

Some detective work

The email was sent to me on Thursday at 2:57 a.m. obviously, being on the bike road at that time, I did not check emails until later. The subject line read: "I enjoyed your website." I wondered who would be up at that ungodly hour checking websites but then again, I can understand, because I can be one of those people who are up at that hour.

The email read, "Its 3 a.m. and someone who has called you before is dialing my number in the middle of the night and waking me... I did a number lookup and found your website. I enjoyed your materials and articles.

I hope they stop calling. Yet thought it nice to read. Thanks for the blessing on the home page. Let me know how I can be of further assistance. Kindest regards." Then she signed her real name.

I showed the email to the office staff and we began some detective work. Jo, our secretary, searched the woman's email address and found out that she was the secretary of a Baptist Church in a small town in North Carolina. She even printed out a copy of the church's bulletin for the previous Sunday.

I wondered if I should respond to the email. Finally, I decided to respond and wrote, "I received your email this morning and am still confused about who might be calling you at 3 a.m. in the morning. I thought I had owned that privilege. I would love to know who that person might be. Maybe you were able to find out through caller ID. I hope that you will not get any more calls at such an hour. Best wishes."

As we waited for a possible response to my email, we did some more detective work. We checked out the area code of the church in North Carolina and found out that it was 828. How interesting, we thought! Then, in a moment of genius, we searched for a particular phone number. We added our parish phone number to the area code (828) and discovered it was a cell phone number from the same area where the women who, initially, emailed me, lived.

By now, some pieces of the puzzle were beginning to make sense. We concluded that the person who was trying to call me at 3 a.m. in the morning, probably transposed the area code numbers and instead of dialing area code 228, they dialed area code 828 instead.

But there was one crucial piece of the puzzle missing. Who usually calls me at 3 a.m. in the morning? Is it someone who knows that I am up and am about to go out for my 3 a.m. morning ride? Is there someone who calls me on a regular or irregular basis at that ungodly hour? Mentally, I go through my brain's electronic Rolodex to see if I could come up with any possible suspects.

Then, in a moment of enlightenment. I remembered one person who used to call me on a consistent basis at all hours of the day and night. I hadn't heard from that person in quite a while and was enjoying my brief reprieve. Was I doomed once again?

Maybe, having called North Carolina with a transposed area code and finding out that "you must have the wrong number. There is no Michael Tracey here," the caller might have resigned themselves to the fact that maybe I have died or moved and left no forwarding phone number.

Now that I have decided to begin my early morning bike ride earlier, I will not be home to answer any 3 a.m. phone calls. If, perchance, they do call, they can leave a message and if they don't leave a message, I will be able to do a reverse lookup. If they do leave a message, I will surely remember that voice that called me in the past at all hours of the day and night.

Then the mystery will be solved both for a church secretary in North Carolina and myself who were brought together accidentally through a mixed up area code.