

Salute veterans in February

Dear Annie: America cares deeply for its veterans. Each and every day, volunteers and Department of Veterans Affairs employees alike provide compassionate and devoted care for those who "have borne the battle."

As we have done for many years, this February, Americans will participate in the National Salute to Veteran Patients by visiting and volunteering at VA medical centers and by sending letters of thanks or valentines to veterans. This year's National Salute week is Feb. 13-17, and we again encourage communities across the country to take part in this effort to honor our hospitalized veterans.

The National Salute is a great time for citizens to get to know their local VA facilities and the veterans who receive care from the VA. Activities and events throughout the week open the door for those in the community to show their appreciation through special ward visits, valentine distribution and veteran recognition programs. Those

interested will also have the chance to explore some of our exceptional volunteer programs.

The VA is more than just buildings in a community. Over 350,000 people serve veterans at the 1,200-plus health care facilities across the country every day. The valuable partnerships with volunteers strengthen the bond with the veterans we care and provide services for.

We also work hand in hand with our valuable veteran service organizations, civic and community partners, and caring individuals from across the country.

Last year, 272,834 valentines were received at VA medical centers, arriving from schools, community groups and youth organizations nationwide. Additionally, more than 9,000 volunteers contributed to events and activities recognizing our hospitalized veterans. I thank you and your readers for your work in bringing attention to this worthy cause.

Of special note, VA Voluntary Service estimates that approx-

imately 160 new community organizations participated in the 2016 National Salute campaign.

The Department of Veterans Affairs continues to do a considerable amount of outreach to invite nonprofits and community, civic and corporate entities to share in our noble mission of caring for veterans. Last year's effort will serve as a notable benchmark to begin expanding our efforts to sustain and grow viable strategic partnerships, as well as meaningful volunteer engagement.

I encourage your thoughtful readers to take time this February to honor our veterans. As always, Annie, thank you for your support for this outstanding program.

For more information regarding the National Salute and volunteer opportunities at a local VA medical center, please visit <http://www.volunteer.va.gov>. — Sabrina C. Clark, director of VA Voluntary Service

Dear Sabrina: Thank you for this excellent reminder to honor the veterans in our own communities. I encourage all my readers to participate in the National Salute this February.

