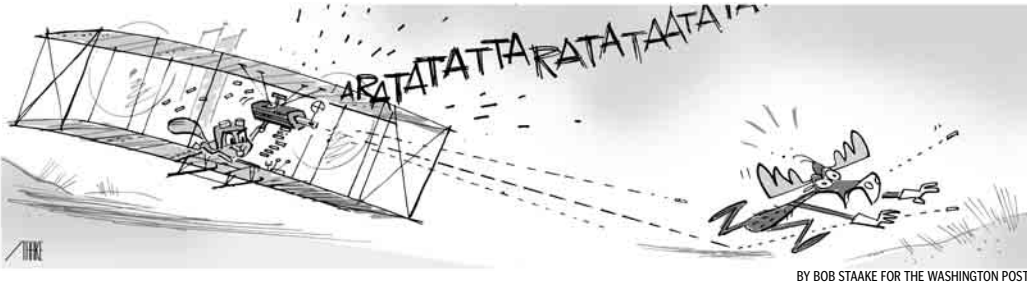


The Style Invitational

Week 540: Revisionist History, or Badenov for You?



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Tune in to 12 Seconds Over Kitty Hawk, or The Orville Truth!

The eruption of Mount Vesuvius: Pompeii Circumstance, or Falling on Their Ash
Watergate: Nixsinning, or Lies, Lies and Audiotape
Rosie Ruiz cheating to win the Boston Marathon: Cheaters Never Perspire, or Long Day's Journey Into Naught

In the several minutes each week that Russell Beland of Springfield is not working on Style Invitational entries, he reminisces about "Rocky and Bullwinkle," the animated TV comedy that was the "Simpsons" of its time in its hilarious mix of sophisticated and juvenile humor, political and social satire, and mile-a-minute groaner puns. Russell reminds us that at the end of each episode, the announcer would intone a teaser about the next show that stated its topic two ways, at least one of them containing a pun: "Tune in next time for 'Axe Me Another,' or 'Tails, You Lose.' " (It was about an impending execution.) Since "R&B" is now history, Russell suggests you apply this form to history: State any news event (or old event) in this "A, or B" form, which also happens to be that of our Revised Titles. First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins a coffee mug from the Web site of Bob Staake, one of the most dynamic, original, colorful and humorous cartoonists working today. The mug is plain white with a black bar around it containing the name of the site in white letters; there are no pictures, no color, and nothing funny whatsoever. It is as if Mr. Staake refuses to allow your coffee-stained mouth to touch his art. Thanks, Bob, for sending it to us! Bob wins a pebble.

Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational Magnet (see below). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312 or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com. U.S. mail entries are not accepted. Deadline is Tuesday, Jan. 20. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or you risk being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your

entry. Contests are 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 Chris Doyle of Forsyth, Mo.

Report From Week 536, in which we asked you to supply some words we could stick on the back of the Inker, pictured here. The most commonly recurring theme among the entries was a play on *Cogito ergo sum*. In addition to those that were actually clever or at least made sense, the Empress also was forced to endure *Cogito ergo slum*; *Cogito ergo sue me*; *Cogito ergo sump*; *Cogito ergo pun*; *Inkito ergo sum*; and in English: *I ink, therefore I yam*; . . . *I ham*; . . . *I lame*; . . . *I lose*; and . . . *I spam*. Not to mention *I stink, therefore I win* and *I quip, therefore Rodin*. Meanwhile, the Empress also announces the winners of a contest she didn't even tell you about: Given that the Invitational is running a tad low on bumper stickers right now—in much the way that Saddam Hussein is running a tad low on housing options—she hereby announces the winners of the Honorable Mention Magnet Slogan contest (culled from the more generic of this week's entries), to be inscribed on the Mildly Sought-After Loser Magnets of 2004:



