

The Style Invitational

Week 580: United Nations



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Andorra + Kiribati = Anlbati, a country with entirely open borders.

Norway + Botswana = NoWana, the country with daily siestas and a 12-hour work-week.

Burkina Faso + Portugal = FasGal, a country with a very high birth rate.

Lesotho + Morocco = LesMor, birthplace of the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.

This week's contest was suggested more or less by both Stephen Dudzik of Olney and John O'Byrne of Dublin: Combine the names of any two countries in the world and describe the new hybrid country. It's very easy to find two names to combine, which means that we will surely receive several thousand entries. So there's not a chance you'll be one of the 40 or so to get ink unless your new country has a very clever description, far superior to those above. First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up wins, for once, an actually useful product: the Banana Guard, which is a banana-shaped hinged plastic container that is designed to protect your banana and keep it fresh and firm. It is bright pink and about 10 inches long, so it can be used with the longest banana. No more bruises!

Other runners-up win a 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 by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 25. Put the week number in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks 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 Nov. 14. 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 576, when we asked for excuses or explanations for various human shortcomings. Yes, some of the entries below are excuses for misbehavior rather than for imperfections. While the Empress has no doubt been called a dog, she has never been called dogmatic.

◆ Third runner-up: Braggadocio: I've tried to get others to praise me, but so far, I'm still the best person for the job. (Kyle Hendrickson, Dunkirk)

◆ Second runner-up: Bad breath: I have my intake and outtake manifolds reversed. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

◆ First runner-up, winner of the board game named Loser: Lousy job: I didn't have the luxury of good grades in college. (Bill Armstrong, Dayton, Md.)

◆ And the winner of the Inker: Being skinny: I'm ribbed for your pleasure. (Erika Reinfeld, Somerville, Mass.)

◆ Honorable Mentions: Sycophancy: You're so clever and creative, I bet you could come up with a better excuse than I could. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

Procrastination: Actually, I'm a severe workaholic, and I believe in deferred gratification. (David Iscoe, Washington)

Dirty fingernails: People mistakenly thought I died last week, and I had to dig myself out of my own grave. Good thing they didn't go with cremation! (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

This is the point where I tell you it doesn't matter why I have such a **controlling personality**, and then comes the part where you will forgive me and promise never to bring it up again. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Crooked, discolored teeth: I *told* you I'm descended from British nobility. (Bird Waring, New York)

Unibrow: Yeah, well when the next ice age comes, guess whose nose will be slightly warmer? (Eric Murphy, Chicago)

Inadequacy in bed: (1) No other women ever complained about me, and they should know—they're all professionals. (Russell Beland, Springfield)
(2) Babe, if it's *too* good, you'll fall in love with me—and I don't want to hurt you. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

Being patronizing: I do have reasons for being so condescending, but nothing you need to worry yourself about—you just go on reading your funny little newspaper column. (Brendan Beary)

Long nose hair and ear hair: I'm letting them grow so I can donate them to chemotherapy patients. (Kyle Hendrickson)

Cellulite. Too many rattan chairs at the nudist colony. (Chuck Smith)

Illiteracy: I don't want to be bamboozled by all the lies in the print media. (Eric Murphy)

Not answering an RSVP: I don't speak French. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Voyeurism: Hey, I can't undress someone with my *nose*. (Chuck Smith)

Not getting spouse an anniversary present: It's an election year *and* an Olympics year, and that's already too much excitement. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

Being overly flirtatious: (1) I'm sorry it bothered you. Let me make it up to you in some special way. (Russell Beland)

(2) My dear, I have had a lust for life—and that's a long, long time. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

Male shortcoming: It's been whittled away by overuse. (Chuck Smith)

Baldness: (1) With this much testosterone, my follicles didn't stand a chance. (John Cushing, Arlington)
(2) I come from a long line of monks. (Noah Meyerson, Washington)

Body odor: *Pardonnez-moi!* (Russell Beland)

Having a child out of wedlock: If it was good enough for Jesus's mom, then it's good enough for me. (Rich Mehrenberg, Manassas)

Arrogance: You would be smug, too, if you were me. (Chuck Smith)

Being a couch potato: It's not that I don't *want* to get up, but as Newton says, "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction." So every time I try to get up from the sofa, an equal and opposite reaction holds me firmly in place. You can't argue with the laws of physics, honey. (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)

