

The Style Invitational

Week 561: Deform of a Question



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A. None of them run; they just sit and rot.

Q. How have those pairs of hemp-fiber pantyhose worked out?

This week we revisit a successful contest from 1998, originally suggested by Jacob Weinstein of Los Angeles. Take any sentence appearing in The Washington Post or washingtonpost.com today through June 14, and make up a question to which the sentence could be an answer. The above example is from today's Dear Abby column about a man who collects junky cars. Please include the headline of the story or ad you're quoting.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins a flask formed from the hoof and ankle of some dark-coated hairy ungulate, probably a deer. 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. Deadline is Monday, June 14. 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 July 4. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonym entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Ezra Deutsch-Feldman of Bethesda.

Report from Week 557, in which we asked you to explain the difference between any two real or fictional people who have a common element in their names. The Empress decided, imperiously, that "people" could include animals and even inanimate objects that wear clothes and/or talk. So she does not want to hear complaints about the inclusion of any entries concerning Al Gore.

◆ Third runner-up: The difference between **Dave Barry** and **Marion Barry** is that Dave is famous for stuff that *comes out of* your nose. (Laura Shumar, Lafayette, Ind.)

◆ Second runner-up: The difference between **Bobby Brown** and **Playskool's Bobby Q**, the **Magic Talkin' Grill**, is that with Bobby Q, the battery's not included. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

◆ First runner-up, the winner of the genuine tasseled pasties: The difference between **Janet Jackson** and **Michael Jackson**: At least when Michael exposes himself in front of the youth of America, he has the decency to do it in the privacy of his own bedroom. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

◆ And the winner of the Inker: The difference between **Marilyn Monroe** and **Marilyn Quayle** is that one reputedly slept with Jack Kennedy, and the other has slept with . . . well, he's no Jack Kennedy. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Honorable Mentions:

The difference between **Thomas Jefferson** and **George Jefferson** is about seven generations. (Miles D. Moore, Alexandria)

Seth Thomas and **Clarence Thomas**: Seth wanted time to move forward. (Jack Cackler, Falls Church)

Donald Rumsfeld and **Donald Duck**: When we can't understand Donald Duck, it's funny. (Eric Murphy, Chicago)

John Dean and **Howard Dean**: You could almost imagine Kerry picking John Dean as his running mate. (Russell Beland)

Lil' Kim and **Kim Jong-Il**: Although both are short and like to party, Lil' Kim doesn't perm her hair. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Jesse Ventura and **Ace Ventura**: Ace wasn't ashamed to admit when he was talking out of his butt. (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)

Michael Jackson and **Jackson Browne**: Michael said, "Doctor my eyes, my nose, my ears, my chin, my skin . . ." (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Daniel Day-Lewis and **Jerry Lewis**: Daniel had only one left foot. (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg)

George W. Bush and **George of the Jungle**: George of the Jungle started as a cartoon and then went to live action. (Peter Levitan, Sherman Oaks, Calif.)

Billy Carter and **Bill Clinton**: One brings to mind a president's feckless relation, and the other a president's reckless fellation. (Chris Doyle)

Sharon Osbourne and **Ariel Sharon**: She holds a house together; he takes them apart. (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

Pontius Pilate and **Joseph Pilates**: Joseph continues to torture people. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

Curious George and **George Bush**: One of them makes a real effort to find out what's going on. (Jack Cackler, Jane Auerbach)

Marion Barry and **Barry Bonds**: One did coke and was caught, and the other sells Coke and hasn't been. (Jack Cackler)

Barry Bonds and **Barry White**: Both had a lot of hits, but White helped a lot more people score. (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)

Elizabeth I and **Elizabeth Taylor**: One hymen, nine husbands and a couple of years. (Judith Cottrill, New York)

Donald Trump and **Ronald McDonald**: Although both are successful commercial clowns, Ronald has much better hair. (Chris Doyle)

Marquis de Sade and **Sade**: You didn't have to be a masochist to listen to the marquis sing. (Jerry Pannullo, Kensington)

Bing Crosby and **David Crosby**: The latter dreamed of white stuff all year round. (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)

Moe Howard and **Howard Hughes**: Moe never saved his clippings. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Paul Simon and **Simon Cowell**: Cowell appears with more than one untalented hack. (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

Donald Rumsfeld and **Donald Trump**: Trump knows when to say, "You're fired!" (Robin Grove, Chevy Chase; Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)

Barney Frank and **Barney Rubble**: Rubble had a yabba-dabba-doo time, a dabba-doo time, too. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

Edwin Newman and **Alfred E. Newman**: Unlike Alfred, Edwin might have worried that I'd spell his name wrong. (Russell Beland)

Stephen King and **Don King**: Don has a bigger vocabulary. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

Anita Bryant and **Anita Hill**: Anita Bryant would never mention anything strange in her drink. (Jane Auerbach)

Jerry Lee Lewis and **Jerry Falwell**: Lewis didn't sue when people made jokes about his having sex with relatives. (Jane Auerbach)

