

BY PAT MYERS

Report from Week 911

in which, in honor of the week number, we asked for humorous ideas for 911 calls or other calls for help. We would have liked to use 911 ourselves, we're afraid, to be rescued from the overwhelmingly lame humor that constituted most of the entries.

THE WINNER OF THE INKER

Caller: Hello, I need the number for the local library.

911: You want 411, not 911.

Caller: Yeah, but the 4-key on my phone is broken.

911: Sorry, but this number is only for emergencies.

Caller: Oh, okay. Help! My 4-key is broken! *(Russell Beland, Fairfax)*

2 Winner of "The Self-Destruction Handbook":

Frantic man: Help, I was preparing Japanese blowfish and may have ingested its fast-acting neurotoxin. . .

911: Please, listen carefully to your options.

Frantic man: Yes? Yes?

911: They have recently changed. To continue in English, press 1 . . . *(Jeff Contompasis, Ashburn)*

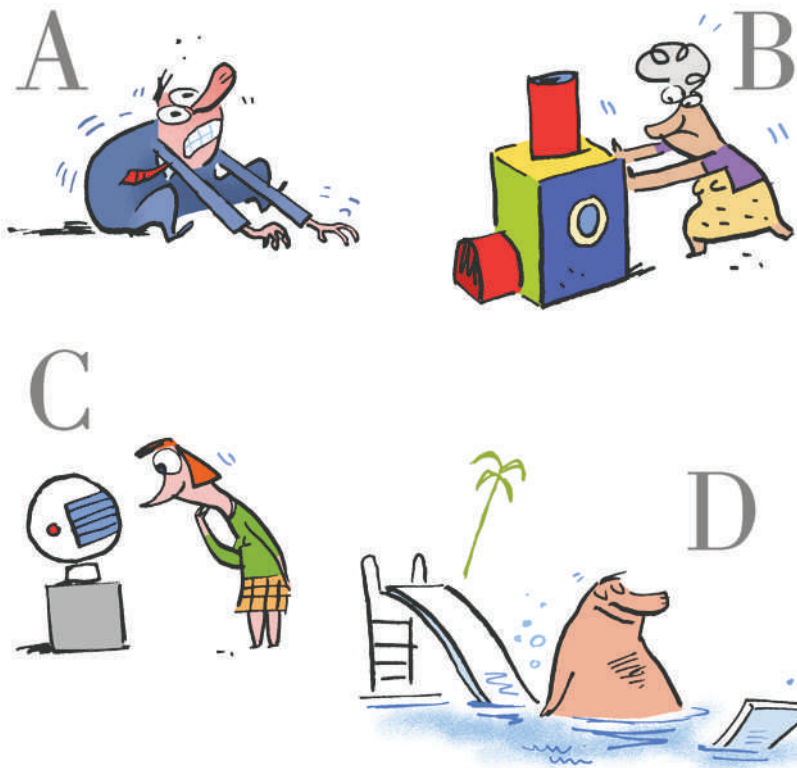
3 Caller: Hello, I have an emergency!

911 operator: (pause) Hey, where did you get this number? *(Art Grinath, Takoma Park)*

4 911: How can I help you?

Caller: These days are gone — I'm not so self-assured! *(Jeff Brechlin, Eagan, Minn.)*

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



Week 915: Picture this

It's one in a venerable line of caption contests in which we ask you to find some glimmer of meaning in various pictorial crazed ramblings by Style Invitational cartoonist Bob Staake, but it's the first Picture This contest since we moved to the Sunday Style section. **This week: Write a caption for any of the cartoons pictured here.** As usual, when several people submit similar ideas for a cartoon, it's the best wording that gets the ink.

Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a package of Pick Your Nose cups, disposable cups with pictures of various noses on them so that when you take a drink, you look as if you have one of these noses. Way cheaper than rhinoplasty, which we are not offering as a prize. Donated by Seriously Recidivist Loser Kevin Dopart.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable mentions a lusted-after Loser magnet. First offenders get a smelly, tree-shaped air "freshener" (Fir Stink for their First Ink). E-mail entries to losers@washpost.com or fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, April 25; results to be published May 15 (May 13 online). Include "Week 915" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it may be ignored as spam. Include your real name, postal address and phone number with your entry. See more rules at washingtonpost.com/styleinvitational. Follow the Empress on Twitter at patmyersTWP. The revised title for next week's results is by Mae Scanlan; this week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Roy Ashley.

