



CAROLYN HAX

## Flirty co-worker imperils their 'happy' marriage

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

**Dear Carolyn:**  
My 44-year-old husband has a 20-something female admirer at work. He describes her as "perky" and tells me she has asked him out for drinks, brought him gifts and told other co-workers she thinks he's adorable. He's fairly new at this job and says the co-workers are not big fans of Ms. Perky. My husband says he finds her admiration sweet and would never go out with her.

We have what I would describe as a happy, mutually satisfying relationship. However . . .

Recently we've been cash-strapped and my — not his — 19-year-old son is causing some strife on the home front. I am not particularly concerned, but I do have a nagging uncomfortable feeling. So many friends, male and female, have ditched their boring old spouses (and troublesome teens) for young, interesting, "perky" newness. I don't want to dwell, but ugly thoughts creep into my mind at the least opportune times. Any ideas to help me get past this would be appreciated.

Cleveland

Even if you and your husband were getting along strifelessly right now, it would still be a problem that your husband wasn't adding 2 (woman asks out and buys gifts for married male colleague) + 2 (woman is disliked by office mates, who know her better than this new guy does) and arriving at 4.

And that's assuming he's being naive; his telling you could also be disingenuous.

You haven't supplied enough information for me to draw conclusions either way, but even without the unsubstantiated colleague dislike, there is plenty to suggest her attentions aren't "sweet."

He may not believe you (or want to cut off his supply of ego flattery) but please explain to him anyway that you're not speaking out of jealousy but instead a self-preservation impulse — and not just for you personally, but also for him professionally, and for both of you maritally. Explain that you see this self-preservation impulse as a warning for him to stay as far away from this boundary-challenged woman as possible.

**Re: Perky Admirer:**  
I would ask the 40-something guy exactly what impression he thinks he is making with his new co-workers. Is he earning their respect or their eye-popping attention? I'm willing to bet they don't all agree that he's adorable.

Anonymous

It doesn't even have to be that extreme. They could just be thinking, "Walk away, you fool, walk away."

**Re: Perky Office mate:**  
Contrast my experience: I was the perky office mate in my 20s . . . about 20 years ago. It was a silly crush, really, although the guy was single. The guy (in his early 40s) handled this with great grace. He kindly and firmly told me that he was enjoying being my mentor. Simply that was enough to wake me from my silly fantasy.

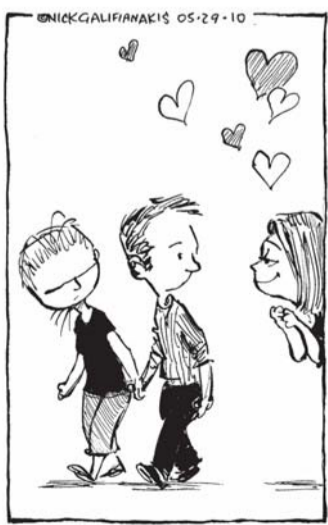
Your husband's behavior is not creating clear boundaries — he can be misinterpreted.

Anonymous 2

Or interpreted correctly, if he's not telling himself/his wife the whole truth and is in fact receptive. Thanks. If it's the latter, then Cleveland will have to find peace in another, equally timeless aspect of this same problem: Even if the worst happens, this unfortunate-flirtation phase will pass.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on [www.washingtonpost.com/discussions](http://www.washingtonpost.com/discussions).

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or [tellme@washpost.com](mailto:tellme@washpost.com).



NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## THE STYLE INVITATIONAL



**Make Music for Me x Don't Roll Over = IRA Gershwin**  
(Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.)

**REPORT FROM WEEK 867**  
in which we had you "breed" two of the inking foal names resulting from the breeding of a list of this year's Triple Crown-eligible horses (or, for the first time, a foal and a "parent"):

- 2** winner of the squashed-duck bathroom mat: **Alcindor x Francis Scott Quay = Tall, Dark 'n' Anthem** (Mae Scanlan, Washington)
- 3** **Dijon the Baptist x Bravo Whiskey = Salome on Rye** (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)
- 4** **You're A-Peein' x Excessive Passion = The Whizzer of Id** (Malcolm Fleschner, Palo Alto, Calif.)