George Bush and **George Washington**: George Bush had enough sense not to allow military service to interfere with regular trips to the dentist. (Carl Northrop, Fairfax)

John Holmes and **John Doe**: Oh, about six inches. (Chris Doyle)

Janet Reno and **Janet Jackson**: Reno brashly showed the nation her best. (Kyle Hendrickson, Dunkirk)

O.J. Simpson and **Jessica Simpson**: Anything Jessica puts on fits like a glove. (Kyle Hendrickson)

James T. Kirk and **James Bond**: All Trekkies know that James Bond isn't a real person. (Kyle Hendrickson)

Marie Antoinette and **Marie Curie**: Marie Curie had a good head on her shoulders. (Peter Metrinko, Plymouth, Minn.)

DeWitt Clinton and **Bill Clinton**: DeWitt Clinton dug big ditches. (Peter Metrinko; George Vary, Bethesda)

Scott Carpenter and **Karen Carpenter**: He actually managed to achieve weightlessness. (Russell Beland)

Prince Charming from "Cinderella" and **Prince Charming** from "Sleeping Beauty": The Cinderella one didn't force his attentions on a woman in a coma. How freaking kinky is that? (Russell Beland)

Donald Duck and **Donald Rumsfeld**: At least the duck wears a uniform. (Russell Beland)

William Jefferson Clinton and **Thomas Jefferson**: Monica was merely an employee. (Russell Beland)

Queen Elizabeth and **Queen Latifah**: The crown jewels are not referred to as "the Windsor bling." (Brendan Beary)

X the Owl and **Malcolm X**: Only one fought against being a puppet of the white man. (Brendan Beary)

John Kerry and **John-Boy Walton**: John-Boy at least says "good night" when he puts you to sleep. (Miles D. Moore)

Zbigniew Brzezinski and . . . **give me a minute** . . . (Brendan Beary).

The difference between **John Adams (second president)** and **John Quincy Adams (sixth)** is similar to the difference between **George H.W. Bush (41)** and **George W. Bush (43)** in that 6-2 = 4, and 43-41 = 2, which is the square root of 4, which is exactly the way the Trilateral Commission planned it. DON'T YOU SEE? IT'S SO OBVIOUS!!! (Roy Ashley)

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Information, Please

"Isn't it shocking the way telephone manners have deteriorated?" Miss Manners is often asked.

How's that? Can't hear you. Someone here is shouting. Now someone else is complaining that this is too loud.

Oh, she supposes they have. The truth is, however, that they were terrible from the very beginning.

Miss Manners would not dream of saying a word against dear Alexander Graham Bell or dear Thomas Edison, to whom we have such reason to be grateful. But they might have stuck to what they knew and refrained from trying to invent etiquette. You don't see Miss Manners messing around in their areas.

It was Mr. Bell who established the principle that people should drop whatever they are doing and attend immediately to whoever happens to be calling them on the telephone. Understandably, he was somewhat overexcited at the time. Not only had he invented the telephone, but he was in the middle of testing whether it could carry speech when he made a mess spilling battery acid.

It was enough to rattle anyone, but he should not have forgotten to say "please" when he called to his assistant, "Mr. Watson, come here. I want to see you!" And he should not have taken it for granted that anyone on the other end of a telephone has nothing better to do than to rush to its summons.

His later choice of the proper word with which to answer the telephone was also unfortunate. It was "Ahoy!" But the amendment proposed by Mr. Edison, "Hello," is not much better, although it is now familiar to us.

For one thing, it was probably a misspelling of the British "Halloo," which is considered fit to shout at hounds. More important, it contains no information. Two people who cannot see each other exchange hellos, without enlightening the caller about who has picked up the telephone or the person called about who is calling.

We have lumbered along with these manners from then on, even to the point of resenting and resisting the inventions that came along to solve the problems they created.

The answering machine, which solved the problem of having to be forever on-call, was deeply resented when it first appeared. The idea that people "screened their calls" was considered insulting, as if it had ever made sense not to have any choice about whom to talk to when.

Now the answering machine and voicemail are

not only accepted but expected. The same people (Miss Manners suspects) who used to declare indignantly, "I won't talk to a machine!" are indignant if they don't encounter one. "Do they expect me to keep calling back?" they will ask. Or worse, "I don't want to talk to him, I just wanted to leave a message."

Yet the outrageous idea that no one should be out of reach continues to hound people who do not yet have cellular telephones, or, even more provocatively, have them but occasionally turn them off.

Meanwhile, caller identification systems have come along. These not only assist those called in knowing whether the call is one they need to take at the moment, but solve the "hello" problem on one side, at least, by indicating who has called.

This unnerves many callers, Miss Manners has been told. Used to the preliminaries of guessing, they resent being greeted by name. She suggests they get over it. Nobody is more devoted to tradition than she, but there are situations in which a tradition that was originally flawed should be replaced by a sensible one.

