



Entertainment

Semper Fib: All-bogus military trivia from Style Invitational Week 1132



Someone told you that the Civil War WASN'T about whether chili should have beans? You mustn't be from Texas. Larry McClemons's runner-up fictoid. (Bob Staake for The Washington Post)



By Pat Myers Editor and judge of The Style Invitational August 6, 2015
[Email the author](#)

(No new contest this week. Click [here](#) to skip down for the details, such as they are.)

In Week 1132, in yet another attempt to bring the full, unvarnished untruth to our readers, we asked for bogus trivia about the military, past or present, domestic or foreign. A disturbing number of entrants, however, decided instead to supply their favorite old saws from their Army days, or send in sexist, xenophobic “humor” so lame and archaic that it made “Beetle Bailey” seem like “Saturday Morning Breakfast Cereal.” A sizable fraction of the rest made a peepee joke about Waterloo. But as always, we’re able to muster a scrappy battalion of inkworthy entries.

4th place:





Despite accusations of less noble aims, the Civil War was actually caused by conflicts over regionalism, states' rights and whether chili should include beans. — Board of Education, State of Texas (Larry McClemons, Annandale, Va.)




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Most Read Entertainment

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3rd place:

Two decorated pairs of brothers — Thomas and Ernest Hall, who fought in the Mexican-American War, and Billy and Eddy Shore, who saw battle in the First Barbary War — are memorialized in the [Marines' Hymn](#). (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)



If you've already won an Inkin' Memorial but were too late for the Inker, you might want to opt for one of these regifted guys. You still have to win the contest, though. (Pat Myers/The Washington Post)

2nd place and

the [Pee & Poo stuffed toys](#):

Union Gen. George McClellan was unable to mount an assault on Richmond because of a huge tactical error: He attempted to move south from Washington through Fairfax

County on a Friday evening. (Nan Reiner, Alexandria, Va.)

And the winner of the Inkin' Memorial

The Congressional Medal of Honor — awarded for gallantry, bravery and willingness to risk personal well-being for the sake of the greater good — was originally intended to be given to members of Congress. They figured out the problem pretty quick, though. (Danielle Nowlin, Fairfax Station, Va.)

DODgy stories: honorable mentions

Before Greek soldiers fought at the Battle of Marathon in 490 B.C., they had to qualify at the Battle of 10K. (Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)

Freshmen at the U.S. Naval Academy are called plebes — short for plebeians — to reflect their lower status. However, the practice of calling seniors patricias — short for patricians — never caught on. (Amy Harris, Charlottesville, Va.)

have way more stuff named after me than you have.” In 1915 Grant’s descendants paid off the bet with Confederate dollars. (Kel Nagel, Salisbury, Md.)

Not a single rose died in the War of the Roses. (Richard Lempert, Arlington, Va.)





Following the order of [Gen. Israel Putnam](#), Revolutionary soldiers did not fire until British troops were well up Bunker Hill because so many of the Redcoats had contracted conjunctivitis. (Mike Gips, Bethesda, Md.)

When the War Department contracted with a food supplier to supply packaged meals for combat troops, the company used existing stock but changed the packaging from “Ken-L Ration” to “K-ration.” (Steve Price, New York)

The word “khaki” comes from the Urdu language, in which it means “always wrinkled.” (Larry McClemons)

The pejorative term “surrender monkey” comes from the French *sur rentrer manqué* (“lack of return”) and refers to soldiers who mysteriously vanish in battle. (Chris Doyle)





cartoons

- 2 First glimpse of Kennedy Center’s much delayed expansion unveiled 
- 3 Oprah Winfrey picks prison memoir for her book club 
- 4 Review The best science fiction and fantasy to read this month 
- 5 Review Vivid ‘Tempest’ at WSC Avant Bard 



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The Swiss Army fights with knives. (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

In response to reports of "Potemkin villages" in Stalinist Russia, the U.S. Army developed a plywood-seeking missile. (Larry McClemons)

The architect of the [Air Force Memorial](#) said the design came to him while he was pulling McDonald's french fries out of the bag. (Drew Bennett)

To the dismay of the more conservative members of Congress, the USS Constitution has been repaired 27 times. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Generals on both sides of the Civil War were remarkably sensitive to the need for sanitary facilities for their soldiers, as well as the need for well-cleared areas to park the many wagons that accompanied their battalions. This explains why so many Civil War battles were fought at national parks. (John Baniszewski, Columbia, Md., a First Offender)

The Defense Intelligence Agency softball team is the Rheas. (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn, Va.)

