

DIVERSIONS

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

And for Premium Readers, the report from Week 1093

BY PAT MYERS

In Week 1093, we asked for inventive ways that businesses could squeeze some more money out of consumers. While the Loser community proved to be imaginative nickel-and-dimers — especially when it came to airlines — it's hard to compete with reality: Several entrants noted that Michael O'Leary, CEO of the super-budget Ryanair, had not only planned to charge for toilet use, but also suggested getting rid of the co-pilot: The airline would just train a flight attendant in landing planes, and "if the pilot has an emergency, he rings the bell, he calls her in."

The winner of the Inkin' Memorial

Did you hear that downtown restaurants will begin charging a "corkage fee" to breast-feeding moms? (Gordon Cobb, Marietta, Ga.)

2nd place and the crocheted cat-butt-motif coasters

Taking a cue from public radio, the Redskins have started weekly "Scoring Drives," taking pledges and scoring when certain goals are met. It's . . . not going well. (Todd DeLap, Fairfax)

3rd place

It's never too early to start ensuring that schools will recognize your child's gifts. And for an appropriate fee, OB/GYNs would guarantee new parents an Apgar score of 10. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

4th place

The revolving door between Congress and lobbying firms will soon be coin-operated. (Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)

The badder business bureau: honorable mentions

A \$1 "circumnavigation fee" to avoid the greeter at Wal-Mart. (Douglas Raybeck, Amherst, Mass.)

Instead of emergency-room triage, use an auction to determine who gets treated first: "Physicians are standing by right now. Who will be next? Do I see a bid of \$50?" (Mark Raffman, Reston)

"Would you like to buy ketchup with that?" (Bradley Jamison, South Riding)

Starbucks could offer customers a choice: room-temperature brew or paying the coffee sleeve surcharge. (Todd DeLap)

Did you hear about the sandwich shop's new gluten-free option? For an extra charge, they'll hold the bread. (Ward Kay, Vienna)

At the Golden Jade Dragon Restaurant, the first chopstick is free. (Todd DeLap)

Put Your Child to Work day at the coal mine. (David Friedman, Arlington)

When selling Matchbox cars, offer undercoating for just \$3 extra (\$10 value!) (Mark Raffman)

Sea World has added a restocking fee to the price of each ticket to cover the cost of new trainers. (Warren Tanabe, Annapolis)

Ten cents per minute allows you to select the music played while you're on hold. (Larry Powers, Falls Church)

A small-town hair salon: Charges extra for new gossip. (Beverly Sharp, Montgomery, Ala.)

It's not really true that Verizon will be imposing an erroneous-charge-removal charge. (William Kennard, Arlington; Kevin Tingley, Vienna)

"Sewer-usage surcharge" on every box of bran flakes. (Will Cramer, Herndon)

For an extra dollar you can try on clothes in the dressing room without the camera. (Jennifer Dickey, Silver Spring)

Trash collectors might solicit tips by leaving a self-addressed envelope in the house's mailbox, including a sample of that day's trash to make sure the envelope will be noticed. (Mark Raffman)

A gynecologist: Ladies, we'll warm up the speculum for just \$25 more! (Mike Gips, Bethesda)

The cable company has raised its rates now that it's carrying the NSA's surveillance channel. (Beverly Sharp)

The firm's office manager announces that the broken shredder won't be repaired after



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

New contest for Week 1097: Futz your sign

"Push has definitely grown into shove by now." (Aries, Nov. 2) And your butt has grown into a beanbag chair. So yup, it's time to start that diet.

"You'll have a lot to share, and so will others." (Virgo, Nov. 1) And we hope you don't mind monitoring your temperature twice a day.

