

The Style Invitational

Week 595: Listing Precariously



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Playgrounds-Plumbing: Make bath time fun every night!

Rental-Reporters: The memo line on Armstrong Williams's pay stub

Paternity-Patio: Where you set up that inviting hammock

This week's contest was suggested by Peter Metrisko of Chantilly, who gets zero credit because it turns out we've done this contest before. It was eight years ago, though; let's do it again: Take the two subject listings at the top of any page of the Yellow Pages and create a definition for the compound word they form. You may use it in a sentence if you like. **Be sure to tell us which edition of the Yellow Pages you are using;** the examples above are taken from the Verizon 2004 Yellow Pages, Southern Prince George's County edition. The Washington Post's newsroom library has an amazingly comprehensive set of directories from all over.

First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives "Think You're the Only One? Oddball Groups Where Outsiders Fit In." This new book by Intrepid Loser Seth Brown introduces readers to several dozen unusual organizations, from American Coaster Enthusiasts to the XXX Church ("The Number One Christian Porn Site on the Internet") and including . . . the Losers of The Style Invitational!

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, Feb. 7. 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. 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 591, our annual obit-poem contest:

◆ **Second Runner-Up:**

Answering machine inventor Joseph Zimmerman
"Hi, this is St. Peter. I'm out at the moment
So leave me your name at the bell."
"This is Zimmerman, Joseph. I made this machine,
I'm so glad to reach you and not Hell."
(Scott Campisi, Wake Village, Tex.)

◆ **Honorable Mentions:**

Firefighter Red Adair
The fire burned in Red Adair
Till well into his eighties;
Now Satan's scared, 'cause Red might care
To douse the fire in Hades.
(Bob Dalton, Arlington)

Arafat once won the Prize
But never won the peace.
Now he might (though not in sight)
Succeed by his decease.
(Luke Currano, Columbia)

Geoffrey Beene's survivors are beset
with second-guessing:
"We could have saved him if we'd put
him in that silk cravat
And double-breasted linen suit disaster
by Armani—
How often he would say we'd never
catch him dead in that!"
(Brendan Beary)

Jan Berry of Jan & Dean
Upon the crooked path of life
At last he failed to swerve,
And now Dean's erstwhile partner Jan
Has rounded Dead Man's Curve.
(Mark Eckenwiler)

Marlon Brando
No more tix for new flix can we buy on
Fandango,
For Brando has finally danced his Last
Tango.
(Manuel Smith, Silver Spring)

To see you in "The Wild One"
I played hooky when 11.
May the angels find a way
To squeeze you into Heaven.
(Howard Walderman, Columbia)

Brando coulda stayed a contenda
If he'd used a little more Splenda.
(Jack Cackler, Falls Church)

Julia Child is dead and gone,
Along with her boeuf bourguignon.
I will miss her cassoulet,
Her light and airy cheese soufflé.
I hope that Heaven's security frisk
Will let her keep her wire whisk.
(Ron Mayer, Columbia)

Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer's fish
Granted a paleontologist's wish.
She found a real coelacanth
That made biologists wet their panth.
(Jack Cackler)

One good thing about **Alistair Cooke**:
You never had to read the book.
(Roy Ashley, Washington)

Rodney Dangerfield
On the stone at his grave
An inscription is cut:
Rodney, Comic and Knave.
R.I.P. (Curb your mutt.)
(Chris Doyle, Honolulu)

◆ **First Runner-Up, the winner of the Summer 2004 Washington Social Register:**

Kinky girls in droves he bunked;
Now Rick James is quite defunked.
(Mark Eckenwiler, Washington)

◆ **And the winner of the Inker:**

For Tony Randall, shed a tear;
It seems a tad unjust
That Felix Unger, gone from here,
Returneth now to dust.
(Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Francis Crick

The Wooster to his Jeeves,
The Oscar to his Felix,
Poor Dr. Watson grieves:
He's lost the double to his helix.
(Brian Barrett, New York)

Arthur Hailey

I just loved "Roots," I gotta say,
Your views on Man so true . . .
Oh, wait, that was the other guy?
Well I guess he's dead, too.
(Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

The Treasure House stands empty
now; no Moose, no Bunny Rabbit,
No Tom Terrific (or his dog) will there
again inhabit.
It seems **Bob Keeshan** has forever
left that famed redoubt;
How sad for Captain Kangaroo:
Grandfather Clock's run out.
(Bob Dalton)

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

We can't believe you had to die,
It makes us kind of mad.
Oh, what we'd do to bring you back!
We're really rather sad.
But that's life, I guess. Too bad.
(John Conti, Norfolk, Mass.)