BY KEVIN CLARK—THE WASHINGTON POST

The Style Invitational Makes Me Gag (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)
The Pen Is Mightier Than the Mind (Josh Borken, Bloomington, Minn.)
Back to the Inker back:
♦ Third runner-up: **I asked for a bronzed hunk and got this!** (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)
♦ Second runner-up: **I ink, erefore I am.** (Kirk J. Eilers, Philipsburg, Mont.)
♦ First runner-up, the winner of the disgusting fake feet: **"O, what a noble mind is here o'er throne."** (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls)
♦ And the winner of the Inker: **I just made Number One!** (Andrew Elby, Arlington)

♦ Honorable Mentions:
Does this bag make my head look fat? (Greg Pearson, Arlington)
I won squat from The Style Invitational. (Roy Ashley, Washington)
The Republic of China disavows any role in the manufacture of this product. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills) [Actually, the Inker (sans bag) is made in Thailand.]
Drop in any mailbox. Return postage guaranteed. (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.; Russell Beland, Springfield)
Cogito ergo something. (Tom Greening, North Bethesda)
Incognito ergo scum. (Erika Reinfeld, Somerville, Mass.)
Caution: Contents of bag may be hot. (Jim Reed, Wales, Wis.)
Warning: Person shown smaller than actual size. (Russell Beland, Springfield)
I've thunk and I can't get up! (Art Gri-nath, Takoma Park)
This statue now guaranteed not to come to life and kill you. (Greg Pearson, Arlington)
For external use only. (Steve Fahey, Kensington)
[This space intentionally left blank] (Scott Campisi, Wake Village, Tex.)
I Empressed (Cecil J. Clark, Arlington)
A mind is a terrible thing to waste on The Style Invitational. (Robin D. Grove, Pasadena, Md.)
They said there wouldn't be enough room fo (Robin D. Grove, Pasadena, Md.)
You're Ink Competent! (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)
The Style Invitational: Under New Mis-management (Russell Beland, Springfield)

