



Photographs by LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

**MARK GREWAL**, an agricultural consultant, stands on a flooded road near Corcoran, Calif., where long-dry Tulare Lake is filling up after a stormy winter and inundating thousands of acres.

# Tensions high as Tulare Lake reappears on prime farmland

Amid unprecedented storms, agricultural communities grapple with how to deal with swiftly rising floodwaters

By IAN JAMES AND SUSANNE RUST

CORCORAN, Calif. — Sixth Avenue used to cut through miles of farmland. Now, the road has disappeared under muddy water, its path marked by sodden telephone poles that protrude from a swelling lake. Water laps just below the windows of a lone farmhouse that sits alongside the submerged route.

Thousands of acres of cropland have been inundated in this heavily farmed swath of the San Joaquin Valley. And the water just keeps rising.

For the first time in decades, Tulare Lake is reappearing in the valley, reclaiming the lowlands at its historic heart. Once the largest freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River, Tulare Lake was largely drained in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as the rivers that fed it were dammed and diverted for agriculture.

[See Tulare, A9]



**RIVERS THAT** dwindled during the drought are swollen with runoff, spilling into fields usually teeming with lucrative crops.

# Skid row trust's dysfunction and bad bets leave tenants in straits

Residents report broken elevators, other issues as nonprofit collapses from internal dissent, fiscal chaos

By DOUG SMITH AND BENJAMIN ORESKES

In 2016, hoarding by the tenants of more than two dozen downtown residential buildings had become so pervasive that employees felt it posed a health and safety hazard.

The Skid Row Housing Trust, a nonprofit that owned the buildings, hired a specialist — clinical psychologist Danielle Schlichter. Her job was to set up a training program for graduate students who would help tenants overcome the obsessions that set them up for eviction.

But soon, the trust began falling behind on its payments to Schlichter and eventually stopped them, according to emails attached in a lawsuit. She was forced to stop working even

as the problems at the buildings persisted, the emails said.

Schlichter's lawsuit was one of many filed by tenants and creditors, alleging uninhabitable living conditions seeking hundreds of thousands of dollars in unpaid bills. They marked the early signs of management and financial disarray, which festered for years before culminating in the meltdown of an institution that had long stood as a model for housing homeless people.

Earlier this year, the nonprofit's interim chief executive acknowledged that the trust could no longer support its 29 residential buildings — many of them operating in the red — and

[See Skid row, A10]

# L.A. Care's issues near crisis point, groups tell county

Fearing patients are at risk, hospitals call for action one year since health plan was fined.

By EMILY ALPERT REYES

A health insurance plan that serves poor and vulnerable patients in Los Angeles County was slapped with record fines — \$55 million in total — last March for what a California state agency described as “widespread, systemic, and unrelenting” failures, including sluggish authorizations for medical care that left patients suffering.

A year later, Southern California hospitals complain that problems have persisted and are reaching a crisis point. The Hospital Assn. of Southern California and other healthcare groups have urged the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to call for changes from L.A. Care, a publicly operated health plan that serves more than 2.8 million people, most of them on Medi-Cal.

What worries medical staff is “that this is putting people at risk,” said Dr. Jorge Reyno, senior vice president of population health for MLK Community Healthcare.

Hospital officials have faulted L.A. Care for delays in authorizations that are needed for medical care or to discharge people to other facilities, clogging hospitals with patients who no longer need their beds. The lag time has been exacerbated, they said, by a growing number of providers unwilling to accept L.A. Care patients because the health plan has not paid them promptly.

L.A. Care has defended its performance, calling the letter from hospitals a “blatant mischaracterization of the issues.”

It said it “works tirelessly to find places to accept members” when they no longer need a hospital bed and has been taking steps to address such concerns. But it argued that the problems faced by hospitals are rooted in the broader problem of low rates of reimbursement under Medi-Cal.

[See L.A. Care, A22]



HAILEY BRANSON-POTTS Los Angeles Times

**JAY BRANSON'S** round barn in central Oklahoma stands 72 feet tall and can be seen for miles. Strangers on the nearby highway often come closer to stare.

COLUMN ONE

# An eye-catching barn, with grief and hope in the rafters

After losing his wife, builder dived into his dream

By HAILEY BRANSON-POTTS LOGAN COUNTY, OKLA.

Curiosity rises amid the wheat fields along rural Highway 33, which cuts through the town of Guthrie.

It's an immense, circular building — about 15,000 square feet inside — with a domed roof topped by an ornate cupola and a copper eagle. Standing at 72 feet, it is visible for miles on the flat Oklahoma expanse.

