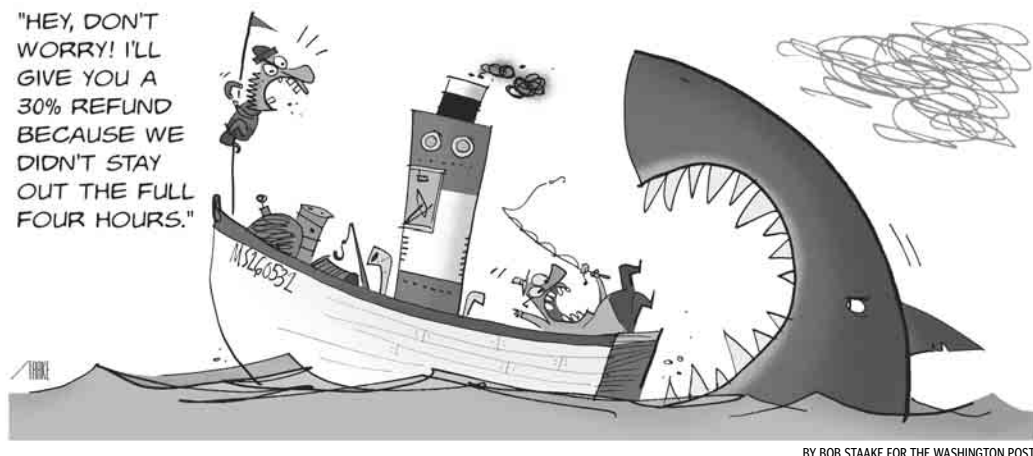


The Style Invitational

Week 593: Take This, Job, and . . .



BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

"You'd feel better if you didn't spend so much time thinking about yourself."

"Don't worry, I'm sure we'll find a bathroom soon. I can remember this one time when I REALLY had to go—oh boy, was that excruciating!"

In an entry for our Jan. 2 in-and-out-etc. list that didn't see ink until now, Stanley Halbert of Lawrence, Kan., noted that jobs were down but Job's comforters were up. A Job's comforter is someone who seems to be offering sympathy but instead just makes the person feel worse, either intentionally or unintentionally. **This week's contest**, also suggested by Stanley, is to come up with some entertainingly awful things that a Job's comforter might offer, as in the examples above. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives a T-shirt from the printer of the super new Loser T-Shirt, Roger Caldwell of San Francisco, owner of CreativeOrigins.com. The shirt says "Creative Origins: Nice, Friendly People." Underneath that is a very cool-looking mosaic-type picture of a very un-nice, unfriendly face.

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, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Jan. 24. 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 property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published Feb. 13. 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 589, in which we asked you to combine the beginning of one word in the Dec. 19 Style Invitational with the end of another word, and define the result: Lots of you chose to use the beginning of "penitentiary." Hahaheeetittertitteryawn. Too easy. No ink for you.

♦ **Third runner-up: Econo-ball: New Year's Eve at Denny's.** (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

♦ **Second runner-up: Feel-ibuster: The most dreaded relationship tactic: the three-hour "we need to talk" talk.** (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

♦ **First runner-up, the winner of the "Christmas With the Kranks" stocking, complete with genuine coal: Begin-ity: The other end of infinity.** (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)

♦ **And the winner of the Inker: Fester-day: The day after the day that you were too busy to take a shower.** (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

♦ **Honorable Mentions: God-weiser: The King of Kings of Beers.** (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)

♦ **Insan-el: Superman's uncle, the one nobody talks about.** (Frank Mullen III, Aledo, Ill.)

♦ **Sim-lehem: The new Nativity-themed ride at Disney World.** (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

♦ **Lust-buster: Curlers, a woolen dressing gown and a half-smoked cigarette stuck to the lower lip.** (Ross Elliffe, Picton, New Zealand)

♦ **Candi-hind: A sweet dish.** (Tom Witte)

♦ **Gross-flict: Hit with a digitally propelled booger.** (Dave Komornik, Danville, Va.)

