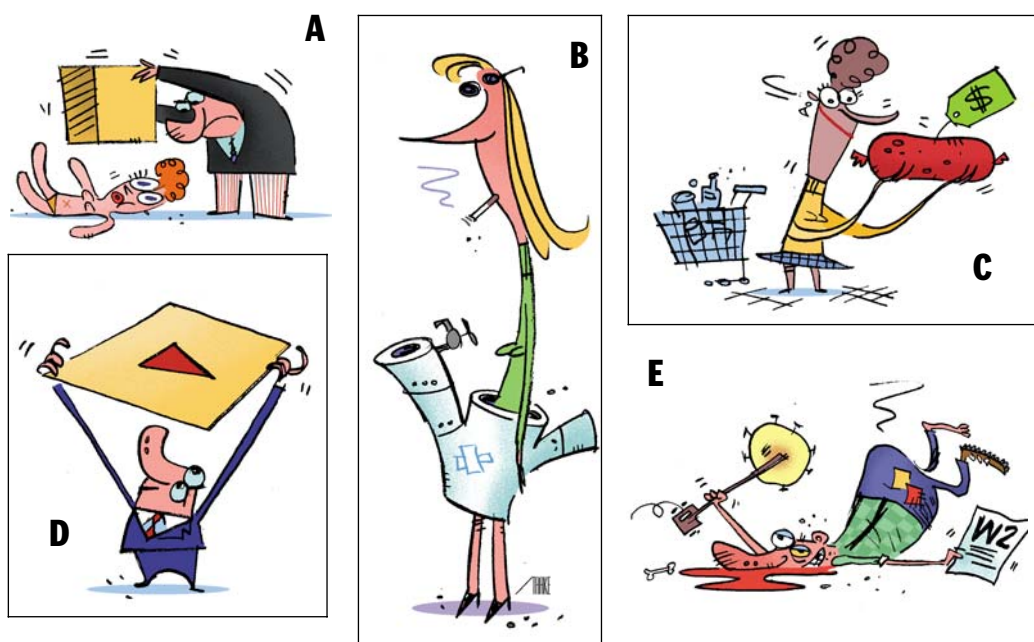


The Style Invitational

Week 631: Picture This



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAIKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This week's contest: After our experiment in Week 616 with a cartoon contest that left most Losers scratching their heads and elsewhere in frustration, we'll get back on the wall this time with the plain-old: **What's going on in any of these cartoons?** Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives the fabulous Fandex Family Field Guide to the First Ladies, which features a stack of riveted-together . . . well, the Empress would never say "phallic," so let's say columnar flash cards, each topped with the head of a president's wife, complete with fun facts. This item was actually purchased by Russell Beland of Springfield and donated to the Empress months ago in a flagrant attempt to buy his way into Invitational print.

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, Oct. 17. Results will be published Nov. 6. Put "Week 631" 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.

Entries 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. 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 John O'Byrne of Dublin.

Report from Week 627, in which we asked for verses that comically *failed* to rhyme. Some people couldn't help themselves and kept sending in actual rhymes! One rhyme much too good for this contest was submitted by both Chris Doyle of Forsyth, Mo., and Ross El-liffe of Picton, New Zealand: "Roger Federer / Plays tennis betterer." As far as we know, no one re-sent a lousy poem originally submitted for our recent limerick contest — though some definitely would have qualified.

◆ Third runner-up:
**In her kitchen, where we fell in love,
I decided to make the first move.
So I then made a pass
While admiring her as
She was leaning there over her stove.
(Katherine Hooper, Jacksonville)**

◆ Second runner-up:
**Men seldom make passes
At girls with prostheses.
(Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)**

◆ Honorable Mentions:
**"I'm in love, girl! My Kate is divine!"
Gushed Tom Cruise, from atop Oprah's
divan.
To Matt Lauer, he'd later decree
All believers in psychiatry!
Said Brooke Shields: "He's one shrimp
I'd love to de vein!"
(Gerard Zarchin, Annapolis)**