Jay Branson is building it in his backyard. He calls it his round barn, but it's

more of a prairie cathedral.

He has been working on it for seven years. As he builds, strangers come. They pull off the highway, haul up his long driveway and stare.

Some, overcome by the beauty, have wept upon seeing the inside of the dome, with its ascending rings of interlocking diamonds and octagons that Jay cut by hand from poplar wood.

At the top is an oculus, a round opening in the roof, like in the Pantheon in Rome. When sunlight streams in, the effect is downright heavenly.

[See Barn, A12]

# Fearing doom if TikTok is banned

Entrepreneurs worry about losing tool that has helped them build a robust clientele and the American dream.

By JAIMIE DING

When Lauren Wyman felt crushed under the weight of her corporate finance job in 2019, she found solace in launching a small goth and alternative clothing business.

She initially made Facebook and Instagram accounts for her shop, Dark Mother Clothing, but generated only \$5,000 to \$6,000 in sales the first year. Wyman, 32, joined TikTok at the start of the pandemic, launched new products and posted a couple of videos that went viral. In 2022, she grossed \$217,000.

“A part of what people have done on this app is created their own slice of the American dream that is preached so much about,” said Wyman, who's based in Arizona, “whether it's opening a small business or people who are no longer facing homelessness, people who are able to retire, creators

[See TikTok, A14]

## Drivers 70 and up say in-person test is discrimination

Steve Lopez asks: Are those 30 and younger more dangerous on the road? CALIFORNIA, B1

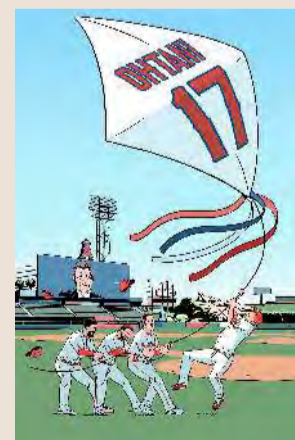
## Museum debuts grand expansion

The Hammer goes big with new immersive art installations about connections. CALENDAR, E1

## Elites play victim amid a 'techlash'

Silicon Valley's movers and shakers are on edge after bailout — as they should be. BUSINESS, A15

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MADISON KETCHAM For The Times

## Angels seek ways to keep Ohtani

As free agency beckons, two-way star enters what may be last season in Anaheim. SPORTS, D1

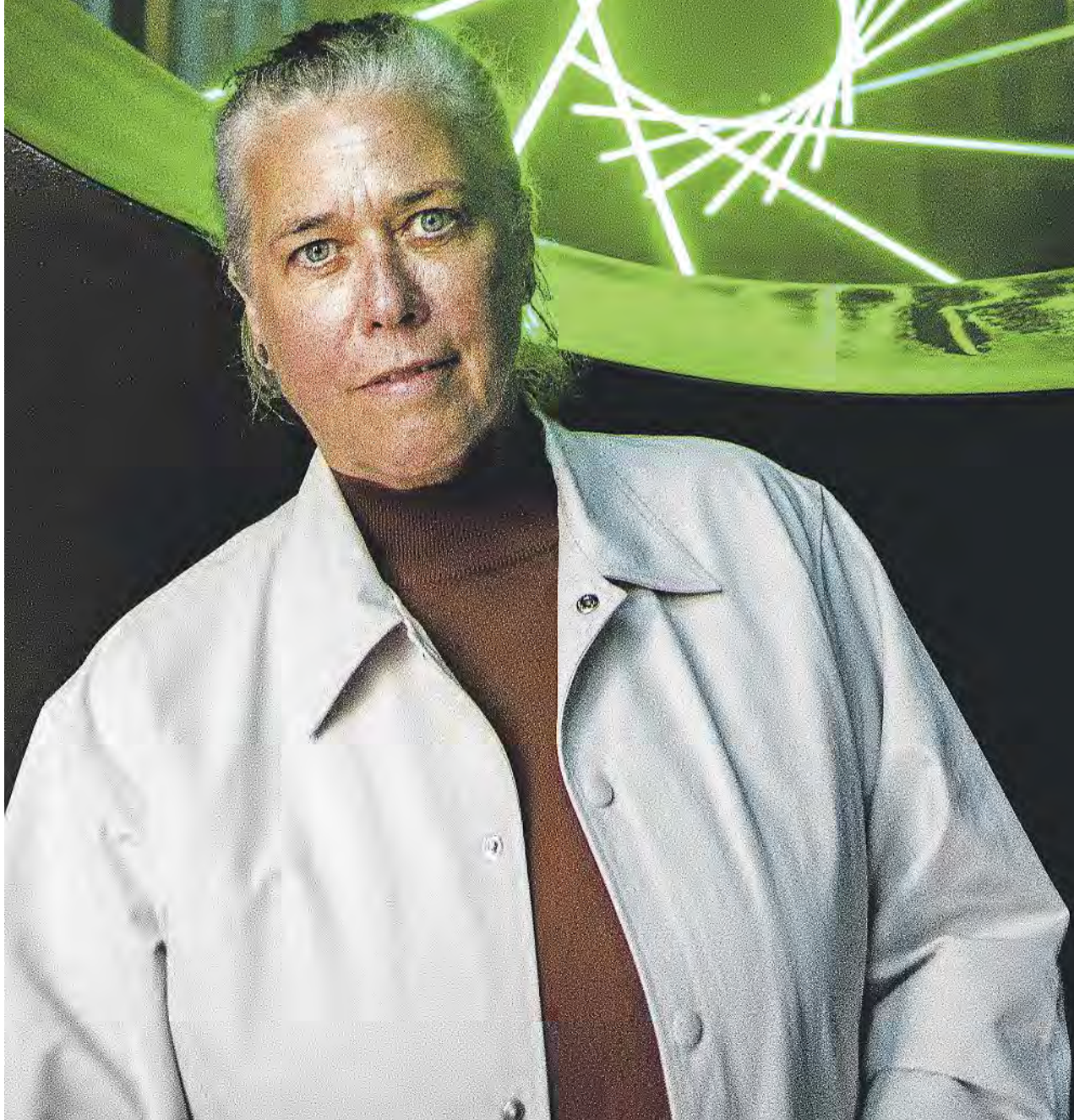
**Weather:** Mostly sunny. L.A. Basin: 67/44. B10

