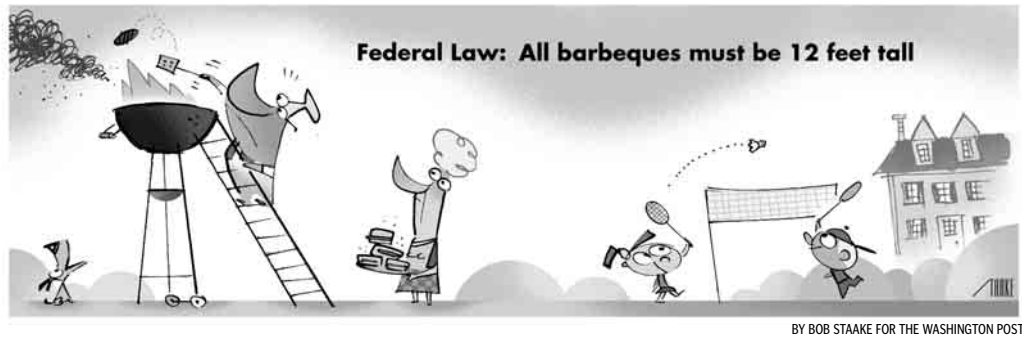


The Style Invitational

Week 523: Hard to Overstate



BY BOB STANKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

- Change 911 emergency number to 134599671A.
- Change license plate size to 1 inch square.
- Print newspapers with yellow ink.

This Week's Contest was suggested by Stephen Dudzik of Olney. This is the ultimate old poop's contest idea, based upon the concept that the dadburn youth of today don't know how good they have it—that life used to be much harder. Stephen suggests that you propose ways to make modern life just a little bit harder than it needs to be, as in the examples above. First-prize winner gets an "Armpit of America" T-shirt from Battle Mountain, Nev.

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 by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. U.S. mail entries are no longer accepted. Deadline is Monday, Sept. 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 Thomas Witte of Gaithersburg.

Report from Week 519, in which you were asked to come up with only-in-Washington pickup lines.

- ◆ Third Runner-Up: **Excuse me, ma'am, but the gentleman at that table has sent you a FYH 2005 energy and water appropriations bill rider for a \$52.3 million solid-waste treatment plant upgrade in your home congressional district, with his compliments.** (Mark Briscoe, Arlington)
- ◆ Second Runner-Up: **I'm guessing you work for Fannie Mae, because your fanny may be the best I've ever seen.** (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
- ◆ First Runner-Up: **Babe, why are you wasting your time with an assistant to a deputy secretary, when you could be with ME, a deputy assistant undersecretary?** (Dan Steinberg, Falls Church)
- ◆ And the winner of the the Lyndon Johnson commemorative plaque: **Your beauty renders me as powerless as Del. Eleanor Holmes Norton.** (Cindy Burnham, Alexandria)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

You're so hot that when you walk by on the street, half-smokes become whole-smokes. (Mel Loftus, Holmen, Wis.)

In full compliance with federal information statutes, I am required to disclose that I've fallen FOIA. (Bob Steck, Washington)

How about if we get away somewhere and completely deregulate ourselves? (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Boy, that dress you are wearing is the most effective Request for Proposals I have ever reviewed. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Your nomination for secretary of the posterior has been confirmed. (Luke S. Wassum, Washington)

Hi, I'm here on an important fact-finding mission. What's your sign? (Michael Burgess, Germantown)

Let's play Cabinet. You be the president, and I'll serve at your pleasure. (Jon Holmlund, Carlsbad, Calif.)

Come here often enough for this to be your domicile for tax purposes? (Hank Wallace, Washington)

May I take you to a motel? I promise this is just to seduce you and not to influence legislation. (Hank Wallace, Washington)

My name is Bond. U.S. Treasury Series EE Bond. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

My intern doesn't understand me. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

You've been holding my eyes hostage all night, and I would like to negotiate a diplomatic resolution. (Michael Burgess, Germantown)

Your basement-level Adams Morgan \$1,600-a-month rat hole, or mine? (Dan Steinberg, Falls Church)

What a coincidence—you have a cute bellybutton, and I work at the Naval Observatory. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

Dick Cheney gave me a key to his secret undisclosed location, and it has a waterbed. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

If I told you your body reminded me of IRS form 10W-817a, would you withhold it against me? (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

I work for the Bureau of Engraving. Would you like to come over and see my etchings? (Robin D. Grove, Pasadena, Md.)