Being too hurried in bed: Gosh, honey, I just couldn't wait to get to the cuddling part. (Steve Fahey, Kensington)

Being broke: I'm waiting for my e-mail pen pal in Nigeria to send me my finder's fee. (Brian Feldman, Chantilly)

Being a liar: I was abandoned at birth and raised by a pack of publicists. (Chuck Smith)

Not being funny: What do you mean not being funny? I *am* funny! Look: booger weasel fart! Hahahahal! (Eric Murphy)

Snoring: I do it to protect you, honey—it keeps would-be burglars from thinking no one is home. (Kyle Hendrickson)

Necrophilia: Oh, sure, like you have a live partner every single time. (Russell Beland)

Having an unkempt lawn: We've been having some financial difficulties, so we had to eat the goat. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

And Last: Forgive my tardiness. I waited because I was planning to write more entries, then the Cowboys/Skins game ran late. (An actual excuse, sent Tuesday morning, by Scott Campisi, Wake Village, Tex.)

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Just Say 'Oh, I'm Sorry but . . .'

Do we have to invite him/her/them? This is (otherwise) Gracious Hospitality talking backstage, where nobody being proposed for the guest list is supposed to hear. The quest to get amiable guests without their awful connections is decidedly ungracious, but Miss Manners realizes that it is often understandable, if rarely permissible.

Desirable people do sometimes make the most undesirable connections. They marry them, they give birth to them, they room with them, they have them as houseguests, or they met them last week and cannot bear to be separated.

So—can the host manage to separate them for a few hours?

Oddly enough, the cases in which the hosts most long to do this are when the connections are their very own. They are giving a family holiday party or holding a ceremonial event such as a wedding and remember how little they care for certain of their relatives. Can they invite the uncle who hands out checks but not the one who hands out opinions? Can they make sure the brother's wife doesn't assume that her children are included? Can they let the sister who disciplines her children bring them and exclude the children of the sister who believes in not inhibiting them? Can they make Grandpa agree to leave his new lady friend home?

Keeping family members away from family occasions is a drastic notion that requires drastic measures. And Miss Manners issues a stern reminder that there is no second-class category by which in-laws and stepchildren are optional. Personal preferences do not count, although you need not invite those with whom you have had major feuds.

Sometimes limitations may be imposed, provided that you make no exceptions. No second cousins or no children under 10, for example. Or you can downplay the event—"Yes, some people did drop by, but it was not really a birthday party," "We eloped on the spur of the moment and only took along the siblings who lived nearby"—but you have to be sure the story will stick.

Common to all social occasions is the question of whether half a couple may be invited. Considering that we no longer know what makes a couple, this is a tricky problem.

Marriage is a sure qualifier, which is why

those gold diggers and freeloaders who forced their way into the family get to accompany the blood relatives. So, now, is para-marriage. People who are living together in romantic partnership must also be treated as a social unit.

This means that love-one-can't-stand-the-other friendships are pretty much confined to weekday lunches. That is also a good time to see people with un-enchanting children, although children do not have to be invited to events designated as grown-up. Nor do dates or house-guests.

There are polite answers other than "Of course" to "May I bring . . . ?" or even "I'll be bringing . . ." These answers all start with "Oh, I'm so sorry, but . . ." and end with "But I'd love to see him/her/them on another occasion." In between are "I'm afraid it's a grown-up party" or "I don't really have room for more." Hosts, as well as guests, have to know when to decline.

Dear Miss Manners:

With the smoking bans in restaurants now, what is the proper etiquette for those who smoke and those who have been left at the table? I do not have a problem with those who smoke getting up (between courses) to go outside to smoke, but recently I was chastised for continuing to eat when the next course was served and they weren't back. Should I have let my food get cold till they returned?

If the smokers weren't back, you must be telling Miss Manners that a nonsmoker chastised you, declaring that it would be rude not to sit there with your hands in your laps to give the smokers time to enjoy their cigarettes.

Does such a person exist? In any case, no such rule exists. If eating had to be suspended mid-meal whenever a guest excused herself from the table for whatever purpose, dinner table conversation would soon deteriorate to the level of "Do you think she fell in?"

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:

Six months ago I met a great guy I'll call Joe. Things have gotten serious and we have discussed living together. A couple of weeks ago, Joe spent the weekend at my place. When I got up to prepare breakfast, I was shocked to see him walk through my front door after retrieving my newspaper—stark naked.

