

The Style Invitational

Week 598: Site Gags



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Name for a cafeteria at a law firm: The Chum Bucket
Name for a cafeteria at the White House: The Undisclosed Location
Name for a cafeteria at The Washington Post: The Meaty Dish

This week's contest comes from Marc Leibert of New York, who sent it to the Empress when his law firm was changing buildings and setting up a new cafeteria. Your challenge: Come up with an appropriate name for a cafeteria—or a meeting room, or an employee lounge, or some other workplace spot—for a particular institution, as in the examples above. First-prize winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets a fabulous genuine 1926 copy of the book “Constipation,” by the flamboyant health nut Bernarr Macfadden, who is pictured topless at age 56, and we can tell you that he is one very buff and no doubt unconspicuated 56-year-old. This book was donated to The Style Invitational by Fred Dawson of Beltsville.

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. 28. 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 March 20. 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 Seth Brown of North Adams, Mass.

Report From Week 594, in which we asked for appropriate (or inappropriate) corporate sponsorships of historical events or of people's life stories: Submitted proudly by dozens of Losers were such pairings as the O.J. Simpson Case by Isotoner; the French Revolution by Duncan Hines; the building of the Pyramids by Amway; the Eruption of Pompeii by Shake 'n Bake; and, from a remarkable number of really shameful, shameless people, the Tsunami by Ocean Spray (“Catch the Wave”). The Empress almost gave ink to such biography sponsors as Cap'n Crunch for “The Joseph Hazelwood Story” and the Gap for “The Life of Rose Mary Woods,” but was informed at the last minute by goody-goody Mark Eckenwiler of Washington that we had run a similar contest 11 years ago on Week 52 (the results of which he supplied). Those entries were rewarded back then. Thank you, Mark. Hope nobody shoves you against your locker. If you don't know what historical events some of the winners refer to, well, go look them up. After all, the *raison d'etre* of The Style Invitational is edification, don't you know.

- ♦ **Third runner-up: The Randy Moss Incident**, brought to you by Bear Stearns. (Mike Cisneros, Centreville)
- ♦ **Second runner-up: The Evander Holyfield Story**, brought to you by Tyson Chicken Bites. (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)
- ♦ **First runner-up, the winner of the 1959 white wine with the broken cork: The Alfred Packer Expedition**, brought to you by Manwich. (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)
- ♦ **And the winner of the Inker: The French Revolution**, brought to you by Pez. (Jennifer LaFleur and Jim Getz, Dallas)

- ♦ **Honorable Mentions:**
The Marion Barry Story, brought to you by 9Lives. (Marcy Alvo, Annandale)
- The Strom Thurmond Story**, brought to you by Pop-Secret. (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa; Chris Doyle, Turangi, New Zealand)
- The Rowan and Martin Story**, brought to you by BP. (Marty McCullen)
- The Bill Clinton Depositions**, brought to you by Depends. (Brent McBurney, Alexandria; Mark Eckenwiler, Washington)
- Gloria Steinem's Wedding**, sponsored by Mrs. Paul's and Schwinn. (Jeff Boulrier, Fairfax; Pam Sweeney, Germantown)
- The Bush-Gore Election Snafu**, brought to you by Lever 2000. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)
- The Success of Jeb Bush**, brought to you by Hasbro. (Mike Cisneros; Kyle Hendrickson, Kissimmee, Fla.)
- The Life of Captain Kidd**, brought to you by IHOP. (Mike Cisneros)
- The Secret of Typhoid Mary**, brought to you by Carrier. (Chris Doyle)
- The Life of Dracula**, brought to you by Sprite: “Image is nothing. Thirst is everything.” (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)
- The 1814 sacking and torching of Washington**, brought to you by the Dallas Cowboys. (Tom Kreitzberg, Silver Spring)
- In Search of the Garden of Eden**, brought to you by Microsoft. “See what misery befalls humankind when it fools around with an Apple.” (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)
- The Alfred Dreyfus affair**, brought to you by Jacuzzi. (Chris Doyle)
- The Voyage of Admiral Zheng**, brought to you by Unix. (Sean Bezdicek, Minneapolis)
- The Rodney King incident**, brought to you by Blockbuster Video. (Bob Dalton, Arlington)
- The Glory of Hank Aaron's 715th Home Run**, brought to you by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America. (Ron Jackson, Chevy Chase)
- Navigating the Erie Canal**, by the American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists. (Fred S. Souk, Reston)
- The Tragic Death of Marilyn Monroe**, brought to you by Pillsbury. (Bob Dalton)
- The Alamo**, brought to you by Texas Toast. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)
- The Desertion of Charles Robert Jenkins**, brought to you by Pepsodent: “You'll wonder where the yellow went!” (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

