

The Style Invitational

Week 554: Love the Tiny Tail Stain!

Former President Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti: Strike finds sad, immature rat in spider hole. —Richard Grantham

Britney Spears weds childhood friend in Vegas: Wavering, she *did* play his bride for ten seconds . . . —Meyran Kraus

As we promised back in Week 547, we've finally gotten around to paying tribute to (i.e., ripping off) a truly amazing online contest, brought to our attention by Rick "Conan the Librarian" Spencer of Severn. The Anagrammy Awards, at www.anagrammy.com, are a set of monthly competitions for anagrams of various topics and lengths. Richard Grantham of Melbourne, Australia, the site's archivist, invites all Losers to check out the site and enter the contest, even with material from this one. (We, on the other hand, are snootier and won't accept anagrams that have been published elsewhere.)

This week's contest: Write an anagram based on a name or event that's been in the news recently, as in the examples above, which The Empress just up and stole from this Web site. The anagrams may be anywhere up to 100 letters long. *What??* How on Earth can you keep that many letters straight? Well, just go over to this site and download the incredibly nifty free program called Anagram Artist, created by Mike Keith of Virginia. Otherwise, just pull out some Scrabble tiles and move them around.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins "In Other Words: A Book of Irish and American Anagrams" (e.g., "The Picture of Dorian Gray"; "I Favor Gay Reproduction") by longtime Loser John O'Byrne, Dublin, and Jerry Ring, donated by Brendan Byrne of Regina, Saskatchewan. 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 26. 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 16. 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 550, in which we asked for creative uses for objects that tend to accumulate around the house:

Wow, thank you, guys, for letting us know that Washington Post delivery bags could be used to pick up . . . dog poop! Yes, yes, a number of you also wanted us to know that this would be an improvement over the original contents harharhar. Other common suggestions were that old AOL sign-up disks would make cool house shingles, coffee cans could hold AOL disks, Post delivery bags could hold coffee cans and packing peanuts, etc.

◆ **Third runner-up:** Washington Post delivery bag: A great stocking mask for the bank robber who longs to win a Darwin Award. (Steve Fahey, Kensington; Josh Borke, Bloomington, Minn.)

◆ **Second runner-up:** Loser Scott Campisi, clearly with way too much time on his hands in Wake Village, Tex., sent in this photo of a little car he fashioned from a milk jug and a few other things, which he sent scooting across the room by stomping on inflated Texarkana Gazette delivery bags, as his sweat socks demonstrate:



BY DEBORAH CAMPISI

◆ **First runner-up, the winner of the duck-motif wine bottle and shoe brush:** Old AOL sign-up disks that come in the mail: If your pet snake just got fixed and you want to make sure the area will heal properly, feed his head through the middle of the CD. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

◆ **And the winner of the Inker:**

Stand an empty coffee can on the ground. Prop two chopsticks against the can and a third one across the mouth. Glue a CD covered with duck sauce to the top chopstick. The mouse crawls up a chopstick and onto the CD for the duck sauce. The CD flips over, sending the mouse into the can, trapped by the CD on top. The world beats a path to your door. (Bird Waring, New York)

Honorable Mentions:

Coffee cans:

They make great hair for a Princess Leia robot. (Bruce W. Alter, Fairfax Station)

They're ideal storage containers for your 100 percent Colombian. (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

Old AOL Disks You Get in the Mail:

They're great for tiling the floor of a chat room. (Steve Shapiro, Alexandria)

It makes a good Frisbee for the electronic dog you got back in 1999, when it seemed so cutting-edge. (Michelle Bowen-Ziecheck, Chicago)

Grind them up and use as dot-compost. (Jack Cooper, Cheltenham)

Put a bunch of them together and voila!—your pet fly has its own mirror. (Mary Ann Henningsen, Hayward, Calif.)

Scrawling messages on them and using them as Frisbees serves as an equally effective communication device. (Bob Dalton)

Milk Jugs:

Cut in half. Use the lower halves as brassiere cups for community theater productions of "Das Rheingold." Use the upper halves as helmets. (Thad Humphries, Warrenton)

Tie a few of them onto your kid with a rope, and go back to sleep on the beach. (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls)

Place them, unwashed, in your hamper to hide that dirty-clothes odor. (Robin D. Grove, Chevy Chase)

Packing Peanuts:

Snack on them while watching a game of Wiffle ball. (Steve Shapiro, Arlington)

Make them into a wind chime as a gift for Marlee Matlin. (Bob Dalton)

Washington Post Delivery Bags:

To protect my check from possible water damage, I always wrap my Post subscription payment several times in a delivery bag. They really appreciate that at the paper. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

They're wonderful for storing and freezing all kinds of meats—just the right size for legs, necks, liver and forearms. (H. Lecter, Rio de Janeiro) (Dave Vierling, Silver Spring)

