

The Style Invitational

Week 547: Give Us a Bad Name

Wham-O is a good name for a toy company but a bad name for . . .



BY BOB STAMKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Red Lobster is a good name for a seafood restaurant but a bad name for a sunscreen.

Soft & Dri is a good name for a brand of deodorant but a bad name for brand of pickles.

This week's contest, suggested by Stephen Dudzik of Olney, who stole the idea from "The Tonight Show" a couple of months ago, is to take an existing product or business name and pair it with an incompatible one, as in the examples above. Don't steal your entries, though; "bad name" doesn't begin to describe what you would suffer.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins a fabulous prize donated to us by Paul Kondis of Alexandria: two plush, squeezable, cuddly toy germs, 1 million times actual size. Specifically, Athlete's Foot, which is a little orange guy of irregular shape, and Ulcer, an elongated critter with flagella sprouting from its head, such as it is. (Really, now, how many chances do you have to give your favorite baby athlete's foot or an ulcer?) Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312 or by e-mail to

losers@washpost.com. Snail-mail entries are not accepted. Deadline is Monday, March 8. 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 March 28. 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 Tom Witte of Montgomery Village.

Report from Week 543, in which we speculate on the next time the Invitational falls on a Feb. 29, in 2032. Many entries discussed President Jenna Bush or President Chelsea Clinton; lots of you told of baseball franchises awarded to East Grand Forks or Tikrit, as Washington continued to wait. In fact, lots of people had the same ideas about lots of things. If your general idea appears below with someone else's name after it, please see your local Department of Vital Statistics. You can change your name to that one, and then we'll send you a magnet.

◆ Third runner-up: *The Feb. 29, 2032, winning Style Invitational entry: A bad thing to say to the Supreme Alien Overlord: "What's up with the anal probes? Can't we just cuddle?"* (Erika Reinfeld, Somerville, Mass.)

◆ Second runner-up: *Lead news story of Feb. 29, 2032: Hundreds Dead in Segway Pile-up* (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

◆ First runner-up, the winner of the Piddlers instructional toilet targets: *Lead news story: Washington (AP)—"no LOL 2day," sez prez, "bcz bird flu kilt 200k!!!!"* (Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls)

◆ And the winner of the Inker: *The winning Style Invitational entry of Feb. 29, 2032: Use a person's name as an acronym for an appropriate quote: President. Ambassador. Representative. I've served honorably in life, triumphing over naysayers.* (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

◆ **Honorable Mentions:** *The lead news story of Feb. 29, 2032:*

Al Qaeda Threatens Security Council Veto (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

Post Issues Historic Print Edition After Third Day of Internet Blackout (Peter Metrinko, Plymouth, Minn.)

Cincinnati Oceanfront Property Values Soar (Robin and Paul Parry, Arlington)

Mayor Barry Jr. Says Powder Was for Athlete's Foot: "Itch Set Me Up" (Mark Young, Washington)

WWIII Obliterates 30 U.S. Cities; D.C. Awarded Major League Franchise (Milo Sauer)

United Negro College Fund Finally Updates Name; To Become United Negro University Fund (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Tree Museum Opens; People Pay a Dollar and a Half Just to See Them (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Next Round of "Survivor" to Be Set on Earth (Russell Beland)

With Cancer, Heart Disease Cured, Socialites Sponsor Hangnail Ball (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

KFC Changes Name to K (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Demi Moore Romances 50-Year-Old! (Russell Beland)

"Harry Potter and the Enlarged Prostate" Sweeps Oscars (Robin and Paul Parry)

Social Security Powerball Hits \$1.2 Billion (Chris Doyle)

President Sandler, House Speaker Carrey Butt Heads (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

And Last: Longtime recluse E. Jerontophiel Carnahan, 79, was discovered crushed to death in his home under an enormous pile of newspaper clippings, some dating back to

the 1990s. Oddly, according to police sources, all were from Sunday editions of the now-defunct Washington Post. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

The highest-flying company: ConservaTivo, which adds digital clothing onto naked TV characters (Milo Sauer)

Embedacel, maker of cell phones that can be implanted in a fetus in the first trimester—two months earlier than the competition (Bill Moulden, Frederick)

Big Al's Smog Saws (Russell Beland)

Downjohn Pharmaceuticals, maker of the Viagra antidote (Bob Wallace, Reston)

