

The Style Invitational »

REPORT FROM WEEK 820, WITH GUEST JUDGE DAVE BARRY

In which we asked you to write some questions and answers to and from Mister Language Person, the great grammarian who appeared in numerous Dave Barry columns back in the day when newspapers had ads and subscriptions and Dave Barry. As promised, Dave has chosen the winners from a list of finalists selected by the Empress, and he even comments on each of his top four.

THE WINNER OF THE INKER
Q. Please demonstrate how to use euphemisms.
A. Correct: "Our hamster Mr. Buttons became rabid, so we had to put him down."
Incorrect: "Our hamster Mr. Buttons became rabid, so we had to put him down the toilet." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Mister Language Person explains: This beautifully illustrates the First Principle of Humor, as defined by Aristotle: "It should have a hamster, and it should have a toilet."

- The winner of the dress made from two Loser T-Shirts:**
2 Q. What is a non sequitur?
A. I'll say! (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)
I picked this one because I love chocolate.
- 3 Q.** What is "hyperbole"?
A. It's what takes place for two solid weeks leading up to the Superbowl. (Beverly Sharp, Washington)
I picked this one because it is the funniest thing ever written in any language in the history of the universe.
- 4 Q.** I seem to have upset some people by saying, "I've got this thing. And it's bleeping golden. I'm just not giving it up for bleeping nothing. . . . I can always use it. I can parachute me there."
**Should I have said, "I can parachute myself there"?
 By the way, nice hair! — R. Blagojevich** (Jeff Hazle, Woodbridge)
I picked this one, even though it does not have an answer, because the author paid me to.

ALSO WINNING THE APPROBATION OF DAVE

Q. Has there ever been an appropriate anagram created for the phrase "a vinyl toilet stain"?
A. Yes. Top anagram scientists report that they were finally able to produce exactly one: "style invitational," whatever that means. (Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

Q. What does "penultimate" mean?
A: This word is commonly misused, so let me clarify it with an example: "The penultimate word in this sentence is is." (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Q. I need to learn how to spell "hemorrhoids." Never mind why.
A. "Hemorrhoids" is made up of two parts: "hemor," meaning "things that guys think are hilariously funny," and "rhoids," meaning "big and lumpy." Remember: The "rr" in the middle stands for "rump rocks." (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

DANGLERS: LESS HONORABLE MENTIONS

Q. Which of these is grammatically correct: "she waxed indignant" or "she waxed indignantly"?
A. Both, actually, since it can refer to the time Mrs. Language Person removed my back hair. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Q. I work for a guy who says "orientate" when he means "orient." Do I let the dude's mistake go, or do I point it out to His Holiness?
A. Hey, nobody's infallible. (Jeff Contompassis, Ashburn)

Q. When I complained to my neighbor about his Confederate flag, he said, "Sorry you was offended." I corrected his grammar, but he looked mad. Now I've noticed that the apostrophe and comma are missing in his "You'll Pry My Gun From My Cold Dead Hands" bumper sticker on his pickup. What's the best way for me to remind him of the importance of good spelling and grammar?
A: Some people learn best from seeing their errors corrected in writing. Using

large, easy-to-read capital letters, scratch your note of correction into the finish of his vehicle. (Megan Durham, Reston, a First Offender)

Q. I'm always hearing about how the Senate can't do anything unless it has a quorum. What is a quorum?
A. A slight buzz. (Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)

Q. What are the differences in the phrases "at three locations," "at three different locations" and "at three completely different locations"?
A: The second makes clear they are not three of the same location, while the third makes clear that the different locations are not located together. (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

Q. They say that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder"; is that true?
A. Well, that's just ridiculous. It's GROSS in there! (Beverly Sharp)

Q. What does "negligent" mean?
A. It's a legal term referring to skimpy underwear, e.g., "She looked negligent in her diphthong." (Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.)

