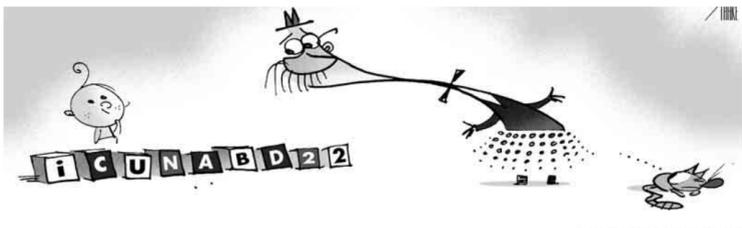


The Style Invitational

Week 562: The LMNs of Style



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

This week's contest will drive you crazy. You may blame Jack Suber of Cabin John, who came up with this idea while playing with the alphabet blocks of his 14-month-old son (who one day will get to use them, too). The late children's book author and cartoonist William Steig had this idea earlier and made a couple of books out of it, "CDB" and "CDC." Write a funny sentence (or more) that you "spell" with only the *sounds* of the *names* of letters (e.g., bee, aitch, eye, ess) and those of numbers 1 through 9. So you don't "accidentally" copy Mr. Steig's work, make your sentences inappropriate for a children's picture book (but still printable in this newspaper, whose editors do not like bad words). For example, the sentence in the cartoon above reads, "I see you in a beady tutu." You may include punctuation. (Attention, aliens: This is America and Z is pronounced "zee"; it does not rhyme with "dead.") Jack wins a plush toy germ that no doubt he will also not let his kid play with. First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins "Mad About Martha," a 1996 parody paper-doll book that features costumes for Ms. Stewart as cocktail waitress, Marie Antoinette and even president of the United States, but fails to include an orange jumpsuit.

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 21. 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 11. 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 Chris Doyle of Forsyth, Mo.

Report from Week 558, in which we asked for right-leaning political humor in any of several standard joke forms. The Empress wasn't overly surprised to receive some entries that were, let's say, a bit disingenuous, such as this one from Brendan Beary of Great Mills: "Be-ware, let me tell you / Of that damned ACLU / And their whole Bill of Rights, / I mean, goods, that they'd sell you."

But first, an amazing bit of news to report, courtesy of Elden Carnahan of Laurel, who has meticulously compiled Loser stats since the Invitational's birth in 1993 (www.gopher-drool.com): With his ink this week, Russell Beland of Springfield has had more than *seven hundred* entries, contest suggestions, etc., printed since he first entered in 1994. While some readers assumed that writing entries was his full-time job, it should be known that Russ actually devotes several hours a week to his big-shot position at the Pentagon. Russ is now about 50 blots of ink above Nos. 2 and 3, Tom Witte and Chuck Smith, who by strange coincidence are also federal employees.

Back to conservative humor:

◆ **Fourth Runner-Up:** How can you tell if a pickup truck is owned by a liberal? That's a trick question—Volvo doesn't make pickup trucks! (Bruce W. Alter, Fairfax Station)

◆ **Third Runner-Up:** What's the difference between the National Education Association and the National Rifle Association? The NRA wants to teach kids to set their sights on something. (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

◆ **Second Runner-Up:** What's the difference between John Kerry and John Paul II? Only one of them is supposed to pontificate endlessly. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

◆ **First Runner-Up**, winner of the autographed copy of Joseph Romm's book "The Hype About Hydrogen": What's the difference between conservative and liberal faith-based initiatives? Well, we could find only one example of the latter—Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ." (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

◆ **And the winner of the Inker:** How can you tell that the Washington Post is liberal? Conservative Invitational entries can be published only by affirmative action. (Danny Bravman, Potomac)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

What's the difference between . . .
 . . . "The Catcher in the Rye" and the Pledge of Allegiance? We might have to stop teaching the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools because its content might offend somebody. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

. . . Michael Moore and Osama bin Laden? One directed "9/11" to demoralize America, and the other is a terrorist. (Bob Dalton)

. . . a stopped-up toilet and a liberal? Eventually, you can get the toilet to work. (Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

. . . Karl Marx and Harpo Marx? Harpo had the good sense to keep quiet. (Russell Beland)

. . . a rich liberal and a rich conservative? A rich conservative thinks he deserves his money, while a rich liberal thinks the conservative should give it to charity. (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)

. . . a conservative and a liberal? To improve the economy, the first would buy a Hummer, while the second would hire a bum. (Chris Doyle)

. . . unborn children and mass murderers: Some people are confused about which group the Constitution should protect. (Russell Beland)

. . . a conservative commentator and a liberal commentator? One is called a conservative commentator; the other is called a commentator. (Jeffrey Contompasis, Ashburn)

. . . a conservative and a liberal? Conservatives love John Birch; liberals love birch johns. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

. . . Jesse James and Jesse Jackson? Jesse James was wanted in a lot of places. (George Vary, Bethesda)

. . . Kerry and Carrie? At least Carrie generates some heat. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

