

Suffering from chronic irritability syndrome

Slightly Off Center

By Dennis Hinkamp



WISH I COULD SAY that my writing inspiration came from my spirit animal muse that sends words wafting down like bronze-hued aspen leaves on the waning days of fall. However, it's not like that.

My inspiration comes from being easily irritated. Do you know what drives me crazy? Everything. This is actually a useful trait to have for a column writer, but it can make your head hurt and render you not so pleasant to be around. I've perfected the persona of being a quiet, thoughtful person because if I give voice to all the things that annoy me, I would end up a muttering homeless person.

Some people see ghosts; I see insanity everywhere. For instance, I found myself mentally yelling at the radio yesterday

when NPR ran a story about their staffers' favorite kind of cake. Seriously, I just gave these people money to help them keep their Baghdad news bureau open, not so they could investigate frosting preferences. They weren't even interviewing Martha Stewart, just some staff person who liked to bring cake to the break room.

Then I was out running last week in St. Louis when I saw the words "The Lord is my shepherd" literally written in stone on a church. What? Did anyone think this through? Doesn't the shepherd eventually sell the lambs for meat and the wool for clothes? Isn't the shepherd just protecting the financial interest of the owner? Maybe "shepherd" is a bad metaphor for God. Maybe it would be better if we thought of God as a police

officer or an air traffic controller — someone who really did protect us without ulterior motives.

Just about every exchange with customer service on the phone drives me crazy, especially when it starts off with "your call may be monitored for training purposes." Seriously? Aren't they just doing this to keep you from threatening them?

Anybody who has a Bluetooth cell phone thing in their ear and walks around seemingly talking to themselves drives me crazy. I understand the misguided attempt at being a safer driver, but if you are just walking around Walmart, why not just put the phone up to your ear and mouth just like the old days? What if I got two ear things and two phones? I could put one in each ear and then I

actually could talk to myself.

Clichés also drive me crazy. Every time someone says "my plate is full" or "at the end of the day," fireworks go off in my head. Pronunciation is equally irritating. Today it was someone pronouncing "program" as "prog-gram." "There is no letter 'u' in that word!" I yelled at the radio. I'm sure I will wake up tomorrow and someone will mispronounce "junta" or tell me that I'm mispronouncing "Nevada" and I'll go crazy again.

So now you know my secret source of inspiration.

Dennis Hinkamp explains that it's only his inner voice and typing fingers that are screaming. He is not an employee of the newspaper. Feedback at thinkamp@msn.com.

Science Unwrapped listens for 'Whispers from the Cosmos,' gravity's hidden message

UTAH STATE University's October Science Unwrapped presentation combines science with music to display the dazzling talents of world-renowned musician and multimedia artist Andrea Centazzo. Inquiring minds of all ages are invited to "Whispers from the Cosmos: Listening to Gravity's Hidden Message" at 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 30, in the USU Performance Hall. Admission is free and everyone is invited.

Centazzo's portion of the

program, titled "Einstein's Cosmic Messengers," features images projected on a cinema screen and complemented by live synchronized music performed with an array of acoustic and digital percussive instruments.



Centazzo

Shane Larson, USU assis-

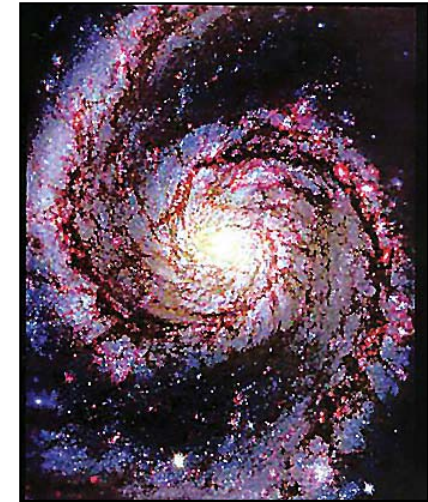
tant professor of physics, will open the program with a brief introduction to the mysterious gravitational waves — "messages from the cosmos" — that emanate from outer space. Famed physicist Albert Einstein described these "ripples in space-time" as clues to the fundamental nature of gravity.

Friday's presentation is the final segment in Science Unwrapped's "Windows on the Cosmos" series, which celebrates the International

Year of Astronomy. The monthly presentation series takes a break in November and December but returns with the new "Origins" series in January 2010.

Initiated by the College of Science in February 2009, Science Unwrapped is a free monthly presentation series featuring varied scientific topics in a relaxed, family-friendly format.

For more information, visit www.usu.edu/science/unwrapped or call 797-3517.



Heritage Center seeking artists for March of Socks

THE HOLIDAYS ARE approaching and to help celebrate, the American West Heritage Center is getting ready for its fourth annual March of the Socks Christmas Stocking Exhibit, an auction and exhibit featuring stockings that have been painted, welded, carved, sewn, quilted, sculpted and otherwise creatively crafted by artists, many of whom are

nationally renowned.

Once the stockings are completed, painted or decorated, they are auctioned off in a silent bidding process. Benefits from the event will be used to assist the Heritage center with its "Artists & Exhibits" program and to help maintain its historic quilt collection.

The exhibit is open to participation by any inter-

ested artist, who can create their own stockings from scratch, or they can request a blank canvas stocking with which to do their magic by contacting David Sidwell at dsidwell@awhc.org or 764-2006.

Participating artists in the past have included Larry Winborg, Jeremy Winborg, Michael Bingham, Jim Davis, Lucille Watkins and

others. Stockings have been made from welded steel, intricately carved walnut wood, bamboo, denim, leather and stained glass, in addition to the more traditional quilted stockings and other materials.

This will be a juried event, with a \$100 prize for the winner. There is no entrance fee, but deadline for finished stockings is Nov. 30.