

The Style Invitational

Week 602: Take a Letter — Again



Vaseball: A game of catch played by children in the living room. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Burglesque: A poorly planned break-in. (See: Watergate) (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

Apocalypse: Day-o, me-day-day-day-ay-o. Doomsday come, and me want to go home. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

As we've mentioned before, there seem to be a whole lot of people out in NetWorld who have been "informed" that The Washington Post runs some kind of word contest, perhaps once a year. And this contest, these people think, is always the same one: Change any word by one letter and redefine it. And so, almost daily, the Empress receives submissions to this contest-that-isn't from all over the globe. She has even been approached by no fewer than four publishers interested in putting out a whole book consisting of *nothing but one after another of these entries*. For the record, we have indeed run this contest, twice in the previous 600 weeks (hence the examples above from 1998 and 2003). So okay, fine. Here it is again, with one new restriction.

This week's contest: Take a word, term or name that begins with A, B, C or D; either add one letter, subtract one letter, replace one letter, or transpose two letters; and define the new word.

The winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets a fabulous item that Loser Steve Fahey of Kensington has been trying to get rid of for months: a Japanese "Boyfriend's Arm Pillow," which is, well, a pillow that looks like a man-size arm, sewn into the cuddle position. Nighttime coziness without the snoring — and very undemanding at 7 a.m. There's only one hitch: Whoever gets this prize must pick it up at the 10th annual Flushie Awards, the banquet hosted by the Losers themselves. This year's will be April 16 in the Silver Spring area. If the first runner-up can't or won't attend this highlight of the Washington social season, we'll send a shirt and an old Loser pen instead.

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, March 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 April 17. 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 Brendan Beary of Great Mills.

Report from Week 598, in which we asked for names for cafeterias or other rooms in particular places: Two entrants noted that the burger place in the middle of the Pentagon's center courtyard is still called, though perhaps not officially, Ground Zero.

◆ **Third runner-up: The press room at the White House: Employee Lounge** (Dennis Lindsay, Seabrook)

◆ **Second runner-up: The ladies' room at Buckingham Palace: The Royal Wee** (Kirsten Andersen, Los Angeles)

◆ **First runner-up, winner of the 1926 edition of "Constipation" by Bernarr Macfadden: The cafeteria at AARP: Where's My Damn Sandwich!** (Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)

◆ **And the winner of the Inker: The dental clinic at the Department of Homeland Security: The Cavity Search** (Robin D. Grove, Chevy Chase)

◆ **Honorable Mentions:**
CAFETERIAS

At the Basketball Hall of Fame: In Your Face. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

At an Internet company: The Dotcommissary. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

At Warner Bros. Animation: What's Sup, Doc? (Joseph Romm, Washington)

At a drug rehabilitation center: The Cold Turkey (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

At the Bureau of Indian Affairs: The Regulatory Maize (Chris Doyle, Kihei, Hawaii)

At a modeling agency: The Barbie Queue (Tom Witte)

At the National Zoo: The Recent Exhibits (Russell Beland, Springfield; Dennis Lindsay)

At R.J. Reynolds: The Cougheteria (Tom Witte)

At NASA: Fill the Void (Ross Elliffe, Picton, New Zealand)

At the Lawrence Welk Resort in Branson, Mo.: The Square Meal (Russell Beland)

At a fertility clinic: The Magic Eggplant (Cecil J. Clark, Asheville, N.C.)

At the D.C. bomb squad headquarters: The Tiki Tiki Lounge (Peter Metrisko, Chantilly)

At a gastroenterologist's practice: Input (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

Automat in the basement of the Office of the Vice President: Go Service Yourself (John Kupiec, Fairfax)

At a modeling agency: The Upchuck Wagon (Chris Doyle)

At MGM Studios: Munchin' Land (Mitchell A. Cohn, Washington)

At Sara Lee Corp: The Pie Hole (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

At the Latvian Embassy: Letts Do Lunch (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

At Metro headquarters: Eating Prohibited (John Kupiec)

At Enron: The Company Mess (John Conti, Norfolk, Mass.)