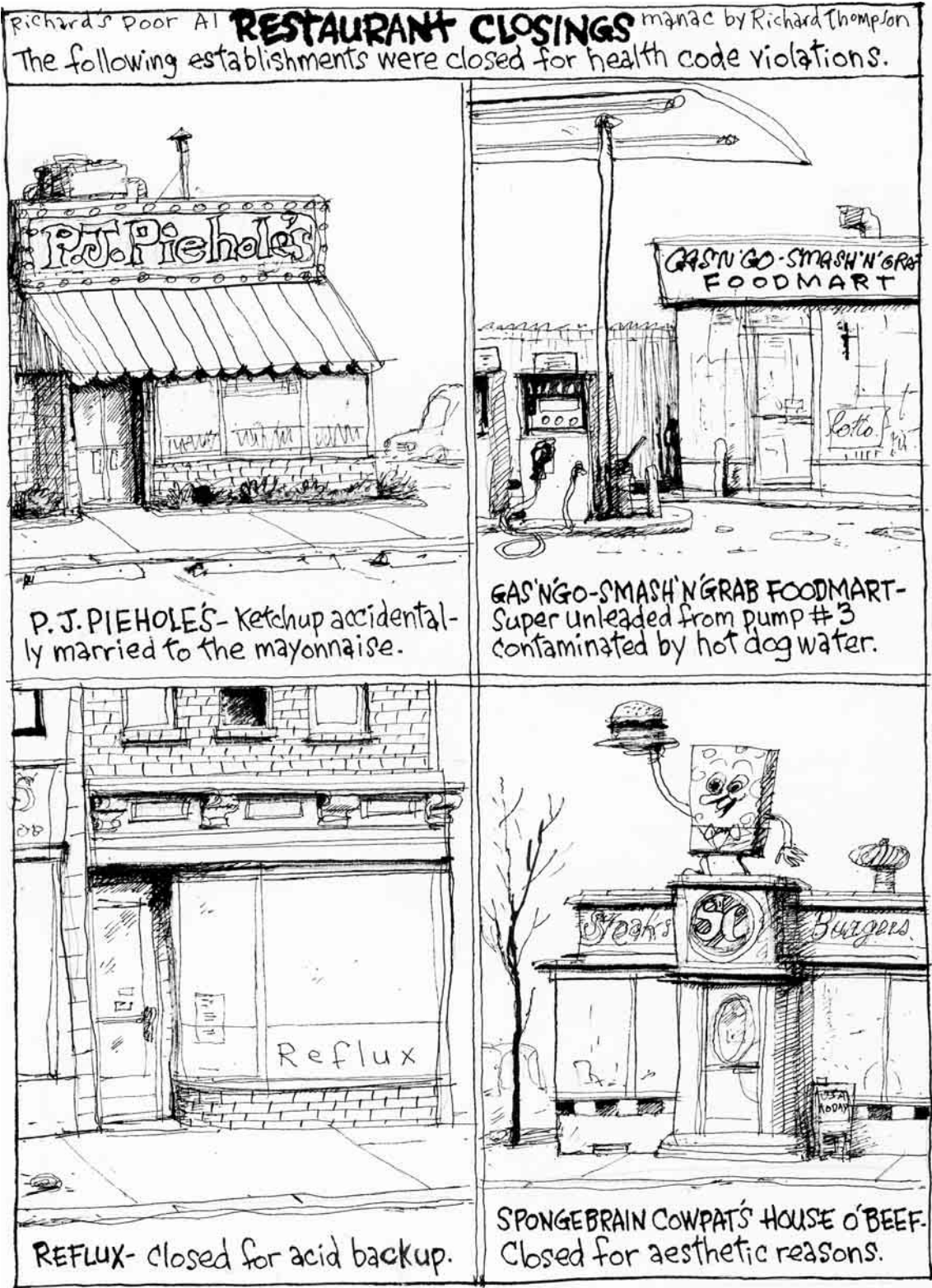
My Other Prize Is a Hunk of Crap, Too (Russell Beland, Springfield)
Not for Use as a Flirtation Device (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)
Thanks. I've been working out. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)
Machine wash cold. Use non-chlorine bleach only. Tumble dry low. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
Some people were made for thinking. For the rest of us, there's The Style Invi-tational. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)
Ingredients: Iron, cerium, sulfur (FeCeS), i.e., wholly crap. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
This Side Toward Fan (Kevin Mellema, Falls Church)
This cherished prize has been designated for you and you alone, Mr./Ms. [Name] (Joseph Romm, Washington)
I am the Inker, I'm pensive by nature; I'm pondering now where the T and the H are. (Pete Hughes, Alexandria)
Hmm, DO I have any Grey Poupon? (Bob Nowak, Euclid, Ohio)
Top Entry That Wasn't Legally Actionable or Morally Repugnant Award (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)
Press here to open door to Batcave. (Russell Beland, Springfield)
Not sold in stores, though not for lack of trying. (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)
Some people come to sit and think, I just came to . . .
What rhymes with "sit and think"? (Bird Waring, New York)
Me and My Bright Ideas (Tom Madison, Alexandria)
If you can read this sign, you're gonna be sorry when I finish my beans. (Erika Reinfeld, Somerville, Mass.)

Next Week: **The Washington New York Post, or Swelled Heads**

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The Washington Post

WF202



MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

A Little Too Plain-Spoken

The language of respect is fading out of use everywhere.

Internationally, traditional forms of governmental and diplomatic discourse, designed to remove the possibility of invective or misunderstanding, are yielding to plain speech, often with predictable results.

In European languages that have two forms of direct address, the informal one was once used only with intimates, children and servants. Now it is the formal form that is becoming a rarity, at least among the chic. In Japan, which has a grammatically intricate honorific language, business policies and generational changes in attitude have arisen to oppose its use.

In America, any language that confers a modicum of honor has been hooted out of common use. Surnames are omitted, even in introductions, and where they are still necessary—on letters, for example—they appear baldly, with no preceding honorific titles.

