

## The Style Invitational

Sleeps With the Fishes



**Week XCIX:** No contests until mid-January. Instead, Everything You Always Wanted to Know About the Stars of The Style Invitational in 100-Word Autobiographies That Contain One (and Only One) Falsehood. The revised title for next week's column is by Russell Beland of Springfield.



CHRIS DOYLE

■ I grew up in Providence when it was the armpit of New England. With the economic renaissance, it's moved up to become New England's goiter. I'm a math geek—in junior high I memorized pi to 100 places. That's probably why I didn't date till college. *That's* probably why I flunked out of Brown. Twice. Got drafted in '66, seeing action at NCO clubs in Jersey and Florida. Got out, went back to school on the GI Bill. Now I'm a Defense Department actuary computing GI Bill costs. What goes around comes around. Except for the digits of pi. (Chris Doyle, Burke)



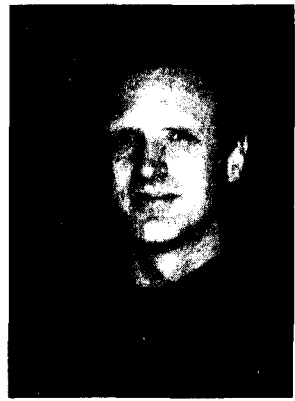
SUE LIN CHONG

■ At birth, I weighed 7 pounds 1 ounce, almost equal to five Entenmann's Ultimate Crumb Cakes. My high school mascot: Quakers. College mascot: Warriors, or the Defenders of the 33 1/3 Percent Retainer Fee. I'm writing a novel based on my paternal grandfather's autobiography, describing his rise from immigrant fruit peddler to Coffee King of the Hawaiian Islands. When I moved here in 1992, people asked, "Why would you move from Hawaii to Washington?" Now that I'm moving to Fargo, I can hear the inevitable question: "Why would you move from Hawaii to Washington?" (Sue Lin Chong, Washington)



PAUL STYRENE

■ My name is Paul Styrene and I can be found on [www.crunchland.com](http://www.crunchland.com). I was born in Washington, D.C., raised in Silver Spring and Wheaton, and currently live in Olney. I work for the Department of the Navy, spending money faster than a bottle of syrup of ipecac can cause discomfort. My friend Lexy thinks I am a jackass. "Scat" is the funniest word I can think of right now. I have the attention span of a 2-year-old. I'm still waiting for John Waters to discover me. (Paul Styrene, Olney)



BRIAN BROADUS

■ But for my earnest, well-rewarded 18 months in The Style Invitational, the only way my name and photograph might appear on your Sunday breakfast table is affixed to a milk carton. Invitational renown saps one's credibility: Sometimes it seemed as though I was the one who insisted that O.J. try on the bloody glove. So I quit to salvage my architectural and scholarly career, spend more time with my wife and daughters, and use my spare time to push Mariah Carey toward movie stardom. I admit that some parts of the plan worked out better than others. (Brian Broadus, Charlottesville)

Next Week: Life Is Shirt (Cont'd)

### BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Neither side vulnerable

**NORTH**  
♠ J 10 9  
♥ A 4 3  
♦ K Q 7  
♣ K 10 8 5

**WEST (D)**  
♠ A 8 7 6 5 4 2  
♥ 6  
♦ 6 4 2  
♣ 6 2

**EAST**  
♠ K Q 3  
♥ J 10 9 8 2  
♦ J 8  
♣ A 7 3

**SOUTH**  
♠ None  
♥ K Q 7 5  
♦ A 10 9 5 3  
♣ Q 1 9 4

The bidding:  
West North East South  
3 Pass 4 NT  
Pass 5 Pass 6 ♦

All Pass

Opening lead: ♠ A

Some stimuli always evoke the same response—does the name "Pavlov" ring a bell?—but if you stimulate 16 bridge players with the same deal, you'll get results that vary.

In the semifinals of a major team event, one North-South made five diamonds, but another got to slam on today's auction. South's 4NT was for takedown. North's five spades said, "Pick a suit."

South, world champion Bob Hamman, ruffed West's ace of spades and tried for a dummy reversal. He led a trump to dummy, ruffed a spade and led a club to the ten. East won and led a heart, and Hamman took the ace, ruffed a third spade and cashed the ace of trumps. He got to dummy with the king of clubs to draw West's last trump and run the clubs and hearts.