♦ **Lust-sis: Sibling ribaldry.** (Chris Doyle, Freeport, Bahamas)

♦ **Mo-lished: Put together; antonym of "demolished."** (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

♦ **Need-orable: Pathetic-looking enough to appear in a Sally Struthers commercial.** (Kyle Hendrickson, Dunkirk)

♦ **Pain-ty: Underwear that's a size too small.** (Fred S. Souk, Reston)

♦ **Act-weiser: A condescending drunk.** (Ned Bent, Oak Hill)

♦ **Be-ble: The first take of Barbra Streisand's most famous song, made before she got over her cold.** (Michelle Stupak)

♦ **Tac-lehem: A little trick that French fashion designers use before sending the model out on the runway.** (Dave Prevar)

♦ **Tilt-ville: Setting for the rock opera "Tommy."** (Roy Ashley, Washington)

♦ **Under-nosed: Being kissed up to.** (Russell Beland, Springfield)

♦ **Begin-sanity: What a lot of people are hoping for on Jan. 20, 2009.** (Michelle Stupak)

♦ **Screw-ple: A moral or ethical restraint that you're willing to overlook if it helps you get her into bed.** (Brendan Beary)

♦ **Be-mered: Run over by a yuppie.** (Jeff Brechlin)

♦ **Kiss-mas: A bussman's holiday.** (Chris Doyle)

♦ **Bud-able: A prepackaged combination of beer and pretzels.** (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

♦ **Cov-bort: To decide not to hit on thy neighbor's wife.** (Ned Bent)

♦ **Bud-Bout: The new beer commercial premiering during the NBA All-Star Game.** (Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

♦ **Lie-atollahs: A crock of Shiites.** (Chris Doyle)

♦ **Can-gestion: When cranberry sauce or tomato paste gets stuck coming out.** (Kyle Hendrickson, Dunkirk)

♦ **Micro-rection: The leading explanation for the continued popularity of overpriced sports cars.** (Niels Hoven, Berkeley, Calif.)

♦ **Cellu-cede: A tacky name for a discount sperm bank.** (Veggo Larsen, Barboursville, Va.)

♦ **Sod-bath: Burial. "Well, Gramps lived a long life, but it was time for the ol' sod-bath."** (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

♦ **Christ-ington: The religious right really HAS taken over the government.** (Beverly Miller, North Clarendon, Vt.)

♦ **Dub-ologues: Press conferences in which no questions are taken.** (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

♦ **Sim-ble: A really stupid drummer.** (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)

♦ **Spread-ble: The press secretary's job description.** (Michelle Stupak)

♦ **Circum-slllllllllllll: Malpractice at a bris.** (Joe Neff, Orelan, Pa.)

♦ **Tex-onomy: An orderly classification of plants and animals, from the yellow rose to the longhorn.** (Chris Doyle)

♦ **Crisp-itiary: Death Row.** (Bruce W. Alter, Fairfax Station; Brendan Beary)

♦ **Dead-Dio: Nietzsche has finally been translated into Spanish.** (Dot Yufer, Newton, W. Va.)

♦ **He-mon: Member of the Jamaican weightlifting team.** (Jeff Covell, Arlington)

♦ **Demo-stan: The new country that forms when the blue states secede.** (Michelle Stupak)

♦ **Dream-void: A nocturnal omission.** (Chris Doyle)

♦ **Flop-son: Edsel Ford.** (Tom Witte)

♦ **Free-ture: The extra movie you sneak into after you've seen the one you paid for at the multiplex.** (Michelle Stupak)

♦ **Gross-ority: The sweatshops of Sigma Chi.** (Chris Doyle)

♦ **Ho-mestic: A prostitute who does windows.** (Chris Doyle)

♦ **Micro-raq: A AA-cup.** (Tom Witte)

♦ **Pa-nymous: When Ma doesn't know who the daddy is.** (Cecil J. Clark, Arlington)

♦ **Pseu-dolph: The new-nose reindeer.** (Tom Witte)

♦ **Demo-lay: Has sex ed in schools gone too far?** (Michelle Stupak)

♦ **Unexpected-nuts: Wardrobe malfunction at men's gymnastic events.** (Jeff Brechlin)

♦ **Vo-mittee: A work group that spews out report after report.** (Bill Spencer, Exeter, N.H.)