- The Birth of Jesus**, brought to you by Miracle-Gro. (Teri Chism, Winchester; Ned Bent, Oak Hill)
- Tales From the Raj**, brought to you by White Rain. (Erich Snoko, Stafford)
- The Paul Reubens Story**, brought to you by PalmOne. (Brent McBurney)
- The Siege of Troy**, brought to you by Durex: Outlasting Trojans day and night. (Greg Gorman, Takoma Park)
- Up Close and Personal with Tomas de Torquemada**, brought to you by Tie Rack. (Mark Eckenwiler)
- The Louisiana Purchase**, brought to you by Best Buy. (Mike Bezdicek, Pasadena, Calif.)
- The evolution of human intelligence**, brought to you by Nunn Bush. (Chris Doyle)
- The McCarthy Era**, sponsored by Red Bull. (Mike Elliott, Oak Park, Ill.; Brendan Beary)
- The Discovery of Penicillin**, brought to you by the Clapper. (Jerry Pannullo, Kensington)
- The Ted Williams Story**, brought to you by Prestone. (Mike Donovan, Hudson, Ohio)
- The story of Catherine the Great**, brought to you by Barnes & Noble. (Mike Elliott)
- The Life of Vlad Tepes of Romania**, brought to you by Impala. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)
- The Divorce of Brad and Jennifer**, brought to you by Liberty Mutual. (Elden Carnahan)
- The 2004 Presidential Election**, brought to you by Country Crock. (Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)
- The Linda Lovelace Story**, brought to you by the Pure Protein energy bar. (Paul Kocak)
- The Career of Charo**, brought to you by Wrigley. (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)
- The Life and Times of Cher**, brought to you by the makers of Mr. Potato Head. (Eric Murphy, Chicago)
- Queen Elizabeth's 53rd year as queen in 2005**, brought to you by StarKist Tuna: “Sorry, Charlie!” (Jane Auerbach)
- The Iraq Wars, AIDS, the Exxon Valdez, the Extinction of the Dinosaurs, and Game 6 of the 1986 World Series**, all sponsored by Halliburton. (J.F. Kerry, Boston; Darren Timothy, Bristow, Va.)

Next Week: Listing Precariously, or Hyphonation

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Rewriting the Rules, IMHO

Considering how sympathetic Miss Manners is to educators and employers who bemoan the demise of formal writing, you would think they could return the support.

Their complaint is no longer simply that students and employees fail to recognize a distinction between the way they talk and the language they should use in writing academic papers or business letters and reports. Now the writing habits associated with e-mail have begun to show up in what is supposed to pass for serious writing.

Rules are violated, either because nobody knows what they are or because nobody cares. Spontaneity and cuteness are thought to trump organization and correctness. Most significantly, the idea that there should be different styles for different purposes is considered bizarre and not quite honest.

Miss Manners is only too familiar with these attitudes. But where are the educators and employers when she encounters just these kinds of troubles in respect to the behavior of everyday life?

Those in charge were not instigators in flouting and ridiculing the rules of etiquette, extolling feelings over skills and generally condemning formality. But neither did they put up effective resistance when those notions were promulgated. It is now rare to find a classroom or an office where people dress differently than they do when at leisure, use forms of address different than those used for their friends, or admit that their behavior should be different from when they are off duty.

What is more, the leaders didn't just tolerate the change, they reveled in it. Professors began to enjoy being called by their first names, as if they were of student age themselves. Bosses bragged about their egalitarianism, which was demonstrated by dress, not by salary.

By now, there are many in positions of authority who grew up under the rule of relentless informality. Reinforced by a social ethos of “being themselves”—as if we had a choice of who to be—they are of a generation that is largely unaware that it is possible to handle more than one style without being fraudulent or satirical. Those who request anything formal, notably for weddings, are likely to encounter some indignant

resistance.

But educated people know about different styles of using spoken and written language. They keep trying to make the point that a highly informal style that is fine for e-mail is offensive when used for a business letter or, for that matter, that words that are common in the locker room should not be repeated in the post-game television interview.

To get that point across, it will be necessary to reassert the respectability of formality. Because this gives rise to various forms of hysteria, notably denunciations of elitism and totalitarianism, it is necessary to point out that formality is not necessarily rigid or expensive. Certainly not compared with the compulsory casual style.

Reassurance is needed that it is only to be used on certain occasions—although that makes it necessary to exercise the judgment to know which occasions.

Okay, the high school prom. But what else?

Dear Miss Manners:

My friend went to a wedding one month ago and has yet to give the couple a gift. She fully intends to (intended to?), but that is beside the point.

She received an e-mail from the groom that read, “Did I send you our address? We have a nice little thank-you note waiting with your lovely name on it, but nothing to write in it yet.”

My friend is mortified that he would have the nerve to ask her the whereabouts of his wedding present. How should she respond?

Miss Manners is always gratified to hear of those who write prompt thank-you letters, if less enthralled when these turn out to be extortion notes. But as the gentleman seems to appreciate them, she suggests your friend send him one. It could say, “Thank you for thinking of me,” after which you can call it quits.

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.

© 2005, Judith Martin

ASK AMY

Dear Amy:

This is in response to the recent conversation in your column about what people should call their in-laws.

When I was married almost 50 years ago, I, too, didn't have a clue as to what to call my mother-in-law.

I asked her, and her remark was, “Well, you have a mother and don't need to call me Mom or Mother.” I never did get an answer and kiddingly called her “mother-in-law” one day and forever after. She loved it as did other people who were in-laws, and before long we were all calling each other mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law or brother-in-law, as the case might be.