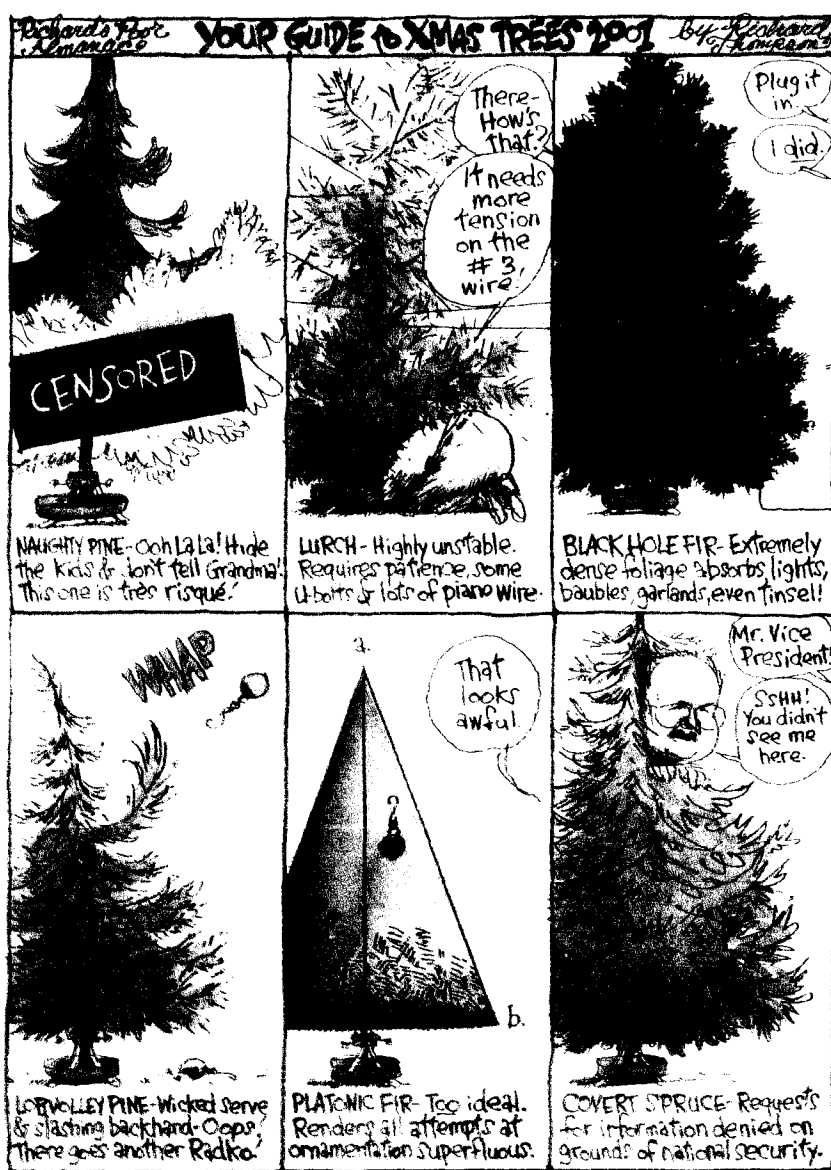
At the third table, West passed

as dealer, and North opened one club. East tried one heart, and North-South bid boldly to six clubs. When East led the king of spades, North ruffed and led a trump. East ducked, won the next trump and led his last trump.

North needed five diamond tricks. He knew East had five hearts, three clubs and surely a few spades, so North took the king of diamonds, led a heart to dummy and let the ten of diamonds ride, alas.

The fourth table saw a little contemporary insanity. West opened three diamonds, a "transfer preempt." East converted to three spades, South doubled and all passed. Though North-South could have beaten the contract, they let East ruff a diamond in his hand for his ninth trick and lost 530 points.

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### MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

### RSVPeeved

Nobody could possibly understand such instructions, Miss Manners keeps being told. They seem to be written in a strange, unknown language. Even the most basic direction can't possibly mean what it says it does.

She readies herself to murmur sympathetic assent and slither off before anyone is foolish enough to ask for her help in assembling a boxful of unrelated parts to look like the jungle gym in the diagram, or program a new electronic device to pick up information from another electronic device. But she halts when it turns out that the incomprehensible instructions comprise a party invitation. Oops. Helping with that is in her job description.

Would-be guests are complaining that they can't even be sure what is meant by the word "party." Tons to eat? Chips, pretzels and maybe a vegetable tray? Even less, because the guests are expected to do the cooking?

