

I Just Have **1** Question

Do You Hear What I Hear?



by Doug Carpenter

Before you answer that question, do me a favor. Close your eyes for a minute and *just listen*. What do you hear? If it's blissful, soothing silence — well, I'd encourage you to keep that to *yourself* for as long as you possibly can.

Because the minute a bunch of your noisy friends show up looking for a piece of your peace and quiet, *that's* the end of *that*. So enjoy it while it lasts, because it'll be over before you know it. [Even *sooner* if the only reason it's quiet is because your hearing aid is turned down.]

But if you're out and about —

like, say, up in the front end of your local grocery store reading the copy of this month's *After 50* you just grabbed off the publications rack, you're probably lucky if you can even hear yourself *think*.

That's because your ears — not to mention the brain sandwiched between them — are effectively surrounded by a sonic cloud so persistent it's no *wonder* you barely notice it dogging your every move. And while the audible distractions it contains will vary depending on where you happen to be when the mental fog rolls in, you definitely feel their effects.

Take that hypothetical supermarket scenario from earlier, for example. If you consider what goes into making the marketplace Mulligan Stew of sound



“Are too many Christmas cookies doing a number on your Type 2 Diabetes? Enjoy your *Jingles* all the way with *Rybelsus*. Ask your doctor or your bakery department manager if it's right for you. [Mrs. Claus and the elves urge you to always snack responsibly.]”

your subconscious must digest as you drag it up one aisle and down another, it would hardly qualify as either healthy *or* nutritious. The dish, however, is really quite easy to make, using ingredients you'll find throughout the store.

You *start* with a simple broth base of rattling shopping cart noise, to which you add matching measures of nap-needy children's whiny pleading for snacks and equally-exhausted parents' frantic-but-ultimately-futile efforts to get them to sit down in their safety seats before they break their necks.

Next, you blend in the lilting sound of couples arguing over meal menus and their obviously

non-working domestic division of responsibility for preparing them while tossing in a dash of unintentionally-overheard and clearly *not* work-related employee conversations. [Warning: May be spicy and/or unappetizing.]

Once combined, you then bake the ingredients under the collective heat given off by the generators that power the store's refrigeration units and freezer cases and the constantly- and annoyingly-humming overhead lights for however long it takes you to assemble the six items you came in for [...along with the other 43 items you ended up *also* buying.]

And you do all this while attempting to focus on your shopping list while desperately trying to filter out the repeated loudspeaker requests for “cleanup

Continued on Page 13



- Park-like setting
 - Beautiful new common areas
 - Parking & Laundry Facilities
- 50 North Avenue, West Seneca, NY 14224

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

An Independent Housing Solution for Low-Income Seniors

- Heat/Hot Water included
- Erie County Senior Lunch Program
- Pet Friendly

“Beautifully maintained.”
— Linda, a resident



668-5804

www.ucmanor.org
A program of UCHS, Inc.

Do You Hear What I Hear?

Continued from Page 12

on the dairy aisle,” the ominously-cryptic “security scan” of “area B,” and that oldie but goodie, “manager to register #3 for customer assistance.”

Combined with the unrelenting wave of pings, chimes and computer-generated voices emanating from the dozen or so checkout line and self-scan registers along with the movie rental kiosk, the ATM and the rarely-idle lottery ticket dispensers, the audio air pollution these devices spew could easily drive you *beeping crazy* faster than you can say “...but the price on the *shelf* was lower.”

And wrapped lovingly around the entire retail experience, of course, is a warm, fuzzy virtual blanket of preprogrammed piped-in music. The choice of genre often seems to have been left to a twentysomething Assistant Manager with a curious fondness for '80s power ballads or “smooth” jazz, but what you're most likely to hear this time of year is almost inevitably the sounds of “*the season*.”

Exactly *what* season, though, is a question that only gets harder to answer with each passing year. Selling Halloween merchandise now appears to be fair game as early as August, leading straight into an ever-expanding and increasingly-expensive celebration of *Thankschri-mahanu-kwanzakah*.

You could, I suppose, also include “election season” in that mashup but for the sad fact that, for all practical purposes, it no

longer either starts *or* ends — gifting us with yet *another* impossible-not-to-hear sound we all have no choice but to listen to.

An endless stream of “You Know *Whats*” pouring from the mouths of a bunch of “You Know *Whos*.” [Please feel free to *ungenericize* that sentence in whatever way least upsets you politically.]

Fortunately, the arrival of the *actual* “’Tis the...” season bumps the overbearing political ads selling ideas off the air, making room for *equally*-overbearing ads selling us — well, what *don't* they try to sell us? And I'm basically O.K. with that, as long as they don't get too seasonally “festive.”

Considering how blurred the boundaries between the seasons have gotten, though, I'm afraid it's just a matter of time before we get one of those prescription drug ads that are all over TV with Santa Claus telling us how he keeps his A1C level under control. I can almost hear the announcer now.

“Are too many Christmas cookies doing a number on your Type 2 Diabetes? Enjoy your *Jingles* all the way with *Rybelsus*. Ask your doctor or your bakery department manager if it's right for you. [Mrs. Claus and the elves urge you to always snack responsibly.]”

In a perfect world, the one thing we probably *don't* want to hear more than any *other* is the exchange of angry words between people we love. And yet that seems to have become one of our newest and most popular traditions, and *not* just during the holidays.

Just as the intimacy of gathering to celebrate with family and friends can bring out the best in us, so too can being with people who *presumably* love us *uncondi-*

tionally tempt us to test the *limits* of that unspoken agreement.

And while you should never underestimate humans' capacity to *not* hear or see what they don't want to *learn* or *know*, conversations undertaken carelessly can produce some pretty unpleasant sounds, which — once heard — can never be *unheard*.

The best we can probably do is to *try* — for their own good — to keep the people we care about from, as they say, “going there.” Playing some nice, upbeat holiday music might be a good place to start. Of course, even *there* you *still* need to exercise caution.

Research has apparently determined that, if forced to listen to *Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer* five or more times within a one-hour period, even

the most holiday-joy-and-love-filled person will experience an overwhelming urge to “pa-rum-pum-pum-pummel” *someone*.

So take my advice and protect yourself. I know *I* certainly am, which is why I've already opened the early present I bought myself this year.

Ear plugs.

© 2022 Doug Carpenter

Throughout *After 50's* first 16 years, veteran WNY writer and columnist Doug Carpenter regularly shared his wry generational observations with readers as *Everyboomer*. He has now returned to write a uniquely-named new monthly humor/opinion column called *I Just Have 1 Question* — which he says he'll ask and then bravely try to answer... without, he fervently hopes, looking excessively foolish in the process. [We wish him luck.]



Call our friendly staff for a tour today

Units Starting at \$550

Safety, comfort, affordability.

We know what it takes to keep you safe, secure, comfortable, and most importantly happy – all at a price the seems unimaginable. For over thirty years, our family owned and operated business strives to offer you this and so much more. Come be a part of our family.

MARYVALE EAST SENIOR COMPLEX
INCOME ELIGIBLE SENIORS 55 & OLDER
100 MOORMAN DRIVE, CHEEKTOWAGA, NEW YORK 14225
716 681- 5061

- All Utilities Included
- On-Site Self Serve Laundromat
- On-Site Management
- Pet Friendly
- 24 Hr. Maintenance
- Meals Program

Maryvale East Management Find us on the web @ maryvaleeast.com

Visit us online: www.after50news.com