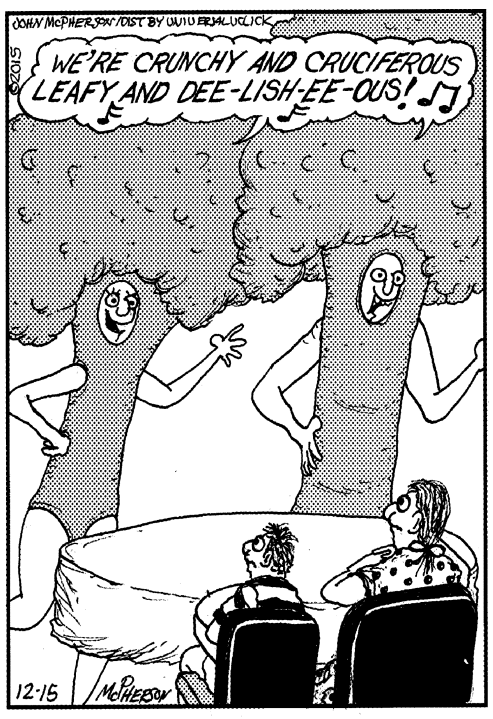
CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



The Middletons did their best to get their kids to like broccoli.

Wife seeks advice for retirement jitters

Dear Abby: I'm writing about the letter you printed from "Excited in Maryland" (Aug. 16), whose wife makes snide comments about his impending retirement. That milestone is the biggest, scariest life change people make — a time marker like no other.

JEANNE PHILLIPS
DEAR ABBY

With many people, our identity is tied to our careers. In my case, I enjoyed a long, successful career as a social worker, counselor, teacher and mother. I wasn't the primary breadwinner and was able to work less than full time. When I retired seven years ago, my day was my own, with little accountability to my husband. I had quiet when I wanted it, music of my own choosing, ate when and what I wanted — and complete privacy all day, every day.

My husband, one of the nicest men I've ever known, retired two years ago, and I still haven't come to terms with the fact that he's home all the time. He doesn't ask me to do anything differently, but he's HERE, which means my definition of privacy has changed. I realize how lucky I am to have him, our health, our kids and financial stability. I just need a predictable block of time I can depend on to have the house all to myself.

That letter writer's wife may be worried about the huge change that is coming. My husband has enough interests, hobbies and projects that he's always busy, but we are different people. He can get lost in his project while I'm "on alert" for any interruption, real or imagined.

A couple of my friends have decided to postpone retirement because they don't want to be home all day with their husbands. They are both mental health therapists, but they can't talk with their husbands about it. If THEY can't, then who can? This seems to be the most major life challenge yet, but I can't find anyone who's willing to discuss it. Is there anyone out there to honestly help us negotiate this phase? — *Liz in Iowa*

Dear Liz: Because of the complicated nature of their work, many therapists have therapists of their own. That is what I would have recommended, if either of the couples you mentioned in your letter had asked, to improve their level of communication.

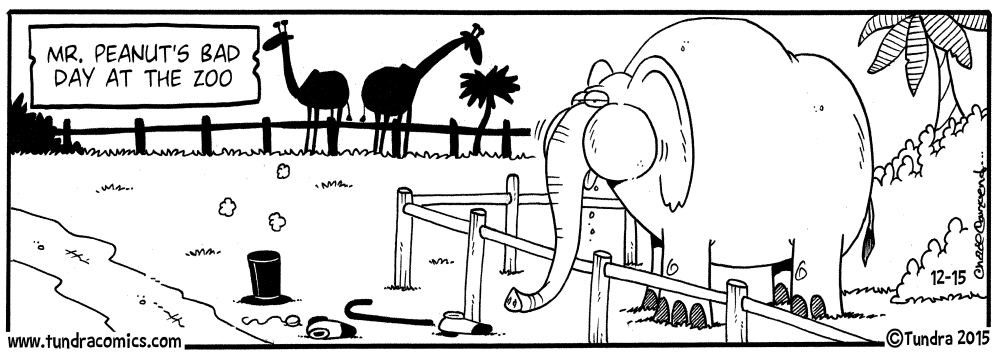
As for the rest of us "regular" folks, a licensed family therapist would be qualified to help. I agree that retirement requires an adjustment on the part of both spouses. You should look for a counselor who is older and who can empathize with what you and your husband are experiencing.

