

The Style Invitational

WEEK 193: ASK BACKWARDS VIII



BY BOB STAAKE FOR
THE WASHINGTON POST

David Letterman's Top-Two List	101 Damnations	Bob Dole & Grigori Rasputin, the Mad Monk	A Man, a Plan, a Root Canal
The Great Taco of Versailles	Time, Newsweek and Scrooge McDuck	Caffeinated Water	Bacteria From Mars
: -)%	Those Milk Mustache Ads	The Fonz, but not the Pope	The Tomahawk Chop
Cool "Disco" Edward Pennington IV	Dot Com	Mary Lou Retton's Smile	Bagels and Logs

This Week's Contest: You are on "Jeopardy!" Here are the answers. What are the questions? Easy enough, except this week there is a twist. For months now we have been getting letters from ticked-off citizens who accuse us of favoritism in the selection of entries to be published: These persons point out that the same 20 or so names keep appearing and the only possible explanation for that fact, as they see it, is that the Czar has abandoned a merit-based selection system in favor of one in which he chooses only his cronies, his lovers, those persons who mail in bribes, etc. Let's put it to a test: This week, we ask that anyone who has won this contest, or has been a runner-up, at least three times enter under a fictitious name and address.

Runners-up, as always, receive the coveted Style Invitational Loser's T-shirt. Honorable Mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Winners will be selected on the basis of humor and originality. Mail your entries to The Style Invitational, Week 193, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, fax them to 202-334-4312 or submit them via Internet to this address: losers@access.digex.net. Internet users: Please indicate the week number in the "subject" field. Entries must be received on or before Monday, Dec. 2. Please include your address and phone number. Winners will be announced in three weeks. Editors reserve the right to alter entries for taste, humor or appropriateness. No purchase necessary. The Faerie of the Fine Print & the Ear No One Reads wishes to thank David Genser of Vienna for today's Ear No One Reads, and to continue to solicit headlines for Buchwald's Turkey. Only three days to go. Employees of The Washington Post and their immediate families are not eligible for prizes.

REPORT FROM WEEK 190,

in which you were asked to come up with Dilbert-like principles for the workplace.

- ◆ Fourth Runner-Up: **When management defends the latest boneheaded policy by saying it was a "board decision," refrain from asking, "Ouija or dart"?** (Sandra Hull, Arlington)
- ◆ Third Runner-Up: **It is advised to check with your company's general counsel before renting out your office on nights and weekends for cockfights.** (Joseph Romm, Washington)
- ◆ Second Runner-Up: **The only way to win the monthly suggestion-box award is to submit an idea so trivial that no one on the suggestion committee could possibly object to it: e.g., "Keeping Wite-Out caps securely fastened would save almost \$10 per quarter in leakage."** (David Genser, Vienna)
- ◆ First Runner-Up: **The smoking lounge is provided for the short-term use of employees and is not for the curing of hams, kippers or other processed meats.** (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)
- ◆ *And the Winner of the Journal of Phrenology:*
Never photocopy your face immediately after a colleague has photocopied his or her buttocks. (John Kammer, Herndon)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

An effective strategy to cure the jerk in the next cubicle of using the speaker phone to retrieve his voice mail is to enlist a friend with a deep, masculine voice to leave tearful messages for the jerk, begging him for one more chance to make their relationship work and promising to do all those special things he likes if he will only love him again. (Sandra Hull, Arlington)

To avoid being noticed, change shoes before extended stays in the bathroom. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

Don't request to participate in the mentor/protege program by stating a preference for "an attractive Asian or Hispanic, 18 to 25." (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

Burning your bridges on the way up the ladder makes for a quick and painless fall. (John Kammer, Herndon)

Any deviation from the company's "Valuing Diversity" policy will not be tolerated. (Sarah Worcester, Bowie)

Taking crap from your supervisor and co-workers is taxable income. The IRS will assess you for it at the equivalent volume and expense of fine-grade nitrogen-rich fertilizer. (John Kammer, Herndon)

The only thing you have to fear is everything. Even fear itself. Boo. (John Kammer, Herndon)

If you wish to keep your boss happy with your work, it is necessary to agree with him no matter what he says. Even if it means saying, "Yes, sir, toilet seats DO make excellent belts, don't they?" Or, "Yes, I, too, believe the universe was created by a giant turtle named Wallace Lumpkin Jr." (Jonathan Hartman, Oakton)

Try to do at least one thing so badly every day that no one will ever ask you to do it again. (Nick Pishvanov, Springfield)

Refrain from asking your building's security guards if they've ever shot anyone with their walkie-talkies. (Stephen Dudzik, Silver Spring)

◆ Never recommend a land war in Asia.

(Robert McNamara, Washington; Russell Beland, Springfield)

You can avert any pending crisis by inverting the tri-polar plasma injectors and realigning the phase modulators, unless of course you are not working on a starship. (John Kammer, Herndon)

No one knows how to "add toner." It is done in the middle of the night, by gnomes. If you are a gnome, Xerox is hiring. (David Genser, Vienna)

If your workspace is a cubicle, it is best to have an office romance with a very short, preferably very quiet, person. (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

There seems to be some confusion about what attire is proper for Dress Down Fridays.

Appropriate: jeans, open-necked sports shirts, tank tops. Inappropriate: professional wrestling costumes. (Earl Gilbert, La Plata)

When you are trying for a big promotion, try resigning from your current job to show everyone how serious you are about the new job!

(Bob Dole, Russell, Kan.; Russell Beland, Springfield)

An attractive framed portrait of your family is a positive addition to your work space. If your loved ones are not attractive, use the photo that came with the frame. (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

People who hold open elevator doors while they finish a conversation may be killed, should the opportunity arise. (David Genser, Vienna)

Disregard the spellchecker's suggestion to use "bestialities" in place of "biosolids" on your report to the EPA. (Paul Kocak, Syracuse)

If you use the office fax machine for lots of personal things, you might want to send them under a pseudonym. (Buster "Buss" Reland, "Fieldspring," "Va.")

◆ And Last: **If you don't want to be fired, start coming up with better contest ideas.**

(Russell Beland, Springfield)

Next Week: **Going Through A Phrase**