

# The Style Invitational

Week 527: Rite of First Defusal



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

- When realizing that your fly has been open for some time.
- To the doctor, during a prostate or OB/GYN exam.
- To the boss, when he catches you visiting adult Web sites.
- After rear-ending someone at a stoplight.
- After committing a social error in a crowded elevator.

**This week's contest**, which was suggested by Stephen Dudzik of Olney: Come up with witty or bizarre things to say to defuse the tension in awkward moments such as those above. You may use any of the above scenarios, or any other similarly awkward situation. First-prize winner gets a soap dish shaped like a bathtub and a pen shaped like the continental United States.

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](mailto:losers@washpost.com). U.S. mail entries are no longer accepted. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 20. 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 Russell Beland of Springfield. The winner of this week's contest is Danny Bravman of Potomac.

**Results from Week 523**, in which we asked you to propose ways to make modern life harder than it needs to be. For some reason, this contest brought out the geeks. Many, many entries—with no apparent sense of irony—read like this: "Reconfigure Excel without disabling the serial ports to access sufficient RAM for most applications, then stand back and watch the mess." Also, Marc Leibert of New York reports that he knows a woman who programmed all the phones in her house to speed-dial 911: "So to dial it now," he writes, "you have to hit Memory-1-6. She doesn't understand why this is funny."

- ◆ Third Runner-Up: **It is no longer sufficient to clean up after your dog. By law, you must catch the offending substance before it hits the ground.** (Andrea Kelly, Brookeville)
- ◆ Second Runner-Up: **Replace the computer mouse with two Etch-a-Sketch knobs.** (Jim Risner, Greenbelt)
- ◆ First Runner-Up: **Presume innocence. (John Ashcroft, Washington)** (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)
- ◆ And the winner of the "Armpit of America" T-shirt from Battle Mountain, Nev.: **Eliminate surnames, as in the old days.** (Danny the Elder, son of Joseph of Great Neck)

- ◆ Honorable Mentions:
  - Drive-on-the-left-side-of-the-road Thursday.** (Russell Beland, Springfield)
  - Supermarkets arrange goods alphabetically: Lettuce, lamb and Lysol are now contiguous.** (William Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)
  - Convert stoplights to stopspeakers.** (Mark Hagenau, Derry, N.H.)
  - Introduce "17-29 Items" lanes at the supermarket.** (Tom Kreitzberg, Silver Spring)
  - ATMs require a urine specimen.** (Judith Cottrill, New York)
  - Install speed bumps on the Beltway.** (Stephen Dudzik, Olney; Bob Wallace, Reston)
  - Standardize the size and shape of all keys, so the only difference between them is the variation in the teeth. Also, make key rings and key chains illegal.** (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)

- Bicycle-pedaled flush toilets.** (Dan Steinberg, Falls Church)
- Diplomacy. (George W. Bush, Washington)** (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)
- The terms "Inner Loop" and "Outer Loop" are replaced by "Clockwise" and "Counter-Clockwise."** (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- Sell tires only in multiples of seven.** (Joel E. Baker, Monterey, Calif.)
- Mandatory fee of a nickel if you hum or whistle a copyrighted song.** (Joel E. Baker, Monterey, Calif.)
- Viagra takes 2 days 4 hours to become effective.** (Marc Leibert, New York)
- Install toilet paper dispensers just out of reach, so you have to stand.** (Mike Fransella, Arlington)
- Phone book arranged in alphabetical order—by first name.** (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)
- Adopt California recall rules for all government positions. If you get 500 signatures and a filing fee, you can recall your postman.** (Kevin d'Eustachio, Linwood, N.J.)
- More buttons on the TV remote.** (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- HOV use now requires three humans, a dog and a family of chickens.** (C. Amor Kramer, Honolulu)
- All election punch cards must be completed in reverse; i.e., stick chad into the holes you don't want punched.** (Kevin d'Eustachio, Linwood, N.J.)
- Subdivide time zones into 60 parts, observing local time to the minute.** (Danny Bravman, Potomac; Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)

- Replace friendly, knowledgeable humans with an automated voice that prompts callers to ceaselessly punch buttons until they no longer remember why they called or even have the will to live. Oh, wait . . .** (Marie Harris, Elkridge)
- Adapt to all appliances the "Are you sure?" message that computers demand before deleting something.**
- Microwave a burrito: "Are you sure?" Change the channel: "Are you sure?"** (Will Cramer and Julie Thomas, Herndon)
- Make "pumping" gas literal.** (Robin D. Grove, Pasadena, Md.; Art Grinath, Takoma Park)
- All pills must be suppositories.** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)
- "Lather. Rinse. Calculate the cube root of the number on the bottle's bar code. Repeat."** (Michael Denyszyn, New York)

Next Week: Man Bites This Contest

## BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Neither side vulnerable

NORTH			
▲ 10 9			
◆ Q 10			
◆ J 8 6 4 2			
WEST (D)		EAST	
▲ J 7 3	◆ 6 2	◆ A 5 4 3	▲ 6 5
◆ 10 9 7 5 3	◆ K Q		◆ J 8 7 4 3
◆ J 9 7	◆ K 8 6 2		
SOUTH			
▲ A K Q 8 4 2			
◆ A K 9 5			
◆ A			
◆ Q 10			

