



CAROLYN HAX

Stand firm in steering clear of in-law's hazardous home

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

Dear Carolyn:
My widowed father-in-law's house is literally a hazard for my two kids. A few examples: He leaves large spray containers of insecticide and weed killer in the dining room. He has lights near the floor, uncovered, with no bulbs. He leaves full buckets of dirty mop water in his kitchen. He leaves power tools on his desk in the living room. My 2-year-old has tried spraying these jugs, putting his fingers in the light sockets, bathing in the mop water, and pulling a chain saw onto his head. I was able to catch him before he did these things, but it scares me. It's all my husband and I can do to keep the kids out of danger when we visit. We've asked his dad to please make the house a little more kid-friendly, otherwise we can't visit. He gets irate and says I should teach my kids (did I mention they are 2 and 3?) to stay out of things that don't belong to them. Am I fair in deciding we can't go to his house anymore, and he needs to visit us (we're only a few miles away)?
Miami

Fairness is not the issue here. Safety is, and you have to protect your kids.

I have to wonder why you're even asking, though, given the almost cartoonish extremes of the hazards. Are you and your husband in agreement about staying away?

Meanwhile, this house sounds like a hazard to your father-in-law. When was the last time he got a thorough checkup?

Carolyn:

We are in agreement but feel guilty about it. In the 15 or so years I've known the man, his house has always been like this. It was just never much of an issue until we had kids. We try as much as possible to get him to visit at our home but to no avail. He will grudgingly come every once in a while and then spend the entire time complaining that we never visit him. I feel bad for him.
Miami again

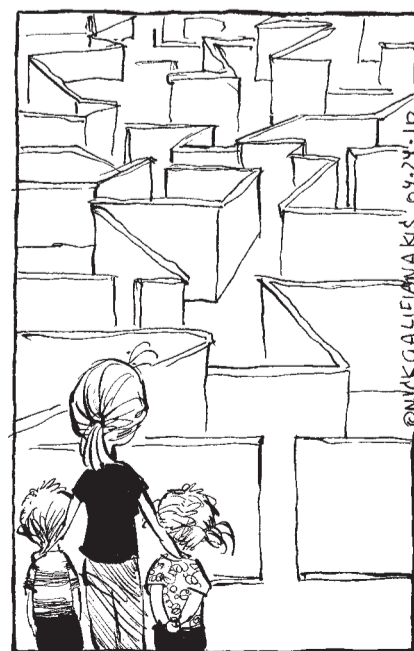
That's good news, that you and your husband aren't working against each other.

But you're both giving your father-in-law way too much power. I can see feeling bad for his inability to act in his own best interests — that is hard to watch. But the circumstances are making it as easy as possible to withhold visits (which is, admittedly, always difficult): He's completely in the wrong, completely unreasonable about it and completely out of line for guilt-tripping you. You have a black-and-white danger issue where so often there's only gray.

Because you obviously want Grandpa in your lives, I would suggest sweetening your invitations (offer rides, for example) and declining his with a set response: "We'd love to come to your house, and we're happy to come help you childproof it." Say it every single time. At minimum, you never validate his argument that you're snubbing him personally. Best case, he actually relents and lets you help him clean up his house — and bring a playpen, some baby gates, etc., that you can store there for future visits. In the bathtub, perhaps.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on www.washingtonpost.com/discussions.

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or tellme@washpost.com.



NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

REPORT FROM WEEK 862

Sometimes it's not enough to be the best: You have to be good, too. And alas, for whatever reason, the contest seeking funny cheers or fight songs for professional and national teams just didn't deliver anything that was truly worthy of a cheap reproduction of "The Thinker" with a bag on its head. Or for that matter, a mug or shirt. However, given their appropriateness to the occasion, and the fact that we want to get rid of them, we award the second prize of the Vancouver Olympics magnet and Flarp Noise Putty to:

For any team in Florida: Goooooo... say, honey, what's the name of the team we like?
(George Smith, Frederick)

POM SCUM: HONORABLE MENTIONS

For the Washington Wizards: (Don't) SHOOT!
(Kevin Dopart, Washington)

Redskins, Redskins, they're our guys! If they can't do it... no surprise.
(Craig Dykstra, Centreville)

Team Canada: Please forgive us if we beat you.
(Christopher Lamora, Arlington)

Baltimore Orioles: Pray for rain!
(Mel Loftus, Holmen, Wis.)

