

The Style Invitational

Week 541: Celled Up the River



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAKER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This week's contest: In the Heights of Modern Rudeness department, it's hard to top that guy in the checkout line or at the post office who insists on yacking on his cell phone while conducting a transaction with the person in front of him. Wouldn't it be great if that person really paid for it? Elden Carnahan of Laurel suggests that you give us a delicious scenario, like the one below, in which the yakker's yacking could be taken profitably out of context.

Sommelier: **"Would monsieur care to try the 1976 Schleswig-Verrazano? It is only \$450 the bottle."**
Yakker, speaking to his foreman about dumpsters at a construction site: **"Yeah, get me 10 of 'em—and dammit, make sure they're empty."**

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins a seemingly perfectly serious souvenir shot glass with the coat of arms of the "U.S. Navel Academy, Annapolis." Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after new Style Invitational Magnets pictured 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 Monday, Jan. 26. 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 Russell Beland of Springfield.



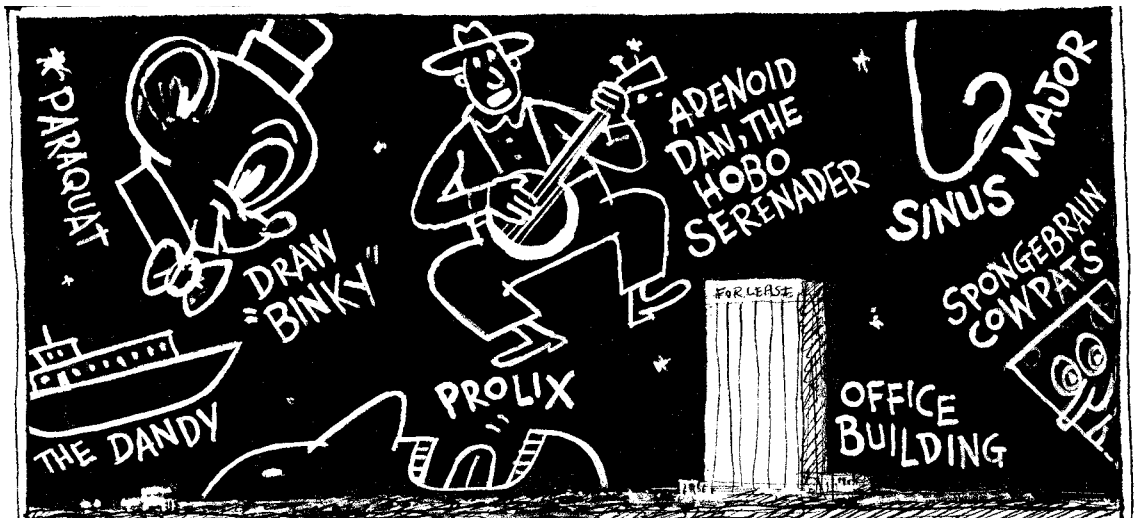
Report from Week 537, in which we asked you to write irresponsibly sensationalistic headlines for actual Washington Post stories:

- ◆ Third runner-up: **KNIFE-WIELDING MAN ON WEST BANK GOES AFTER TOURISTS!**
Real headline: "Struggle of Family Nativity Carving Business Reflects Bethlehem's Woes" (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)
- ◆ Second runner-up: **ANOTHER D.C. MAYOR SEEN LIGHTING UP!**
"At a ceremony last night, D.C. Mayor Anthony A. Williams switched on the newly restored, historic street lights" (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)
- ◆ First runner-up, the winner of the remote-control fart machine: **MALVO WON'T DIE LIKE A MAN!**
Lee Boyd Malvo gets a life sentence; his youth is cited as a factor. (Kevin Mellema, Falls Church)
- ◆ And the winner of the Inker: **WASHINGTON INFERNO TERROR LINKED TO FRANCE!**
"French Fry Fire Damages Kitchen" (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