The best-selling self-help book: Where There's a Will: Personal Healing After You Put Grandma to Sleep (Bob Dalton)

Heather Has Three Mommies and One Happy Daddy (Jeff Brechlin)

Languor Management: Handling Life Without Work (Chris Doyle)

This Ain't Your Grandpa's Ecstasy (Judith Cottrill, New York)

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff: It's Time for the Spine-Chilling Fear (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

You CAN Beat Mutated-Platypus Flu (Tom Witte)

The Feb. 29, 2032, winning Style Invitational entry: Report from Week 1999: What Does God Feel Like? [winners interned by Homeland Security Thoughtcrime Agency] (Elden Carnahan)

And the winner of the vintage 2004 "The Scream" tie with Howard Dean goes to . . . (Nick Sibilla, Reston)

And the winner of the suppository shaped like Planet Zorg: "A black hole in the hand is worth . . . shwwwwoop!!!! Aaagh! (Chuck Smith's Preserved Head, Woodbridge) (Mary Ann Henningsen, Hayward, Calif.)

Next Week: You Gotta Have Heart, or Rhymes With Cupid

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Theya Culpa

Do you remember which public figure, looking uncharacteristically wan with a silent and strained-looking family standing by his side, made this statement?

"I made a mistake. I want to be clear about that. I accept full responsibility. I'm only human, and I succumbed to a moment of weakness. I will regret this all my life.

"I am here to apologize—to the people whose trust I earned, and, most especially, to my family, who are blameless but have suffered the most.

"I ask your forgiveness and understanding, and I will work hard to regain your trust. I would give anything to be able to undo what happened, but that is in the past, and we have to accept it and move on.

"I never claimed to be perfect. The biggest mistake was not telling the full story to you right away. I had hoped to spare my family, who have stood loyally by me in good times and bad, but I was wrong. This has been a nightmare for them.

"I have sought help, and I believe my experience has helped me gain insights into a problem that afflicts many people—maybe some people who are dear to you. I believe I have gained some insights, and I want to help them so others don't make the same mistake.

"Most of all, I want to get back to the job you entrusted me to do. I have been punished for what I did—I have been wracked with regrets, with only my faith in God and the support of my family to sustain me.

"I am profoundly thankful for that and for the faith you have shown in me. I ask only that you let me redeem myself by working hard to serve you.

"I want to answer all your questions. But right now I hope you'll allow me a little time with my family. They've been extraordinarily patient, and I have a lot of repairing to do."

Miss Manners supposes that the answer to her question is: Which public figure didn't? The ones who didn't get caught?

But she finds herself unable to enjoy the cynicism that is one of the benefits of citizenship. The prescription for this formula to which we are so often subjected was decreed by etiquette.

Miss Manners takes full responsibility for that, and is sorry.

Wait—no, she's not. It's a perfectly good formula: Admit the blame, express remorse, promise to do better.

Admittedly, it is self-serving for the wrongdoer. It is intended to be so. The idea is to stop him from continuing in the wrong direction by making him do a complete turnaround. We can't promise that it is sincere, but mouthing humility is supposed to suggest some sincerity and is, at any rate, mollifying to the wronged.

For years, Miss Manners's complaint about the public apology was that it was hedged. Wrongdoers would try to shift the blame to others who were incompetent ("I was misinformed") or oversensitive ("I'm sorry you took offense") or, by going into the passive tense, to no one ("Mistakes were made").

Now that everyone seems to have gotten the speech right, it is working too well. When convicts show remorse, they soften the court and may lighten their punishments. It does not mean that the record is wiped clean.

DEAR MISS MANNERS: PLEASE TELL ME THE CORRECT USE OF A FORK FOR CUTTING FOOD. I THINK IT VERY BAD MANNERS TO CUT MEAT, PIZZA, ETC., WITH THE SIDE OF YOUR FORK. I THINK A KNIFE SHOULD BE USED. YOUR ANSWER PLEASE.

First, Miss Manners begs you to get a grip on yourself. People who are shouting should not be allowed to grip knives.

In fact, this is connected with the historic basis for the rule that anything that can be cut with the fork should be, and knives should be used as little as possible. It seems that hot-tempered people in the 18th century were wielding their dinner knives a bit too freely.

Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distracted 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

N-S vulnerable

NORTH (D)
 ♠ A 10 9 2
 ♥ A J 10 5 4
 ♦ 7
 ♣ A 8 5

EAST
 ♠ 5
 ♥ Q 8 2
 ♦ A Q 9 6 4 2
 ♣ Q 9 3

WEST
 ♠ 7 6 3
 ♥ K 7 3
 ♦ 10 5 3
 ♣ K 10 4 2

SOUTH
 ♠ K Q J 8 4
 ♥ 9 6
 ♦ K J 8
 ♣ J 7 6

The bidding:
 North East South West
 1 ♥ 2 ♦ 2 ♠ Pass
 3 ♠ Pass 3 NT Pass
 4 ♣ All Pass
 Opening lead — Choose it

That Grapefruit sure is a pain in the neck," a club player remarked to me.

"Some people have a lower opinion of him," I replied.

Grapefruit is as ornery as a bunkhouse cook. He harangues partners without mercy.

"The way he intimidates his partners comes home to roost," my friend said. "Look at this deal: I was South, and Grapefruit was East. When I landed at four spades, West led a diamond."

"I don't blame him," I said. "If you don't lead Grapefruit's suit and it turns out badly, you may not live to play the next deal."

"Grapefruit took the ace and shifted to a trump. I drew trumps and led a heart to dummy's ten. Grapefruit took the queen and led a club, but I took the ace, cashed the

ace of hearts, ruffed a heart, took the king of diamonds, ruffed a diamond and threw two clubs on dummy's good hearts. Making five."

If West had a different partner, he might use his judgment on opening lead. South had suggested no-trump, but North had insisted on spades, hence North had a shapely hand—probably with a singleton diamond. North had also shown a heart suit, and West's heart holding suggested that South could easily set up the hearts and throw away losers.

West needed tricks in a hurry and rated to get them from only one place: He should have preferred the aggressive opening lead of the deuce of clubs. This lead is correct in theory and in practice. However South plays, the defenders get two clubs, a diamond and a heart.

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DEAR ABBY

Dear Abby: My best friend, "Sheila," was recently married, and I was a bridesmaid.

About two months before the wedding, Sheila called to say that the junior bridesmaid dress she had selected for one of her attendants was too small—size 8 for a girl who was size 12. Sheila asked if there was anything I could do to make the dress fit because it was too late to order another one.

After a lot of work and many long hours over a four-week period, I finished the alterations. Neither Sheila nor the junior bridesmaid paid me for the work, and I thought that was because I said I'd do it as a favor to Sheila.

A few days before the wedding, I was still deciding what to give her as a wedding gift, but everyone I asked said that altering the dress should be enough. Well, Sheila didn't see it that way. On her wedding night, she called me several times demanding a gift of money! She said I had been disrespectful by not giving her a gift. Even after her honeymoon, she called again to talk about the money.

Was I wrong not to give her a separate wedding gift?
Friend of the Bride on Long Island

For a bride to demand a gift shows an appalling lack of manners. I think that spending an entire month trying to ensure that Sheila had the wedding of her dreams was gift enough. If you have an itch to do so, scratch Sheila off your list, because she is no friend.

Dear Abby: Last July you kindly printed a letter from Christopher Reeve, the vice chairman of the National Organization on Disability (NOD), in which he called on the communities of this country to enter NOD's Accessible America Contest.

The letter generated substantial interest and 64 entries were received. Each one documented impressive efforts that towns and cities around the United States are making to enable their communities to be more welcoming and accessible so that citizens and visitors with disabilities can fully participate in community life.

In your response to Christopher, you said you would share the name of the winning community when it was announced. Phoenix is the winner of the 2003 Accessible America Contest, which includes a \$25,000 prize underwritten by UPS. Phoenix joins Venice, Fla., and

Irvine, Calif., winners of the first two contests, as a model for other communities as they strive to be disability-friendly.

For further information about the contest, Phoenix's winning entry and NOD's Community Partnership Program, which provides guidance and assistance to towns and cities in their efforts to work with the disability community, readers can visit www.nod.org.

Brewster Thackery, NOD Director of Communications

Thank you for the update. And congratulations to the forward-thinking city of Phoenix for winning the Accessible America competition.

It demonstrates the city's commitment to execute the plans and devote the funds to assure that everyone can fully participate in the life of the community. That's time and money well spent.

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 or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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"While looking for a job, you may find a career."

Jobs. Every Sunday. **The Washington Post**

Source: 2003 Job Seeker Interviews, conducted by The Washington Post and Rosenthal. R346 6x2 A

