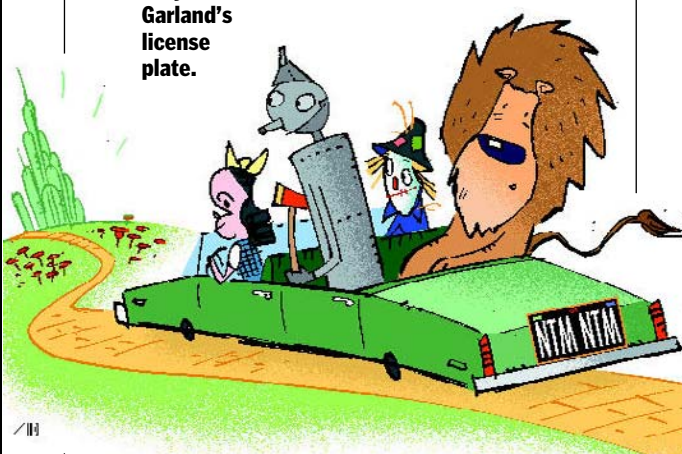


The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Judy Garland's license plate.



(Tom O'Brien, Winchester, Va.)

Week 704: Another Game of Tag

Shot through with inspiration — in fact, watching said inspiration squirt out from between two ribs — aspiring Losers often e-mail the Empress to suggest a new contest, only to be shot right back, between the same ribs, with a reply that includes the results for that same contest, from, say, Week 462 or Week 314 or even Week CXLVIII. Michael Levy of Silver Spring was about to suffer the same fate recently when he suggested a contest to come up with celebrities' license plates, when we realized that we were shoeing him away with the results (including the example above) from Week 9: They were published May 23, 1993. Surely we have enough new celebrities, or new takes on them, almost 14 years later. **This week: Create vanity license plates for well-known people, real or fictional.** Maximum number of characters plus spaces is eight; you are limited to letters, numbers and common symbols found on a keyboard.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions (or whatever they're called that week) 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 by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, March 19. Put "Week 704" 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 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. This week's Honorable Mentions name was suggested by both John O'Byrne of Dublin and Eric Murphy of Ann Arbor, Mich.

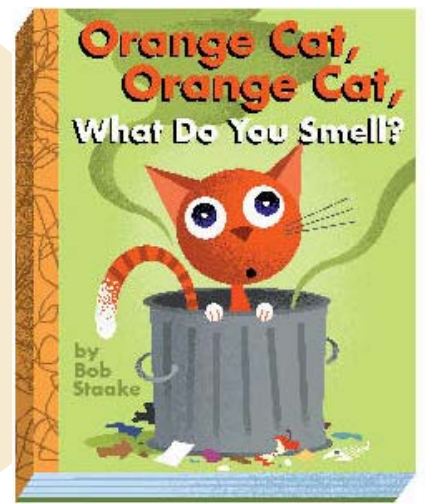
REPORT FROM WEEK 701

In which we asked you for the titles of these alleged books that Style Invitational cartoonist Bob Staake was thinking of writing, and what they would be about:

- 4** "Baby Still on Board": Freddie spends his entire life, from infancy to long gray beard, on a runway aboard a JetBlue plane. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)
- 3** "Have You Seen My Happy Feet?": A young penguin, tragically disfigured by a hungry shark, demonstrates amazing fortitude in his far-flung though ultimately futile quest for his missing appendages. (Beverly Sharp, Washington)
- 2** The winner of the remix CD of politicians seeming to sing rock songs: "What Part of Dual Spinal Tumors Don't You Get?" Bob self-published this title after being turned down by Readers' Digest's "Laughter Is the Best Medicine" section. (Kevin Marshall, South Riding)

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER

Flagrantly ripping off Eric Carle's "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" Bob tries to market a scratch-and-sniff book. Unfortunately, no one wants to sniff pages that read, "I smell a hippo who's really not well," "I smell a junkie who's locked in a cell" or "I smell the armpit of fat cousin Nell." (Andrea Kelly, Brookeville)



ILLUSTRATIONS BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THE REMAINDERD



THE GIRL
"Water Wings Wanda": A little girl's parents overreact to the danger of global warming. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

"Penelope Goes Postal": Without an education, you too could end up delivering bowling balls for a living. (Rick Haynes, Potomac)

