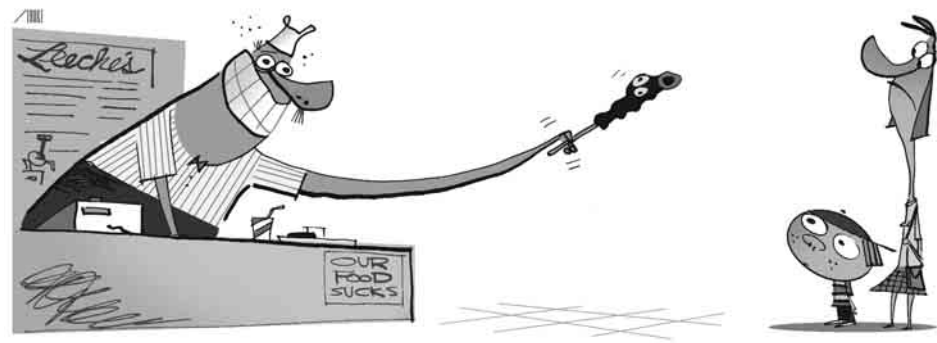


The Style Invitational

Week 612: Oh, and One More Thing



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Great Fast-Food Ventures, Idea No. 102: Leech-on-a-Stick!

Rules for Buying a House, No. 102: Make sure the icemaker produces cubes that have nice corners on them, instead of those weird curves.

Ways to Stay Looking Young, Idea No. 102: Convert to Judaism and wear a yarmulke to cover your bald spot.

It is a tenet of the hack book industry that 100 just isn't quite enough. Which is why the ubiquitous 101 list was devised. Go into your local bookstore and you'll be confronted with 101 Things to Think About When Buying a House, 101 Uses for Plastic Toothpicks Shaped Like Buccaneer Swords, etc. In a lot of these books, the authors are struggling gamely to fill out the list and make quota. So for **This Week's Contest**, from the brain of Style Invitational cartoonist Bob Staake himself: What was the 102nd thing — on any list you come up with — the one that *didn't* make the cut?

Winner receives the Inker, the official Style Invitational Trophy. First runner-up gets exactly 102 nasturtium seeds raised by the contest-suggester himself, direct from Cape Cod (though he cannot promise more than maybe 12 will bloom). The Empress will throw in a three-pack of Funky Fresh hanging air fresheners in the shape of beefsteaks ("Smells like BBQ Meat!"), discourtesy of Russell Beland of Springfield.

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, June 6. 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 June 26. 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 608, in which we asked for snappy retorts to rude questions or comments. Some people sent in snappy retorts to non-rude questions, such as this one from Tom Witte of Montgomery Village: "Q. Do you swear to tell the truth? A. Hello! I'm a criminal, remember?" Maybe nobody's ever rude to Tom.

- ◆ **Third runner-up: "Man, if your belly was on a woman, I'd swear she was pregnant."**
"It was, and she is." (Veggo Larsen, Turks and Caicos Islands)
- ◆ **Second runner-up: "Are you walking that dog or is he walking you?"**
"Actually, he's walking me, so would you mind helping him with the pooper scooper?" (Marcy Alvo, Annandale)
- ◆ **First runner-up, the winner of the six-foot-tall inflatable palm tree: "Do you play basketball?"**
"No, do you sumo-wrestle?" (Six-foot-tall Beth Morgan, Palo Alto, Calif.)
- ◆ **And the winner of the Inker: "Say, baby, let's make like we're the last two people on Earth."**
"If we were, pal, we always would be." (Roger and Pam Dalrymple, Gettysburg, Pa.)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