Estee Lauder

Lipstick, rouge and beauty creams
(for women's dollars vying)
Can do a lot to keep you young
But can't keep you from dying.
(Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)

Janet Leigh
I tremble at the alchemy, the
transcendental
power
That kept you moving 40 years since
dying in that shower.
(Jeff Brechlin)

What a family tradition that Janet
Leigh started!
She showed how a psycho might
hurt us.
Then her kid did the same with that
guy Michael Myers.
(Of course, I mean Jamie Lee Curtis.)
(Scott Campisi, Wake Village, Tex.)

Combination

Farewell to Helmut Newton and
Richard Avedon,
To Eileen Darby Lester, Henri
Cartier-Bresson,
Scavullo, too—photographers
departed left and right,
All exiting the darkroom and heading
toward the light.
(Brendan Beary)

More Honorable Mentions appear on
[washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Hospitality Knocks

So few people regularly entertain friends at home nowadays that Miss Manners has been recommending doing so as a way of perking up a depleted social life. When the departure of a spouse, partner or child leaves a social, as well as an emotional, void, it is time to set the table.

Besides providing chores that cut into time otherwise spent brooding over having been forgotten by the world, this fills a social need. It throws people together in new combinations or ones they might not otherwise have thought of, often creating new friendships and, occasionally, romances.

The entertaining Miss Manners has in mind is not necessarily elaborate. But neither is it so casual as to omit planning for the guests' comfort, or so cavalier as to foist the host's tasks on them. Just quiet meals at which a few people can sit down and talk.

Sure, you can do that in a restaurant. But think of doing it without anyone coming around to peer into the plates asking, "Are you still working on that?" And without your story being ruined by the question, "Is everything all right here?" just when you were about to deliver the punch line. And without your being part of a whispered conference about "How much should we leave?"

What Miss Manners failed to anticipate is that people who arranged such functions would be bitten by the mouths they are feeding.

That they would not be invited back in kind naturally follows if they are, indeed, entertaining people who are not in the habit of doing so themselves. But Gentle Readers tell Miss Manners that it is worse than that. They are reprimanded.

A Gentle Reader who was widowed and continues to have dinner parties reports that she gets complaints about being "too fancy" when she gives dinners the way she and her husband always did, using their best china, silver and linens. "I'm supposed to 'lighten up,'" she said, which means dumbing down.

"I don't know whether my friends are saying that a house without a man in it might as well not

try to be nice, or they think they're trying to save me work, or they just resent my exerting myself because they don't. If they're really worried about me, why don't they ever invite me back? Or just plain thank me, instead of making me feel bad."

Another Gentle Reader reports that he and his wife are always being told that others don't entertain them "because it's too expensive. I'll tell you what's expensive—the restaurants they 'invite' us to where we're expected to split the bill. The groceries we buy to feed them don't count, of course. Or maybe they think that amount is canceled out by the bottle of wine they bring. Not the kind of wine they bring, believe me."

Notice that in both—and other such—cases, the guests keep accepting invitations, even as they keep reminding their hosts that they are being foolhardy to invite them, and should expect nothing in return.

Dear Miss Manners:

When two couples finish a meal at a restaurant, who instigates departure? Is it the host couple or either one?

Whoever can say "Well . . ." more meaningfully and forcefully, so as to get everyone's attention and announce a change of subject.

When the food is gone and the check has been paid, the guests are supposed to say, "Well, this has been lovely. You were so kind to have us." This allows the hosts to reply, "Well, it was wonderful to see you." But if the guests haven't gotten around to it and the staff is vacuuming under the tables, Miss Manners allows the hosts to pronounce their "Well . . ." statement first.

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 am so confused. I have been with my boyfriend and now fiance for a little more than seven years. We got engaged in May, and as you can see it took a while before he proposed.

I have been ready to marry him for some time now, so of course I was happy when he finally asked. It had crossed my mind that maybe it just wasn't meant to be or it was just not something he wanted, but he assured me that I was the one he wanted to be with—he was just not financially ready yet.