The bidding:

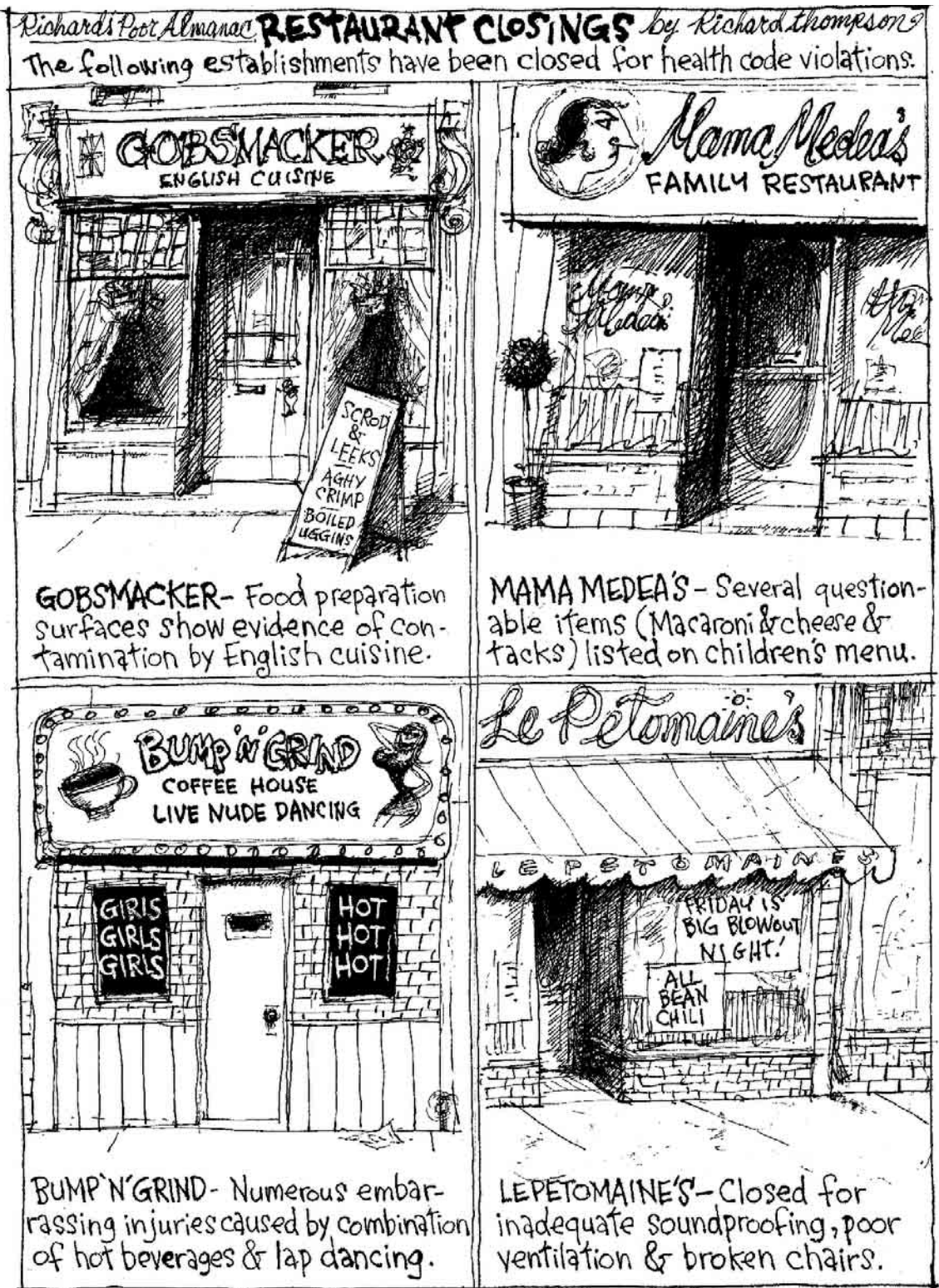
West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♥	Dbl
Pass	2♦	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

Opening lead: ♥ 6

Tournaments with cash prizes are common abroad but rare in the United States. The American Contract Bridge League has only recently allowed cash-prize events at its tournaments, perhaps hoping the game will receive media attention if a tour like the PGA Tour can be developed. At the ACBL Summer Championships, players entered an individual event with \$12,000 in prizes. Many amateurs competed (with no danger of losing their amateur status since bridge has no such thing), but the winner was pro Chris Compton. In today's deal Compton brushed aside East's unwise opening bid and tried his luck at 3NT. West led a heart, no doubt making East regret he'd opened. Compton won with the king and wanted all 13 tricks. He returned a heart to

dummy's queen and took the A-K of spades, and when both defenders followed, he had 12. Compton cashed four more spades and two more hearts, pitching three diamonds and three clubs from dummy. With three tricks to go, dummy had the J-8 of diamonds and ace of clubs, and South had the ace of diamonds and Q-10 of clubs. East was stuck. If he kept the K-Q of diamonds and the king of clubs, Compton would take the ace of clubs and win the last two tricks with the ace of diamonds and the queen of clubs. If instead East kept one diamond honor and K-8 of clubs, South could cash the ace of diamonds and score the ace of clubs and jack of diamonds. The rare "crisscross" squeeze helped earn Compton the first prize of \$4,000.

