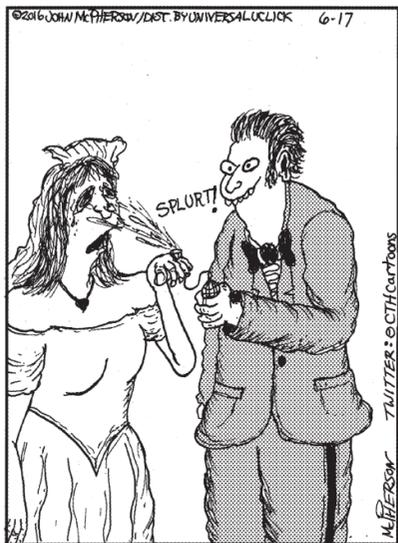


CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



Though she loved his sense of humor, Vera did not care for Barry's use of the squirting diamond ring gag during their wedding vows.

A long life lived well is an inspiration

Dear Abby: I read your column and I feel for the people who have problems. I have no worries. Although my life has been far from perfect and no bed of roses, here I am at 95 with no serious physical, spiritual, emotional, family or economic problems.

I grew up during the Depression, had wonderful parents, worked my way through college, and was married to a loving woman for 67 years.

I have four successful children and their spouses and several industrious grandchildren. I also have met a terrific widow who shares the current daily obstacles.

Service in the Navy during WWII and Korea seemed at the time to limit my future career, but in retrospect were experiences I cherish.

Science has been good to me. My knee replacement still permits tennis, three stents keep me alive, vertebra shots elimi-



JEANNE PHILLIPS
DEAR ABBY

nate severe pain and I have had a couple of other minor corrections.

Yes, I know, Abby — I am the luckiest person alive. — *Frank in Atlanta*

Dear Frank: I agree. And I can't help but wonder if part of your luck has to do with your attitude when you were faced with problems that others would consider to be adversities. We can all learn from your example.

Dear Abby: I know I have an issue with alcohol. I have read about local AA groups, but they don't seem right for me because I'm an atheist. When I went to my doctor, along with my supportive husband, she had no suggestions to offer. I know I need help beyond what friends and family can provide. Do you have any ideas for me? — *Taking the Step in Pennsylvania*

Dear Taking the Step: I certainly do, because there are secular alternatives to AA.

SMART Recovery offers a four-point pro-

gram aimed at motivation to abstain, coping with cravings, managing negative emotions and finding a life balance. It has face-to-face support groups worldwide, as well as daily online meetings.

Like AA, lifetime abstinence is the goal, and meetings and help are free of charge. Unlike AA, lifetime abstinence need not require lifetime attendance at meetings. For more information, visit smartrecovery.org.

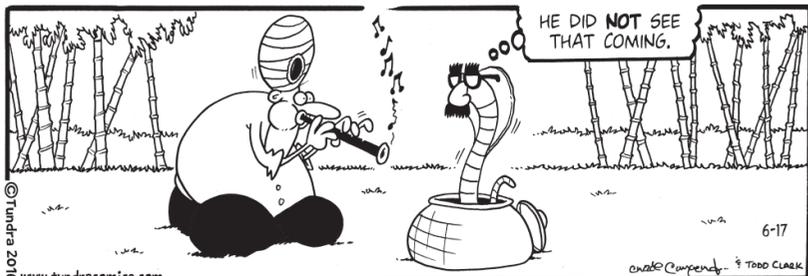
Another group, Women for Sobriety, may be of interest to you because it is non-theistic and aims to empower women and minorities.

The website, womenforsobriety.org, does not list its meetings (for reasons of privacy), so in order to find a group, you will have to make contact within the site.

Last, Secular Organizations for Sobriety (aka Save Our Selves) is sometimes described as a 12-step program minus the religious overtones. To find a list of meetings, visit sobriety.org.