At the IRS: The Pound of Flesh (Cecil J. Clark)

At NORML: High Noon (Chuck Smith)

At Leavenworth Prison: The Greasy Shiv (Rob Poole, Ellicott City)

At the Globe Theatre: What Foods These Morsels Be (Kirsten Andersen)

At the Tower of Pisa: Lean Cuisine (Jay Brown, Charlottesville)

RESTROOMS
Ladies' room at the FAA: The No Fly Zone (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)

At the Department of Public Works: The City Dump (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

At the White House: Leaks (John O'Byrne, Dublin; Cheryl Davis, Arlington)

At NIH: The Urinal of the American Medical Association (Brendan Beary)

At USA Today: Where We're Pooping (Brendan Beary)

At Neverland Ranch: The Little Boys' Room (John Kupiec)

At a real estate office: The 1/2 BA (Dave Prevar)

At a car dealer's: They Gotta Go! (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

At Washington National Cathedral: The Matthew-Mark-Luke John (Fred Souk, Reston)

LOUNGES
At NOAA: Davy Jones's Locker Room (Chris Doyle)

At a K Street lobbying firm: The Tasseled Loafer (Brendan Beary)

At Home Depot: Bored Feet (Dave Prevar)

Bill Cosby's Private Office Lounge: The Hug-Stable (Barbara Hoss Schneider, Bowie)

OTHER
The "lost-items office" at Google: Room 404 (Evan Golub, College Park)

The day care center at the Department of Education: Children Left Behind (Brendan Beary)

The White House Press Corps snack bar: Mister Softee (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

The snack bar at Hertz: Between the Seats (Kirk Zurell, Waterloo, Ontario)

The coffee room at a lingerie manufacturer: The Uplifting Cup (Dennis Lindsay)

The coffee room at The Washington Post: The Circulation Boost (Steve Shapiro, Alexandria)

And Last: The prize warehouse at the Style Invitational compound: This Is Not Trash — Do Not Remove! (Brendan Beary)

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Food Fight!

The ancient and noble tradition of hospitality has come to this: Hosts and guests are squabbling over who gets possession of the leftovers.

Miss Manners is aghast. How sordid it is for people who have broken bread together to fight over the disposition of the crumbs. If she had not received countless letters from angry combatants, she would never have believed that this is a widespread problem.

The catalyst for this spectacle is the downgraded "potluck dinner," which has become a commonplace of modern society. Potluck once signified a cheerful willingness to share whatever was in the family pot with the unexpected visitor and an implied apology that something special would have been offered if only there had been more notice.

Now it means that the visitor is expected to show up with a pot full of food for the host's table. This is all very well when a group decides to meet for cooperative meals, sharing the responsibilities rather than taking turns entertaining. But so many who believe themselves to be hosts assign their invited guests to cook that it has come to be believed that to attend a dinner party, you must help cater it.

It may sound gracious for guests to take the initiative by asking "What can I bring?" But truly hospitable people complain that they can't plan a menu because guests whose offers were refused persist in bringing items they expect to be integrated into the meal.

Miss Manners would have thought that the upside of this confusion would be a generous spirit among those who want to share the work along with the fun. Instead, the meal is hardly digested before things turn ugly.

There are hosts who consider that all items contributed to the meal, mandated or not, count as presents. They are appalled when a person who brought an item takes the leftovers home along with the platter. There are even hosts who resent being expected to give back the platters.

There are a corresponding number of guests who consider that anything they bring continues to be theirs to offer and are appalled when the hosts put the leftovers away in their kitchens, with or without their pots.

Then there are third parties who contributed nothing but manage to appall everyone by asking for leftovers to take home. Or who, without asking, simply shovel them into containers. Yes, it's come to that, Miss Manners weeps to say.

It would be easier if people did their own entertaining, making however many subsequent meals out of it they wished, and were rewarded for these efforts by being subsequently invited with nothing to do but be charming.

Failing that, we need to establish some rules. And some sense of proportion.

Portions would be a good place to start. In the hope of solving the problem by eliminating leftovers, contributing guests should be told or ask how much to bring. Beyond that, scraps should be left where they are: those in the guest-cooks' pots or platters to go home with them, and those on the hosts' platters and plates to be disposed of by them, with the understanding that either can offer theirs to the other.

But anyone who so much as mentions getting another meal out of the one still being eaten should be sent home without dessert, no matter who made it.

Dear Miss Manners:

Recently I overheard a conversation in which my boss used the term "irregardless" several times. It is obvious that she does not know that "irregardless" is not a word. What would be the most respectful way of correcting her?

Miss Manners suggests that you think about another word: "disregard."

One meaning of "to disregard" is to show a lack of respect for other people, which is what you would be doing if you corrected one of your boss's overheard conversations. Another meaning is to ignore something, which is what respect requires you to do here.

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:

I have been living in my apartment for seven years. I am a single mom, and my son is a toddler.

I am very concerned because there is a neighbor who rarely said hello to me before my child was born. He's a single man in his fifties, seems to be a loner and has lived here for more than 20 years.

Since my son's birth, this man has had an unusual preoccupation with my son. At first I thought it was sweet, because many people showed him attention and everyone loves babies, right?

However, as the months have gone on, I have had an extremely uneasy feeling about his interest in my son. I fear he is a child molester. I checked the sex offender list in my state, and his name isn't on it. I told him of my neighbors about my concerns and learned that another neighbor with children told him to stay away from her kids — this man has a strong attraction to her young son too.