People should surely be able to know, before they commit themselves to chatting, who it is who wants to chat. Hello?

Dear Miss Manners:

We all know that pointing is impolite, but could you clarify: does this pointing include all pointing or just pointing at people (or where it may be perceived that one is pointing at a person)? In other words, is it acceptable to point at the lamp on the mantle or a difficult-to-pronounce or unknown word on a menu?

This rule is designed to protect against "Oops, they're talking about me" and "Would you mind getting your finger away from my eye?" In other words, it prohibits only pointing to or toward people. Miss Manners would like to point out that it is not wrong to point as an accompaniment to "That lamp is about to fall off the mantelpiece!" or "I'll have that for dessert, but I'm not even going to try to pronounce it."

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

Dear Abby:

We are good friends with our neighbors the "Smiths." Our oldest son is their youngest son's best friend. The problem is their oldest son, "Joey." Tonight we came home to find that Joey had broken into our garage and stolen the liquor we had stored there. When Mr. and Mrs. Smith confronted him, he took off.

This is not the first time Joey has vandalized our home or stolen from us, and we are fed up. It would be sad to sacrifice our relationship with his parents, but we don't know what else to do.

Should we press charges? Or would that open a whole new can of worms with Joey? Do you think he might take his anger out on our kids? I don't know what's best. Part of me wants to throw the book at him; part of me is afraid of the repercussions. What would you do?

Had Enough in Minnesota

I'd make my decision based on the number of times Joey had acted out. Since this is not the first time he has vandalized your home or stolen from you, I'd put the Smiths on notice that if anything further happens, the police will be involved. Their son is in serious need of counseling and possibly drug rehabilitation. Also, he needs to learn that there are serious consequences for his actions. If he threatens your children, it may be necessary to get a restraining order.

Dear Abby:

My husband, "Roger," has some unusual hobbies that I don't know how to handle. He owns more than 24 cars. None of them run; they just sit and rot. He buys old airplanes, although he doesn't know how to fly—and they, too, sit rusting away. He also collects cardboard boxes and anything in bulk. A few months ago, he bought 23 16-by-20 picture frames simply because they were on sale.

Roger ignores me. Unless I initiate a conversation, he does not talk. He won't talk to anyone; he just sits and reads.

With the promise of a new home as bait, he moved us out of state into a trailer park. But all

our money has been spent on old vehicles.

Abby, my husband comes from a nice, well-to-do family. Roger has a college education and works for a large company, but sometimes I think he would like to be a hermit. What can I do?
Living Like a Hermit in California

Talk to an attorney who specializes in family law and find out what your rights as a wife are in the state of California. Your husband appears to be eccentric by conventional standards, and possibly should be evaluated. If he won't consent to the evaluation, then please discuss it with his "nice, well-to-do family." But don't be surprised if they are already aware of it. These quirks have been known to run in families.

Dear Abby:

From season is upon us. Thousands of beautiful gowns and handsome tuxes will be bought or rented.

Please suggest to your young readers that they can get more mileage out of those beautiful outfits by planning and presenting a fashion show or a tea for a local retirement home. Seniors in these facilities would love to see the girls in their gowns and the young men in their tuxes. This will not only bring back memories for the seniors, but will bring the "outside" and "inside" communities together in a way that will bring joy to young and old alike.

Pat Bridges, Topeka, Kan.

What a delightful idea for a school club project. All it would take is someone with the willingness and skill to coordinate the event, and I'm sure the "models" would enjoy strutting their stuff. Perhaps the parents could split the cost of the tea, cookies or cake.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeane Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable

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

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
1 ♦	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	All Pass	

Opening lead: ♦ K

Marriage, n.: A community consisting of a master, a mistress and two slaves, making in all, two.

—Ambrose Bierce, "The Devil's Dictionary."

A married couple, looking as companionable as a cat and a goldfish, brought me today's deal. They'd been East-West, and wife, East, wasn't happy with husband's defense.

"I played the nine on the first diamond," she said, "but he then led the ace and a third diamond. South ruffed, drew trumps and led queen of clubs. My husband won, and South later took the K-J of clubs to pitch the jack of hearts."

"We beat it if my hubby leads a low diamond at the second trick: I'll win and shift to a heart. And later, if he ducks the queen of clubs,

wins the next club and exits with a diamond. South loses a heart."

Husband gave me a pained look. "Couldn't East have had the 9-2 of diamonds? What if South's queen of clubs were singleton? My wife expects me to defend like a genius."

"On the bidding," I said with a shrug, "South is more likely to have two low diamonds than Q-10-5, so underleading in diamonds at Trick Two would have been reasonable."

Wife nodded approvingly.

"But as the play actually went," I went on, "you were right to grab the ace of clubs. If declarer has Q-3, as in the actual deal, ducking won't help you. He overtakes with the king, ruffs dummy's last diamond and leads another club, and when you win you're end-played."

"Just as I foresaw," husband nodded wisely—and wife led him away by the ear.

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Next Week: Set Us Right, or Run This Bias