### BEYER BEWARE: HONORABLE MENTIONS

**Biden Time x Liquidity Event = Warm Spit** (Edmund Conti, Raleigh, N.C.)

**Francis Scott Quay x You're A-Peein' = Gallantly Streaming** (Harvey Smith, McLean)

**OK Commuter x Boxers and Briefs = Metro Opens Drawers** (Pie Snelson, Silver Spring)

**Braille Centerfold x Ow Ow Ow = Ouch, the Staple!** (John Winant, Arlington)

**D' Funnybone x Manslaughter = Locker Room Humer** (Roy Ashley, Washington)

**Boxers and Briefs x Tiger in Your Tank = Calvins and Hobbes** (Jennifer Rubio, Vienna)

**Frigid Heir x Lip Styx = Hell Freezes Ova** (Pam Sweeney, St. Paul, Minn.)

**Braille Centerfold x You're A-Peein' = Touch and Go** (Jennifer Rubio)

**Medium Rare x Ragging Wit = Chew Chew Twain** (Mae Scanlan)

**Pen & Teller x Giuliani's Dream = Hocus POTUS** (Christopher Lamora, Arlington)

**Mississippi Burping x Liquidity Event = Bubba Bath** (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

**Utopian + Kareem of the Crop = Shangri-L.A.** (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

**In de John x Super Saver = Larry Craigslist** (Jeremy Levin, Washington)

**Dublin x In de John = Irish Setter** (Trevor Kerr, Chesapeake, Va.)

**Near Miss. x Noah's Dream = Ark.** (Jeff Contompassis, Ashburn)

**Near Miss. x In the Paint = La. Tex** (Pam Sweeney)

**Near Miss. x You're A-Peein' = You're in AL** (John Winant)

**Tiger in Your Tank x Broke the Trojans = Esso-B!** (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

**Ode to Joystick x Preamble = Wil the People** (Christopher Lamora; Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

**Okay Corral x Super Saver = Buy It Earp** (Steve Price, New York)

**Chief Counsel x Good Buy, Mr Chips = Lawyer's Poker** (Chris Doyle)

**Colonel Mustard x Biden Time = Clueless** (Harold Mantle, Lafayette, Calif.)

**Fenway Faithful x Soixante-Neuf = Doubleheader** (Chris Doyle)

**Unspeakable Filth x Kollege**

**= Dirty Duncing** (Brad Alexander, Wanneroo, Australia)

**OD to Joy x Joke La Motta = Narc-Narc!** (Christopher Lamora)

**The Babe's Homer x Jorgensen = Ball Is Outta Here** (Andrew Hoenig, Rockville)

**Unspeakable Filth x Shiver Me Timbers = Vulgar Boatmen** (Dudley Thompson, Cary, N.C.)

**Stay Put x Don't Roll Over = Think of England** (Dan Kinney, Charlottesville; Bill Vanko, Ellicott City; both First Offenders)

**Shiver Me Timbers x Ow Ow Ow = Long John Silver** (Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.; Susan Thompson, Cary, N.C.)

**You're A-Peein' x Make Music for Me = Urethra Franklin** (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

**Soixante-Neuf x Don't Roll Over = Quatre-Vingt-Seize** (Craig Dykstra; Jeff Contompassis)

**Susan Be Anthony x Chief Counsel = A Boy Named Sue** (Beryl Benderly, Washington)

**Next Week: Count the Ways, or Nerdplay**

**Loser Dion Black** wincees at modeling this week's second prize.



### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

## Week 871: Remarques

**Taxi Drive!** On the ride in from Dulles to Capitol Hill, the cabbie insists on reciting the entire oeuvre of his poetry.

According to some obsessive Losers Who Know Such Things, we've never done this contest before, hard as it is to believe: Jeff Contompassis suggests this variation on The Style Invitational's Best-Known Contest: *Change a movie title by one letter (or number, if the title includes a number) and describe the new film.* You may add a letter, delete a letter, substitute one for another, or transpose two letters in close proximity. The Empress expects to receive a lot of the same titles, so the cleverness of the description is likely to determine what gets ink.

