

The Style Invitational

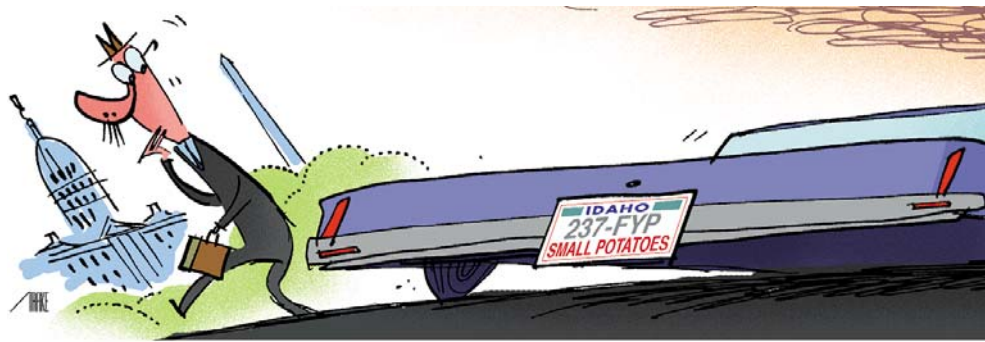
THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



Week 640: Whassa Motto Wid You?

In one of the more sensible acts committed by a politician this year, the acting governor of New Jersey rejected the state slogan that his government had paid a firm \$260,000 to come up with — “New Jersey: We’ll win you over” (the gov’s objection was that it was just too pathetically desperate) — and instead asked the public for suggestions. He’ll announce the winner next month. In the meantime, **give us a slogan or motto for any of the states, the District or the U.S. territories.** This contest was suggested by several Losers (including Cheryl Davis of Arlington and more recently Russell Beland of Springfield) but truth be told, the Empress was reluctant, fearing that most states would generate entries that were mostly variations on “This state is boring.” So prove her wrong.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. First runner-up gets the bodacious prize pictured here, from Loser Kyle Hendrickson of Frederick: “Now, I Can Dress Myself!!!,” a lovely paper-doll-style set of refrigerator magnets featuring “George W. Bush,” clad only in a Texas-shape Lone Star fig leaf, whom you can dress in various costumes including Napoleon, Carmen Miranda, Generic Rasta and Generic Terrorist.



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

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, Dec. 19. Include “Week 640” 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 humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published Jan. 8. 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 636

In which we asked you to come up with songs about any of a dozen topics that had rarely if ever been the subject of anyone’s song. Some are parodies of existing songs; for the rest, make up your own tunes.

4 The Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act:
What you want, baby, I’ll tax it,
What you need, you know I’ll tax it.
All I’m doin’
Is to protect the folks who live at home (just a little bit)
Hey baby (just a little bit), the folks at home.
P-R-O-T-E-C-T
Help our weak economy,
P-R-O-T-E-C-T
Vote for Smoot-Hawley.
(Barbara Sarshik, McLean)

2 The winner of the 1989 “AIF” calendar:
The S&P 500:
Burning rubber down on Wall Street
In Florsheim shoes and rubber tires,
He’s my NASDAQ NASCAR driver
But my options have expired.
Oh, I’m a broken-hearted broker
’Cause our merger has been sundered.
He left me stranded at a pit stop
On the S&P 500. (Steve Langer, Chevy Chase)

3 Sea urchin sushi (To “When You Wore a Tulip”):
Oh, sea urchin sushi,
Now what shall I do? She
Has left me alone to cry.
Sea urchin sushi,
I’m feeling so blue, she
Won’t even tell me why.
Sea urchin sushi,
She said she was true. She
Was true — to another guy.
As I sit here and chew you,
I wish you were fugu,
So I could curl up and die.
(David Smith, Santa Cruz, Calif.)

1 AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER:
Tungsten, bismuth and/or molybdenum:
I gave my true love specimens of bismite,
And bismutite in quantities galore;
I told her of my own Bi curiosity,
And how my preference ran to “either ore.”
I only can assume she misinterpreted,
For in a tearful huff, my love has flown.
Yes I’m footloose, fancy free, since she left
them rocks with me,
And now they ain’t nobody’s bismuth but
my own. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Burkina Faso:
I took a post in Upper Volta back in World War II,
It’s now Burkina Faso, what’s a diplomat to do?
The French Sudan is Mali, and Benin’s replaced Dahomey,
But where the hell’d the Gold Coast go? Can anybody show me?
I’ve got the Ouagadougou-what’d they do-to-Africa blues. (Chris Doyle, Forsyth, Mo.)

