

Style Invitational

BY PAT MYERS

Report from Week 1044

in which we asked for comical safety rules:

THE
WINNER
OF THE
INKIN'
MEMORIAL

To avoid spinal injuries to women, elementary school sidewalks must be poured as continuous slabs of concrete. (Stan McCoy, Bethesda, whose received his only other blot of Invite ink in 2005)

2 Winner of the custom-made Loser Dreidels with L-O-S-R and the Hebrew equivalents:

"Staring daggers" is no longer allowed in the workplace, but "staring butter knives" will be permitted. (Mark Raffman, Reston)

3 In the restroom: During hand-washing, the alphabet song must be sung once for Number 1, and twice for Number 2. A monitor will record compliance. (Heather Spence, New York)

4 School toilet rims must be padded to prevent injury during swirlies. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Safety nyets: honorable mentions

All restaurants must be located at least an hour's drive from any beach or swimming pool. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)

To prevent accidental shootings, hunters must carry a device that emits a beep audible at 250 yards, along with a flashing beacon. (Dave Prevar, Annapolis)

Children wearing zombie Halloween costumes must have a fluorescent orange sticker on their foreheads saying "FAKE ZOMBIE" so that law enforcement officers do not accidentally shoot them. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Because of last summer's brain-freeze pandemic, ice cream will now

be served at room temperature. (Barry Koch, Catlett, Va.; Martin Bancroft, Issaquah, Wash.)

Danger: Room atmosphere is 79 percent nitrogen, an odorless, colorless gas that does not support life. Avoid breathing. (Irene G. Plotzker, Wilmington, Del., a First Offender)

All rigid plastic "clamshell" packaging must come with Band-Aids. (Art Grinath)

Signs must be posted at street corners: "Cross with care, especially if you are wearing tattered underwear." (Edmund Conti, Raleigh)

Due to a recent tree-climbing incident at another Montgomery County elementary school, all trees and other vegetation exceeding 16 inches in height have been removed from school grounds. To mitigate negative

aesthetic impacts, all teachers are required to wear brown footwear, brown pants and green shirts when outside during recess. (James Adler, Potomac, a First Offender)

Place "Caution: Handrail Ending" signs at the bottoms of all staircases in your home. (Michael Rae, Potomac)

To minimize the chances of concussion and hand injury, always allow the Frisbee to hit the ground and come to a complete stop before picking it up and tossing it back. (Rob Huffman, Fredericksburg)

Pepper spray makes a poor steak marinade and should be labeled as such. (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

Goo Gone is intended for removal of residue from household surfaces and clothing, and is not recommended for use as an enema. (Diane Yamini, Williamsburg, Va., a First Offender)

To avoid mistaken identity, everyone should have a single nine-character name generated at birth by the government. If the letters in the names alternate any of 16 distinct consonants with any of five distinct vowels, we could have 573,440,000 unique names to pass out before adding a 10th character. In fact, I have a program here that gave me got the splendid names Kenalijeb, Pokajamod, Jafolonal, Nogogegaj and Piregelob. (Elden Carnahan, Laurel)

At Fukushima Beach: After eating, wait 25,000 years before going in the water. (Kevin Dopart)

Only tweet pictures of other people's junk. — "Carlos Safety," New York (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

Still running — deadline Monday night: Our contest to reinterpret headlines by writing a "bank head" to follow it. See bit.ly/invite1047.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST

Week 1048: Ask backwards

Men at Twerk • the Toronto mayor's latest revelation • the Two and a Half Wise Men • the Wicked Witch of the Waist • 140 characters on baloney • foie gras ice cream • RGX • a panini, a pineapple and a pincushion • 4 miles, 27 pounds • Omaha bin Laden • the Empress's birthday • an answer for the next Ask Backwards

Once again, our beloved (or not too often behated) perennial contest: **Above are the 12 answers. You supply the questions to as many of the answers as you like**, up to the usual 25 entries total. The answers were offered up by various sources who won't be entering the contest, including the deposed Czar of the Style Invitational and the still-current Imperial Scion No. 1.

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives, actually in time for the holiday, a Christmas ornament two-pack: a ceramic T-shirt-shaped "Biggest Loser," presumably promoting the TV show; and, discovered by the Empress in the dollar store, "The Christmas Pickle." A card explains the "time honored, German tradition": "Following an Old World custom, parents waited until Christmas Eve to hide a small pickle ornament on the Christmas tree, tucking it out of sight among the branches. On Christmas morning, the first family member to spot the pickle was rewarded with a special blessing for the coming year and received the first present from under the tree." This turns out to be totally bogus; evidently some American ornament-maker came up with this "tradition" about the "Weihnachtsgurke," and no actual Germans have heard of it. Also, the German tradition is to open presents on Christmas Eve.

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for Loser Mug or the ardently desired Grossery Bag. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet, probably one of those pictured today. First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Dec. 2; results published Dec. 22 (online Dec. 19). No more than 25 entries per entrant per week. Include "Week 1048" in your e-mail subject line or it might be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See contest rules and guidelines at wapo.st/inviterules. The subhead for this week's honorable mentions is by Jeff Contompasis. Join the lively Style Invitational Devotees group on Facebook at on.fb.me/invdev, and click "like" on Style Invitational Ink of the Day at bit.ly/inkofday.

Coming soon: our newest Loser magnets for honorable mentions. Don't think of them as 20-cent strips the size of a business card; think of them as limited-edition (500 each) Bob Staake prints. The slogans got ink (but not iron) in earlier contests: "Po' Wit Laureate" is by Roger Hammons of Ashburn, and "Puns of Steel," by Invite Hall of Famer Jennifer Hart, was an honorable mention back in 1994 for a T-shirt slogan contest. (But it works for magnets, too, no?)



DESIGNS BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

NO MARS FOR YOU!

Remember our contest this year for haiku to send on the Maven spacecraft to Mars? We didn't think it was likely, but we did encourage y'all to send your inking entries to NASA's own contest. Well, the voters picked a bunch of winners, and they weren't the Losers'. But they might have been!

In the results published by the University of Colorado, which was in charge of the contest, there's this at the

bottom: "On May 23, 2013, the Washington Post acknowledged our haiku contest and ran their own contest in response (The Style Invitational Week 1023). . . . Alas, none of The Style's winning entries were submitted to our contest!"

Dear Empress: In vain we searched for shared haiku; yours must be from Venus."

See the results at bit.ly/marshaiku.



STYLE CONVERSATIONAL Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at washingtontpost.com/stylconversational.