After the food, in importance, come the hosts. But who are they? There may be several names, as people sometimes give joint parties, or maybe they are just reveling in domesticity and those are the names of the baby, the dog and the parakeet. They are likely only first names, and if a guest is lucky one of them might be recognizable. But even if that is the right Josh, is that his telephone number? Is that his address or one of the others? Is he the person you are supposed to thank, or is it the one who turns out to live there, or is it everybody?

There is an arrival time stated, but when are you really supposed to get there? If you show up as told, you will be caught in painful isolation with your hosts, desperately repeating how nice everything looks? How long do you have to stay? Is it safe to accept another invitation for after the stated closing hour, or will your hosts interpret that as desertion?

Then comes the hardest question: What are you supposed to wear? If it says anything, there is a built-in contradiction, such as "elegantly casual" or "creatively formal."

Miss Manners shares the guests' exasperation, although not to the point of forgiving them for forgetting the whole thing until the date of the party and then acting on their own terms—showing up or not at almost any hour, dressing as they please, being cross because they are hungry if the food is slight or, if they ate before and it turns out to be plentiful, and not greeting or thanking anyone because no one appears to be in charge.

Contrary to its reputation, etiquette does not like to set traps. It begs hosts to use their full names, words like "dinner" or "cocktails," and to elaborate on terms like "informal" by saying "dressy" or "business dress" or "jeans." If they don't, it authorizes guests to grill them, asking, "Who are the other hosts, and whose house is it?" "Should I wear a suit?" "Are we safe in making dinner reservations afterward at about 9?" but not "Why didn't you say so in the first place?"

Dear Miss Manners:

Could you please clarify a four-generation picture? I have not been able to find this topic addressed in any etiquette book.

Would it be all the females, or grandmother, mother, female daughter and female granddaughter? I am the mother, and this has created a large problem because my son feels that his daughters were slighted. I know I could have included them, but my daughter, who paid for the picture, preferred to do it this way.

Of course you haven't found it in an etiquette book. Having just experienced how divisive and un-

becoming it is to make rules that exclude family members on the grounds that they don't really meet a certain definition, why do you suppose that Miss Manners and her Etiquette ilk would want to do this?

You can arrange certain shots with certain relatives or categories of relatives only if you arrange other combinations so that everyone feels included. Film is cheaper than blood.

Dear Miss Manners:

On Sept. 11, the whole world fell apart. Members of my family had to walk from Manhattan across the bridge to get home to Brooklyn. The next day I was still told to have a nice day. This time I asked, "Do you really think I can have a nice day following what happened?" All I got was a silly stare.

Miss Manners: How can we stop this kind of meaningless invitation? I realize it has become so entrenched it is automatic. Even the bus driver says it to each passenger as we get out. No, I do not say thank you. Anyway, what is a nice day? The weather?

A nice day for Miss Manners would be one in which people realize that there is enough hatred in the world without their taking umbrage at perfectly harmless and routine expressions of good will.

Dear Miss Manners:

In the wake of the tragic attacks on New York and Washington, my wife and I canceled a trip to attend the late September wedding of an old friend in Europe. While we believed that flying was safe, our parents were terrified, and we did not want to put them through the anxiety they would feel during our absence.

We anguished over the decision, in part because our friend and his fiancée had attended our wedding in the United States earlier this year, but finally decided that it would be better to call off our travels.

Although I suggested to my friend soon after the tragedy that we might need to cancel our trip, I told him only six days before the wedding, in a long letter of apology that explained our reasons. I then sent him, the bride-to-be and their parents flowers with a note of both regret and congratulations. I said that though my wife and I would not be able to be at the ceremony, we had postponed our trip for later in the year, and hoped we might be allowed to toast their happiness then. My friend is now very angry, and the letter I received in reply was chilly.

I fear I have permanently damaged our relationship. Did we do wrong, and, if so, how might we do right? Or should our friend be more understanding of the difficult decision we made?

On the one hand, it is rude to rescind the acceptance of a wedding invitation. On the other hand, etiquette makes allowances for emergencies, and this was a major emergency. On another hand, your friend considered his wedding to be a major event.

How many hands does that make? Miss Manners hopes you have at least one left to stretch across the seas, in a generous gesture of friendship. Perhaps if you ignore his chilliness and apologize for being caught up in strong and stressful emotions, he will realize that he, too, was acting under emotional distress, although of a different sort.

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. 20001

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