DEAR ANNIE

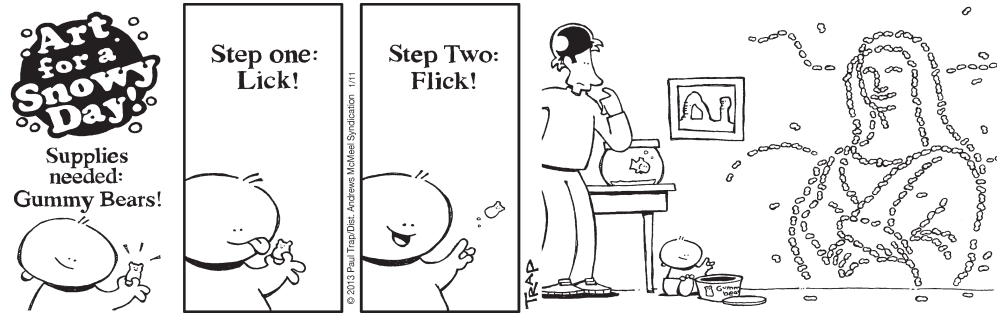


Annie Lane
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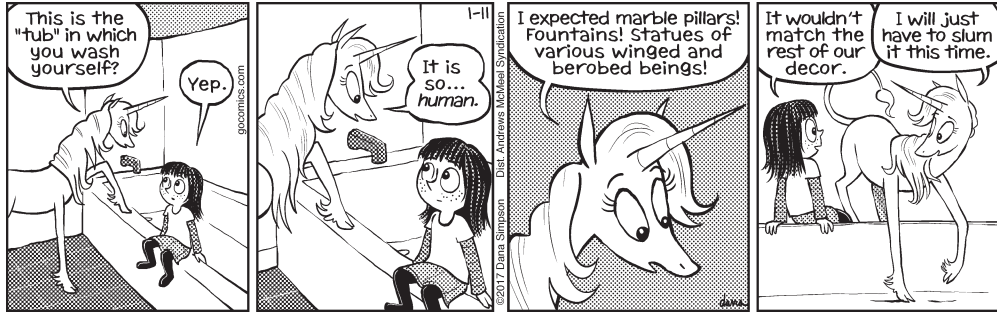
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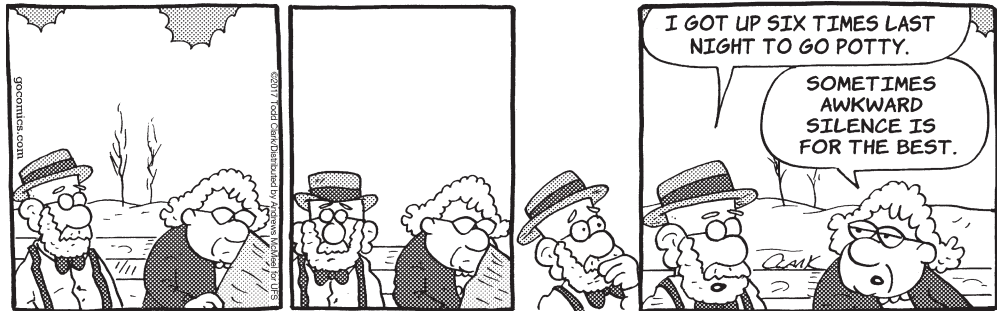
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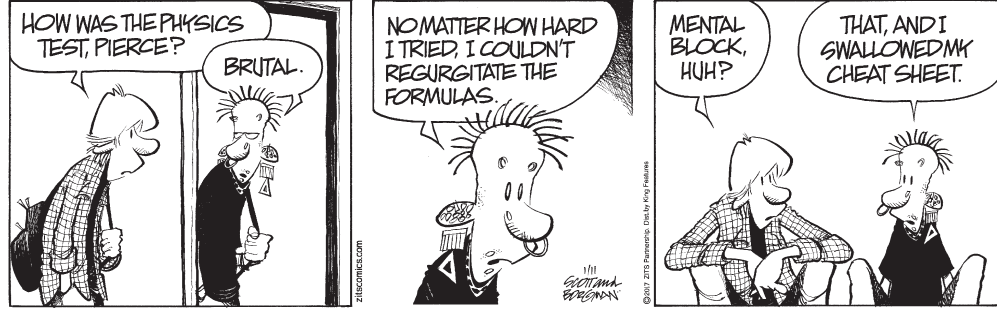
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You feel stalled in some respects, but it's not your fault; it's the destination. The goal is off. Change what you want from the situation, and you'll find that the road is totally clear.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The people who you'd categorize as "fun" are the same ones who tend to find something new in a familiar situation. It's one of the reasons that you'll be looking for the novelty in something you do nearly every day.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). If no one can give you self-confidence, then no one can take it away, either. There are, however, those who foster an atmosphere where such a thing can grow. They should be your first choice for company.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Everything doesn't have to be big and spectacular to be pleasing to you. Simple pleasures will be even more satisfying now, as you effortlessly settle into them.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Making small talk is a ubiquitous feature of your professional standing and your busy social life, though not one that you always feel prepared for. Pick your topics before you leave the house, and you'll win at conversation.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You're interesting in so many ways. Don't be in a rush to reveal them all up front. There's an art to impressing people and getting them intrigued — rather than impressing with the effect of making people jealous and resentful.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Absurdity is a tone that intellectuals, artists and humorists like you can pull off beautifully. By the way, if you don't think of yourself in these terms, it's about time

you started to, because it's definitely part of who you are.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). You can go through the day's challenges hoping not to crash, but you'll only be shortchanging yourself. Instead, go into them anticipating the opportunity to take a running leap into the sky and soar.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Ask an OK question; have an OK time. Ask a better question; have a better time. Ask the question; hold on for a conversational loop-the-loop that no one was expecting and none will soon forget.

