



BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This Week's Contest was proposed by several people, but credit goes to Cindi Rae Caron of Lenoir, N.C., because she was the first to provide good examples. Cindi, who wins her choice of a live rat or a \$10 gift certificate to Shoney's, suggests writing appropriate epitaphs for the not-yet-dead. Winner gets four coffee mugs featuring the three-dimensional likenesses of Popeye, Olive Oyl, Wimpy and Bluto, a value of \$50. Runners-up, as always, get the coveted Style Invitational losers' T-shirts. Honorable Mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper stickers. Winners will be selected on the basis of humor and originality. Mail your entries to the Style Invitational, Week 59, The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, fax them to 202-334-4312 or submit them via Internet at this address: losers@access.digex.net. Entries must be received on or before Monday, April 25. Please include your address and phone number. Winners will be announced in three weeks. No purchase necessary. Employees of The Washington Post and their immediate families are not eligible for prizes.

REPORT FROM WEEK 56

in which we asked you to come up with excuses to miss a day of work.

But first, a hearty Style Invitational apology goes out this week to Benjie Watts, a columnist for the News-Topic newspaper of Lenoir, N.C. Benjie, who writes under the pseudonym Tar Heel, read our question-and-answer column two weeks ago and took offense at the part where we asked, "Where is Lenoir, N.C.?" (Answer: "Who cares?") Benjie felt this was disrespectful to his town and urged his readers to call The Post to complain about our "highfalutin" ways. We wish to say we are very, very dreadfully sorry. We are certain that the only reason we have received just one call is that most folks in Lenoir haven't had time to hitch Ol' Bessie up to the buckboard and drive all the way to Mount Pilot to use the pay phone at the feed store.

Back to playing hooky:

◆ Fourth Runner-Up: "If it's all the same to you I won't be coming in to work. The voices told me to clean all the guns today." (Peyton Coyner, Afton, Va.)

◆ Third Runner-Up: "When I got up this morning, I took two Ex-Lax in addition to my Prozac. I can't get off the john, but I feel good about it." (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

◆ Second Runner-Up: "I set half the clocks in my house ahead an hour and the other half back an hour Saturday and spent 18 days in some kind of space-time continuum loop, reliving Sunday (right up until the explosion). I was able to exit the loop only by reversing the polarity of the power source on exactly e*log(pi) clocks in the house while simultaneously rapping my dog on the snout with a rolled-up Times. Accordingly, I will be in late, or early." (Sydd Souza and Jim Eagles, Upper Marlboro)

◆ First Runner-Up: "My stigmata's acting up." (Cindy Aldrich, Silver Spring)

◆ And the winner of the fabulous talking parrot and Kodak Funsaver:

"I can't come to work today because I'll be stalking my previous boss, who fired me for not showing up for work. OK?" (E.J. Wassmer, Olney)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

"I have a rare case of 48-hour projectile leprosy, but I know we have that deadline to meet. . . ." (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

"I am stuck in the blood pressure machine down at Giant." (Mike Thring, Leesburg)

"Yes, I seem to have contracted some attention-deficit disorder and, hey, how 'bout them Skins, huh? So I won't be able to, yes, could I help you? No, no, I'll be sticking with Sprint, but thank you for calling." (Robin D. Grove, Washington)

"Constipation has made me a walking time bomb." (Chris Rooney, Blacksburg)

"I just found out I was switched at birth. Legally I shouldn't come to work knowing my employee records may now contain false information. I should get it cleared up by tomorrow." (Donna Kerns, Winchester)

"The psychiatrist said it was an excellent session. He even gave me this jaw restraint so I won't bite things when I am startled." (Chuck Hawkins, Oakton)

"The dog ate my car keys. We're going to hitchhike to the vet." (Ray Smith, Germantown)

"I prefer to remain an enigma." (David L. Jaquith, Free Union, Va.)

"My mother-in-law has come back as one of the Undead and we must track her to her coffin to drive a stake through her heart and give her eternal peace. One day should do it." (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

"I can't come to work today because the EPA has determined that my house is completely surrounded by wetlands, and I have to arrange for helicopter transportation." (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

"I am converting my calendar watch from Julian to Gregorian." (David L. Jaquith, Free Union, Va.)

"I am extremely sensitive to a rise in the interest rates." (David I. Gilbert, Miami, Fla.)

