

Not wanting to hover

Dear Annie: I have a somewhat uncomfortable question. Recently, I moved from California to Texas for my job, and I love it here. Though there are a lot of differences between the states, one has stood out to me more than any other: There are no paper toilet seat covers offered in public restrooms. When I first moved, I thought it was simply that I was going to the types of restaurants and businesses that don't offer them. However, I've been asking Texas natives about it, and rarely does anyone here use a toilet seat cover or make one from toilet paper. Some people are hoverers, depending on the state of the toilet, but the majority of people I've polled seem to be fine sitting right on the seat. Is this normal? Are toilet seat covers really a facade? Have I been wasting precious seconds carefully laying down covers and paper all these years?! — *Cover, Hover or Quit*

Dear Cover, Hover or Quit: In a word, yes. As University of Arizona public health researcher Kelly Reynolds explained in an interview with USA Today earlier this year, bacteria and viruses are tiny and easily able to pass through paper seat covers — an unpleasant thought but not reason to worry. Unless you have an open cut that would be making contact with the seat, risk of germ transmission from a toilet is incredibly low. So you'd be better off saving the paper and sitting down plainly. If that sounds gross, consider that most cell-phones carry 10 times more bacteria than a toilet seat. Now go clean your phone and wash your hands.

Dear Annie: I read a number of letters about how families can't figure out who goes where and when on holidays. I don't understand. Why do families not work together more and compromise? I come

from a large family. Once we all started getting married and having to share time with in-laws, my mother said she was not going to try to compete with other families, that if they had to have their event on the day of the holiday, we would just find another day to get together. This worked out so well! No running to do double or even triple duty on holidays or trying to coordinate when to be where. If the in-law wanted Thanksgiving Day or Christmas Day, fine; we'd get together the Sunday after Thanksgiving, and usually for Christmas, we'd get together on the weekend between Christmas and New Year's. All it takes is communication and dispensing with the notion that one family is more important than the other. It's not the day that's important; it's the time you spend with loved ones that is. — *Happier for the Holidays*

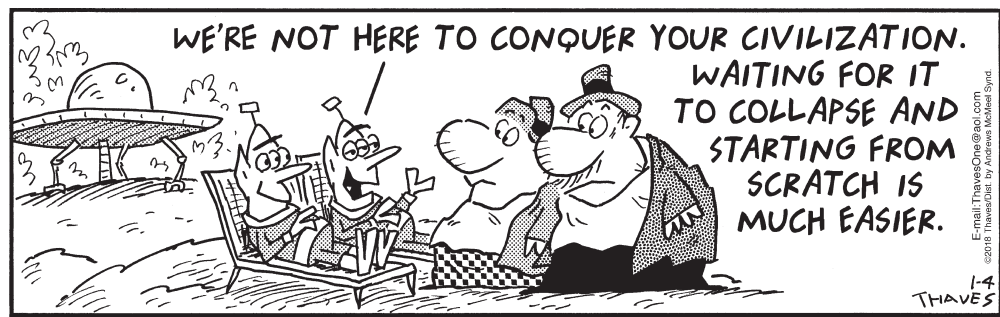
Dear Happier for the Holidays: I couldn't agree more. May we all go into the new year with such a clear sense of priorities.

