

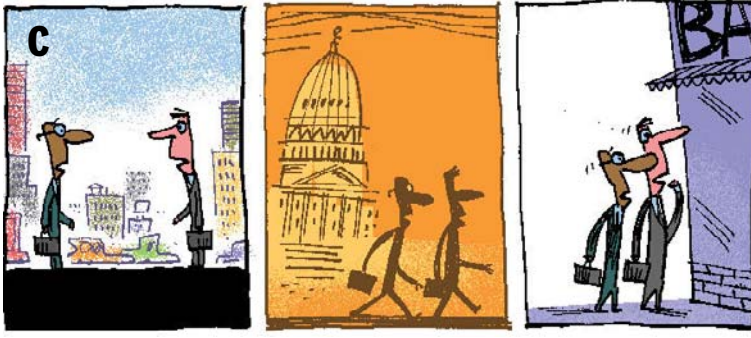
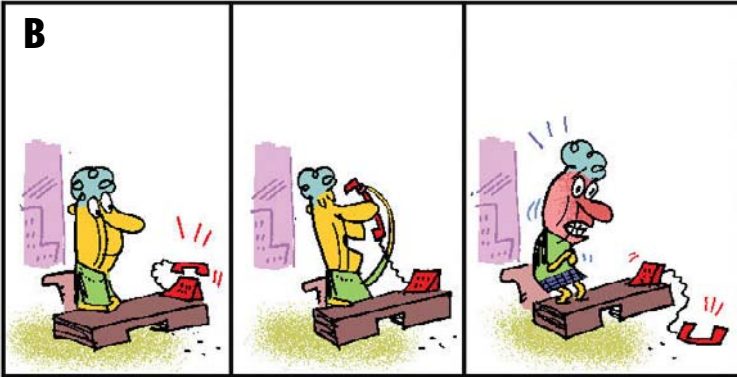
THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 761: Strip Mining

Style Invitational Official Wonder Boy Bob Staaake offers up these three comic strips for your consideration. While considering them, supply the text for any or all of the three. Please just type it up, with indications as to who's saying what; don't scribble it into the drawings. The Empress has enough problems reading your typing.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a colorful, cute, slightly bent metal It's Happy Bunny sign with the legend "Sucky losers not allowed," purchased expressly for the Invitational by obviously-not-all-that-sucky (though arguably suck-appy) Loser Russ Taylor of Vienna.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. 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 by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, April 28. Put "Week 761" 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 May 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 results is by Tom Witte. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Dave Prevar.



COMIC STRIPS BY BOB STAAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

REPORT FROM WEEK 757

in which we sought Style Invitational-toned rhyming couplets featuring any of 13 letter pairs, a la Edward Gorey's famously horrific "Gashlycumb Tinies" alphabet primer. The award for most off-the-wall response to a simple alphabet contest goes to

A is for Ape, from whom man is descended.
B is for Bible-believers, offended. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

C's Callipygian, my favorite form.
D is for Droopy — alas, that's the norm. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village, third runner-up)

D is for Dead, a more certain gauge. (Dot Yufer, Newton, W.Va.)

E is for Enron, went freely astray.
F's for the expletive meaning a Lay. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

G's the ex-Guv of the state of New Yawk.
H is the Hooker he'd hoped wouldn't tawk. (Christopher Lamora, Arlington, first runner-up, winner of the love-seeking T-shirt)

I is for Imus, he hoed his own rows.
J is for Jacko, who picked his own nose. (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

K is for Karl and the lies that he wove.
L is for Libby, the fall guy for Rove. (Chris Doyle)

Ben Aronin of Washington, who sent "I is for-Eigner, my English please pardon / I's for the jingoist hearts I see harden."
You'll notice what event was making the headlines when this contest was open; the former governor of New York gets a grateful thank-you from The Style Invitational.

M is Madame, whom Monsieur mollicoddles.
N's Nick Sarkozy, who's traded in models. (Christopher Lamora)

O is for Ouzo, a drink from the bar.
P's for Pedestrian under your car. (Beth Baniszewski, Somerville, Mass.)

