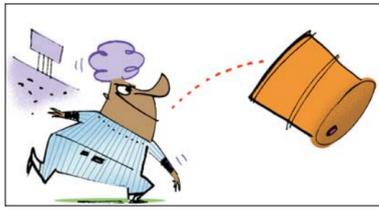


The Style Invitational

Week 599: So What's the News?



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This week's contest: Style Invitational cartoonist Bob Staake has been contributing to The Washington Post for more than a decade. But in all those years under contract to this fine newspaper, he has never been called to illustrate actual news. Until now. Bob has sent us these illustrations of the world's events. Unfortunately, he forgot to tell us what the events are. Please help.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets a really weird bright orange cloth belt emblazoned with random but totally misspelled titles of Rolling Stones songs, such as "Ruby Tnesday" and "Get Off Df Hycolud," sent to us from New Delhi by Wandering Loser Robin Diallo. This prize is clearly more fabulous than you deserve, but the Empress is occasionally given to bouts of wanton generosity.

Other runners-up win a 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 by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, March 7. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks 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 March 27. 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 Russell Beland of Springfield.

Report from Week 595, in which we asked you to take a hyphenated heading from the top of a page of the Yellow Pages and define it: Among the almost 2,000 entries the Empress received were headings drawn from Dave Ferry's 49-pager in Purvis, Miss.; a 1985 directory from Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea; and this note accompanying the entries of Loser Chris Doyle, currently in New Zealand during a world tour with his wife: "On the three-hour ferry from Wellington to the south island's Picton . . . I found fifteen NZ phone books on a shelf for passengers' use. I saw little of the crossing, which Karen later informed me was rather foggy."

- ◆ **Fourth runner-up: Carpet-Catastrophic:** The text message you don't want to receive from home when you're house-sitting a friend's very old dog. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)
- ◆ **Third runner-up: Cellular-Chalkboards:** Wireless phones with particularly annoying ring tones. (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- ◆ **Second runner-up: Banquet-Beauty:** A euphemism for a plus-size woman. (Eric Murphy, Chicago)
- ◆ **First runner-up, winner of Seth Brown's book that mentions the Style Invitational Losers: Piano-Pizza:** An industry term for household pets that get in the way of furniture movers. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)
- ◆ **And the winner of the Inker: House-Human:** The token normal person at Michael Jackson's home. (Bruce W. Alter, Fairfax Station)

- ◆ **Directory of Honorable Mentions:**
- Advertising-Air:** Touting a product when you already have a monopoly with no alternatives. "Seeing ads for U.S. postage stamps is like advertising-air." (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)
- Alcohol-Apartments:** Universities used to call these "dormitories." (Elden Carnahan)
- Artificial-Asphalt:** Polenta. (Brendan Beary)
- Attorneys-Audiologists:** Lawyers who guarantee they'll get you a hearing. (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)
- Automotive-Bail:** What you'll have to pay if you're found parked on Constitution Avenue at 4:00:00.00001 p.m. on weekdays (Elden Carnahan)
- Balancing-Balloons:** Silicone implants on just one side to "even things up." (Russell Beland)
- Billing-Blood:** A loan shark's late payment fee. (Harold Kerr, Takoma Park)
- Brass-Brick:** A minimum-wage gold-brick. (Russell Beland)
- Chiropractors-Christmas:** A forecast of freezing rain and heavy, wet snow. (Brendan Beary)
- Curtain-Dancing:** What burlesque queens resort to when they've lost the figure for fan-dancing. (Brendan Beary)
- Can-Car:** Pulled by the Little Engine That Could (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)
- Child-Duct:** An FCC-acceptable euphemism for part of the female anatomy. (Pam Sweeney)
- Demolition-Dentists:** Let us rearrange your mouth in a single visit. (Marty McCullen)
- Environmental-Escort:** Ooh, I'll maketh you lie down in green pastures, big boy! (Harold Kerr)
- Foam-Foods:** The nation's top supplier of airline meals. (Joseph Romm, Washington)
- Financial-Fire:** For when cooking the books didn't work well enough. (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)
- Granite-Grocers:** Specializing in those holiday fruitcakes. (Stevens R. Miller, Ashburn)
- Heating-Heliports:** Starting next season, the only interjection the FCC will allow on broadcast television. (Tom Kreitzberg, Silver Spring)
- Internet-Inventors:** What do you mean, plural? (A. Gore, Nashville) (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)
- Iron-Jewelers:** For the gift that tells her you'd tolerate her all over again. (Eric Murphy)