Q: We often hear of "abject poverty." Does someone ever have "abject wealth"?
A: Donald Trump. (Jay Shuck, Minneapolis)

Q: My husband is never in a subjunctive mood anymore. Is it me?
A: Would that it were. (Jennifer Hart)

Q: Could you demonstrate correct usage of the word "impact"?
Wrong: "The business model was impacted by the grim economic scenario."
Right: "I found whomever wrote the above sentence and had an impact upon him, by impacting his head in a junkyard car-crushing machine." (Jennifer Hart)

Q. Can you suggest a good name for my rock band?
A. Sorry, nothing's coming to mind. (Jeff Contompassis)

Next Week: Spit the Difference, or Sim-Hilarities

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Week 824: Jestination

We've asked for mottoes and slogans for states and countries; now it's time to give a boost (emphasis on the "boo") to cities and towns. **This week, give us a slogan for any city or town**, as in the example in the cartoon. Don't go through the atlas and make puns on every unknown burg on the globe; we're not looking to run a list of puns, as we did for our contest for sports team names. For those who can't resist that urge, send us no more than your 25 best entries. This boost to our chambers of commerce was suggested by Kelley Bielewicz of Newark, Del., who recently got three blots of ink in her very first appearance on this page.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives the book "Punk Shui: Home Design for Anarchists," which at least semi-seriously includes such decorating tips as cutting your couch in half with a chain saw and letting the stuffing dribble out.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (Fit Stink for their First Ink). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, July 13. Put "Week 824" 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 Aug. 1. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Beverly Sharp; the revised title for next week's contest is by Mae Scanlan.

Palin and the Press: Always a Rocky Road

MEDIA NOTES, From Page C1

bedded in the popular culture that it spawned its own set of subplots: her daughter Bristol's pregnancy, Bristol's breakup with boyfriend Levi Johnston, their dueling morning-show appearances, and the governor turning on the young man she once said would marry her daughter, accusing him of "flat-out lies, gross exaggeration and even distortion of their relationship." And there was Palin firing the state public safety commissioner, who had resisted pressure to dismiss a trooper who happened to be embroiled in a bitter divorce and custody battle with the governor's sister.

It is easy to forget what a fresh and charismatic figure she seemed at September's Republican convention. It is more difficult to forget the media overkill as some journalists flirted with sexism, questioning how she could juggle the vice presidency and five kids, including an infant with Down syndrome. But the McCain brain trust shielded her from the press, and by the time she was refusing to tell Couric a single newspaper or magazine she read, and could not name a single Supreme Court ruling other than *Roe v. Wade*, Palin became a punch line, even when she showed she could laugh at herself on "Saturday Night Live." Conservative commentators

spotted her early, some on scouting trips to Juneau, and one attribute kept popping up. Rush Limbaugh called Palin "a babe." National Review's Stephen Spriell called her "ridiculously good-looking." Before long, CNBC's Donny Deutsch was saying: "Women want to be her. Men want to mate with her." But Palin's candidacy also sparked a civil war on the right as some opinionators called her out of her depth. When syndicated columnist Kathleen Parker ripped Palin as unqualified, Parker was showered with 11,000 negative e-mails, calling her a "traitor" and an "idiot." After retreating to Alaska, Palin remained an object of media fascination. Her on-again, off-again agreement to address a recent Republican fundraising dinner in Washington fueled a week's worth of hot-air debates. She seemed at once pugnacious and put-upon. Even by the standards of Amer-

ican insta-fame, Palin's roller-coaster ride was breathtaking. Plucked from obscurity by McCain, she practically hijacked the fall campaign, soared so high, plummeted so low, and wound up defending why the GOP had been charged for \$150,000 worth of clothing and accessories. "Wasilla hillbillies looting Neiman Marcus," an "aide," unnamed as always, huffed to Newsweek. Now the press, to paraphrase Richard Nixon, won't have Sarah Palin to kick around anymore. But she went rogue one more time yesterday afternoon, achieving the near-impossible feat of knocking the endless Michael Jackson coverage off the air. In the end, Palin made monkeys out of the pundits who spent endless hours debating whether she was positioning herself for a 2012 presidential run. And perhaps that gave her a small measure of satisfaction as she stepped out of the white-hot spotlight.

Violinist Goes To Bat for National Anthem

VIOLIN, From Page C1

an instrument to use in a children's concert; he had done the same program in D.C. with more standard electric fiddles, but he had only borrowed those instruments and couldn't take them on tour.

Not everyone might have come up with his solution, which required hours backstage at the Kennedy Center, using the stagehands' drill press to make holes in a baseball bat. "It's tricky to drill a hole in the handle," he observes. "If you use a small enough bit, it wants to drift." He adds, "You'll see how [the bat-violin] is kind of crude at the bottom."