- "Would it kill you to call your mother more often?"
"Sorry, I'm not willing to take that risk." (Mark Eckenwiler, Washington)
- "How tall are you? 6-1, 6-2?"
"6-2. What's your IQ? 61, 62?" (Hope Linske-Rice, the contest suggester's over-six-foot-tall younger sister, Potomac Falls)
- "I liked you better with long hair."
"So did I, but I really needed the chemo." (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City, who actually used this retort)
- "Are you losing your hair?"
"No, I'm growing my forehead. Thanks for noticing!" (Luke Currano, Columbia)
- "You're not wearing that tonight, are you?"
"No, this is what I'm wearing to your funeral. I was just practicing." (Judith Cottrill, New York)
- "Are those breasts real?"
"No, but your husband thinks so." (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)
- "Was it good for you, baby?"
"Oh, good, bad, mediocre, uninspired, second-rate, pedestrian, humdrum, insipid, forgettable, regrettable — why do we have to put a label on it?" (Tom Witte)
- ... "Sure. Of course, a rectal exam is good for me, too, but I don't plan to do that more than once every five years either." (Joseph Romm, Washington)
- [Pointing] "Implants?"
[Pointing] "Lobotomy?" (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)
- "Haven't you had that baby yet?"
"Actually I have, but he was so noisy I stuck him back in." (Bonnie Hughes, Reston)
- "Honey, I really think you need to get a boob reduction."
"So do I, sweetheart — so I'm seeing a divorce lawyer tomorrow." (Michelle Stupak)
- "When are you going to give me grandchildren?"
"Hey, for all those years I asked, did you ever get me a pony for Christmas?" (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)
- "Do you have any idea just who I am?"
"Someone who thinks he's important?" (Russell Beland)
- "Is that your dog urinating on my tree?"
"I think the question should be why are you watching? You some kind of sicko?" (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)
- "Hey, baby, what's your sign?"
"No vacancy." (Mark Eckenwiler)
... "Right now, it's 'I'm With Stupid.'" (Jon Reiser, Hilton, N.Y.)
- "Why are you still single?"
"I'm not scheduled to cell-divide till Thursday." (Mike Cisneros, Centreville)
- "Are you having a baby?"
"No, I just need to exhale." (James Noble, Lexington Park)
... "No, but I do plan to name this tumor after you." (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)
- "Have you tried dieting?"
"I'm comfortable with my weight, just like you're comfortable with your stupidity." (Jean Sorensen)
- "Was your baby an accident?"
"Yes. I was leaning over scrubbing the bathtub when my husband tripped and impregnated me." (Luke Currano)
- "Were those triplets natural or in vitro?"
"Oh, they're adopted. We figured if we got them all at once we'd only have to pay for one lawyer." (Beth Morgan)
- "You look terrible — are you tired?"
"No, I just like to accessorize with the latest designer eyebags." (Michelle Weltman, Clayton, Mo.)
- "Oh, you're here?"
"I am? Thank heavens, I thought I was lost!" (Judith Cottrill)
- "Are you an illegal alien?"
"Klaatu barada nikto." (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)
- "Is that a diamond or cubic zirconia?"
[Scratching her car] "Hey, guess it's real!" (Jeff Brechlin)
- "How much money do you make a year?"
"How much excrement do you make a year?" (Luke Currano)
- "Were you born in a barn?"
"You mean like Jesus of Nazareth?" (Mark Eckenwiler)
- "Do you think I'm saying this just to hear myself talk?"
"No, I think you're saying it for people in Guam to hear you talk — I mean, sheesh, don't you have a volume button?" (Brendan Beary)
- "Are you always this immature?"
"I know you are but what am I?" (Chuck Smith)
- "Don't you know that smoking kills?"
"Yes, and I've been meaning to ask: When the smokers are all dead, who will you annoy then?" (Tom Kreitzberg, Silver Spring)
- "If you were really my friend, you'd tell me the truth."
"Okay, the truth is I'm really not your friend." (Michelle Stupak)
- "Don't you think you can do better than him?"
"I believe in marrying for love — after all, where would you be if your husband had tried to do better?" (Brendan Beary)
- "Do you mind if I read over your shoulder?"
"Go ahead, but I have to warn you: Some of the words have more than three letters." (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)
- "What ever made you think I'd be interested in doing anything with someone like you?"
"Well, that's what it says on the doors of all the stalls." (Russell Beland)
- "I keep looking for your name in The Style Invitational, but unfortunately it's never there."
"I keep looking for your name in the obituaries, but unfortunately it's never there." (Seth Brown, North Adams, Mass.)

Next Week: **A2D2**, or **Correctional Facility**

How Carl's Jr. Makes Those Burgers Sizzle

ESSAY, From D1

washing cars for the chain? Unless you've lived out West — Carl's is a California-based chain that has no franchises east of Oklahoma and doesn't advertise nationally — chances are you hadn't.

You have now. That's because the ad has achieved what few ads ever do: a life beyond the next commercial break. Carl's is spending just \$4 million to \$5 million to buy air time over the next two months in a handful of Western cities, but the freebie exposure has been many times that. The Hilton commercial has gotten attention from countless newspapers and local newscasts, from all the cable news networks, "Today," "Entertainment Tonight" and even ESPN. The pretext is the "controversy" — the Parents Television Council helpfully played along by calling it "basically soft-core porn" — but that's just an excuse for airing footage of Ms. Hilton sudsing up (and you didn't think *we'd* print a jaded commentary about filth and degradation without including saucy pictures of it, did you?).

What Carl's (and its ad agency, Mendelsohn-Zein of Los Angeles) did was strip its selling proposition to its chassis. Since young men between the ages of 18 and 34 are Carl's core customers, it wasn't hard to figure out what grabs their attention.

But filling your ad with scantily clad babes and expensive cars alone doesn't get you denounced by moralists and discussed on CNN. In fact, Carl's has tried generic exploitation in the past, to limited effect. Its most recent commercial showed a young woman gyrating on a mechanical bull while eating a burger; in another, young men take bets on whether an attractive woman will splatter some of the contents of her juicy burger on her blouse. Its slogan: "If it doesn't get all over the place, it doesn't belong in your face."

Edgy, maybe, but not hormonal enough. This time around, Carl's did two very clever things.

The first was to keep the concept simple and uncluttered. "We absolutely meant to be racy," says Brad Haley, Carl's executive vice president of marketing. Indeed, there's no story line and very little sales pitch. The ad features nothing but the almost-naked babe, a shiny car and a lot of suds. Except for a brief shot of Hilton biting into a burger, the commercial could just as easily be selling Bentleys, garden supplies or Turtle Wax.