♦ **Invita-position: Just an idea for a really interesting contest.** (Jack Cackler, Falls Church)

♦ **Won-tonpost.com: The Web site that leaves you wanting more news an hour later.** (Chris Doyle)

♦ **And Last: Guan-ologues: The annals of the Style Invitational.** (Danny Bravman, St. Louis)

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Browse of Ill Repute

The idea that it is necessary to maintain a good reputation—one of etiquette's sternest arguments in favor of the nuisance of behaving well—has been rescued from disrepute. By Internet commerce, of all institutions.

For centuries, society had held the peculiar idea that it did not want to associate with notorious people. Then along came flocks of kindly souls who condemned the notion of evaluating character in terms of past sins.

They may also have wanted livelier dinner guests. Or any dinner guests at all. On the assumption that everyone makes mistakes (well, almost everyone, honesty forces Miss Manners to note), forgiveness becomes not just a virtue but a necessity.

She appreciates the fact that of all people, Americans believe in second chances and fresh starts, as befits a country founded by people who were not doing well at home.

We have come to recognize that receiving a bad reputation from your relatives—unmarried parents or fleeing spouses, for example—is patently unjust. And social science advanced the idea that people were less in control of their actions than we presume when speaking of good character. Furthermore, we like to believe that the punishment system works, so that someone who has paid his debt to society, as we say, should be able to leave jail without a disadvantage in regard to someone who never entered it.

When all these generous factors were put together, they gradually extended the noble principle of forgiveness to cover all possible wrongs, and shortened the time in which it was granted. Miss Manners looked forward to a peaceful society where nobody cast blame and grudges were never held.

Someone that escaped us. The citizens only got more contentious. Surely there has never been so much snapping and criticizing as since we started bragging about not passing judgment on one another's behavior.

In fact we are not only passing judgment but keeping voluminous records. Miss Manners is not referring to criminal or other public records, or to the mean-spirited gossip people sometimes post about those whom they know. She has been observing feedback on commercial Web sites.

There you can find multiple observations of how individuals behave when they are dealing with others whom they will never meet and

whose names they may never know. As buyers and sellers comment on one another, it is not only speed of payment and quality of merchandise that are mentioned. Whether the person was courteous and pleasant seems to be an important factor.

Of course these comments are based on minute contacts and may be biased or unrepresentative. But as they accumulate, you tend to get a general impression of the demeanor as well as the reliability of the subject. Newcomers make great use of it to determine if that is the kind of person they would trust, or whether it is someone to be avoided no matter how glittering the opportunity in question.

It's called a reputation. We may believe in infinite possibilities of reform, but we also know that past performance counts.

Dear Miss Manners:

Often, when I'm in a waiting situation, such as in a doctor's office or on a long bus trip, I like to do pencil puzzles. The puzzles I choose are complicated and challenging, such as anagrams, cryptograms, cryptic crosswords, logic problems, etc.

Many times I have someone looking over my shoulder; as if this weren't bad enough, they want an explanation of the puzzle I'm working on. My first instinct is to say, "You wouldn't understand," which is probably true or they wouldn't have asked. I stifle such an answer as it sounds rude and condescending. Instead, I usually launch into a long explanation; halfway through the explanation they are confused enough or bored enough to leave me alone.

Can you suggest a kinder, gentler way to handle this?

By saying, "Sure—please just wait until I finish it." You will probably be called into the doctor's office or reach your destination first, but Miss Manners assures you that your questioner will have long since been called away by the boredom of watching you moving your pencil around.

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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ASK AMY

Dear Amy:

I have a very young-looking 85-year-old mother. Her husband died six months ago and left her with enough money to live very comfortably for the rest of her life. She still has a good mind, takes care of all of her business, and drives herself anywhere she wants to go. She goes to the senior citizens center five days a week to eat and goes one night a week to a dance they have there. My brother, sister and I realize how lucky we are that she is so capable at her age. The problem is that she started dating a 70-year-old married man. This has upset us for many reasons. Of course the most obvious is that he is married. We don't know what his intentions are. If she ever gave him money she would never tell us. Plus, we feel she is paving the way to hell at a very late date in life.

I live in front of my mother and have the responsibility of taking care of her. I have talked to her about this, and she will not listen to me. Oh, and by the way, he does not know how old she is.

