

The Style Invitational

Week 584: Deliver Us a Post



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The new presidential term will undoubtedly bring about some shakeups in the federal bureaucracy, especially with the new post of national intelligence director. Loser Seth Brown of North Adams, Mass., suggests coming up with some new Cabinet or other positions that the president could establish, and describe the job responsibilities. First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets a genuine souvenir from Transylvania, brought back by Elden Carnahan of Laurel and donated to The Invitational: a little cylindrical wooden soldier, painted green and wearing what looks like a large goblet on his head. Around his body is a sort of spool that, when you lift it, also lifts up a certain, disproportionately large part of the soldier. It gives a whole new meaning to the moniker Vlad the Impaler. Please, 10-year-olds, don't come in second place in the contest this week.

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, Nov. 22. 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 Dec. 12. 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 580**, in which we asked you to combine the names of two countries and describe the hybrid land. Among the 1,300-plus entries, BRAZIL and BURUNDI and HUNGARY, among others, were used in too many names to count. Some Losers decided "two" meant "a long string of"; the best of their efforts were "Iraq + England + Chad + Ireland = Raqeng-chair, a country where everyone takes it easy" (Eric Murphy, Chicago) and "Israel + U.S. + El Salvador + Pakistan + Yugoslavia + Spain + Myanmar + Barbados + Libya = Is-U.S.-Or-Is-Yu-Ain-My-Ba-by, a country whose flag is in all the shades of blues" (Jack Cackler, Falls Church). A special blind T-shirt goes to Harvey Smith of McLean, who combined Central African Republic with Burkina Faso to produce a two-word country with a doubly unprintable name.

◆ **Third Runner-Up: India + Malawi = Inlaw**, the world's least favorite honeymoon destination. (Robin Diallo, New Delhi)

◆ **Second Runner-Up: Vatican City + Suriname = Vatsuriname**, where they haf veys to make you talk. (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

◆ **First Runner-Up, the winner of the Banana Guard: Madagascar + Libya = Madlib**, the [adjective][noun] in the world. (Joseph Romm, Washington)

◆ **And the winner of the Inker: Netherlands + Fiji = Netheriji**: I don't know much about it; I've been warned since age 12 not to play with Netherijians. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

A Gazetteer of Honorable Mentions:
Isle of Man + Romania = Isle of Mania, a fractious country led by evil princes Klepto, Pyro and Megalo. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)
Solomon Islands + Brazil: Solobra: Land of the Amazons. (Bob Hale, Bilston, England)
America + Norway = Amway, whose pyramid-building far surpasses Egypt's. (Christina Courtney, Ocean City, Md.; Richard Slavik, California, Md.)
Uzbekistan + Myanmar = Kismy, a perennially belligerent nation, often in disputes with **NyaNya (Kenya + Chechnya)** (Fred Souk, Reston; Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)
Costa Rica + Grenada = Costa Nada, the land of the free. (Richard Wong, Derwood)
Spain + Italy = Spitaly, where the first three rows in the National Opera come with complimentary ponchos. (Russell Beland, Springfield)
Curacao + Dahomey = Curdaho, major exporter of penicillin. (Steve Fahey, Kensington)
Botswana + Kuwait = Botwait, corporate headquarters of Gynco International and Ronco Worldwide. (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)
China + Angola = Chinola, which some folks can't tell from Chad + Italy. (Kyle Bonney, Fairfax)
Oman + Bolivia = Oblivia, the land that time—and everyone—forgot. (Russell Beland)
Bechuanaland + Samoa = Bechuanasamo, where everyone weighs 300 pounds. (Steve Fahey)
Bahrain + Azerbaijan = Bahbai, flight attendants' favorite vacation destination. (Dave Komornik, Danville, Va.)
St. Lucia + Comoros Islands = Stcom, a tropical paradise: No matter what you do, it will all turn out okay in the end. (Erica Reinfield, Somerville, Mass.)
Singapore + Northern Ireland = Singaporno, the largest exporter of X-rated musical videos, including "Damp Yankees," "Lay Miserables" and "Beauty and the Bestiality." (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)
Sudan + Honduras = SuUras, a miserable place inhabited entirely by lawyers. (Steve Fahey)
Cambodia + Cameroon = Dual Cam, a country whose government has a notoriously high overhead. (Russell Beland)
Mozambique + Barbados = Mozbar, where Homer, Barney and his friends escape to. (Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)
Thailand + Cayman = Hyman, a country that, despite great pressure from its many friends and partners, has remained intact. (Russell Beland)
Falkland Islands + Virgin Islands = Island Islands. Why, what did you think I was going to come up with? (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)
Brazil + Sierra Leone = Brasierra, home of the famous Twin Peaks. (Edward Roeder, Washington)