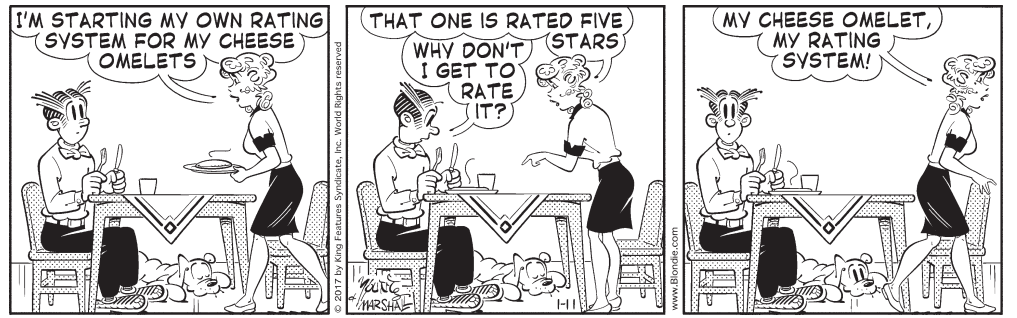
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). So many instances prove that in life, it doesn't matter how intelligent you are: What matters most is how prepared you are. That big brain of yours notwithstanding, get ready today and you'll succeed tomorrow.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). When you love and are loved, it makes everything a little easier. You feel like you can choose what to get emotionally invested in. The perspective you come from is one of involved detachment.

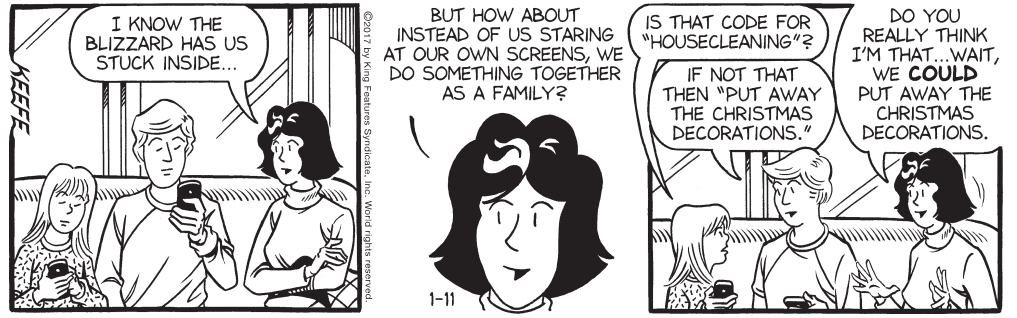
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You don't always turn up your power to high voltage, because it's not the level that's needed much of the time, and you don't want to exhibit bad taste. However, you can afford to amp it up somewhat today.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 12). Obstructions in the road to happiness will lift. This year everything will seem to come to you with much less effort than before. In February, starting a new project or relationship will put you in a positively effervescent state. March is for investing. June gives you a different take on the current situation. Gemini and Virgo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 4, 9, 20, 18 and 45.