You guys have a problem with this? Miss Manners does, even though she knows that, as with so many disimprovements in modern life, this change arises from noble intentions.

The noblest of these is egalitarianism. A hierarchal language presumes superiors and inferiors, which is not as popular a concept as it was when only the superiors' opinion was counted. Women, employees and African Americans who used to be routinely addressed in the familiar by people to whom they were expected to use honorifics didn't care for it. For that matter, medical patients who are so addressed by those who expect to be addressed as "doctor" still don't.

But couldn't the solution have been to accord such respect to everyone, instead of to no one?

The answer comes back that respect must be earned by the individual. Miss Manners disagrees even with that.

There is a basic respect we are all due as human beings, and beyond that, respect due to age, relationship and position. Grandparents should not have to be tested on their ideology and deeds to enjoy family deference. Government officials should have the respect due the offices they hold, even though the people who put them in office have become disillusioned with them.

Related to this is the idea that it is not honest to pretend to respect someone one does not. This quickly grows into a grandstand denunciation of etiquette as an enemy of free speech, whose forms inhibit people from saying exactly what they think.

Well, of course. If everyone went around telling others exactly what they thought of them, we would have a society . . . very much like the one we have now. Where people casually give one another the finger in the street, and "Here's what's wrong with you" talks at home.

Etiquette couldn't and doesn't squelch free speech. It just suggests that a reflection on the consequences might head off some of that speech—and couldn't you put the rest a bit more gently?

A more winsome argument is that this way of speaking is "just being friendly." To treat all other people as if they were intimates must surely warm their lonely hearts. It also deprives them of choosing their friends, and distinguishing them from strangers, acquaintances and enemies.

Because Miss Manners would like to see respect enter our routine language, she hesitates to mention the only really valid arguments: that we all got good and sick of those squabbles about Miss, Mrs. and Ms., and that it is so hard to remember names.

Dear Miss Manners:

I have been with my boyfriend for 9½ years. We have been living together for four years. I was only 16 when we started dating so I called his parents "Mr. and Mrs. surname."

They have never referred to themselves by their first names to me. So I don't feel comfortable calling them by those names. They always refer to themselves as his mother or his father. Although I don't feel comfortable calling them by their first names, I also feel that I am too old and have known them too long to call them Mr. and Mrs. What is the proper way to handle this? When is it correct to call them by their first names?

By Miss Manners' calculation, the gentleman's parents are aging at the same rate you are, and have known you just as long. Therefore, they retain the senior privilege of deciding when or whether they want you to address them less formally—which is not to say that you cannot press their son to press them to do so.

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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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

"You and Wendy would get along if you knew each other better," I told Cy the Cynic. "Ask her out."

Wendy, an ardent feminist, and Cy, a shameless chauvinist, have been at odds since Wendy joined my club.

"Wendy dates only younger men," Cy growled. "Her theory is that men never mature anyway. Besides, I wouldn't have a chance; she's so perfect even practice couldn't make her."

Cy's last remark stemmed from today's deal. Wendy, North, was unhappy with Cy's play, and he was unhappy with her. West took the K-A of clubs and led a club to East's 10, and Cy ruffed, led a trump to the king and tried a heart to his queen. After that inauspicious start, he went down two.

"It was cold," Wendy bit out, and Cy glared.

Cy takes eight tricks with perfect play. East surely has a high diamond, hence West must hold the king of hearts to have 16 points; and to avoid a second heart loser, Cy must assume he has K-x. Since West seems to hold four clubs and at most three diamonds, Cy must also assume he has four trumps.

At Trick Four Cy leads a trump to dummy's 10, following the consequences of his assumptions. He cashes the king, comes to the ace of hearts, draw trumps and leads a low heart. Voila!

"I'm not a genius—like some people," Cy scowled when I pointed out the winning play. It seems he and Wendy won't be an item anytime soon.

"You know," Unlucky Louie told me, "I think Cy and Wendy would be a perfect match. He's a headache and she's a pill."

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