Following the disastrous "Charge of the Light Brigade" in the Crimean War, Lord Cardigan was removed from command of the disarmed brigade, and replaced by Lord Sweatervest. (Larry McClemons)

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USMA stands for "use scores of mystifying acronyms." (Jeff Hazle, Woodbridge, Va.)

During the Siege of Jerusalem in 1099, the defenders ran out of boiling oil to repel the Crusaders, so they switched to boiling vinegar. The tactic failed because vinegar boils at the temperature of a medium-hot shower. (Mike Gips)

The uniform ribbons worn on the chest are called "fruit salad" because each one provides 10 calories of emergency nourishment if held on the tongue for 60 seconds. (Ellen Ryan, Rockville, Md.)

The original World War II plans for the War Department's headquarters called for a rectangular building, but congressional hawks insisted that it have an extra side. (Mark Raffman, Reston, Va.)

The "Pentagon" actually has an unseen sixth side: That's where stealth soldiers are designed. (Al Fisher, Rockville, Md., a First Offender)

During an inspection, Naval Reserve Lt. Cmdr. Lyndon Johnson was

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photographed picking up a sailor by the ears. (Kevin Dopart)

William Jefferson Blythe Sr., the grandfather of Bill Clinton, survived a deadly mustard gas attack in World War I because he managed not to inhale. (Frank Mann, Washington)

Military aircraft [toilet seats from the 1980s](#) are now available on eBay for \$6.40 each. (Kevin Dopart)

By 2000 B.C., the Sumerians had mostly given up using copper for weapons — not because it did not hold an edge, but because thieves kept selling the spears to scrap dealers. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis, Md.)

And Last: The creation of the rank of “rear admiral (lower half)” was originally an entry by a [deputy assistant secretary of the Navy](#) in a humor contest. It was accidentally forwarded to the secretary of defense — and approved. (Jeff Contompasis)

But not the horse they Rodin on

Before the Inkin’ Memorial, there was the Inker — which was half a pair of “Thinker” bookends with a paper bag (labeled “Winning Loser”) to cover its shamed head. Inkers were given to first-place winners from 2004 to 2012. (Before 2004, during the Czarist era, the winner got the gag prize that now goes to the second-place finisher.) Last week, Bigshot Loser Christopher Lamora, who’s getting ready to move, regifted his six Inkers (pictured above and [here](#)) back to the Empress; future winners may opt for one of these until they’re gone.

[At ease ...](#)

It’s August. Give that little brain of yours a rest. Or ...

Four weeks from now, the Empress will be spending a few days surveying her overseas dominions (and marrying off the Little Prince). And so for that week, she’ll be putting together an Invitational that can be finished in advance — probably featuring sundry Great Stuff That Was Robbed of Ink Some Time Ago. To keep the other weeks’ contests on schedule, there’s no new contest this week: You and your fellow Losers get a week off to dust off your cranial synapses, write cranky letters to the editor, think of limericks featuring words beginning with ga-, whatever it is you people do.

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The headline for this week’s results is by Tom Witte; the honorable-mentions subhead is by Jeff Contompasis. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at [on.fb.me/invdev](#). “Like” the Style

Invitational Ink of the Day on Facebook at bit.ly/inkofday.

The Style Conversational: The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.

Still running — deadline Monday night, Aug. 10: our contest to cite situations that need a time limit. See bit.ly/invite1135.

0 Comments



Pat Myers is editor and judge of The Style Invitational, The Washington Post's page for clever, edgy humor and wordplay. In the role since December 2003, she has posted and judged more than 700 contests. She also writes the weekly Style Conversational column and runs the Style Invitational Devotees page on Facebook. Follow @patmyersTWP

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