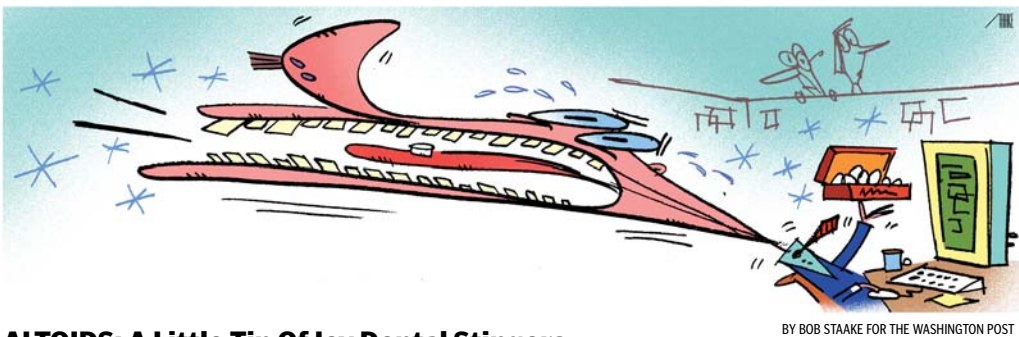


# The Style Invitational

## Week 632: Live On, Sweet, Earnest Reader (Inc.)



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

### ALTOIDS: A Little Tin Of Icy Dental Stingers COMCAST: Cut Off My Cable Another Stinking Time

A couple of years ago, in Week 512, we featured a contest asking you to use a person's name as an acronym for an appropriate description or quote. You might (evidently we didn't at the time) recognize this wordplay as what's widely called a backronym — a fake etymology that often gets in a little dig at the subject. **This week's contest**, suggested by Loser-on-the-Rise Katherine Hooper of Jacksonville: **Give us an original backronym for a company or product, as in the examples above. Warning:** There are zillions of these all over the Internet. It's very easy to check if your idea is already out there — please do. Newer, longer and less common names probably offer less traveled territory. On the other hand, don't use this contest as an opportunity to vilify your local dry cleaner; stick to corporate entities that aren't going to be cut to the quick by a little snarkiness.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up receives, discourtesy of Brenda Ware Jones of Jackson, Miss., the Internet Urinal™, a little turquoise (opaque) jug for those times when you can't tear yourself away from the computer, such as when you're working on yet one more entry for this contest. (No, really, go, go. We'll wait.) It comes complete with a "female adapter."

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](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or, if you really have to, by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Oct. 24. Results will be published Nov. 13. Put "Week 632" 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. Entries 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 628**, in which we asked how any two items in a 12-item list we supplied were similar or different: Once again, the Loser community came through, making astonishing connections among the 66 possible combinations in the Empress's truly randomly assembled list. More predictably submitted by dozens of you: How is \$52.20 like a \$400 pair of jeans? Both are worth about 50 bucks. A number of entrants were evidently unenlightened about the Flying Spaghetti Monster, thinking it had to do with the caloric value of Italian food rather than with a particular theory of "intelligent design." The Omniscient Noodly Appendage did enjoy a chuckle, however, we are reliably informed.

◆ **Third runner-up:** *How a \$400 pair of jeans is unlike Deep Throat's throat: One is top-of-the-line brushed denim; the other is a piece of old Felt.* (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

◆ **Second runner-up:** *How two male rabbits are unlike the 400-meter dash: The former are two short hares with long fur, while the other is a hair short of two furlongs.* (Kyle Hendrickson, Frederick)

◆ **Honorable Mentions:**  
**How Groucho Marx's eye-brows . . .**  
. . . are unlike two male rabbits: **You can't make a whole coat out of two rabbits.** (Roger and Pam Dalrymple, Gettysburg, Pa.)  
. . . are unlike a \$400 pair of jeans: **The jeans only look painted on.** (Greg McGrew, Leesburg)  
. . . are different from John Roberts's breakfast: **Justice Souter isn't required to fetch Groucho his eye-brows.** (Russell Beland, Springfield)

**How the 400-meter dash . . .**  
. . . is like Deep Throat's throat: **Both have been the venue for many climactic finishes.** (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)  
. . . is like 2 degrees Celsius: **They were the athletic and academic achievements listed on Michael Brown's job application for FEMA.** (Elwood Fitzner, Valley City, N.D.)  
. . . is like a \$400 pair of jeans: **The results depend on the shape of the person who's in it.** (Ann Worthington, Annapolis)  
. . . is like Groucho's eyebrows: **Both have often been enhanced by foreign substances.** (Mike Fransella, Arlington)

**How sea urchin sushi . . .**  
. . . is different from two male rabbits: **The first is expensive, the second just a couple of bucks.** (Jeff Brechlin)  
. . . is different from John Roberts's breakfast: **When John Roberts is eating sea urchin sushi, we KNOW he's nibbling away at roe.** (Pam Sweeney, Germantown)  
. . . is like Roberts's breakfast: **Both leave you wishing you had a Burger or Frankfurter instead.** (Brendan Beary)  
. . . is like the Flying Spaghetti Monster: **Both are things the Kansas Board of Education isn't about to swallow.** (Brendan Beary; Russell Beland)  
. . . is unlike Deep Throat's throat: **You don't mind giving the Heimlich maneuver to someone choking on sushi.** (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)  
. . . is like Groucho's eyebrows: **In a blind taste test, these two items tied for next to last, beating out only batter-fried Play-Doh.** (Russell Beland)

