

# The Style Invitational

Week CXXI: Ask Backwards



<b>Kukla, Fran &amp; Osama</b>	<b>'I Can't Hear You, You're Breaking Up.'</b>	<b>Abigail, but not Martin, Van Buren</b>
<b>Definitely Not the Bob Levey Diet</b>	<b>Enron and Cream of Mushroom Soup</b>	<b>Fran Drescher and the Norwegian Parliament</b>
<b>It Got Lost In the Translation</b>	<b>Those Paper Toilet Seat Covers</b>	<b>Germany. Only Germany</b>
<b>Rapid I Movement</b>	<b>A Mackerel Lollipop</b>	<b>Velcromagnon Man</b>

**This Week's Contest** You are on Jeopardy! These are the answers. What are the questions? Choose one or more. First-prize winner gets a set of four ebony candlesticks in the shape of a human foot, donated to the Style Invitational by Robin Diallo of Malawi.

First runner-up wins the tacky but estimable Style Invitational Loser Pen. Other runners-up win the coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable mentions get the mildly sought-after Style Invitational bumper sticker. Send your entries via fax to 202-334-4312, or by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com). U.S. mail entries are no longer accepted due to ra-

bid, spit-flying fanaticism. Deadline is Monday, May 27. All entries must include the week number of the contest and your name, postal address and 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.

*Entries may be edited 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. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's contest is by Thos. Witte of Gaithersburg.*

## Report from Week CXVII,

in which we asked you to start a Washington-based blues song.

◆ Third Runner-Up:  
**Whoaa, the cap'n just announced our final approach  
Whoaa, don't matter if you're first class, business or coach,  
My bladder it is bustin' from Co-colas, wine and booze,  
I got them flyin' into Reagan strapped into my seat on the final 30 minutes not  
gettin' up for nothin' nohow blues . . .**

(J.F. Knowles, Springfield)

◆ Second Runner-Up:  
**You know I just got the Washington D.C. acronym blues, un-hunh  
You know I just got the Washington D.C. acronym blues, uh-hunhh,  
YKIJGTWDCABUH . . .**

(Paul Kocak, Syracuse, N.Y.)

◆ First Runner-Up:  
**When my baby done left me, she done took the Jeep  
Now my only woman says "Doors closing (beep)" . . .**

(Mark Young, Washington)

◆ And the winner of the Japanese-language story of Dodgers pitcher Hideo Nomo:  
**Well, that man who is my neighbor, I thought he was my fren.  
Yeah, that man who is my neighbor, I done thought he was my fren.  
Then he put up that basketball hoop in his driveway flatly contrary to the terms  
and covenants of the Homeowner Association protocols,  
And now that ol' litigation never end . . .**

(Bob Dalton, Arlington)

◆ Honorable Mentions  
**Sittin' with the Statehood Party  
Waitin' for the Congress to act.  
I'm jes sittin' with the Statehood  
Party  
Waitin' for Congress to act.  
City's got a better chance o' gettin'  
the Texas Rangers back.**

(Howard Walderman, Columbia)

**Well, he's crossin' the median, no  
median gonna impede 'im  
Well, he's crossin' that ol' med'n, and  
he's doing it speedin'  
He's stopping with impunity cause he  
got immunity,  
I got the drivin' behind a diplomat  
who don't give a damn blues.**

(Howard Walderman, Columbia)

**Oh, I'm a hard-workin' man,  
And sometimes that's a hard thing to  
be.  
Ohhh, I'm a hard-workin' man,  
And sometimes that's a hard thing to  
be.**

**Well, a senior partner just asked me  
to analyze the impact of Sec.  
3407 (b) of the Tazuin-Dingell  
Bill (as amended),  
And I'm wonderin' why I ever got my  
law degree.**

(Bob Dalton, Arlington)

**Sat-dee night in Georgetown, they  
got some real hot lovers.  
Welllll, Sat-dee night in Georgetown,  
they got some real hot lovers.  
Gotta wear me a hard hat down there,  
cause they also got some real  
hot flyin' manhole covers.**

(Bill Moulden, Frederick)

**Oooh, the streets they're all a-closin'  
So you can exercise free speech.  
Oooh, the streets they're all a-closin'  
So you can exercise free speech.  
You complain about this nation and  
the scourge of globalization,  
but how 'bout my right of  
transportation,  
'Cause I got the get outta my way I  
gotta get to work now blues.**

(Cynthia L. Gilman, Alexandria)

**I asked for some water, but she gave  
me gasoline,  
I jus' want a little water, but that  
mama poured out gasoline,  
Don' seem we'll ever get no  
alternative fuel vehicle while  
EPA run by that mean ol' Miss  
Christine.**

(Peyton Coyner, Afton, Va.)