Los Angeles Times

# CALENDAR

A massive new gallery. A state-of-the-art study room. A redesigned lobby and entrance. Inside the Hammer Museum's \$90-million expansion. E4-7

# THE HAMMER DROPS



FAST MOVES FOR TRON AT WALT DISNEY WORLD E2

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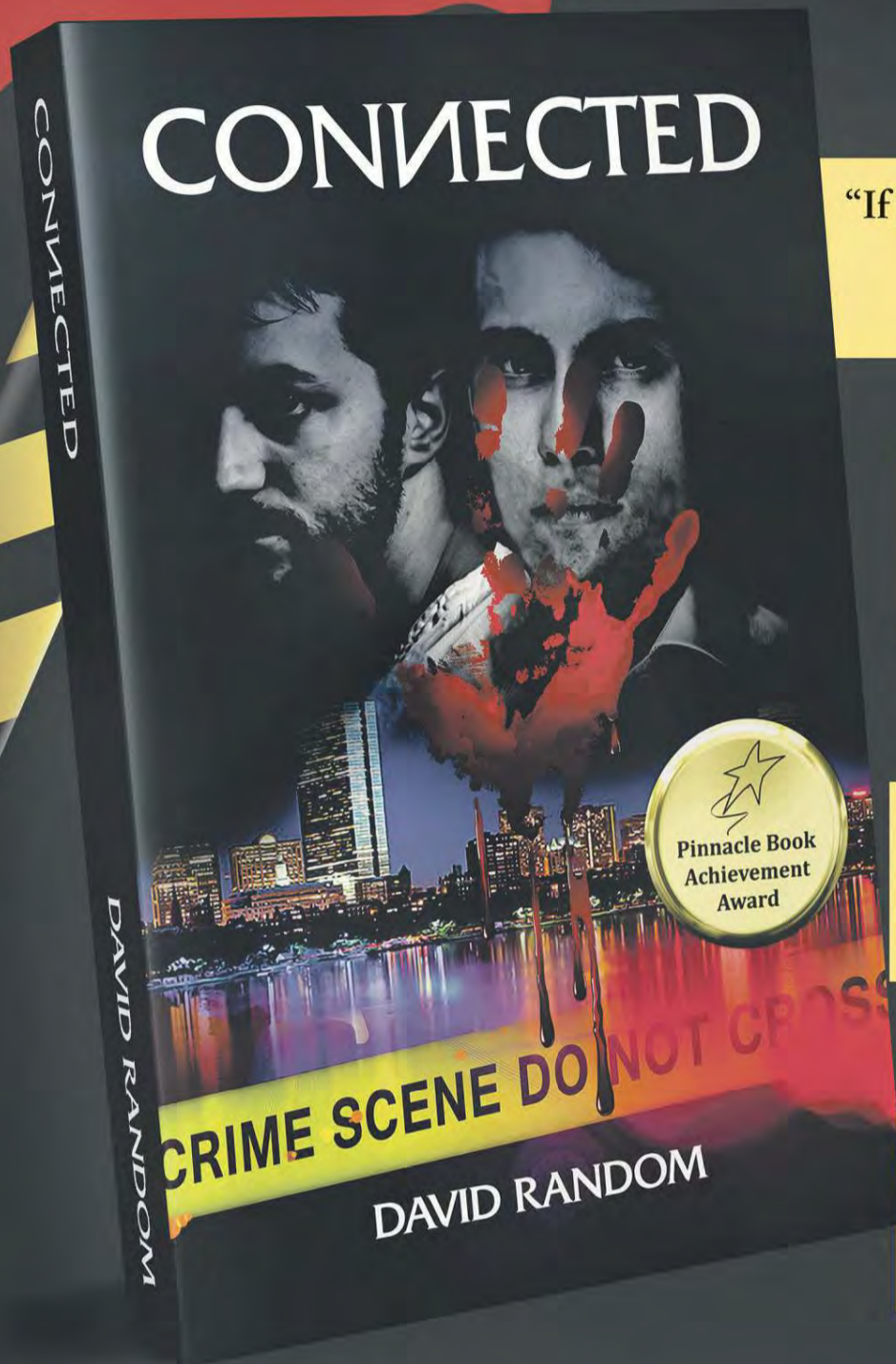
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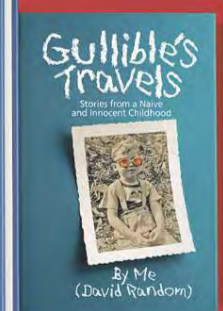
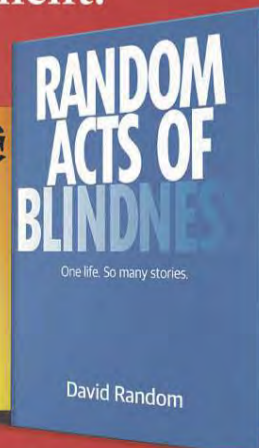
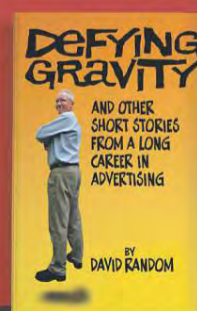
