

Pet peeves. And pains in the...



The WordchipperSM

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I'm broadening my annual "pet peeve list" to include *pains*. What kind of "pains"? Pains in the you-know-where; you choose the part of your anatomy that hurts the most when confronted with some of these things. I won't prioritize my list, however, some of my peeves and pains are more serious than others. I will, however, classify:

PAIN: Polls. They ought to be outlawed, particularly those involving elections. Pollsters today practice what is called "push-polling." The way they ask the question influences the answer. And with elections being called 24 hours before Election Day, voting is seriously discouraged. Media that still resemble—however slightly—*real* journalism, have no sense of responsibility in this regard.

PEEVE: TV commercials. They're too loud compared to the sound of the program you're watching, and there are way too many of them. My only relief on Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo's CableOne system are channels 2, 3, and 47, i.e., the two C-SPAN channels and commercial-free Turner Classic Movies. I also thank goodness for the Fargo Public Library's outstanding collection of *Midsomer Murders*, and the *Inspector Lynley Mysteries*, two British-produced productions on DVD. The library's Dr. James Carlson southside branch recently received a whole new batch of the latest *Midsomer Murders*. If you haven't tried this series or the Lynley yarns, and if you're a mystery lover, you're in for a treat!

PEEVE: TV news and graphics. Why, or why, do producers of TV newscasts insist on covering every square inch of the screen with some kind of blinking, scrolling or glaring information when all you're trying to do is watch what the newscaster is talking about, *if* you can see him or her? And then they add those stupid, irritating noises: zip here, zap there, schwoosh, screech – yuk! Why? Why must they do this? The noise part of this is particularly irritating if you're listening to any of the national cable news channels on XM/Sirius Satellite Radio in your car.

PAIN: Plastic blister packaging. This one can give you a pain, literally! Impossible-to-open packaging can even draw *blood* – yours! It's happened to me. Try opening some electronic device wrapped in this crap. You take a scissors, razor blade, box cutter, ballpoint pen, whatever. And you're one cut away from stitches. It's not only wasteful; it's downright dangerous.

PEEVE: Pill packaging. Take *Omeprazole*, for example. This is an acid-reducing drug similar to, but less expensive than, Prilosec O.T.C. (over-the-counter). I purchase a 42-tablet package at a major discount retailer for about \$18. It takes me almost 45 minutes to un-package the pills, which are individually sealed in a difficult-to-puncture foil wrap. This isn't the only annoyance with this ridiculous packaging. Each group of 14 pills is contained in a *separate* cardboard package, and all three are held together inside a much larger and even more wasteful and irritating cardboard container. Grrrr... is it any wonder I need a stomach acid reducer?

PAIN: Lane straddlers. This one is serious, so it's not only a get-your-goat pain in the rear (or neck); it can kill you. I'm referring to people who straddle two traffic lanes while they're lost in a cell phone conversation with their girlfriend, boyfriend, spouse, mistress or paramour. It's not only hard to get around them, but trying to pass is downright dangerous. Do cops ticket this? They should.

PEEVE: Large-scale stupidity. In this category I put a baseball team, legislators and developers who build a major league stadium in a northern city (Yup, I'm talking about the Twins and Minneapolis) without even the possibility of adding a roof. For those of you who lived through the fall wind, cold temps and even snow of about a week or so ago, how in the world could the Twins host a World Series at Target Field? Go figure. And bring your sheepskin coat.

PEEVE: Drive-through dummies. These are idiots who go through drive-up lanes at fast-food places and change their order(s) as soon as they get to the window. Worse yet, they sit there and try to decide, while about six cars with people who've already placed their orders (including me) have to wait until Mr. or Ms. Indecision tries to figure out what they want.

PAIN: Airlines. This pain in my neck starts the minute I try to make reservations. Airlines are forcing me to go to their websites to buy a ticket, and some charge to *talk* to an agent (in order to spend *my* money with *them*). Some of these airlines sneakily "populate" their website with "yes" responses to options like "A limo ride at your destination." If you happen to overlook this and don't click "no," you're charged for a service you don't need. And that's just for starters. You don't see all of the fees until you get to the end. Sure, you can dump the whole itinerary and your choices without buying, but only after spending a half-hour or more going through all the screens and fees. And then I start to think about the TSA hassle, crowded planes plus grumpy and offensive cabin crews. By then, I'm ready to grab my antacid pills and drive.