. . . John Kerry and John Edwards? Kerry will be a senator in January. (Chuck Smith)

. . . predictions of global warming and the college football rankings? One is the complex numerical analysis and evaluation of a topic with factors having major importance to concerned citizens across the country. The other is just a bogus weather report. (Greg Arnold, Herndon)

. . . a conservative and a liberal? The conservative keeps his hand close to his vest; the liberal keeps his hand close to your pocket. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

. . . an illegal Mexican immigrant and a Texas Democrat? The Mexican seeks democracy by sneaking *into* Texas. (Bob Dalton)

. . . John Kerry and a roulette wheel? When a roulette wheel stops spinning, there's at least a small chance it won't cost you money. (Allan Moore, Washington)

. . . John Kerry and a knock-knock joke? In a knock-knock joke, you learn who is really there. (Carl Northrop, Fairfax)

◆ Knock, knock . . .

. . . Who's there?

Kerry.

Kerry who?

Kerry your water for you, Mr. Chirac? (John McMillan, Manassas)

. . . Who's there?

Your car engine, running on EPA-formula gas. (Peter Metrinko, Plymouth, Minn.)

. . . Who's there?

John Kerry.

John Kerry who?

Who do you want me to be?

(Bob Dalton; Robert L. Hershey, Washington)

. . . Who's there?

Big government.

Big government who? Just kidding—big government doesn't knock, it bashes in the door and takes your gun away. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

. . . Who's there?

Global warming.

Global warming who?

Actually there's nobody here, but global warming *could* be here soon. (Seth Brown)

. . . Who's there?

Kerry won the nomination,

Promptly took a short vacation;

Said he needed to unwind.

Put on flip-flops, changed his mind. (Bob Dalton)

. . . Who's there?

How can you tell if a liberal has just won a presidential election? He finally reveals his definition of "middle class." Bulletin: It doesn't include you. (Tom Witte)

And Last: How can you tell if a humor contest has a liberal bias? The prize is an environmental screed by some low-level Clinton appointee. (Joseph Romm)

Next Week: Your Slogan Here, or Signs Fiction



The D.C. Cowboys entertain the crowd at the Capital Pride Parade. A festival takes over Pennsylvania Avenue today.

Reagan on AIDS: The Invisible Man

GAYS, From D1

then known as the "gay cancer," entered the American consciousness.

For many who celebrated gay pride week here, the president eulogized as someone who "never made an adversary into an enemy" was invisible when they needed him.

"Where was he?! Where was he during AIDS?!" Wayne Wilson is yelling in Cobalt, a bar at 17th and R that is kicking off a gay pride party Friday with balloons, \$2 sour apple puckers in test tubes, and Beyonce blaring. Wilson, sipping on vodka and Red Bull, ticks off the friends he lost in the early and mid-'80s.

"There was John! Then David!" "Ken!" "Randy!"

Wilson doesn't think Reagan was homophobic. He just thinks the president "was too much of a good of cowboy," to be worried, to get alarmed.

The 49-year-old physical therapist leans forward, whispers, "I think it's kind of fitting. He gets buried on the night we're all here."

Many gays who grew up in the Reagan era don't remember "Reagan, the Great Communicator," "Reagan, the Optimist," or "Reagan, the Idealist." What they remember is an administration that cracked wise the first time it was asked about AIDS.

The exchange is making the rounds on the Internet, e-mailed from friend to friend. In the White House Briefing Room transcript dated October 15, 1982, White House press secretary Larry Speakes is asked:

Q: Larry, does the President have any reaction to the announcement—the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, that AIDS is now an epidemic and have over 600 cases?

Speakes: What's AIDS?

Q: Over a third of them have died. It's known as "gay plague." (Laughter.) No, it is. I mean it's a pretty serious thing that one in every three people that get this have died. And I wondered if the President is aware of it?

Speakes: I don't have it. Do you? (Laughter.)

Q: No, I don't.

Speakes: You didn't answer my question.

Q: Well, I just wondered, does the President—

Speakes: How do you know? (Laughter.)

Q: In other words, the White House looks on this as a great joke?

Speakes: No, I don't know anything about it, Lester.

Q: Does the President, does anybody in the White House know about this epidemic, Larry?

Speakes: I don't think so. I don't think there's been any—

Q: Nobody knows?

After Reagan died, Jay Brennan, 53, a registered nurse from Chevy Chase, wondered how others in the gay community remembered him. Did anyone talk to the homeless? To blacks?

"The oversimplification and glorification of this man," says Brennan, shaking his head. He grips a rainbow flag bought from Lambda Rising bookstore in Dupont Circle—"a comfort zone," he says of the neighborhood, a place where gays can kiss, hold hands. Not worry about the looks, the stares, the judgments.

But even now, he says, some people feel uneasy holding hands or kissing beyond Dupont Circle, beyond 17th Street, closer to the White House.

