

CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



"Our computers are down, so this is going to take awhile."

Teen has a hard time expressing thanks

Dear Abby: I'm a 17-year-old girl, and all my life I have had trouble accepting gifts, even inexpensive ones.

I do believe it's the thought that counts, but I have trouble expressing gratitude.

An example: My brother was disappointed by my reaction when he got me soap shaped like a rock last Christmas. My smile was forced.

I feel anxious when I get presents, no matter what they are.

I have started seeing someone, and I was planning to save up for a really nice present for him. But when he said he wanted to do the same, I felt uncomfortable. What's a great line I can use to express my gratitude — "I'm happy that you thought of me"? — *Searching for Words Out West*



JEANNE PHILLIPS
DEAR ABBY

Dear Searching For Words: Always say thank you. After that, you might express that the item is "beautiful" or that you like the style or the color. In a case like your brother's

gift, you could have said, "Wow! This gift rocks!"

Dear Abby: I am 29, independent, single and have a steady job. I'm planning on going back to school to become a certified plumbing technician.

Here's the catch: I'm a woman, and because I'm female, some people make comments like, "You don't want to do that. It's working with other people's —!" Yes, this is really because I'm female.

I have tried explaining that plumbing doesn't just involve unclogging toilets and that I feel it's a good choice for me, but I still get these stupid comments. One woman in particular I work with won't stop trying to talk me out of it. I think it's my choice and she's being rude. Is there a polite way to convince her without being rude? — *Ms. Plumber in Lancaster, Penn.*

Dear Ms. Plumber: Try this: "Plumbers make good money. Right now, I'm making 'this' much, but once I complete the course I'll be earning ()" If that doesn't convince her, nothing will.

Dear Abby: Is there any hope for a man who refuses to turn off the TV during dinner?

When I tell him dinner is on the table, he waits until it's cold and then continues to watch the program from the dinner table and ignore me. I have asked him to please turn off the TV during meals, but he won't.

He gobbles his food and doesn't close his mouth. Food drops out of the side of his mouth, and it's disgusting to see. Have you any suggestions? — *Over It in Stockton, Calif.*

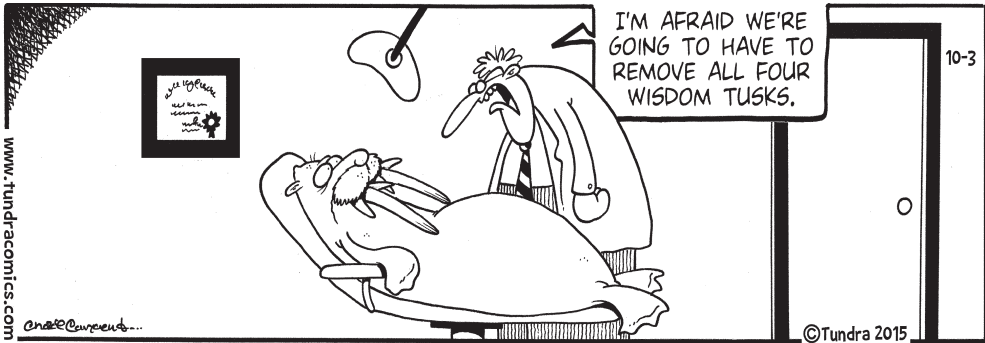
Dear Over It: Your husband's behavior is passive-aggressive, and I can't help but wonder what he's punishing you for.

It's sad that he has such atrocious table manners and such little consideration for your feelings.

I "suggest" you stop trying to serve him a hot meal, let him get his own food from the kitchen and eat it in front of the television when he's hungry, while you eat separately — preferably out with friends.

