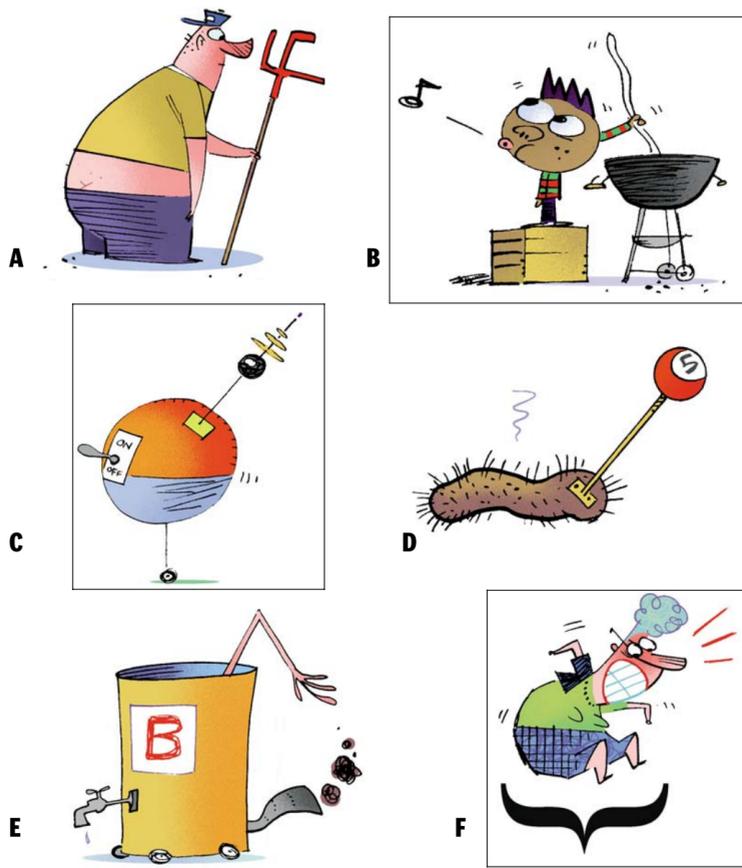


The Style Invitational

Week 553: Picture This



This week's contest: Tell us what's going on in one or more of these cartoons. First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins a lovingly used copy—donated by John O'Byrne of Dublin—of "Ben Wicks' Book of Losers," a Canadian collection of amusingly unfortunate events, like the one in which a man standing frozen in his role as a live mannequin was stabbed in the back by some guy trying to prove to his wife that he was real.

Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312 or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. Snail-mail entries are not accepted. Deadline is Monday, April 19. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or you risk 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 May 9. 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 of Montgomery Village.

Report from Week 549, in which we asked for novel units of measure:

