

arts/entertainment

Years take fun out of annoyance phone calls

By T. Marni Vos

Annoyance calls: Intentional annoyance of another by telephone is prohibited by law. The maximum penalty for violation is a fine of \$100 or 90 days imprisonment or both.

As a child of 11 or 12, exciting weekends usually included the company of your best friend on a Friday night. If rain hampered us from going to the club house (a converted tool shed that dominated the south corner of the backyard) the next best things to do were:

humor

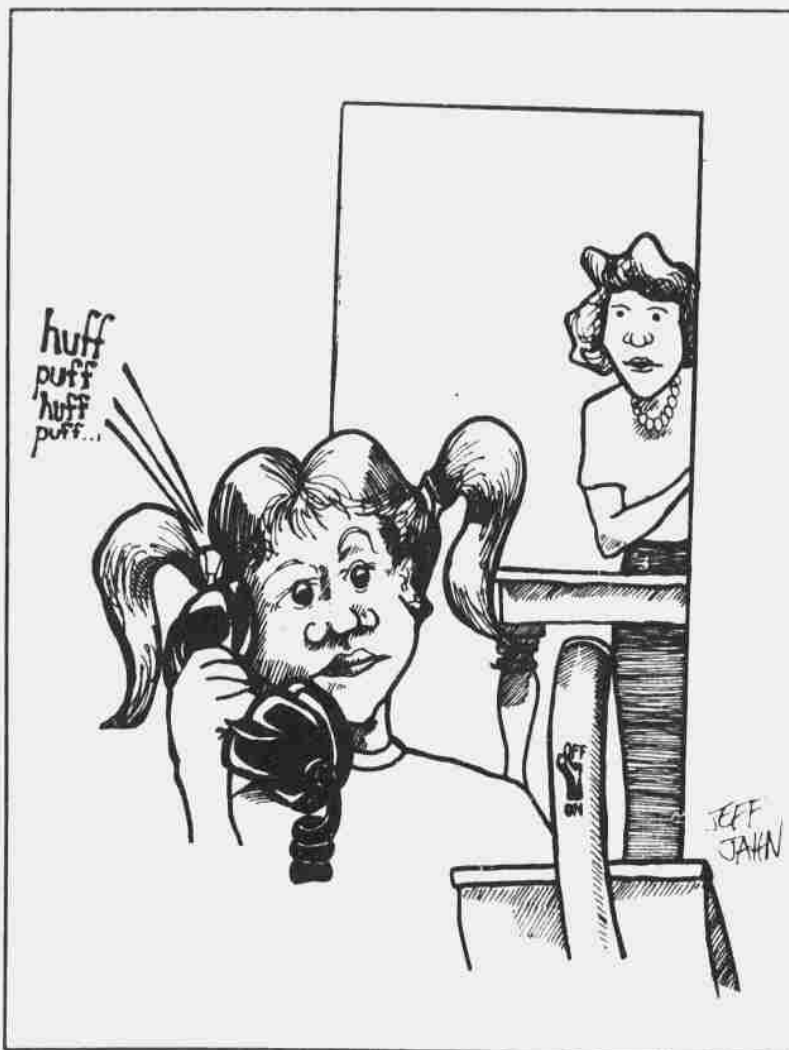
1. Blow your allowance on "mass quantities" of sweets.
2. Wait for *Creature Feature* to come on.
3. Make prank phone calls.

Umbergers, a mortuary on North 48th, was one of the first to "bite the dust." ...
"Umbergers"

"Yea, ah, we're from outta' town and my mom wanted me to call and order a couple of umbergers with fries to go."

"I think you are mistaken. Umbergers is a mortuary."
"Oh, ah . . . mom says to hold the pickles." Click.
We never forgot to ask if a drug store had Prince Albert in a can or if there wasn't a Tom Wall or a Bill Wall, in

fact, if there were no Walls at a particular residence what was holding up the roof. Endless evening of laughter.
Today, the club house is gone, *Creature Feature* is an absolute last resort and prank phone calls, somewhere in the years, have turned on me.



"Vos's residence, Marni speaking."
"Is this Marni Vos?"
"Nope. I think you have the wrong number. What exactly did you dial?"
"Are you a virgin?"
"Oh crap . . . Is this KLMS trivia? I always listen and wouldn't you know it, the minute my batteries run down you guys call. What was the question?"
"Are you a virgin?"
"Right. OK. Don't tell me. Hold on OK? Hey, hey mom, am I a virgin?"
"No honey, you are a Gemini."
"Hello? The answer to your question is no. Do I win?" (breath breath breath)
"Hello?"
(More breath breath breath)
"Hey, hey mom, do we know anyone with asthma?"
"Your Uncle William had asthma but he's dead. Whom are you talking to?"
"Mom, I think Uncle William was faking it."
"Marni, are you talking to the breather?"
"Hey, look, I know it's your life but if I were you I'd cut back on cigarettes and call 911 as soon as we say good-bye."
(breath breath breath)
"I'm sorry, could you breathe a little louder, I have to vacuum."
"Marni, hang up that phone, you're just encouraging him."
"Hey look, we're expecting this phone call from KLMS so maybe we could continue this conversation some other time. What are you doing in '84?"
"Are you a virgin?"
"Gemini, G-e-m-i-n-i. But listen, I think I know who you want to talk to. Nici's a Virgo. Nicolette, it's for you."

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Hannah's book jumps time, presents war adventures

By Pat Higgins

Ray, By Barry Hannah. Knoph Books, New York, 1980, 113 pages.

Leaving aside the obvious snobbery, there is, I hope, a good deal of truth contained in this statement. *Ray* is a serious work of art that is very entertaining but ultimately puzzling, much in the same manner of Thomas Pynchon in *Gravity's Rainbow*.

Hannah is being lionized coast to coast as the hottest young novelist around. The jacket blurb from Phillip Roth (no slouch himself) says: "Hannah is a young writer as true and original as any writing fiction today." The American Academy of Arts and Letters recently honored Hannah for achievement in fiction: *Ray* is up for this year's National Book Award.

Ray is a short, thought-provoking, novel that is basically the musings and recollections of a 33-year-old Alabama doctor named Ray. His surname is never mentioned. Ray's main concerns are poetry, sex, medicine, and war. He comments on each of these in a quite telling fashion. There are a variety of other characters here: his Tuscaloosa neighbors, the Hooches, who appear to be the quintessential poor Southern whites but with some odd twists.

The Patriarch of the clan is an unemployed deadbeat who somehow manages to write brilliant poetry. His daughter is well on her way to being a country singer until violence in the form of a Baptist minister interferes. There also is a steady stream of patients for the good doctor to heal and a variety of willing nurses, but *Ray* is chiefly concerned with Ray himself speaking from the heart.

Ray also jumps about in time, changing suddenly from modern-day Alabama to tales of Vietnam battles as a pilot to strange Southern ancestral memories of the Civil War where Ray is riding with Jeb Stuart.

In his descriptions of war, Hannah is making the same observation as did Hemingway and more recently, Michael Herr in *Dispatches*: War is hell, but it sure is an exciting adventure at the same time. It is difficult to determine what the point of the Civil War scenes are unless it is an obtuse comment on Vietnam.

Ray is worthwhile but difficult reading. It is a serious attempt at art rather than the cotton candy prose of people like Tom Robbins. Hannah is definitely on to something here that is worth investigating.

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