Winner gets, appropriately, a statuette of a naked man, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place wins a T-shirt that rivals even our own Loser T-Shirt for its wha??? factor: It features 29 smiley faces, each topped with a turban depicting the flag of a nation in NATO's International Security Assistance Force, and says "Afghanistan Smiling Faces." They must be the last 29 smiling faces in Afghanistan. Donated by Not Even a Loser Patricia Bartolillo of Bowie, who avows that this is "the oddest T-shirt I've found in a thrift store." Modeled here by Loser Dion Black, who agreed to pose in it at the Losers' recent Flushies award luncheon.

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 Loser Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly, tree-shaped air "freshener" (Sir Stink for their First Ink). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, June 7. Put "Week 871" 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 to be published June 26. 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 subhead is by Roy Ashley.

**Online discussion** Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at [washingtonpost.com/styleconversational](http://washingtonpost.com/styleconversational).

## One woman and a furiously boiling movement

TEA PARTY FROM C1

town hall meetings since his inauguration. Rakovich objected to the \$787 billion stimulus plan, which looked to her like an expensive, misguided big-government overreach.

Rakovich had never been to a protest before, much less organized one, and she didn't know much about how to do it. She and her husband had been laid off from automotive contract jobs in Detroit and moved to Fort Myers to take care of Ron's parents in 2006. The couple had married in 2002 and they have eight children from previous marriages living outside the house.

Before her first protest, Rakovich sent out some e-mails, tweets and Facebook messages, and she called a conservative radio program. She wondered if anyone would show up.

One person did. Julie Flynt, now 50, a software instructor who supports abortion rights, drove from the other side of the state to join the demonstration. A few other sympathizers floated by, but they seemed reluctant to hold signs.

The three demonstrators waved their placards and tried to engage Obama supporters in conversation as the supporters waited to go inside for the town hall. The conversations were civil, Rakovich says.

"When it was basically over, I got a phone call from national Fox News," Rakovich recalls. "They wanted to know if I would go on Neil Cavuto. And I'm like, huh? Prior to this event, I had never spoken to the press regarding anything, ever."

Over the next seven days, incrementally larger protests broke out in Seattle (estimated more than 100 people), Denver (nearly 300) and Mesa, Ariz. (500).

Then on Feb. 19, another signal moment: The movement got its name.

It sprang from the lips of Rick Santelli during the CNBC on-air editor's spontaneous combustion on the floor of the Chicago Board of Trade, reacting to the mortgage bailout plan: "This is America! How many of you people want to pay for your neighbor's mortgage that has an extra bathroom and can't pay their bills? . . . President Obama, are you listening? . . . We're thinking of having a Chicago Tea Party. . . ."

Santelli's unscripted performance was a million-plus YouTube hit. Within hours, the tea party label was adopted by conservative activists.

On Feb. 27, the first protests styled as "tea party" actions took place in more than two dozen cities. Another series occurred on tax day, April 15, and another around July 4.

The largest tea party rally took place in Washington on Sept. 12, when tens of thousands of demonstrators marched down Pennsylvania Avenue and rallied outside the Capitol.

### Growing support

Now 27 percent of Americans say they are supportive of the movement, including 17 percent who are "strongly" supportive, according to a Washington Post/ABC poll in late April. Among supporters, 8 percent say they consider themselves "active participants" in the movement; this group is 2 percent of all adults.

Hundreds of tea party groups, or tea-party-sympathizer groups, are listed with the Web site TeaPartyPatriots.org, including 22 from Maryland, 38 from Virginia and five from D.C.

As anthropologists of the movement explore its origins and prospects, they cite the gathering of Rakovich's lonely crowd of three as the earliest stirring on record.

