

WORKING

Dogged Pursuit

Step away from
the gnome.

By Haidee E. Allerton

Police have a difficult job catching criminals. A particularly puzzling case in McLean, Virginia, involved the disappearance of an elderly woman's ceramic lawn figures.

Over some months, a raccoon went missing, then a small deer, another deer, then a squirrel. So, one night police set up a videotape surveillance system. Sure enough, caught on camera was the thief: a black Labrador retriever, who seized the statuettes in his mouth and happily went on his way. As of this writing, the canine culprit is still at large.

◀ Source/the Washington Post

Reality Check

95% That's the number of Americans who say that the most important factor in choosing a new job or career is

- independence in how they do their job
- a relationship with their supervisor that "allows them the freedom to voice their concerns openly and honestly."

◀ Source/Ajilon Office staffing, Saddle Brook, New Jersey

Another Reality Check

52% of executives and 30% of workers say that lack of open, honest communication takes a heavy toll on morale, in a

WORKING

recent study by Office Team. Failing to recognize achievements was the second factor cited to most negatively affect the workplace mood.

☞ officeteam.com

Just Desserts

In my October 2002 column, I ranted a bit about waitpersons asking crudely, "Are you still workin' on that?" when they want to know whether you are finished dining and they can take your plate for you.

That prompted Working reader Steve Kanten to write (Working, March 2003) that it irks him when servers hand him the wine list, for instance, and he says, "Thank you," and they reply, "No problem." Why should it be a problem, Steve wanted to know. It's their job, right?

Steve, I'm about to make your day: *Washington Post* restaurant critic Tom Sietsema, in his column Ask Tom, in which he publishes diners' gripes about local area restaurants, published a complaint about servers responding too often to patrons' requests with "No problem." Sietsema suggested several more appropriate responses, such as "Certainly" or "Of course."

As it happens, Sietsema also published my complaint about "workin' on that" in a previous Ask Tom.

Aint' it sweet?!

☞ [Source/the Washington Post Magazine](#)
July 11, 2004

Utilize This

The June column ranted about my workplace annoyances, and I asked you to send in yours. Here's one from a reader:

Do people really think that saying "utilize" instead of "use" makes them sound more intelligent? It doesn't! The word utilize is overrated and never used properly. If you mean "use," say "use." It's simpler and to the point; just say what you mean. Thanks. I feel better about that.

Judy A. Connaughton
Royal P&O Nedlloyd
East Rutherford, New Jersey

First-Class Act

Here's a nice story I saw in the *Washington Post*. A first-class passenger aboard an American Airlines flight noticed a soldier boarding and asked him where he was sitting. The soldier, returning from Iraq, was assigned a seat towards the back. So the first-class passenger said he wanted to change places with him. Pretty soon, all of the first-class passengers were giving up their seats for other soldiers aboard. Says one of the flight attendants, "We ran out of soldiers. There were 12 of them and only 14 first-class seats. But it put an entirely different mood on the flight."

**This will be my last Working,
after more than 12 years of
writing this column.
Thank you for your stories
and your fan mail.
It has been a lot of fun, hasn't it?**