- Kitchen-Labor:** Term of endearment likely to go over even less well than "the old ball and chain." (Russell Beland)
- Lawn-Lawyers:** Little statues of guys in business suits holding attache cases—for the discriminating homeowner who'd never have a lawn jockey. (Russell Beland)
- Lumber-Magicians:** Your friends at Pfizer. (Michelle Stupak)
- Mattresses-Memorial:** Hugh Hefner's already planning his grave site . . . (Les Greenblatt, Ann Arbor, Mich.)
- Movers-Moving and Nurses-Nursing:** What I got on the 13th and 14th days of Christmas. (Kevin d'Eustachio, Linwood, N.J.)
- Paper-Parapsychologists:** Practitioners who, instead of attending a rigorous school, simply got their parapsychology credentials from a diploma mill. (Russell Beland)
- Perforating-Pest:** Build a more disgusting mousetrap, and . . . (Nancy Moore, Montgomery Village)
- Real-Refrigerators:** A Food Network reality show featuring spur-of-the-moment dishes like Worcestershire Sauce and Two-Year-Old Olives Wrapped in Brown Lettuce. (Tom Kreitzberg)
- Rubber-Safe:** Where the bank puts the bounced checks. (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)
- Radio-Ready:** Less than photogenic: "That guy has a face that's radio-ready." (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)
- Sewer-Sewing:** The latest fad since extreme ironing competitions. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)
- Sheet-Social:** Code phrase for a KKK rally. (Eric Murphy)
- Stools-Storage:** Label on a vault in Howard Hughes's home. (Pam Sweeney)
- Tree-Trophies:** What beavers proudly display in their lodges. (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)
- Wedding-Welding:** Up to 40 percent less likely to be put asunder! (Tom Cary, Hollywood, Md.)
- Women's-Zoning:** A wife's rules for use of a house's public space. Seldom written down; usually enforced with a simple "You're not putting that in here, are you?" (Brendan Beary)
- Word Processing-Zoos:** Where the monkeys who work on Shakespeare hang out. (Anne Lange, Arlington)
- Yacht-Zoos:** Noah's three sons launch a successful business chain. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Next Week: Take Her Words for It, or Amy Which Way

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

A Hug Mistake

Should a willingness to jump into the arms of strangers be considered a test of good character?

Miss Manners seems to recall its once being considered the opposite. A lack of discrimination about whose embraces one permitted and the inability to keep one's hands to oneself was not behavior that religious, social and professional leaders condoned.

Now these people don't just encourage it; they demand it.

"Lately at meetings, luncheons, etc., the speaker or person presiding has told those present to exchange hugs with the people at their table or sitting in their vicinity," reports a Gentle Reader who says she is not fast enough on her feet to make a quick exit when this happens.

"I exchange hugs gladly with my family and close friends, but I don't care to hug strangers. From the facial expressions on some others, I know I'm not the only one. It's getting so that there's always some perky lady telling everyone how we all need hugs."

A gentleman writes that he has stopped attending a church where "everybody seems to have developed a hugging addiction. Before the greeting period, the minister or a lay leader stands on the platform and virtually orders everybody to get some hugs. People I hardly know run up to me and say 'How about a hug?' At the close of the service the minister and his wife stand at the door and grab everybody before they can get out of the building.

"I don't think I'm prudish, but, strange as it may seem, I don't feel like slobbering over every Tom, Dick and Jane I meet. Has plain, everyday friendliness gone out of style? Since when isn't it possible to be friendly without getting so personal?"

"I resent having behavior patterns dictated to me. It makes me feel as though I'm in a mind control unit."

A lady reports that hugging has spread to medical laboratories. "The problem, chiefly of concern to women, is unwanted hugging and other pseudo-affectionate, non-medical touching by medical personnel," she writes. "The intent

seems to be to develop an instant relationship. A number of medical technicians hug the patient far too tightly and with far too great affection as they escort the patient to the X-ray room. They then take the mammogram, all the while hugging the patient between X-rays, and they then hug the patient on the way back to the waiting room. This has happened to me three times, at three different facilities. On the last, I told the technician as she was walking me from room to room, tightly hugging me all the while, to stop hugging me. That angered her, and she went out and complained to the staff personnel that I was irritable.

"So much unrequested sympathy, so much physical affection, and all because we are getting routine tests?"

Miss Manners would have thought the era was past in which it was held that physical demonstrations among strangers would inspire people to love one another. Eventually it was noticed that it didn't even inspire them to call the next day.

Dear Miss Manners:

When a widow who lives alone has others over for dinner, who sits at the head of the table? I recently had two couples over for dinner, and one of my gentleman guests was taken aback that I sat at the head of the table. Was I incorrect?

No, but Miss Manners assures you that you would have a hard time being less correct than your guest.

First, he has no business appearing taken aback at your seating arrangements, even if you choose to place yourself in the middle of the table as a centerpiece. Second, a hostess always presides over her own table, whether or not there is a host at the opposite end.

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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ASK AMY

Dear Amy:

I have been married to my soul mate for 14 years, yet we have never really lived up to that title.

