

By ANNE DONNELL

Perhaps some would think me overly sensitive, but I think the response to "Thank you" should be "You're welcome." That's worked well for a long time. The current response of "No problem" grates on my ears! Don't you agree? □ -Someone Who Appreciates Good Manners

In the news recently: Famous cook who has overcome many problems is now under attack for her diabetes; Wealthy banker after paying for a \$133 lunch leaves waitress a 1% tip and a note saying, "Get a real job." (The latter, possibly a hoax, is in the process of being checked out as is the waitress's level of service.) We used to mumble something about man's inhumanity to man, but felt optimistically that everyday life around us would still shine clean and bright.

Well, around me a lot of people have not been "aping their betters." I'm noting, as is our QP of T (Question Person of Today), quite a bit of just plain aping. Or, not to insult our primate friends the apes, quite a bit of imitation of the worse behavior and speech, narcissistic, rude, careless. Truly care less.

[ATA (According to Anne) *Narcissism* is inordinate fascination with oneself; excessive self-love; vanity. It takes its name from Narcissus, a figure in Greek mythology who loved only himself, causing great grief, including that of poor Echo, earlier cursed by a wronged goddess after Echo interfered to protect the goddess's straying husband. Echo could then only repeat the words of others. After breaking Echo's heart, Narcissus finally falls in love, but it's with his image in a pool. He won't leave it, and can't understand its resisting him. Refusing food and drink, he withers away. A flower pushes through the earth where Narcissus had lain. NOT "where Narcissus had layed" FOR PETE'S SAKE! Guess what the flower's named?]

I think the response "No problem" could perhaps be used graciously, perhaps, but generally it's flipped off with the casualness now awarded another empty phrase, "Have a nice day." Can one say "No problem" without a brush off wave of the hand?

Users of "No problem" are sending a message all right, something like, "You are an inconvenience, but I suppose I'll get over it. Now go away." Tut, tut.

[ATA Recently there's been a real flurry of use of alright to replace all right, even in national print sources. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition*, not the most industrious and firm of sources, allows alright, giving a bit of patchy history in defense. *Oxford Advanced American Dictionary* says don't use alright in formal writing. Why use alright at all? All right always works.]

ONE MORE THING: Rudeness (and we are getting hefty chunks of it everywhere, not just in big northern cities) is not limited to the young. I cringe at the impolite antics of my age group (the almost ancient) and fear I'm out there imitating them. Well, beware that, too, tomorrow when you're busy bewaring the Ides of March.

ONLINE DEPARTMENT "How to Write Good" (Thanks, P.W.) [Please note the tongue in cheek element, starting with the title!] by Frank L. Visco (vice-president and senior copywriter at USAAdvertising) My several years in the word game have learnt me several rules: 1. *Avoid alliteration. Always.* 2. *Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.* 3. *Avoid clichés like the plague. (They're old hat.)* 4. *Employ the vernacular ordinarily.* 5. *Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.* 6. *Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.* 7. *It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.* 8. *Contractions aren't necessary.* 9. *Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.* 10. *One should never generalize.* 11. *Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."* 12. *Comparisons are as bad as clichés.* 13. *Don't be redundant; don't more use words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.* 14. *Profanity s___s.* 15. *Be more or less specific.* 16. *Understatement is always best.* 17. *Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.* 18. *One-word sentences? Eliminate.* 19. *Analogies in writing are like feathers on a turtle.* 20. *The passive voice is to be avoided.* 21. *Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.* 22. *Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.* 23. *Who needs rhetorical questions?*

BW (Bigtime Word) *myrmidon* – any follower, servant, or underling who carries out orders remorselessly, blindly. One always hope's one's children could be a bit more like this.□□