"My wife makes more than I do, so I have to stay at home with our sick son." (Julie Brinkman, Gaithersburg)

"I refuse to travel to my job in the District until there is a commuter tax. I insist on paying my fair share." (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

"I'm feeling a little disgruntled this morning. You want I should come in?" (Paul Kondis, Alexandria)

◆ And Last:

"I can't come in because the deadline is Monday and so far I only have seven different fun things to do with a barrel of snot." (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

Next Week: **Calling the Toon.**

ANN LANDERS

DEAR ANN LANDERS:

Can you believe this? The following story appeared in a totally reputable newspaper, the San Jose Mercury News. Otherwise I would not have thought it was true.

It seems that a homeless couple, Darryl Washington and Maria Ramos, were injured when a train plowed into them as they were having sex on a mattress on the tracks of a New York City subway station. Fortunately, the couple's injuries were not severe, thanks to a quick-acting motorman.

Nonetheless, according to the newspaper account, the couple has filed a lawsuit against the transit authority for "carelessness and negligence." The couple's attorney made the following statement: "Homeless people are allowed to have sex too."

Ann, I agree that homeless people should be allowed to have sex, but on public train tracks?—Mr. X

Dear Mr. X:

Seldom am I at a loss for words, but this one has left me speechless.

DEAR ANN LANDERS:

I am 80 and have been a widow for 19 years. A widower and I have had a comfortable relationship for about eight years. "Henry's" wife and I were best friends. We attended college together in the '30s. Henry lives in his own home, and so do I. We went on a vacation together, and it was great fun until he hit me. This man is 84 years old.

Recently, Henry and I talked about making things easier for both of us by moving into one house, hiring someone to clean and shop for us, and sharing expenses. Our families and friends think it would be wonderful. It sounds like the perfect solution, except for one thing.

Henry has hit me on my backside very hard on four separate occasions. One time, when we were walking toward our car after attending a meeting with friends, he lifted me off the ground with one slap. When a friend expressed shock, he laughed and said, "That's the way I keep her in line."

I was hurt and told him, "If you ever hit me again, I'll hit you back, but it won't be in the same place." We didn't speak for more than a month.

I recently returned from a trip and had no way of getting home from the airport. I called Henry, and he seemed eager to drive me. As we were unloading the car, he hit me (same place) so hard that tears came to my eyes. I had a bruise back there for more than a week. Never once has he apologized or shown any sign of remorse.

Last night, Henry called for the first time since that episode and asked me to move in with him. I told him no. He didn't even ask why.

I think this man has a real problem. Should I discuss it with his family or my daughters? They all think he is a love.—Carson City, Nev.

Dear Carson:

Henry has strudel in his noodle. Stay away from him.

There is no need to discuss his aberrant behavior with family or friends. (One friend has already witnessed it.)

I'm sure there are taxis in Carson City, and they are cheaper than an ambulance. I hope you will take this advice seriously.

Gem of the Day: Nothing much happens in a small town, but what you hear certainly makes up for it.

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Bridge

By Alfred Sheinwold and Frank Stewart

South knew whom to blame for today's result. "It was all my partner's fault," he asserted, "for not holding what he was supposed to."

When East opened one diamond, South applied a pet theory. Since South had four diamonds himself, North was unlikely to have many; hence North might have heart support, and South could afford a light overcall. But West applied a penalty double, and the rout was on.

East took the first diamond and returned a low trump. West won with the nine and continued diamonds: East led the jack of trumps to the ace, took declarer's club switch with the jack, cashed two more diamonds and led a spade.

South won and led another club; but the defense got the A-K of clubs and the K-10 of trumps. It cost South 1,100 points to test his theory of overcalling with length in the opener's suit.

"I'd do it again," South shrugged. "Swap the dummy and the West hand, and we'd have a game." Meanwhile, North scratched his head, wondering how he was to blame for the disaster when all he'd done was pass.

We'd scratch too. In South's place, we'd consider the length in diamonds evidence of a misfit. Though an overcall may strike gold, it may be doubled for a big penalty or help the opponents judge the bidding and play.

Before you overcall, think of what you stand to gain and lose. Don't bid without an objective; and bid your own hand, not your partner's.

North-South vulnerable

NORTH

♠ J 9 4 2

♥ 8 3

♦ 9 5 2

♣ Q 8 7 2

WEST

♠ K Q 8 5

♥ K 10 9 4

♦ 8 6

♣ A 5 4

EAST (D)

♠ 10 7 6 3

♥ J 6

♦ A K Q J

♣ K J 3

SOUTH

♠ A

♥ A Q 7 5 2

♦ 10 7 4 3

♣ 10 9 6

The bidding:

East	South	West	North
1♦	1♥	Dbl	All Pass

Opening lead: ♦ 8

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TOP 20

Every Friday, 'The Music Score' charts Washington's top 20 albums and singles along with their national rankings. In 'Weekend.'

THE WASHINGTON POST