Let's make like John Poindexter after knowledge of the terrorism futures market became public, and leave. (Noah Meyerson, Washington)

Is that a Washington Monument paperweight in your pocket, or are you just happy to see me? (Susan Thompson, Raleigh, N.C.)

Is that a congressman in your pocket or are you just glad to see me? (Paul Styrene, Olney; Greg Arnold, Herndon)

Did Matt Drudge drop you off here? Because you're a bombshell. (Ian Morrissey, Walkersville)

Are you a spin doctor? Because I'm head over heels. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Next Week: **Who Ordered What?**

TODAY'S HOROSCOPE | Jeraldine Saunders

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
Future plans are very important. Mercury, in retrograde motion at a hard angle to Pluto, could mean that your priorities are shifting and changing, and you reach an altogether different solution.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
Much is going on in the background, and you want to speak out. However, for some reason, you feel it's better to hold back. Better to do nothing until you learn more.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
You may listen politely to partners, but, being you, you'll do exactly what you want. This evening promises relaxation and wining and dining with friends.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
Anxiety is one thing you cannot live with. A confrontation today could get you really upset. So be adamant, and clear the air as soon as possible.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
You may be under pressure as someone wants an all-or-nothing commitment. Don't allow yourself to be manipulated. With a

harmonious moon to your sun, everything should turn out well.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
Somebody is arguing his or her point over a not-too-serious issue. Giving way will save your Sunday. A Taurus companion could lighten the atmosphere.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
You may have an argument with someone who is passionate about what he or she believes. You get very annoyed and wonder what to do. Everyone has his or her convictions. Let things be.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Someone's rigid attitude—call it narrow-minded—could be spoiling your fun today. You may be listening to music or kicking a football to get the frustration out of your system.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
If single, the moon in your sign has you swooning about evolving romantic possibilities. Children may be cramping your fun. An escape to the beach or into nature restores your faith.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
You may not want to admit that

you've misjudged a family issue. Backbiting could make things worse. You learn by observing others' reactions and how they handle the situation.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
You're speaking your mind at last, and it's amazing nobody feels offended. You've been tiptoeing around for so long in order not to offend that this makes you feel reconnected.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
Neptune is still giving you problems. You're loath to admit that you've obviously dropped the ball in your approach toward a loved one. But today you have the Midas touch.

IF SEPT. 14 IS YOUR BIRTHDAY:
You're a thoughtful, rational person who does not relish controversy; a good networker, likable and make connections easily. You could be a writer, journalist or salesperson. This year sees you starting and succeeding with important projects; a time for introspection and learning from the past. December is good for money; romance should be blossoming this month.
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MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Suit Yourself, Ladies

At the highest levels of government, for work and during daytime ceremonial occasions, American ladies in official positions are now routinely wearing trouser suits.

(Well, at least senators, representatives and the ranking ladies who live or work in the White House are. You can never tell about those stylish justices.)

Miss Manners considers this an overdue triumph for decorum. The gentlemen are no longer subject to becoming overexcited by catching a glimpse of exposed ankle.

It is not often that she finds a sensible trend in the world of feminine fashion. Other such news—heralding the return of what Miss Manners actually wears, such as hats, gloves and evening dresses with trains, rather than what she countenances in others, as she does the trouser suit—typically amounts to nothing more than regularly repeated false alarms.

When the female equivalent of the male suit first began to be widely worn, it provoked outrage. Restaurateurs with fancy establishments declared that they would bar the door to ladies with the audacity to show up wearing pants. And that was in the first miniskirt era, when the same people had managed to accept the rapid retreat of hemlines—apparently only with the proviso that that trend not be reversed.