Q is for Queers, proudly took back the name.
R's for the Redskins, whose name still brings shame. (Randy Lee, Burke)

S for Spitzer squanders sums for sordid sex: sore luck.
T is for Testosterone: turns titan into schmuck. (Ellen Raphaeli, Falls Church, second runner-up)

U is Urethra: helps men "plant the flowers."
V is Viagra; seek help in four hours. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

W is for Writer's block, thinking "What next?"
X is for . . . ??? (Beth Baniszewski, winner of the Inker)

Y is the chromosome making a he.
Z is the Zero he often will be. (Kevin Dopart)

A-Z PICKINS: MORE HONORABLE MENTIONS

A stands for what George Bush called Adam Clymer.
B stands for what his mom called a "rich"-rhymmer. (Ira Allen, Bethesda)

A is for Ass, a creature equine.
B is for Butt, a large cask of wine. (George Vary, Bethesda)

C is for Cruising for airport romance.
D's for a Dummy with too wide a stance. (Randy Lee)

E is for Eliot, governing rashly.
F's for the Feminine wiles of hot Ashley. (Randy Lee)

I is for Imus, whose head isn't nappy.
J is for Judgment — Imus's: crappy. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

L is for Larry Craig, stalled by a cop.
K is for Karl, who hijacked the GOP. (Larry Yungk)

Q is for Quadruped (4-footed being).
R's for Regret — that's the girl you've been seeing. (Beverley Sharp, Washington)

S is for Spitzer, and his big spick-and-span act.
T is for Theater — 'cause, man, could that Mann Act. (G. Smith, New York)

S is for Scotch, and for Swilling till dawn.
T is for Throwing it up later on. (Mae Scanlan, Washington)

W is for Words that are used in bad taste.
X is for Xysma (that's bits in your waste). (Kevin Dopart)

Y is for You and your "taking a breather."
Z is for zipper, which you can't get up, either. (Judith Cottrill, New York)

Next Week: Wrong Address, or Shallowed Ground

The Fear Factor In Everyday Life

FEAR, From C1

school massacres, the absence of bees.

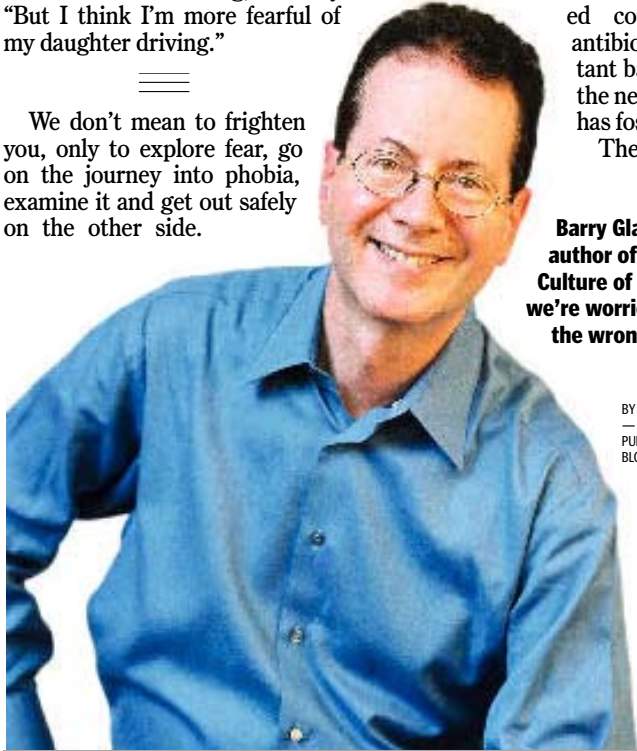
But fear is a curious thing. It makes a person run from one thing, but she may be running into the arms of something more frightful. They say fear is the emotion that brings things to pass. One day you wake up and realize the thing you feared is not the monster that has come to sleep in your bed. But something else, something you never thought about, would creep in the open window. It's all a matter of perspective.

Elly Porter is a good mother. An arts and dance teacher who lives in Takoma Park, she ran for years from the fear of bad food. She did everything to avoid it. "When I had my first child," Porter says, "I was the healthiest mom. I nursed her. I fed her all organic food. . . . She got cancer anyway." Her daughter, now 18, has recovered.

That put the brakes on her worries about food. After that, Porter learned to balance her fears with common sense. She doesn't microwave food in plastic. It's an intuitive thing that seems to make sense. "I don't know about the latest fear," she says. "Bottled water?"

