

Spread thin on visits

Dear Annie: I'd like to make a plea to your readers.

My wife and I live far from the places where we grew up, but most of our friends are still close to our respective parents. When we visit, especially now that we have children, it is always stressful because of our friends' expectations.

Because of work schedules, school schedules and our desire to take some vacations by ourselves, we don't visit so often as we ideally would. That means our time back "home" is limited.

Of course, our top priority is spending quality time with our parents. We also really value our friendships, but the reality is that we can't spend a whole lot of time with our friends. (It's especially problematic for me because my friends have not stayed close with one another, so I have to see everyone individually. We can get together as a group with my wife's friends, but with kids, these group get-togethers don't lend themselves to our having quality time together — i.e., adult conversations.)

The main problem is that our

friends just don't get our situation. They're always annoyed that we don't spend more time with them. I think it's mostly because they live close to their parents and therefore don't get how meaningful our visits are.

So, Annie, would you please print my letter as a public service announcement to your readers? If any of your readers identify with my friends, I hope they'll have more sympathy toward their friends in our boat. — *We Would Prefer More Time, Too*

Dear WWPMTT: I think many people who live far from their hometowns will relate. You can wind up feeling spread thin when trying to see everyone each trip home. Perhaps you're trying to please too many people. You could always tell your friends a time and place to be if they'd like to see you while you're back, thus getting all your face time in at once. Who knows? It might encourage your old friends who have drifted apart from one another to get close again. If they're not comfortable seeing you in a group setting,

that's on them. At least you'll have extended the invitation.

Ultimately, try to keep in mind that their annoyance stems from their really wanting to see you. That so many count you among their close friends — well, count your blessings.

Dear Annie: I was sad reading the letter from "Lonely Renaissance Man." I have some other suggestions for him:

Find something you like and volunteer. If you like animals, volunteer at the shelter. You could tutor or read to elementary school students, sit with people in a nursing home or hospital. Help a florist on Mother's Day. Join a church. Coach a Little League team. You'll meet people doing these things, and you'll share a common interest with them. The next thing you know, you'll have a circle of friends and maybe even a girlfriend. I wish you the best. — *Older and Wiser in Mississippi*

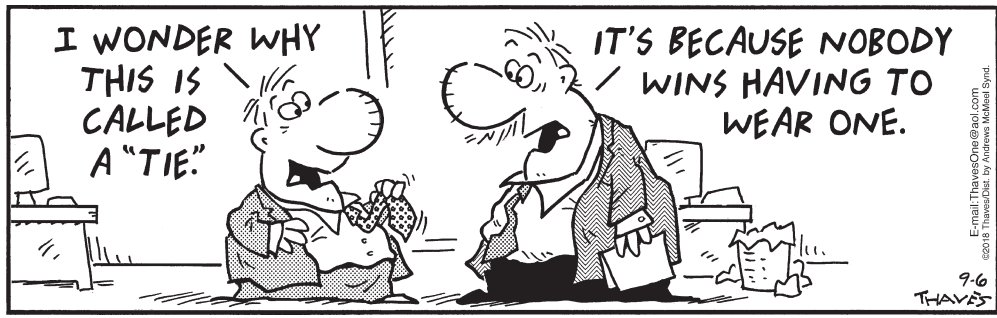
Dear Older and Wiser: Wise words indeed. "Lonely Renaissance Man's" letter provoked an outpouring of supportive letters such as this one. I hope it helps him realize he's less alone than he thinks.

DEAR ANNIE

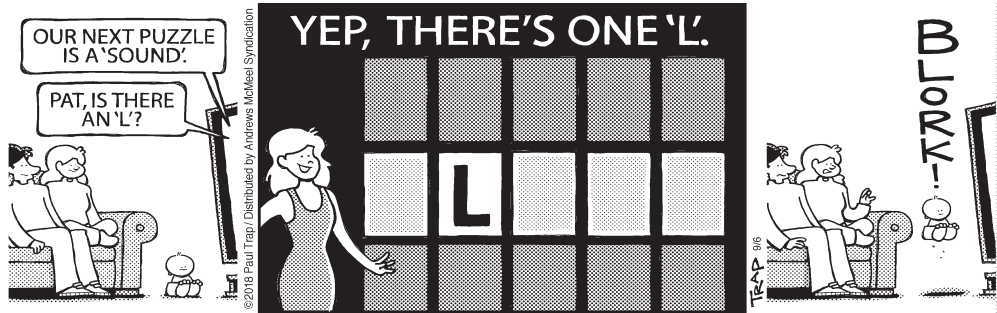


Annie Lane
Creators
Syndicate Inc.