What should we do? *At Wits' End in Alabama*

Because you have already spoken with your mother and shared your disapproval with her, and because she isn't interested in what you have to say about this, I'd suggest that you need to face the fact that older people are just as prone to make mistakes with their lives as the rest of us and that you might not be able to stop her.

Even though you disapprove of your mother's relationship, I think that the best way to try and ensure her continued well-being and safety is to stay close to her, even if this means that you have to be exposed to a relationship you find unacceptable. If you stay close to her, you'll see if this man is trying to take advantage of her. If you sense that he is trying to isolate your mother from you or your siblings, then I think you should step in and deal with him directly. Your local Office on Aging can advise you if you have serious concerns about your mother's competency or finances.

Dear Amy:

I have five children, three boys and two girls ranging in age between 16 and 7 years old. My husband has been acting strangely for the

past several months and now has gotten into the habit of wanting our two daughters, ages 14 and 12, to lie in bed with him to watch television or stay with him until he falls asleep. He has also become a tickler.

Both of my daughters have told me that they don't like it and that it's weird. He tells them and me that we're party poopers and I should lighten up and get over it. I constantly ask my girls if they are being touched inappropriately, and they tell me no. I repeat that no one—not even their father—has the right to touch them if they don't want them to.

Please tell me if my feelings of concern are correct. I am terrified.

Scared

I can't tell you if your concern is misplaced because you live in the home and you have to trust your own instincts here. Your instincts are smarter than either one of us. If you are terrified, then there is probably a reason for it. If your girls are being molested, they might not be able to tell you the truth about it. Parents who abuse their children also insist that they lie about it.

Your daughters should not have any physical contact with their father that makes them uncomfortable. No tickling, no backrubs, no lying in bed with him. I'm not saying that all teen girls should avoid this contact with their dads, but in your home, because you are terrified and because they don't like it, you must keep them safe.

I think you and the girls should also see a counselor. Your local Department of Children and Family Services can set you up with a person who can speak with the three of you, together and separately. Your girls might disclose something to a counselor that they won't say to you. A counselor will also advise you about what steps to take if your fears turn out to be true. I hate the thought that you are living in the house with someone who creates a feeling of terror in you, and I hope you'll take that gut feeling as evidence that it could be time to get your children out.

Ask Amy is written by Amy Dickinson. Write to her at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

East dealer Both sides vulnerable

NORTH
 ♠ 14
 ♥ 193
 ♦ 164
 ♣ 109852

WEST
 ♠ 982
 ♥ 752
 ♦ A10752
 ♣ Q3

EAST
 ♠ A Q 7 6 5
 ♥ 86
 ♦ K 9 8 3
 ♣ A 6

SOUTH
 ♠ K 10 3
 ♥ A K Q 10 4
 ♦ Q
 ♣ K J 7 4

The bidding:

East	South	West	North
1 ♠	2 ♠		Pass
Pass	4 ♥!	All Pass	

Opening lead—♠ 9

Every problem has a solution—except, perhaps, how to re-fold a road map. As today's deal unfolded, South had enough clues to solve his problem.

South jumped boldly to four hearts at his second turn, counting on North for a point or two. When West led the nine of spades, East took the ace and returned a spade. South won in dummy with the jack, drew trumps ending in dummy, led the 10 of clubs and let it ride when East played low.

When West produced the queen, South folded like he'd been hit with a broadax. East got the ace of clubs later, and the defense cashed a diamond for down one.

North, of course, had manifold comments, one of which was that South should be led to the scaffold.

"East opened the bidding," North

contended. "He probably had the ace of clubs."

North was correct, but his analysis failed to unfold all the facts: South had a twofold reason to guess right in clubs. When East failed to shift to a high diamond at the second trick, West was marked with either the ace or king; hence East had to hold the ace of clubs to have an opening bid.

Moreover, South couldn't play East for A-Q-x in clubs and three trumps (by taking only two trumps with the ace and nine and then leading the 10 of clubs) because West, who had shown a weak hand, would surely have led a singleton club.

Instead of playing as if he wore a blindfold, South should put up the king on the first club. When the ace and queen fall together later, the contract is safely in the fold.

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Next Week: **Send Us the Bill, or Act-Finding Mission**