

The Style Invitational

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 787: Tour de Fours V

Mittenmitten: The ultimate in hand protection.
Preminder: An announcement letting you know about an upcoming save-the-date invitation.

Venim: Snakeskin jeans.



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Once again we steal from our unwitting predecessor, the late and lit'ry New York Magazine Competition, which regularly ran contests on this theme before its demise in 2000 after an amazing 973 installments. **This week: Coin and define a humorous word that includes — with no other letters between them, but in any order — the letters M, I, N and E, as in the examples above.** It has to be a new word, not a new definition for a well-known existing word. You may add a hyphen for clarity.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives an embarrassingly ridiculous Chinese hat with a long braid of yarn "hair" hanging from it. It was actually acquired outside the Temple of Heaven on a trip to Beijing by Howard Walderman of Columbia, perhaps the only regular Loser not to own a computer, and it's modeled here by totally computer-savvy Loser and Good Sport Mae Scanlan of Washington, who posed with it during a recent monthly Loser brunch.

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air freshener (fir stink for their first link). 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, Oct. 27. Put "Week 787" 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 Nov. 15. 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 Roy Ashley.

REPORT FROM WEEK 783 in which we asked you to choose an appropriate — or comically inappropriate — person, real or fictional, to endorse a particular product. Entries sent by too many people to credit individually include the Marquis de Sade, Torquemada, etc., for Hertz; Cheney hunting buddy Harry Whittington for Target; Monica Lewinsky for Hummer; and Bill Clinton for Merriam-Webster.

SEEN ONLY ON 4 A.M. INFOMERCIALS: HONORABLE MENTIONS

The Three Magi for the Old Spice Gift Pack. (Mike Ostapiej, Tracy, Calif.)

Robert Franklin Stroud, the Birdman of Alcatraz, for Stayfree With Wings. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

Sen. Larry Craig for Tappan. (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)

Pee-wee Herman for Hot Pockets. (Peter Metrisko, Chantilly)

50 Cent for Lehman Brothers. (Mike Ostapiej)

Matt Drudge for Dirt Devil. (Chris Doyle, Stephen Dudzik)

Mike Krzyzewski for Hooked on Phonics. (N.G. Andrews, Portsmouth, Va.)

Joan of Arc for Sears. (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)

Karl Rove for Powerade. (Brad Alexander, Wanneroo, Australia)

David Duke for Kotex: "Wear white with confidence." (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

Sen. Joseph McCarthy for Visine. (Beverly Sharp, Washington; Mike Ostapiej)

Henry Paulson for AIG: "I liked it so much, I bought the company. (With your money.)" (Chuck Koebel, Houston)

Marty Feldman for Google. (Mike Ostapiej)

Howard Dean for NASA: In space no one can hear me scream. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Yusuf Islam for Meow Mix. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

Bill Clinton for Depends. (Brad Alexander; Jeffrey Contompasis, Ashburn; Russ Taylor, Vienna)

280 million Americans for Lean Pockets. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.; Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Kermit the Frog for Emetrol: So you're

4 Lorena Bobbitt for Johnson Wax. (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

3 Vladimir and Estragon for Verizon Repair Service. (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

2 the winner of the books "Yiddish With Dick and Jane" and "Yiddish With George and Laura": Jane Fonda for 20th Century Fox. (Phyllis Reinhard, East Fallowfield, Pa.)

not queasy being green. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

Steve Irwin for Ray-Ban. (Stephen Dudzik; Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Henry Paulson for NetZero. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

Jeffrey Dahmer for PETA: "Because we shouldn't eat helpless animals." (Jon Graft, Centreville)

Lou Dobbs for Borders: "Come celebrate our grand closing!" (Brendan Beary)

Larry Craig for Fruit by the Foot. (Brendan Beary)

Oedipus for Next Day Blinds. (Brendan Beary; Stephen Dudzik)

Al Gore for Green Giant. (Brendan Beary; Mike Ostapiej)

Johnnie Cochran for Trojans: "If the glove don't fit, you can't emit." (Russ Taylor)

Barry Bonds, Jose Canseco and Jason

AND THE WINNER OF THE INKER
Ralph Nader for Armour Chopped Liver: "Hey, where's MY press coverage?"
 (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)

Giambi for Pep Boys (Rick Haynes, Potomac; Stephen Litterst, Newark, Del.)

Gen. Antonio López de Santa Anna for Texas Toast. (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)

Sen. Robert Byrd for Smithfield Foods: "Pork: Apparently, it's also the other white meat." (Barry Koch)

Hugh Grant for Celebrity Cruises. (Beth Morgan, San Francisco)

Boy George for Irish Spring Soap: "Manly, yes, but I like it, too." (Mike Ostapiej)

John Edwards for Pop Secret. (Chris Doyle)

... and for Cheetos. (Beth Baniszewski, Somerville, Mass.)