Dear Abby: My father-in-law picks his nose. I had a birthday dinner for my wife with 15 people around the restaurant table, when her father inserted his forefinger into his nostril and started digging. Sometimes he digs for up to 10 minutes. My wife says, "Don't look." What would Abby do? — *John in Fort Worth, Texas*

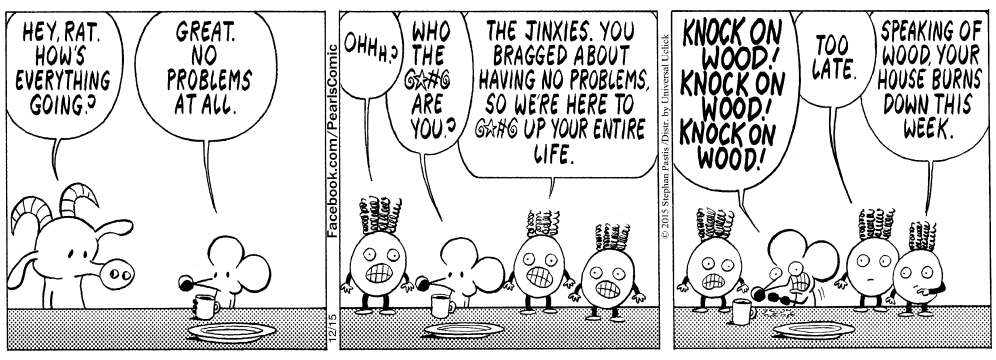
Dear John: Abby would use the first chance she got to speak to the man alone and tell him that picking his nose in public grosses people out. Then she'd suggest the next time he feels the urge, he should leave the table, head for a restroom and take care of it in private.