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Critics have compared David Random to Stieg Larsson, author of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, whose crime novel was adapted into an Academy Award-winning film. *Connected* is expected to begin production later this year.



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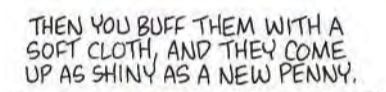
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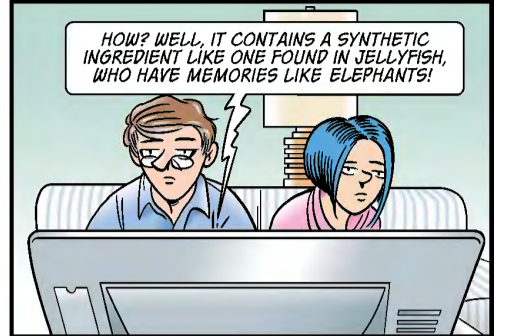
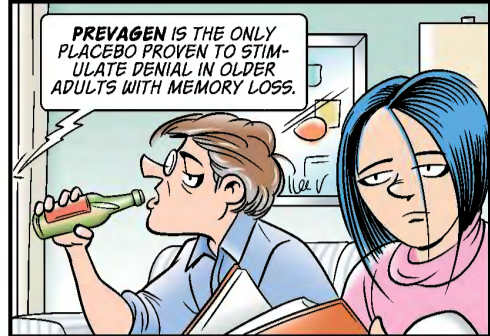
## PICKLES

