopart)
- ROCK 1 MI FOREIGN POLICY 2 MI HARD PLACE 3 MI** (Russell Beland)
- DAYS SINCE LAST SIGN-FALLING ACCIDENT: 02** (Mike Connaghan)
- EXITING DC KEEP FAR RIGHT NEXT 2500 MI** (Kevin Dopart)
- RIGHT LANE ENDS 500 INCHES** (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)
- « The Worst Picture Ever Painted.**
- SLOW TO 45 MPH WHEN DROPPING OFF PASSENGERS** (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)
- TIME: 4:17 PM — OR IT WAS WHEN WE SET THIS THING** (Jay Shuck)
- ARE WE THERE YET? ARE WE THERE YET? ARE WE THERE YET?** (Joseph Newman, Bethesda)
- YOUR WAIT TIME TILL NEXT ACCIDENT: APPROX 4 MINUTES** (Brian Fox, Charlottesville)
- GAS THIS EXIT — MUST BE PRE-APPROVED FOR FINANCING** (Drew Bennett)
- COULD SOMEONE PLEASE EXPLAIN TODAY'S ZIPPY?** (Jay Shuck)
- CONSTRUCTION AHEAD A BIG DANGER EXPECTED MEN WRITING HAIKU** (Tiffany Getz, Manassas)
- THRU TRAFFIC KEEP LEFT HAH! LIKE U R MOVING! I CRACK MYSELF UP!** (Cheryl Davis, Arlington)
- NO HUMMERS PERMITTED PLEASE BUCKLE UP** (Art Grinath)
- ANY OF YOU KNOW HOW TO TURN OFF THE CAPS LOCK?** (Kim Herman, Centreville)



PHOTO BY JULIA EWAN — THE WASHINGTON POST

Next Week: Mess With Our Heds, or Black and White and Rude All Over

# 'This Other Universe' Is All About Escape

CAMP, From D1

close when I'm just going to go away?). A surfer, a water-lover, she wasn't ready for a life lived inside. She wasn't ready to seriously consider career interests and long-term goals. She turns 21 this summer. Time is about to run out.

For now, though, she has one more summer, one more chance to disappear in what she calls "this other universe."

Kayla's got a construction paper card on her bed in the cabin, pressed upon her by a camper who's already decided that she's "the best!" Tonight she's ordering pizza for her girls. The other morning she laughed hysterically, bumping and grinding, as her girls taught her some hip-hop moves so she wouldn't make a fool of herself at the camp dance. She also let them teach her the words to the "naughty" camp songs.

As a repeat counselor, Kayla could have requested some adorable 8-year-olds with their stuffed bunnies and easy-to-bed ways, or she could have asked to hang out with the senior campers, 16-year-olds who converse almost on her level. Instead, she picked the middle ground, girls still struggling through the agonies of adolescence, uncertain about boys, uncertain about themselves, beautiful and awkward all at the same time. Girls who worship college-age women like Kayla. She gets that. She gets them. She chose them, and they love her for it.

So when she wears her Joe Boxer pajama bottoms to breakfast and surveys her troops, it's easy to see how she strikes her campers as the savvy big sister, one who would never try to lock them out of her room.

She's got one girl with a knee injury, one with a mouth sore, one talking about "Where's the overflow boy table? I know I can't go there, but I can look!" She gives permission to go to the nurse to the first two and rolls her eyes at the other. Then she looks across at the one camper who is absolutely morose, hair draped across her face, spoon doing circles in a bowl of Rice Krispies.

**Boy trouble.** Kayla's seen this before, and she knows exactly what's happening. The boy in question has white-blond hair he likes to tuck under a baseball cap, and at the moment he's sitting two tables over, goofing off with his bunk mates. He's about to go home, and Kayla



PHOTOS BY MARK GORG — THE WASHINGTON POST

**Clockwise from above: Natalie Virden, Phanae Womble, Beth Craven and Jessica Bates race back to camp after hanging out at a bonfire. Female campers react as "hottie" counselor Dave Johnston chats with them. Counselor Loride Silva gives camper Eliza Bloom a noogie after their pillow fight. Camp counselors from the around the world teach and play at Camp Letts.**



knows that her mopey camper is already missing him.

Outside the dining hall, the girl siddles up to Kayla, rests her head on her shoulder. Kayla's arm goes around her. "Boys aren't worth it," Kayla says. The girl nods, sighs.

Mark Kido is tired. This whole round-the-clock job thing is more than he bargained for. He's sharing a cabin with rowdy 11- and 12-year-old boys who never seem to stop. The "your mama" jokes are getting old.

"They tell you all these things in staff training about how it'll be good after the first three days," he says. It's Day 11 and he's still not buying it.

Late morning, and he's on dockmaster duty, watching over the sailboats, the canoes, the water skiers.

And he's daydreaming. About Natasha. Natasha Moses, his girlfriend of three years — they met in Hawaii, where they lived at the time. Natasha, with her beautiful hair and smooth dark skin and that air of grace about her. Natasha, who hatched the plan that brought the two of them to Camp Letts for the summer after she went to a job fair at Liberty University, which they both attend.

The session ends tomorrow, which means he has to survive just one more day. Then they both get two days of freedom in Alexandria, where Natasha's family lives.

Tromp, tromp, tromp. The tryout campers — the 6- and 7-year-olds who come for a two-night mini-camp — have landed in Mark's world. They squeeze onto a long wooden

See CAMP, D3, Col. 1

