

No shoes rule irritates man

Dear Annie: One of my wife's siblings insists that everyone remove their shoes upon entering her home. This makes me feel like I am welcome only so long as I don't get their precious house dirty.

My wife and I were recently invited to her sister's house for a family party. When I didn't take off my perfectly clean shoes, she looked me in the eye and told me to remove my shoes or not to bother coming in. She said, "We are zero tolerance on that." I turned and left without saying a word.

Last week, we went to another party at a different sister's home. She met us at the door with a big smile. "Keep your shoes on if you want, but wipe your feet if they are dirty." We had a good time. I felt welcomed.

I often take my shoes off at people's houses. We live in a snowy climate and I don't want to track snow or dirt into their homes. But shouldn't it be my decision to remove my shoes? When people put conditions on coming in, doesn't that give me a choice to accept the conditions or not?

My side of the family would

Annie's Mailbox

Creators Syndicate Inc.

Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar



never do this. We have been married for 40 years and I love my wife's family, but this drives me crazy. Please advise on proper etiquette. — Clean Shoes In Wisconsin

Dear Wisconsin: We think that when you are a guest in someone's home, you should make an effort to follow their rules. It isn't intended to make you feel unwelcome. No matter how clean your shoes may seem, they are still tracking in detritus from the outdoors. However, we also believe that hosts who ask you to remove your shoes have an obligation to provide slippers of some kind so you aren't walking around barefoot or with holes in your socks. Perhaps you could work something out with your sister-in-law so that neither of you feels that the other is being rude.

Dear Annie: My husband and I are in our early 30s and come from middle-class families. We both work extremely hard. We are getting ready to build our second home and are going to complete the transaction in cash.

When people ask what kind of mortgage rate we have or which bank we are using, what's the best way to respond? We don't want others to be jealous or think twice about hiring our business for fear that we may charge too much. — Hardworking in the Midwest

Dear Midwest: You do not need to give out this information. If someone actually has the gall to ask, you have a few options: You can tell them a version of the truth: "We've been saving for a long time so we can pay in cash. It's taken forever." Or misdirect: "Why do you want to know? Are you looking to buy a house? Where? Tell me all about it!" Or more evasively: "We're working on that. Do you have some suggestions?" By turning the question around, they will feel important and wise, and will stop focusing on things that are none of their business.

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Progress will be thwarted by too many opinions. They can't all be right, and they can't all be wrong. You're the one to sort this out. There must be a consensus if the group is to move forward!

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Showing off is never cool, and yet how are you going to let them know what you can do if you never perform it or even mention it? Today you'll walk that fine line between standing out and fitting in.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Some people complain to sound big, when actually it only makes them sound weak, insecure and ill-equipped to do what it takes to make a situation work. As far as you're concerned, complaining is a red flag.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There's a score to even. The other person might not think so, but you have your own way of accounting, and in your book, things won't be quite right until you execute a certain chain of action.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). If it can be done, you'll find a way to do it. Whether or not it's worth doing, well, that part might be out of your hands, as an authority figure is likely to request much that falls under the category of "your job," whether you like it or not.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). People want to know about you, but you're feeling shy and perhaps inclined to avoid the subject of you altogether. It would be a mistake to let the day slip by without revealing at least a little about your remarkable life.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Bottom line, this certain someone sees something different in you. You're attractive in your uniqueness, and if you continue to be so intriguing you'll soon

gain a fan for life.
SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). A sacrifice will prove that you're committed. But if you give too much, this will backfire on you. Over-giving could be taken as a sign that you care more about what the other person thinks of you than you care for yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You know what you're doing and where you're going. You'll find the way, the alternate way, the scenic route and the shortcut. And you'll generously help anyone else headed in the same direction as well!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). When you come up against someone's pride, go gently. Keep in mind that this person may feel like he or she is fighting for life itself. That's the power of ego. Pride is all some people feel they have.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Not feeling quite as driven? The break from ambition will be healthy for you. Bonus: If you just go along for the ride, you'll wind up at the same destination as you would if you were in the driver's seat.

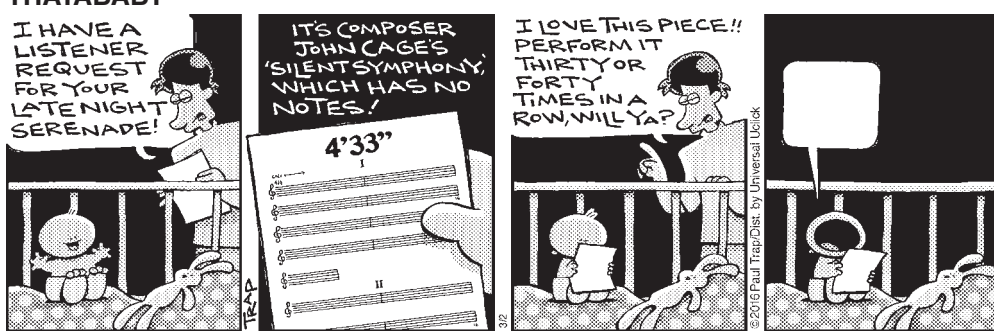
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Improvement will be simple for you. Name the problem and solve it. If it's too big, make it smaller. If it's still too big, make it smaller still, until it's small enough to solve.

THURSDAY'S BIRTHDAY (March 3). More attention, respect and money are coming your way over the next seven weeks. You'll put your money where your heart is this month, buying into only what contributes to your happiness and health. The social calendar heats up in May and a tight relationship forms. December shows you paying dues; it will pay off in 2017. Libra and Sagittarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 7, 49, 23, 41 and 17.