By Brian Crane



## DOONESBURY

By Garry Trudeau



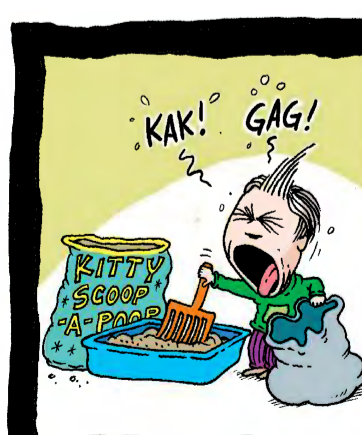
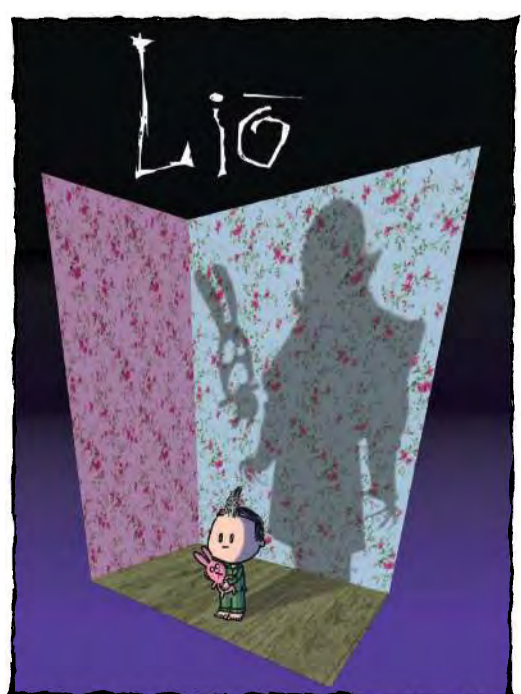
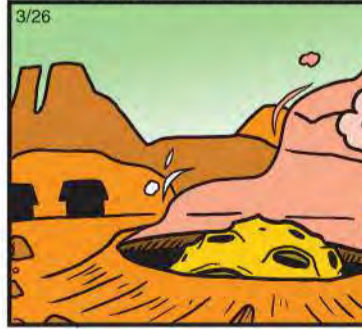
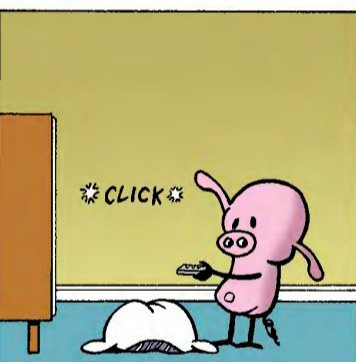
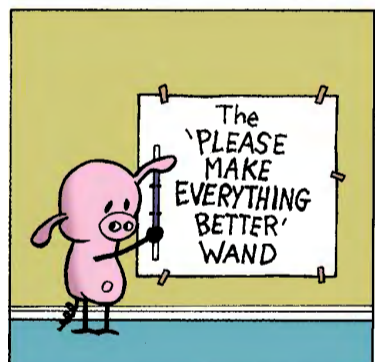
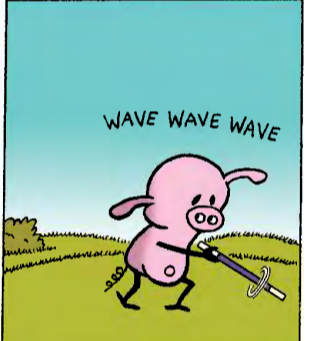