To send The Post back in if it was delivered by mistake. (R. J. Sturgeon, Kensington)

Perfect for wrapping bleeding hearts during organ transplants. (Mary Lou French, Lorton)

Fill with water, drop in a betta and tack it up on your bulletin board: instant fishbowl and, more important, instant friend. (Jean Sorensen)

Post bags make great condoms. A little snug, but that's okay. (Russell Beland)

The bag from the Sunday Post, when placed over a Loser's head for the appropriate interval, produces the ideal cognitive level for creating Style Invitational entries. I've had one on for six minutes now and just rea . . . (Cecil J. Clark Jr., Arlington)

Other stuff:

Plastic grocery bags make great frog parachutes. (Jeff Brechlin)

Used fabric softener sheets still smell great after coming out of the dryer, so put them in your garbage can, where they will make your trash smell great, too! (Vincent Buquicchio, Arlington)

Stickers from bananas are a great way to decorate an unused passport. Note: Do not reveal the source of this information. (Nick Sibilla, Reston)

Fill old Diet Coke cans with concrete, and build a colorful retaining wall that flanks your obnoxious neighbor's property. (Jeff Brechlin)

Combinations:

Ballpoint pens that have ink but won't write, bent paper clips and a matchbook make a dandy home tattooing kit. (Russell Beland)

And Last: "The Empress as I Imagine Her," mixed media, 2004 (Kevin Mellema, Falls Church)



BY JULIA EWAN—THE WASHINGTON POST

Next Week: **Lost in Translation, or Ling Pong**

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Bad Conduct Conducting

As if they don't have enough fun dressing up and waving those sticks about, orchestra conductors harbor an ill-disguised desire to take over Miss Manners's job. Once again, a prominent concert was followed by a tirade on the subject of manners delivered by the maestro.

The conductor, who sounded off after a concert in Naples, Fla., earlier this year, was more restrained than the director in Rio de Janeiro last fall who indicated what he thought of the manners of the audience at his "Tristan and Isolde." He mooned them.

Music has a long history of such incidents. Well, not exactly these incidents; the mooning revealed that the offended gentleman was wearing green drawers, which may be a first. Nevertheless, attempts from the podium to persuade audiences to be polite have been going on for centuries.

Perhaps a career exchange could be arranged. It is true that Miss Manners can't count terribly well, but she looks fetching in evening clothes and has some experience at terrorizing people into silence with a mere glance. How difficult can the rest of it be?

Apparently that is the same view that conductors take of her august calling. To judge from their outbursts, they believe that her highly complex discipline involves nothing more than berating people of whose behavior they disapprove, and that it is not necessary to employ good manners when doing so.

Musicians have always complained that audiences paid them insufficient attention. Mozart whined to his father that people were multitasking—chatting and drawing—while he was playing. Long before the invention of television, classical music audiences had invented television manners, including wandering in and out during the performances.

Impresarios saw it as a class problem. In Europe, the blame was put on arrogant aristocrats who attended to show off, as opposed to the modest folk who loved music. So, in Paris, the boxes were made smaller and prices reduced to attract a better crowd.

In America, the blame was put on rowdy riffraff, as opposed to the rich and refined who loved music, so expensive seats were installed to replace the pit and attract a better crowd.

But audience behavior changed radically only in the late 19th century, when some fed-up conductors went into the manners business. Threats, sar-

casm, stomping out, singling out individuals and silence (where the music should have been) changed the standard of audience behavior to the one-cough-and-you're-dead expectations of today.

Miss Manners does not claim the problem has been solved. In addition to eating, humming, chewing, talking, telephoning, snoring and conducting along—all the activities that people go to concerts and opera to do—we now have the rude machinations of music vigilantes armed with rolled-up programs. We have come to the sad point where every performance now opens with an elementary etiquette lesson about cell phones and beepers and cameras, which someone should set to music.

But those post-performance attacks were directed at audiences who were behaving themselves. The audience in Rio was booing the production, which may not be pleasant but is as much a custom of opera as applauding. The Naples audience had actually given that concert a standing ovation.

Miss Manners advises the gentlemen who attacked them to keep their night jobs. They are not suited for her profession.

Dear Miss Manners:

My boyfriend and I have been feuding over whether it is appropriate to smell food at the dinner table. I believe that it is rude and strange to act like a dog and smell one's own food at a nice restaurant. Please help me settle this.

Does he run around the table several times before settling down? Does he put his nose in his plate? This would suggest to Miss Manners that you might attend to his identity problems before his table manners. Or reconsider your own social life.

Actually, there is nothing wrong with human beings enjoying the smells of good food. There is just something very wrong with their being caught with their noses down or their mouths open. The correct posture is with the head thrown back to catch odors wafting in the air, murmuring a discreet "Mmmm" from behind closed lips.

