

The Style Invitational

Week 497: Ask Backward



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This Week's Contest: You are on "Jeopardy!" These are the answers. What are the questions? First-prize winner gets the actual board game based on the movie "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days." This was sent to us free by Paramount in the naive hope that we would praise this wretched, manipulative, formulaic mess of a film.

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, or

Because the French Got There First	Definitely Not Michael Jackson	Mahmoud Finkelbaum
The Nobel, the Pulitzer and the Fonz		Zippo the Pinhead
Zippy the Pinworm	Because It Didn't Rhyme	The Rapper Nice-T
Dick Cheney But Not a Training Bra	Hans Blix's Right Nostril	Just that al Qaeda Guy in the T-shirt

by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. U.S. mail entries are no longer accepted. Deadline is Monday, March 24. 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 winner of the Week CLIX first prize is Lindsay Lacy of Woodbridge. The revised title for next week's contest is by Seth Brown of Williamstown, Mass.

Report from Week CLIX, in which you were to come up with really miserly ways to ride out the recession, and from Week CLX, in which you were asked to complain with extreme oversensitivity to items in that day's paper. We are combining these results because Week CLX occurred on the day of the big storm, a lot of people didn't get their papers, and the entries that did arrive were, by and large, terrible. Only three deserve mention, but they were pretty good.

◆ Second Runner-Up: **Your repeated references to "President Bush" are highly offensive to those who regard Al Gore as the legitimate winner of the election.** (John Holder, Rock Hill, S.C.)

◆ First Runner-Up: **We're in a war on terrorism and you print a convenient map of the Washington area right there on Page A14. Why not just put up a "Welcome Terrorists!" sign?** (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

◆ And the winner of a copy of "The Great American Parade," described in The Washington Post as "the worst novel ever written in the English language": **I was deeply offended that the Czar chose to conduct this week's contest at the expense of oversensitive people; haven't we suffered enough for our condition?** (Cecil J. Clark, Arlington)

Now, to the cheapskates:

◆ Third Runner-Up: **At the bottom of your Christmas cards, write: "P.S., Happy Valentine's Day!"** (Elisabeth Kuhn, Richmond)

◆ Second Runner-Up: **Kill and cook your own meals. Hint: Security is pretty lax at petting zoos.** (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

◆ First Runner-Up: **Peel congealed toothpaste drips from your bathroom sink. Use as after-dinner mints.** (Keith Irvine, Springfield)

◆ And the winner of the kosher dog food sample: **Instead of paying for a personalized license plate, just change your name to match your license plate.** (XZC-4147, Woodbridge)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

Instead of money, give panhandlers coupons for little favors, like back rubs and "together-time." (Hilary Neggin Keilp, Washington)

Save on heating oil by inviting bombastic blowhards over for a discussion. Then light them on fire. (William Barratt, Falls Church)

Tell your kids that nobody cool goes to college anymore. (Elizabeth Kirkwood, Arlington)

Just let the Supreme Court pick the next president directly, and we'll all save money! (G.W. Bush, Washington)

(Alex Smith and Susan Houston, McLean)

Open a window instead of turning on the air conditioning when the furnace overheats the house during the winter. (Rebecca Nilson-Owens, Madison, Va.)

Save all your calendars; then, in a dozen years or so when they start to match up again, you'll be all set while your friends have to buy new ones. (Rikki Rabbin, Olney; Mariann Simms, Wetumpka, Ala.)

Buy an old truck. Paint "Goodwill Industries" on it. Park in a shopping center and wait for the booty to arrive. (Barry Blyveis, Columbia)

To save money on pet food, buy a big dog and train him to feed on the little dogs and cats in the neighborhood. (Barry Blyveis, Columbia)

After reading the paper, instead of washing your hands, rub them in your hair. It really gets rid of the gray. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

Can't afford a tracheotomy voice box? Everyone loves a kazoo! (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Instead of dropping expensive aluminum chaff to fool enemy radar, use those AOL disks. (Martin Schulman, Herndon)

You can save on funeral expenses AND commuting time by having your loved ones taxidermized in seated poses and placed into your car's passenger seats on I-66. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)

To save energy, the Redskins only show up to play in the first half of each game ... oh, wait ...

(Scott Watson, Jemez Springs, N.M.)

Instead of those expensive congressmen from California or New York, bribe someone from Wyoming or Arkansas. (Noah Meyerson, Washington)

Instead of getting that new premium cable TV package, try reading one book a week from your local public library. Kidding! Kidding! Just try cutting off HBO7 in a few months. (Joe Morse, Charlottesville)

Collect old Electroluxes and convert them to jet packs to power an army of flying mechanoid zombies. This is far more economical than trying to clone a race of vampire pterodactyl men. (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

Turn gay. Then you can share clothes with your mate. (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

When designing your \$50 million home, make sure everything is automated so you can save money on servants. (Bill Gates, Redmond, Wash.) (Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

Never clean the bathtub. Eat the mushrooms. (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)

When sniffing glue, use a generic brand. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

There is a reason they call it "toe jam." (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls)

Read The Washington Post online for free. Your HMO will pay to treat seizures caused by flashing pop-up ads. Meanwhile, you will have saved even more by purchasing flights through Orbitz with your American Express card! (Hilary Neggin Keilp, Washington)

And last:

Instead of hiring professional writers, trick the public into delivering a half-page of comedy each Sunday. Pay them with plastic vomit and movie promotional materials taken from wastebaskets. (Martin Schulman, Herndon)



TELL ME ABOUT IT

TELL ME, *From F1*

you're right, but the message in it was a winner: "Value me." You were entitled—and in fact overdue—to ask him for that, especially if we're all working off the same definition of "intimate."

And even though you could have phrased this request of him a bit better, his response renders that issue moot. He said no. And he said it with a non-answer, possibly the most dismissive of his many options for dealing with your frustration.

What I see is a guy who was one of your best friends—and a girl who was his occasional friend with benefits. The repair you needed to make was to close the perception gap. I hope I'm wrong—but if I am, let him come tell you that.

Dear Carolyn:

I am a college student who is transferring to another school for the 2003 fall semester. I have a boyfriend of more than two years, who will stay in our small town indefinitely. I am choosing between two schools close to home (the better schools) and one about a thousand miles away (the expensive school). Right now I am not interested in dating

anyone, including my boyfriend, who is dependent on me for all things emotional. I am, though, extremely attracted to my boyfriend's friend.

It would be easier on my pocket to stay here. But a big part of me wants to go explore myself a thousand miles away, while staying friends with my boyfriend and having a fling (which I really want) with our friend before I go. I'm not sure what to do.

—Northeast

A thousand miles away, please—from the stultifying boyfriend, whom you need to dump now; from the dubious fling concept, which you need to dump now; from the hometown dust you're not convinced you're ready to shake. (Hint: You are. You are. You are.) The mileage can even be conceptual. If the local schools are better and cheaper, great, take advantage of that—but immerse yourself in one, don't keep dragging your laundry home. And when you graduate, look up that guy.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or tellme@washpost.com and join Carolyn's live discussion at noon Fridays at washingtontimes.com/liveonline



HE CALLS ME EVERY FEW WEEKS, WE ALWAYS STAY IN, WE SLEEP TOGETHER—YOU KNOW, HE'S JUST A VERY BUSY GUY.

BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Next Week: Brief Is the Soul of Wit