DEAR ANNIE

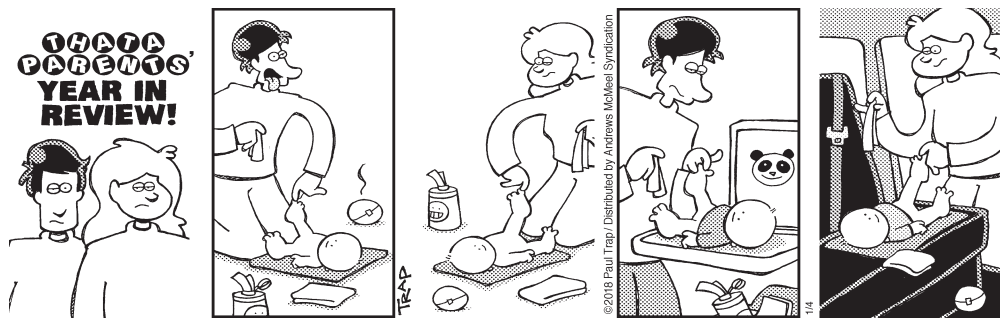


Annie Lane
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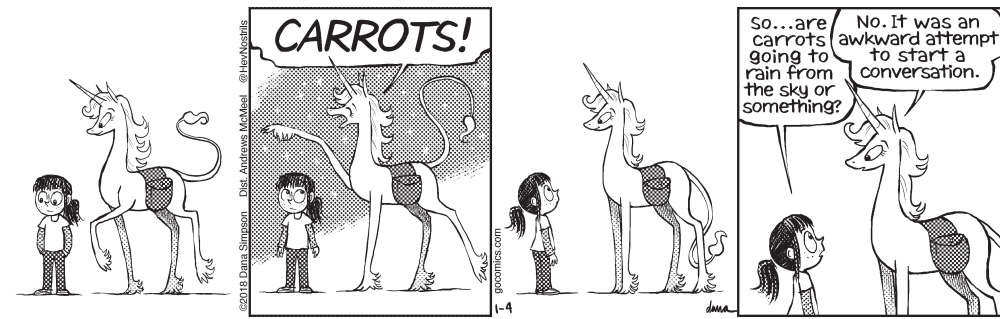
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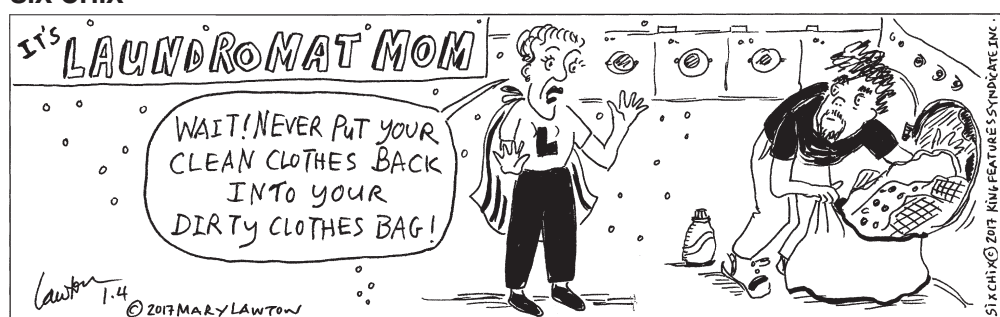
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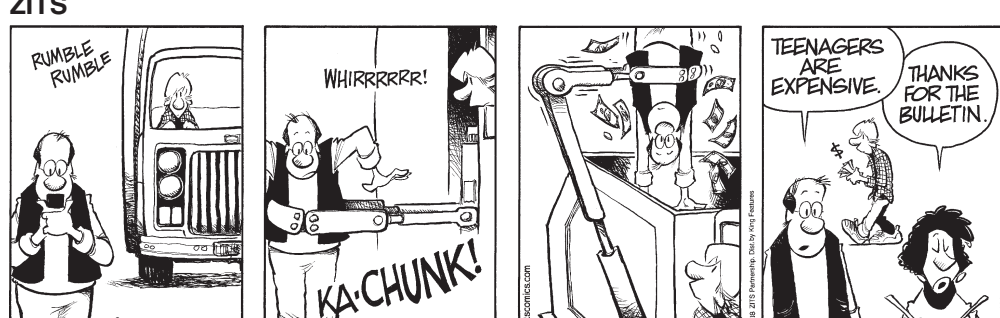
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TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Observation is your cosmic gift of the day. No one will accuse you of missing the forest for the trees. You'll see the trees, the forest, the continent, the curve of the planet ...