**Bill Shakespeare stole my plays, so how
come no one sees
He's a bloody rotten poet, I'm a better
man than he is.
My only hope's posterity will recognize
the fraud
And realize that Billy Boy wrote not one
single word.
— Earl of Oxford (attrib.) (Bob Hale, Bilston,
England)**

**NCAA's trail of tears,
Atoning for its racist sins,
You can be Wolves or Bears,
But not Native Americans.
Without a tribe's official blessing,
Your mascot can't be Tonto.
It's vital that you learn this lesson,
Especially if you don't want to.
(Tom Greening)**

**That "Sideways" guy thought he had
class,
As he swirled wine like a king in a
palace.
You tell him I bought
A case of merlot,
And shove pinot noir up his foie gras.
(Tom Greening)**

**You didn't divulge your positions;
You stayed, for the most part,
inscrutable.
The Dems are now having conniptions;
Judge Roberts, your hearing was
beautiful.
— Sen. O. Hatch, Washington (Brendan Be-
ary, Great Mills)**

**A pun should be met with a groan,
A roll of the eyes, or a frown.
But never with laughter!
That is a disaster
For which one should be gagged and
bound.
(Greg Arnold, Herndon)**

**It's been my experience that fears
through life abound.
Our childhood's an example. What kid's
not afraid of clowns?
But, when we hit adulthood, we can feel
true life's sad crush.
For me, a real-life boogeyman is George
W. Bush.
(Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)**

◆ First runner-up, winner of the Alfie the
Liver coloring book:
**The newlyweds who live above me
Romp all night, so lovey-dovey.
I wish they'd cease to copulate,
So I could see Ted Koppel late.
(Tom Greening, North Bethesda)**

◆ And the winner of the Inker:
**Hal had plenty of presence and poise,
And a longing to leave Illinois.
He decided to go
Out to Idaho; now
Our pal Hal is a man among Boise.
(Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)**

**They say In English, new or hoary,
There is no word that rhymes with
orange,
To disillusion you I'm sorry,
There's sponge, and estrange, and the
Age of Bronze.
(Richard Lempert, Arlington)**

**What edgy product placement
Right here in the Sunday comics:
"AAACK!" cried Cathy. "The dog just
pooped
In my new Manolo Blahniks!"
(Brendan Beary)**

**There was once a young man from
Potomac,
Who heard voices from inside his
stomach.
He knew not the language —
It could have been Spanglish —
But it gave him one terrible tummy ache.
(Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)**

**Of English I do not approve:
For the past tense of cleave is clove,
Since language is modal,
Then using this model,
The past tense of leave should be love.
(Kyle Hendrickson, Frederick)**

**My remarks, they must always be pithy,
Don't wanna seem wussy or chichi.
When I make a mistake,
Folks won't leave it lay.
They all go have fits like a hissy.
— Name withheld by request, Crawford, Tex.
(Marty McCullen)**

**If your hobby's to ski in your Speedo,
Please refrain here in Vail, Colorado.
We have rules to enforce,
And we will. Park your arse
Right at home, perv, and play the piano.
(Ed Graham, Cupertino, Calif.)**

**You can call this a new art form, of
course,
Making poems with poor rhymes on
purpose.
This bastardized rhyme scheme:
Is it not just the same thing
That non-literati call Free Verse?
(Douglas Frank, Crosby, Tex.)**

**It's so easy to write a good rhyme,
You just put the same sound on each
line.
When the going gets rough
You can simply plough through
And then use random words from your
brain. (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)**

**And Last:
For this poet's end-all and be-all
(A runner-up T-shirt in bright teal),
Here's a rhyme scheme that misses,
Without puns, jokes, or twists,
And a topic too self-referential.
(Steve Fahey, Kensington)**

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

We Remember Them Well

An unpleasant side effect of cancer is that whoever gets it will be characterized thereafter as a victim and a loser. And that, Miss Manners has observed, is on the part of well-wishers.

