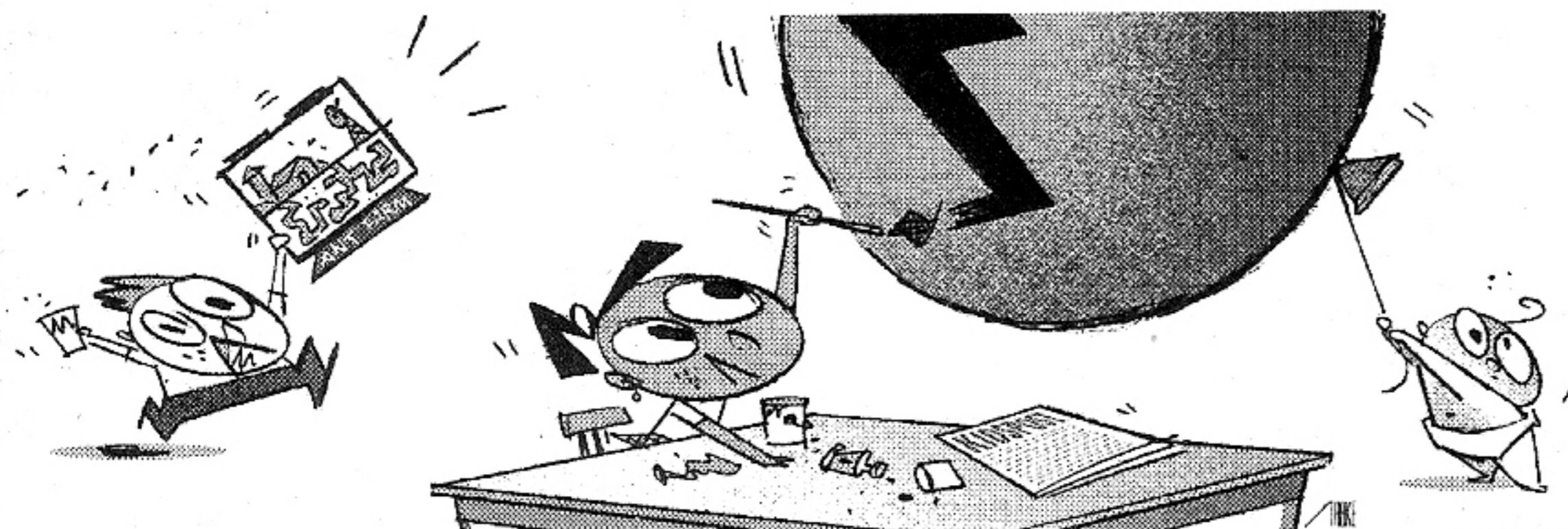


The Style Invitational

Week XIII: Greasy Kids Tough

How KidsPost might have covered the Monica Lewinsky scandal:

Sometimes, when a man and a woman love each other very, very much, the man gets impeached.



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

How KidsPost might have covered the Hindenburg disaster:

Here's an experiment you can do right at home! Blow up a big balloon. Next, paint a swastika on one side. A swastika is sort of like an X with feet. Okay, now take a bunch of ants in a Dixie cup and tape it to the bottom of the balloon. They're the people. Now ask mom or dad for a safety pin . . .

How KidsPost might have covered the Roxanne Pulitzer trial:

Lots of kids play the trumpet. Some grown-ups play it in a special way . . .

This Week's Contest

is based on KidsPost, the spunky new feature at the back of the Style section. Every weekday, KidsPost tries to explain current events to children between the ages of 9 and 13. KidsPost writers must walk a fine line: They must be simple but not condescending. They must be interesting yet educational. They must be informative, yet hands-on friendly. They must be aggressively evenhanded—deferential to all possible interpretations of facts, lest parents accuse them of political indoctrination. It's a toughie, but it seems to be working great. We

think this idea is long overdue, and wonder how KidsPost might have covered important news events of the past. That's your job, as in the examples above. Take any news event from history, recent or ancient, large or small, and rewrite it in 100 words or fewer as it might have appeared in KidsPost. (It can simply be the start of a story.) Your story should read as though it was written at the time the event occurred. First-prize winner gets an antique T-shirt commemorating the famous historical meeting between Elvis Presley and Richard Nixon, a \$40 value.

First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-Shirt. The Uncle's Pick wins the yet-to-be designed but soon-to-be-coveted "The Uncle Loves Me" T-shirt. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, or by e-mail to losers@washpost.com, or by U.S. mail to The Style Invitational, Week XIII, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. Deadline is Monday, May 1. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and a daytime or evening telephone number. E-mail entries must include the week number in the message field. Contests will be judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Editors reserve the right to edit entries for taste or content. Results will be published in four weeks. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes.

REPORT FROM WEEK IX,

in which we asked you to heed Al Gore's call for a return to "plain English" in public communication by finding direct quotations in the newspaper and rewriting them into "plain English."

Many people did not seem to understand what we meant by a "direct quotation." Quoting directly from a newspaper story is not necessarily a direct quotation. "A direct quotation is something uttered aloud by a person and contained between quotation marks," explained the Czar of the Style Invitational. This error disqualified several otherwise worthy entries, the best of which was by Sue Lin Chong of Washington, who lifted the following line of prose from Miss Manners: *Surely we have the right to assume whatever appearance we wish without suffering for it.* Sue Lin's plain English translation: *Stop laughing at me because I wear a bustle.* Also, Greg Arnold of Herndon lifted this line from an advertisement: *It's The Biggest Furniture Giveaway Ever!* His plain English version: *We're open.*

◆ Fourth Runner-Up:

"We hope this will be the first of many such ventures. The internationalization of baseball has begun." —Commissioner Bud Selig, on Major League Baseball opening its regular season in Japan.
Plain English version: **"We'll put a team in Ulan Bator before the D.C. area sees one again."** (Bruce W. Alter, Fairfax Station; Elliott Jaffa, Arlington)