... and for Strayer University. (N.G. Andrews)

Chuck Norris for any damn thing he wants, and you'll buy it, too. (Russell Beland)

Next Week: Words to the Wiseacres, or The Pithy Party



An unembarrassed Mae Scanlan obviously does not realize she is wearing a ridiculous tourist-kitsch hat, this week's second-place prize.

In the Macro World of N.Y., a Microcosm of Street Smarts

NEW YORK, From C1

seemed like a good time to fill in that blank, so we called J.E. Englebert and asked for a tour. Englebert is the self-described "King of Clubs" in Manhattan, and while this might overstate matters, he does own two venues that cater to Staten Islanders, a group considered toxically unhip by Gotham scenesters. Plus, soon after Fossella's arrest in May, Englebert sent him a letter offering to hold fundraisers and rallies on his behalf.

"If Bill Clinton would have resigned after Monica Lewinsky," he wrote, not quite grammatically, "we would have lost a great President."

Fossella didn't respond and has announced that he's leaving politics, but the generosity of Englebert's gesture made him seem like the perfect safari leader for our expedition. And when the day of this five-hour voyage arrives, it's clear that he's taking it seriously. He brings along a lengthy printout of highlights, which includes a stop at Nunzio's, a pizzeria that Englebert raves about through the whole drive and keeps raving about as he snarfs down his third slice.

"Did I tell you?" he asks rhetorically. The walls at Nunzio's are dotted with head shots of actors from "The Sopranos," and Englebert looks ready for a walk-on part. He's a meaty, soft-spoken guy wearing a black Adidas track suit, and his dark hair is Dippity-do'd into a stiff, shiny mass.

Next to him is Englebert's publicist — who, oddly enough, asked that his name be kept out of this article — and across the table is one of Englebert's childhood friends, Mike Gallo, a pit bull breeder who looks like a bouncer. On his iPhone, he shows off photos of both his ex-wives — "the second one was drop-dead beautiful," he says — as well as his prized dog, which apparently has the perfect head-to-body ratio and is worth \$100,000. Talk turns to the subject of Staten Island pride.

"We didn't really have Staten Island pride so much as neighborhood pride," Englebert says.

"Yeah, it was more about your neighborhood," says Gallo, who sounds uncannily like Robert De Niro in "Raging Bull." "We fought our neighborhoods all the time. Thirteen carloads of kids would go fight 13 carloads of kids, with baseball bats."

With baseball bats?
 "Oh yeah," Gallo says. "Crowbars, hammers. Right here," he goes on, tilting his shaved head, running a finger over zig-zagging lines on his skull. "Stitches, stitches, stitches."

"Look at this," says Englebert, who stands, unzips his track suit and lifts his shirt, revealing a large, all-cap tattoo of SURVIVAL in a semicircle over his stomach and two thick, jagged vertical lines from his waist to the bottom of his rib cage. "Knife fight."

They stabbed you twice?
 "No, this is from the knife wound," he says, pointing to the shorter line. "Then they



PHOTOS BY HELAYNE SEIDMAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, above, opened in 1964 and heralded an influx of residents to Staten Island. So-called "King of Clubs" J.E. Englebert, below center, says he and pals Mark Fiore, left, and Mike Gallo don't "have Staten Island pride so much as neighborhood pride."



had to open me up and make sure everything was all right in there."

Wait, don't people get killed when they fight with knives and bats?

"Yeah, my friend Danny Pasolino lost his life on Midland Beach — you can look it up," Gallo says. "It was us fighting New Dorp. They were a bunch of [wussies]. A lot of them went to Catholic school. Danny got hit in the head —"

"You guys want to order another pie?" asks Englebert, who is leaning back in his seat, chewing ice.

"— and he died," Gallo says.

"We can eat a full pie, right?"

"I'm good," says Gallo.

"I'm good," says the publicist.

"Another pie," Englebert tells the waiter.

The deep weirdness of Staten Island is

how un-weird it looks. You don't have an image of the place, it turns out, because it's like every other suburb. But because it is part of New York City, the strip-mall mundaneness feels otherworldly — like those episodes of "Star Trek" that take place on Earth.

Its most famous landmark, arguably, is Fresh Kills landfill, for many years the world's largest dump. For decades, until it was closed, Fresh Kills was where other boroughs shipped their garbage, which inevitably became a metaphor for Staten Island's relationship with the rest of New York City. It didn't help that Fresh Kills was also popular with mobsters in need of a place to unload stiffs — although when you name a place Fresh Kills, you're kind of asking for it.

"The truth is that mobsters turn up dead all over New York, and there are crooked politicians all over New York," says Tom Matteo, Staten Island's official historian.

