

The Style Invitational

Week XC: Roling With Laughter

1. If the Munchkin from the Lollipop Guild in "The Wizard of Oz" had played Rick in "Casablanca," the movie would have surpassed even "Rocky Horror" in cult classic status.



2. If Dumbo had played Thelma in "Thelma and Louise," the end wouldn't have been at all tragic.

3. If Hannibal Lecter had played Andre in "My Dinner With Andre," the movie would have been over in four minutes.

This Week's Contest was suggested by Bill Spencer of Exeter, N.H. Bill suggests that you take a character from one movie, use him or her to replace a character in a second movie, and then explain how this change would affect the second movie. First-prize winner gets an antique can of South Carolina Potted Possum, a value of \$15.

First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, by e-mail to losers@washpost.com, or by U.S. mail to The Style Invitational, Week XC, c/o The Washington Post.

1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 22. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and telephone number. E-mail entries must include the week number in the subject field. Contests will be 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 in four weeks. 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 Stephen Dudzik of Olney.

REPORT FROM WEEK LXXXVI

In which we asked you to come up with Rodney Dangerfieldisms. The Czar, not noted for his modesty, nonetheless decided there was one person more qualified than he to judge this contest. He phoned Rodney Dangerfield at his home in Los Angeles and read him the 20 finalist entries. As Rodney was about to select his favorites, his friend Bob Saget walked in. (You think we are making this up. We are not.) And so Rodney performed them for Bob. ("He's laughin', baby" Rodney reported. "Dese are all funny, y'know?") And yes, Rodney Dangerfield relaxing at home sounds exactly like Rodney Dangerfield popeyed and sweating onstage.

◆ Fourth Runner-Up: **At home, I don't get no respect. My wife tells me she wants to make a kid. I says, "You're too old to make another kid." She says, "No, I mean the kid next door."** (Chris Doyle, Burke)

◆ Third Runner-Up: **This lady, she's so ugly she don't get no respect. She has to hand out whistles to construction workers.** (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

◆ Second Runner-Up: **My wife don't give me no respect. I say, "Let's have sex like animals." She says, "Okay, I'll be a possum."** (Chris Doyle, Burke)

◆ First Runner-Up: **I go out, I don't get no respect. I say to the bartender, "Gimme the strongest thing you got." His bouncer beats me up!** (Mark Young, Washington)

◆ And the winner of travel and face-lift books: **In bed, I don't get no respect. My wife's favorite position is back-to-back.** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

◆ Honorable Mentions: **As a kid, when I went trick-or-treating, our neighbors didn't bother with apples. They just handed me a razor blade.** (Lawrence P. McGuire, Waldorf)

When I played cowboys and Indians as a kid, I always had to be the post the cowboys tied their horses to. (David Kleinbard, Jersey City)

When I called my OB-GYN for an appointment, he said, "How about you just describe yourself over the phone." (Judith E. Cottrill, New York)

I joined the Optimists Club and within a week they had all committed suicide. (Debra J. Gravelle, Cornwall-on-Hudson, N.Y.)

Melissa Etheridge passed up my sperm for David Crosby's. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

Even hookers want to know why we can't "just be friends." (Ray Aragon and Cynthia Coe, Bethesda)

The tollbooth operator told me to take my business elsewhere. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

My computer won't let me turn it off until it says so. (Mark Young, Washington)

When I take my dog out, he walks behind me carrying the little plastic bag. (Andrea Kelly, Brookeville)

As a kid, I got lost at the beach. I asked a cop if he could help me find my mom and dad. He said, "I dunno, kid, there are a lotta places they can hide." (Bill Gardner, Fairfax)

I asked Kevorkian for help. He mailed me a noose. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

My wife and I tried group sex. The group had sex with my wife. (Chris Doyle, Burke)

My wife says I should get in touch with my feminine side. I guess that's because she won't let me get in touch with HER feminine side. (Chris Doyle, Burke)

Matt Drudge considers me unreliable. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

My dog tries to roll in me. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

When I turn on AOL it says, "Welcome. You've got a weak chin." (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Lawyers tell jokes about me. (Bob Sorensen, Herndon)

When I was a kid, the crossing guard at my school gave me a blindfold and told me to Use the Force. (Stephen Dudzik, Silver Spring)