Germany + Guyana = Germanguy, the country with the world's smallest population. (Jerry Ewing, Orlando)
Morocco + Dominica = Moronica, a confederacy of dunces. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)
Yugoslavia + Singapore = Yugosingapore, where there's a karaoke bar on every corner. (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)
Brunei + El Salvador = BrunEI, a nation whose army has no offensive capability. (Bob Dalton, Arlington)
Ghana + Algeria = Ghaneria, where the whole country is under quarantine; informally known as Clapland. (Barry Blyveis, Columbia; Chris Doyle)
Uganda + Iraq = Uraq, where always is heard an encouraging word. (Elizabeth Chan, Fairfax Station)
Norway + Sri Lanka = Wayanka: Explorers have long known about this island, but never stayed around to settle it. (Brendan Beary)
Tuvalu + Sudan = Tudalu, a country whose people leave as soon as they can. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)
Fiji + Haiti = Fijiti, the land with the highest per capita caffeine consumption. (Brendan Beary)
South Korea + Tuvalu = KorValu, a country that knows where its priorities lie. (Eric Murphy, Chicago)
Algeria + Egypt = Algypt, formerly known as Florida. (Peter Ostrander, Rockville)
Spain + Bermuda = Spainuda, a country with no unwanted pets. (Karen Bock-Losee, Washington; Brendan Beary)
Uruguay + Costa Rica = Urica: It's customary in this country to run naked through town after bathing. (Brendan Beary)
Grand Duchy of Luxembourg + Andorra = Duchdor, a semi-open country. (Russell Beland)
Djibouti + Madagascar = Boutigas, a country whose principal crop is beans. (George Vary, Bethesda)
Albania + Lebanon = Alanon, the world's driest country, consisting of 12 steppes. (Stephen Dudzik; Brendan Beary)
Dubai + Kenya = Dubya, where even the natives can't speak the language. (Jack Cackler, Falls Church)
Nauru + Madagascar = Nascar, ruled by a regime that always turns toward the left. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)
Slovakia + Poland = Slopokia, the country that's never qualified for the Olympics. (Chris Doyle)
Russia + Rumania = RuRu: Not the sort of place you want to visit. (RuRu Beland)
Marshall Islands + Sweden + France = Shallwedance, a romantic getaway. (Jane Auerbach)
Bosnia + Oman + India = Bozomandias: I met a traveler from this made-up land / Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone / Stand in the desert, balanced in the sand / In clown shoes of proportions overblown . . . (Brendan Beary)

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Reopening Clothes Minds

A cry of freedom went up when dress codes were abolished. Comfort! Creativity! At last, a civilized society had recognized that it is what's inside a person, not outside, that counts. Even such oppressed minorities as schoolchildren, office workers and fashionistas finally gained the right to throw off all strictures (and practically all garments).

And what are we doing with this privilege? Trying to end it, from what Miss Manners hears.

Schools and offices are reinstituting regulations and, so far, they are not encountering the sort of revolutionary opposition that had made them drop the ones they had. Airlines are wondering how to placate customers who complain about sitting next to exposed and (they inevitably add) smelly flesh. High-priced restaurants are fretting that a single baseball cap will drive away untold numbers of patrons who value "atmosphere." The fashion industry has switched from recommending that grown-ups dress like their children to suggesting that they dress like their grandparents.

What went wrong? One reason that dress codes were easy to demolish is that those who fought to save them were in the untenable position of opposing comfort and creativity. Other arguments went unheard (as Miss Manners knows, because she was making them at the top of her ladylike voice) while these charges were being made.

And they will be made again. Miss Manners is not so naive as to believe that lessons learned from experience are remembered once the dissatisfactions that arose from the experience are removed. We just now happen to be in a period where the problems of rule-free clothing have become generally apparent.

While everyone gives voice to the desire for comfort, it is not a genuine concern for a sizeable number of people. Low-slung pants, stiletto heels and skin-tight jeans are no more comfortable than were such equally faddish styles as high, stiff collars and corsets. But those who really do put comfort above all turned out to be thinking only of their own comfort, however much discomfort it causes others who happen to be jammed up against them.

Creativity also offends others when it takes such forms as obscene slogans and threatening symbols. But it even rattles those who endorse it. For many, dressing has become too competitive, too confusing or—of all things—too boring.

Parents and teachers focus on how distracting and expensive it is for teenagers to dress to—as

they claim—express themselves, but when the competition is free-form, even professionals find it overwhelming. Fashion arbitrators are notorious for promulgating ever-changing and outrageous styles for others while they stick to wearing black basics.

Others simply don't know what to wear. Confusion is rampant because the claim that clothing choices will not be interpreted—that lofty argument about caring only about what is inside the heart, as if that could be glimpsed—is false. Miss Manners finds it pathetic that innocent people who choose to dress as hookers or jailbirds are surprised and indignant when they are treated as being loose or suspicious.

Employers have come to realize that unprofessional dress symbolizes unprofessional attitudes to outsiders, and may even foster these in the workers themselves. And people who are told to wear whatever they like to a social event are well aware that they could still be judged as being over- or underdressed for the occasion.

