The Style Invitational

Week 551: Lost in Translation



If you feed into the Google translator "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party," and click on "English to French," you get:

> Est maintenant l'heure pour tous les bons hommes de venir à l'aide de leur partie.

And if you feed that into the translator and click on "French to English," you get:

Is now the hour for all the good men to come using their part.

This week's contest: Find us some comical translations-and-back using the Google translator (click on "Language Tools" on the Google.com home page). Feed some passage of English text into the tool—25 words max—and ask it to translate it into one of the five languages offered; then copy the result back into the tool and ask it to translate that back to English. Warning: It's very important this week to come up with text that other contestants aren't likely to submit; if we get more than three identical entries of a passage, we won't use it. Obviously, you need the Internet for this contest. Those of you who don't have Internet access get the week off; you can pull out your abacuses and finish your taxes.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins a "Today" show baseball cap hand-autographed by Katie Couric ("Good morning!" it says perkily).

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 e-mail to losers@washpost.com. Snail-mail entries are not accepted. Deadline is Monday, April 5. 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 April 25. 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 Josh Borken of Bloominaton. Minn. This week's contest was suggested more or less by Russell Beland of Springfield.

Report from Week 547, in which we asked for things that an existing brand name would be bad for: The Empress received 462 e-mails for this contest, many of which contained dozens of entries each, and almost all of which contained an entry suggesting that Microsoft would be a bad name for an erectile-dysfunction drug. Other entries too common to reward: Cheerios for a funeral home, Next Day Blinds for a laser eye surgery center, and Redskins for a football team. The category of laxatives really got you going, so to speak; the litany of bad names included Outback, Grey Poupon, Jiffy Lube, Chunky, Pump & Spray, Big Brownie Blast, Quicken and, but of course, IBM.

- ♦ Fourth runner-up: Rolling Rock is a good name for a beer but a bad name for an insurance company. (Jim Lyons, Arlington)
- ♦ Third runner-up: The Chrysler Building is a good name for a skyscraper but a bad name for an SUV. (John Conti, Norfolk, Mass.)
- ♦ Second runner-up: Antabuse is a good name for an alcoholism drug but a bad name for a magnifying glass. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
- ◆ First runner-up, the winner of the cuddly stuffed Athlete's Foot and Ulcer toys: Wachovia is a good name for a bank but a bad name for a cemetery.
- ♦ And the winner of the Inker: Virgin Airways is okay as a name for an airline but not for a cigarette. (Russell Beland, Springfield)
- ♦ Honorable Mentions:

(Michael Cisneros, Centreville)

BP is a good name for a gas company but a bad name for a honey company. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

Renuzit is a good name for a room deodorizer but a bad name for an acne treatment. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Nine Inch Nails is a good name for a rock group but a bad name for a proctology clinic. (J. F. Martin, Naples, Fla.)

Hi-C is a good name for a fruit drink but

a bad name for a tutoring service. (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles) Open Pit is a good name for a barbecue

sauce but a bad name for a toilet bowl cleaner. (Ann Martin, Annapolis)

Wawa is a good name for a convenience store but a bad name for an antidepressant.

(Dave Komornik, Danville, Va.)

Iran is a good name for an Islamic republic but a bad name for an infantry platoon. (Ted Einstein, Silver Spring)

Newman's Own is a good name for Paul Newman's brand of condiments, but it would not be a good name for his brand of condoms. (Russell Beland)

IHOP is a good name for a pancake shop but a bad name for a prosthetics

(Larry Blue, Potomac; Tom Matthews, Fairfax Station; Jeff Brechlin, Potomac Falls)

Ashburn is a good name for a town but a bad name for hemorrhoid ointment. (Karen Tierney, Ashburn)

3-in-One is a good name for a household oil but a bad name for a religion. (Mike Genz. La Plata)

Domino's is a good name for a pizza place but a bad name for a construction company. (Tiffany Getz, Manassas; Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

Nordic Track is a good name for exercise equipment but a bad name for an affirmative action program. (Larry

Target is a good name for a retail store in America but a bad name for a retail **store in Iraq.** (Jeff Martin, Gaithersburg)

Chick-fil-A is a good name for a fast-food outlet but not for O.J. Simpson's next business venture. (Tom Witte)

Phillips, Falls Church: Russell Beland)

The Tinder Box is a good name for a tobacco shop but a bad name for an

apartment building. (Dean Evangelista, Silver Spring)

Twinkies, HoHos and Ding Dongs are all good names for snack cakes, but not for WNBA teams. (Blythe Marshall, Annandale; Russell Beland)

Taco Bell is a good name for a Mexican restaurant but a bad name for a Mexican phone company. (Dave Ferry, Purvis, Miss.: Dudley Thompson, Raleigh, N.C.)