The glossy, generic quality was part of the plan, too. "It was designed to be like a music video," Haley says. "This was written for young men who are doing a dozen things — playing video games, listening to their iPods, looking at the Internet, watching MTV. These days, watching TV is the least of all those activities."

What made the ad something more than merely titillating was its second masterstroke: casting Paris Hilton. For Paris isn't just any blond bimbo writhing on a Bentley. She's the blond bimbo of the year (Haley wouldn't disclose how much Hilton got to appear in the ad, but he noted:



An outraged Parents Television Council branded the ad showing a swimsuit-clad Paris Hilton writhing on a Bentley "soft-core porn."

"The media rebroadcasts are worth far more than we paid her."

Hilton is a remarkable creation: a young woman (she's 24) with a famous last name (she is the great-granddaughter of hotel magnate Conrad Hilton) and no visible talent other than an uncanny ability to keep attracting attention. Unlike fellow blondes Jessica Simpson, who play-acts at being ditsy, or Pamela Anderson,

babe? The adoring wife? The perfect daughter or granddaughter?

Yes. No. Maybe. Whatever. There is, ultimately, something remarkable about the sheer gall of the Carl's commercial. In a post-feminist age, in an age of jaded consumerism, advertisers that use sex to sell tend to do so by making at least some nod toward the ridiculousness of using sex to sell. Remember the blatantly

"We absolutely meant to be racy."

Brad Haley, Carl's executive vice president of marketing, on Paris Hilton's steamy TV commercial

absurd Swedish Bikini Team ads for Old Milwaukee beer in the early '90s? Or the Miller Lite "catfight" commercial of 2003 in which two bodacious young women get into an argument that leads them to tear

each other's clothes off, tumble into a fountain and wrestle in wet cement?

Haley, the marketing executive, argues that the Paris ad is similarly over the top, recalling as it does the car-washing scene in "Cool Hand Luke" as well as every Whitesnake or Motley Crue video from the 1980s. But that seems like a stretch. It's hard to find any winking subtlety, much less an *homage au cinéma*, in Paris Hilton in a skimpy bathing suit cavorting with a spraying hose.

Maybe it's an act, like Madonna's clever media manipulations of years ago, but it's an act — and an image — Hilton controls awfully well.

Hilton's emptiness, in fact, makes her a kind of iconic figure (she wisely doesn't utter a single word in the Carl's Jr. ad). She's in many ways a sleazier version of Vanna White, who never said much in all those years of turning letters on "Wheel of Fortune." That's why White was strangely beloved. By never revealing anything specific about herself, White became to many observers the perfect "empty vessel" onto which any narrative could be plausibly pasted. Was she the girl next door? The hot

For its part, the Parents Television Council has backed off its threat to file an indecency complaint with the Federal Communications Commission. That's too bad for Carl's and Hilton, both of whom would have enjoyed another round of free media exposure.

Instead, they'll have to pursue publicity the old-fashioned way. Stay tuned. A new version of the Hilton commercial, this time for Hardee's (which is owned by Carl's parent company), is coming to cities in the Midwest and Southeast in June.

BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Today's deal reminds me of the old story about the lawyer who visited his client, charged with robbery.

"I've got good news and bad news," the mouthpiece announced. "You know that blood test you took? The bad news is, they found your DNA at the crime scene."

"So what's the good news?" asked the accused.

"Your cholesterol level is only 140."

When West led a diamond against four spades doubled, it was a good-news/bad-news situation for South. The good news: West's lead was a sure singleton, so South could pick up the diamonds — something he might not have managed after a different lead. The bad news: West surely had A-K-x in trumps and threatened to get a ruff.

South could see nothing but to try to draw trumps as soon as possible.

He captured East's queen of diamonds and led a trump. West won with the king and shifted to a low heart, and South took the ace and led another trump. West won, led a heart to East's queen and ruffed the diamond return. Down one.

To save the contract, South must trade his heart loser for a trick only West can win. At Trick Two, South should lead a club to dummy's ace and return the jack. If East played low, South would discard a heart effectively, so say East covers with the king.

South ruffs and leads a trump, and when West takes the king and leads the ten of clubs, throwing his last heart when East plays low. South later draws trumps and finishes against East's ten of diamonds.

E-W vulnerable			
NORTH (D)			
♠ 10 9 5 3			
♥ A 6			
♦ A 7 6			
♣ A J 10 3			
WEST			
♠ AK 4			
♥ K J 9 5 4 2			
♦ 2			
♣ Q 7 4			
EAST			
♠ 6			
♥ Q 10 8			
♦ Q 10 8 4			
♣ K 9 8 5 2			
SOUTH			
♠ Q J 8 7 2			
♥ 7 3			
♦ K J 9 5 3			
♣ 6			
The bidding:			
North	East	South	West
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠	2 ♥
2 ♠	3 ♥	4 ♠	Dbl
All Pass			
Opening lead: ♦ 2			