Hot dang, West Africa’s sending me my own mail-order bride,
And I’m gonna’ take her into town, just a-bustin’ out with pride.
And on my word, you can bet the ranch that’s so,
As long as she ain’t no Burkina Fatso. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Tungsten, bismuth and/or molybdenum:
I am the very model of a maven academical,
Astute in esoterica, both physical and chemical.
I know the strengths of tungsten and the oxides of titanium
And made it all my business to have bismuth in my cranium.
I’ve taken many courses sans remorse for having cribbed in ‘em
To be a little glibber as an expert in molybdenum. (Chris Doyle)

“The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer”:
You picked a fine time to leave me, MacNeil,
With wars and recessions and elections they steal.
I need a co-host, and you seem to know most,
So please, can’t we work out a deal?
You picked a fine time to leave me, MacNeil. (Dan Seidman, Watertown, Mass.)

The S&P 500:
I was sittin’ in a barroom. I was feelin’ just like trash.
I’d lost my job, I’s deep in debt, I needed extra cash.
Then a sexy lady spoke to me, and I was really stunned.
She said, “Buy the S&P 500 fund.”

Now I got screwed that evening (my story is complex)
’Cause I didn’t get no kissin’ and I didn’t get no sex.
This lady was a broker. She persuaded me somehow.
I did what she asked, and I am broker now. (Harvey Smith, McLean)

Our company’s in good company
We’ve made the list of S&P
The trick to earning more and more
Is to keep our moral standard poor. (Dan Seidman)

Fluorescent light bulbs:
Bartender, bartender, I need a drink tonight.
I need to drown my heartache in your fluorescent light.
Something ’bout that bulb keeps reminding me of him.
It’s cool, white, cheap — and a little dim. (Barbara Sarshik)

She’s rude and she’s crude, and she’s foulmouthed and lewd,
She’s a cowgirl with no social graces,
With a brain like a long-burned-out fluorescent light bulb,
But she’s bulbous in all the right places (Bob Dalton, Arlington)

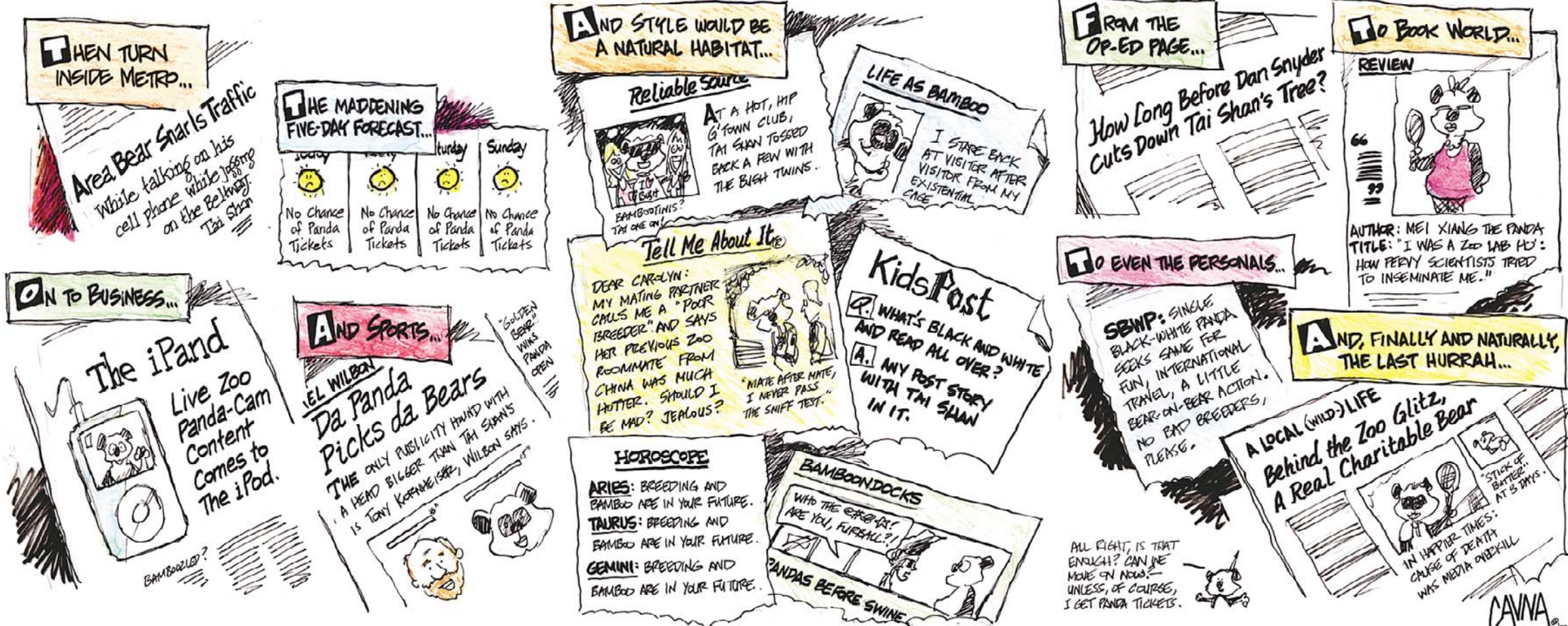
The preservative sodium benzoate:
There’s a doctor up in Austin who’s been givin’ me some guff,
Sayin’ cut out all the country ham and pork, I’ve had enough.
My hypertension’s spikin’ on preservatives in food.
But, doc, I’m sold on salty meat, don’t wanna seem so rude.
So have your say an’ lecture me from up there on your podium,
But, hell, I like beef jerky filled with benzoate and sodium. (Chris Doyle)

