

The Style Invitational

Week 543: Read Our Leaps



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This Week's Contest: Because of the Invitational's imperiously leisurely turnaround time, the results of this contest will appear, as usual, four weeks from today. What is not so usual is that they will appear Sunday, Feb. 29—an occurrence that cannot happen again, according to the ever-vigilant Russell Beland of Springfield, for another 28 years. Just in case our readers might not have a chance to pick up The Washington Post on Sunday, Feb. 29, 2032, or tune in the day's news dentally through their Molaradios, please fill them in on any of the following: (a) the day's lead news story; (b) the highest-flying company and its business; (c) the best-selling self-help book; and/or (d) the day's winning Style Invitational entry.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins a package of Piddlers toilet targets, 20 flushable little spongy fishes to teach your 2-year-old son or your beer-sodden husband (or perhaps yourself) how to aim. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after new Style Invitational Magnets (collect two and use them as a nifty clip for your credit cards!).

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 ac-

cepted. Deadline is Monday, Feb. 9. 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 on—duh—Feb. 29. 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 Seth Brown of North Adams, Mass.

Report From Week 539, in which The Empress asked for poems about people who died in 2003. Funny ideas that were submitted by many: Satan asking "Price Is Right" announcer Rod Roddy to "Come on down!"; Bobby Hatfield has "lost that livin' feeling"; and Maurice Gibb's no longer "stayin' alive."

There was an especially high dreck-to-quality ratio this week: Most of you, it seems, figured that as long as a line was a few syllables away from scanning, or a few letters away from rhyming, what the hey. Almost-rhymes and almost-scans may suffice if you're rapping out loud, but for the printed page, either make it work or we kill this doggerel.

◆ Third runner-up: **Football gave George Plimpton fits. He didn't quite avoid the blitz. Like many literary scions, He couldn't read between the Lions.** (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

◆ Second runner-up: **Ed Teller, you fathered the hydrogen bomb, The scope of your dream's still unfurled. We'll think of your contribution to us On the day that they blow up the world.** (Scott Campisi, Wake Village, Tex.)

◆ First runner-up, the winner of the tie with little West Virginias all over it: **At 105, old Madame Chiang At last met her mortality, That's got to be a record for A Taipei personality.** (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

◆ And the winner of The Inker: **Idi, you were real Amin, Your passing we think swell. They're laughing up in Heaven 'cause They know Uganda Hell.** (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

◆ Honorable Mentions: **For departed Lester Maddox Comeuppance bleak awaits, To see St. Peter, ax in hand, Between the Pearly Gates.** (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Robert Atkins, diet guru, and Robert Ross, co-creator of the Pillsbury Doughboy
Linked together forever, in fate's cruelest of barbs: Bread's Patron Saint and the Bane of the Carbs.

A sticky Inferno, a Dantean feat: Set for 10 minutes at moderate heat. (Mary Ann Henningsen, Hayward, Calif.)

Let's celebrate here the best thing achieved By a crooner who passed in the night, And reflect on the millions of children conceived To the voice of the great Barry White. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

His caricatures were plain INane but he teased the brain IN All he spelled what AN INnovative mind we're losIN' IN Artist AI Hirschfeld (Drew Knoblauch, Falls Church)

Sydney Omarr, Astrologer and Leo:
Died, 1/2/03. That day, your sign, your advice: "Get work done early." (Mary Ann Henningsen, Hayward, Calif.)

Donald O'Connor
Moses supposes Don's toeses are roses, Planted now, deep, six feet under, serene.

But hear that great tap rhythm up in the thunder? O'Connor is dancin' in Heaven with Gene. (Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)

Sheb Wooley's Hell on Earth, they say, Is wakin every single day Knowing some annoying twerp'll Ask you on the streets: "Is the people eater purple, Or are purple people what he eats?" (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

Dan Snyder of the Atlanta Thrashers hockey team:
He had not his Skins, He had not his clout, But unlike OUR Dan He got the puck out. (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

David Brinkley:
Acerbic wit and impish smile, He seemed above the muck, but nyet, Pitched ADM and made a pile, Good night, David. Good night, Chet. (Tom Greening, North Bethesda)

"This Week With David Brinkley" Survives without him rather stinkley. (Sanford D. Horn, Alexandria)

"Maytag repairman" Gordon Jump
He never spent a minute fixing dryers, He begged the phone to ring so he could talk; At last there's productivity at Maytag: Now the deadwood's dead and off the clock. (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)

Sen. Strom Thurmond:
You preached the "Southern way of life" In various high places. (But on occasion, you'd condone Some mixing of the races.) (Jerry Norris, New Bern, N.C.)

"The Ghost and Mrs. Muir" survived While Hope Lange held our hearts; If e'er the show should be revived, She now could play both parts. (Bob Dalton, Arlington; Mike Connaghan, Alexandria)

Gertrude Ederle:
From France to England unabatted, She swam for hours, barely sweated, But once ashore, though glory won, She smelled like Channel No. 1. (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

Ron Ziegler's gone inoperative, We're saddened by his dying. His lips are stilled: At least, for once, We know he isn't lying. (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

N!xau the Bushman is gone—it's no joke. Died very naturally, Not beamed by a Coke. (Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)

Olympic hockey coach Herb Brooks:
Life's crowning glories don't come twice: This time, no "miracle," just "on ice." (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Fred Rogers is gone, and the puppets grieve In the magical Land of Make Believe. In fact, the mood is so melancholy, King Friday threw himself under the trolley. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