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

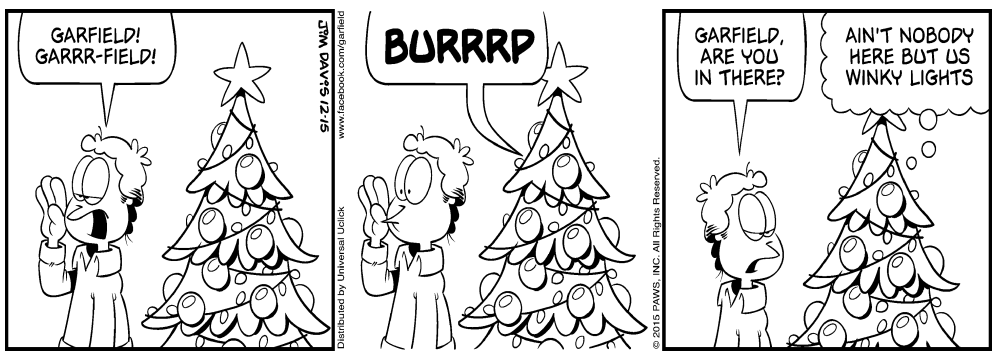
TUNDRA by Chad Carpenter



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE by Stephan Pastis



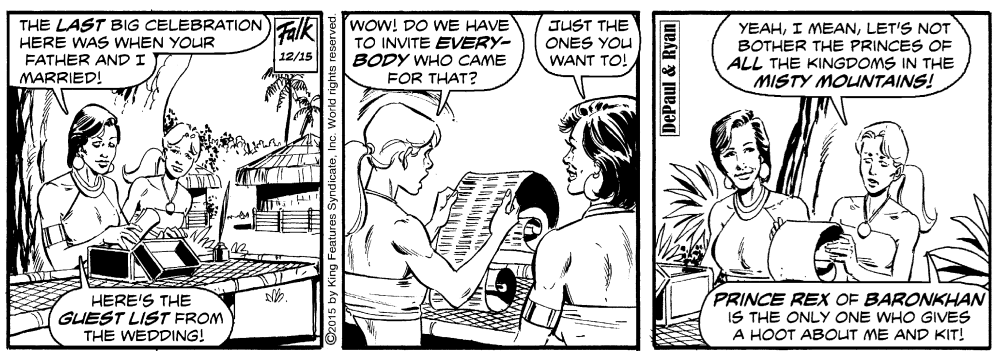
GARFIELD by Jim Davis



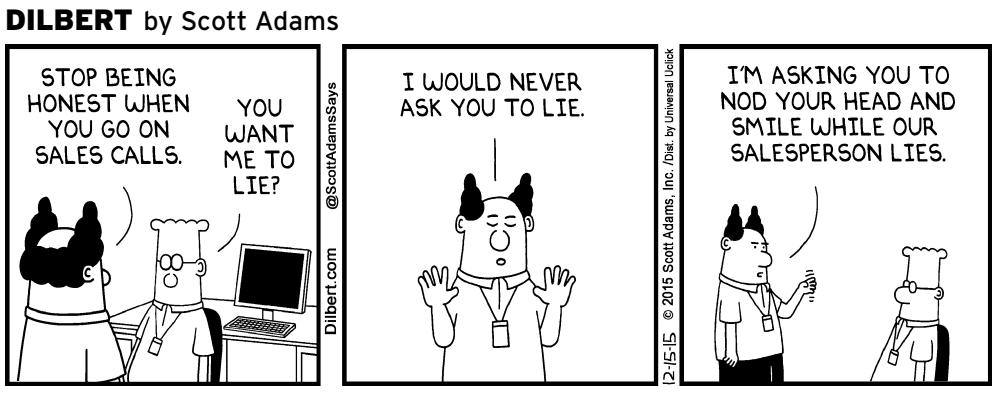
JEFF MACNELLY'S SHOE by Chris Cassatt and Gary Brookins