Here's another thing, besides The Style Invitational, that's in The Washington Post but you can't get in the New York Times: the daily horoscope. How do Manhattanites plan their days? Hall of Fame Loser Stephen Dudzik suggests we take advantage of this reliable source of essential information by harking back to (a.k.a. ripping off) a 2002 contest that ran in the Canadian paper the Globe & Mail, and gave ink to Steve ("You are the centre of attention this week." Means: They found the bodies"): **This week: Select a line from one of the horoscopes appearing anytime from Nov. 6 through Nov. 17 in the Washington Post's daily Style or Sunday Arts & Style sections or on washingtonpost.com** (click on Entertainment, then Horoscopes; also available at www.astrology.com; hover on Horoscope and choose Daily Overview or Daily Extended) and "clarify" it with a translation or extra "information."

Winner gets the Inkin' Memorial, the Lincoln statue bobblehead that is the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives . . . money! *Packs* of money! The first pack is a set of *four* erasers depicting various denominations of euro notes — brought directly from Ireland by Loser John O'Byrne when he came to a Loser brunch — and *two* mini-packs of tissues with \$100 bills pictured on them, donated (unused!) by Loser Jeff Contompasis.

Other runners-up win their choice of a yearned-for Loser Mug or the ardently desired "Whole Fools" Grossery Bag. Honorable mentions get a lusted-after Loser magnet in one of our two new Bob Staake designs: either "The Wit Hit the Fan" or "Hardly Har-Har." First Offenders receive a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (FirStink for their first ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or, if you were born in the 19th century, fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, Nov. 17; results published Dec. 7 (online Dec. 4). No more than 25 entries per entrant per contest. Include "Week 1097" 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/InvRules. This week's honorable-mentions subheads is by Beverley Sharp. 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.

STYLE CONVERSATIONAL The Empress's weekly online column discusses each new contest and set of results. Especially if you plan to enter, check it out at wapo.st/styleconv.

all, but will be replaced by her Labrador. (David Friedman)

At the beach, they'd like to sell \$5 Day-Glo anti-drowning wristbands that guarantee you an expedited rescue. Those without wristbands must wait for the next available lifeguard. (Kathleen DeBold, Burtonsville)

If "Jeopardy!" contestants end up in negative numbers, make them pay in cash before they leave the set. (Mark Raffman)

Businesses know that time is money, and that's why they're planning to have the toilet paper in employee bathrooms retract into the wall exactly four minutes after the stall is entered. (Mike Gips)

GPS Fee-for-Direction Surcharge: "I am recalculating . . . your toll. Please swipe card, or I'll keep saying, 'Yes we're there yet, but I won't tell you where.'" (Phil Frankenfeld, Washington)

Fan Fail Fee: To encourage cheering, charge ticket holders \$2 each time the home team is scored on. (Kevin Tingley)

Doctors' offices could add a surcharge if you want a gown that ties in the back. (Roy Ashley)

For an additional \$7.50, the proctologist will give you a souvenir photo of your colonoscopy. (Kathleen DeBold)

When airline toilet charges do get instituted, there can be alternative "personal waste" bags to be used behind a curtain in the back. Passengers must take their bags with them when they leave. (Mark Asquino, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea)

A manhandling charge for the extra effort it takes to damage your checked bag. (Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

Airline barf bags are now \$3 and

you'd better have exact change ready! (Frank Mann, Washington)

On cruise ships, premium lifeboats could come with plasma TV screens and free WiFi. (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

\$50 constituent service fee: Some new members of Congress, noting that voters elected them to "scale back government," remind citizens of this when they call the office. (Mark Asquino)

To reduce traffic congestion, charge motorists \$1 for stopping at red lights. (Kevin Tingley)

Traffic camera film development fee. It's needed for the rush processing. (Jonathan Hardis, Gaithersburg)

Delivery of Washington Post Style Invitational Loser magnets will henceforth require a \$5 fee to defray "administrative costs." (Free for Amazon Prime subscribers!) (Nan Reiner, Alexandria)

AND SOME TRUE STORIES

A 30-day trial of antivirus software with every copy of Windows 8. (Thad Humphries, Washington, Va.)