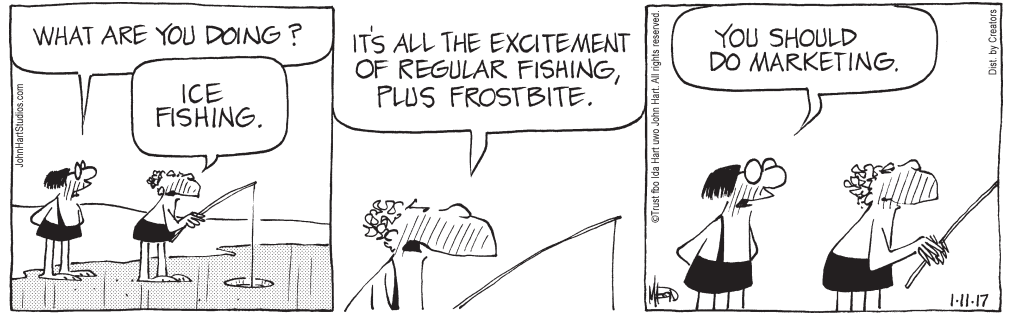
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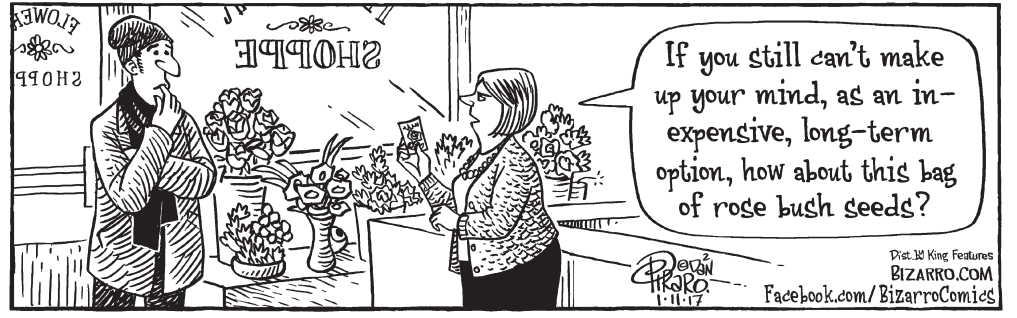
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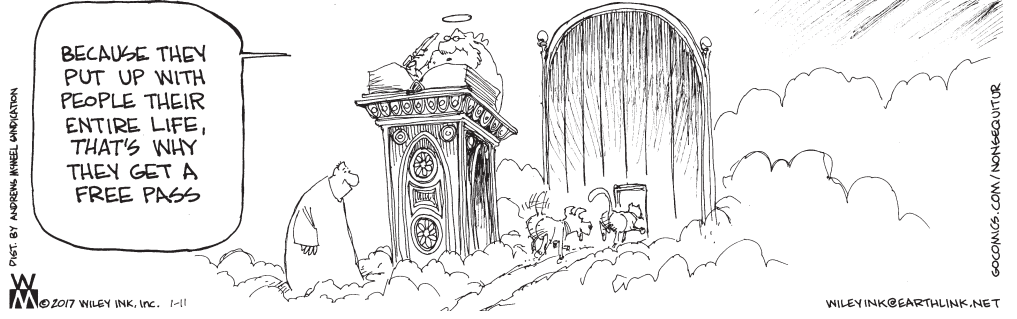
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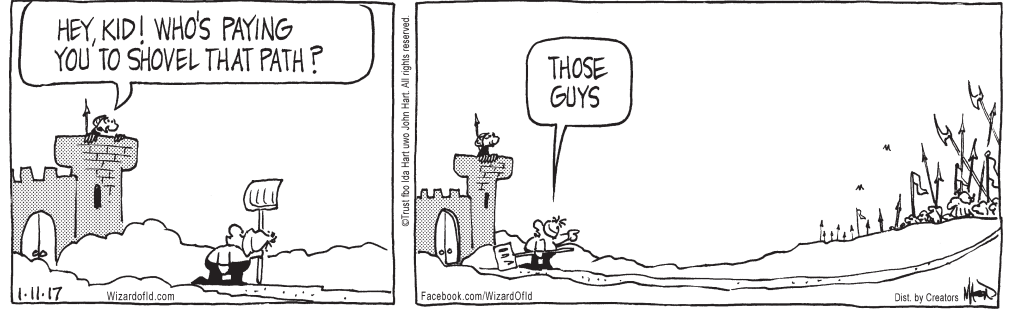
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