- ◆ Fourth runner-up: **The pico-deliter:** *A measure of sibling rivalry.* (Dudley Thompson, Raleigh, N.C.)
- ◆ Third runner-up: **The serling-rod:** *The distance between light and shadow, between science and superstition, between a man's fears and his knowledge—which turns out to be 16.5 feet in the Twilight Zone.* (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
- ◆ Second runner-up: **The slug:** *A measure of the disgustingness of something stepped on in bare feet. 4 slugs = 1 used Trojan.* (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- ◆ First runner-up, the winner of the Fruit Flavored Beef Jerky from San Francisco's Chinatown: **The dubyabushel:** *The amount of fertilizer needed to manufacture one weapon of mass destruction.* (Judy and Donna Sherman, Burtonsville)
- ◆ And the winner of The Inker: **The godiva:** *Just a hair over nothing.* (Joseph Anthony, Winnipeg, Manitoba)
- ◆ Honorable Mentions:
 - The overpeso:** *The excess amount you spend on vacation purchases because you don't understand the currency.* (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)
 - Knot-furlong:** *The amount of time Gary Hart's candidacy lasted after that trip to Bimini on the Monkey Business.* (Chris Doyle)
 - The armstrong:** *One small step.* (Martin Christopher, Springside, Saskatchewan)
 - The holy mole:** *1. The number of angels that can fit on the head of a pin. 2. The weight of an object created by God that even He cannot lift.* (Chris Doyle)
 - The kant-fathom:** *A philosophical depth just over one's head.* (Dudley Thompson)
 - The doh:** *A measure of the career-endingness of an action, such as sticking a doughnut into a nuclear reactor. 1 kilodoh = 1 steward.* (Niels Hoven, Berkeley, Calif.)
- [After a two-year absence following 64 printed entries, Niels wins the talking toilet for showing his pixels again.]
- The millow:** *Standard hotel bedding unit, equal to one-thousandth of an actual pillow. Motel 6 = 10 millows; the Four Seasons = 2,400 millows.* (Brendan Beary)
- Fleming:** *The amount your nose runs while skating. "Ooh, Mom, Daddy did a 50-fleming right after he put his mittens on!"* (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls)
- Sheer-to-Waste:** *The ratio of clean, unsnagged pantyhose in your drawer to those that are basically unsalvageable but you put them back anyway.* (Michelle Bowen-Ziecheck, Chicago)
- The deci-gore:** *The 1-to-10 scale of Democratic electability. 10,0001 DGs are needed to win an election.* (Russell Beland)
- The googleplex:** *A measure of narcissism, calculated by the number of Internet searches on your own name.* (Chris Doyle)
- The connerly:** *A measure of suave, irresistible masculinity. 1 connerly = 10 moores, 20 brosnans, 100 daltons, 1,000 lazenbys and 1 million romms.* (Joseph Romm, Washington)
- The dynapere:** *A measure of failure in stand-*

- up comedy.* (Dudley Thompson)
- Mass-destruction:** *The amount of weaponry needed to kill one camel.* (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)
- The hemi-holmes:** *The average guy.* (Gordon Labow, Glenelg)
- The ohman:** *The amount of resistance a husband produces when asked to do just one more little thing.* (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)
- The pia:** *A measure of unwarranted fame: 1 pia = 3.5 charos = 9.2 torii.* (Russell Beland)
- The nanasecond:** *The amount of time it takes to scan and mark 15 bingo cards.* (John Conti, Norfolk, Mass.)
- The chas'm:** *The amount of time Prince Charles will have to wait to ascend the throne.* (Brendan O'Byrne, Regina, Saskatchewan)
- The pushel:** *The amount of zucchini your neighbors try to give you after they planted 14 hills.* (Jon Reiser)
- The teradactyl:** *A REALLY long line of poetry, with 10¹² accented beats.* (Dean Alterman, Portland, Ore.)
- The nasa:** *The amount of metal that can be thrown up into space at one time; not to be confused with the wasa, the amount of metal that can be thrown up into a sink at one time.* (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)
- The family joule:** *The minimum sperm energy needed to produce a child.* (Chris Doyle; Dudley Thompson)
- The beltsize:** *A measure of time spent at an all-you-can-eat buffet. 2 hours = 1 beltsize.* (Dan Mannion, Manassas)
- The Metrek:** *Measure of a nerdy passion for something. Wearing Spock ears around the house = 100 metreks.* (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- The Style Week (SW):** *The unit of time around which all life is organized, equal to approximately 9.7 days. Each SW begins on a Saturday morning (when early editions of the Sunday paper become available), continues through the entire next week and ends at midnight on the following Monday. Four SWs form a Revised Style Cycle (RSC), which is divided into five phases: Think, Send, Pray, Read, Pout.* (The Ultimate Metrek, Springfield)

Next Week: **Spring Cleaning, or Debris-Incarnation**

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Going Into a Stall

Where do you people get this stuff? Here is a fine etiquette lesson, spontaneously delivered to one of Miss Manners's hapless readers, who was minding and doing her own business:

"There are six stalls in the ladies' room of the large, professional office building where I work," she writes, "each separated by walls and doors that lock. (I am not familiar with the stall count in the men's room, as I have never been in there.) The other day, after I was finished using the facility, the woman in the next stall confronted me as we were both washing our hands and told me that it is improper etiquette to use the stall directly next to another person in the restroom.