Airlines blasting the air conditioner and then charging for a blanket. (Jennifer Dickey)

A Seattle movie theater charges a \$3 "amenity fee" not to play commercials before the movie. (Jane Auerbach, Los Angeles)

A 1991 Wall Street Journal article reported that some companies were targeting special mailings to people who had signed up to be taken off junk-mail lists: "Their mailboxes would be wonderfully uncluttered," said one leading data executive." (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Still running — deadline Monday night: Our Bob Staake cartoon caption contest. See bit.ly/invite1096.

POST PUZZLER

No. 240

BY TRIP PAYNE EDITED BY PETER GORDON • FIREBALLCROSSWORDS.COM

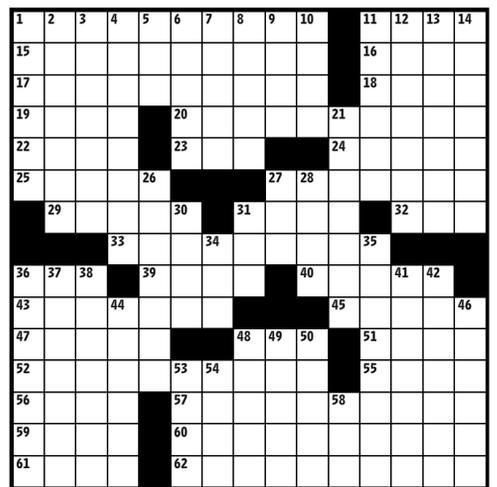
ACROSS
 1 Flaky sort
 11 K's lower them
 15 Islander player of note
 16 Serious attention
 17 Troubled
 18 Waistline-friendly
 19 Pugsley's creator
 20 Businesses that are constantly folding
 22 Ranges of knowledge
 23 Start of a Faulkner title
 24 Scope user
 25 Used for support, in a way
 27 Event with a hare
 29 Blue-white supergiant
 31 They're close
 32 Tacit agreement
 33 Green goddess dressing ingredient
 36 Scotland's longest river
 39 Kaplan preps people for them

DOWN
 1 Dowsing rods, essentially
 2 Flaky sort

3 It falls between adagio and moderato
 4 Carriages used at presidential funerals
 5 Athlete who sells a line of Big Easy wines
 6 Literally, "baked"
 7 What reiki practitioners read
 8 Uno + due + tre + quattro
 9 Petro-Canada rival
 10 Author Gerritsen who created the characters Rizzoli and Isles
 11 Patisserie offering
 12 Highest-grossing film of 1988

13 Like the Queen Mary's interior
 14 Fumes
 21 Craigslist alternative, perhaps
 26 Period before the Quaternary
 27 Org. with the motto "God, home, and country"
 28 Designer for Jackie
 30 Cheat
 31 Linux runners, sometimes
 34 Hi follower
 35 One of the heroines of an 1868 novel
 36 Part of TMNT

37 Like some tans
 38 Pound sound
 41 Révolution française goal
 42 Physical performers
 44 What numbers after some colons represent
 46 Blocks
 48 Smooth
 49 Roxanne's boss on "L.A. Law"
 50 Vandalized, in a way
 53 ____ Club
 54 Go to the other extreme?
 58 Citizens United focus, for short



Answer to last week, No. 239

W I T H F R I E N D S F L U
 I N E E D A B R E A K I O N
 C L E A N E N E R G Y L I S
 C O N V Y A D A M W E S T
 A C E Y E D D M E A S L Y
 N O R D I Q U E A N N U A L
 S U C R E D I N E
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 E S S S A N D B L A S T E R