- ◆ Honorable Mentions: **J. LOPEZ'S IMPRESSIVE BOOTY FLASHED IN BALTO!**
"The Baltimore Orioles agreed to terms Sunday night with catcher Javy Lopez on a three-year contract believed to be worth \$23 million" (Heather Abelson, New York; Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
- MICHAEL JACKSON UNABLE EVEN TO DRESS SELF, EXPERT ATTESTS!**
Fashion columnist Robin Givhan laments Jackson's courtroom attire. (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- DEATH TOLL HITS 152 AT AREA PARKS!**
Howard County sponsored a deer hunt. (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)
- LADY JUDGE IN THREE-WAY WITH D.A., LAWYER!**
"Judge Faces Three-Way Contest in St. Mary's" (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
- FAVRE RETURNS FROM DEAD, THROWS 4 TD PASSES!**
Packers quarterback Brett Favre played the Monday after his father died. (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls)
- WOMANIZING EX-PREZ FOUND GUILTY IN LAND DEAL!**
"Jefferson Convicted in Mock Trial on La. Purchase" (Danny Brawman, Potomac)
- SENATE LEADER ADMITS INVOLVEMENT IN MONKEY BUSINESS!**
Sen. Bill Frist, a physician, tells of performing surgery on an orangutan at the National Zoo. (Robin D. Grove, Chevy Chase)
- TIPSY VIRGIN EMPLOYEE PINCHED IN BUST!**
"Pilot Pulled From Dulles Flight Faces Charges Over Drinking" (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)
- PROMISING 'A PARTY,' ADULTS LURE YOUNG CHILDREN FROM HOMES!**
Kids were given free-admission buttons to the First Night Annapolis festival. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)
- BUSH TO ALIENS: COME ON DOWN!**
"Immigration Reform on Bush Agenda" (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)
- JETS INTERCEPTED NEAR NYC FIVE TIMES THIS WEEK!**
New England 21, New York 17 (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- COUPLE CHARGED \$76 FOR FOOD AT McDONALD'S RESTAURANT!**
Story on Wall Street bonuses quoted Lever House restaurant owner John McDonald. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