(Each of the five boroughs has one.) "But since dead mobsters and crooked politicians are all that anyone reads about Staten Island, that's the only connection."

Matteo is author of "Staten Island I Didn't Know That" — no colon, for some reason — and a repository of local history, most of which can charitably be classified as not quite momentous. Staten Island was the first place to manufacture linoleum. It was home to the first lawn tennis championship on American soil. A peace conference between Americans and Brits during the Revolutionary War was held on Staten Island, but it failed to yield peace.

It's only slightly stronger in the category of Famous People With Links. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Annie Oakley spent time on the island, as did the inventor of the Chiclet, Thomas Adams. Politician and televangelist Pat Robertson lived on Staten Island when he decided to leave a company selling hi-fi speakers and become a minister.

"It's where I found the Lord," he says on the phone. "I was in the rat race at the time, commuting to Manhattan, trying to make it in the hard, cruel business world, and I decided there had to be a better life."

Paul Newman lived on Staten Island during his struggling days as a New York actor. Christina Aguilera, Emilio Estévez, Joan Baez are natives. But the island's most distinctive cultural contribution might be the Wu-Tang Clan, a rap collective that emerged in the early 1990s from the Park Hill Apartments, a public housing project in Clifton, on the northeast tip. The group, which jumbled up lyrics about chess, mob lore and martial arts movies, calls Staten Island "Shaolin" in songs.

"Because it was like a forbidden, unknown city, far from civilization," explains Raekwon, a founding member of the group, on the phone in Los Angeles. "For a long time, people made fun of the place. Then, with the Wu-Tang, they saw the talent and flava coming out of there, and Staten Island became a landmark. We put it on the map."

If the Wu-Tang put Staten Island on the map, credit the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge for putting the Wu-Tang on Staten Island. Before this double-decked, 4,260-foot marvel was completed in 1964, the island was relatively undeveloped and isolated, the Elba where New York cops were banished if they screwed up, a place where the cows, lore has it, outnumbered traffic lights. By 1965, a migration began, mostly from Brooklyn, where the Verrazano touched the mainland.

The trickle of fed-up city dwellers would include some African Americans, such as Raekwon's mom, who moved after her home in Brooklyn was burglarized. But far more Italians and a smaller number of Jews made the trip, in search of a safer, less crowded place to call home. They would turn Staten Island into what it remains today: a Republican-leaning suburb of Brooklyn. Residents of the island will tell you that they elected

Rudy Giuliani to the mayor's office, twice. Nearly a half a million people live there now.

"It's very suburban, very homey," says Mark Fiore, another Englebert friend who arrives at Nunzio's near the end of dinner. He, like his pals, is wearing a track suit. "A lot of history, a lot of forts here, a lot —"

"A lot of corruption." This is half-shouted by a guy two tables away. Everyone turns to see a man in his 60s, paying his check, a toothpick dangling from his mouth. "The island used to be good, but there's overdevelopment with all these crappy homes they put all over the place."

"Well, it became congested," Fiore says, trying to sound conciliatory and maybe change the subject.

"There's a lot of good things, but they're overrun by the bad things," Toothpick Man continues. "A lot of truth gets buried here because of" — he rubs together two dollar bills — "money. Money! Greedy developers wrecked the place."

He gets up to leave with his wife, declining to give his name.

"It's a horror," his wife says as they head out the door.

"I apologize for that," says Fiore, once they've left. "It sounds to me like he's filled with a lot of anger and hostility."

There is something Staten Island about feeling aggrieved. Residents pay more in taxes than they get back in city services, such as schools and sewers, and yet there's virtually no public transit. To succeed in Staten Island politics, you need to understand that many residents feel they're outsiders getting shafted, nearly all the time. Now and then, there is talk about seceding from the city.

Staten Island considers itself the city's underdog, which is why even with the drunk-driving arrest and love-child revelations, Rep. Vito Fossella remains a popular figure locally — and has been urged, by senior Republicans, to run again. He understands the frustrations of his voters. His signal achievement was leading the fight to close Fresh Kills, which put an end to the literal dumping on his home district.

But as much as Staten Islanders potshot the other boroughs, the rest of New York City exerts an influence on the place that is so profound it seems genetic. One of the reasons Englebert and his friends fought when they were kids is that their fathers fought when they were kids, growing up in Brooklyn. These guys are among the only suburbanites you'll ever meet who use the word "survivor" without irony.

"It gave me street smarts," Gallo says, reflecting on his childhood. "It gave me mental toughness. I just went to prison for a year. My second wife left me. I had a dog die. I've had people look at what happened to me in the last few years and say, 'You're a survivor.' And I don't think anything of it. It's just me living. I think that came from growing up in Staten Island."