HOROSCOPE

BY JACQUELINE BIGAR

HAPPY BIRTHDAY | NOV. 9: This year you get involved with many new experiences and let go of the heaviness of recent years. A newfound levity seems to attract new friends. If you are single, you won't have any difficulty meeting someone you would like to date. A big romance is most likely to enter your life from mid-summer 2015 on. If you are attached, the two of you enjoy your time together now more than ever. People who don't know you often mistake you for a newlywed couple.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
 You naturally draw others toward you; they are attracted to your energy. A partner might be out of sorts. Find out what is going on, but don't push.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
 You might experience a need to make your home more "yours," or perhaps you'll choose to purchase a new item. Others feel naturally comfortable in your home.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
 Your charm attracts many people. You'll have your eye on one specific individual. Communication may reveal another side to this person.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
 Take the day off. Only do what you want for a change. You don't need to remain responsive to

someone whom you would prefer to ignore.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
 You'll discover once more that you are most content with many people around. Your humor helps others relax.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
 Make it a point to visit with an older friend or relative whom you don't see often. Speak your mind in a caring way.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
 Visualize more of what you want. The first step: looking at the big picture. You will gain a better understanding of a key person as a result.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
 Deal with someone directly and compassionately. One-on-one relating will increase in

importance, though there may be some awkward moments along the way.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
 Others will seek you out, perhaps to encourage you to change or adjust your plans. The spontaneity around you might have you hiking miles away from home without giving it a second thought.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
 You might be in the mood to catch up on errands, visit the gym or maybe start holiday shopping. You enjoy having time off from everyone occasionally. Make it a regular thing.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
 Your imagination will run the show today. A family member or loved one might wish that you would be a little more relaxed than you seem to be.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
 Tension builds at home. Your energy might be in conflict with someone else. Pace yourself in order to get as much done as you can. Invite an older friend or family member over.

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Struggle to define unique relationship

Ask Amy

AMY DICKINSON

Dear Amy: I am a single, straight woman in a deep but nonsexual and nonromantic relationship with a single, gay man. We share living space and spend much of our free time together, including with each other's families. We consider ourselves family, though certainly a very nontraditional one.

Whenever I introduce him to someone who doesn't know our relationship, I have a hard time explaining who he is to me without going into detail. To say he's my best friend is true, but that doesn't go far enough. To say he's my "special" friend or my significant other, gives a sense of a romantic or sexual relationship that just isn't there. Can you help me?

Grace to His Will

I often receive queries from people seeking to describe a relationship that is challenging to describe, whether it is calling an elderly consort "my boyfriend," a beloved stepfather "my parent" or a former mother-in-law "still a good friend."

I don't think we should put so much pressure on ourselves to describe complicated relationships in order for every person to understand exactly

what's going on the instant he or she meets someone. One pleasure of getting to know people is the slow unfolding of understanding: "Oh, you two are like 'Will and Grace' or 'Niles and Frasier' or 'Bert and Ernie.'" Or, you two are a whole new thing altogether.

Introducing each other using only your names is fine at the outset. I'm sure readers will want to weigh in.

Dear Amy: "Irritated Sister" wrote to you complaining about the pressure to donate to her nephew's school fundraiser. I agreed with her choice to donate in a different way other than buying products. Many of these fundraisers are set up so a tiny percentage of the money raised goes to the school.

Irritated Too

My main concern is that adults were fighting about this, while the child, who was allegedly raising this money, had no role.

Dear Amy: Your attitude toward the woman signing her letter "Irritated Sister" was very irritating to me. Many of us are sick to death of the pressure to "buy" wrapping paper, cookies, pretzel and pizza dough, etc. from family members for school

fundraisers. These fundraising efforts are obnoxious, and the organization doesn't even receive much money from the sale. I don't blame this woman for being irritated, and for you to call her a name like "irritating" is just rude.

Disgusted

Several readers agreed with your assessment of my answer. However, my choice of words was an attempt to describe the letter-writer's behavior and that of her family members — undermining each other, overfunctioning and basically having a major dispute.

Based on the hundreds of responses I have received about the larger issue, there is a clear consensus that these fundraising efforts are annoying and a waste of effort and money. Organizations may need to find other more organic ways to engage their families where a higher percentage of the money raised stays in the community.

Amy's column appears seven days a week at www.washingtonpost.com/ advice. Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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