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

TUNDRA by Chad Carpenter



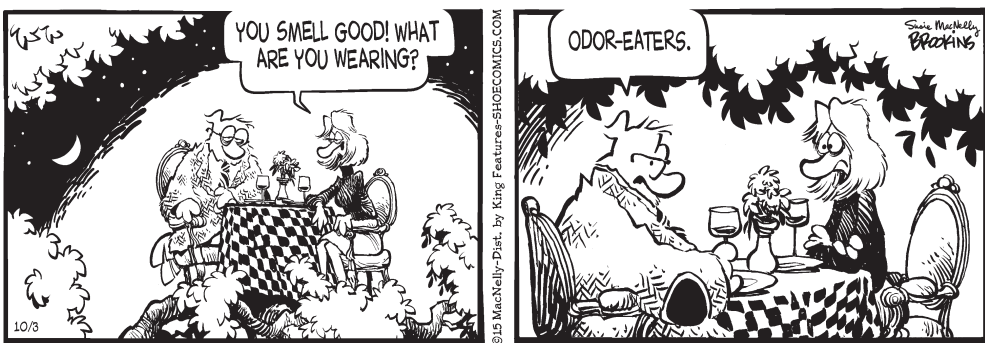
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE by Stephan Pastis



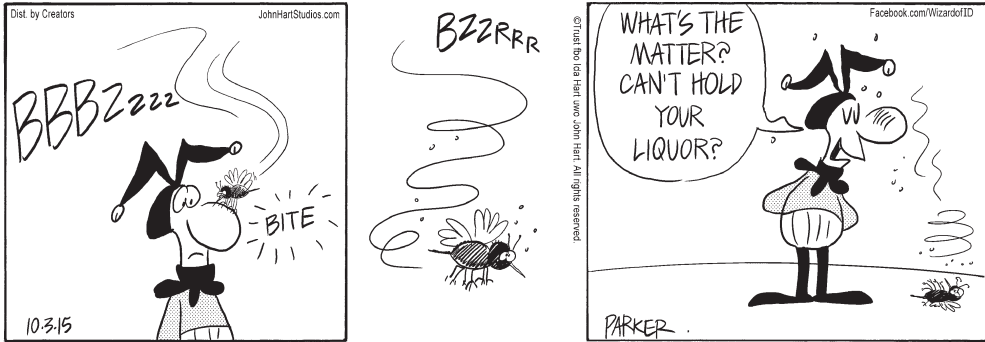
GARFIELD by Jim Davis



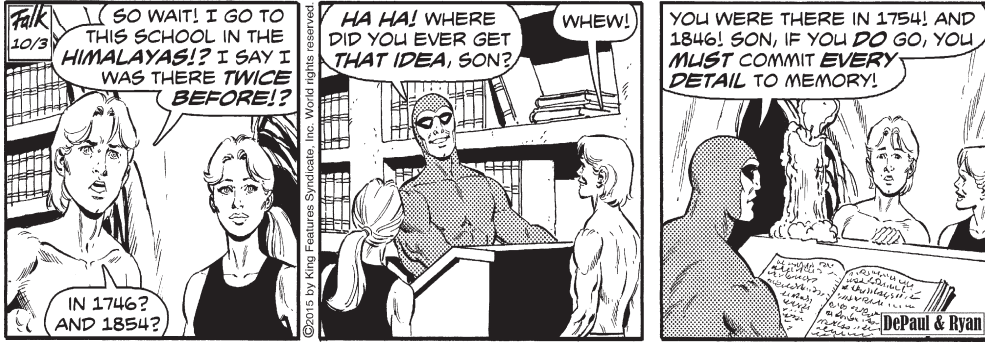
JEFF MACNELLY'S SHOE by Chris Cassatt and Gary Brookins



