

## Rigsby: D.C. Woman Serial 911 Caller

Tuesday, November 12, 2013 | Amy Brittain, The Washington Post

Martha Rigsby collapsed to the ground for the first time in 1977. The spells continued, and she began calling 911 for help. She hasn't stopped. In the past year alone, she's accounted for 226 calls to 911 and been whisked by an ambulance to a hospital 117 times. About 55 percent of the time, she refuses to be



transported in an ambulance and signs a waiver allowing emergency responders to leave.

Among firefighters in the District, she's a dreaded legend. They can recite her date of birth and Social Security number from memory. Over 30 years, Rigsby has become the most frequent 911 user in D.C. history, totaling thousands of emergency calls and trips to the hospital after falling down, court papers say. Dubbed "super users" or "frequent fliers," repeat 911 callers have long been identified as burdens on the health system and a drain on public-safety resources.

The situation has led to the first known attempt in the city to seek guardianship for a serial 911 caller. The Department of Behavioral Health filed a court petition in April, alleging that Rigsby, 58, has bipolar and borderline personality disorders and does not have the mental capacity to handle her medical affairs. These are "uncharted waters," said David Miramontes, medical director of the D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department. Public documents and legal proceedings detail Rigsby's 911 habits and assessments of her mental state and medical problems. They also reveal continued concerns from D.C. officials about the impact of one woman's troubles on public-health and safety resources.

Although Rigsby has had various medical insurance plans throughout the years, she has an outstanding balance of \$61,366.33 owed to the D.C. Fire and EMS for ambulance transports, according to Andrew Beaton, the department's management program analyst. In the past five years, each ambulance trip has averaged \$478. Rigsby opposes the city's attempt at guardianship. Over two weeks, she has quietly watched the proceedings in Judge Erik P. Christian's courtroom in the D.C. Superior Court's probate division. She has whispered instructions to her court-appointed attorney, Vickey Wright-Smith, at times. Wright-Smith has argued that Rigsby is able to care for herself and has no malicious intent for calling 911. If the District's petition is successful, the medical guardian could take responsibilities for such things as hiring a home health aide, filling prescriptions and proposing a different living environment. But it would still be possible for Rigsby to dial 911 because the guardian would not be a live-in caregiver.

According to testimony during the court hearings, Rigsby's calls follow the same general pattern. She feels faint and collapses. About 40 percent of the time, she dials 911 on her own. Other times, she's out in the District when passersby see her fall and call for help, the testimony indicated.

Rigsby has reliable housing and a steady income, and court documents have not suggested any alcohol or drug abuse. She receives about \$1,300 a month in Social Security disability payments, court documents show. Her home in the Trinidad area is problematic, officials have testified, because the neighborhood already has some of the highest call volumes in the city. The closest firehouse to Rigsby is Engine Company 10, which is nicknamed the "House of Pain" because of the constant grind.

Court proceedings won't resume until January, when Rigsby will have had a neuropsychological assessment, attorneys in the case said. In the District, first responders cannot refuse a patient. The patient's bill of rights, which has been posted in every ambulance since 2011, explicitly states this policy. When Rigsby calls 911, the reported symptoms "generally prompt the highest level of response," including the first available paramedic and a separate ambulance for transport, testified Rafael Sa'adah, the fire department's battalion fire chief for emergency medical services.

"Our default assumption must be that she is suffering from a life-threatening medical condition," Sa'adah said. Although Rigsby has been known to paramedics for decades, city officials increased their focus on her in December after she called 911 and threatened to harm herself, according to court testimony. The Department of Behavioral Health's mobile crisis team was sent, and Rigsby was involuntarily admitted to the hospital for a mental-health evaluation, according to testimony by Jonathan Ward, the team's director. After that, a group including representatives from several city agencies met to discuss a plan for Rigsby. Rigsby declined some suggestions, such as having a home health aide and using a wheelchair, Ward testified. She has a lingering fear that the volume of calls might lead to criminal charges and said she has been handcuffed before. "I've been through a lot," she said. "I'm surprised they haven't put me in jail by now." But as discussions continued, the idea of the guardianship emerged.

Niels Tangherlini, a paramedic captain for the San Francisco Fire Department, led a successful pilot program from 2004 through 2009 to stop 911 serial callers. During the height of the program, Tangherlini said, officials successfully filed conservator petitions, which are legally similar to guardianships, for about 12 serial 911 users a year.

**Next Generation Sunshine State Standards** adapted from [floridastandards.org](http://floridastandards.org). Standards specifically addressed in this edition are strategically aligned with state standards and annotated adjacent to the respective inquiry.