Snickers is a good name for a candy bar but a bad name for a support group. (Briana Payne, Annapolis)

First Impressions is a good name for a dating service but not a bungee jumping center. (Russell Beland)

Ayds used to be a good name for a diet candy . . . (Paul Styrene, Olney)

Kaboom is a good name for a stain remover but a bad name for a high-fiber cereal. (Kelly Wilson, Milwaukee)

The Library of Congress is probably too subtle to be a good name for an adult **bookstore.** (Russell Beland)

First Union is a good name for a bank but a bad name for a Boy Scout camp. (Michael Fribush, Burtonsville)

Rent-A-Wreck is a good name for a usedcar rental company but a bad name for an escort service. (Marleen May, Rockville)

Boeing is a good name for an airplane company but not for a mattress

company. (Peter Metrinko, Plymouth, Minn.)

The Foot Locker is a good name for a sports shoe store but a bad name for quick-drying cement.

(Art Grinath, Takoma Park) Wanamaker is a good name for a department store but a bad name for a

dating service. (Susan Thompson, Raleigh, N.C.)

Excalibur is a good name for a security company but a bad name for a tampon. (Jeff Brechlin)

Just Do It is a good slogan for Nike but a bad slogan for a suicide relief center. (Jeff Keenan, Severn)

Miracle Whip is a good name for a salad dressing, a bad name for Mel Gibson to use for movie tie-in toy merchandising. (Dave Zarrow, Herndon; Elden Carnahan)

Ram Cargo Van is a good name for a vehicle but a bad name for a driving school. (Jeff Brechlin)

The Swimsuit Issue might be a good name for a week of Sports Illustrated, but it probably won't work for Hustler. (Russell Beland)

Air France is a good name for an airline but a bad name for a deodorant. (Danny Bravman, Potomac)

Sizzler is a good name for a steakhouse but a bad name for a rectal thermometer. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Stove Top Stuffing is a good name for stuffing that you cook on the stove, but not for a book on how to get the romance back in your marriage. (Russell Beland)

Kleenex may be a good name for a tissue, but it's an excellent name for a divorce law firm. (Paul Kondis, Alexandria)

Next Week: Inklings, or I Know You Were but What Was I?

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Vulgarians at the Gate

ublic indignation is not providing the excitement it once did. Miss Manners misses the days when people with pretensions to respectability dramatically declared that they were shocked at vulgarity, instead of prissily insisting that they are not.

But every once in a while there is an outburst, as it were. Something just plops out—ah, pops up—oh, never mind. What Miss Manners is failing to say euphemistically is that such an occasion occurred when the sudden appearance of a bare breast in the otherwise vulgar Super Bowl halftime show struck a number of people who were willing to admit it as—vulgar.

We all have to take our amusement where we find it, and a great many other people enjoyed themselves by ridiculing those who were shocked. Miss Manners, in turn, enjoys the righteousness of the arguments the latter group inevitably makes in support of vulgarity.

- These are: ■ That whatever is being deemed vulgar is a part of the reality of life and, being natural, can-
- not be vulgar. ■ That since it is part of life, people who consid-
- er themselves honest must face it. ■ That whatever sight, word or act it is has, in fact, been observed before, often without ob-
- iection. ■ That it is not so bad because one can think of things that would be even more offensive.
- That there is so much vulgarity around, there is no point in trying to restrict it.
- That any ban on the distribution of vulgarity constitutes censorship, and thus an abridgment of our fundamental rights.

Noble as these sentiments are, Miss Manners remains unconvinced that there is no such thing as vulgarity—or (the giveaway that everyone knows it exists) that it has to be allowed to run freely through society if we are to preserve our own freedom. Some unseemly leaps have been taken in the reasoning.

Miss Manners is willing to grant that standards about what constitutes vulgarity are relative and subjective. She knows that repetition wears away the shock, so that allowing vulgarity to take its own course eventually renders it unexceptional. And she yields to no one in her opposition to censorship and the abridgment of

Nevertheless, she cannot help noticing that not everything natural is good. Earthquakes, for example. And she fails to see the benefit to anyone if natural human functions, even ones that

produce beneficial results—she is much too delicate to name them—are on public view.

That some like to observe or be observed does not strike her as a reason for arranging for the disinclined to do so when they are going about their normal business. And that some things may be delightful in one context and shocking in another is not a contradiction that should trouble anyone with a modicum of sophistication.

Vulgarity is one of those lapses of manners that do not arise from accident or ignorance. Whether it is showing off or showing too much, it is done to provoke others to envy or disgust.

So while allowing it to become commonplace helps dull the reaction, it forces down the standards with which everyone else has to live. Now we get to the tricky part. How do you shield some people without suppressing others?