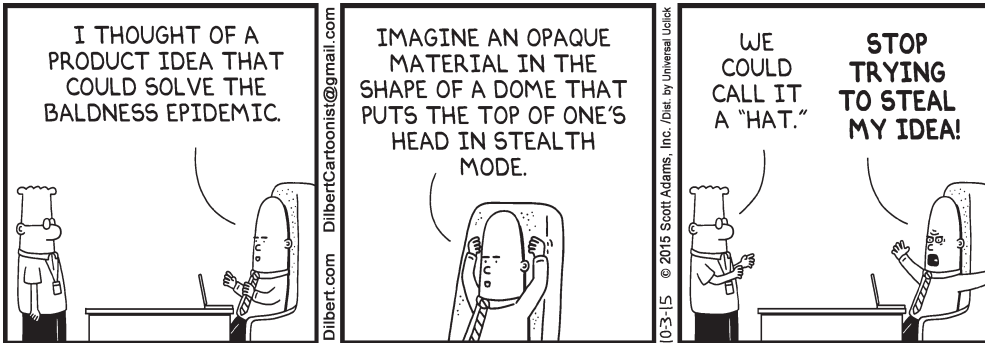
WIZARD OF ID by Brant Parker



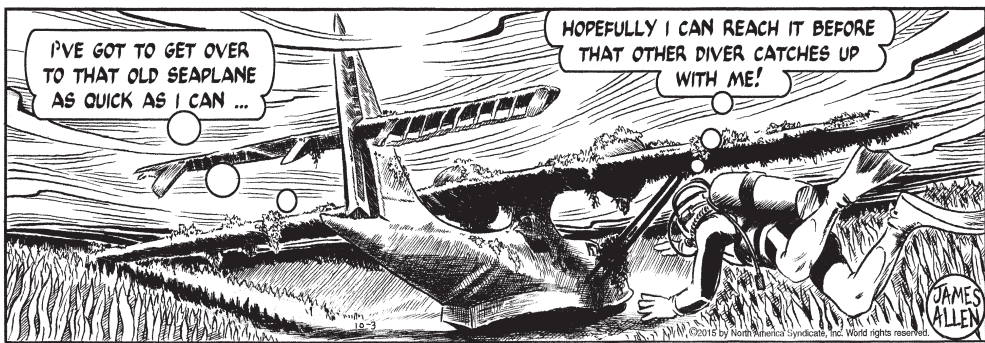
THE PHANTOM by Lee Falk



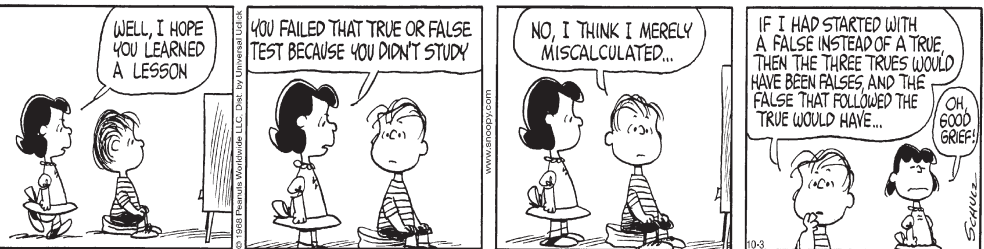
DILBERT by Scott Adams



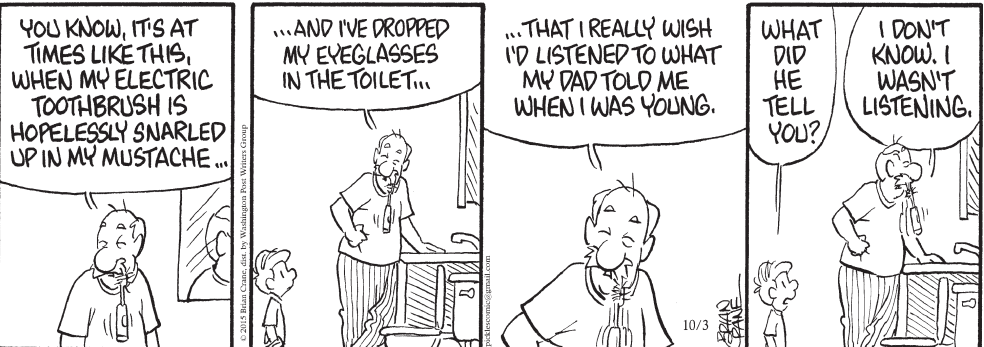
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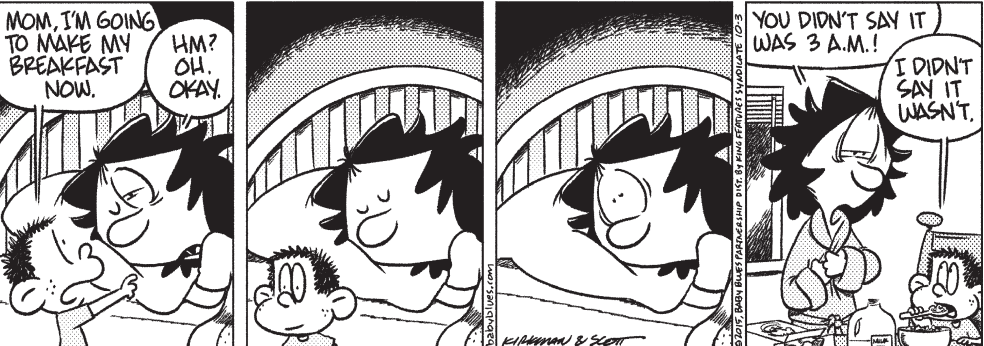
PICKLES by Brian Crane



FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE by Lynn Johnston



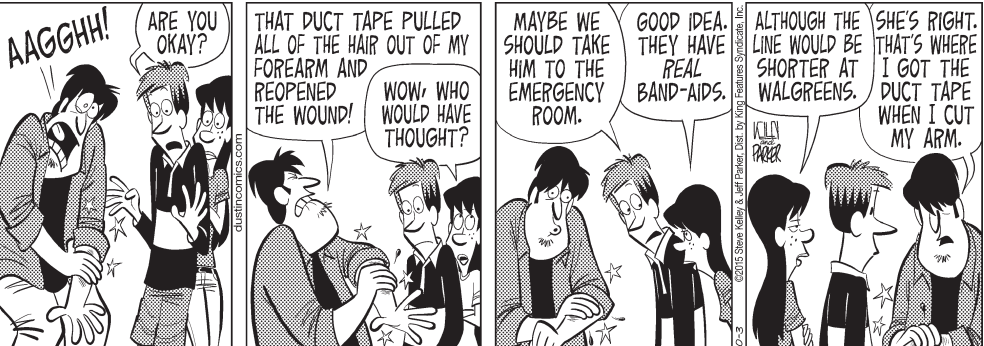
BABY BLUES by Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman



ZITS by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



DUSTIN by Steve Kelley and Jeff Parker



Daily Horoscope

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You are pleasant company in a world that's been hostile to some of your friends. Can you blame them for adoring you so? You'll continue to build the good will through the weekend.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Find out what the other person needs, and you're halfway there. Help the other person get that need fulfilled, and you're golden. The reciprocity will be fun, but it's merely a bonus compared to the giving-high you'll get.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You cater to the person you're with. That's why you can be so different with one person from how you are with another. The one who is your favorite brings out your best qualities. You like who you are around this person.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). It's a good thing that your sense of what is possible is all out of whack. If you knew better, you wouldn't even try for that mad-love goal. Maybe the only targets worth shooting for are the impossible ones.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). While trying to connect with others, many focus so intently on being their personal best that they forget that the most attractive quality a person can have is the ability to make the other person feel attractive.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Routines give you a sense of control, which leads to a sense of calm.

That seems to bother the universe these days, and things will be disrupted, forcing you to find your calm in a deeper place inside yourself.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You're a thought-leader whether or not you realize it and want to be. No pressure, but it means a lot of people are going to listen to, follow and copy you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). It's a day of illusions. The smoke and mirrors will divert your attention long enough for life to pull off a trick or two. And if that weren't enough, there will be real magic, too!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You can't help but think ahead, anticipate appetites and expectations, and hold your hands out to catch what might fall. You're earning someone's trust by doing what comes naturally to you.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The best part about the silliness you encounter today is that it's genuine, organic and likely to uncontrollably escalate into gales of laughter. This is what friendship bonds are made of.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). A lot has changed. The way you communicate is different, as are your hobbies, interests and social outlets. As for your ability to make other people feel valued and important, that remains the same.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Your heart speaks a language that sometimes even you, the owner of said heart, cannot understand. All will not be revealed in time, but at least you're the type who thrives on mystery.



HOLIDAY MATHIS