

The Style Invitational

REPORT FROM WEEK 824

in which we asked you to supply tourist slogans for cities and towns, much as we'd done before with the U.S. states. We mostly focused on the actual qualities (or lack thereof) of the various towns, rather than just running a list of puns on the weird names of sundry obscure hamlets. (For those who feel deprived of this, here are two from Rick Haynes of Potomac: Bra, Italy: Thanks for Your Support; Pee Pee, Ohio: We're Number One.)



- 2 the winner of the book "Punk Shui: Home Design for Anarchists": Fort Knox: The Gold Tooth of Kentucky (Wayne Rodgers, Satellite Beach, Fla.)
- 3 Manhattan, Kansas: The City That Sleeps (Brendan Beary, Great Mills, Md.)
- 4 Wasilla, Alaska: Home of the Moose Burger! Governor Sarah Palin! the next VP of the U.S. of A.: Governor Sarah Palin! the Moose Burger! (Chad Pridgen, Marshall, Va.)

TOWN TRODDEN: HONORABLE MENTIONS

- Visit Hoboken, Because It Would Be a Shame if You Didn't and Something Happened to Your Family** (J.J. Gertler, Alexandria)
- Las Vegas: For Sale by Lender** (Ed Gordon, Georgetown, Tex.)
- Galveston, Texas: Hurricane-Free Since Last Summer** (Charles Koelbel, Houston)
- Put Your Liquids, Gels and Aerosols in a Quart-Size, Zip-Top, Clear Plastic Bag and Visit Kitty Hawk** (Kevin Dopart, Washington)
- New Orleans: Now a Somewhat Smaller Easy** (Russell Beland, Fairfax)
- Las Vegas: Where Everybody Knows Your Alias** (Beverly Sharp, Washington)
- Washington, D.C.: Come Watch Your Favorite Team Win on the Road** (Russell Beland)
- Wasilla, Alaska: Gateway to the Evil Empire** (Jim Encinios, Manassas, a First Offender)
- Cleveland: We Were Bankrupt When Bankrupt Wasn't Cool** (Larry Yungk, Arlington)
- Crawford, Texas: Decommission Accomplished!** (Chad Pridgen)
- Chicago: Buy Your Seat Now!** (J. McCray, Hyattsville)
- Mustang, Nevada: The City of Brothely Love** (Ellen Raphaeli, Falls Church; Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.; Erik Wennstrom, Bloomington, Ind.)

- Juneau: Come On Up — She's Gone** (Steve Price, New York)
- Woodbridge: The Perfect Place for YOU, if Dale City Seems Just a Little Too Urbane** (Chad Pridgen)
- Las Vegas, New Mexico: Whatever Happens Here . . . Would Be a First** (Brendan Beary)
- Stay a Spell in Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch, Wales** (Chris Doyle; Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)
- New York: Home of the Giant Offensive Lines (D. Letterman, Manhattan)** (J. McCray)
- Ocean City: The Atlantis of Tomorrow** (J.J. Gertler)
- Visit Glorious, Modern Pyongyang! (Bring Your Own Food.)** (Cy Gardner, Arlington)
- Redmond, Washington, Is for [FATAL ERROR]** (J. McCray)
- Pyongyang: If you happen here, you stay here.** (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)
- Toledo, Ohio: Holy Us!** (Brendan Beary)
- Rochester, New York: Home of Xerox. Home of Xerox.** (Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.)
- Waldorf, Maryland: In a Certain Light Our Vacant Storefronts Mirror the Emptiness of Your Materialistic Existence** (Lawrence McGuire, Waldorf)

- Rio de Janeiro: Absolutely Favelas** (John O'Byrne, Dublin)
- Venice: Pothole-Free Since A.D. 421** (Robert Gallagher, Falls Church)
- Shanghai: Come Visit Your Money** (Cy Gardner)
- Singapore: Where Everyone Is Happy — or Else** (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)
- Scaggsville, Maryland: A Great Personality** (Bill Armstrong, Dayton [a suburb of Scaggsville])
- Morristown, New Jersey: We're Upwind of Newark** (Jack Held, Fairfax)
- The Future City of Fairfax: From Suburban to Sub-Urbane** (Kevin Dopart)
- Montgomery Village, Maryland: Our Idiot Is Funnier Than Your Idiot** (Tom Witte, Montgomery Village)
- And Last: Ponder, Texas: One Style Invitational Inker for Every 33 Residents** (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)
- Next Week: Disinstrumentals, or Themes and Violations**

ONLINE DISCUSSION Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.



Week 828: Inhuman Puns

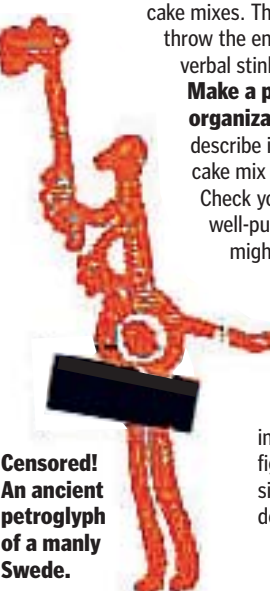
The Wonkees: A TV rock band portrayed by four policy analysts. (Alan Rosenthal, Columbia)

J.C. Couture: A stylish line of white robes and woven sandals. (Beth Morgan, Palo Alto, Calif.)

In Week 796, we gave you permission to commit shamelessly what some blighted souls consider the lowest form of the lowest form of wit: puns on people's names. Some Losers, typically ignoring the contest directions, instead sent in puns on names of non-people: rock groups, corporations, cake mixes. The Empress gave them no ink but told them not to throw the entries away (assuming that they didn't have little verbal stink lines emanating up from them). **This week: Make a pun on the name of a familiar group, organization or company,** as in the examples above, and describe it or provide a quote from it. (Once again, save the cake mix entries; we'll milk this contest for all it's worth.) Check your idea online to see if it's already someone else's well-publicized pun (though your imaginative description might help it pass the originality test anyway).

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second prize receives a souvenir that the Empress picked up this summer in Sweden: four fancy-schmancy handmade-paper notecards depicting various examples of Bronze Age art carved into rocks — in these cases some very happy-looking male fertility figures. (Okay, some of the maleness might be silhouettes of 3,000-year-old swords, but others are definitely anatomical, if wishful.)

Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or Loser Mug. 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 Ink). 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, Aug. 10. Put "Week 828" 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 Aug. 29. 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 is by Mae Scanlan; next week's revised title is by Jeff Contompasis.



Censored! An ancient petroglyph of a manly Swede.

NOTECARD FROM THE VITLYCKE MUSEUM, TANUMSHED, SWEDEN

CAROLYN HAX

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

Dear Carolyn:
Do you think people should not care about the impressions their significant others make in public? I catch myself wondering what friends and co-workers will think about my significant other, if they think we're a good match, etc., and I feel like this shouldn't matter to me at all.

Public opinion isn't everything, and you certainly shouldn't live or die by it, but it also has to matter a little. Not as a vehicle for popularity — that's something people "should not care about," though they do — but instead as an invaluable source of information and perspective.

For example, what if nobody likes this person? I don't mean your basic "my friends don't like her" (which is valuable in itself), but instead, say your friends recoil from this person, and she has no friends of her own. That doesn't mean you dump her on the spot, but it does mean you need to think carefully about whether you're seeing something in her that only you appreciate, or whether you're missing something very bad about her that's very obvious to everyone but you.

For some reason, the idea of sonar just popped into my head. In addition to gathering information with your own eyes and ears, it can't hurt to bounce some waves off the people around you, and see what comes back. Not to replace your own judgment, but to alert you to any gaps between what you and other might see.

For Virginia:
I do think there's a difference between "sonar" and undue emphasis on status. I've known too many people who were more concerned with how their partners made them look to others (e.g., by being gorgeous, rich, popular, a "catch") than in their actual compatibility.

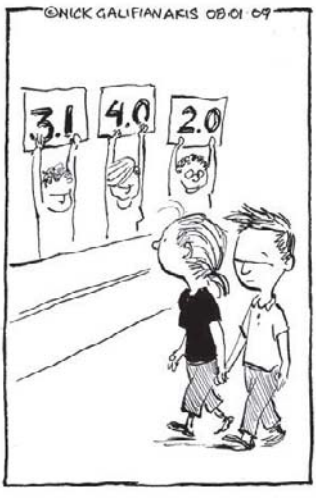
That's why I advised using others' opinions only as an FYI. Using others as a source of validation is always shaky. First and last, your choices need to please you, since the majority of your relationship will occur between the two of you alone (at least until you have five kids, accumulate a barge of baggage and simmering resentments, take up separate interests and actively court estrangement). That said, you do want someone who carries him- or herself in public in a way that doesn't make you cringe. Gotta be at ease, both at home and away games.

Hi, Carolyn:
It's me, "Virginia" again. People judge people all the time, and it really bothers me that people could judge my S.O. or my relationship. There are no warning signs, my S.O. is great, but I catch myself caring too much what people think. How can I stop?

You are seeing people's comments as a reflection on you. Instead, please also weigh their comments as reflections on them. Are they people you respect? Do they have actual knowledge of the situation, or are a few facts just meeting up with a few prejudices? The question to ask yourself is not "What do they think of my choices?" — since this isn't just about mates — but "How valuable is their opinion?" Know your critics, weigh their proximity to the truth, and heed them accordingly. You'll miss some things, as will they; your job is to reconcile your way to the truth.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on www.washingtonpost.com/discussions.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or tellme@washpost.com.



BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A Derby Gal Who's Driven to Succeed

DERBY, From Page C1
she slams down on the accelerator, and —



Lisa Harden with dad "Big Rick" Clark before the demolition derby in Winchester, Va. Below, Harden gives her wedding band to her husband for safekeeping.

Gotta love a demolition derby. What greater symbol of work ethic and prosperity than an event where competitors rescue unwanted autos, spend months preparing them — moving the batteries, stripping the breakables, painting on elaborate decorations — then smash them into metallic confetti in 20 minutes? The sport started in the United States in the 1940s. The concept has spread to Western Europe, but there they call them "banger races" and the goal is to win a race. Here, where summer means derbies at fairs nationwide (there's one tonight at the Anne Arundel County Fair, another in a few weeks in Prince William), there's no racing. Organizers just put a bunch of cars in a field and let them go at each other until only one is left running.

There are rules: No hitting the driver's side. No tires thicker than eight-ply. No Chrysler Imperials. "Those have a thickness of steel three times normal," explains Blaine Jenkins, a derby official in Winchester. Before the Imperial ban, drivers from Pennsylvania used to come down and cream everyone. Other than that, anyone who can pay the \$35 entry fee can compete.

But women have never won here, which surprises derby chairman Gary Bohnenkamp. "Women are way more aggressive," he says. "Just ruthless. You know why that is? It's because boys have their toys all year long. The typical woman does not have that. She's taking care of the kids, she's working." She might have just this one chance to let loose and bust some stuff up.

Odds are against women: In the larger demolition derbies, the multi-head ones with hefty prizes, there might be two or three in a pack of 200. This fair is small potatoes —

top prize is \$250 — and back when Lisa Harden started competing, she was regularly the only female.

"Her very first year, she made it to the finals," says her mother, Mary Clark, proudly — and that was despite all the boys ganging up on her. Lisa married Moe five years ago; they have two kids, Cheyenne and Michael. Moe prefers racing cars to doing derbies; Lisa thinks that's crazy. "You just go in a circle and you're not supposed to hit nobody," she says. "What's the fun in that?"

Tonight's derby has drawn an unprecedented five women. Two are the DeHaven sisters, Britteny and Melissa, regulars who wear matching shirts that read "Looking Good, Getting Dirty."

One of the others is Lisa Harden's sister-in-law, April Clark, who shows up just in time for registration, towing a monstrous 1966 Lincoln. She has painted it lilac.

"I married into redneck," Clark says cheerfully as she touches up the car with a can of spray paint. "The first year I signed up, my mom cried and said —" She calls over to her mother, Brenda Crisman. "Hey, Mom, what did you say?"



"They can't print what I said." "I think it was, 'The hell you are!'"

Clark finishes up the last-minute prep by spraying "MOMMA" in big white letters on the hood. This particular car used to belong to Harden's family. "It was in showroom condition," Clark admits, not so much as a tear on the leather interior. But: "After a while, when you ride down the road and you see a big old car sitting there, you just think *derby*."

Finding a good "big old" is getting hard. The demolition derby has been threatened recently: First, there was the rising value of scrap metal, which meant people no longer wanted to sell you their beaters for \$75 when they could get \$300 at a junkyard. Then, there was the recession and its annoying resurgence of waste-not. Since ripping a car up for a demolition costs a few hundred

dollars, many people now put the money toward maintaining their rides instead.

Harden and Clark are both slated for the same heat, which is a relief. "We try to look out for each other," Harden says. "I don't think I've ever hit April except on accident."

But at 7:15, when all the cars line up for last-minute inspection, there's a problem: Clark's seatbelt doesn't meet derby requirements. She'll have to sit out for now.

Harden drives in alone.

At first things go well: Six cars die almost immediately, and Lisa doesn't have so much as a flat tire. It begins to pour, but her Chrysler handles the mud better than some of the bigger cars. Then, disaster: She gets pinned between two broken vehicles, then repeatedly slammed by a third. She struggles to break free, but the strain causes her transmission to go.

She stays in the mud until the demolition is done.

Almost a winner. Yet again.

The victor turns out to be Rusty Poston, from a family of derbies. Second place goes to Heather Cook, a first-timer, the woman no one had heard of.

Harden is annoyed but unfazed. As soon as the car is towed off the field, she and her dad assess the damage. Not too bad. They've seen worse. They'll salvage some parts, try again next year.

In racing, "you just go in a circle and you're not supposed to hit nobody. What's the fun in that?"

Lisa Harden

touches up the car with a can of spray paint. "The first year I signed up, my mom cried and said —" She calls over to her mother, Brenda Crisman. "Hey, Mom, what did you say?"