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:

I am so mad! My husband doesn't understand my feelings and told me to write and ask for your opinion.

We threw a swimming party for our son's fifth birthday. We invited a few of his closest friends from kindergarten, along with their parents, and his grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

I went inside to change my clothes and ran smack into a burglar. He tied me up with cords from the window blinds; then he used one of my husband's ties to gag me and left me squirming on the floor. I was bound so tightly I couldn't work my way out of the room.

I figured someone would come looking for me. I am an extrovert, and I was sure my absence would not go unnoticed. I wriggled around for what seemed like an eternity before anyone came looking for me. In reality, it was 45 minutes of misery before my husband walked in, trailed by our children.

My family and our guests had not noticed I was missing for all of that time! Abby, I was crushed. They have tried to explain it away, but I am mortified. I can't seem to get over this. My family thinks I am making too much of it, but I find myself breaking down in tears all the time. What do you think I should do to get over this and get my life back on track?

All Tied Up in Palm Springs

You have my sympathy, and there is a name for what you are experiencing: It is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It often occurs in people who have survived a disaster, such as an earthquake, flood, car accident or being a victim of a crime. The feelings of anger you are aiming at your family and friends should appropriately be aimed at the burglar who invaded your home, hogtied you and violated your sense of security.

Before any more time elapses, I urge you to ask your doctor to refer you to a psychotherapist who specializes in PTSD. Please don't wait to make the call, because it's the quickest way to resolve your anger and feel better.

Dear Abby:

My husband, "Danny," is obsessed with his

cousin's little daughter, to the point where he thinks she is his (and acts like she's his, too). If Danny doesn't see her often enough, he says he's in "withdrawal." She doesn't live near us, so it's expensive getting her here. Danny is out of work and doesn't consider the fact that I'm the one earning the money.

I have an older child from another relationship, and I would love for Danny and me to have one of our own. However, he says we can't afford another child. It hurts me that he wants his cousin's child, but not mine.

Danny accuses me of being jealous. Am I overreacting?

Resentful in Illinois

Money may be tight now, but you and Danny could benefit from marriage counseling. Your questions are valid, but the person providing the answers should be your husband—in the presence of a referee. His attachment to his niece does seem excessive. (Could the child really be his daughter?)

Dear Abby:

My live-in boyfriend of 12 years won't let me visit my never-married girlfriends on the East Coast. He says they're man-haters, which has some validity. But these are longtime friends who share intellectual interests he and I do not. How can I manage his feelings and have my freedom, too?

Managing His Feelings

You're asking the wrong question. His feelings are his feelings. His insecurities are his insecurities. You can't fix him; only he can do that.

He is only your live-in—not your husband and not your warden. The question you should be asking yourself is why you are allowing him to dictate whom you can and cannot visit.

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

"Standard American," the bidding system that has evolved from the old Goren style, is far from perfect. The sum of a "Standard" auction is often less than its parts.

In a team match, one North-South got to a silly contract. The auction began one diamond-one spade-two clubs. Fine, but South was afraid to force with two hearts next on so little strength. Fearing a misfit, he passed.

"I can't blame him," North told me, "but we missed our 5-3 heart fit!"

North had managed to make two clubs. East led a spade, and North won, took the ace of diamonds, and ruffed two diamonds in dummy and two spades in his hand. He also got a heart trick and the ace of trumps.

At the other table, South bid as if

there were no tomorrow and landed at four hearts. If West leads the 10 of clubs, South can take the ace and crossruff for 10 easy tricks. But since West had strength in spades, South's first suit, he led a trump. East took the ace and returned a trump.

South then needed good luck. He won in his hand, finessed with the queen of diamonds, cashed the ace and ruffed a diamond. He took the ace of spades, ruffed a spade and ruffed a diamond. He could then draw trumps and go to the ace of clubs to cash the last diamond for his 10th trick.

I admit I'd rather try to make four hearts than two clubs on those North-South cards, but it's an imperfect system that forces you to choose between those two contracts.

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N-S vulnerable

NORTH (D)
 ♠ 5
 ♥ K Q 7
 ♦ A Q 5 4 2
 ♣ A J 6 2

WEST
 ♠ K 10 8 7
 ♥ 5 2
 ♦ K 10 8 6
 ♣ 10 9 8

EAST
 ♠ Q 9 6
 ♥ A 4 3
 ♦ J 9 7
 ♣ K Q 5 3

SOUTH
 ♠ A J 4 3 2
 ♥ J 10 9 8 6
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 7 4

The bidding:

North	East	South	West
1 ♠	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 ♥	Pass
4 ♥	All Pass		

Opening lead: Choose it