WIZARD OF ID by Brant Parker

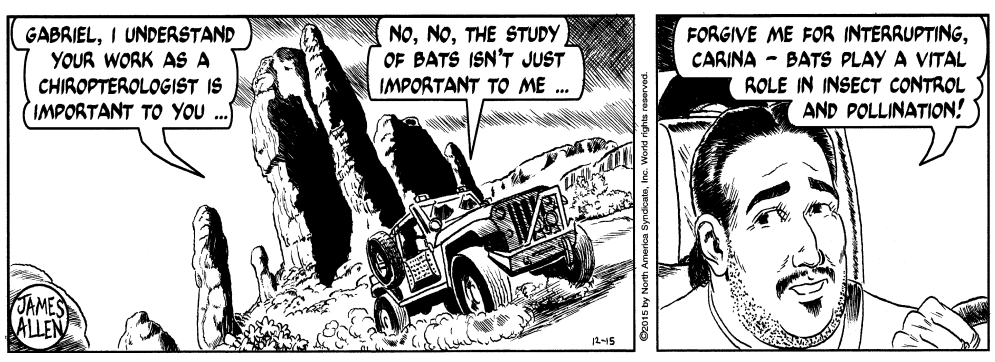
THE PHANTOM by Lee Falk



DILBERT by Scott Adams



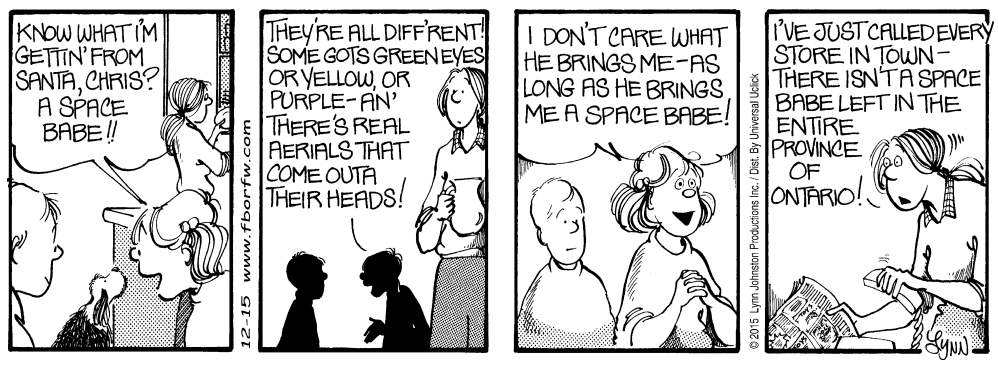
MARK TRAIL by James Allen



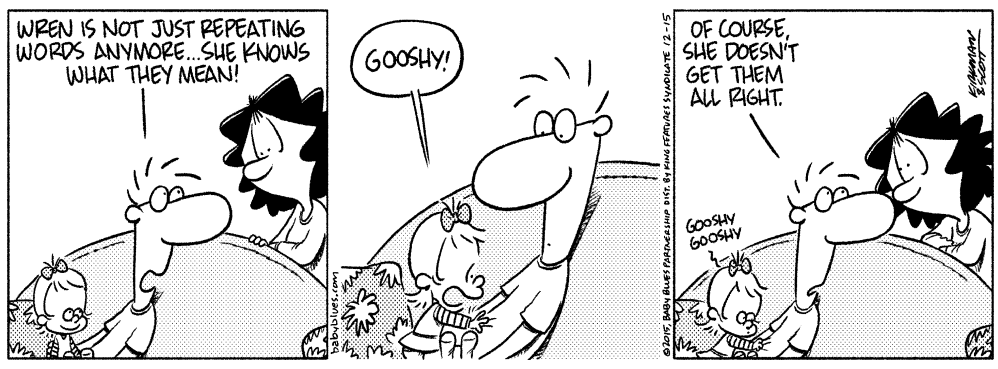
PEANUTS by Charles Schulz

PICKLES by Brian Crane

FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE by Lynn Johnston

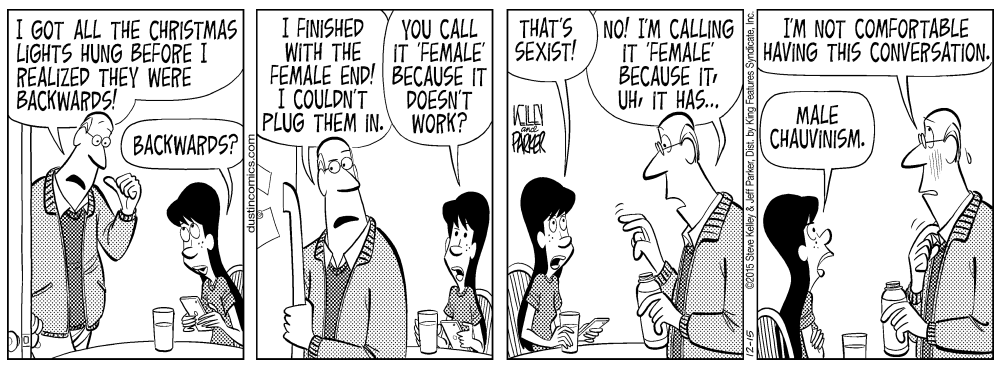


BABY BLUES by Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman



ZITS by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

DUSTIN by Steve Kelley and Jeff Parker



Daily Horoscope

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You've a unique kind of confidence. You trust yourself to provide something different than what the others around you know how to give. This will make for highly entertaining and useful interactions.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You know what's in you — at least you think you know. Tiny doubts will cause you to seek confirmation from the outside world. Do they recognize who you are? The kindred spirits will.

HOLIDAY MATHIS

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). To avoid the stress of the unknown, some around you will make inaccurate snap judgments and ill-fated quick decisions. You'll have more patience. Tolerate the discomfort of the unknown and you'll be wise.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There's a person near you who drains your energy in unexplainable ways. His or her company is unavoidable now, so this is a good time to obtain tools for emotional and spiritual protection.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). To avoid falling into an unwanted mood, be proactive. Consciously create the mood around you. Which do you prefer: festive, meditative or other? Put thought into the lighting, music and the scent of the air.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Try not to see a relationship as a fixed entity; rather, it's a co-creation that can take any number of interesting twists and turns along the way. Don't like the pattern? Change it!

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Occasionally life brings big change all at once. But most of the time, the big changes happen over the course of hundreds of small changes. Set a new intention, and the baby changes will begin immediately.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). What's popular is not always right. You'll see something glaringly wrong with a path that many are following. Before you speak up, anticipate the backlash and formulate your arguments.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The best way you can show your love today is through active listening — giving full attention through your body, mind and spirit. It's not easy, and that's what makes it such a loving gesture.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You have the raw ingredients to make magic. It's just like cooking; you can follow the recipe, or you can experiment. If you choose the latter, expect to fail until you figure it out.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). The hardest thing to rule is your own appetite (especially when you're in a place where it can be easily satiated), so celebrate every small win in this regard.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You feel partially responsible for how things turn out in your family, work group and community. As for your whole world — yes, you even feel partially responsible for that.