Strangest of all is the absence of variety that comes with an absence of rules. Clothing conventions, like any social code, cover a myriad of conditions, including whether it is day or night, what season it is and what the venue or occasion is. When these faded out of use, only two amorphous styles were left: casual and wedding prom.

Miss Manners only asks for some semblance of order, not that everyone dress as she happens to see fit. Although she does note with astonishment that upswep hair, long skirts, brooches and gloves have been declared the latest fashion.

Dear Miss Manners:
The topic of brunch was under discussion in my home this weekend, and what was at debate was the proper time brunch is served. Keeping with proper etiquette, can you please inform me?

At that morning hour when your guests can manage proper etiquette. Of course Miss Manners knows that they are polite all the time, but she suggests not pushing it by scheduling brunch before they are awake enough to enjoy making conversation or waiting until they are hungry enough to feel cranky. Generally, this means starting some time between 10 a.m. and noon.

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:

I joined an online dating service six months ago. Although my family disapproved, I researched my options and found a reputable company.

After two months of meeting numerous nice people whom I would consider friends, I met a really special guy. We have been talking on the phone and e-mailing for four months. We have never met, nor have we exchanged pictures. We wanted to get to know each other from the inside out first.

We have finally decided to exchange pictures. I asked a friend to take my picture and was disappointed with the results. I know I could look better. She says I'm being overly critical and shallow, that if he finds fault with the picture that I look just "okay" in, he's not worth it.

Shouldn't I attempt to send the best picture I can, even though he assures me that looks aren't everything? Don't I owe it to myself and to him to look good—not just "okay"?

Okay but Not Great in Idaho

Listen to your head and not your girlfriend. Looks aren't everything, but they can be an asset. Go to a professional photographer and have some pictures taken with good lighting—both head shots and photos that show your figure. It's called putting your best foot forward. First impressions are important, so don't sell yourself short.

Dear Abby:

I am a freshman in high school. This guy I like is very sweet, but he has a girlfriend. He likes me a lot, too, but he doesn't want anyone to be hurt so he's reluctant to break up with her. I told him I won't wait forever, and he told me he's trying to get her to break up with him.

He doesn't accept her calls, doesn't take her anywhere, and has asked his friends to tell her bad things about him. She refuses to get the message. How can we get the point across to her without hurting her more than necessary? Did I mention

that he's sweet, sensitive, caring and cute!

In Love in Grand Rapids

He may be sweet, sensitive, caring and cute, but the boy is also too immature to realize that his unwillingness to level with his girlfriend will hurt her more in the long run than telling her the truth. Unless he speaks up, the girl will continue to hang on because she has nothing to lose. The sooner she hurts and heals, the sooner she can begin looking for someone who will truly care for her.

Now a word of caution to you: Watch carefully how he treats this girl, because chances are great that it's the way you will be treated one day.

Dear Abby:

I am a nanny for twins who are now about 6 months old. I have a degree in education and specialize in preschool. Based on my experience with developmental milestones, it is quite obvious that one of the twins is hearing-impaired. I was hoping the pediatrician would notice it at their last physical, but that didn't happen. I don't know if it is my place to tell the mother, because I certainly wouldn't want to learn that my child cannot hear from the nanny. Should I let this go, or should I tell?

Nannified in Ohio

You should certainly tell the mother that you are concerned about the child, and why. Suggest that during the baby's next visit to the pediatrician she mention your observation to the doctor. You are a professional, and as such, your expertise should be shared with your employer. It's the responsible thing to do.

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

Reading a bridge magazine will sharpen your technique and keep you up-to-date on what's happening in the world of bridge. Here are four good choices:

■ The Bridge World, published since 1929, contains material for experts as well as for aspiring players. For the magazine's great Web site, go to www.bridgeworld.com.
 ■ Bridge Today, available online, is edited by Matthew and Pamela Granovetter, who also offer other online services. See www.bridgetoday.com.
 ■ The Bridge Bulletin, issued for its members by the American Contract Bridge League, has tournament reports, player profiles and loads of instruction. See www.acbl.org or call 800-264-2743. ACBL members get many other benefits.
 ■ A new entry is Better Bridge magazine, formerly part of the

ACBL's magazine but now on its own. It offers instruction for learning players plus other features.

In today's quiz deal from Better Bridge, South sees four losers at four spades—a trump, two diamonds and a club—but can use dummy's hearts to discard one loser. To succeed no matter where the king of hearts lies, South takes the ace at Trick Two and leads the queen. If East played low, South would pitch a diamond, and if West could win, South would later discard a club on the jack of hearts.

In the actual deal, East may cover the queen of hearts, and South ruffs and leads a trump, again losing only two diamonds and a trump.

To subscribe to Better Bridge, contact the publisher, Baron-Barclay, at 800-274-2221 or at www.baronbarclay.com/books/grantmag.html.

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Next Week: **Evil Things in Store, or The Devil Is in the Retails**

Opening lead: ♦ K