By custom. The mannerly principle of not deliberately provoking others, which is the foundation of civilized living, supplies a sense of etiquette about what is permissible where. If you attend orgies, you cannot complain of indecency; if you stumble upon the same activities in the grocery store aisles, you should. The vulgar have their venues and should not expect to be allowed to set the tone everywhere.

Dear Miss Manners:

Please advise on this ongoing controversy regarding how one eats raw fruit: apples, pears, peaches, etc. Shall one simply hold the fruit in the hand and eat of it, like Eve partaking of the forbidden, or is it more mannerly to slice off segments with a knife?

I prefer the latter way, and point out that whenever we see a still-life painting, there is always a knife.

Eve lived in a garden. Still-life paintings generally have tables in them.

What Miss Manners is trying to tell you is that, in this case, how depends on where. At the table, the fruits you mention are eaten with fork and knife; without a table, you would only succeed in cutting yourself, so they are finger food.

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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DEAR ABBY

My girlfriend and I have been a couple for almost two years and have been living together for two months. We rented a house so it would be had moved in on the other.

At first, we split all the chores. She likes to cook, I like to clean; she did the laundry, I did the yard work. Now she doesn't do anything at all! I find myself doing all the laundry, cooking, etc., which, to tell you the truth, I don't really mind. What I do mind is her constant complaints about

the way I do things. She implies that I am incompetent, yet she won't lift a finger. In the morning before work, if I am busy doing chores and paying bills, she complains that I'm not spending enough time with her. But when I stop, she only wants to watch TV. When I try to talk to her about it, she yells and storms off.

Is it possible to fall out of love with someone over things like this? Or am I just disillusioned? When I look at her, I don't feel that twinge of excitement anymore.

Exhausted and Frustrated

Yes, it is indeed possible to fall out of love with someone who is lazy, hypercritical and impossible to please. Consider yourself fortunate to have seen this side of your girlfriend before it was too late. Frankly, you deserve better-so don't look back.

Dear Abby:

Before I married my husband, I had, shall we say, a "colorful past." None of those encounters gave me much satisfaction. I was upfront about it with my husband before we married. He asked how many and I told him.

Last night, I made an off-the-cuff remark that he took the wrong way. He told me later that it reminded him of my past. He felt I was bragging about it and throwing it in his face. He told me

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that day.

that after he learned how experienced I was, he had almost broken up with me.

Abby, I have explained to him repeatedly that the only relationship that has ever given me any and over how much I love him and need him. But this hurts. How do I help him get over my past?

Hurting in Massachusetts

Men who ask the question are often insecure. An emotionally mature man would have respected your privacy and not pushed. The next time he brings up your past, suggest to him that it is healthier and more fruitful to live in the present. Assure him that you love him only and offer to go to counseling together until he has talked it out. The rest is up to him.

Dear Abby:

My sister-in-law gave my daughter a beautiful antique desk a few months ago. I was there at the time, and both of us thanked her for the generous gift.

My mother says I was rude for not sending a thank-you card for the gift.

What is the proper etiquette when someone receives a gift and thanks the giver in person? Is an additional written thank-you card called for? Concerning Manners

In addition to thanking the giver in person, a

handwritten note is the proper way to show gratitude for a gift. It doesn't have to be long and flowery—only heartfelt. However, the person who receives the gift should write the note—and that's your daughter, not you.

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.Dear Abby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

here must be some good in the man," Rose sighed. "Has to be," said Cy the Cynic,

"since none ever comes out." We were talking about Grapefruit, our member with the acid disposition, who had been in rare form

Grapefruit was West, and South ruffed the second club and erred by starting the trumps instead of the diamonds. He led the king to Grapefruit's ace, ruffed the next club and drew trumps. South then led a low diamond.

... a fourth club.

East won with the nine and led

"Whose side are you on?" Grapefruit roared. "You just gave the man a ruff-sluff.'

South ruffed in his hand—with his last trump—and threw a spade from dummy. He took the ace of diamonds and ruffed a diamond, but

when diamonds failed to break 3-3, dummy had a losing spade at the end. Down one.

Grapefruit still wasn't happy. He told East that if his IQ were any lower, he'd trip over it.

A ruff-sluff costs nothing if (1) declarer has no losers to sluff, or (2) he'll score his remaining trumps separately anyway. Say East leads a spade when he wins the first diamond. South takes the king, leads a diamond to the ace, ruffs a diamond, leads a spade to the ace and ruffs a diamond. He ruffs a spade and cashes the fifth di-

amond for his 10th trick. East's lead of the fourth club sank the contract by forcing declar-

er to use a trump prematurely. As for Grapefruit, he can't help being himself, I guess. A lot of players are insecure enough to take ref-

uge in badgering partners. © 2004. Tribune Media Services