

The Style Invitational

Week VIII: What's in a Name?

William Clinton: I, William Clinton, claim I am a cool man now. I am not a clown. I want no woman.

Cal Ripken Jr.: I peek: Cal Ripken Jr. in a nice necklace, a pink parka, a pink cape, in a prance. I like Cal. I panic.



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Bob Staake: Bob Staake eats kebab, takes a sake, eats a basket o' oats, takes a sake, takes a toot, eats steak, takes a sake, eats toast, takes a sake, eats beets, takes a sake, tosses.

This Week's contest is based on an idea stolen from McSweeney's quarterly, a fine and strange magazine. For some reason, McSweeney's ran an entire fictionalized short story about David Gergen using only the letters in "David Gergen." That's the contest. Write something about any famous person that uses only the letters in his or her name, as in the examples above. It can be as long or as short as you want. It does not have to use *all* the letters, and it can use a letter more than once. In choosing winners, we will look unfavorably on pidgin English, poor grammar or Me-Tarzan-You-Jane construction. Also, we will consider degree of difficulty: "William Jefferson Clinton" is a lot easier than "Janet Reno." First-prize winner gets a terrific prize: a copy of "What Will Become of Us?" by Julian Gregori, the most comically apocalyptic of all the Y2K books. Published in 1998, it predicted that the millennium bug would be "one of the most traumatic upheavals of civilization ever," flatly stating that the Clinton administration would have to declare martial law and "confiscate food." It advised, among other things, that you move to the country, convert all your money to gold and silver coins, and hide it from the inevitable marauding gangs of desperate, starving savages. This book was donated to The Style Invitational by Jonathan Paul of Garrett Park, who wins some canned food.

First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-Shirt. The Uncle's Pick wins the yet-to-be-designed but soon-to-be-coveted "The Uncle Loves Me" T-shirt. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com, or by U.S. mail to The Style Invitational, Week VIII, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. Deadline is Monday, March 27. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and a daytime or evening telephone number. E-mail entries must include the week number in the message field. Contests will be judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Editors reserve the right to edit entries for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes.

REPORT FROM WEEK IV,

in which you were asked to design an icon to replace the 1-to-4-star system for rating things, and then use that icon in rating some quality by degrees of intensity. But first, an announcement: The Style Invitational now offers, online only at www.washingtonpost.com, an official Loser Index, a weighted tally (updated weekly) of the degree to which various individuals have no lives outside this pathetic contest. Back to icons:

◆ Fifth Runner-Up:
Icon: Fig leaf.
Measures: Nudity in a motion picture.
Zero fig leaves: "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs."
Four fig leaves: "Snow White and the Los Angeles Lakers."
 (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

◆ Fourth Runner-Up:
Icon: Split human hair.
Measures: Degrees of minuteness of difference between two persons' politics.
One hair split in half: George W. Bush and John McCain.
One hair split in thirds: Bill Bradley and Al Gore.
One hair split in quarters: Pat Buchanan and Joerg Haider.
 (Ron Stanley, Arlington)

◆ Third Runner-Up:
Icon: Casper the Friendly Ghost.
Measures: Likelihood of dying soon.
Four Caspers: Needing your death sentence commuted by the governor of Texas.
Seventy-Nine Caspers: Needing your death sentence commuted by the governor of Texas when he is running for president.
 (Russell Beland, Springfield)

◆ Second Runner-Up:
Icon: Different species of horned animals.
Measures: The amount of testosterone in a person.
One doe: Mary Tyler Moore in the role of Mary Richards.
One billy goat: Your average NFL linebacker.
One fully grown pronghorn antelope: The guy out with your teenage daughter *right now*.
 (Niels Hoven, Houston)

◆ First Runner-Up:
Icon: Bill Bradley's face.
Measures: The degree to which one is ignored by the media.
One Bill Bradley: That organization that advocates pedophilia.
Four Bill Bradleys: That tall guy who ran against Al Gore.
 (Joseph Romm, Washington)

◆ And the winner of the Hair Shirt:
Icon: Mushroom cloud.
Measures: Severity of TV winter weather predictions in Washington.
One mushroom cloud: Snow is expected to fall. Schools are closed.
Four mushroom clouds: Snow is expected to actually hit the ground. Schools are closed.
 (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

Icon: Piece of silver.
Measures: Degree of betrayal.
One piece of silver: George Stephanopoulos.
Thirty pieces of silver: Judas Iscariot.
Thirty-one pieces of silver: Linda Tripp.
 (Joseph Romm, Washington)

Icon: Burglar's mask.
Measures: Degree of one's tendency to plagiarize music.
Three masks: You are Michael Bolton.
Four masks: You steal from Michael Bolton.
 (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Icon: Accent aigu.
Measures: The difficulty involved in typesetting one's name.
Zero accents aigu: Your name is e.e. cummings
Four accents aigus: Your name is ♀
 (Bill Strider, Gaithersburg)

Icon: "Dead End" sign.
Measures: How bad a job is.
One Dead End sign: You're sending out your résumé.
Four Dead End signs: Everyone else in the office is sending out your résumé.
 (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

Icon: Razor blade.
Measures: Seriousness of one's cocaine habit.
One blade: You spend a small, but noticeable, percentage of your income on cocaine.
Four blades: You spend a small, but noticeable, percentage of Bill Gates's income on cocaine.
 (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Icon: Herve Villechaize's face.
Measures: Degree of stupidity for quitting a hit TV show.
One Villechaize: George Clooney leaving "ER."
Four Villechaizes: Shelley Long leaving "Cheers."
 (Joseph Romm, Washington)

Icon: Heart pierced by arrow.
Measures: Love for another person.
One heart: Willing to share one's life.
Four hearts: Willing to share one's toothbrush.
 (John Held, Fairfax)

Icon: "Censored" stamp.
Measures: Creativity of an obscenity.
One stamp: %*#\$\$!
Four stamps: *%#@%*\$%#*&?!
 (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Icon: Lemming.
Measures: Willingness to do something merely because lots of other people are doing it.
One lemming: Heading for the tollbooth line because there must be something wrong with the open booth because no one else is there.
Four lemmings: Listening to Britney Spears.
 (Doug Grekin, Washington)

Icon: Confederate flag atop statehouse.
Measures: Degree of Southern redneck sentiment.
One flag: Believes flying the flag of the losing side of a 135-year-old war waged to perpetuate human slavery is an appropriate way to celebrate one's "heritage."
Four flags: Uses the term "War of Northern Aggression." Believes Northerners entering Southern states should have to pass through customs and obtain visas. Has \$250,000 in Confederate money in attic "just in case."
 (John Holder, Rock Hill, S.C.)

Icon: Yield sign.
Measures: Women's tendency to yield.
One sign: Hester Prynne.
Four signs: Monica Lewinsky.
 (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Icon: Potty.
Measures: Likelihood of an entry being printed in The Style Invitational.
Zero potties: A witty, trilingual pun pointing out the delicious irony of the American war for independence being won through the assistance of the autocratic French monarchy.
Four potties: A comparison of the names of foreign heads of state to the sound of various animals breaking wind underwater.
 (Meredith Austin, Arlington)

◆ The Uncle's Pick:
Icon: Colostomy bag.
Measures: Tasteless.
Zero Bags: The Uncle's Pick.
Four Bags: This entry.
 (Malcolm Visser, Clifton)
(The Uncle explains: There's something about this one that bothers me, but I can't quite put my finger on it. Still, I was flattered by this gentleman's vote of confidence in my sense of propriety.)

Next Week: **Who Wants a Toilet?**