I still use these names even though my dear mother-in-law died years ago.

Please remember that if you have a question about something, it is best to ask the person involved directly.

The Daughter-in-Law

I love your solution to the age-old in-law naming issue. And yes, if you have a question about something, it is best to ask the person directly.

Or you can ask me. And I'll ask my readers. And we'll all get back to you in the morning.

Dear Amy:

I believe you were wrong in suggesting that a daughter-in-law might call her mother-in-law by her first name. In my opinion, that is disrespectful. I think that calling anyone in an older generation by a first name is disrespectful—unless that person wants to be called by the first name.

I know people who do not like to be called by their first name by their doctor, either (including me).

If my daughter-in-law had trouble calling me “Mom” or “Mother” (which I understand and respect), then “Mrs. So-and-So” would be just fine with me. My own daughter-in-law, who is a very sweet person, calls me “Mom” or “Mama Edda.” She would never even consider calling me by just my first name.

In my opinion, that shows she has class.

Edda

I appreciate your point of view, and I certainly agree with you in terms of how your doctor should address you, but I'm having trouble picturing “Mrs. So-and-So” as a term of endearment appropriate to the relationship, though several other readers wrote in expressing the same view. I also know many mothers-in-law who aren't married, so in those cases “Mrs.” is not only inappropriate but also incorrect.

“Mama Edda” sounds great, however.

Dear Amy:

I, too, did not want to call my mother-in-law “Mom,”

as that is what I call my own mother. And in my native culture, it is considered rude not to address people when speaking to them. I then called my mother-in-law “Mommy” so as to differentiate.

My own daughter addresses both me and her mother-in-law as “Mom,” and it can be quite confusing as we live in the same city and are often in the same place at the same time.

Mom

I think that in every culture it is rude not to address people when you are speaking to them. That's why it's a good idea to settle this question between the principals (fathers-in-law, too) early on.

Dear Amy:

When I first met my wife's parents, my father-in-law could not decide how I should address him. He felt that calling him by his first name was not appropriate, yet he was not comfortable with me calling him “Dad.” Because he could not decide, I chose to call him “Poppo.” I also started calling my mother-in-law “Momm.”

I borrowed these names from the former sitcom “Get a Life,” starring Chris Elliot, so there is a bit of humor associated with them.

Jim M.

Wow. Chris Elliot makes a guest-appearance in an advice column. Surely this is a first. On behalf of Mommos and Poppos everywhere, I'd like to thank him.

Dear Amy:

I solved my mother-in-law problem by borrowing a mother-in-law nickname from a friend: “Milly”—standing for MIL (mother-in-law).

To be honest, even after 20 years of being her “Dilly” (daughter-in-law) and loving her as if she were my own mom, I still wasn't comfortable calling her “Mom.”

I say, go with whatever feels most comfortable and loving at the time, and show your mother-in-law respect by treating her son well!

Milly in Training

To quote from another reader's response to this issue, “I don't care what you call me, just don't call me late for dinner!”

Hear, hear!

Ask Amy is written by Amy Dickinson, a journalist who has worked for NBC News, Time magazine and National Public Radio. Write to her at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

© 2005 by the Chicago Tribune
Distributed by Tribune Media Services Inc.

BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH (D)		
♠	A 10 8 4	
♥	A K Q	
♦	K J 3	
♣	K 6 2	
WEST		
♠	7 3	
♥	J 6 5	
♦	9 7 6 4 2	
♣	9 4 3	
EAST		
♠	K 6	
♥	9 8 4 3	
♦	A Q 8	
♣	Q J 10 7	
SOUTH		
♠	Q J 9 5 2	
♥	10 7 2	
♦	10 5	
♣	A 8 5	

The bidding:

North	East	South	West
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	All Pass		
Opening lead: ♠ 3			

By the Cynic, who can hardly be called an optimist, says the trouble with the future is that it keeps getting closer and closer.

A bridge deal consists of 13 tricks that take only a few minutes to play, so the future can arrive quickly. In today's deal, West led a trump against South's contract of four spades, and since South didn't want to be talked out of the finesse, he played low from dummy. East took the king and shifted to the queen of clubs.

South won in dummy, drew trumps, cashed the hearts and led a club: 10, ace, four. South then exited with a club, hoping East would have to win and lead a diamond. But instead West put up the nine of clubs and led a diamond, and East took the queen and ace. Down one.

The future arrived early for

South: when he finessed in trumps at the first trick. South has four possible losers—a trump, two diamonds and a club—but can set up a diamond winner in dummy for a club discard. When South finessed in trumps, he lost time: East had a chance to get in and shift to clubs, setting up a club trick before South could get his discard ready.

South must win the first trump. Moreover, he must not lead a club to his ace next to return the 10 of diamonds. South must lead a low diamond from dummy at Trick Two.

East takes the queen and shifts to clubs, but South takes the ace and forces out the ace of diamonds. He wins the next club in dummy, discards his last club on the high diamond and leads a trump. The contract is safe.

© 2005, Tribune Media Services