AOL wants its disk back. (Bob and Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

My wife told me to pick up condoms on the way home. I've had a vasectomy. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Ray Romano called the other day. He doesn't want me to love him. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

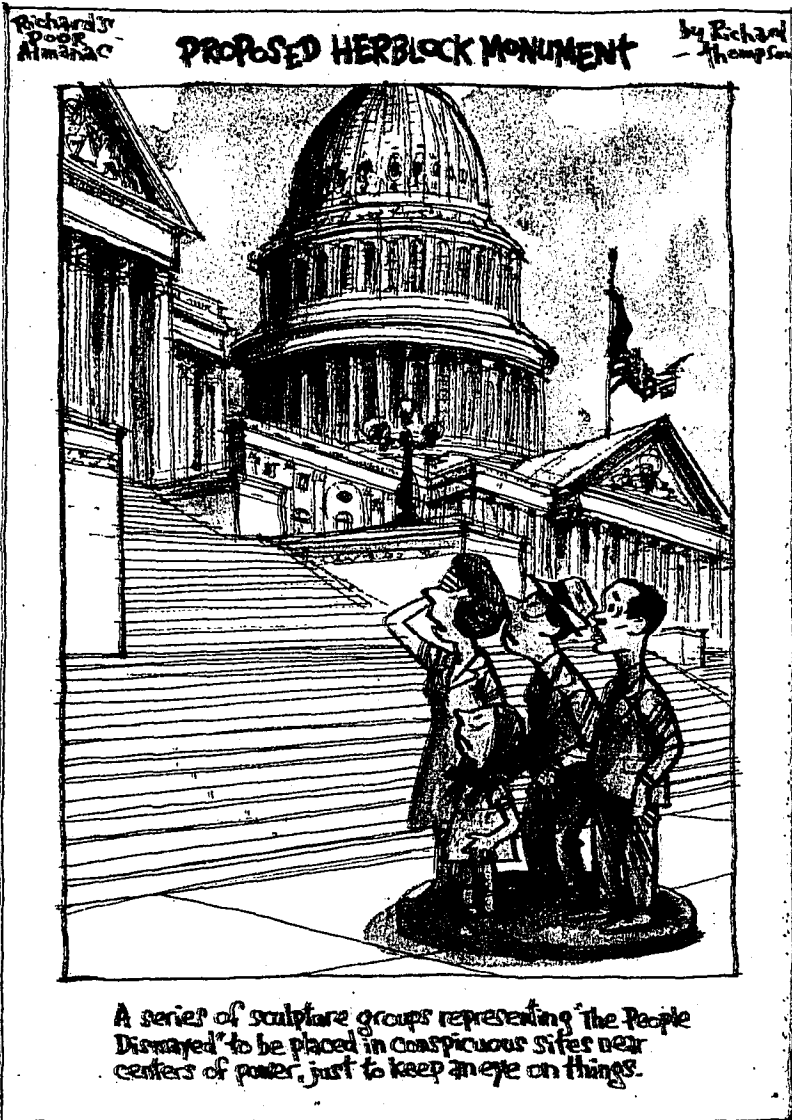
When I go to restaurants, waiters make me spit in my own iced tea. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

I got a letter from Publishers Clearing House saying, "No way in hell you could be a winner." (Craig McGowan, Liverpool, N.Y.)

When my patients come into the examining room, they ask the nurse for rubber gloves. (Stephen Fahey, MD, Kensington)

They only print my name in parentheses. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Next Week: Bodacious Ha-has



A series of sculpture groups representing 'The People Dismissed' to be placed in conspicuous sites near centers of power, just to keep an eye on things.

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Destination Weddings

Presumably, events have overtaken the idea that came to be known as the "destination wedding." If they hadn't, Miss Manners was about to do the job. Weddings belong at home. If anyone can figure out where that is.

The idea that one should marry the boy or girl next door was not just a bit of homely romanticism; it was a logistically brilliant wedding plan. The hedge growing between their houses might have taken some wear, but there was no need to rent vulgarly long cars, because everyone was already on the scene.

But, of course, the young had to spoil it. They claimed to feel nothing for the twerps who had taunted them when they were little. Or they claimed that family had moved away long ago and left no forwarding address. Even when they were allowed to go farther afield, they refused to listen to their elders. Mother held strictly with tradition and said the wedding had to be held in the bride's parents' home, so naturally it would take place in the ski chalet she and her new husband had just bought.

