

The Style Invitational

Week XLIV: Week MDMCLXIV

GILLETTE ANNOUNCES NEW 17-BLADE RAZOR
George Z. Bush to Run for President
17th Nobel Prize Awarded for Mideast Peace Efforts



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This week's contest was suggested by Marvin Elster of Gaithersburg. Marvin proposes that you provide a headline (and, if necessary, the first line of the text) for any article that will appear in the Washington Post on this day in the year 2050. First-prize winner gets a genuine Hershey's Kiss® hat, which transforms one's head into a giant Hershey's Kiss® and provides valuable aluminum-foil protection from brain-control X-ray beams. This is worth \$20.

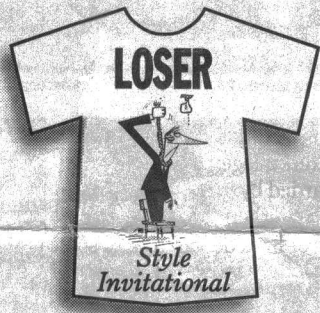
First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. The Uncle's Pick wins the shockingly ugly "The Uncle Loves Me" T-shirt. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com, or by U.S. mail to The Style Invitational, Week XLIV, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. Deadline is Monday, Dec. 4. 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 subject 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 XL,

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in which we asked you to design the back of the new Style Invitational T-shirt. But first, some unfinished business. Elsewhere on this page we reprint the results of a recent contest where we prohibited frequent winners from entering under their own names. It was an experiment to determine if the same names keep appearing as winners because 1) these are the funniest people out there, or 2) because we play favorites. We had no idea which of the 1,300 entries were real and which were ringers until pseudonymous authors contacted us afterward with proof. Check out the results, as corrected. Also, we would like to acknowledge receipt of some entries by Jan Verrey of Alexandria, a Style Invitational veteran who was in the hospital, and too weak to write. Still, in a desperate effort to win the T-shirt that has so far been denied her, Jan whispered her entries to another person, who typed them up and e-mailed them in. They were quite good, but, gosh darn it, not quite good enough. Try again, Jan!



And now, the T-shirts. The winner goes on back of the shirt. The front of the shirt looks like this:

◆ **Fourth Runner-Up: Like a Rock. Only Dumber.** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

◆ **Third Runner-Up: (John Kammer, Herndon)**



◆ **Second Runner-Up: (Russ Beland, Springfield)**

◆ **First Runner-Up: Don't Blame Me. I Voted for Buchanan and Gore.** (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

◆ **And the winner of the history of Firestone: (Mike Elliot, Oberlin, Ohio)**



◆ **Honorable Mentions: Fine, I'm a Loser. Now get off my back.** (Barbara Sullivan, Potomac)
I Stink, Therefore I Lose. (Meg Sullivan, Potomac)
Who Let the Doggerel Out? (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)
Visualize Whirled Feces. (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

SHULER 5 (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

Style Invitational Staf (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)
If You Can't Read This, Spank a Teacher. (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)
Stinking Outside the Box. (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)
Out-of-Potty Experience. (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)
Dumb-as-a-Post.com. (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)
Commit Random Acts of Senselessness. (Chris Doyle, Rockville)
Purveyors of Fine Gallows Humor Since 1993. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)
If you see this shirt being worn in an unsafe manner, fax 202-334-4312. (Sandra Hull, Arlington)
Made in Equatorial Gineau. (Philip Avigan, Silver Spring)

I'm Stupid and This Other Person Is With Me. (Joe Kobylski, Vienna)
The Uncle Doesn't Love Me. (Katharine M. Butterfield, Potomac)
Mall Security (Amanda Temple, Alexandria)
Notice: Do Not Resuscitate. (Russell Beland, Springfield)
I Hang With Losers. (Russell Beland, Springfield)
I Ink I Can, I Ink I Can. (Phyllis Kepner, Columbia)
Don't Quit . . . Fail! (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)
Never say "Uncle." (Robin D. Grove, Pasadena, Md.)
◆ **The Uncle's Pick: Note: Do Not Attempt Feat on Front Without Proper Supervision.** (Russ Beland, Springfield)
The Uncle Explains: Fun is fun, but safety's number one. I am also sending poor Ms. Verrey a shirt.

Next Week: Express Yourself

Richard's Poor Almanac will return next week.

NOTED WITH

Regrets

Not a Host of a Chance

By JOHN F. KELLY
 Washington Post Staff Writer

As the week wore on it became more and more apparent that hardly anyone was coming to our party.
 "We have a wedding to go to."
 "We have tickets for the Kennedy Center."
 "We just can't get a babysitter."



Cyril Calry

BY CYRIL CALRY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

One person was still in the melancholy aftermath of a breakup and was, he said, in no mood to party. Another was attending a quiet gathering to celebrate a friend's completion of her chemotherapy. (Talk about your lame excuses.)