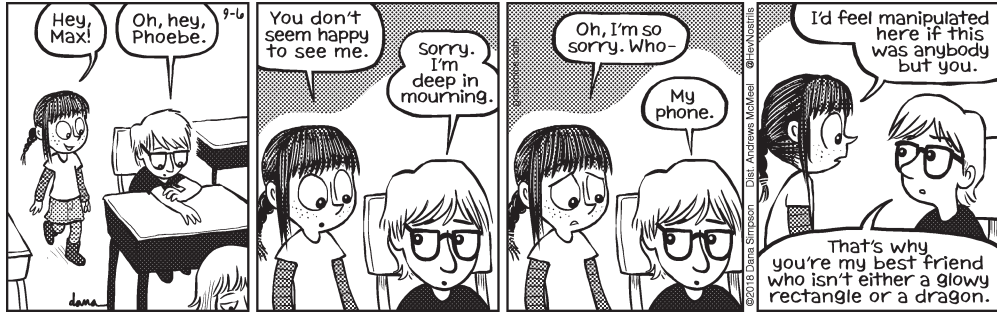
FRANK AND ERNEST



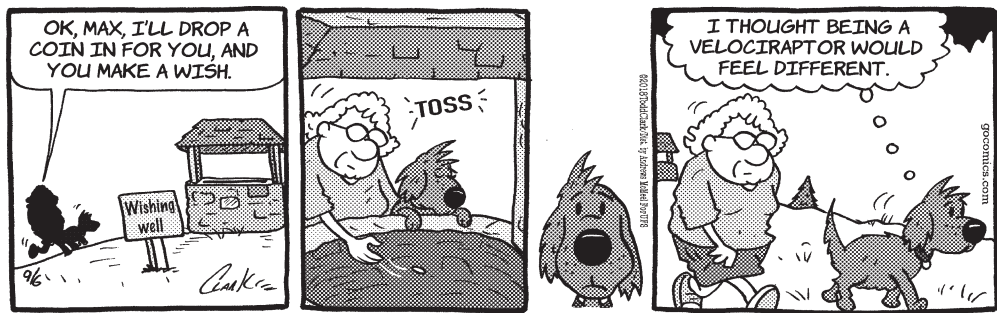
THATABABY



PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



LOLA



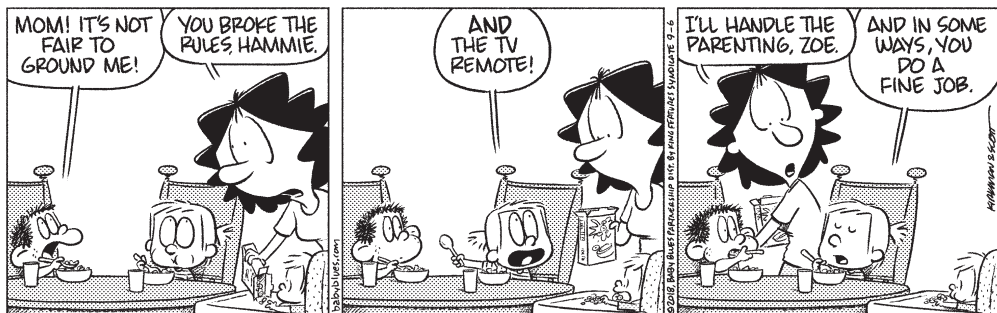
SIX CHIX



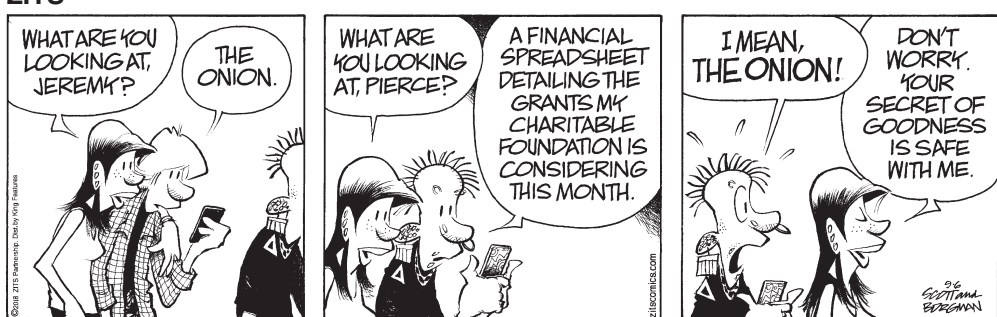
MUTTS



BABY BLUES



ZITS



TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). What is it called when an emoji shows up one way on one device and another way on a different device? Maybe there's no name for it, but it's an echo of what happens with real emotions today.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Games are no fun if they are too easy. Think of today's challenge as though it were a game, and suddenly the parts that might have once annoyed you now seem like simple problems to solve on your way to winning.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Everyone wears a mask with varying degrees of difference from the real face underneath. Today, you'll be very good at guessing just how far off the mask is from the raw emotion it covers.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Of all the thoughts you could think, the one that will be the most damaging follows along the lines of "if only I had ..." You did what you did and you're better for it. Believe that, and get back in the swing of things.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Your ambitions may be surprising to more experienced types who may tell you not to bother with certain goals. But they don't know what you know — that your way hasn't been tried and just might work.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You'll be drawn to passionately driven people and you like that you can tell in no uncertain terms what they want. The most successful people are the ones who help others get successful.