They speak of "cancer victims." Even in a victim-oriented culture, this suggests having been bested by a bully, with its hint that only a wimp would allow this to happen. Therefore the more popular metaphor is that of warfare. People with cancer are said to be "fighting" or, more often, "battling" the disease. It sounds more dignified that they are not taking this lying down.

On their part, they have come up with "cancer survivor" to indicate a refusal to succumb, or perhaps just to remind their too-quick sympathizers that they are alive. This carries an air of athletic triumph, rather like someone who had been thought lost while mountain climbing and is discovered alive at the peak.

All the same, everyone eventually dies of something. Especially if it is cancer, but increasingly in regard to other causes, you may be sure that the mourners will sum it up by saying, "She lost her battle against cancer," although she will be said to have "fought valiantly." It will be the first and most prominent part of memorial tributes and reminiscences. Whatever is said about the person's pre-cancerous or extra-cancerous life takes second place.

Miss Manners wonders what is going on here. The idea seems to be to evoke the heroism of war, but what principle or population did anyone serve or save by being sick? And what of the fact that they were not volunteers but drafted against their will and hopes? It strikes her as rude to give that much emphasis to an accident of fate when identifying a person or summing up a lifetime. Being sick is neither a character trait nor an occupation.

People who have disabilities have put a lot of work and emotion into getting across the idea that they despise being identified by the disability and admired for being heroic for coping with a situation about which they were given no choice. Not unreasonably, they ask to be assessed in terms of what they can do, rather than what they

can't help.

Yet the principle has not been applied to disease. People with the best intentions in the world continue to speak of those they care about as battling cancer and, when it comes to that, losing. Furthermore, the well-wishers throw themselves into the wartime spirit. They make nuisances of themselves telling wartime hero stories about people who overcame the disease, proposing tactics such as other treatments and urging the warriors on to fight harder.

But these are not warriors and disease is not a fight, much less a fair fight. Sick people do not need the implication that better strategizing and fighting harder would lead to victory. What they need is the recognition, expressed in countless different ways, that they are still the same individuals they were before they got sick.

Dear Miss Manners:

What is proper etiquette when attending an art gallery opening reception? Should one arrive punctually or at any time? Should one bring a gift, and, if so, any suggestions? Can one bring a friend?

Miss Manners assumes that you are speaking of a commercial art gallery with mass-mailed invitations, as opposed to a posh party for the patrons of an art museum. If wine is being served in a plastic cup, you may bring a friend. So if you want to bring a present, make it a friend who collects art.

If there are real glasses and more than cheese cubes to eat, you may not bring a guest without permission. The present for which those hosts are hoping is your doubling the last donation you made.

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 am a 31-year-old woman and have been dating a 54-year-old man for the last 3 1/2 years.

I have three children and he has always declared that we are all a family.

Two weeks ago, I learned that he was planning to take another woman to his daughter's wedding in another state. He says his reason is that my children are stressing him and he simply wanted to have fun.

Amy, I have stood by this man's side through thick and thin. I have been there for him when no one else was. I have picked him up when he has fallen — more than once.

He has since vowed that we would work on our "family" and he wouldn't contact this woman again. She knows about me and also about my children.

I want to trust and believe in him because I have made a commitment to him, but I don't know if I can truly trust him again.

What's going to happen the next time he is stressed? Am I wasting both my children's and my time? I don't think I could handle being hurt this way again.

Hurting in D.C.

The next time your guy is "stressed" he will do exactly the same as he has done before. Why? Because using your children as an excuse to dump on you is an indication of what a weenie he is.

After more than three years with someone, you should know just about everything you need to know in terms of how he will hold up over the long term, and, well, here you are.

Your children deserve the very best from all of the adults in their lives. Now it's time for you to take more responsibility for yourself and for them, by putting yourself in the driver's seat of your relationship.

Give him the heave-ho.

And while I'm at it, I can't help but point out your extreme age difference. He is either too immature or at a different life stage than you. If you want to be in a relationship, find yourself a nice guy who wants to be part of a family, someone whose idea of "fun" includes you and the kids.