Then there were the people we never heard from one way or the other. They had, I thought, sensed something, the way the vague unease of some travelers causes them to miss their doomed flights.

My wife and I were starting to sweat. We have a party every fall. We've had some great ones: live bands in the basement, spurting kegs on the deck, happy people throwing their arms around each other in drunken camaraderie. This one, though, seemed blighted.

The regrets kept coming right up to the Saturday of the party. Every time the phone rang it was another friend bailing out. I'd smile grimly at my wife after hanging up. "Tom and Lisa can't come."

Sixty people invited, a sixth of them confirmed, not even enough names to fill half the notepad kept near the telephone. Worse, not enough to spark the spontaneous party combustion every gathering needs. Our home is small, but it still takes more than a dozen people to achieve critical party mass. You need at least 20 bodies to force the proximal bonhomie that can blossom when you're stuck next to a stranger and are forced to start talking. Our few guests could scatter to far corners of the house and, like hermits on an escarpment, never interact with another living soul.

A thought crossed my mind: Could we cancel? Is it the grown-up equivalent of canceling a play date? "I'm sorry, little Jimmy has strep and Tommy shouldn't come over."
 "I'm sorry, our party seems to be teetering on the brink of a mortifying lassitude. We're calling the whole thing off."
 But it was too late. By now the thing had a horrible

momentum of its own. We trudged through our pre-party chores like men condemned. (Dead hosts walking.) I cleaned the bathroom. I vacuumed. I made the bed so people could toss their coats onto it. (You know how at some parties the master bedroom looks like the winter coat department at Syms, and as guests leave there's a comical dance as they try to make sure they've retrieved the proper garment? This was not to be that kind of party.)

I thanked God that this year we hadn't invested in the luminarias that usually lined the walk to the front door. It would have seemed like a cheery invitation into the gates of Bad Party Hell.

For this is what I foresaw: People arriving and filing into a living room as empty as a deserted blimp hangar. In the dining room, a table grotesquely laid with an embarrassing surfeit of Price Club food: heaping mounds of pot-stickers drying out over guttering cans of Sterno, mixing bowls full of Parmesan bagel chips and garlic pita crisps, a wagon-wheel-size pumpkin cheesecake that I somehow knew I'd be eating for breakfast all week. I thought of the invitation, which now seemed to mock me: "8 till?" We'd be lucky if this thing ran to 9:30.

I began to feel something else: a weird and convoluted sort of Stockholm syndrome. Who were these handful of losers who were actually

coming? Couldn't they find anything better to do? I had to be there. They could have done nearly anything else.

And what would I tell these people when it dawned on them (as it eventually must) that something was horribly amiss? Should I lie: "I don't know where everyone is, heh-heh. A tractor-trailer must've jackknifed on the Beltway."

Or should I level with them: "We invited a lot more people, honest. For some reason we had lots of cancellations, heh-heh."

But if the awful calculus is revealed—60 people invited, 15 or so in attendance—unsettling questions may be raised in the minds of the guests. What did those other people, those no-shows, know? Have you, by attending, made some tragic mistake?

I decided to keep mum. I allowed a calmness to come over me, as if I'd been treading deep water for hours and had decided to just let myself slip under. There was nothing I could do now—nothing anyone could do.

Was it, in the end, as bad as I thought it would be? Hard to say. I think our guests were too polite to say anything, though I did notice heads swiveling around, trying in vain to see if there were clots of people in other rooms. One thing is for sure: I'm going to every single pathetic holiday party I'm invited to this season. No one should have to eat pumpkin cheesecake for breakfast four days in a row.

REPORT FROM WEEK XXXVIII

In which we asked you to write questions for any of 12 "Jeopardy!" style answers we supplied. This is the contest where—to test our objectivity—we prohibited frequent winners from entering under their own names, or in any way indicating their entries were pseudonymous. Several regulars seemed to think we were kidding. We weren't. The guy who entered as Rufus T. Firefly? Tossed, without reading. Dr. Lance Boyle? Wedded up and flushed. Some regulars simply couldn't figure out how to get around the fact that their e-mail addresses gave them away, and begged for absolution. Sorry. And then there was the entry arriving by snail mail from a "Vincent Von Elmo" of Kokomo, Ind., bearing a Rockville postmark, in a handwriting identical to that of a regular contributor who also mails in his entries, and also writes in blue ball pen, and also staples his pages together. Tossed. We got 1,300 entries, total. We have no idea how many of the ones published below came from the 30 or so names you see all the time. We will credit any in an upcoming week, after authorship claims have been stated and verified.