We dated for approximately 18 months, and after having one bad relationship after another, I thought this was it! We did not consummate our love until our wedding night, and things seemed to get worse from there.

My wife never talks to me about her feelings and says the topic of sex embarrasses her. I've tried all of the softening techniques, and I am the main housekeeper around here, which is supposed to be the ultimate aphrodisiac, right? My faith and four children (I can almost count the exact number of times we've been intimate) will not allow me to wander outside of our marriage, but I have a constant burning feeling in my stomach.

Amy, my wife is the most attractive woman I know; it is both a blessing and a curse to be married to such a beautiful, untouchable woman.

I cannot stop feeling that it is I who am to blame, but why?

I do everything for my wife, and despite what I am telling you, she is a kind and compassionate person, though one who shuns intimacy. I am at an all-time low. Any advice?

Sexless Soul Mate

You're right—housework is an aphrodisiac. The mere sight of a man wearing those pink rubber kitchen gloves has been known to drive some women wild. However, the ultimate aphrodisiac is talking. And listening. I wish your wife would participate more in this vital act of intimacy—you'd both feel much better.

I read your letter to Barry McCarthy, a psychologist and author (with Emily McCarthy) of "Getting It Right The First Time: Creating a Healthy Marriage" (Brunner-Routledge, \$14.95). McCarthy says that as a couple you have fallen into an unhealthy pattern—where sex is only your domain. McCarthy says: "When you are so disappointed in your wife sexually, it really is poisonous. Your wife has to develop a healthy sexual voice, and it can't be based on your version of how things should be. The old view of marriage was that if you improved the emotional intimacy, then the sex would take care of itself. The current view is that you have to deal directly with these sexual issues."

McCarthy and I agree that no amount of scrubbing the sink will do as much good for your marriage as some sessions with a compassionate counselor. I want for you and your wife to make some changes for your sake—of course—but also for her sake. She is missing such a beautiful part of life.

You sound like a good man. No doubt she is lucky to have you. I hope you can do one more thing for your wife and get her to accompany you to some counseling sessions—after you've finished the vacuuming, of course.

Dear Amy:

A recent letter from "Ex-Hausted" prompted me to write. The writer thought it was strange that her boyfriend and his ex-wife did things together with their kids.

I am in favor of split families getting along and getting together as a group. I have two children with my ex, and my boyfriend has one with his ex. My ex and I get along better now than when we were married.

This is going to sound strange, but my boyfriend and my ex sometimes take all three of the kids and do things together. They all just went snowboarding while I stayed home. I get along well with my ex's girlfriend and sometimes talk to her more about the kids than I do with their father.

I think it's healthy and wonderful for the kids. They don't feel the pressure of one parent against the other.

I know my situation is different, but we have worked hard to make it good for everyone.

Heather in Bellingham

Your situation might not be as strange as you think. I've heard from many families who have shared stories of their unusually good relationships with their exes.

I love this affirmation of what a "family" really is.

Ask Amy is written by Amy Dickinson, a journalist who has worked for NBC News, Time magazine and National Public Radio. Write to her at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH
 ♠ Q J 3
 ♥ J 10 9 6 3
 ♦ Q J 10
 ♣ K 10

WEST
 ♠ 9 6 5 4 2
 ♥ K 5 2
 ♦ A 5
 ♣ Q 5 3

EAST
 ♠ 8 7
 ♥ A 8 4
 ♦ 8 7 4 3
 ♣ J 9 6 4

SOUTH(D)
 ♠ A K 10
 ♥ Q 7
 ♦ K 9 6 2
 ♣ A 8 7 2

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	3 NT	All Pass

Opening lead: ♠ 4

North's bid of two diamonds was a "transfer," forcing South to convert to two hearts. Then North's 3NT suggested a five-card heart suit but balanced distribution and offered a choice of games. If South had held three or four hearts and, say, two low spades, he'd have bid four hearts. But South passed with his actual hand.

Most expert pairs use transfers, but North's use of the convention here looks like an attempt to transfer the blame to South if they reached the wrong contract. Since North had mostly queen and jacks (more useful at no trump), 3NT was probably the better game even if South had three cards in hearts. North could instead have responded two clubs, Stayman, planning to play at hearts only if South had four.

What happened at 3NT? When West led a spade, South won in dummy and led a low heart (not best): four, queen, king. South won the next spade, lost a heart to East's ace, won the club return, forced out the ace of diamonds and claimed 10 tricks.

If West had refused the first heart, saving his entry, South would have forced out the ace of diamonds for nine tricks. To beat the contract, East must play "second hand high": He must rise with the ace on the first heart and lead his last spade, spending his entry to plug away at West's long suit while West preserves his entries.

When South wins and leads a second heart, West will take the king and lead a third spade. When he gets in with the ace of diamonds, he'll cash two spades.

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