As soon as he proposed, I started looking different things up for the wedding—dresses and things like that, but I wasn't rushing anything. Well, needless to say he barely brings up the subject as far as the planning of the wedding is concerned. We have only seen one reception location. I have gone to see three others myself and told him about them. He doesn't seem excited at all to plan a wedding or indicate that he even wants to.

I already was not really sure we would get married until he proposed, and now that he shows no interest in really planning this wedding, I am even less secure.

I know that he loves me. We have a great relationship, we talk, we laugh and have fun together, but I'm thinking of just breaking up with him.

If he's not into the wedding plans or isn't excited about marrying me, then maybe this is not what he wants. I've already tried talking to him, and I've explained that I need more input from him and for him to show more emotion toward the wedding and he hasn't.

What should I do?

Confused

Your energy would be much better spent dragging your guy into premarital counseling than into another wedding hall.

I don't think it's a good idea to break up with someone as a way of calling his bluff, and from what you say about the dynamic of your relationship, you sound desperate and insecure enough to break up with your guy just to see if he cares. It's possible that he is being glib and just isn't into wedding planning, but I think it's probable that he has undertaken a stealth campaign of passive resistance. He loves you—sure he does. He'll even mar-

ry you if you make him.

But you need to know this: People are what they do. Your guy can say all the right things and even let you pull him into matrimony, but in a relationship such as yours, the passive partner is the one who wakes up one day and says, "I never wanted this, I only did this for you." Then they're out the door.

And you don't want that.

Dear Amy:

A recent letter from a sad grandmother whose son and daughter-in-law rejected her attention toward the new baby hit home. The same thing happened to us—our family was excluded, while the new mother's family was welcomed.

Gifts of food, time and help from our family were rejected. We did not want to crowd them, so we backed off, thinking that perhaps they needed time alone.

It is now six years and several grandchildren later. Not only did the situation not improve, it worsened. Our entire extended family is disconnected not only from the children but also from our son and his wife. We have made attempts to discuss this with our son, but he refused.

After years of "what ifs" and "where did we go wrong?"—not to mention counseling to deal with our loss—we have finally accepted this heartbreak. The little children would have been a joy to our family, and we would like to think that we would have enriched their lives as well.

I urge new parents to include both sets of families—children cannot be too loved.

A Family Who Tried

I am so sorry for the loss of these relationships, and I can only urge you to please keep in touch with your grandchildren, remembering them on their birthdays and holidays and sending them notes and postcards from time to time. They have done nothing to bring on this estrangement, and they deserve any little bit of you that you can share with them.

Ask Amy is written by Amy Dickinson. Write to her at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, 17500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

N-S vulnerable

NORTH
♠ J 7 6 2
♥ A K 10
♦ K Q J
♣ A Q J

WEST
♠ 4
♥ 8 4 2
♦ 10 9 8 5
♣ K 9 8 4 2

EAST (D)
♠ A K
♥ Q J 9 3
♦ A 4 3
♣ 10 7 6 5

SOUTH
♠ Q 10 9 8 5 3
♥ 7 6 5
♦ 7 6 2
♣ 3

The bidding:

East South West North
1 ♣ Pass Pass Dbl
Pass 1 ♠ Pass 4 ♠

All Pass

Opening lead: ♦ 10

"Are your students showing any signs of intelligence?" I asked my friend the English professor.

"Their ignorance is authoritative," he growled. "One English Lit student told me Shakespeare's works weren't so great: They were just a bunch of famous quotations strung together."

"Then," the prof went on, "a student submitted a paper full of misspellings. When I said he should consult a dictionary when in doubt, he claimed he hadn't been in doubt."

The prof was today's North, and South was in doubt when he didn't have to be. Against four spades, East won the first diamond, cashed the A-K of trumps and led the queen of hearts.

South took the ace and saw he could get a discard for his losing heart with a winning club finesse:

He could lead to dummy's queen, or he could take the ace and lead the queen for a ruffing finesse against East. South shrugged and chose the second play, but West produced the king of clubs. Down one.

"East opened one club," South muttered. "I'd play it the same way again."

South's play was more than doubtful. After South took the ace of hearts, he could cash the king of hearts and the K-Q of diamonds. When East followed, South would know East had two spades, at least three diamonds and at least three hearts, hence balanced distribution.

East had also shown 14 points: A-K of spades, ace of diamonds and Q-J of hearts. If East held the king of clubs, he'd have opened 1NT, so South should have played West for the king.

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Next Week: **We Got Gamy, or Offensive Tickle**