"The Wriggly Green Sack": Krystie hates Snake Handling Day at her religious school. (Peter Metrinko, Chantilly)

"Okay, Today Joey Bites the Dust!": It was the final straw for Sally after her little brother shaved a huge bald spot on her head while she slept. (Michelle Stupak, Ellicott City)

"Quasimoda": An angry girl with chips on her shoulder enrolls at Notre Dame. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

"Hillary and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day": "I decided to run for class president and then this super-popular boy decided he would, too, and then this gang of

kids kept twisting my arm until I told them I was sorry..." (Kevin Doport, Washington)

"The Life of Mildred Oyl": The rags-to-riches memoir from the woman who was called names as a child because of the odd lunches she brought to school. (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

No Fun for Lindsay: Little Lindsay is very angry that she has to leave parties early to go to rehab. (Bruce Alter, Fairfax Station)

THE CAT
"Goodbye Moon": The old lady whispered "hush" one too many times for Kitty, who in a rash act lost the only home he ever knew. But come on, people, she was a rabbit! What did you expect? (Jeff Brechlin)

"The Cat in the Can": The Cat once again lets out Thing One and Thing Two. (Sue Finger, Falls Church; Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

"Can You Bring Me Home?": After escaping from the zoo, a tiger cub eats a grouchy animal he finds in a trash can, driving a once-peaceful neighborhood into bitter sectarian conflict. (Valerie Matthews, Ashton)

"The Lost Earmark": Marshmallow discovers life in

the unfunded world after his shelter loses its research grant on whisker-impaired felines. (Verenda Smith, Alexandria)

THE PENGUIN
"Ice Bubble": With global warming, finding an affordable condo in Antarctica has become difficult even for the natives. (Rick Haynes, Potomac)

"Yo, Mama, Put Your Milk Right Here!": Guido the Penguin teaches toddlers Brooklyn sign language. (Lawrence

McGuire, Waldorf)

"Who's Your Daddy?": Anna Nicole's fertilized egg is left in midtown Manhattan and it's up to Prince to help find the father. (Carl Gerber, Annandale)

"The Waddlefather": As an immigrant from a faraway land, Don Penguino must assert his authority over the local pigeons. (Eric Murphy, Ann Arbor, Mich.)

"Global Walking": With his home heat-imperiled, Pepe the Penguin decides to move to Manhattan, where

although the houses are warmer, the people are way chillier. (Marjorie Streeter, Reston)

THE BABY
"The Babiator": A tribute to Howard Hughes's earliest and latest years. Includes a packet of Kleenex attached to the inside cover. (Jim Korenthal, New York)

"I'm a Really Big Boy Now": Baby Joey discovers that you're never too young for phallic metaphors. (John Johnston, St. Inigoes, Md.)

"The Lisa Marie Nowak Story": An inspirational book describing how the famous astronaut learned from a young age how to dress when traveling long distances. (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

"Young Slim Pickens": How he learned to love the bomber. (M. Lilly Welsh, Oakton)

"The Loudest Baby in the World Flies to Tokyo": The story of little Daisy Belle and what happened when the passengers couldn't take it anymore. And why loud noises are still measured in Daisy Belles. (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

Next Week: Our Greatest Hit, Part 2, or U-GH

ASK AMY

Dear Amy: Please help me. Our 12-year-old daughter has an opportunity to attend a private school in a wealthy neighborhood about 20 minutes away. She has been offered a complete scholarship.

The school is better than the public school that our daughter attends. The private school presents several advantages, including class size, advances in technology and safety.

My spouse believes that private school is not for our child, despite not having seen the school. She says that it doesn't matter what is presented.

Our daughter doesn't want to leave her friends. Even if our daughter changes her mind, my wife will not support this idea.

We want what is best for our daughter, but we are on opposite ends of this issue. I say it is a life-changing opportunity, and she says it is not worth considering.

I worry that this will destroy my family if it is not handled correctly.

Privately Worried

If you and your wife truly want what is best for your child, then you'll stand together, open to every possibility and opportunity — including the possibility that your daughter will do fine right where she is.

This issue seems to have devolved into a power struggle between the two of you, but when you raise the stakes to the level of destroying your family, you're giving this issue too much weight.