**How two male rabbits . . .**  
. . . are unlike John Roberts's breakfast: **Glenn Close wouldn't cook John Roberts's breakfast.** (Pam Sweeney)



◆ **And the winner of the Inker:** *How \$52.20 is like sea urchin sushi: Together they make up Toyota's offer for General Motors in 2009.* (David Smith, Santa Cruz, Calif.)

◆ **First runner-up, winner of the pair of pink and white argyle socks:** *How the Flying Spaghetti Monster is unlike two male rabbits: One is a tangle of noodles and two meatballs that created everything; the other have four meatballs but can't create anything no matter how much they tangle their noodles.* (Jonathan M. Guberman, Princeton, N.J.)

**How two male rabbits . . .**  
. . . are unlike \$52.20: **Michael Jackson isn't likely to carry \$52.20 around in his pants.** (Brendan Beary)

**How \$52.20 . . .**  
. . . is unlike a \$400 pair of jeans: **\$52.20 is the monthly wage of the person who sewed the jeans.** (Ted Weitzman, Olney; Rob Poole, Ellicott City)

. . . is like a \$400 pair of jeans: **They are worth exactly the same at an "Everything 86.95% Off" sale.** (Russell Beland)

. . . is unlike the 400-meter dash: **The former was the cost of our dinner at the Mexican restaurant, and the latter was the cost afterward.** (Michael Platt, Germantown)

**How \$400 jeans . . .**  
. . . are unlike the Pandacam at the zoo: **The first are best when stone-washed; the second is best watched when stoned.** (Kyle Hendrickson)

. . . **One covers bears as they rear, the other covers bare rears.** (Jeff Brechlin)  
. . . are like two male rabbits: **They're both things that Jessica Rabbit fantasizes about.** (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

**How Deep Throat's throat . . .**  
. . . is unlike Groucho's eyebrows: **The latter will tickle your funny bone.** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

*is like a \$400 pair of jeans: If the pants are scratchy you can probably get a refund.* (Elwood Fitzner)

**How John Roberts's breakfast . . .**  
. . . is like the Flying Spaghetti Monster: **If you ask about either of them, don't expect a forthright answer.** (Evan Golub, Hyattsville)

. . . is unlike sea urchin sushi: **Ted Kennedy does have a snowball's chance of getting invited for sushi.** (Greg McGrew)  
. . . is different from two male rabbits: **At the former, Roberts ate Lucky Charms; the latter HAVE eight lucky charms.** (Jesse Frankovich, Lansing, Mich.)

**How are sea urchin sushi, a \$400 pair of jeans, the Flying Spaghetti Monster and two male rabbits alike?**  
**The first two make me want to vomit; the last two make Pat Robertson want to vomit.** (George Demas, Fairhaven)

## MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

## Stories We've Overheard

Uh-oh. They're on to Topic A again. He's talking about his children's athletic triumphs. She's talking about her grudges against the health care system. They're talking about their favorite vacation spot.

And there isn't a soul within hearing distance who hasn't heard it all before.

Before the trapped listeners start screaming or crying, Miss Manners would like to remind them that everyone has a Topic A. It is the subject that suddenly awakens a person to the joy of one-way conversation consisting of set pieces with a fixed point of view, delivered in wording that has been honed by use.

It could be about almost anything, with a slant that is either gloomy or proud and with a corresponding effect that is depressing or insufferable. Some favorites are:

Personal illness, either because no one has been able to cure the speaker, or because he or she found a miracle cure that would benefit everyone else, if only they could be persuaded to try it.

Holiday destinations, either because the food and the warmth of the people are superior to anything at home, or because they are so markedly inferior.

Children, either because they are astonishingly successful or because they are dramatically ungrateful.

Parents, either because they were abusive or because they were distinguished.

The surprising truth about a famous figure, either someone alive who is a fraud, or someone long dead whom history has judged unfairly.

An encounter with a celebrity, either because a quick incident proved that person to be extraordinarily gracious and (highest compliment) "human," or because it exposed his or her hypocrisy.

A new car or computer, which has turned out to be either a lemon or so far beyond expectations that everyone else should go out and buy one.

The state of the world, either because it is hopeless or because there is an obvious solution to its ills that the government refuses to try.

The state of the economy, either because nothing is affordable anymore or because there are

amazing opportunities for smart people who act fast to get rich.

The genius of Shakespeare, either to the extent that he has put a code in his works that predicted the subsequent history of the world, or to the extent that a man like Shakespeare was obviously incapable of writing the works of Shakespeare.

And so on. The possibilities are endless, and so are the recitals.

One etiquette question is how much of this a body can stand. If the body is a spouse, the answer is not much more. Can such a performance be stopped? And if so, when?

