

Fast-talking Phone Number Mumbler

“Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...” Ephesians 4: 26.

Pharmacy techs generally treat me well. They thank me for ignoring their company’s good health initiative when I was younger. They’re appreciative. “If it weren’t for you and few others like you - valued senior citizens spending your pension, social security, and children’s inheritance on health aids, prescription drugs, and non-prescription drugs - we wouldn’t have jobs.”

I appreciate their appreciation. Pharmacists aren’t nearly as attentive to customers as techs are. They stand around all day filling little bottles exactly a fourth to a third full with pills. This constant concern for precision can make a person unfit for human companionship.

I like pharmacy techs, and so I feel bad about what happened last week. It started when I found a phone message on my machine. The first part of the message was lost in transit, and so all I heard was, “There’s a problem. Call us at *Thrixevendoodahdoodah.*” Or numbers to that effect.

If there’s anything that makes me angry, it’s fast-talking phone number mumbler, young people trying to set a speed record when leaving messages. And I can’t always ignore them. They may be phoning about something important. It’s in my interest to phone them back. But at what number? I play it back several times. Still, I get no closer than *“Foreynantootyfruitycooty.”*

I figure that the message is from the pharmacy. I had called in a prescription earlier. And rather than looking up the number and waiting for someone to tell me what the problem is – they don’t know it’s me on the phone and so they’re busy helping other valued customers – I drive there. But I’m still mad.

The first question the pharmacy tech asks is, “What’s your birth date?” Techs recognize you by sight when you throw around your money like I do ; still, they are required to ask your birth date, which I can usually handle. But on that day, thanks to the fast-talking phone number mumbler, I’m suffering from irritable vowel disease, which can lead to anger all over the place.

“Tintinelation,” I say. The pharmacy tech asks me to repeat it. *“Seveightcatchitiftwoacan.”*

She says, “Sir, can you smile?” No, not when I’m still upset by phone number mumbling.

“Sir, can you raise both arms?” She knows I can’t. What is this? I had a left-shoulder acromioplasty that didn’t get the job done. I remind her by raising my left hand all the way to my chin and then, just for the fun of it, flopping it about as though there’s no brain attachment.

“Sir, can you repeat after me, *‘The legend lives on from the Chippewa on down of the big lake they call Gitchy Goomie?’*” She knows I like Gordon Lightfoot’s music. Why is she asking me these questions? My irritable vowel acts up, and instead of saying, *“The big lake they call Gitchy Goomie,”* I say, *“The big lake they call Shimmy Shimmy Ko-Ko-Bop,”* proof positive by the pharmacy’s three-part stroke test that I’d had one.

At the hospital, where I’m taken for stroke observation in spite of my protests, the first question asked is, “What’s your social?” At that point, I’m feeling even less social than at the pharmacy. I give it to her in Roman numerals, which I soon realize is a mistake. They don’t let me out until the next day. The sun went down on my anger...and the moon came up. – DJ