

The Style Invitational »

REPORT FROM WEEK 811

In which we asked for signs that the economy has hit rock bottom. Only a few people took that to mean that things had finally started to turn around — the best of these was from Jim Lubell of Mechanicsville, Md., who said: "After being told for the past two years that my property wasn't worth \$%&*, I'm finally being told that my property IS worth \$%&*." Most everyone else sent jokes along the line of "The economy is so bad that..."

THE WINNER OF THE INKER

You go into debt to keep up with the loads. (John H. Tuohy, Arlington)

- 2 Al Gore is burning old car tires in his furnace. (JL Strickland, Valley, Ala.)
- 3 Crate and Barrel starts selling crates and barrels. (David Epstein, Potomac)
- 4 The Virgin Mary appears in Akron on a loaf of bread, which is immediately eaten. (Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)

SPLINTERS FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE BARREL: HONORABLE MENTIONS

The dollar is propped up by an emergency loan from Zimbabwe. (Jeffrey Contompasis, Ashburn)

When waiters at snooty restaurants scrape the crumbs off your table with one of those fancy tools, they ask if you would like a birdie bag. (Roy Ashley, Washington)

"I work for the government" is finally a good pickup line in a bar. (Rick Haynes, Potomac)

The Petco flier in the Sunday paper has a page of recipes. (Bridget Goodman, Philadelphia)

The Republicans can't find anyone rich enough to deserve a tax cut. (Cy Gardner, Arlington)

"The Amazing Race" is run entirely in Gaithersburg. (Chuck Smith, Woodbridge)

People in India with broken computers now call here. (Cy Gardner)

"Day financiers" hang out in parking lots hoping to get hired for a day of commodities speculation. (Michael Reinemer, Annandale)

Mattel is asking for a government bailout for its Hot Wheels division. (JL Strickland)

"The Office" replaces highly paid actors with real Dunder Mifflin employees. (Chuck Smith)

NASA announces that free meals will no longer be provided on space shuttle flights. (Mike Czuhajewski, Severn)

McDonald's introduces the Totally Bummed Out Meal. (Mike

Czuhajewski; Toni Gagnon Ross, Alexandria, a First Offender)

The Detroit Pistons change the team name to something more geographically accurate, like the Detroit Squeegee Guys. (Russell Beland, Fairfax)

Mattress companies are making box springs with cash compartments. (Beverley Sharp, Washington)

Hugh Hefner has to scale back to just twins. (Art Grinath, Takoma Park)

Foreign journalists now throw flip-flops at world leaders. (Lee Dobbins, Arlington)

911 now requires a "convenience charge." (Chuck Smith)

Frank McCourt yearns for the good old days. (Barbara Turner, Takoma Park)

Your kid's Career Day speakers include a pencil seller, a repo man and a subsistence small-game hunter. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)

A share of stock in the New York Times costs less than a copy of the New York Times. (David Kleinbard, Jersey City)

The closing bell on Wall Street was melted down for scrap metal. (Sue Lin Chong, Baltimore)

People are actually eating fortune cookies after breaking them open. (Tom Lacombe, Browntown, Va.)

In San Francisco, hollow-eyed men are standing in focaccia lines. (Chuck Smith)

If you open a bank account, they give you a piece of toast. (Kevin Dopart)

The Navy is spending 25 percent of its fuel budget on oars. (Bob Reichenbach, Middletown, Del.)

The Five-Second Rule has been changed to 10 for chocolate and pecans. (Stephen Dudzik, Olney)

A homeowner in Potomac was seen mowing his own lawn. (Larry Yungk, Arlington)

A new ad campaign: "Fancy Feast: It's Not Just for Seniors Anymore." (Chad Pridgen, Marshall, Va.)

Pink slips must be returned for use by the next laid-off employee. (John O'Byrne, Dublin)

And Last: Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place receives General Motors, donated by Detroit, Michigan (Mike Czuhajewski)

Next Week: Rx-Rated Humor, or Doctor My Lies

NEW ON WASHINGTONPOST.COM: THE STYLE CONVERSATIONAL

Starting today, the Empress hosts an ongoing discussion group about The Style Invitational and various other matters of national importance. Talk with her and the Losers online at www.washingtonpost.com/styleconversational.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



BY BOB STAAKE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Week 815: Wittecisms

Twitteronomy: Book 5 of the iPhone Ultra-Condensed Bible

Last Saturday marked yet another Milestone in Brain Cell Waste: The just too perfectly named Tom Witte of Montgomery Village has amassed his 1,000th blot of ink, joining the super-exclusive Double Hall of Fame previously including only Russell Beland and Chris Doyle. It is entirely irrelevant that Chris, Russell and Tom all are or were for many years in the employ of the United States Department of Defense.

Tom, who has been entering the Invitational almost without fail since Week 7 in 1993, has gotten ink in 469 contests and has won the whole thing 21 times. But he

has a specialty: He's a master of the short-form contest, especially those for neologisms, or word-coining. And so we honor him thus, on the collegial suggestion of Dr. Beland: **This week: Create an original word containing — in any order — at least a W, an I, two T's and an E, as in the example above, and define it.** The five letters don't have to appear next to one another.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets — to rectify recent complaints that some Invitational prizes are juvenile and tasteless, and not of the caliber of a newspaper that still has no ads on its front page — the illuminating fine-art-reproduction light switch plate pictured here, donated by 10-time Loser Melissa Yorks of Gaithersburg.



Other runners-up win a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Magnets. 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 11. Put "Week 815" 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. Contests 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 will be published May 30. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. This week's Honorable Mentions name is by Kevin d'Eustachio of Beltsville; the revised title for next week's results is by Chris Doyle of Ponder, Tex.