Team Saudi Arabia: We will, we will stone you!
(Peter Metrisko, Gainesville)

Montreal Alouettes: Gimme an Eh!
(Josh Borken, Minneapolis)

Gimme an L! Gimme another L! [edited for space] Gimme an H! What's that spell?

Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch!
(Russell Beland, Fairfax)

Team Mexico baseball: Give us the runs!
(Kevin Dopart)

Team North Korea: 2,4,6,8, let us brutally destroy our enemies and bask in the admira-

tion and glory of our Dear Leader, who is great!
(Mike Gips, Bethesda)

Let's go, Redskins, give a cheer! We just love Coach [add name here].
(Craig Dykstra)

Detroit Red Wings: Watch our team control the puck — the only thing here that doesn't suck.
(Judy Blanchard, Novi, Mich.)

Ain't no payroll high enough, ain't no scandal low enough, ain't no ego wide enough to keep me from cheerin' for you! Go Yankees!
(Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

Hockey's San Jose Sharks: The Sharks will get you, there's no doubt; We'll chew you up and spit you out! (This plan is maybe not so hot: Our teeth are missing — we forgot.)
(Beverly Sharp, Washington)

The Boston Red Sox, best with glove Along with wicked ball and bat To this great team, I give my love Straight from the bottom of my heart. * * It does too rhyme.
(Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)

Next week: It's Post time, or Pun for the Roses

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Week 866: Natalie Portmanteau

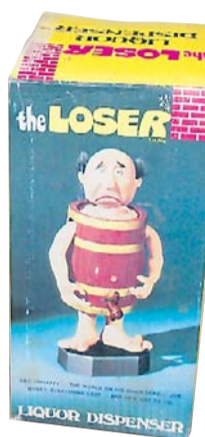
Boy George Gershwain: Composer of "Rhapsody in Lavender."
(Tom Witte)

Thomas Jefferson Clinton: President who penned the famous line "We hold these half-truths to be legally accurate."
(Douglas Riley)

Heimlichtenstein: A small country firmly lodged between Austria and Switzerland.
(Sandra Hull)

This contest, which we did with slight variations in 1998 and 2003, is modeled on the frequent "Jeopardy!" portmanteau category called "Before and After": Begin with a real name; append to it a word, name or expression so that they overlap; and finally define (humorously, of course) the resulting phrase, as in the above examples from the 1998 contest. The spellings don't have to apply accurately to both of the elements; for example, "Mister Rogers and Hammerstein" is fine even though the composer's name is spelled Rodgers. But they must be pronounced the same, and if the spellings are too far off, that's likely to spoil the joke.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives this battery-operated SELF-DISPENSING Loser Liquor Dispenser, donated by Loser Christopher Lamora and put into use at the Losers' Holiday Party at the Empress's palace in January. Push a button and the Loser turns his head back and forth to make sure no one is coming, then turns on the tap of the barrel. And you see where that's conveniently located.



Dribbled, not stirred: The second-place prize.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Loser Magnets (in a TBA new design). First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (Fir Stink for their First Ink). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to losers@washpost.com or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, May 3. Put "Week 866" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contestants are 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 to be published May 22. 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 results was sent by both Andrew Hoernig and Jeff Contompasis; this week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Judy Blanchard.

PUTTING THE RUDE IN ERUDITION

HONORABLE MENTION MIRTH CERTIFICATE

Here's the newest pair of our lusted-after Loser Magnets for honorable mentions. The slogans, submitted in response to a recent request on the online discussion group The Style Conversational, are by, from left, Losers Craig Dykstra and Kevin Dopart, and the magnets were of course designed by Bob Staake, who wins a magnet.

Online discussion Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.

Same passions, new packaging for protests

BY DAVID MONTGOMERY

A decade ago this month, when the nation had so little to worry about, clouds of pepper spray wafted over Washington as thousands of protesters and police shut downtown with fences and blockades of flesh, chains and PVC pipe. Truce was negotiated in the middle of Pennsylvania Avenue between a police commander and a woman dressed as a tree.

On the 10th anniversary, with a crisis around every corner, the protest is this: an anarchist 5K Run on the Bank, tug-of-war on Pennsylvania Avenue, soccer in Dupont Circle, a scavenger hunt and baseball. Same passions, new packaging.