"Furthermore, since she was there first, it was up to me to choose a stall that left at least one stall in between us.

"I was completely thrown off-guard and confused by these comments. I have worked in this environment for five years, and this issue has never been brought to my attention. I told her that I would take her opinion into consideration upon my next visit.

"However, I am curious to know if there is some rule of thumb when choosing a restroom stall. Also, is this etiquette different for other venues—such as restaurants, movie theaters, etc.? And, if I must choose a stall that leaves a 'buffer' zone, how in the world is anyone supposed to take care of their business without wasting time and creating an even longer line in the women's restroom? Any thoughts you may have on this situation are greatly appreciated, as I am very confused."

You're confused? What about Miss Manners, who knows every rule in the books, past and present, and who serves on the Etiquette Council's committee for examining petitions requesting new rules?

Had this one been submitted, it would have been roundly rejected. Doubling the lines to ladies' rooms by putting half the stalls out of business, so to speak, would not serve to raise the civility level in society.

Nor would any of the other outlandish rules that people make up on their own, sometimes committing the rudeness of embarrassing or chastising those on whom they spring their creations.

There is the houseguest whose attempt to be polite by "buying her own toilet paper, dishwashing liquid, milk and anything else she uses" while visiting only makes her hostess feel that the use of such trivial items is counted and begrudged. And the father arriving for a visit to his son, who bewilders the family by insisting that it is "proper eti-

quette to first go into the house empty-handed" and only to produce luggage from the car when assigned a bedroom.

Then there is the guest who accepted an invitation to an event but then didn't go because he was "very upset with the host for not acknowledging my affirmative RSVP" with an acceptance of the acceptance. And the luncheon guest who watched others spreading their paper napkins over the remains of their food, fearing she had been remiss in failing to protect "waiters from handling your soiled napkins with their bare hands."

And there is the bridegroom who suggests writing letters to those who had not sent presents, thanking them for attending the wedding, which his bride realized would be taken as a broad hint to fork over. And the suitor who was told that, "according to tradition, a man should suggest the equivalent of one month's salary for an engagement ring."

None of this is authorized; none of it is even well thought out. Goodness knows Miss Manners needs all the help she can get, but when these people learn and practice the existing rules, it will be time enough for them to harbor ambitions of entering the exalted profession.

Dear Miss Manners:

By observing people eating, I was wondering: When you are using your fork to eat, do you close your mouth over the fork when you are eating, or do you eat like models do, so as not to mess their lipstick, by just using your teeth to take the food off the fork? This may seem like a silly question, but I've wondered what is the correct way to use your fork. I do not know where I would find an answer to these questions.

Right here, of course. Eeeeww!

That is your answer. Miss Manners is not in the habit of offering makeup tips to models, but surely they can use lip pencil, or find long-lasting lipstick, or cultivate the natural look that the cosmetic industry is so eager to sell us. There is little point in looking appetizing if the sound and sight of your dragging your teeth along your fork causes appetite loss in others.

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at MissManners@unitedmedia.com or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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DEAR ABBY

Dear Abby:

Twenty years ago—at the age of 3—my son was diagnosed with kidney disease. His illness worsened, his kidneys failed, he endured dialysis. Then he received a kidney transplant—the miracle of life.

My son's first transplant was at age 6, and it gave him three great years. His second transplant was at 9. Both donors were deceased. The second kidney took him all the way through high school. He started dialysis again when he entered college, and the wait began for another kidney.

No one in our family could donate because we all had the wrong blood type. Then, one day, science and research came through for us again. A technique was perfected that allows a person to donate an organ of a different blood type from the recipient. My son was one of the first to benefit from the technique. We were able to use my wife's kidney, a near-perfect match except for her blood type. It worked!

That was three years ago. My son is healthier than he has been in 20 years and has just graduated from college.