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

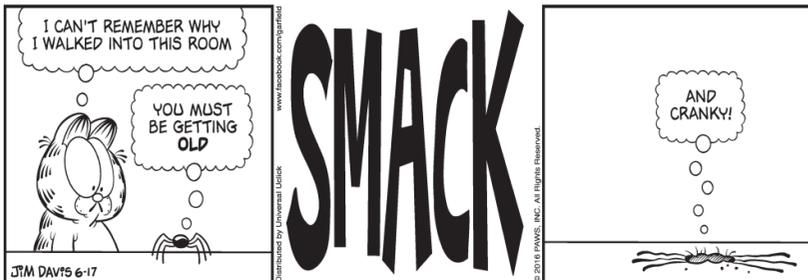
TUNDRA by Chad Carpenter



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE by Stephan Pastis



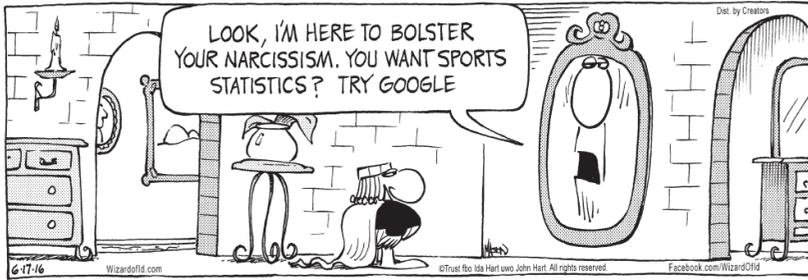
GARFIELD by Jim Davis



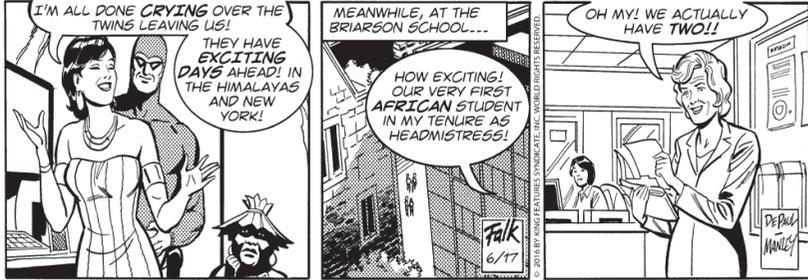
JEFF MACNELLY'S SHOE by Chris Cassatt and Gary Brookins



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). Name the feeling. It will help you experience it. Names have power. Once you put a name to it, it will be so much easier to release it or hold tight to it — whichever you need to do.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). New people — distant, strange or foreign — are all very interesting to you. The real gold is when you become fascinated by the sweet person in your realm who has been there all along.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Happiness isn't something that's granted to you. You'll create it, and then you'll enjoy it and keep it inside your very attractive energy all day long and into the night. This will be among your favorite days.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). The interesting parts will fall in between other things — nonchalant oddities that make you smile. You'll point things out to enrich the lives of others as you direct their attention.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). People who are too restrained make you nervous. Plus you don't believe them. That's why you'll poke around and see if you can get a reaction and more information. You need a better sense of a person's character before you trust.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). To be present to another person's pain is to expose yourself to it and risk possibly getting hurt, too. But that's

what friends do. You'll do it again and again this weekend.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Sometimes the inventor is the last one to know exactly what's been created. Being too close to the work causes a loss of perspective. You'll be in such a position. It's too early to comment on or name what you've made.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). When you know that the story has a happy ending, it makes it easier for you to go through the ups and downs of it. Eat the salad; later there will also be cake.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You find it easier to hang out with people who share your favorite interests, but this is not a prerequisite to enjoying your friendship. In fact, you'll be quite enriched by someone very different from you this weekend.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). When a person tries their darndest, you respect the effort, regardless of the result. Today, you might be on the fence about the efforts made by those close to you. Be a good coach. Cheer them on to do better.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Backward logic will be part of it today. Maybe it was a cover-up. Maybe it was about trying to fix something that was so broken to begin with that it never had a chance. If you must throw up your hands and start over, it's understandable.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). The one who makes an excuse for a partner is being loyal, but perhaps to a fault. The way to help people grow to their best selves is to expect them to be that.



HOLIDAY MATHIS