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## DEAR ABBY

Dear Abby:

I am a 20-year-old single father of a beautiful 13-month-old little boy. His mother took off with my best friend when our son was only 2 months old. I have a good job, my own place and don't depend on anyone, but I wish I could go back to school so I could provide my son with an even greater future. I would like to get my high school diploma, go on to college and become a police officer and mentor young fathers like myself. I don't have any support from my parents as far as my education goes. My mom says to be happy with what I have and stop being selfish. Is it selfish to want more out of life? Right now I am just living paycheck to paycheck.

Single Father in Houston

Selfish? Quite the opposite! While I agree with your mother that a person should be happy with what he or she can't change, I don't think that philosophy applies when it comes to furthering one's education. Pick up the phone, call the high schools in your area and ask about adult education programs so you can get your GED—the equivalent of a high school diploma. With that in hand, you will qualify for entry into a community college. There is no reason why, in time, you cannot fulfill your dream. Others have done it; go for it! You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

Dear Abby:

I am a wife and mother of two boys. Last year I left my job of six years to start my own business. Unfortunately, my business has not generated the income my family and I need. I am now looking for work, along with thousands of other people. My problem is, I have a criminal record that stems from two small but painful incidents when I was 18. My husband knows about my record, but no one else does. When going on job interviews, I have been honest and

upfront about my past, but it seems I'm put on the "ignore list" once the interviewer hears about my record. They can't see the years that have passed without so much as a traffic ticket; how I solved my problem through therapy; the stable environment my husband and I provide for our boys; or the years of hard work I devoted to my previous job and current business.

How can I find someone who will hire me while my growing business takes off? Should I lie about my record? I know it's hard to trust a stranger, but I'm a hard worker, an honest and faithful employee, and I am desperate.

Lost in Texas

You should not lie. However, it would be helpful if you can provide letters of recommendation from previous employers, your clergy person and respected people in your community who will vouch for your honesty and the success of your rehabilitation.

Dear Abby:

For my birthday, I was given a gift certificate for a day of beauty services at a high-priced spa. Am I supposed to tip each person who works on me that day, or has that been included in the price of the gift certificate?

Needs to Know in Minnesota

What a generous gift! Tips are not included in the cost of a gift certificate. Therefore, each person who renders service should be tipped 15 percent—or more if the service is exceptional. (Ask to see a price schedule when you go in, so you know the value of each service.)

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

## TODAY'S HOROSCOPE | Jeraldine Saunders

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)**

Giving away your innermost feelings may well have a negative effect on a relationship. Holding back is wise even though you long to show your emotional heartache. Better not now.

**SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)**

With the Uranus-Mars link, things are not as difficult as they seem. Your boundless energy attracts both sexes into your orbit. Taking up an issue in innocence could have drama you don't need.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)**

You could be indulging yourself and others. Your ruler, Jupiter, at the high point of your chart is making you more generous and tolerant than is good. Use your common sense.

**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)**

A work or venture matter takes up your time. You have to speak your mind and not just listen to opinions. Get all the details. Libra or Cancer offers suggestions.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)**

You may be feeling excited about a venture. Keeping it to yourself is appropriate even though your face is a giveaway. Well, you can always admit you're having fun.

**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)**

You've been reluctant to talk, but now's the time to update those who need to know the situation. Avoid trivia and gossip, and be uncompromising as to your principles. This evening promises fun.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19)**

You want to offer comfort and aid to someone vulnerable, but the person is stubborn and independent. Concentrate on work and duty.

Hidden rewards are in the making.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20)**

The moon in your sign helps you to handle obligations with customary care. You know you've made things unnecessarily difficult for yourself where work is concerned.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 20)**

The harmonious Libran sun, Mercury and lunar influences have you bouncing with new ideas. You want to embark on social or off-duty fun that's more daring than is your nature.

**CANCER (June 21-July 22)**

Disruption in your home life is not as dramatic as it seems. Let close ones know that you don't approve of their behavior. Saturn provides the steel to enforce your way with a velvet glove.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)**

Treating workmates or neighbors too openly and generously may cause embarrassment. Your extravagant gesture may be suited to an Aquarian, but a little goes a long way in your case.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)**

There is talk about money, which may become a problem. Offering support could mean someone feels indebted. Be true to yourself.

**IF OCT. 12 IS YOUR BIRTHDAY:** You are open-minded and diplomatic, and you enjoy people; you have a tendency to be rather radical. An enterprising traveler who makes instant connections, you would also make a good teacher or scientist. A new cycle is beginning, so have no fear of coming changes. December is good for money and love; nurture yourself in February.

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