Dear Amy:

I am a 44-year-old man who would like to ask a 38-year-old woman to marry me. Her father has passed away, so do I ask her mother for permission, or her oldest sister, or the oldest sister's husband? Her brother is not in the picture.

Virginia Gentleman

This is very sweet, but why on earth would you think of asking her older sister's husband if you could marry his sister-in-law? I can tell that you are trying very hard to be a proper and respectful Virginia gentleman, but the most important person to ask is your beloved. She is a 38-year-old woman, for goodness' sake, and should be in charge of her own life.

After you ask her, then the two of you should go to her mother in order to share your happy news and respectfully ask for her blessing.

If you are devoted to the tradition of asking somebody in your beloved's family for permission to ask her to marry you, then seek out her mother privately in order to get her permission.

Dear Amy:

After reading your response to "Happy Grandma," I had to write. Happy wanted to know if the parents or grandparents should decide the nickname that the grandkids should call the grandparents. You said you couldn't imagine a happy grandma choosing an objectionable nickname.

Well, I've got one for you — my mother-in-law wants my son to call her "Mom." My husband doesn't understand why that bothers me. Apparently, in their family, the kids called their mothers either "Mother" or "Mama," and they called the grandmother "Mom."

While I am not specifically addressing the issue with my in-laws, I kindly refer to her as "Grandma" when talking with my son. I guess I'll explain when they ask, but I don't want to open the can of worms.

The "Real" Mom

Well — now you've got me, because my daughter calls my mother "Mom." My mom and I love it, probably because my daughter chose the name herself. It seems that when she was little, she heard me calling her grandmother "Mom," so she figured that it must be her name. When we're around "Mom," I become "Mommy."

I hope that your son does as many young children do, allowing you to sidestep this awkwardness by choosing his own name for his grandmother.

Write to Amy Dickinson 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 (D) | | EAST | |
| ♠ K 9 5 4 | ♥ Q 8 4 | ♠ A Q 3 | ♥ 9 6 |
| ♦ J 8 4 | ♣ K 6 | ♦ Q 10 7 3 2 | ♣ 8 4 2 |
| ♠ A K 7 5 | | | |
| WEST | | SOUTH | |
| ♠ 6 2 | ♥ J 10 8 7 | ♠ J 10 8 7 | ♥ K J 3 |
| ♦ A 10 7 5 2 | ♦ J 8 4 | ♦ A 9 5 | ♣ Q 6 3 |
| ♣ J 10 9 | | | |

The bidding:

| | | | |
|-------|----------|-------|------|
| North | East | South | West |
| 1 ♣ | Pass | 1 ♠ | Pass |
| 2 ♠ | Pass | 2 NT | Pass |
| 4 ♠ | All Pass | | |

Opening lead: ♣ J

How do you defend?

I often wish my TV had a control I could use to turn up the intelligence level of the programs. (I tried the "brightness" knob; it didn't help.)

When bridge was all the rage, video games and the Internet didn't exist. People got mental exercise from games such as bridge. Then came television — chewing gum for the mind — and now our idea of an intellectual challenge is watching game shows.

Bridge teaches logical reasoning, among other skills. Test your defense by covering the East and South cards. When you lead the jack of clubs against four spades, South wins with the queen in his hand and lets the jack of trumps ride. East takes the queen and leads the nine of hearts, and South plays the three.

At the table, West took the ace and returned a heart, hoping East could ruff. Alas, South won, forced out the ace of trumps and lost no more tricks.

The winning defense — ducking the first heart to keep communication for a later ruff — isn't as easy as chewing gum, but it's logical. South's bid of 2NT shows balanced pattern with about 11 points; South probably has a four-card spade suit. But if he had four hearts and four spades, he'd have responded one heart, showing his suits "up the line."

Moreover, South's play in trumps makes it likely East has the ace. If East had a singleton heart and A-Q-x in trumps, he'd cash his ace before leading his singleton, giving West no option but to win and return a heart.

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Next Week: Gotta Have Connections, or Link for Ink