"Mary's was the first protest that happened," says Brendan Steinhauer, director of federal and state campaigns for FreedomWorks, the Washington-based advocacy group that has supported and promoted the tea party movement. There had been growing unease about big spending, bailouts and federal power during the latter part of the Bush administration, but "her event was the first street protest of the stimulus and what was going on," Steinhauer says. "These were the first people to take to the streets . . . which was a paradigm shift among fiscal conservatives."

Even though the tea party moniker was not an explicit part of the identity of Rakovich's protest, nor of the handful of other rallies that week, Steinhauer and other students of the movement say those seminal demonstrations burst from the same constellation of concerns, though they didn't have an organizing theme yet.

Santelli improvised the theme on camera. He says he has no idea why it popped into his head.

"How do I feel 15 months later? Pretty damn proud," Santelli says, noting that he is not active in the movement he helped inspire. "Having Americans get

off their couches and be active because they feel their future is at stake and their kids' future is at stake . . . is terrific."

### Charges of deception

Critics of tea party enthusiasm say the movement has been manufactured and orchestrated by professional conservative activists. The seeming grass-roots passion is more like Astroturf, they say — fake grass roots.

"The Republican Party directs a lot of what the tea party does, but not everybody in the tea party takes direction from the Republican Party," House Speaker Nancy Pelosi told ABC News in February, summarizing what she said was her original view of the movement. "And so there was a lot of, shall we say, Astroturf, as opposed to grass roots."

Rakovich says she is a registered Republican whose first political activity was to volunteer for John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign. Weeks before her first protest, she attended an activist training session held by FreedomWorks. Steinhauer called her before Obama's visit to Fort Myers, but by that time she and her husband had decided to try organizing something. The only time FreedomWorks gave her any material support was in securing insurance for a tea party protest she organized in April 2009, she says.

Steinhauer, for his part, says he and his professional activist colleagues only helped channel a widespread passion that was already simmering. The day of Santelli's rant, FreedomWorks created the Web site IamWithRick.com. FreedomWorks and other groups organized some tea party protests, including the big one in Washington, and served as clearinghouses when folks from across the country wanted to plug into tea-partying in their own communities.

After organizing several tea party protests last year, journeying to Washington for the big one in September and becoming something of a celebrity in Florida

tea party circles, Rakovich is proud of her footnote in history.

"I was just a person. I wasn't doing it for any other reason than to be heard," she says. "If I inspired one other person, who could inspire one other person, and show that you didn't have to be anybody special to do this, yes I feel good about that."

She says she'd like to go back to work once she gets her hips replaced, which she hopes will be after her Medicare kicks in later this year. But she's worried because she's convinced the new health reform law will cut Medicare.

In her spare time since she stopped working, she has been reading the Constitution and other founding documents for the first time.

"Spending is out of control, and then we have the whole other issue of our Constitution being chewed up and spit out on a daily basis," she says. "Which is actually even more important than the financial issues going on. They're tied together."

She considers herself an environmentalist — "I believe God made us stewards of this earth, including animals; I was a kook carrying my bags to the grocery store in the 1980s" — but she considers global warming "a farce."

Recently, she and her husband moved a couple hundred miles north to Cedar Key, Fla. She formed a meet-up group called Nature Coast Patriots.

"This is the very beginning up here," she says. "I'm not stopping."

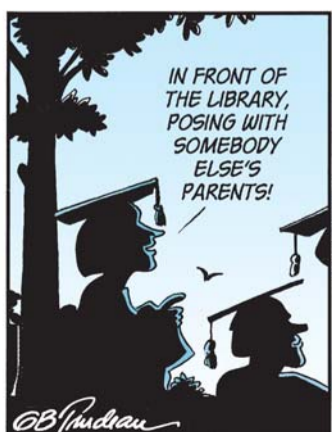
"It feels good to have been part of something and still be a part of something. . . . I call it restoring our republic."

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Staff polling director Jon Cohen contributed to this report.

To see video of Rick Santelli's spontaneous on-air "tea party" announcement, visit [washingtonpost.com/style](http://washingtonpost.com/style)

### DOONESBURY FLASHBACKS BY GARRY TRUDEAU



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