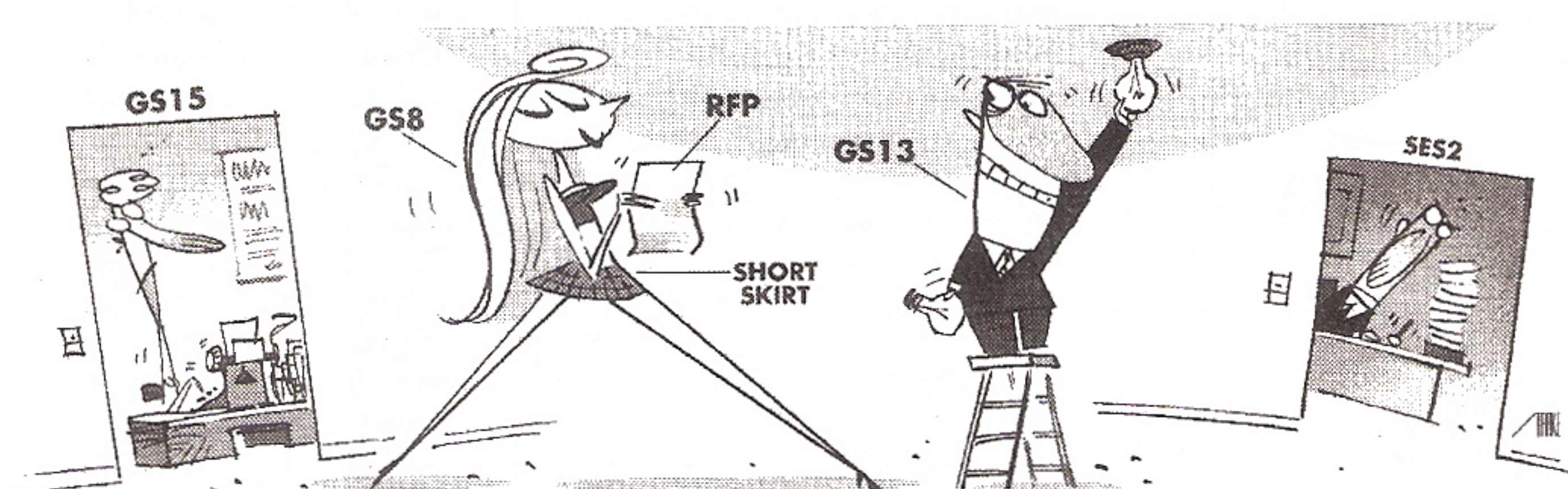


The Style Invitational

Week LIV: By Jingo



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Q: How many Step 4 GS-13s does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A: Only one, but you'd need at least a Step 3 GS-15 to draft the RFP for incandescent illumination devices, and a Step 1 GS-8 in a very short skirt to persuade an SES 2 to approve the expenditure!

This week's contest was created in response to an alarming development. For the first time ever, more than half the published entries (below) were submitted by foreigners—persons who live outside the Washington Post circulation area. Because The Style Invitational is the only remaining pure meritocracy on Earth, where choices are made entirely on the basis of humor, the Czar was powerless to prevent this.

This week's contest:

Come up with a joke that could be written only by a Washingtonian, and understood only by the same. First-prize winner gets an astonishing prize we recently purchased in West Virginia: a framed tableau featuring an 1890s photograph of two men with comical Smurf-like haircuts, a sprig of faux mountain laurel, buttons, and a small tin of laxatives, all mounted on a cloth doily. It is, trust us, priceless.

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 shockingly ugly "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 LIV, c/o The Washington Post, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071. Deadline is Monday, Feb. 12. 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 subject 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 L,

in which we postulated that English has male and female nouns, and asked you to assign a gender to nouns of your choice, and explain your reason.

◆ Third Runner-Up: **Detective Novel—f.**, because you're not supposed to peek at its end the minute you pick it up. (Arthur Litoff, Dillsburg, Pa.)

