

CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



"We want to get the baby started as early as possible in martial arts."

Thank-you for gift too often left unsaid

Dear Abby: In my opinion, too many young people today are shortchanged when it comes to manners and etiquette. The knowledge of how wonderful it is to receive written acknowledgment of giving is rapidly fading.

A quick note of appreciation for any kind of thoughtful gesture lifts the giver's spirit. Receiving recognition for a tangible gift, time spent lending a hand or a shared meal puts a smile on his or her face. These things are not entitlements; they are gifts from the heart.

I urge young parents to teach this courteous gesture to their children. Abby, I know your letters booklet has a section on thank-yous. Maybe it's time you mention it again. — *Sherrie in Chehalis, Wash.*



JEANE PHILLIPS
DEAR ABBY

Dear Sherrie: If there is one topic that is repeated in my mail, it's thank-you notes — or, rather, the lack of them. It's such a common aggravation that I receive

dozens of complaints in every batch of emails or letters I receive.

While letter-writing may always be a chore to some people, there are occasions when the written message is the only proper means of communication.

My Dear Abby Letters Booklet was written to serve as a guide to those who put off writing because they don't know what to say or how to say it. It contains sample letters for readers to use to show appreciation for a birthday, Christmas, shower or wedding gift.

There are also examples of letters that are difficult to write, such as expressing condolences to someone who has lost a parent, a child, or for an untimely death such as a suicide or an overdose.

My letters booklet can be ordered by sending your name, mailing address, plus a check or money order for \$7 (U.S. funds) to Dear Abby Letters Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

And remember Rule No. 1: The important thing about letter-writing is to say what you want to say, say it so you can be easily understood, and say it so that it sounds like you.

Dear Abby: My parents are refusing to pay for me to attend my dream school after learning that I am sexually active with my boyfriend of two years. (They liked him prior to learning this.) He's in school in France.

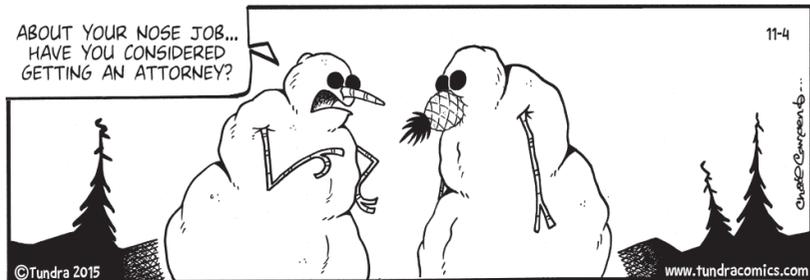
They say it would be a "sin" to pay for me to attend school in the same city he's in, and they expect me to stay home and go to a local community college. Would it be wrong to disobey their wishes and take out my own student loans? — *Parents Vs. Boyfriend in France*

Dear P Vs. B: I not only think it would be wrong, I'm afraid it could be a disaster for you. What if the relationship doesn't work out? When you take out those loans, you will be responsible for repaying that debt for many years.

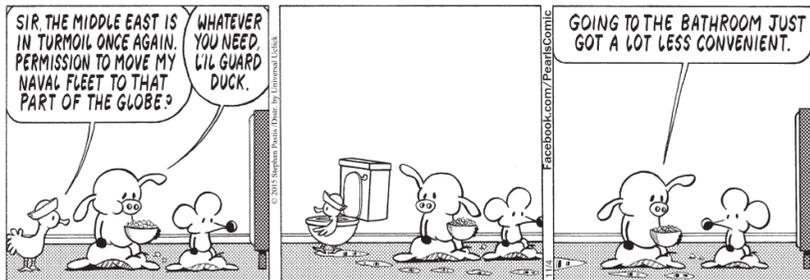
Before you make that decision, I urge you to carefully consider the kind of jobs that will be available in the field you're interested in pursuing. If what you're really interested in pursuing is your boyfriend, you might be better off staying home.

Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

TUNDRA by Chad Carpenter



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE by Stephan Pastis



GARFIELD by Jim Davis



JEFF MACNELLY'S SHOE by Chris Cassatt and Gary Brookins



WIZARD OF ID by Brant Parker



THE PHANTOM by Lee Falk



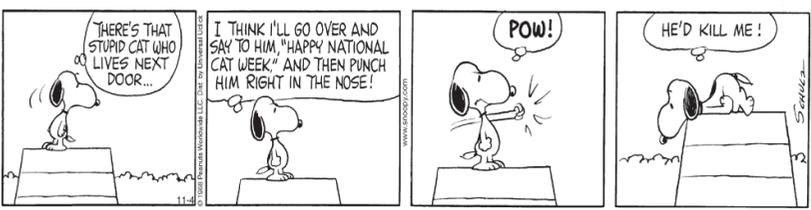
DILBERT by Scott Adams



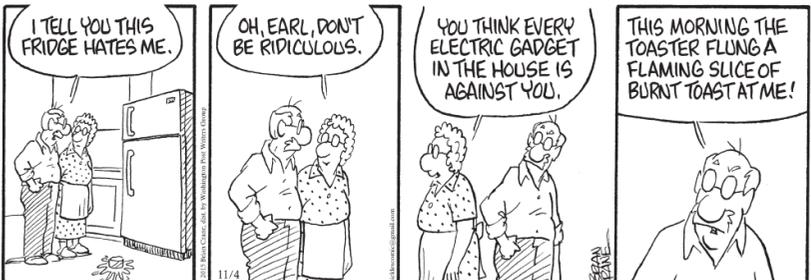
MARK TRAIL by James Allen



PEANUTS by Charles Schulz



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FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE by Lynn Johnston



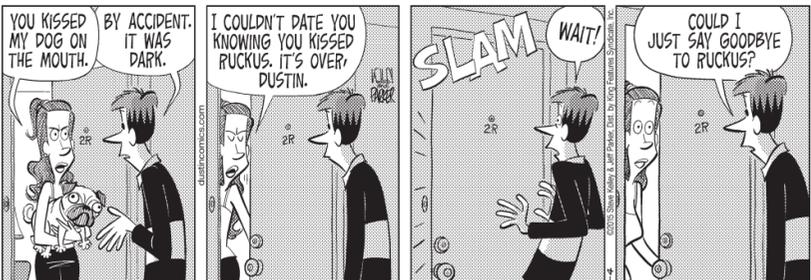
BABY BLUES by Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman



ZITS by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



DUSTIN by Steve Kelley and Jeff Parker



Daily Horoscope

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Small children become the person they want to be through imitation and assimilation. You'll do the same in a more subtle fashion, adopting manners and habits similar to the one you aspire to be like.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Beware: The real aims may be terribly different from the declared aims. If you know which is which you will be ahead of the game. Indeed, you may win it all in the end.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Exercise will get your vitality up for the tasks of the day, though you should know that strength alone won't prepare you for what's ahead. You'll need mental suppleness and flexibility for these challenges.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). If you think that you can do it alone, try. A short stint will be all it takes for you to realize that this is unwise, if it's even possible. For better or worse, grand plans will be pulled off by committee today.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). There's more pressure than you would like, but mostly you put it on yourself. To make this pressure go away, all you have to do is make a far less demanding agreement.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). There's a simple reason you'll get what you're after today, and that reason is that you feel like you deserve it. You're

worthy. Whether directly or indirectly, you've put in the work, and this is your due.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The world doesn't seem to be considering your feelings, but as long as you're considering them, you'll be fine. Honor your emotions and accept them, even when it's not how you think you should feel.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Remember when you felt shy around a certain person? Now you're so free you'll do just about whatever comes to mind. This is the reason you'll laugh so much together.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). To better your fortunes, seek opponents and allies that help you to be your best. If you're having trouble playing nice it might be a sign that you are playing with the wrong mates.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). There is no easy route today. The break only comes after much toil and sweat, which is not the hard part. Putting up with others without rolling your eyes is the hard part.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You'll assess your current chances of making something happen. Sure, there are things you could change that would better your odds. Still, don't be too critical of yourself.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Everyone needs a cheerleader, a kindred soul to root for you regardless of the odds, to cheer for you whether or not you are winning. Cherish the one who keeps you from losing heart.



HOLIDAY MATHIS