◆ **Fourth Runner-Up: Answer: O.J. Salinger. Question: Who wrote "Catch Her in the Lie?"** (Joan D'Urso, Medford, N.Y.)
 ◆ **Third Runner-Up: Answer: The Helium Bomb. Question: What was developed by J. Robert Oppenheimer?** (Aaron Hoffmann, Washington)

◆ **Second Runner-Up: Answer: RU-412. Question: What new drug can you take the morning after just to remind you of the guy's name and phone number?** (Susan Iato, Washington; Andy Buonviri, Lovettsville)

◆ **First Runner-Up: Answer: Thwock! Fwoooooooeooooo. Question: What is the sound of one hand clapping, followed by someone yelling "Thwock! Fwoooooooeooooo?"** (Elizabeth Mack, Washington)

◆ **And the winner of the John Tesh CDs: Answer: Patriotism and Underpants but not Vladimir Putin. Question: What might it be useful to have if you are involved in a potentially fatal submarine mishap?** (Fred Hayes, Boonshoro)

◆ **Honorable Mentions: Because It Discriminates Against the Deaf. Question: What adorable droid has the voice of James Earl Jones?** (Alan Gerson, McLean)
 ◆ **Why has super-liberal Ralph Nader refused to propose a "round fiscal policy?"** (John Garcia, Annandale)
 ◆ **What is an unlikely reason that someone would sue Gaillardet University?** (Sean W. Finnegan, Springfield)
 ◆ **What would be a shrewd excuse to give for not pledging your support to National Public Radio?** (Maja Kesch, New Carrollton)

◆ **O.J. Salinger. Question: Who is devoting the rest of his life to finding the real killer of passengers aboard TWA Flight 800?** (Laura Ducharme, Gaithersburg; John Garcia, Annandale)
 ◆ **What should I have named my back-stabbing daughter?** (L.D. Salinger, Cornish, N.H.; Tonda Sherk, Earlyville)
 ◆ **What is a book writer's (Melanie Stevens, Manassas)**
 ◆ **Stop! In the Name of Rep. Constance A. Morella, R-Md. Question: What campaign song was slightly less of a mistake than Sen. Rob's "Chuck, Chuck, Be-A-Sack . . . ?"** (Annika Tallis, McLean)

◆ **Thwock! Fwoooooooeooooo. Question: How does a toothless amp signal that a hacker has struck out?** (Susan Iato, Washington)
 ◆ **What does "right" mean with a blow-up doll sound like?** (B.T. Wells, Fairfax)
 ◆ **How does Barbara Walters pitch her "60 Minutes" news shockless game?** (Annika Tallis, McLean)

◆ **Who is the sound of Mark McGuire joining Major League Baseball?** (Sean Finnegan, Columbus, Miss.)
 ◆ **Who is the president of China?** (George W. Bush, Austin, Tex.; Stephanie Cangin, Rockville)
 ◆ **What does it sound like when you run a race a propprooooooo (Max Boggiano, Alexandria)**

◆ **What adorable droid has the voice of James Earl Jones?** (Alan Gerson, McLean)
 ◆ **What pill should you take after someone sexs?** (Mark Shultz, Vienna)
 ◆ **What pill for men makes them willing to ask for directions when they get lost?** (Elizabeth Mack, Washington)

◆ **Very Soft Money. Question: What did the moon gangster get when he tried to launder money using Downy Extra?** (Joan D'Urso, Medford, N.Y.; Alan Gerson, McLean)
 ◆ **What is another word for legal tender?** (Mark Shultz, Vienna)

◆ **The Helium Bomb. Question: What invention was based on the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle?** (Annika Tallis, McLean)
 ◆ **Other word for its release, what would critics call the documentary "Flyover—The Story of the Junkyard Billionaire?"** (Spencer Thornton, Falls Church)
 ◆ **What is it called when you jokingly ask an scientist, "Who was that bag of inert gas I saw you with last night?"** (Alan Gerson, McLean)
 ◆ **What are three things that are dead as a door-nail?** (Nick Dierrman, Berkeley)

◆ **The Uncle's Pick: Euro Saarinen, Yuri Gagarin and the Euro. Question: Who or what are we owed from architect, the Russian astronaut who was first to orbit the Earth, and the new European currency? This may not be funny, but it does have some salty appeal.** (Meghan Meredith-Sands, Bedford)

◆ **The Uncle Explains: Not all entries need to be funny, if they are educational.**

(Joan D'Urso) is Jean Sorenson.

(Elizabeth Mack and John Garcia) are Joseph Romm

(Susan Iato) is David Genser

(Fred Hayes) is Meg Sullivan

(Tonda Sherk) is James Pierce

(Melanie Stevens) is Sandra Hull.

(Annika Tallis) is Chris Doyle

(Aaron Hoffman) is Lloyd Duvall

(Alan Gerson) is Martin Bredeck

(Mark Shultz) is Jonathan Paul.

(Spencer Thornton) is Jennifer Hart

(B.T. Wells, Mary Boggiano & Meghan Meredith-Sands) are Chuck Smith

Next Week: Trial Balloons