The protesters used MapMyRun.com to devise a race route that was exactly five kilometers.

"Why are we running?" apprentice farmer Molly Adelstein, 28, asked three dozen young people in Meridian Hill Park on Friday afternoon, as she led them through stretches drawn from the yoga sun salutation.

"To destroy capitalism," came the answer from one lanky runner in black shorts and shirt.

Later, 3.1 miles later to be exact, a 4-year-old tourist from suburban Philadelphia named Jackson Phillips had a different question for his mother.

"Why are they shouting?"

"They don't like the bank, so they're yelling at it," Julie Phillips explained.

This rite of Washington spring always raises more questions than it answers.

The action usually centers on Murrow Park, across from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the finance and development bodies that claim to fight poverty and instability but are demonized by globalization skeptics and environmentalists who say they do more harm than good.

April is when the bank and the fund have their spring meetings, and Washington fills with limos and motorcades as diplomats pack the poshest hotels. It's all a fat target for a traveling circus of protesters, who roll into town to fill the psychic space recently vacated by those other carnivals, the tea parties and the gun activists.

But much has changed in the decade since April became the cruelest month for bankers and capitalists. Protester numbers are way down, tactics have morphed, some of the action has gone inside the bellies of the two beasts, which gives everyone leave to declare progress, if not victory.

"The global financial collapse has opened the door for a lot of people to see some critical problems with the system," said Nadine Bloch, a top organizer of the action 10 years ago who, like many of her comrades from back then, has moved on to a more focused role. "It makes our



RUN FOR THE MONEY: Paul T. McCarriar, left, of Portland, Maine, and a man who identified himself as Peter, joined the 5K Run on the Bank on Friday.

DAVINA SMITH FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

message more palatable and less radical."

"It's 10 years more important than it was that we oppose these organizations," said Lacy MacAuley, a lead organizer of this year's protests, who was on the streets as a protester in April 2000.

Rushing police lines and blocking intersections is no longer the thing. The Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks took the sharpest teeth out of American street protests. The protesters needed something besides a dash of violence as catnip for the media.

A coalition convened by a group archly dubbing itself the Self Described Anarchist Collective came up with the three-day "Anticapitalathon": a spoof on corporate sports — and subsidized stadiums, like Washington's ballpark — to liven up the old arguments.

Only two dozen protesters ran the 5K. They had a permit for 200, counting runners and rallyers. They hope for 300 participants over the weekend. The rules of their "convergence space" in Takoma, where meals and workshops take place,

include: "No oppressive behavior... No snitching... Don't be a jackass in the neighborhood, save that for downtown."

As the runners jogged toward Dupont Circle, they chanted "[Expletive] the bank, [expletive] the bank!"

A hotel doorman joined the chorus: "[Expletive] the bank!"

"The IMF is robbing Africa," explained Kaleb Dawit, the doorman, who is of Ethiopian heritage.

Other bystanders were less sympathetic. "I think it's bloody ridiculous," said Bill Rauschelbach, who used to run the Golden Ox restaurant downtown.

Inside the bank and fund headquarters, officials rolled their eyes. "The meaningful dialogue is taking place inside the building, not in the streets," said World Bank spokesman David Theis.

The park had just been cleared of another spectacle, a couple of dozen folks dressed as either bankers or oppressed masses, plus one polar bear, having a tug-of-war over a giant half-penny. The half-penny symbolized a proposed tax on financial transactions to raise billions for

the environment and health care.

Here's the shocker: The IMF is actually studying similar proposals. And some think-tank intellectuals and activists — including Bloch, the top street organizer of a decade ago — have been supplying experts and arguments to support that study inside the IMF.

Rested, the runners went for an "Anti-capitalathon Walking Tour" of downtown, stopping to jeer outside places such as Bank of America, Citibank, Morgan Stanley, Starbucks and hotels housing delegates.

A column of 15 police officers shadowed closely, blocking them from entering any restaurants or hotels.

The police officer in charge, Capt. Jeffrey Herold, was a veteran of that bracing April of 10 years ago. To him, this was new, but familiar.

He took a call. Someone was asking about the protesters' schedule. "We're going to have the anarchist soccer at 10 tonight in Dupont Circle," he said. "And then — we'll see."
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DOONESBURY BY GARRY TRUDEAU