If your daughter goes to private school, she will most likely benefit from all of the educational qualities that you mention. If she stays in public school, she'll benefit from another (but not necessarily inferior) set of qualities. I disagree with you that your daughter's future hinges on this opportunity. I also disagree with your wife's refusal to look into it.

Your wife should respect your idea enough to carefully consider it. She should go to the school, speak to people

and investigate the opportunity with an open mind. Knowing that the school values your daughter's potential enough to offer her a scholarship might affect her view of the school.

One thing is certain. You will not be able to promote this idea to your daughter unless you present a united front. If you ease up on the pressure, your wife might take a few steps toward you.

Dear Amy:

I have a question regarding spring break and college kids. Do you believe that it is the parents' responsibility to pay for their children's spring break vacations?

My husband and I pay for tuition, spending money, books, food, car, gas, insurance, clothing, etc. We feel that it is not our responsibility to supply vacations to Europe or the Caribbean.

What happened to getting a degree and earning your own money? My husband and I are so confused because we have been told by our children that "every parent pays" — except for us. Are we being snowballed?

Spring Break the Bank

What happened to "earning your own way" is that good parents like yourselves started letting your kids buffalo you until you were so confused that you forgot your own values.

"All the kids are doing it" is the oldest trick in the book. Didn't you try to pull that on your own parents when you were in college?

And did it work?

No, I didn't think so. Don't fall for this. If your kids want to go to the Caribbean, then toss them a tube of sunscreen, wish them all the best, and ask them to shoot you a postcard from the beach.

Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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BY LARRY DOWNING — REUTERS

Real-life disasters, such as the April 2002 tornado that devastated La Plata, Md., are depressing reminders of man's vulnerability to the elements.

Getting Blown Away — but in a Harmless Way

TV PREVIEW, From D1

5 p.m. on a Friday. It goes right through the Washington Monument, between the museums and smack into the Capitol dome! It picks up a tourist van on Constitution Avenue, the one driving 11 mph with his left blinker on for eternity, and flings it out to Largo!

Is this great television or what?

If you're not familiar with this brand of weather porn, "It Could Happen Tomorrow" is a series in which the Weather Channel goes around destroying large parts of the United States. It's pretty ghoulish, if you think about it, but there's some sort of irresistible rubbernecking quality to watching what-if scenarios of a major Category 3 hurricane hitting Manhattan, or an 8.0 earthquake wiping out San Francisco.

Pat Robertson would have a field day deciding who did what to deserve such wrath!

The Weather Channel people tend to favor twisters (Dallas and Chicago get blasted, too), and now it's Washington's turn.

The show uses the devastating F-5 tornado that hit La Plata in 2002 as the model for the plausibility of a D.C. tornado. The La Plata



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Fantasy disasters are scary, but also fun, because nothing's really at risk.

twister was one of the strongest recorded for much of the East Coast, with 260 mph winds. It killed five people and devastated the town. Helpful weather types, such as Topper Shutt from local CBS affiliate WUSA (Channel 9), and Greg Romano of the National Weather Service, do a fine job of telling us how tornados form, how forecasters spot them and how winds wreak such devastation.

But — and here's where the "what if" comes in — the show's narrator wonders what if a tornado about that size came right into downtown D.C. An F-4 monster, with winds about 200 mph.

Stones from the Lincoln Memorial become missiles! The Washington Monument is decapitated! The Capitol dome, sheared away! All this is shown in really cheesy special effects.

Sample comments from "storm chasers" and others on the show:

The tornado becomes "a giant meat grinder."

"The loss of life would be incredible."

"You may not have any warning until it picks up your car."

Apparently, Washington gets out of this only slightly better off than when aliens blew the White House to smithereens in "Independence Day."

Real-life documentaries of disasters are terrifying and depressing, of course, as the word "Katrina" has come to symbolize. It is an unsettling fact that we live at the mercy of the elements.

Yet make-believe disasters and horror shows remain a thriving business, because there's nothing like scaring yourself silly when there's nothing really at stake.

So, like, a really great episode would be one in which Hawaii sinks like a stone and only surfers survive: "There was this monster wave, dude, and I..."

Stay tuned.

It Could Happen Tomorrow: Washington, D.C. Tornado (30 minutes) airs tonight at 9:30 on the Weather Channel.