How can we ever thank the two families who gave my son the gift of life that allowed him to survive long enough for my wife's kidney to be used? We will celebrate my son's life with thousands of other transplant recipients at the National Kidney Foundation U.S. Transplant Games this summer. Together we will pay tribute to the doctors and donors who made this happen as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of transplantation, a therapy that has saved more than 100,000 lives.

Alan Mittleman, National Kidney Foundation

I am pleased that so many with kidney disease are now enjoying healthy, normal lives as a result of this giant leap forward. Readers, April is National Donate a Life Month, a time for everyone to consider organ donation and to discuss their wishes with their families. For more information, or a free donor card, contact the National Kidney Founda-

tion at Box DA, 30 E. 33rd St., New York, N.Y. 10016, or call 800-622-9010. The Web site is www.kidney.org.

Dear Abby:

I have a happy 10-year marriage. Recently my husband, "Ben," found a snapshot of me taken when I was about 15. At the time, I was trying to look sexy: tight jeans, unbuttoned shirt, come-hither look—but now it's just embarrassing. I laughed with him at the silly photo and forgot about it.

This week, Ben brought home a "surprise"—a life-size painting of me based on that old photo. Now he wants to hang it in our home. I told him I didn't find it flattering and would be uncomfortable having that slutty painting of me displayed anywhere. He said I'm too sensitive, and no one will know it's me. (What an insult!)

Then Ben played his trump card: He bought the painting for himself, not for me, and thus it's his decision whether (and where) he chooses to hang it in his house.

I am mortified. I can't imagine looking my guests in the eye after they see that painting. Am I overreacting?

Blushing in the Midwest

I think so. Regardless of how much you think you have changed, that painting reflects how your husband perceives you. To him, you are "hot," and that's a compliment. Perhaps you can negotiate where the painting will be hung.

It would be nice if he were more sensitive to your feelings, but it appears he is not. So try to accept it and, instead of blushing, tell your guests that the painting is his idea of "art," not yours.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

N-S vulnerable

NORTH (D)
 ♠ K Q 9 5
 ♥ 8 6 4 3 2
 ♦ K 2
 ♣ Q 7

WEST
 ♠ J 8 6 2
 ♥ 5
 ♦ Q 10 9 5 4
 ♣ J 5 2

EAST
 ♠ 4 3
 ♥ K Q J 10 9
 ♦ 7 6
 ♣ 10 8 4 3

SOUTH
 ♠ A 10 7
 ♥ A 7
 ♦ A J 8 3
 ♣ A K 9 6

The bidding:
 North Pass East 2 NT South Pass West Pass
 3 ♠ Pass 3 ♥ Pass
 3 ♦ Pass 3 NT Pass
 6 NT(!) All Pass
 Opening lead: ♦ 10

In tournaments, some partnerships consist of a professional and a client. Many clients want a playing lesson, as in golf. Others want a better chance to win the "master points" that success brings. Some simply enjoy seeing the game played well. In any case, a pro must be a fine declarer because he or she lands in shaky contracts: A client is apt to add points in the bidding for the pro's skill.

At the ACBL Fall Championships, pro Brian Senior found himself at 6NT when North overbid. West helped out by leading a diamond—a poor choice against a slam since it might cost a vital trick.

Senior took the jack and knew his best chance was a squeeze. Since West was likely to have diamond length, Senior planned a heart-club squeeze against East:

Senior led a diamond to the king and returned a heart, playing low to "rectify the count" for the squeeze. East led another heart to the ace, and West threw a diamond.

Senior had to assume East had length in clubs as well as five hearts, and East had followed to two diamonds. Senior therefore assumed West had four spades. Senior led the ten of spades to the king and a spade to his ace. He took the ace of diamonds and led a spade to dummy's nine!

When dummy next led the queen of spades at the ninth trick, East was finished. He couldn't save a heart and four clubs. When he threw a club, Senior took four club tricks to make the slam.

I'd say South earned his fee on that deal.

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