



Appointment with Pohlman

ONLY DINGBATS WHINGE

By Ralph Pohlman

My mother used words that I thought she had made up. The funny thing, though, is that I always knew what they meant. Maybe it was the tone of voice that accompanied them; the music, not the words. In any case, I don't think I ever heard them anywhere else, never took them in school or saw them in a book or had them on a spelling test.

For example, she often called me a "scallywag". I took that to be a sort of a loving term for being mischievous but not evil or malicious, and having too much energy. Sort of a rascal. Today, as I write this, is the first time I have ever actually looked it up in a dictionary and there it is - "a mischievous young person".

On the other hand, "Don't get rambunctious," meant you were approaching some kind of discipline like being sent to your room. It had something to do with being too noisy, unruly, or a general pain in the ass.

There are lots more, and I will get to them, but it just now crossed my mind that our dog also seemed to respond to what he was called. We had this big dog of undetermined ancestry who appeared to have been assembled from parts of other dogs, all of them large. My father called him "Forklift" in a sarcastic tone of voice, and that's what he was like - plodding, a bit clumsy, goofy, predictable. My

mother called him "Precious". I don't know why, but, sure enough, when she was sitting down he would stand at her side with his face in her lap and his eyes rolled up at her like he was worshipping. I called him by his real name, which was "Lucky" and he seemed to like that. Energetic, playful, ready for anything - but maybe that's because I was a kid and with me he could be one too.

Like all kids, I used to get sent on errands of various kinds and with various instructions. The commonest were either "Don't lollygag" or "don't dilly-dally." I'm not sure if there is a difference but I took "lollygag" to mean to hang out some place, like the rink, or maybe the poolroom when I got older, and "dilly-dally" to just be generally slow, stopping here and there to talk to people. I still do that. I like to dilly-dally but I'm not much for lollygagging.

And then we have "monkeyshines", as in "don't get into any monkeyshines", or, simply, "no monkeyshines, y' hear?". I had no idea what monkeyshines were for a long time. Could monkeys really shine? What did they shine? Shoes? Not knowing what they were, it was hard to avoid them. Were they against the law? What if you got caught monkeyshining?

I now take monkeyshines to be a broad category of playful activities that extend from the mischievous to the forbidden, from "high jinks" to "hanky-panky" although I don't actually recall my mother using hanky-panky in relation to me. I did hear my folks use it in conversation about

some girl in town being up to some hanky-panky. Hmmm. I wondered what that meant.

I have since come to recognize hanky-panky as the world's most secretive and yet most popular indoor sport. It also used to be very popular at the drive-in movie.

Here are a few more words that were part of her vocabulary. Someone who was generally unreliable, irresponsible or unpredictable was a dingbat. A major fuss, anything from a noisy argument to a riot, was a brouhaha and then one could get up to shenanigans, which sound like Irish monkeyshines.

An object of unknown function or forgotten name was a doohickey, and sometimes a whatchamacallit, and an intrusive kid was a whippersnapper.

Finally, I'll get around to whinge, a general favourite of those days, which seems to have disappeared, although I'm told it is common in England. Both of my folks thought that life was filled with a series of problems, which either had to be solved or tolerated. The one thing you were not to do was complain or, in their word, whinge.

A conversation might go, "The test the teacher gave us was unfair."

"Don't whinge."

That's the response I would use if you were to complain about this column. Don't whinge.

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Library invites patrons to BABBLE

By Catherine Sword

What if somebody gave you \$35,000 to spend on books over the next year? I imagine all your family and friends would be receiving books as gifts. The question is, could you spend it all?

At an average cost of \$30 for an adult hardcover that would be 1,167 books. Some people look at \$35,000 and think it's a lot of money but perspective is funny. I look at that budget and then I look at the three foot stack of catalogues which come in three times a year and shake my head. Let me show you how easy it is to spend the money.

Expand the list of family and friends to include the entire population of about 27,000 and growing. Add in neighbours from bordering communities. We have over 14,000 active members, and that number is growing daily.

A lot of people means a lot of different choices. Stuart Woods' Dark Harbor has been borrowed 45 times since last year so there is some overlap.

Let's start with determining how many countries there are in the world to visit.

Canada and Ontario get extra attention, and therefore more books. Now try to calculate what is needed for a travel section. Remember that snowbirds have different ideas of Florida than a family with children.

The health section is always changing because of new developments, not to mention the wide range of diet plans. The Feel-good Diet, South Beach Diet, The French Don't Diet Plan.

Just try to keep up with computers and changes like digital cameras, iPods and Facebook. We haven't even touched on books that support school research, resumes, craft books, biographies, pet guides, gardening books, cook books and how-to books on building a deck, playing the piano or decorating your house.

Now to fiction. Science fiction, fantasy, chick lit, romance, historical fiction, general stories, family stories, and the never-ending yet never enough - mystery novels.

Spending \$35,000 is way too easy but I'm trained for this. I'm also happy to say that there are many people who help out. We call them BABBLEERS. That is, they Buy A Book and Become a Library Enhancer. You

may have seen book plates in some of the books. Recently a few regulars (and a brand new BABBLEER) came out for a photo for the Free Press. They have BABBLED for many reasons.

Marita Concil, on behalf of Stouffville Therapeutic Clinic, has been updating some health titles. Library board member John Relph holds one of the anonymous BABBLEER books. Kevin McWhinnie discusses current events with me which often results in a new book for the library. Charlene Jones began by reading her poetry at the old library and is now leading interesting programs here. (See the calendar of events for her upcoming "Law of Attraction, Scrapbooking and You".)

She heard about BABBLE and has been regularly selecting titles from the upcoming bestseller lists. First-time BABBLEER Harold is still in negotiations regarding his selection. There are lots to choose from and I wouldn't turn anybody away.

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