I am the very fine preservative sodium benzoate,
I’m found inside those plums and cloves and cranberries and prunes you ate,
I help preserve your salad dressing, juices, jams and soda — yum,
I’m made of carbon, hydrogen and oxygen and sodium. (Dan Seidman)

The Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act:
Woke up this morning, no sugar to be found,
Woke up this morning, your melons ain’t around.
They can’t protect you, baby, gonna make you pay . . .
Got some strong lumber here, need to move it now,
I got hardwood, honey, but no one will touch it now.
Those tariffs keep messin’ the depression,
Got me the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act blues. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Next Week: Full Steam Ahead, or VIPorn

CONTINUED FROM D1



BY MICHAEL CAWNA — THE WASHINGTON POST

MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

Charity Ends at Home

Occasionally a disgruntled patron attending a charity fundraiser dinner or ball can be overheard muttering, “How much did we pay for these tickets? I’d pay twice that if we could stay home instead.”

Rather than being insulted, some organizers have become inspired. So every once in awhile, an ersatz invitation goes out promising that if the recipients donate money to the charity, they can claim to other such solicitors that they are already committed for the evening and are free to enjoy themselves as they wish.

Miss Manners finds Buy Back Your Time an amusing little ploy, and hopes that it works. Philanthropy and society are both important facets of life, although she fails to see why the charity budget and the amusement budget should be linked. Surely money that is available for charity should be devoted entirely to charity without subtracting one’s own food and drink. And surely it

is the very nature of socializing to dispense and enjoy free hospitality with people one likes instead of being thrust among fellow purchasers.

Miss Manners feels sheepish about confessing all this because she is well aware that charities would suffer if everyone felt that way. Selling entertainment is a major source of their intake, especially the grand-scale kind that comes with the lavish trappings that few individuals can afford to provide for their guests. Certainly there is nothing to stop those who do not wish to attend from sending in contributions, except perhaps the fear of how much of it the attendees may end up eating or drinking.

Her small point was about the cleverness of playing into the plight of those who feel coerced into attending such events. This only began to scare her when she found that the contributions-only play is now being applied to private life.

Gentle Readers are reporting receiv-

ing notices about sending presents such as would be given by guests at weddings or baby showers to people who have not invited them to weddings or baby showers. “Registry cards,” the modern form of targeted begging, have been arriving with tasteless invitations for some time; now they are arriving without.

“I received an e-mail from an acquaintance informing me of her due date of her second child and where she is registered,” writes one G.R. “As far as I know, no baby shower has been planned (at least to which I’ve been invited). I’m inclined not to respond at all, but am wondering if the hormones have rendered her temporarily incapable of good judgment.”

Another G.R. reports receiving “a marriage announcement from an old friend who also sent her registry. I was happy to hear from her and glad to know she is doing well and is married. However, I never received an invitation to her wedding.”

Others have sent in registry cards that came with graduation announcements and notices of “phantom showers,” meaning that no shower will take place. They all want to know whether they are obligated to oblige.

No, of course not. The charity events are dressed up fundraisers, but social life is all about being with people you like and sharing their important occasions. Eliminating the social part is not likely to leave much in the way of generosity-inspiring sentiment.

On the other hand, paying such people to keep away may be something of a bargain.

Dear Miss Manners:

Our father passed away a couple of months ago. Now that Christmas is coming, we’ll be sending cards to our mother. One sister wants to address the card to both our parents, but I don’t think that’s right. What is the correct way without hurting our mother’s feelings and

not forgetting our father?

Your sister wants to spare your mother’s feelings by allowing her to believe that you have all forgotten that your father can’t receive mail because he is dead?

Miss Manners agrees that this is a really bad idea. But so is lobbing an ordinary Merry Christmas at a new widow. Surely you want to go beyond sparing your mother to comforting her. If you and your sisters cannot be with her at Christmas, you should each be writing her letters expressing how much you feel for her on this occasion and how much you miss your father.

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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