On the contrary, the video is downright elegant — both for the instrument, narrow and compact, and for the playing, executed with cool aplomb. It's certainly not your typical classical-music approach to the national anthem. There are overtones of Jimi Hendrix in the reverberant electronic sound, though the arrangement is actually Donnellan's own. (The video appears on YouTube as a "video response" to Hendrix, but Donnellan says that was an accident; new to the site, he randomly clicked a lot of different links when his post first went up.)

Donnellan has been with the NSO since 1997; his violinist wife, Jan Chung, frequently plays with the orchestra, too. (They have two children: Adrian, 8, and Katherine, 6.) On his own time, Donnellan tries his hand at fiddling and experimenting with jazz. "Jamming with a guitarist on 'Hotel California' at the California Congressional offices on the Hill, and with kids playing the Blues in Mississippi were some of the most fun and memorable musical experiences I've had," he writes in a follow-up e-mail. "In terms of playing outside the classical box, I think that if you can feel it, you can play it."

The instrument had immediate resonance in Arkansas. Iván Fischer, the NSO's principal conductor, happened to see Donnellan playing it backstage and immediately had to try it out. Now, Fischer wants one of his own. "I just haven't had time to make one," says Donnellan.

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CAROLYN HAX

While I'm away, readers give the advice.

On devastation, and its aftermath:

My parents divorced when I was a teenager. For years and years, my mom was bitter about it. My dad married the other woman. She was nice enough, but I never felt close. Along the way I took up with a guy and lived with him for a few years. My mother never trusted him and figured he'd break my heart. Guess what? She was right. He cheated on me, and after eight years I moved out. I was devastated.

But I learned the lesson my mom never knew she taught me: Get over it. You only live once and who wants to spend the rest of your life bitter? The other party doesn't suffer, but you do.

My dad died a year ago. Funny thing was, my dad stayed with his second wife for 35 years. My allegiance is always with my mom, but I still phone my "stepmom" every week.

Breakups are horrible, and I don't wish them on anyone. But even I learned from disaster how to reprioritize what you value in life.

S.G.

On women who preen, and on those who judge them:

Ah, a woman's "tyranny of choice." Women have dozens more choices to make than men before we head out the door. Men? Which pants, which shirt, which tie (if he needs one), brown shoes or black? Then he's good to go! It's not just makeup for women, but hair that needs styling and so many more choices — slacks or skirt or dress? Capris or jeans? Which earrings, necklace, bracelet, belt? Too dressy or casual for the occasion? Etc.

And of course, we've been captivated by our choices since the Barbie days, so we take a fair amount of pleasure in all our choices. I often think what we could accomplish if our morning ablutions were as quick as a man's! But a woman who is able to cover all the necessary bases, while looking good doing it, is probably a good time manager.

My husband and I were college sweethearts and are now celebrating our 30th wedding anniversary. In addition to the time it takes for me to get ready, he's a morning person, up at 5 or 6 and out by 7, whereas I need more sleep and move more slowly in the morning. Early on, when my slower pace wore on my husband, we had a frank discussion where we both concluded that he needs to take care of himself and I may miss out on things. He's come to enjoy his morning quiet time with the paper and a cat on his lap before I'm up and about. He runs errands or rides his bike without me on early weekend mornings.

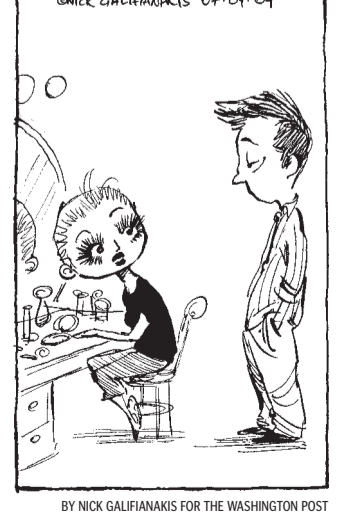
Sure, there were times when my husband made value judgments about my fuss and bother. He thought it was hypocritical and too girly of me to want to carry a bouquet as we walked down the aisle together. We both laugh about that now.

Sometimes I think unmarried men harbor a fantasy that women will put away girlish things when they marry, but will somehow magically, effortlessly stay the same slender bombshell that attracted them in the first place. Dream on, fellas!

Realistic Feminist

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ONLINE DISCUSSION
 Carolyn Hax's Weekly Web chat is at noon Fridays at www.washingtonpost.com/discussions.



BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST