

CAROLYN HAX

While I'm away, readers give the advice. On grandparents who play favorites:

My three kids (now 30, give or take a couple of years) came to me one day with the issue. "Grandma A likes girls best... and Grandma B prefers boys," they began. "Oh dear," I thought. My mother's and my mother-in-law's attitudes had been obvious to me, but I had hoped they weren't obvious to the kids. Then, all three looked at me earnestly. "Do you have a favorite?" they asked. I didn't feel I favored any of them, but that's a question fraught with potential for hurt feelings...

I looked at the faces of my three beloved children... and out of my mouth came the answer I might have come up with if I'd had the luxury of three days to compose it. "Yes," I answered. "At any given time, I have a favorite," adding, "and it's never the same one."

Des Moines

On ending the never-ending battle over dividing household chores:

I solved this problem years ago with a sign-off sheet posted on the fridge. When the kids were babies, the list simply itemized what needed to be done every week around the house and car. Once the chore was complete, we just initialed it on the sheet. This system gave each of us the flexibility to "pick our poison" according to inclination and time available. Any discussion needed about chores became easier with the "proof" of the weekly sheet. When our children became toddlers, they started to contribute. One of their first jobs was picking up coconuts for a penny apiece before we mowed the lawn. They learned about money, because they saved our lawnmower blades. As the children got older, I assigned a monetary value to each chore. Chores became more of a cause for jokes than fights.

A.

On dividing chores, continued:

People doing the lion's share of the housework might try the following strategy:

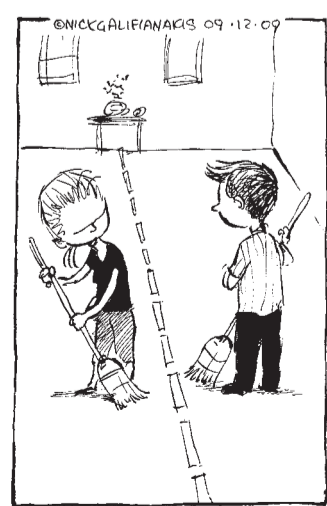
- 1. Call several local housekeepers and get an idea of the hourly rate for cleaning house.
2. Start keeping track of the time they spend each month. At the end of the month, they will have a dollar figure for their cleaning services.
3. When it's time to put money into the joint account for monthly bills, they put in their share minus the dollar amount they "earned." If their mates question this, they can present them with a "bill."
4. Be nice about it. Approach it like a business deal.

I have found that when someone else's behavior is making me angry and resentful, 95 percent of the time it's not their behavior, it's how I am reacting to it. I change my reaction, and sometimes they change theirs and sometimes they don't, but I stop feeling angry.

Not a Shrink

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

ONLINE DISCUSSION Carolyn Hax's weekly Web chat is at noon Fridays at www.washingtonpost.com/discussions.



BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The Style Invitational

REPORT FROM WEEK 830

in which we asked you to write funny "bank heads" for actual headlines in The Post: Lots of insensitive people saw "64 Killed in Plant Accident" and reinterpreted it as a Venus flytrap run amok. And what naughty minds some of you have! To deter further off-color entries, we will not print the one from Jeff Brechlin of Eagan, Minn., about something done to one "Sen. Whistle." There were so many good entries that we'll run some more next week.



- 1. the winner of the Cushy Tushy knitted toilet seat rim cover: This Time, He Doesn't Answer Bell Watson Said to Be Working on 'Voice-Mail Contraption' (Mike Fransella, Arlington)
2. Zorn, Campbell Look at Big Picture But Neither Is Able to Identify Photo of End Zone (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)
3. Several Methods Can Help You Find Studs Behind Drywall How to Pick Up the Hunkiest Construction Workers (Pam Sweeney, St. Paul, Minn.)

B-HEADED: HONORABLE MENTIONS

- Neighborhood Watch Recession Forces Bethesda Residents to Share a Single Rolex (Christopher Lamora, Arlington; Cy Gardner, Arlington)
When a Towel Is Too Tough to Figure Out Sarah Palin Throws In the Washcloth (David Smith, Santa Cruz, Calif.)
Nationals Sign Pitcher to Record Contract 'For That Kind of Money, He Better Be Able to Sing, Too,' Lerner Says (Craig Dykstra, Centerville; Jim Lubell, Mechanicsville)
In Six Months, Williams Has Dropped 111 Pounds British Poker Player Continues Modest Losing Streak (Russell Beland, Fairfax)
Death Row Prisoner Wins Hearing Deafness Cured Days Before Execution; Will Be Able to Listen to Zapping (Lisa Trossarello-Christian, Rex, Ga.)
U.Va.'s Barker Follows Large Footprints Campus Police Set Bloodhound on Trail After Sasquatch Sighting (William J. Collinge, Gettysburg, Pa.)
Back to the Garden Undaunted, God Vows to Try Again With Adam & Eve 2.0 (William Bradford, Washington)
Quirós Has Length. Now He Needs Drive Mrs. Quirós Now Sorry She Let

- Sportswriters Into Bedroom (Roy Ashley, Washington; Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)
Va. Commuter Trains to Get Millions From Federal Stimulus Stafford County Carpooler Studies 'Cash In Now' Booklet 200 Times on Ride to D.C. (Ed Gordon, Georgetown, Tex.)
'Old Goats' Combine to Stifle Arizona Why You Shouldn't Wear Cashmere in Phoenix (Dave Ferry, Purvis, Miss.)
Bolt's Best Times Lightning Most Likely to Strike in Late Afternoon, NOAA Says (Russell Beland)
Obama Defends New Tack in Afghanistan Says Geneva Convention Technically Bans Only Thumbscrews (Peter Metrinko, Gainesville)
Just Let It Soak In New Transfusion Method Less Painful but Awfully Messy (Drew Bennett, West Plains, Mo.)
Yoga Is for Everyone Spandex Is Not (Pete Morelewicz, Washington)
Why Obama May or May Not Reappoint Bernanke to a Second Term Because There's Not a Third Option, Is There? (Russell Beland)
Long Balls Are Costly for Tillman and Orioles Pitcher Asks for Round Ones Next Time (Rick Haynes, Potomac)

- Break-In at Lohan's Party Raiders Disappointed, Leave Empty-Handed (Craig Dykstra)
'Paradox Now!' Exhibit Will Be Postponed Until Yesterday (Christopher Lamora)
Home Refinancers Have Little-Used Tool 'Women Won't Go Out With Me Anymore,' Mortgage Broker Laments (Rick Haynes)
Leader of North Sends Word to South's Lee Lincoln's Battlefield Communique Arrives 144 Years Late (Mike Fransella)
'We Don't Have Anybody From Washington Down Here' Sarcastic Satan Jokes With Friends (Marleen May, Rockville)
Palin's Red Menace Ex-Gov. Releases Her Own Line of Lipstick (Jeff Contompassis, Ashburn)
Vick Begins Anew With the Eagles 'Parole Officer Only Said No Dogs,' QB Explains (Tom Fusco, Derwood, a First Offender)
Executive Openings Filled at Freddie Mac But Congress Likely to Tear Them a Few New Ones (Kevin Dopart, Washington)
Redskins Look at Bright Side Team Keeps 'Going Toward the Light' (Lois Douthitt, Arlington)
Next Week: A Big To-Do, or Pre-Kickoff Activities

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BY BOB STAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Week 834: Fractured Compounds

Tap-fueled: The main type of energy system at a frat house. Here's a word-combination contest that's a combination contest in itself: Over the years, we've asked you to define various compound terms formed by the page headings on dictionaries and the Yellow Pages, and we've asked you to join the beginning and end of two different words within a single Washington Post story. And so Uber-Loser Russell Beland, in his 59th Invitational contest idea to see print (yes, they keep stats for that), suggests: Combine two full words within any single article appearing in The Washington Post or on washingtonpost.com into a hyphenated compound word, and define or otherwise describe the result, as in Russell's example above from a Sept. 8 story on health insurance. Please identify the story and date. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives a tiny metal "Do Not Throw Paper in Toilet" sign found in Greece by Loser Kevin Dopart, who says the toilet paper there is so stiff that it has to go in the trash can. (He also noted that The Washington Post doesn't seem to have a motto...)



For those with Spartan plumbing, this week's second prize.

become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results will be published Oct. 10. 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 Jeff Contompassis; this week's Honorable Mentions name is by Beverley Sharp. Happy New Year.

ON WASHINGTONPOST.COM Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational discussion at washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.

The Queen of Soul Kicks Off Another Inauguration - in Md.

MUSIC. From Page C1

This wasn't the venue's grand opening — that won't happen till February. But who could pass up the chance to book Franklin, who is scheduled to perform for two nights next week at Radio City Music Hall? (How did Montgomery College score such a get? The venue's publicists credited a good relationship with Franklin's agents at Philip Morris.)

Taking the stage in a flowing gown the color of tomato soup, she launched into "Your Love Keeps Lifting Me" Higher and Higher" backed by the Aretha Franklin Orchestra, an ensemble of 20 musicians presumably enlisted to try to collectively eclipse the vocal superpowers of their employer.

They had no such luck during the evening's spunkiest numbers, "Respect" and "Think," with Franklin's trills registering as tremors seemingly beyond her control. But Lady Soul was at her most riveting during the slowest of slow burners, evoking both a

formed on the Mall for the Fourth of July; and most notably, she delivered an unforgettable rendition of "America (My Country 'Tis of Thee)" at Barack Obama's inauguration.

Franklin didn't offer much stage banter Friday for a gig this cozy, but she cited the president while she sang "As if We Never Said Goodbye." In the song's tender refrain, she dropped the words "Mr. President" into "you're teaching the world a new way to dream" — an effortless yet

powerful tweak that spurred the crowd from quiet reverence to delighted applause.

Considering that Franklin's music first bloomed in tandem with the civil rights movement, it was hard not to hear a certain satisfaction in her voice — a contented pride pouring from those 67-year-old lungs.

This voice had not only survived its journey through the social fabric of the 20th century; it also had somehow — miraculously — landed here.



BY TRACY A. WOODWARD — THE WASHINGTON POST

Aretha Franklin brought emotion to the Montgomery College concert hall.

THE GUIDE to the Lively Arts

Advertisement for 'THE GUIDE to the Lively Arts' featuring various theater, jazz, and comedy performances with dates, times, and contact information.

Lady Soul was at her most riveting during the slowest of slow burners.

songbird and a motorcycle engine, sometimes in the same phrase.

She belted up to the piano for a somber take on the Simon and Garfunkel ballad "Bridge Over Troubled Water" but slowly exploded it to an outside, gospel-soaked rave-up. By the tune's finale, her syllables sounded as if they were catching fire in her throat.

That indelible delivery might still be echoing in plenty of Washingtonians' eardrums. Friday night marked Franklin's fourth area performance in the past year. She sang at the Kennedy Center's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Day concert in January; she per-

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The Guide to the Lively Arts appears Sunday in Arts, deadline: Wed., 12 noon Monday in Style, deadline: Friday, 12 noon Tuesday in Style, deadline: Mon., 12 noon Wednesday in Style, deadline: Tues., 12 noon Thursday in Style, deadline: Wed., 12 noon Friday in Weekend, deadline: Tues., 12 noon Saturday in Style, deadline: Friday, 12 noon For information about advertising, call Raymond Boyer 202-334-7006 FAX 202-496-3814