**I drive with two hands, but you got to  
have a third,  
Me, I drive with two hands, but you  
yourself got to have a third,  
How else you drive, use the phone, cut  
me off, do your makeup, eat  
breakfast and flip me the bird?**

(John Bauer, Gaithersburg)

**Because of recent cutbacks, well the  
bossman took my DSL away,  
Lawd, without my high-speed Internet I  
just can't make it through the day.  
So now I'm slogging through my work at  
56K.**

(Dave Zarrow, Herndon)

**Well, the Post it leans to the left,  
And the Times it leans to the right,  
When I want unbiased news there ain't  
no paper in sight.  
I got the blues, the whose news views to  
choose blues.**

(Seth Brown, Williamstown, Mass.)

**I been working for the gummint  
All my live-long life.  
Oh yeah workin' for the gummint  
My whole live-long life  
And let me tell you mister  
She makes a mighty ugly wife.**

(Judith Cottrill, New York)

**Never gonna see no Air and Space  
Museum,  
Lawd, I'm never gonna see me no Air and  
Space Museum  
So many outta-towners, baby,  
I never get to carpe diem . . .**

(Judith Cottrill, New York)

**I'm gettin' off the highway, 'cuz 95 is  
hell,  
I'm getting off the highway, 'cuz 95 is  
hell,  
I'm headin' toward ol' Route 1, but so is  
everyone el'.**

(Tom Witte, Gaithersburg)

**My pappy done tol' me  
Be sure you take enough naps,  
If you do, my pappy done tol' me,  
You not gonna hurl in no foreign head of  
state's laps . . .**

(G.W. Bush, Washington; Milo Sauer, Fairfax)

**My conscience is achin', baby  
'Cause I'm a man that's born to lobby.  
My conscience is achin' real bad, baby  
'Cause I'm a man that's born to lobby  
Don't matter right or wrong, I could  
change the Code of Hammurabi.**

(Sue Lin Chong, Washington)

## MISS MANNERS

Judith Martin

### Is the Finger Bowl All Washed Up?

**A**lthough they are of humble origin and their era of glory is well past, nowadays they will show up only at fancy dinners. Furthermore, they arrive only in time for dessert, make many people feel uneasy and fail to make themselves useful.

Finger bowls: How do they manage, like people of similar characteristics, to hang on socially long after one might think their time had passed?

Miss Manners admits to a sneaking fondness for the old things and the useless ritual that they require. When finger bowls are presented on their little doilies, with the dessert fork and spoon on their respective sides of the underlying plate, she welcomes the pause while diners remember to place the bowl and doily to their left and the silver to the sides of the remaining plate in expectation of being offered dessert.

Unless more basic rituals have been violated during the meal, nobody at a formal dinner should need a finger wash at this point, so the warm water with its pretty petal or two generally remains untouched, as does the doily, which was originally there to be used as a towel. But goodness knows we can all do with a pleasant pause before plowing into dessert.

However, Miss Manners suspects that if finger bowls don't stop scaring people and figure out how to make themselves useful once again, even these remaining nights of theirs are numbered. They could be spending the rest of their lives in the cupboard, sulking.

It is lonely in there. The old-timers who didn't chip or slink off to the flea market faced their loss of grandeur bravely and devised ways to make themselves acceptable in modern times. Even the table cigarette urns managed to reinvent themselves, for heaven's sake. Once they realized that they would never again be required at grand feasts to offer puffs between courses, they pulled themselves together and asked what a small silver cup had to offer under new circumstances.

They got jobs holding potpourri or violets. Some managed to earn back a place at the table,

where they can occasionally be found holding chocolate sticks, perhaps reunited with their old partners, the tiny silver ashtrays, who found employment holding nuts.

Finger bowls could be used for cold soups and desserts, but a false pride keeps them clinging to their old job, even though its purpose is long gone. The custom dates from times when refined people not only ate with their fingers but from shared helpings. You wanted to make awfully sure that your dinner partners washed their hands, under those circumstances, and the best proof was witnessing it being done.

From this humble, not to say suspiciously utilitarian, necessity grew the grand ritual of the ewer and the sewer. The ewer was the basin or pitcher containing scented water for a grand ceremonial of cleaning used fingers, and the person privileged to pour this all over important people was also called the ewer, or ewerer. (The sewer was the mealtime chief of staff, and Miss Manners threw him in here just for good measure.)

Whether people are now washing their hands before coming to the table, Miss Manners cannot say, as she does not care to inspect. They at least mostly leave the table no worse than they arrived.

Occasionally, however, finger foods, such as corn on the cob and asparagus, are served at informal meals. This is where finger bowls could make themselves useful again, not only for mopping up, but for making the ritual again familiar and thus removing the panic from formal occasions.

Or, like others with archaic skills, they could resort to working in the fast food industry, where, despite the pitiful efforts of "towelettes," they are badly needed.

*Feeling incorrect? E-mail your etiquette questions to Miss Manners (who is distraught that she cannot reply personally) at [MissManners@unitedmedia.com](mailto:MissManners@unitedmedia.com), or mail to United Media, 200 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10016.*

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### Richard's Poor Almanac will return.