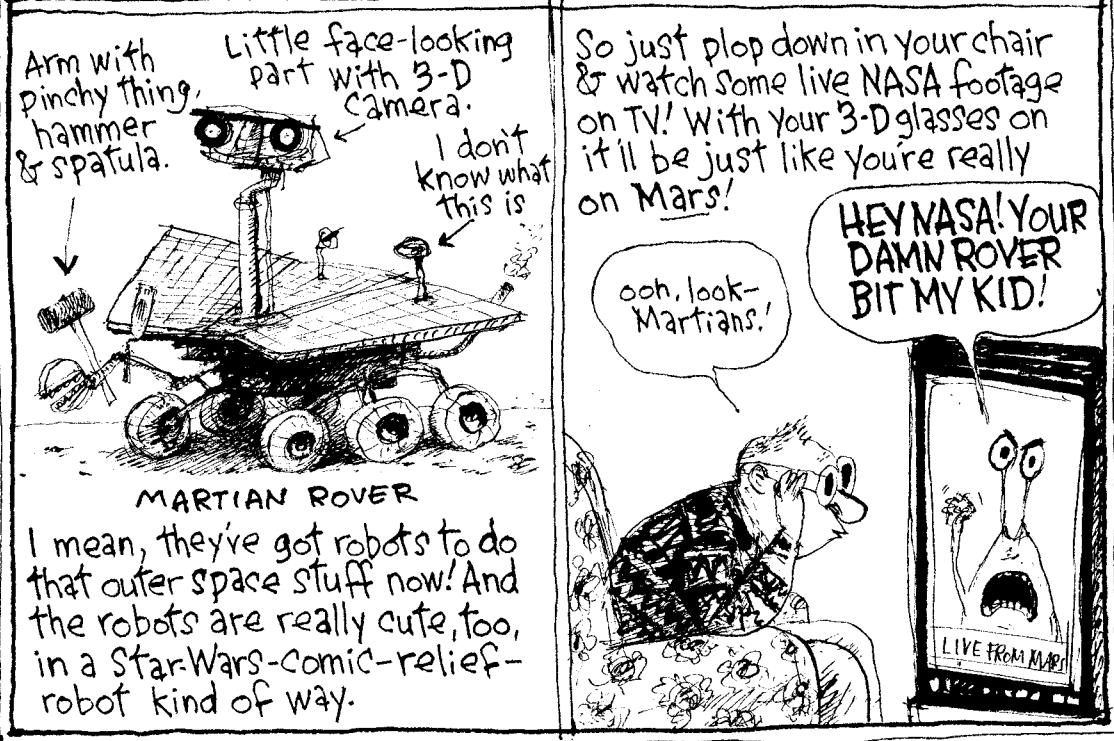
- GOVERNOR LINKED TO DRUG TRADE!**
Illinois' Rod Blagojevich is seeking federal permission to import pharmaceuticals from Canada. (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)
- VOYEURS FLOCK TO RED-LIGHT DISTRICT PEEP SHOW!**
Three landers are scheduled to visit Mars. (Bob Dalton, Arlington)
- ED BRADLEY TO GET IN BED WITH JACKO FOR "SPECIAL" EVENING!**
"CBS Gets Interview, Jackson Gets Special" (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls; Beth Benson, Lanham)
- PENTAGON: U.S. TROOPS SHOULD BE SHOT!**
"General Defends Anthrax Shots for Troops" (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
- WEALTHY MAN TREATED LIKE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT!**
The Orioles' \$22.5 million contract with Javy Lopez is contingent on his passing a physical. (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)
- ZOMBIES FOUND IN BALTIMORE HOSPITAL!**
Johns Hopkins has cut back on medical residents' 90-hour workweeks. (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)
- CAPTIVES UNDER TORTURE BEG FOR LIFE!**
"Tormented Jurors Argued, Cried and Wavered" before agreeing on a life sentence for Malvo. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)
- 60 KILOTONS OVER PYONGYANG!**
"U.S. Sending 60,000 Tons of Food to N. Korea" (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)
- EAGER TO SCORE, VA. TECH MEN DRIVE MILES TO GET SOME TROJANS!**
"Hokies to Face USC in '04 Season Opener" (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)
- IV BRINGS DEAD ROYAL BACK TO LIFE!**
Several exciting new productions of Shakespeare's "Henry IV" have been staged. (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)
- FAMILIES KILL CATS DURING XMAS FEAST!**
"Holiday Treats and Trimmings Can Be Deadly to Curious Pets" (Tom Madison, Alexandria)
- And Last: **MD. MAN RUINS WIFE'S XMAS BY REVEALING ALL IN POST!**
"Earlier this month, Jay Ireland of Bethesda bought his wife a digital camera," Dec. 21 (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

Next Week: Try, Try Again or Meet the Jetsams



Richard's Peer Almanac **WINTER SKYWATCH** By Richard Thompson

The Winter Sky is just filled with celestial objects & constellations, most of them so lurid, embarrassingly absurd or flat-out tedious that you have to wonder why any sane grown-up person would even consider standing outside & rubbernecking in the middle of the night when it's barely ten degrees above zero.



MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

A Snide 'Smile'

If a Wellesley graduate of a certain age worries about attracting retrospective ridicule, her mind races to . . . posture pictures. Uh-oh.

These were photographs once taken of all students, ostensibly for health reasons connected with posture. As was revealed decades later, the photographs had been ordered in cooperation with a dubious sociological study done independently of the school, which purported to connect body types with intelligence (such as can be discerned from freshmen). These so-called posture pictures were not unique to Wellesley, nor to female colleges; Ivy League colleges, then all-male institutions, also mandated them.

The "uh-oh" is that the female photographs were taken nearly nude, and the male ones entirely so. Whatever effect this had on the posture, knowing that revealing photographs of oneself are out there somewhere beyond one's control ought to teach humility.

If people now want to laugh at the 1950s in general, as it seems they often do, and at Wellesley College in particular, Miss Manners would have thought this provided ample material. The fact that at the time it produced jokes, rather than protests, could illustrate the standard thesis that everyone then was gridlocked into conformity. And think of the visuals, starring innumerable current dignitaries.

But no. The new film with this thesis, "Mona Lisa Smile," passes up mentioning posture pictures for something more shocking: a scene purporting to show Wellesley students taking a course in, of all things, etiquette (and never mind that today's students of both genders are actively seeking remedial etiquette instruction).