Father said it had to be near him because his second wife's children had invited all their friends, and that she said to remind everyone that he is entitled to make all the crucial choices or he wouldn't contribute a cent.

Grandfather said that he supposed no one cared whether he came or not, because if they did, they would hold it at his retirement community, where there was a lovely activities center that could be decorated nicely.

Grandmother said she was planning to be there no matter what, and if the trip proved to be too much for her, they should just carry on with the festivities as if she were alive.

And then another grandmother said . . . but by this time, the couple was plotting escape. Under such circumstances, Miss Manners can understand their deciding to settle the question themselves.

The traditional solution would be to elope, or at least to threaten to do so until everyone else calmed down. Or to hold it in their own home, which Miss Manners supposes is what passes for tradition nowadays.

But then people who didn't have quarreling families wanted them so they could do their own planning, and they soon found ways to inconvenience everyone. The culmination is the idea of eloping with all the wedding guests, to an exotic locale unrelated to anyone concerned except to the vacation dreams of the couple.

The destination wedding was a lark for those who could take a week or so off at the time of the wedding, were eager to go to the particular place chosen, had the available money for transportation, hotels and other travel expenses, and who wanted to be along on the honeymoon.

The bride and bridegroom could certainly meet those criteria, and perhaps a few others as well. For most people, it meant preempting their own vacation plans, coming up with a lot of money, and committing to spend a long time with someone else's family and friends—at any rate, with those of them who could manage it themselves.

It does not seem to have occurred to the couples themselves that people who would be delighted to witness their wedding would not be happy to live with them ever after.

Dear Miss Manners:

My friend's husband has the habit of answering our telephone when visiting us, sometimes to regrettable effect. Once he answered immediately

prior to my husband's surprise birthday party, before I had a chance to hush the excited guest, and my husband, on the other end of the line, was sadly tipped off to the surprise.

Last night, he answered while I was outside chatting with my friend. He mentioned that "some idiot" had called with the wrong number. It turns out he was rather rude to our housepainter, whose first language is not English. Needless to say, I had some explaining to do later to this lovely man.

What exactly is the rule on answering the phone in another's house? I realize one should never be rude, but what are the guidelines? And how do I discourage him from doing this again?

The rule is that all a guest may do about a ringing telephone is to call out to the host, "Do you want me to get that?" or to say "I left this number, so that might be for me," and let the host decide who should answer.

The guidelines are that the host is indeed banned from being rude, but not from self-protection.

May Miss Manners safely assume that you have already tried the obvious? Such as saying "I appreciate your wanting to help, but please don't answer the telephone—I prefer to let it ring" (or "the answering machine will take it")?

If that hasn't worked, you know this is not someone who was being inadvertently rude under the mistaken notion that he was doing you a favor. You should take measures to stop him before he thinks of doing you a favor by opening your mail.

The next step is from etiquette's unlikely friend, technology. Turn off the ringer. Set the answering machine to answer on one ring. Unplug the telephone. Whatever it takes.

Yes, of course, Miss Manners realizes that your busybody guest will discover this and point it out to you. That gives you another opportunity to explain that this is because you prefer handling your calls yourself after your guests have gone.

Dear Miss Manners:

Help! What do I say to people when they say to me, often in a very loud voice, "My, have you lost a lot of weight!" Actually, I am at an all-time high, weight-wise. I am stunned by people who feel they can comment on my personal appearance in an obviously false manner. I would never comment in a way to highlight their faults. I was surprised to find that friends had the same problem and were also struck by how hurtful it was.

"Thank you, you're so kind to worry about me, but I'm fine."

The trick here is to refuse to say anything more about a subject that is not their concern ("you're so kind to worry about me" being polite-speak for "mind-your-own-business"). Even Miss Manners was tempted to suggest adding, "as a matter of fact, I've been maintaining my weight nicely," until she realized that that, too, could be considered an opening.

Instead, you should be closing off ignorant evaluations with the chilling hint that weight is a more complicated matter than indicated by the assumption that thin is always better.

Feeling incorrect? Address your etiquette questions (in black or blue-black ink on white writing paper) to Miss Manners, in care of The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071.

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