◆ Third Runner-Up:

"I'm not proposing tax relief because it's the popular thing to do, I'm proposing it because it's the right thing to do." —George W. Bush.
Plain English version: **"I'm proposing it because it's a right popular thing to do."** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

◆ And the winner of the U.S.S.R. tour books:

"It feels like nothing, actually." —Cybermagnate Michael Saylor, on what it's like to lose more than a billion dollars in one day of stock reversals.
Plain English version: **"I can't feel my legs. I can't feel my legs!"** (Martin Bredeck, Community, Va.)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

"Couples lead such busy lives, they hardly have time for a weekend anymore, so we thought, why not an afternoon . . ." —Carla Caccavale, spokeswoman for a Manhattan hotel that offers 30-minute room rental.
Plain English version: **"Do I have to spell it out to you? We have Magic Fingers and mirrors on the ceiling, okay?"** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

"The Japanese take their baseball very seriously." —Mark Grace, Cubs first baseman.
Plain English version: **"After he dropped a fly ball, I was not expecting their right fielder to disembowel himself."** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

"Attractive engineer, DHM, 39, honest, successful, ISO S/DPF, 29-40 for companionship."
Plain English version: **"I am a pathetic geek. ISO someone who can calculate π to the 15th decimal place and wants to cuddle in the warm flicker of my Unix mainframe while we contemplate the integration of the natural logarithm to the x-power, (je-, get it? Ha ha!)"** (Cheryl Davis, Arlington)

"This era does not reward people who struggle in vain to redraw borders with blood." —President Clinton, on Pakistani TV.
Plain English version: **"This era only rewards people who successfully redraw borders with blood."** (Beth Baniszewski, Columbia)

"We need to seize the moment available to us to set down themes for the election." —Karl Rove, political strategist for George W. Bush.
Plain English version: **"We need to think up some themes quick."** (Jennifer Hart, Arlington; Mike Genz, La Plata)

"Bush must reposition the issue environment." —A Gore spokesman on the weakness of a tax cut as an issue for Bush.
Plain English version: **"Yes, I know my guy has habits for a return to plain English, but old called die hard."** (Mike Genz, La Plata; Russell Beland, Springfield)

"If no adults smoke as a result of cracking down on youth smoking, we are prepared to accept that we will invest in other businesses." —A Philip Morris executive, reacting to an anti-smoking campaign.
Plain English version: **"If we have to, we will send dime bags of crack cocaine to your children."** (Robin D. Grove, Laurel)

"We can play a lot better than we played today. We could have finished more of our chances on offense, and passed better." —Northern High School girls' lacrosse player, commenting on the team's 13-1 victory over the Patuxent High team.
Plain English version: **"We wanted to stomp them into the ground until the life oozed out of their senseless, twitching, drooling bodies."** (Mike Genz, La Plata)

◆ Second Runner-Up:

"I am okay. I am capable. There is no one exactly like me." —Students reciting a motivational pledge in a high school self-esteem class in Charlotte.
Plain English version: **"I am okay. I am capable. There is no one exactly like me aside from the 20 other people saying the same thing."** (James Pierce, Charlottesville)

◆ First Runner-Up:

"We need a change. A cold brain means sober calculations." —Oleg Makeyev, a Russian voter, on the icy personality of Boris Yeltsin's successor.
Plain English version: **"We need a change. A sober brain means sober calculations."** (David Genser, Arlington)

"My staff can tell you I have been complaining about this for months." —Mayor Anthony Williams on the problems with cable construction underneath District roadways.
Plain English version: **"Nobody ever listens to me."** (Mike Genz, La Plata)

"Want some focaccia?" —A San Francisco cab driver to a man who has just entered his taxi.
Plain English version: **"Hey, sailor."** (Brian Broadus, Charlottesville; Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

"Now, I realize this could be a guy's ultimate fantasy, but I have to wonder if we're just looking for trouble." —Married man asking Carolyn Hax what he should do now that his wife's female friend wants to engage in a *ménage à trois*.
Plain English version: **"Now, I realize this could be a guy's ultimate fantasy, but I have to wonder if my wife is a lesbian."** (Joseph Romm, Washington)

"It's a happy thought which gave us a satisfactory general term and philologically manageable stem upon which to base all the new nouns and adjectives that physiologists and organic chemists will soon need." —An endocrinologist after a 1930s brainstorming session with colleagues, resulting in the decision to base the names of female hormones on the word "estrus," which means "gadfly," "frenzy," "crazy" and "insane."
Plain English version: **"We endocrinologists are men."** (Joseph Romm, Washington)

"He feels very badly about this." —Orioles VP Syd Thrift, describing a young pitcher who was sent to the minors.
Plain English version: **"He feels very bad about this."** (Russell Beland, Springfield)

"Soldiers are expected to keep their sexual orientation private." —U.S. Army Capt. Kevin Reszka.
Plain English version: **"Straight male soldiers are expected to openly lust after members of the opposite sex. Straight female soldiers are expected to lust after members of the opposite sex. Gay soldiers are expected to keep their sexual orientation private."** (Beth Benson, Lanham)

◆ The Uncle's Pick:

"Your challenge is to take any direct quotation from any article in today's Washington Post and translate it into 'plain English,' as in the examples above." —the Czar of the Style Invitational
Plain English version: **"Your challenge is to take any direct quotation from any article in today's Washington Post and make it sarcastic and insulting."** (Michael Shriro, Richardson, Tex.)

(The Uncle Explains: Because I think it better to say nothing than to speak ill of others, I shall observe only that Mr. Shriro is welcome at my dinner table any time.)

Next Week: Eastwood Ho