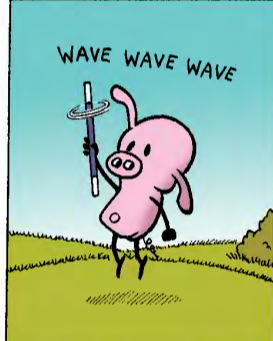
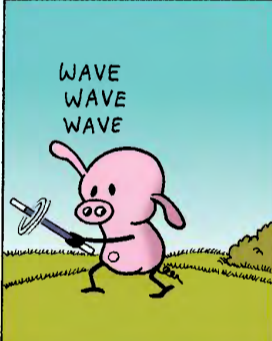
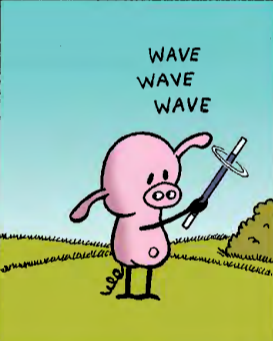
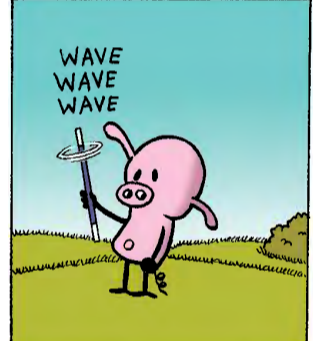
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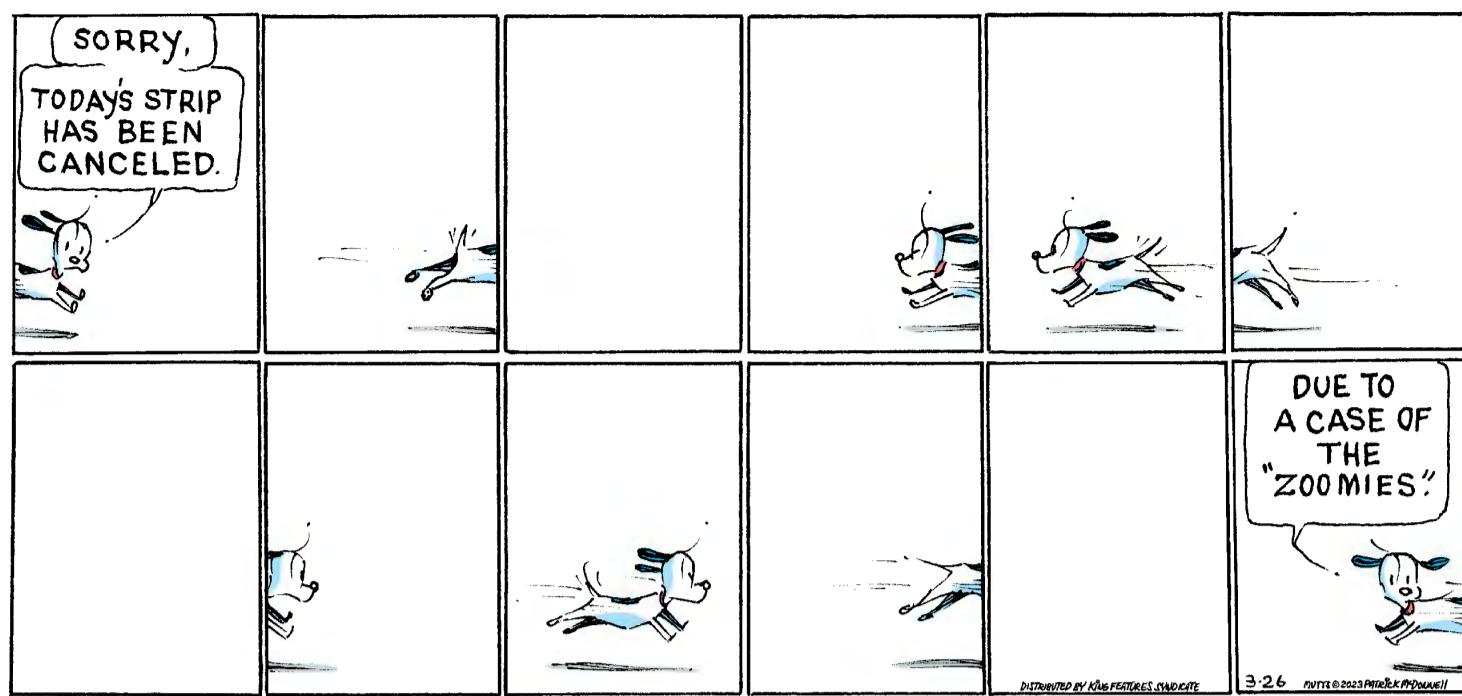