But Wellesley did not teach etiquette. Miss Manners was there at the time, and you had better believe that she would have noticed. Even Posture and Relaxation, which served as a cover for the posture pictures, was only a mini-course in the Physical Education department, not—more's the pity—an area of study in which she could have captured high honors.

For one thing, the practice of etiquette is not an academic subject (nor, by Wellesley's standards, was journalism, another field into which Miss Manners later fell headfirst). The history and theory of manners are academic subjects, but even now few academics understand this element of philosophy, history, anthropology, sociology and literature.

For another thing, it would have been su-

perfluous, as all the students, not just prissy Miss Manners, knew basic etiquette. This was not because they attended an expensive school, but because etiquette was something all children had to suffer through at home.

Innocent of the history of etiquette, the film is rife with anachronisms. Students were given the dignity of being addressed by title and surname, and faculty eschewed the title of "doctor," since their doctorates were taken for granted. "Poise" was a word associated with beauty contests, which were disdained; the term "gracious living" was said as a joke.

More deeply, the film fails to question the assumption that female students were at Wellesley to pursue marriage, when accomplishing this required an exactly equal number of males with the same goal. Whether they first establish their families and then build their careers, as then, or reverse the order, as now, does not strike Miss Manners as much of a change.

What does shock her is the realization that posing naked is hardly worth mentioning these days, but knowing how to behave is considered damning.

Dear Miss Manners:
My boss's son is having a baby—well, not him, but his girlfriend. And he would like to know, what is the "norm" when a baby is born out of wedlock and the parents want to hyphenate the baby's last name? Does the mother's name go first standard? Alphabetical? Any input you could provide would be greatly appreciated.

Norm? There is no normal standard about names in this society. It's total chaos, and it's driving Miss Manners crazy. Nobody knows what to call anybody else.

But much as she would like a standardized system, she would hardly countenance one that had a specific way of identifying those born out of wedlock. Just tell your boss to be grateful that society no longer decrees what such children should be called.

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

"If you were marooned on a desert island," Unlucky Louie asked me, "what one book would you want to have?" "What an original question!" I remarked.

"How about a copy of 'How to Build a Boat?'" Cy the Cynic piped up.

"I suppose I'd want something to keep my mind agile," I told Louie, "like a collection of logic and math puzzles. If you're talking about bridge books, I'd want one that teaches logical thinking on defense."

Cover the South and West cards and defend today's 3NT as East. West leads the deuce of hearts, and your king falls to South's ace. South then leads the jack of diamonds: nine from West, seven from dummy . . . and your king wins. What next? Do you return your partner's lead or

look elsewhere?
Reason it out; the clues are there. West's deuce of hearts suggests a four-card holding, so South also has four hearts. But if West had a five-card spade suit, he'd have led a spade against 3NT, so South also has four spades.

Since South opened the bidding with one diamond, and since West's signal with the nine suggests a doubleton, South has at least four diamonds. And so he has at most one club.

At the third trick, shift to the deuce of clubs. Since South's singleton club is the king, you can't defeat the contract by leading the queen, but the deuce lets the defense run four club tricks for down one.

Maybe you wouldn't have bid 2NT on South's cards, but that's no reason to let him steal a game.

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|----------------|--------------|---|-----------|
| N-S vulnerable | | | |
| NORTH | | | |
| ♥ | A Q 5 | ♠ | K 9 4 |
| ♦ | 5 3 | ♣ | K 6 5 4 |
| | A Q 7 | | ♠ Q J 9 2 |
| | ♣ 10 8 7 5 4 | | |
| WEST | | | |
| ♥ | 10 8 4 2 | ♠ | J 3 |
| ♦ | 10 8 7 2 | ♣ | K 9 4 |
| ♣ | 9 2 | | ♦ K 6 5 4 |
| | ♠ A 6 3 | | ♠ Q J 9 2 |
| SOUTH (D) | | | |
| ♥ | K 9 7 6 | | |
| ♠ | A Q J 6 | | |
| ♦ | J 10 8 3 | | |
| ♣ | K | | |

The bidding:
South West North East
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♣ Pass
2 NT Pass 3 NT All Pass

Opening lead — ♥ 2