I can't say I'm brokenhearted To find out that he's departed. You laud his life and wipe a tear; Not me—he ruined my career. I should have left him years ago; He never let me change, or grow! I had to play some half-wit babbler; I'd done "Streetcar"! "Hedda Gabler"! Now I'm typecast, just some joke, All from those stupid lines I spoke. So mourn his passing if you choose, I'll lie in the sun and snooze, And wake to arch my back and hiss: "Yo, Fred Rogers: Meow meow THIS." (Henrietta Pussycat, Pittsburgh) (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Richard's Pool Almanac **MOVING SALE** **by Richard Thompson**

After 6 1/2 years at this location we are moving to SATURDAY STYLE next week!! And we're selling everything right down to the bare newsprint!! **JUST LOOK—**

- ASSORTED BOB STAAKE DRAWINGS!** Strayed in to our space by mistake - \$17.99
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MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Myth Manners

When Miss Manners yanked etiquette back into the American consciousness a quarter of a century ago, she thought she was dictating to clean slates. A generation that had rejected courteous behavior with the devastating and high-minded argument that it was unnatural had produced a subsequent generation innocent of its rules.

Yet certain notions of etiquette have such a powerful hold as to survive. Unfortunately, they all happen to be wrong. Nevertheless, even people with no discernible manners cling to them and are outraged if others do not.

The Guest Towel Syndrome, Miss Manners calls it, in honor of the vast number of people who believe that these bits of cloth exist for the purpose of tantalizing guests who might want to wash their hands but are strictly forbidden to touch them.

Amazingly, some of these errant notions are not self-serving. That is to say, one suspects that they were first promulgated by, for example, hosts who wanted to show off pretty towels without the trouble of laundering them, but such ideas were later convincingly sold to others.

Here is an incomplete list of persistent etiquette myths:

- ◆ That a proper place setting consists of a fork, knife and teaspoon, no matter what food is being served, and that a teaspoon is the proper implement for eating dessert, while the larger oval dessert spoons should be used for serving.
- ◆ That it is permissible to disrupt a social event with a telephone call or premature departure if citing a work demand.
- ◆ That wives who have used their husbands' names may no longer do so when they are widows.
- ◆ That invitations don't need to be answered unless there is a specific request to that effect, and preferably a stamped card and envelope with which to reply.
- ◆ That it is rude to invite a single person anywhere without the option of bringing along a date.
- ◆ That party invitations require the donation of a bottle of wine or an item of food because guests "can't come empty-handed."
- ◆ That all announcements and invitations con-

cerning milestones in the hosts' lives require the recipient to send a present—except for a death, which requires sending the bereaved a check.

- ◆ That it is the obligation of people who expect presents to make known what they want.
- ◆ That the monetary value of a wedding present must equal the amount spent on the guest's entertainment at the wedding reception.
- ◆ That a bride has a year in which to thank people for sending wedding presents. Or that she cannot begin to thank people until after the wedding.
- ◆ That purchasing a greeting card is more thoughtful than writing a letter.
- ◆ That formal letters should be written on small, fold-over cards known as "informals."
- ◆ That a donation to charity counts as a present if you tell people you have given it in their name.
- ◆ That it is generous to direct other people to give money to charity in your name, using funds you would otherwise expect them to spend on you.

There is not a word of truth in any of this.

Dear Miss Manners:
How does one deal with a hot flash in public? I have an attractive fan that I carry, preferring it to whatever piece of paper lies closest at hand, but is a fan obvious in an inappropriate way? Sometimes, dabbing my face discreetly with a pretty little linen handkerchief just isn't enough!

Then Miss Manners suggests confessing that you have the vapors, and holding the back of your hand to your forehead while saying, "Oh, dear, I feel one of my spells coming on."

This will give you a reputation for having a delicate sensibility, not a bad reputation to have in these vulgar times. It will also enable you to fall back on a sofa, steady yourself on the arm of the nearest gentleman or otherwise make yourself more comfortable.

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

E-W vulnerable

NORTH		EAST	
♠ 54	♥ K 10 9 5	♠ K 10 9 3	♥ 3
♦ Q 9 5 2	♣ K 10 4	♦ 10 8 6 3	♣ 9 8 6 2
WEST		SOUTH (D)	
♠ Q 8	♥ 7 6 4	♠ A J 7 6 2	♥ A Q J 8 2
♦ A K J 4	♣ A 7 5 3	♦ 7	♣ Q J

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 ♠	Pass	1 NT	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	3 ♥	Pass
4 ♥	All Pass		

Opening lead: Choose it

Many chess masters can play blindfolded. A few, amazingly, can play several games at once. No doubt they consider it equally amazing that bridge experts can recall every bid and play in a 26-deal session from a week earlier.

Bridge has no equivalent of blindfold chess, but I've heard many tortuous auctions, with the opponents fighting each other up to slam despite an obvious misfit, and I'd have been willing to double without even looking at my hand. Moreover, some auctions make the opening lead so obvious you hardly need look at your hand to choose it.

In today's deal, North shows a weak hand and likes hearts but not spades. Since dummy's only good source of tricks will be ruffing tricks, West should lead a trump.

But the actual West made the mistake of looking at his hand before he led, and his A-K beckoned. West therefore led the king of diamonds.

West shifted to a trump, and South won in dummy and led a spade to his jack and West's queen. He won the next trump, took the ace of spades, ruffed a spade, ruffed a diamond, ruffed a spade and led a club to his queen. West won and tried to cash the ace of diamonds, but South ruffed, drew West's last trump and claimed.

If the opening lead is a trump, South goes down. South wins and loses a spade, and West leads another trump. If South wins in dummy and leads a club to his queen, West wins, carefully cashes one high diamond and leads a third trump. South then loses a second spade.

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Next Week: **Are You Badenov?, or Headline Moose**