**D2** SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2003

The Washington Post



man and woman:

Third runner-up: The child of Bob Dole and Cleopatra would suffer from a reptile dysfunction. (Mark Eckenwiler, Washington)

♦ Second runner-up: The child of Imelda Marcos and Dr. Seuss would collect mukluks, galoshes and gillies and high-tops, and also some moccasins, chukkas and flip-flops. (Mark Hagenau, Derry, N.H.)

♦ First runner-up: The child of Marion Barry and Leona Helmsley would set himself up. (Sandra Hull, Arlington)

♦ And the winner of the "Star Trek" watch: The child of Beethoven and Britney Spears would overcome dumbness to become a great composer. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

### ♦ Honorable Mentions:

The child of Richard Nixon and Miss Manners will compile a People Whom We Will Decline to Invite list. (Brendan Bearv, Great Mills)

The child of Segway inventor Dean Kamen and Tina Louise will discover that no one's interested in Ginger anymore. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)



# **MISS MANNERS**

## Judith Martin

people wearing tight jeans.

# Formal Complaint

ow many of you gentlemen are engaged in righteous protests, fueled by outrage that it is your own closest relatives and friends who are pressuring you to betray your principles?

Miss Manners finds it amazing how worked up gentlemen can get when they are asked to dress up. Two simple words, "black tie," make them see red

A distaste for conformity is a big issue to those for whom casual is law. But Miss Manners is afraid that any credibility this argument might have is undermined by those who make it. They have the impertinent habit of hectoring gentlemen who don't conform to their dress code of jeans or khakis and T-shirts, ordering them to take off their jackets and tie

for which they have gotten nothing in return.

#### **Dear Miss Manners:**

I have a dilemma that I suspect only you can adequately address, given that it involves a lady fainting. I dressed much too warmly for a Christmas party at the home of my husband's colleague and, in true Victorian style, overheated and fainted dead lv genial along with my husband and two other guests, caught me, carried me to the living room, and revived me most graciously. The gentlemen reviving me were all surgeons and were mildly disappointed that I was experiencing no abdominal distress, but they hid their disappointment as best they could. The dilemma I am experiencing is that I do not know how to adequately thank my hosts (a married couple with small, darling children) for their kindness. I know that tending to my needs took them away from their other guests and, frankly, I feel awful about it. I try so hard to be a pleasant. low-maintenance guest.

The child of Saint Paul and Mae West would ask, "Is that epistle in your pocket . . .?" (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

The daughter of Helen of Troy and Joe Cocker would have a face that could launch, oh, maybe 25 ships. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

The child of Marty Feldman and Calista Flockhart would have eyes bigger than his stomach. (Rich Mehrenberg, Manassas)

The children of Will Rogers and Sally Field will like everybody and everybody will like them. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

The child of Carmen Miranda and John Nash will be fruitful and multiply. (Peter Metrinko, Plymouth, Minn.)

The daughter of Anna Nicole Smith and **George Washington Carver would find** 300 ways to use a man. (Dave Michaels, Silver Spring)

The child of Bill Gates and Martha Stewart would market a line of sheets that stay on only if you buy their bed. (Dave Michaels, Silver Spring)

The child of Jack Ruby and Barbara Walters would shoot first and ask questions later. (Harold Mantle, Gaithersburg)

The child of John Holmes and June Allyson wouldn't know if he was coming or going. (G. Smith, Reston)

The child of Izaak Walton and Lorena Bobbitt would fish or cut mate. (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

The child of Martha Stewart and Michael Jackson would be a neat freak. (Greg Pearson, Alexandria)

The child of S.I. Newhouse and Joan of Arc would publish or perish. (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

The child of Joni Mitchell and JFK would pave paradise and put up a Camelot. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

The child of Oliver North and Rosie O'Donnell would trade arms for sausages.

(Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

The child of Sir Edmund Hillary and Dolly Parton would be the first person to climb herself.

(Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

The child of Paul Berry and Halle Berry had better have some Vitamin B1. (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls)

The child of Katie Couric and Geraldo Rivera would be as cute as a buttonhole. (Mike Connaghan, Alexandria)

The child of Edward Albee and Virginia Woolf would be afraid of his mother. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

The child of Imelda Marcos and Nikita Khrushchev would pound the table with a different shoe every day. (Russell Beland, Springfield; Brendan Beary,

Great Mills) The child of Sir Francis Drake and

Jennifer Lopez would have a golden hind. (Bob Stone, Alexandria)

The child of Persephone and Tiger Woods would putt it where the sun don't shine. (Bob Stone, Alexandria)

The child of Paris Hilton and Tommy Lee would be a movie star even before he could breathe. (Josh Borken, Bloomington, Minn.)