FRANK AND ERNEST



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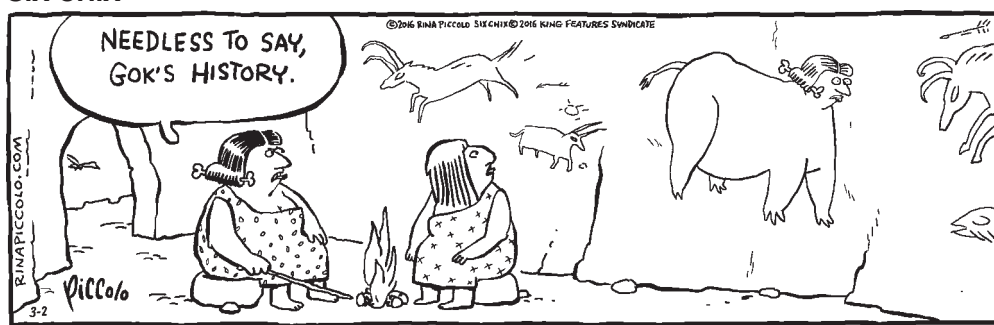
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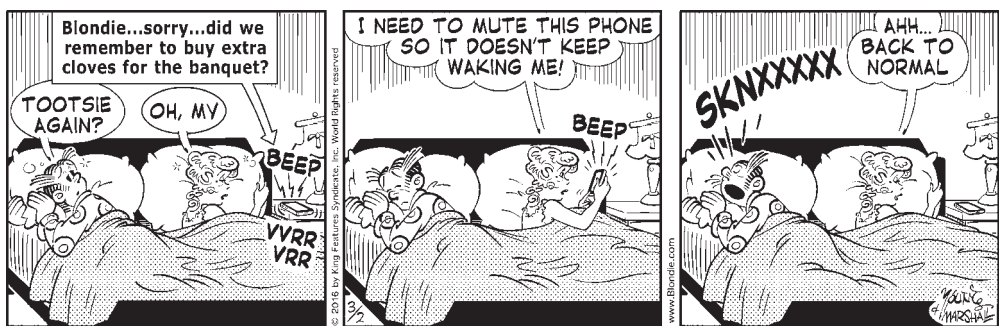
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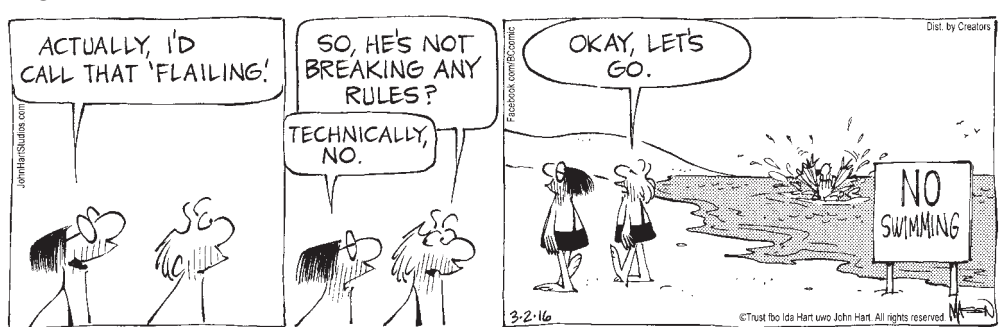
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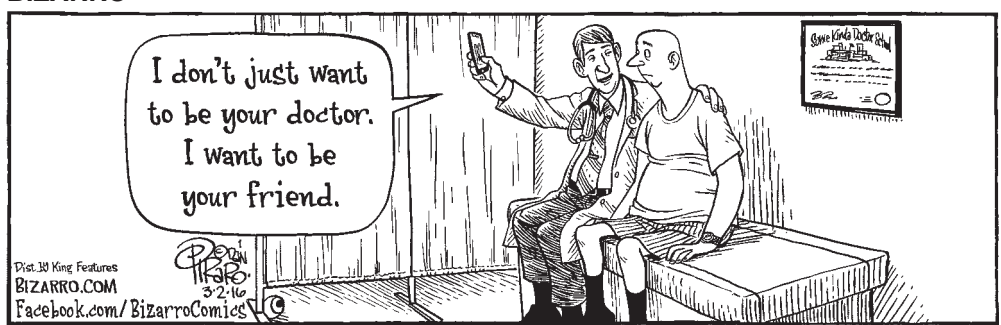
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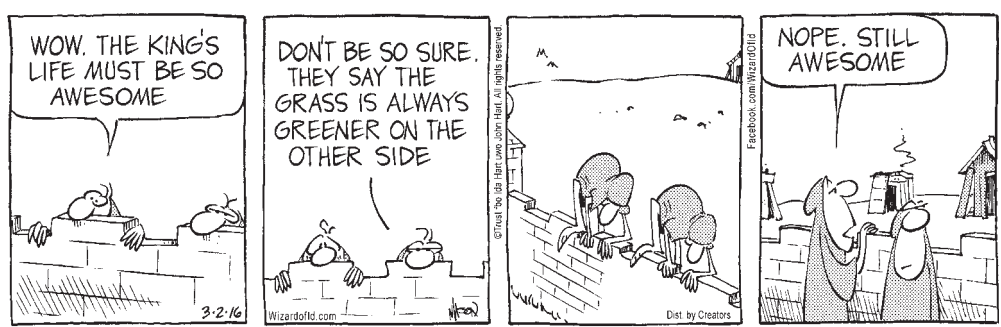
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WIZARD OF ID



ROSE IS ROSE