I feel guilty that this man may just be lonely, but he goes out of his way to be with my son (he'll ride back up the elevator just to spend time with him, etc.). I am always with my son, but worry about him, as he gets older, because this man is trying to befriend him.
Is there anything I can do or say to this man?
Very Concerned Mom

I read your letter to Joan Tabachnick, director of public education at "Stop It Now!" — a national child sexual abuse prevention program. We both think you're doing many things right.

First of all, you are right to listen to your gut. Your instincts are an important tool in keeping your son safe. You are also right to reach out to other neighbors. You should speak directly with this other mom to learn exactly what concerned her about this man's behavior toward her son.

An educated parent who will advocate for her child is a vital tool in preventing abuse. For this reason, you need to speak with this male neighbor. Tell him honestly that his interest in your son makes you uncomfortable. Tell him what your boundaries are, and tell him you expect him to respect these boundaries. And then, of course, make sure your son is never in this man's presence without you also being there.

Get to know your other neighbors well — a secure community of people who will keep an eye out for you and your son is an important safety tool.

For more information on how to determine if a child is at risk for being sexually abused, check www.stopitnow.org. You can also call 888-773-8368 to speak with a counselor who will help guide you through this very difficult topic.

Dear Amy:

I am a young woman attending law school. I happen to be slender and tall, as is the trait on my mother's side of the family. I am healthy with a high metabolism.

I socialize with a large group of people whom I often go out to dinner with. I find I dread these meals. These people direct comments toward my eating habits, such as "What's wrong with the potatoes? You didn't like them? Why won't you eat them?" They also say, "Are you going anorexic on me? You're so skinny—just like my cousin who has anorexia!"

I have never had a problem with eating. I love food. But I stop when I'm full.

I'm tired of these rude, overly inquisitive comments. I recently resorted to snapping at one individual for this kind of dinner table questioning, which offended the others.

What can I say to my inquisitors?

Weary in Ill.

I agree. This kind of comment is very rude. Most of us would rather eat our food than talk about it—in fact we have a rule in our family that no one can talk about someone else's dinner, mainly because I once said my sister's entree looked "yucky."

Also, anorexia is a very serious affliction and not a fit dinner-table subject.

I think that when people make this sort of personal comment, the thing to say is, "It really bothers me when you call me skinny like that, so let's not talk about my relationship to the potatoes. Can't we find another topic?"

Dear Amy:

Recently, a woman asked you what she could do about her husband and son's very loud eating when they scraped their bowls with spoons. My housemate clanked her cereal bowl every morning while eating and reading the paper (your column, of course). I solved the problem by purchasing soft plastic bowls. She still bangs away at her cereal bowl, but silently.

Nancy

Thank goodness you didn't think my column was the problem. Well done!

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

N-S vulnerable

NORTH
♠ A 10 6 3 2
♥ K Q 7
♦ 4
♣ Q J 10 6

WEST
♠ J 8 4
♥ 10 9 4
♦ K Q J 5 3 2
♣ 3

EAST
♠ K 9 5
♥ 5 2
♦ 10 8 6
♣ K 7 5 4 2

SOUTH (D)
♠ Q 7
♥ A J 8 6 3
♦ A 9 7
♣ A 9 8

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	3 ♦	4 ♠	Pass
4 NT	Pass	5 ♠	Pass
6 ♥	All Pass		

Opening lead: Choose it

Russia's upset of the United States in the final of the 2004 Women's Olympiad was all the more remarkable since competitive bridge in Russia was scarce until the demise of communism. Russia also contended strongly in the Open Teams.

The women's final was a tense affair with the outcome in doubt to the finish. The United States took an early lead, lost it and was striving to recover when today's deal arose near the end. At both tables, South ended at six hearts after West had preempted in diamonds. Both Wests found the best lead: the singleton club.

The U.S. South put up the queen, winning. She took the ace of diamonds, ruffed a diamond and tried a club to her nine. West ruffed and led a trump, and declarer won in dummy and led another club to her ace. West ruffed again,

and South also lost a spade for down two.

In contrast, Russia's declarer played a low club from dummy and won with the nine. She took the K-A of trumps, on which West followed with the four and ten, and let the queen of spades ride.

East won and could have given West a club ruff, but West's failure to "echo" in trumps (playing high-low to show three) plus her false-card with the ten deceived East: She led a diamond, hoping West had the ace.

Declarer won, took the ace of spades, ruffed a spade, drew trumps with the queen and cashed two good spades, throwing two diamonds. She led a club to the eight and claimed, and Russia gained a decisive 17 IMPs. The final score was Russia 271, U.S. 259.

© 2005, Tribune Media Services

Next Week: **So What's the News, or Details Are Sketchy**