The child of Cindy Crawford and Moses would be . . . holy moley! (Mike Connaghan, Alexandria)

The son of Monica Lewinsky and Rodney Dangerfield would really be down on himself. (Andrea Kelly, Brookeville)

#### The child of Jimmy Durante and Barbra Streisand could make a living finding truffles. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

And last: I don't know if this cloning thing is a good idea. Sure, you could pair Hillary Clinton and J.S. Bach and get someone who'd make New York a fugue state and that's fine, but shoot, some moron with a test tube is going to go pair Wizards players with Mystics players and, sure, they'll be tall, but they're still going to lose all the time, and that's plain wrong. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Next Week: The Rite of Feminine Domain

# Looking for a job in Washington? Look where the Washington jobs are.

The Washington Post washingtonpost.com

Not all of them, of course. Some who see red are willing to don evening clothes if only they can turn the outfit into something more sprightly. So they add red ties and cummerbunds, or pink ones, or, if they stick to black ties, ones that come in funny configurations.

This is a whimsical, although curiously unamusing, form of protest. Die-hards will refuse to wear any semblance of evening clothes, preferring either to defy their hosts or to stay home and sulk.

Miss Manners has never succeeded in finding out what this was really all about-but not for lack of hearing gentlemen's laments.

The chief complaint is that evening clothes are uncomfortable. Mind you, we are not talking about white tie, with its stiff shirt, waistcoats and tails-the get-up in which orchestra conductors habitually jump up and down and flail their arms about.

Most formal events now require only the dinner jacket, once the informal alternative to full evening dress. This is cut like any ordinary suit, with which a soft shirt may be worn, so if it is less comfortable than other suits, complaints should be directed at one's tailor, not one's hosts.

Especially if they come from

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### Opening lead: ♥ J

n the early years of my marriage, I did my Christmas shopping on the eve of the big day. Then my wife, who finishes most of hers in late summer, shamed me into a more diligent approach.

Now I have returned to my former habit: I do my

Another professed objection is based on the antique notion that evening clothes are the costume of comic-strip plutocrats who smoke cigars and hang onto lampposts for balance.

Americans used to pity and be amused by countries where the citizens all wore drab work clothes and the leaders were belligerently underdressed for state occasions; now those people have discovered fashion, and we wear drab work clothes and are suspicious of formality.

Miss Manners suspects that what it really signifies is the reluctance of anyone over drinking age to be taken for an adult. While very young gentlemen are dressing like hardened thugs, their elders are trying not to look grown-up. (The gentlemen, that is. As pubescent girls affect the jaded-hussy look, their elders feel safe in doing so, too.)

This seems a particularly bad bargain. If forfeiting stylistic variety and glamour could purchase eternal youth, Miss Manners (who was born old and marches happily on from there) supposes it might be worthwhile.

But it has become just another compensation—along with precedence and other forms of respect—that adults have given up, Flowers. Normally these are presented to a lady who has brought off a melodramatic dramatic scene, but Miss Manners would consider it a graceful gesture to your hosts who played the supporting roles, as it were.

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at MissManners@unitedmedia. com or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.

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# GE | Frank Stewart

shopping late to avoid the early rush.

In today's deal, South took the ace of hearts and went shopping for nine tricks in the club department: He led the ace and a low club, hoping for a 2-2 break. Instead, East threw a diamond, and West won and led another heart to dummy's king.

South couldn't lead another club since the defense had at least three hearts to cash. So South took the A-K-Q of spades and then his last spade, which was good. He next led a diamond—and West won and claimed the rest with good hearts and the king of clubs. Down two. "If the clubs break," South shrugged, "I have nine

tricks.' How would you play 3NT?

South starts with six top tricks and must develop three more quickly since the defense threatens to set up the hearts. South can easily get two tricks in diamonds; hence if the spades break 3-3, he can succeed by forcing out the ace of diamonds. But if the spades break 4-2 or worse, South needs good luck in clubs.

South therefore shopped too early. After he wins the first trick, he must cash the top spades. When the spades break 3-3. South forces out the ace of diamonds. If the spades didn't break, South would try the ace and a low club, hoping for a friendly break there.

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