STYLE CONVERSATIONAL Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join us at washingtonpost.com/styleconversational

Beyond help: Honorable mentions

Caller: "My husband is paralyzed! He can't seem to get up!"

"Very funny, Marge. I'll take out the trash when I'm ready. Now hang up the damned phone." *(Bird Waring, Larchmont, N.Y.)*

Caller: I was robbed!

911: When did this occur?

Caller: In 2000.

911: For the last time, stop calling, Mr. Gore. *(Jeff Contompasis)*

Caller: Help, I'm stuck in the Metro

Center elevator!

911: Now, stay calm and listen carefully: You need to eat less and exercise more. *(Kevin Dopart, Washington)*

Woman: I need an ambulance right away!

911: Hey, this is 703-555-1212 and 123 Main Street! Is that you, Mom??

Woman: So, if you know the address, how come you never visit? *(Bruce Alter, Fairfax Station)*

Caller: "Ha! You used my trademark again. You owe me another nickel."

911: "Please stop calling, Mr. Giuliani." *(Gary Crockett, Chevy Chase)*

Caller: "My house is being overrun by stink bugs!"

Help line: Okay, what you need to do is first, move to a different part of the country . . . *(Tom Murphy, Bowie)*

Pat Robertson to FEMA: "Help! We need sandbags, boats and other homosexuality readiness equipment immediately!" *(Dixon Wragg, Santa Rosa, Calif.)*

911: What's your emergency?
Roberta Flack: He's singing that

song again, softly! *(Kevin Dopart)*

Caller: Quick, I need to know the square root of 9!

911: You shouldn't call 911 for things like that.

Caller: You could have answered in less time than it took you to tell me you weren't going to tell me.

911: Fine, it's 3.

Caller: See, that WAS faster. Okay, now for Problem 2 . . . *(Russell Beland)*

Next week: Pair-a-phrasing, or Out of this word

ASK AMY | BY AMY DICKINSON

A boyfriend with baggage — lots of it

Dear Amy: I'm worried that my live-in boyfriend might be a hoarder. He's different from the people shown on TV living in waist-high filth. He's very neat and clean, but there are excessive amounts of stuff in every room of the house and in three storage units. There are piles of books, tools, clothes, new dishes — most of it neat and organized.

The kitchen drawers are packed with plastic bags, bottle caps, twist-ties and other useless junk. We have enough plastic cutlery and paper napkins for many, many picnics! He's always incredibly busy and brags about his work ethic.

And while he does work hard, he doesn't seem to finish what he starts. Close friends of mine

hired him to do some work. Now he has way too much stuff in their space, and his work progress is stalled. He has left a trail of unfinished projects and stuff all over town!

I'm really rooting for him to follow through, but what can I do to help? He gets mad whenever I try to talk to him about it. — *Overstuffed*

My amateur guess is that your boyfriend is a hoarder, albeit a tidy one. He could have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), anxiety or a compulsive disorder, which would contribute to his tendency to obsessively collect things. As most of us have seen (due to the

current popular fascination with the obsession), hoarding is tricky. But it can respond to therapy, treatment and very hard work. No "fix" will work for your boyfriend, however, until he pursues answers, and so far he doesn't seem open to the possibilities. You have to decide if you can live with someone with these tendencies. If he doesn't face his problem and work hard to deal with it, the hoarding will likely get worse.

Dear Amy:
Is it proper "manners" to eat with a fork upside down? I see folks on the Food Network doing

this all the time and it is repulsive to me. I have even seen food fall off the fork because they have the "prong side" down. I've even seen judges on cooking contests doing this! Are my manners antiquated? *Sue*

I think of this as a European style of eating, where the fork is held in the left hand, prong side down. Your manners aren't antiquated — just provincial.

Write to Amy Dickinson at askamy@tribune.com or Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60611.

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