## ANN LANDERS

Dear Ann:

**My 15-year-old daughter was molested over a period of years when she was a very young child. As soon as we found out, my husband and I put her into therapy, but she never completed her sessions. The man who molested her (a great-uncle) has since died. The counselor has retired.**

**My daughter has no memory of the molestation, but she does recall the counseling sessions. Recently, she asked me why she had to have therapy. I told her we were worried about some anxious behaviors she was exhibiting, such as excessive nail-biting and hair-pulling, which is true. She accepted my explanation without question.**

**My daughter is a happy, well-adjusted child. Should I tell her the truth about the molestation?**

—Concerned Mom in Iowa

The point of therapy is to help a person become happy and well-adjusted. Since your daughter is already at that point, I see no reason to bring up something that might upset her needlessly. Apparently, the therapy sessions were successful. If your daughter should demand more specific answers, by all means, tell her the truth. Meanwhile, don't ask for trouble. Leave it alone.

Dear Ann:

**I know you've heard this story before, but I hope you will help me anyway. I have been seeing a married man for two years. "Dennis" has been separated from his wife during this time, and they have a 5-year-old son.**

**I am annoyed by all the restrictions Dennis puts on our relationship. He won't tell his parents about me, and I am not welcome at family gatherings. If we are together and his mother calls, he moves to another room so she won't accidentally hear me in the background. He doesn't even carry a picture of me in his wallet. He says if his wife learned about my existence, she would cut off access to his son.**

**Last week, I thought I was pregnant, and Dennis was furious. He said under no circumstances did he want me to have a child right now. Fortunately, I was mistaken about the pregnancy.**

**I love Dennis with all my heart, but I am almost 30 years old and want to settle down. Should I issue an ultimatum and insist that he get a divorce? I'm tired of living like this.**

—Still Waiting in Arkansas

You are dating a married man, for Heaven's sake. Why would you expect to be welcomed into his family with open arms?

No matter what Dennis tells you, it is possible he is still living with his wife. Even if he is legally separated, he obviously wants your presence to be kept secret. If you want to be treated like a girlfriend, you ought to date someone who is available. When Dennis is ready to move on, he will get a divorce. Until then, consider him off-limits.

Dear Ann:

**I have been involved with a married man for two years. I dated "Jerry" when we were younger, but we broke up, and I married someone else. I am now divorced and seeing Jerry again. I love him, and he says he loves me.**

**Jerry claims he is separated from his wife. However, I do not have his home phone number, nor have I ever been invited to his apartment. He never takes me anywhere his friends or family socialize. Our time together consists of restaurant meals or candlelit dinners at my place.**

**I know this sounds suspicious, but when I stop taking his calls, Jerry panics. He sends me flowers and candy, and begs me to take him back. I always do. I am certain his marriage is over, yet I am less sure that our relationship is going anywhere. What approach can I use to solidify this arrangement?**

Georgia Peach

The only solid arrangement you are going to have is as his "mistress." Either Jerry is lying about his separation, or he has no intention of making you part of his life. Regardless, he is still married, and you have no business dating him. Disentangle yourself soonest, and move on.

*To find out more about Ann Landers and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at [www.creators.com](http://www.creators.com).*

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## BRIDGE | Frank Stewart

Both sides vulnerable

**NORTH (D)**

♠ A  
♥ 4  
♦ AK 10 8 5 4  
♣ A J 8 7 2

**WEST**

♠ 4  
♥ Q 8 7 6 2  
♦ 9 7  
♣ K 6 5 4 3

**EAST**

♠ 10 8 6 3  
♥ A 10 9 5  
♦ Q J 6 2  
♣ Q

**SOUTH**

♠ K Q J 9 7 5 2  
♥ K J 3  
♦ 3  
♣ 10 9

The bidding:

North East South West  
1 ♦ Pass 4 ♠ Pass  
5 ♠ Pass 6 ♠ All Pass

Opening lead: ♥ 6

**T**he Old Kibitzer, a gentleman in his informative years, shook his head when today's slam failed.

"You must see the problem through the other player's eyes," he told South.

East took the ace of hearts and returned the ten: jack from South, queen, ruff with the ace of trumps. South then took the ace of diamonds, ruffed a diamond and cashed the K-Q of trumps. West discarded, and South had to lose a trump.

"When East leads a second heart," the O.K. remarked, "he's hoping West has the king so dummy's ace must ruff. Unless East thought he might promote a trump trick, he'd lead a trump."

"Take the king of hearts," the O.K. went on, "cash the ace of diamonds, ruff a diamond, go to the ace of trumps and ruff a diamond

with the nine. Draw trumps and get to dummy with the ace of clubs for the good diamonds.

"East could prevail by leading a trump at the second trick, removing a vital entry from dummy."

Do you agree with the Old Kibitzer?

South should indeed try to set up the diamonds instead of ruffing a heart in dummy, crediting East with logical defense, but South can still get home if East leads a trump at Trick Two. South takes the top diamonds, pitching a club, ruffs a diamond and runs his trumps. At the end, West is squeezed: He can't guard both the queen of hearts and the king of clubs.

To beat the slam, East must shift to the queen of clubs. He removes an entry to set up the diamonds—and an entry necessary for the squeeze.

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Next Week: **Just Deux It.**