At the time, Miss Manners refused to become aghast. The prescience of denouncing ladies' tailored trouser suits struck her as an invitation to join members of the French Academy, who had barred the Impressionists; and the first-night audience at Stravinsky's "Rites of Spring," whose musical sensitivity led them to tear up the theater. One does not recover from such reputations. And surely there is enough nasty business around to keep the discriminating busy without having to scorn what will soon be considered conventional, if not classic. The grand restaurateurs' understanding of the gender factor in fashion did not improve after this defeat. When the law forced them to abandon their policy of hiring only males to wait on tables (with the notion that waitresses were better suited to simpler restaurants, where they could carry heavier trays for lighter tips), they dressed their waitresses in male formal dress, complete with bow ties.

What this says symbolically is: We still have male service, but some of it is performed by male impersonators. The difference between that and the female business

suit, whether it has a skirt or trousers, is that the suit is an adaptation rather than an imitation. While benefiting from such advantages as freedom from worry of exposing various parts of the body to view and criticism and compatibility with low-heeled shoes, the suit retains feminine access to the full color spectrum and (with the addition of jewelry and scarves, and the addition or total subtraction of blouses) individualization.

More significantly, it provides that recognizably professional look that gentlemen have always been able to summon. In contrast, ladies were presumed to be present on official occasions only in a social capacity, and their prescribed wardrobes—floaty dresses with whimsical hats for the most formal daytime occasions—reflected this. Even now, there is an oddly reactionary tendency among young ladies to wear clothes to work that are amazingly, ah, social in original intent.

The trouser suit, in contrast, symbolizes seriousness. So do the skirted suit and the coatdress, if they are of decent length, and Miss Manners will personally stick with them—despite that pesky problem of the provocatively exposed ankles.

Dear Miss Manners:

I have been noticing more and more at various dinner parties that the place settings are being done in a manner that appears odd to me. Over many years I have always placed the knife with the sharp edge of the blade toward the plate.

Now in many cases I see that sharp edge pointed away from the plate. Is this the correct new place setting arrangement, or not?

What are you thinking? That the Etiquette Council met one fine day and issued a proclamation that from then on, everyone was required to reverse all knives?

Not likely. What Miss Manners finds all too likely is that fewer and fewer people know or care how to do things properly.

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at MissManners@unitedmedia.com—if you promise to use the black or blue-black ink you'll save by writing those thank you, condolence and congratulations letters you owe.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable
NORTH (D)

♠ K 6 2
♥ A 6 3
♦ 2
♣ A J 10 5 4 2

WEST
♠ Q J 9 8 5
♥ 10 2
♦ 10 8 7 6
♣ 7 6

EAST
♠ 7 4
♥ J 9 8 7 4
♦ A 4
♣ K Q 9 3

SOUTH
♠ A 10 3
♥ K Q 5
♦ K Q J 5 3
♣ 8

The bidding:

North	East	South	West
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	3 NT	All Pass

Opening lead: ♠ Q

“What do you really think of men?” I asked Wendy, my club's feminist member.

“Men are like grapes,” Wendy told me. “It's a woman's job to stomp on them and keep them in the dark until they become something fit to have dinner with.”

Wendy and her nemesis Cy the Cynic, a shameless chauvinist, are forever stomping on each other, but Wendy never keeps Cy in the dark when he misplays. In a penny Chicago game, Wendy led the queen of spades against Cy's 3NT.

Cy won in dummy and hoped for overtricks. He led a diamond to his king and continued with the queen. East won and returned a spade, and Cy took the ace and cashed the jack of diamonds.

When East showed out, Cy couldn't afford to set up the diamonds; he tried a club to dummy's

jack. East won with the queen and returned a heart, and Cy took the ace and cashed the ace of clubs. When the king didn't fall, Cy took eight tricks: a club, two diamonds, three hearts and two spades.

“Unlucky,” Cy mumbled, but Wendy chortled.

“Just like a man to miss an easy avoidance play. Finesse with the nine on the first diamond. Even when I win with the ten, I can't lead another spade effectively. If I lead, say, a club, you take the ace, lead a heart to your hand and force out the ace of diamonds for nine tricks.”

Wendy was right, I fear. South can't let East win an early diamond trick to return a spade. (As Cy actually played, he could still succeed by end-playing East.)

“I'll fix her wagon yet,” Cy muttered.

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