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). People who change their minds will keep you on your toes. You'll be driven to find out why. To understand what makes the emotional, social and intellectual tides turn is to have great power.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). There's no such thing as true perceptions, as all perception is subjective. You'll be well aware of the fantasy element at play in your expectations of others today, though you may not be able to control it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Will this problem still bother you tomorrow? What about next week? Next year? If the answer is "no," then there's really not a good reason to let it bother you now.

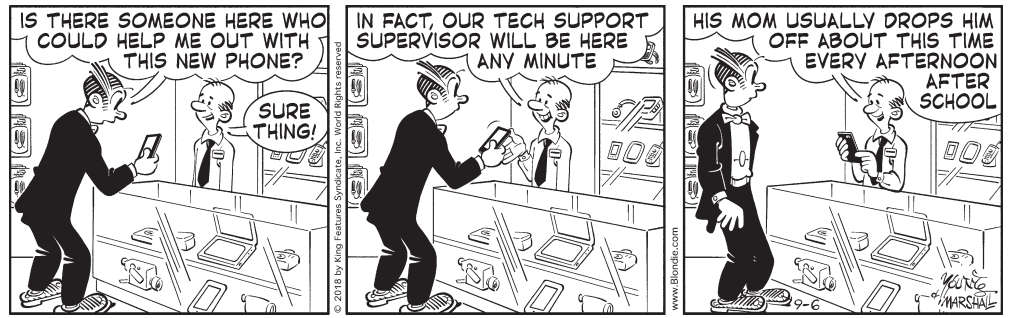
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). The work itself may not be very difficult, but in a weird way it's the easiness that makes it hard. Staying focused is made difficult by tedium. Tedium is its own kind of burdensome labor. What if you made it harder?

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Work isn't hard. You do what's asked of you and anticipate what else might be asked. It's something you learned to do long ago, and you'll be struck by those who never picked up the same work ethic. Kindly show them how it's done.

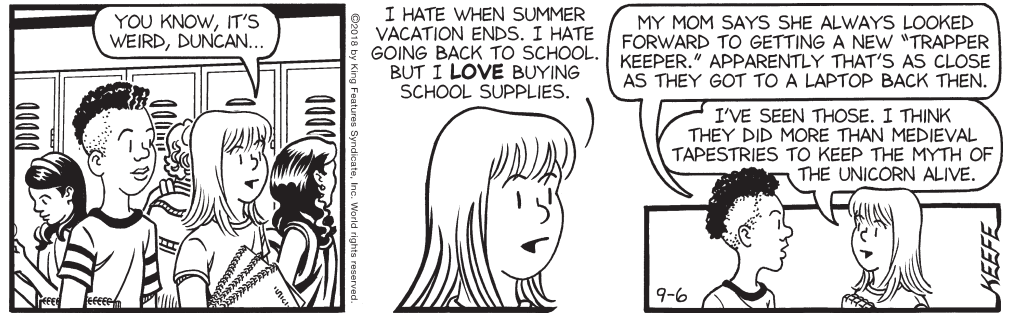
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Just as water reflects what's above and around it, you'll reflect your influences in a distorted way. They will be all the more lovely for your generous interpretation.

TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Sept. 7). You'll adopt new mindsets in the name of peace, progress and prosperity. One idea that will work brilliantly to improve things is total acceptance of all that is and all that's happened. Things could not have been otherwise. Take the easy gifts of the next two months. Reinvest half. There's another pay out in March. Cancer and Leo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 13, 9, 10, 45 and 12.

BLONDIE



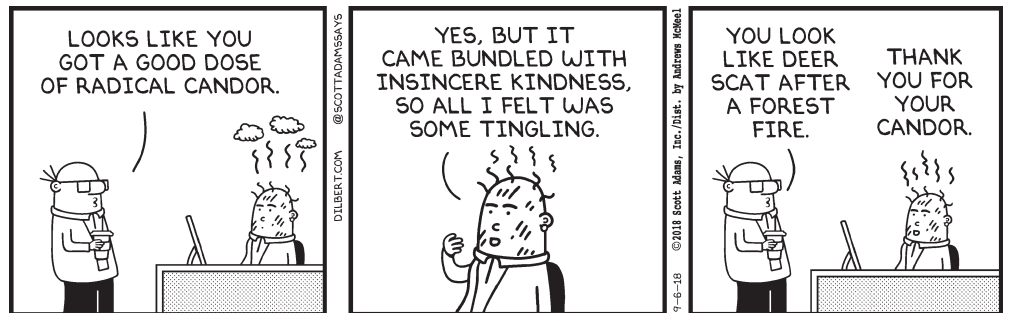
SALLY FORTH



B.C.



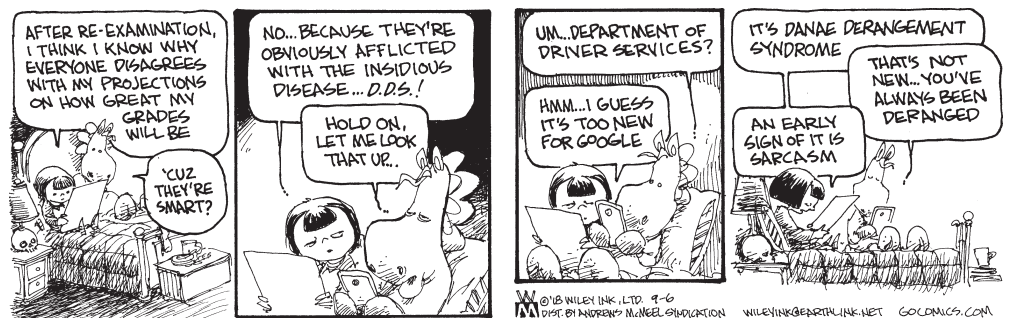
DILBERT



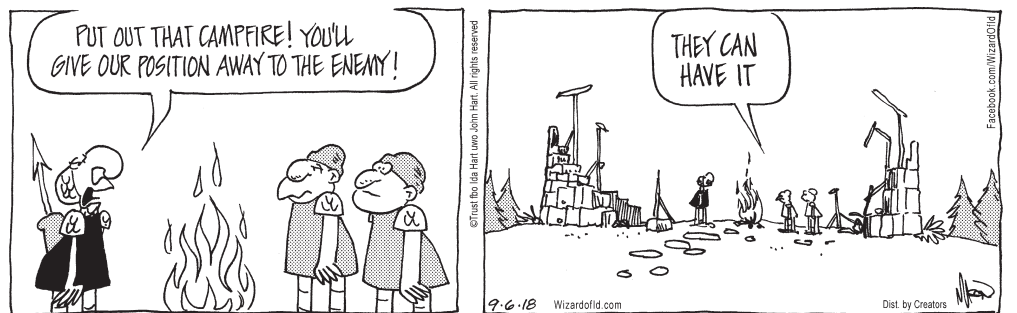
BIZARRO



NON SEQUITUR



WIZARD OF ID



ROSE IS ROSE