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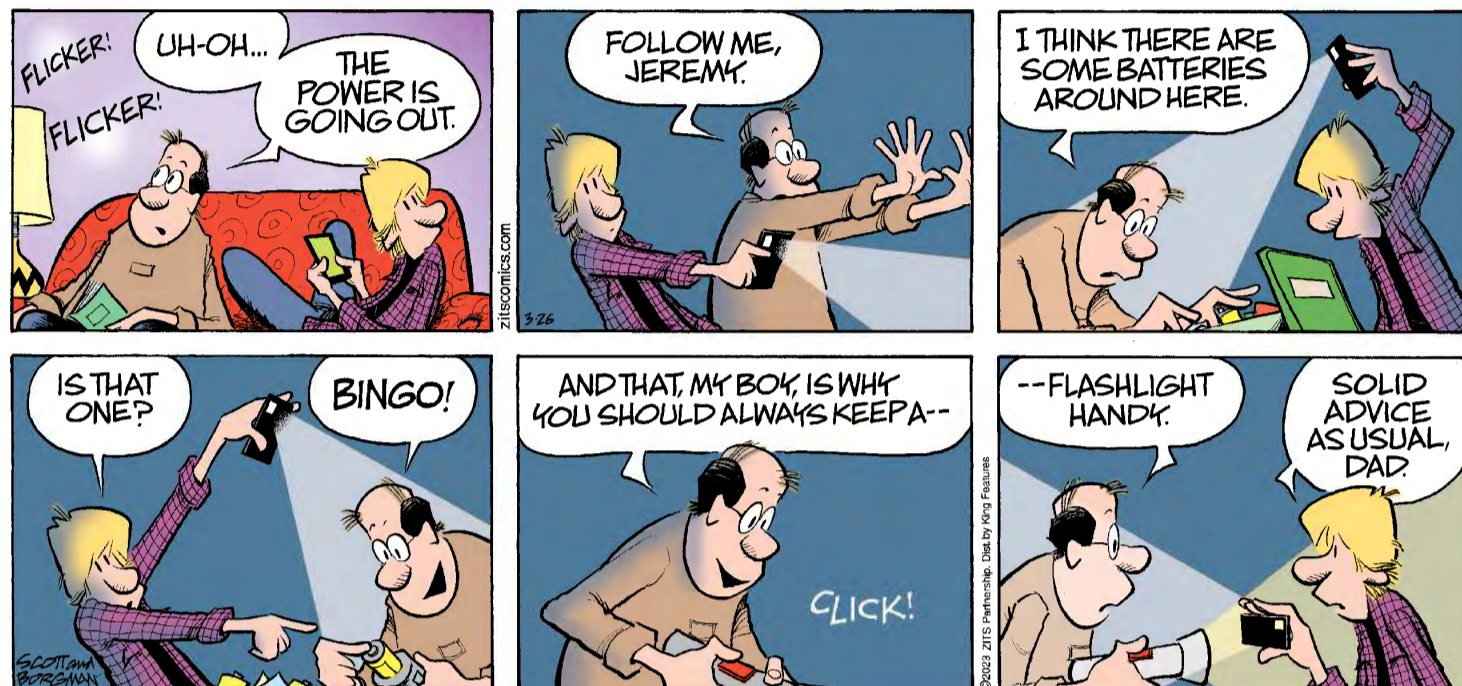
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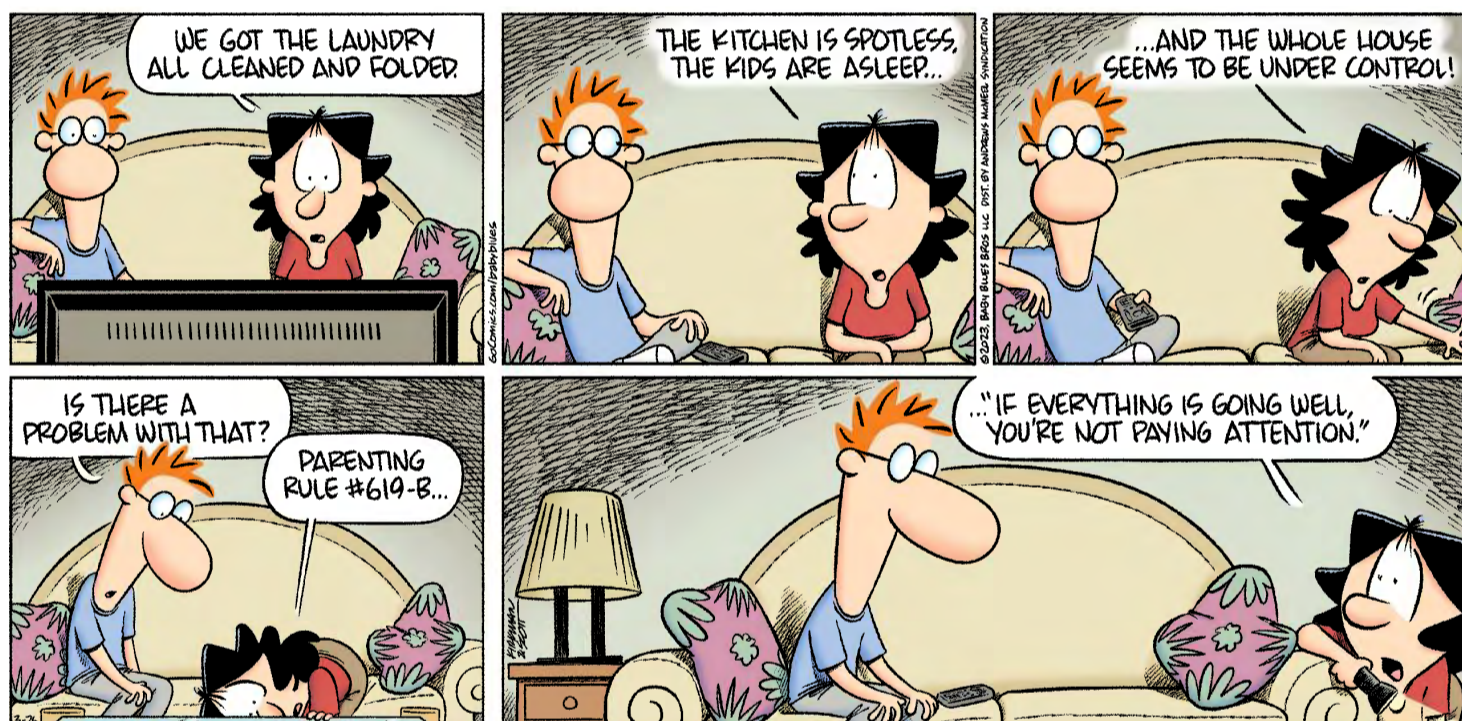