After that chorus of "Now!" and "Twenty years ago!" Miss Manners must remind sufferers that they, too, have such topics, only they think of them as opportunities to impart polished wit and wisdom. So the second question has to do with control on the part of the storyteller. When, if ever, must a favorite recital be retired?

The polite way to block a story is with a preface "Oh, that's such a good story" or, on the part of spouses, "I think we may have told them that" (the tactful part being the "we"). It rarely works, in which case polite people exercise patience and remember their own tendencies.

In doing so, they should also remember to pick up such clues directed at themselves, to vary their audiences, to edit their stories for length and finally to retire them after a good run.

### Dear Miss Manners:

**When a dear friend achieves tenure, what would be an appropriate recognition and/or gift?**

A good book. Miss Manners assures you that it has been years since your friend was able to read something outside of his or her field.

*Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at [MissManners@unitedmedia.com](mailto:MissManners@unitedmedia.com) or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.*

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## ASK AMY

Dear Amy:

My parents have accumulated savings through the years and occasionally help my wife and me financially. They lived frugally throughout their lives and saved and are comfortable but not millionaires.

I earn about \$80,000 in a salaried job, have two kids in public school, and we live in a house that we bought for \$150,000 seven years ago.

My parents give us a gift of approximately \$5,000 a year, which we usually put into savings or use if unforeseen expenses come up. We do not waste it.

I recently found out that whatever gifts they give us during the year, they also give to my brother.

My brother has a very successful business, has recently become a millionaire and purchased a house for more than a million dollars. He and his wife are major spendthrifts, have three kids in private school, college funds for each child are paid off, etc. In addition, they go on numerous expensive vacations as well as buy several fancy cars every year.

I understand that it is my parents' money and it is their decision as to how they want to spend it, but this hurts me. I truly appreciate the money given to my wife and me by my parents while my brother and his wife just blow it. It even bothers my parents — how much my brother spends.

It seems strange to me that my parents give each of us the same amount. One son is rich while the other is smack in the middle class. Should I be upset or am I just being greedy?

Jeffrey

For the life of me, I can't understand why two adults who make good livings would take money from their parents. I further can't understand why one of these adults would complain about it.

The thing about receiving money from people is that when you accept it, you also have to accept the terms attached to it. In your case, your generous parents only ask that you accept their equal generosity to your brother. Your job is to take their five grand, be gracious and keep your greed at bay.

It really isn't any of your business how your parents or your brother spend their money, though it seems to me that if your brother has three kids in school and their college funds paid off, then at least some of his money is going in the right direction.

Please rethink your position. Be grateful. You're a lucky guy.

Dear Amy:

I met a guy about two months ago. One night, I went to my friend's house because he was having a few people over. This guy was there and he was nice

and we got along well.

We both had a lot to drink that night and we ended up sleeping with each other, something I fully regret, but unfortunately you can't go back in time.

About a week later I found out that he's married but getting a divorce. You can only imagine what I was thinking.

I am not that type of girl at all.

I ran into him about two weeks later and we talked, and he apologized for what happened, and I explained to him that I am not the type of girl who sleeps around and that if he was only looking for a "booty call" that I wasn't interested. He swore to me that he knows I'm not that type of girl. He said he really enjoyed hanging out with me and that he wants to hang out again.

We have talked on the phone a few times, haven't hung out yet, but I am going to hang out with him tonight.

I just don't know what to do. Do I trust him? I'm just so tired of being used and being treated so badly. For once, I want to meet a nice guy.

Am I wasting my time on him?

Completely Confused in N.Y.

Let me guess. You aren't that type of girl.

But wait. You ARE that type of girl.

Hey — we all make mistakes, but I get the feeling from your statement that you get used and treated badly — that you've made more than your fair share.

If you no longer want to attract the type of bad boys who use you and throw you away, then you need to change your actions.

If you don't want to be "that type of girl," then you could start by choosing a better class of guy to hang out with. So far, this "nice" guy you chose to sleep with is a married guy who, like you, gets drunk and sleeps with people he barely knows.

And, call me crazy, but your plan to "hang out" tonight sounds like a booty call to me.

So, can you trust this guy? No.

But you can't even trust yourself. That needs to come first.

If you want to "hang out," then do so over a meal, coffee or on a stroll through the zoo. If you want to get to know a nice guy, then see what he's like while both of you are sober. Then say goodnight at the door. Then have many more phone calls, dates and strolls through the zoo. Then say goodnight at the door again. Don't talk about not being a booty call — don't be one.

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## BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

N-S vulnerable

**NORTH (D)**

♠ A J 7 3  
♥ A 4 3  
♦ Q 8 4  
♣ K 10 5

**WEST**

♠ 9 5 2  
♥ K Q J 7  
♦ A 10 5  
♣ 8 6 3

**EAST**

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

**SOUTH**

♠ K 10 6 4  
♥ 9 6 2  
♦ J 9 3  
♣ A J 4

The bidding:

North	East	South	West
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♠	All Pass		
Opening lead: ♥ K			

Next Week: Odd Couplings, or Names Bond