◆ Second Runner-Up: **Swiss Army Knife—m.**, because even though it appears useful for a wide variety of work, it spends most of its time just opening bottles. (Martin Bredeck, Hybla Valley)

◆ First Runner-Up: **Kidneys—f.**, because they always go to the bathroom in pairs. (John P. McDermott, Mount Pleasant, S.C.)

◆ And the winner of the deer that poops jellybeans:

Inflatable doll—m., because you can dress it up but you can't take it anywhere. (J.F. Martin, Naples, Fla.)

◆ Honorable Mentions:

Penlight—m., because it can be turned on very easily, but isn't very bright. (Mike Genz, La Plata)

Chad—f., when pregnant. **m.**, when hanging. (Tom Berson, Deland, Fla.; John Cogburn, Southlake, Tex.)

Hammer—m., because it hasn't evolved much over the last 5,000 years but it's handy to have around and is good for killing spiders. (Cindi Rae Caron, Lenoir, N.C.)

Tire—m., because it goes bald and often is over-inflated. (Jonathan Paul, Garrett Park)

Hot air balloon—m., because to get it to go anywhere you have to light a fire under it. And, of course, there's the hot air part. (Susan Thompson, Rockville)

Ketchup bottle—m., because it will give you what you want as long as you spank it first. (Or is that just the men I know?) (Sandra Hull, Arlington)

Pen—m., because anytime you get your hands on a good one, you lose it right away, but the cheap pieces of crap seem to hang around forever. (Beth Baniszewski, Columbia)

Web page—f., because it is always getting hit on. (Holly Hacker, St. Louis)

Web page—m., because you have to wait for it to reload. (Holly Hacker, St. Louis)

Soap—m., because it is often in a bar, it's slippery when in hot water, and it can be quickly worked into a lather by rubbing it. (Jennifer Hart, Arlington)

Hourglass—f., because over time, the weight shifts to the bottom. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

Shoe—m., because it is usually unpolished, with its tongue hanging out. If it's not a sneaker, it's often a loafer. And you want to put a sock in it. (Judith E. Cottrill, Bronx, N.Y.)

Copier—f., because once turned off, it takes a while to warm up. Because it is an effective reproductive device when the right buttons are pushed. Because it can wreak havoc when the wrong buttons are pushed. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon; Mel Loftus, Holman, Wis.)

Department store—f., because it has more than three pair of shoes. (Russell Beland, Springfield)

Magic 8 Ball—m., because it gives monosyllabic answers that usually indicate it did not pay attention to your question. (Cindi Rae Caron, Lenoir, N.C.)

Knives—m., because whether sharp or dull they will always cut the cheese. (Cindi Rae Caron, Lenoir, N.C.)

Ziploc bags—m., because they hold everything in, but you can always see right through them. (Cindi Rae Caron, Lenoir, N.C.)

Sponges—f., because they are soft and squeezable and retain water. (Cindi Rae Caron, Lenoir, N.C.)

Molecules—f., because without them, you'd be nothing. (Cindi Rae Caron, Lenoir, N.C.)

Critic—f. What, this needs to be explained? (Chris Hill, Santa Fe)

Subway—m., because it uses the same old lines to pick up people. (Howard Walderman, Columbia)

Calendar—f., because it is good at helping you remember birthdays. And because once a month, it flips. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

Tupperware—m., because it holds things in tightly, and when it does finally open up to you, it burps. (Jean Sorensen, Herndon)

Black hole—m., because it is one of the densest objects in the universe. (Bob Kopac, Poughkeepsie)

Tangerine—f., because it is a little tart, a little thin-skinned, and falls to pieces remarkably easily. (Zora Margolis, Washington)

The Style Invitational—f., because no matter how funny or clever I am, it ignores me. (Brendan Beary, Great Mills)

◆ The Uncle's Pick: **Titmouse—f.**, because it is small and adorable. (Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)
The Uncle Explains: At last, a nice observation. You don't need to denigrate the opposite sex in order to generate laughs.

Next Week: What's Your Story?