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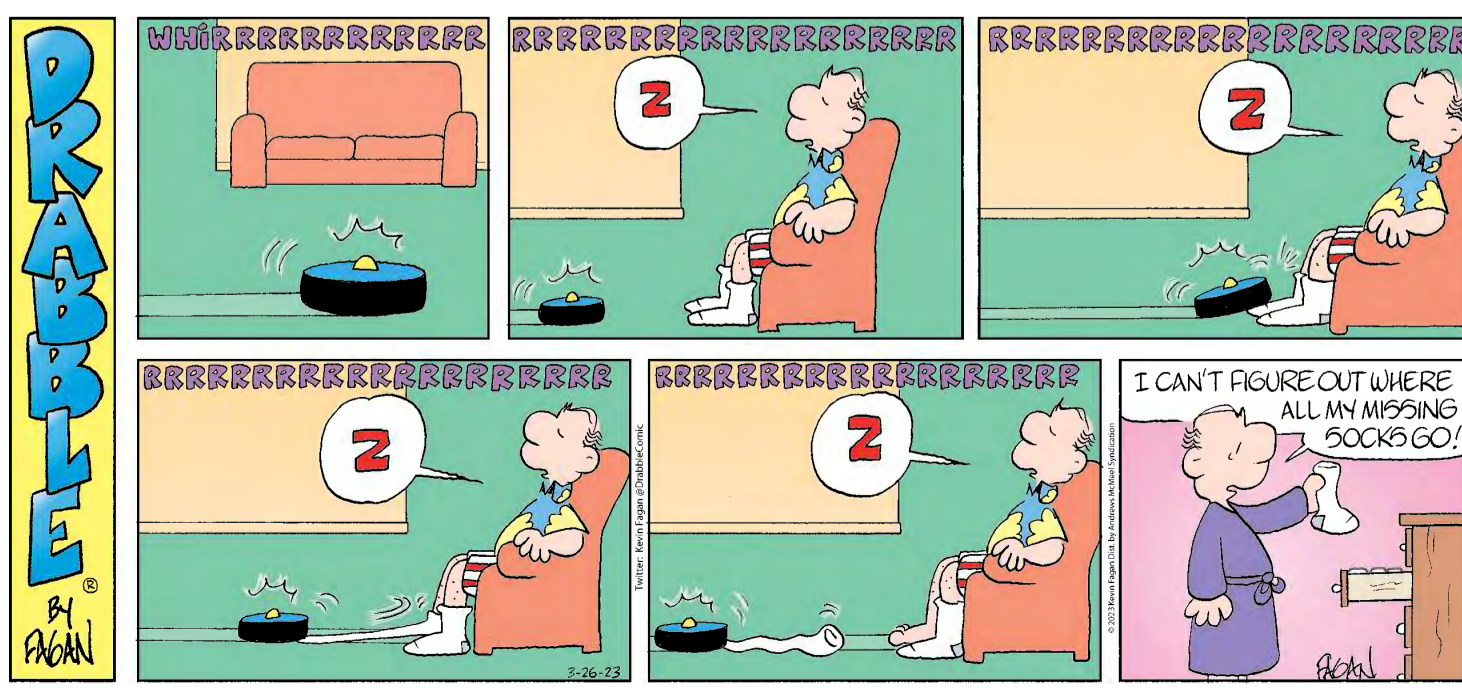
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