She is standing in an aisle in a mega-bookstore. The sun presses through large windows. She smiles. "Fear is a curious thing," she says. "But I think I'm more fearful of my daughter driving."

We don't mean to frighten you, only to explore fear, go on the journey into phobia, examine it and get out safely on the other side.



Barry Glassner, author of "The Culture of Fear," says we're worried about all the wrong things.

BY JENNIFER LESHNICK — HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISHERS/ECCO VIA BLOOMBERG NEWS

Understand why our anxiety has increased. Why people are so jittery.

The reports slip out from government watchdog agencies announcing carcinogens in bread, grilled meat and mothballs. We hear about them on the news, read of them in the papers. Then the reports disappear, though they remain in the dark recesses of the mind, issuing vague warnings as you toss mothballs into the closet, whispering threats as you grill in the summer. We are either afraid of the truth or we don't believe those who issue these reports.

"One thing that happens is, we live in this environment . . . the culture of fear, where there are lots of fears and scares directed at us all the time," says Barry Glassner, a professor of sociology at the University of Southern California and author of "The Culture of Fear" and "The Gospel of Food."

In this kind of environment, people tend to look for fear everywhere and thereby produce more things to be fearful of, he says. "For example, it was from scares about tap water that the multibillion-dollar bottled-water industry emerged. So now we have ourselves in a situation where we are creating all kinds of new environmental hazards."

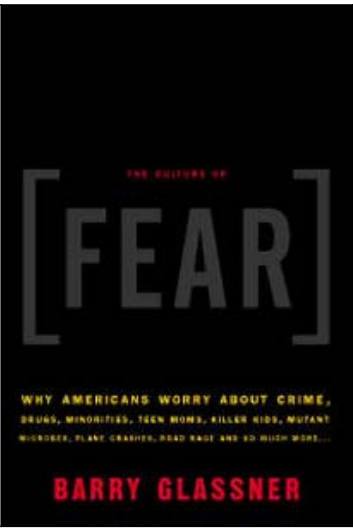
The fear of bacteria that has produced a billion-dollar industry of antibacterial products has had an unintended consequence: antibiotic-resistant bacteria and the new fear that has fostered.

The list of



ABOVE: BY DAVID MCNEW — GETTY IMAGES; RIGHT: BUSINESS WIRE; BELOW RIGHT: BY PAUL SANCYA — ASSOCIATED PRESS

The National Toxicology Program has warned that bisphenol A, a chemical used in the production of a variety of plastic products, including bottles, CDs and cellphones, can mimic estrogens in the body and possibly cause cancer.



9/11 said, "Yes they can," says Paula Danzinger, associate professor of counselor education at William Paterson University in Wayne, N.J. "Once people start getting that anxious and having those kinds of fears, it spreads to everything. I don't think it can be isolated."

The reports seem to deluge us: poison in toys, evil chemicals in plastic. And you learn that cold medicine is bad for your children — 10 years after you've given it to them.

What is safe? Where is safe? "We all know children's toys are poisoned from China. We know there is poison in plastic bottles. Partly because all the news channels have to make news," so they tell us things over and over, says Danzinger. "All the news channels, cable, the Internet. Oh, my God — we can't fly because the planes will fall out of the sky. And bridges will fall down. Didn't a bridge just fall down? I'm not sure I want to go through that tunnel because it is under the Hudson River, and will that hold?"

Her advice: "Turn off the TV. Don't watch the news so much — not because I'm talking to a newspaper. Newspapers are easier on you than TV. You don't have to read the article." More advice: breathe. Breathe deeply. Don't forget to breathe.

William Morrison, 58, is on his way to jog near Sligo Creek Park, holding his potentially harmful water bottle.

"I've had to deal with fear of flying and fear of public speaking," he



says, having stopped to discuss the topic at hand. "Over the years, I've learned you can train yourself to overcome your fears. I just took a couple of plane rides to Europe. . . . I agree with people who say courage is not absence of fear but being able to act despite fear in any situation."

Morrison said he was most fearful when the region was stalked by snipers. "What I ended up doing is dressing in a black track suit and going out and running every night to work off the fear." He overcame it.

He grips his water bottle. "I have a bottle of water. I have no fear of that," he says. "A lot of these fears are long-acting. I'll be dead by the time toxins have any effect on my body — if they are there."

He takes a sip.