

CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



"I'll be up-front and tell you that there is a bit of a moisture problem in the basement."

Reader disappointed at kids' education

Dear Abby: There are no words to express how disappointed I am at the education kids receive now and still graduate with "honors." I was at the grocery store a short time ago. Two young ladies working there just completed their freshman year at the local college. One of them had been on the honor roll all through high school.



JEANNE PHILLIPS
DEAR ABBY

I bought four packages of gravy mix that were on sale — four packages for \$1. As the cashier rang it up, I noticed that she had entered them at 44 cents apiece.

When I brought it to her attention, she asked the other cashier if that was right. She asked, "Forty-four cents, wouldn't that be four for \$1?" The other one picked up a calculator to find the answer.

Can you tell me, what did this honor student learn in school? Both girls are in college. My heart is broken for our kids. Maybe we need to go back to teaching like when I was a kid. — *Grandparent in Texas*

Dear Grandparent: Frankly, your letter leaves me at a loss for words. I can only say that the problems with our educational system will not be resolved in an advice column. Readers?

Dear Abby: I was sober for a year when I met my husband. Neither my alcoholism nor my 24 years of perfect sobriety have ever caused any upset for anyone in his family.

His niece will be married later this year in a winery in another state. The thought of it makes me anxious, and I am opting to not attend with my husband.

Abby, I am not a "special" aunt, and I have no place in the wedding, which will be large. Some family members think I'm being selfish, but I believe I am my first responsibility. They are not the sort you can talk to, so please advise.

Am I being selfish? — *Very Sad in Pennsylvania*

Dear Very Sad: Not in my opinion. Your reason for not attending makes sense to me, and it's not "selfish" to skip an event at which you would not be comfortable. If you send

your husband — and a nice wedding gift — I'm sure the bride will forgive your absence.

And for those who would hold it against you, "remind" them that although you have maintained your sobriety for many years, it can't be taken for granted because sobriety is a day-to-day challenge for people with alcoholism.

Dear Abby: My friend and I have a disagreement. We do crossword puzzles together at the dog park.

She says using a thesaurus/dictionary is cheating. I say that if I look something up and then write it down, I'm learning. What say you, Abby? — *William in Oceanside, Calif.*

Dear William: I agree with you. For this friend to shame you because you need a little help with the answers isn't very nice.

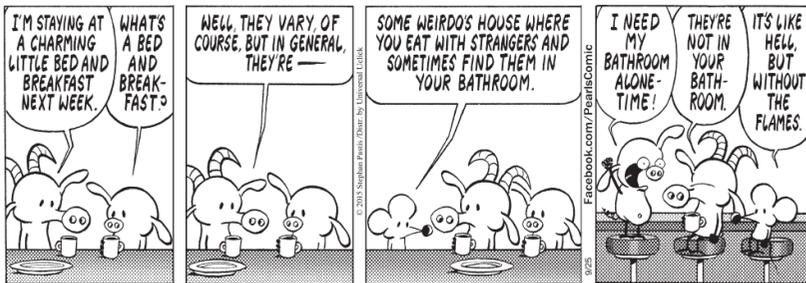
The next time she says it, smile and ask her what a five-letter word with a "t" in the middle is.

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



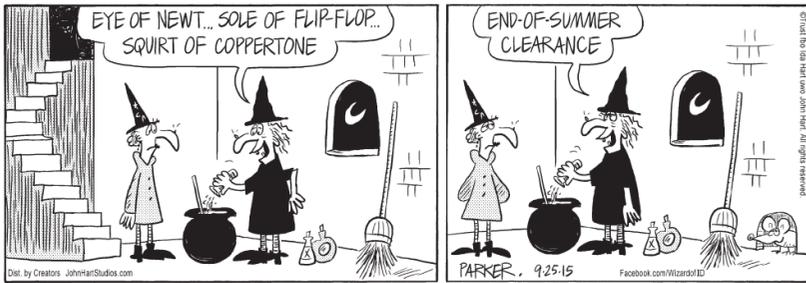
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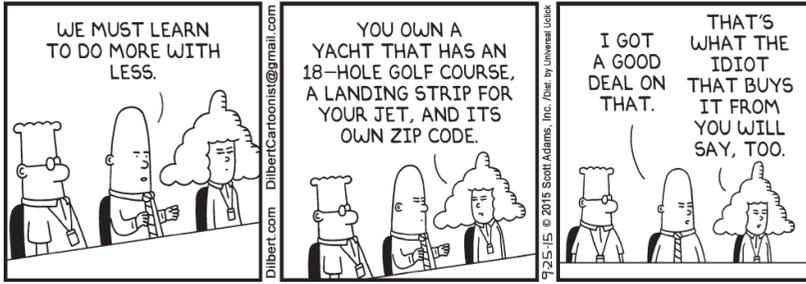
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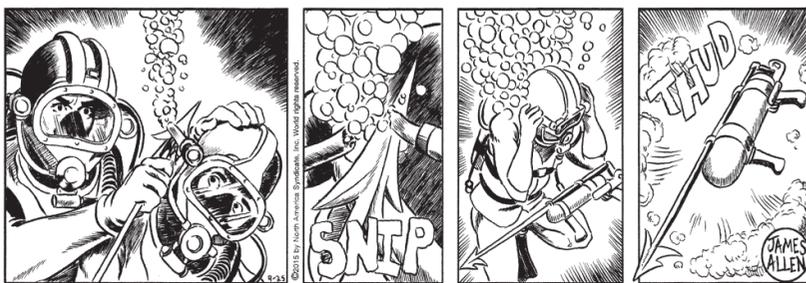
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DUSTIN by Steve Kelley and Jeff Parker



Daily Horoscope

ARIES (March 21-April 19). These days it's more difficult than ever to capture and hold anyone's attention, but you'll do it well quite by accident today. You're so interested in your activities that you make other people interested, too.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). When you find yourself in a funky mood, focusing on the ecstatic moments you've experienced in your life will help you trample negative thought patterns like a quarterback headed toward the goal line.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You cast a spell with your bewitching presence, and so you don't have to do much more than just show up. In fact, when you try to be more engaging, attractive, etc., it works against you. Nonchalance is your secret weapon.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You don't need a quick anecdote, an instant solution or an extreme cleanse. What you need is a lifestyle change. It will happen through habit. Set up the routine and repeat it hundreds of times over.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Truly you'd rather be the rejected than the rejecter. You hate to hurt anyone's feelings. Even when you're not sure you're in the mood to socialize, you'll move forward, make suggestions and initiate plans.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Someone is fascinated by you and wants to know what makes you

tick. You may find this amusing because you're not sure that you even know what your motivation is today. You'll figure it out together.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). The best and worst of outcomes are often one and the same. Therefore, you're not completely sure what to hope for. Focus on executing your plan precisely and let the rest surprise you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). There's no question that you're more attractive to others when you're attractive to yourself. The habit you wish you didn't have is going to have to go sooner or later, so why not now?

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You'll probably have trouble recalling the good times you've experienced — a sure sign that you need to create a few more of them. This weekend will bring a prime opportunity.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Wouldn't it be awesome to see wildly, taste in Technicolor and send impulses with your touch? You'll settle for 10 percent more awareness of your surroundings — that will make a beautiful difference.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Some people are better at compartmentalizing their feelings than others. You'll benefit from your association with one such person and be better off for the example of good internal boundaries.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You don't experience one emotion at a time. Your emotions mix together like recipes, turning each interaction into a unique and unforgettable concoction.



HOLIDAY MATHS