I live in a wooded area with few neighbors. Joe had to stroll down a long private driveway to the public street to get the paper. Anyone could have seen him. There are little kids in the neighborhood. To top things off, it was chilly outside and raining.

I asked Joe why he went outside naked in the rain, and he tried to shrug it off as no big deal. He replied, "I didn't want to get my clothes wet."

I haven't been able to think about anything else for days. I'm considering breaking up with him over this. Joe seems perfect in every other way. He's handsome, successful and even-tempered. I live in a small town and can't risk my reputation by being in a relationship with the local flasher. He thinks I'm making a big deal out of something innocent. What should I do?

Mortified in Minnesota

First of all, count your blessings. I know a doctor in Minnesota who likes to shave naked in the snow. He says he gets a closer shave that way. Of course, he hasn't caught pneumonia yet or been reported to the police—and his wife is open-minded.

Because you live in a secluded area, it's possible your friend didn't realize he could be seen by anyone—young or old. Put him on notice that when he's at your house, he is not to go outside au naturel. If he respects your feelings, he'll abide by your wishes. If he doesn't, Nature Boy is not the man for you—and could be courting a "close shave" with the law in your community.

Dear Abby:

I am one of your male readers. I posted my

profile on an Internet site for singles. The site contains a significant amount of personal information. All the information I entered was accurate except for my age: I said I was six years younger.

I did it for two reasons: First, I neither look nor act my age. I take excellent care of my body and my chronological age doesn't reflect who I am. Second, individuals conduct a search based on only two parameters—the age range desired and geographic location. Thus, many women would never view my profile because I would fall outside the age range considered acceptable.

I sent and received several e-mails from a delightful young lady. At one point, she asked me whether the age listed in my profile was accurate. I told her the truth and the rationale I had used for listing myself as younger. She immediately informed me that she was no longer interested in communicating with me because I had lied.

Was I wrong to list an age in my profile that wasn't accurate, even though I am more youthful than most people my age?

Looking for Love, Columbus, Ohio

Yes, you were wrong. Although many people of both sexes lie online—about everything from height to weight to income level—the truth has a way of coming to light in the end. And when it does, the inevitable question that follows is: "What *else* has this person been lying about?" That's a very poor way to start any meaningful relationship.

It is best not to engage in false advertising—and if you're going to post a photograph, make it a recent one so there are no disappointments.

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, Calif. 90069.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

E-W vulnerable			
NORTH			
♥	K 2		
♠	A K 5 4		
♦	A J 9 6 5 2		
♣	2		
WEST (D)			
♥	5 4 3		
♠	10		
♦	8 4		
♣	K Q 9 8 6 4 3		
EAST			
♥	6		
♠	Q J 7 3		
♦	K Q 10 7 3		
♣	A J 7		
SOUTH			
♥	A Q J 10 9 8 7		
♠	9 8 6 2		
♦	None		
♣	10 5		

The bidding:

North	East	South	West
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	6 ♠	All Pass
Opening lead: ♣ K			

A reader says his partner is an overbidder and won't be slowed down. "I was North and had my foot on the brake all the way," my fan writes, "and we still got too high. My rebid of two diamonds was timid. When he jumped to four spades, I could have bid six. Instead I settled for cue bids of five clubs and five hearts. That was like putting high-octane fuel in his tank."

West shifted to a trump at Trick Two, and South won in dummy, threw a heart on the ace of diamonds, ruffed a diamond, ruffed a club in dummy and ruffed a diamond. Alas, West discarded, and South was a dummy entry short to set up and cash the sixth diamond. He conceded a heart.

"At least we avoided our 4-4 heart fit," my fan says. "We'd have

no chance at six hearts."

The time to play at a 4-4 fit is when you need the extra tricks it can provide. Here, North-South had another source of tricks and a fatal weakness in hearts.

South's play at six spades was unleaded. After he ruffs the third diamond, he runs his trumps. Dummy's last four cards are the A-K of hearts and J-9 of diamonds, and South has three hearts and a trump.

A "trump squeeze" operates. If East saves two hearts and two diamonds, South cashes the A-K of hearts, and his hand is high. If East saves three hearts and one diamond, South leads a heart to dummy and ruffs a diamond, and dummy is high.

West prevails with a heart shift at Trick Two.

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