Larry Kramer—the polemicist, playwright and author—remembers in a telephone interview Re-

gan's first major speech on AIDS. It was on May 31, 1987, under a tent near the banks of the Potomac River.

"I want to talk tonight about the disease that has brought us all together," the president told those gathered for the fundraising dinner sponsored by the American Foundation for AIDS Research. "The poet W.H. Auden said that the true men of action in our times are not the politicians and statesmen, but the scientists. I believe that's especially true when it comes to the AIDS epidemic."

Kramer had been writing about AIDS for some time, warning gay men in his essay, "1,112 and Counting." And toward the end of the speech, as Reagan called for routine AIDS testing for prisoners, for immigrants, for applicants for marriage licenses, Kramer started booing.

"Not once in that speech—not once in his presidency—did he ever say gays and AIDS and crisis in the same sentence," recalls Kramer, who co-founded the Gay Men's Health Crisis in 1982, and ACT UP in 1987, the same year he tested positive for HIV.

"Reagan always talked about 'the American people,'" Kramer says. But the gay community, "we were dying left and right," did not feel it was included.

In a telephone interview, Tony Kushner—the Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright of "Angels in America," about AIDS in the '80s—declines to join the remembrances, at least for now.

"I'm sitting shiva," is all Kushner would say.

Today, on Pennsylvania Avenue, between Third and Seventh streets, revelers will join the street festival, the finale of gay pride week. There will be corporate sponsors, entertainment, fitness and health booths and voter registration information. The theme of the week: Pride + Vote = Power.

After Recall, It's a Lighter Shade of Gray

By BETH FOUHY
Associated Press

SAN JOSE—"Oh, you'll appreciate this one," former California governor Gray Davis says of his latest exercise in self-deprecation.

The 61-year-old Davis, still casting about for a career after being booted from office by Arnold Schwarzenegger, appeared in a recent promotional spot CBS created for advertisers after Janet Jackson's "wardrobe malfunction" and other network problems.

In the promo, Davis commiserated with disgraced baseball star Pete Rose and other down-on-their-luck celebrities.

"You guys think you had a bad year?" Davis tells the group. "I was replaced by the guy who starred in 'Conan the Barbarian.'"

Last year was most definitely a bad one for Davis, who became just the second governor in U.S. history to be recalled by the voters.

But months later, Davis—a career politician known to most voters as a humorless, cardboard-stiff policy wonk—has exploited his own misfortune and crafted a funny new image as a lovable loser.

Davis has joked with Schwarzenegger and Jay Leno on the "Tonight Show" and made a cameo appearance on the sitcom "Yes, Dear," playing himself. He also stars in a series of ads for Yahoo!, saying he can use the search engine to find an agent now that he is out of a job.

"An actor got to be governor; maybe a former governor can go into acting," Davis quips in the ad.

Yahoo! spokeswoman Nissa Anlesaria says: "He was great, really charming, and all the feedback we've gotten has been really positive. We're really happy with it."

With his foray into comedy, Davis is showing a part of his personality few people got to see before.

"That's always been a part of me, but I've never been able to reveal it," Davis says, adding that he has hired



Gray Davis joked with Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jay Leno on the "Tonight Show" in March, after Davis was recalled as governor by California voters.

an agent to field offers. "If people are willing to continue with the self-deprecating tone that I like, then I'd be interested."

If only he had shown such levity before, says Phil Trounstine, who was Davis's communications director and now runs the Survey and Policy Research Institute at San Jose State University.

"Had he demonstrated a lighter touch and a greater sense of the interests of other people while he was governor, we might not have Governor Schwarzenegger," Trounstine says.

Davis insists he is not obsessing over his downfall. Publicly stoical, he says that losing his office was part of the rough-and-tumble of politics.

"There's no envy there," says Davis, who talks regularly with Schwarzenegger. "I'm grateful for the 30 years I had. It was a long ride. But I didn't appreciate how much stress I was under. Now, I'm just taking life as it comes."

That means taking trips with his wife, Sharon, and allowing himself to do something virtually unheard of in his old life: have fun.

"We went to Napa for four days, and it was so beautiful," Davis re-

calls, describing a trip through California's wine country. "Before, every time I went to Napa Valley, I was always on the phone and my nose was in a speech—I didn't ever take in all the beauty. But this time we played golf, did some wine tasting and hung around. It was spectacular."

Nevertheless, the new Davis looks a lot like the compulsive and workaholic old one. He still favors conservative navy suits and drinks a tofu shake for breakfast each morning; his lean frame reflects the daily 90-minute workout he never misses.

A lawyer by training, he will probably join a law firm or an investment bank in the fall, and may do some teaching on the side. He will be a delegate to the Democratic convention in July and is helping John Kerry rake in contributions across California.

As someone who failed to project much personality to voters, Davis offers some hard-won wisdom to Kerry.

"I think he needs to capture some of the excitement and energy that Howard Dean brought to the campaign," Davis says. "I would recommend he find a role for Dean, have him out there actively campaigning."