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1. In appropriate paragraph form, compare and contrast the pros and cons synonymous with encountering rather interesting individuals comparable to the notorious serial 911 caller, Martha Rigsby. Provided the information articulated in the passage above, do you believe her actions blatantly constitute a burden upon emergency management services, which warrants involuntary guardianship be assigned? In anticipation to the inevitable repercussions, identify a series of proactive measures unaffiliated emergency services may implement forthwith to tactfully combat a similar dilemma. Thoroughly explain your reasoning and provide specific artifacts and evidence not limited solely to article above to support your response. Create and illustrate a Venn Diagram to effectively explore relationships and patterns and to make arguments about relationships between sets. **(LA.910.3.2.2; LA.910.1.6.2; MA.912.D.7.2; MA.912.A.10.1)**
2. In the past year alone, Rigby's singlehandedly accounted for an unprecedented 226 calls to 911 emergency services and been whisked by an ambulance to a hospital an astronomical 117 times. About 55 percent of the time, she refuses to be transported via ambulance and signs a waiver allowing emergency responders to disperse. Engine Company 10, the department that involuntarily endures the burden is appropriately nicknamed the "House of Pain" because of the constant grind. The local populace is calling for Rigsby's immediate banishment. Joe Lunchmeat, chairperson of the Homeowner's Association, discreetly confessed concerns of negative publicity to a trusted colleague coupled with a clandestine strategy to illegally, yet promptly banish her from her residence. After one minute elapses, temptation assumes control and his confidant discreetly shares this highly confidential information with another. Every minute thereafter, every resident familiar with the information enlightens another not limited to but to include the one who initially disseminated it. In a room of 30 people, the expression  $30/1 + 29 \times 2^{-t}$  predicts the approximate number of people who will have heard the verdict after  $t$  minutes. About how many people will have heard the verdict after 2 minutes, 5 minutes, and 10 minutes? Explain your reasoning. **(MA.912.A.10.1; MA.912.A.10.3; MA.912.A.3.5; MA.912.A.4.1)**
3. Due to the large amount of development and population growth, Engine Company #10 was established in 1895. It is the busiest company in the District for many years and busiest single piece engine company in the nation according to Firehouse Magazines National Run Survey. Reportedly, the House Of Pain personnel is highly motivated and extremely aggressive making it a highly sought after assignment, however, only a few get to live it. A newer building erected in 1925 and was unique in the fact that it had a balcony type second floor. It was surrounded by individual bunk areas for each member, while at each corner were poles that allowed for rapid access to the apparatus floor. This house also featured a weathervane on the roof and a wooden flag pole, which remain today. A probationary firefighter is tasked with decorating the facility for the traditional forthcoming holiday season. A strand of Christmas lights is strategically affixed to the pinnacle of the building fully extended in a diagonal fashion approximately 30 feet. An additional string of lights is attached to a stake at the base of the facility, which extends 24 feet forming vertex with the diagonal. Using the Pythagorean Theorem, find the approximate height of the building and determine if a Pythagorean Triple exists. Identify the formulas as well as specifically what information one may derive from obtaining the following measurements via the following trigonometric ratios when applied to the sculpture: tangent, sine, and cosine. Explain your reasoning and determine whether the solution(s) is reasonable in the context of the original situation. **(MA.912.G.5.1; MA.912.G.5.4; MA.912.T.2.1)**
4. Identify and thoroughly support your reasoning regarding which of the following that best describes the author's attitude toward infamous serial 911 caller, Martha Rigsby: flippant disregard, mild frustration, passive resignation or an informed citizen. Explain the intended purpose of this article and identify any indicators or supporting evidence, which suggest the author may possess a bias for or against any individual who frequently utilizes emergency services above and beyond the traditional societal norm. What is the central idea and what conclusion might one obtain? Provide an inference a family member of a habitual 911 caller may derive from this material. The point of view assumed throughout the passage is best described as first person, second person, third person, or a combination of first and third person. How may this article be referenced for an independent student research project analyzing and interpreting the variation of services rendered by local fire department personnel? **(RI.9-10.1 – 10.6)**
5. Using contextual clues only, determine the most complete and accurate definitions of following italicized terms: *conservator*, *petitions*, *default*, *testimony*, *malicious*, *problematic*, *assumption*, *passersby*, *whisked*, and *dubbed* as obtained from the passage above. Additionally, use each word in a complete sentence to demonstrate further comprehension. **(LA.910.1.6.3; LA.910.1.6.1)**
6. **SARASOTA MILITARY ACADEMY WORD-OF-THE-WEEK** Create a concluding paragraph aligned with the passage above incorporating the following italicized term: *Dolt* adj. A stupid person. **(LA.910.1.6.1; LA.910.1.6.5)**

*Long Live Ang Daughtry Times. Iyan ba ang lahat. | Due Monday, November 18, 2013*

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