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). How far should you take an idea? Should you put your money behind it? Test the concept first. See what you can do without investing much. If it's a good idea, you'll get a sign.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). All subtlety will be lost, and you're not in that kind of mood anyway. Use your loud, clear voice; write in big letters. You'll be dealing with people who can take anything you have to give, so give it straight.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Like an athlete building toward being a contender, you'll dedicate yourself to consistent, daily work. You'll sweat through the discomfort, through the inconvenience, through whatever mood descends. This is what it takes.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). When facts come to light or memories resurface, there's a reason. Don't discount anything. If you don't know the purpose, make a detective note of what happened. It might help you later. This is all part of the case.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You love your people, but you don't always want to talk to them. You need time to yourself. If you don't get enough alone time you'll feel resentful of those who "stole" it from you.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). An extroverted introvert is a person who is proactively outgoing to avoid being rude though they prefer plenty of time to themselves to recharge and enjoy the hours however they please. Can you

relate?

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). The pile of paperwork needs your attention. Same with a pile of emotions. There's nothing too awful in either pile, so reach in and deal with it one item at a time. In a few concentrated hours you'll be free.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). When you know it's for you, you really know. You dive right in. You commit yourself without an ounce of regret or reservation. Your confidence will attract friends and followers.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Oddly enough, knowing what needs doing is more important than doing it today. You're wise not to start on anything without a plan. It may take several hours to plot out the journey ahead, and this will be time well spent.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Empathy has no words. It's receptive. It holds open an emotional catcher's mitt. It receives with eyes of kindness, an encouraging face and open body language.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You've been the frequent recipient of spontaneous kindness, and now you'll be paying it forward. It feels good to be the mastermind of someone else's kismet. You might even prefer to do this anonymously.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 5). The big, beautiful life that's unfolding is something you couldn't have predicted or controlled. Your interests will multiply, which will have a similar impact on your social life. In February, your trust and friendship change a life. Your work will be immersive and fascinating in April beginning a financially bountiful trend. Scorpio and Capricorn adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 5, 27, 9, 33 and 40.

BLONDIE



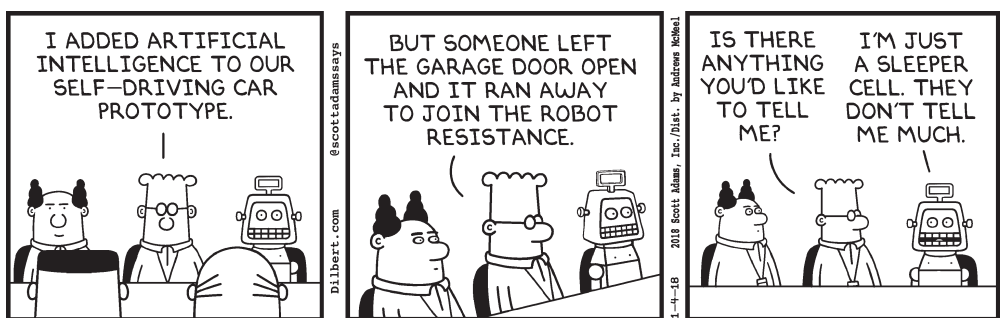
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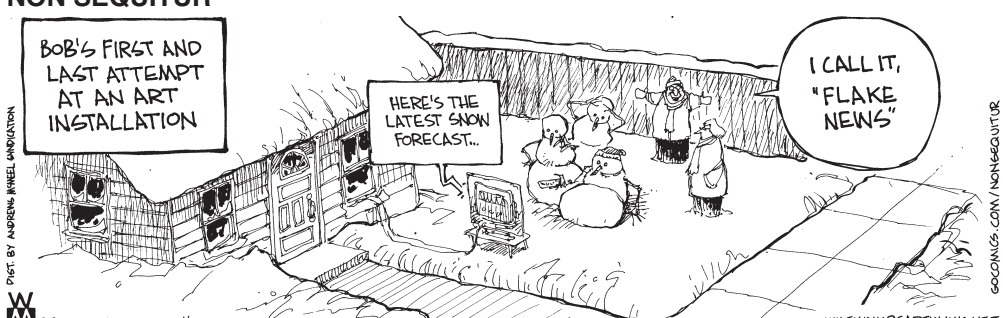
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ROSE IS ROSE

