

THE OBSERVER

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■ AND IN THIS CORNER

Recipe for a disastrous holiday season

Let's say, just as an example, you recently got a part-time job from some big, nameless corporation who likes to hire desperate "will work for food" fools like yourself for the Christmas rush. And let's say you come down with flu-like symptoms the weekend before you begin to work on a regular basis.

But now that you finally have got the job you needed at the beginning of the semester, you can't not work because of some silly little snuffling and coughing. Thus you pop a few over-the-

counter antihistamines and wind up with your brainpan floating approximately ten feet above your body during your entire eight-hour shift. This is after you've already walked back and forth a mile to campus for three hours of class that morning, then taken a bus to work with a dozen other sneezing and hacking walking-flu zombies.

Fast forward to the end of the day. It is about ten at night, and you have just trudged home from your ordeal. Your apartment still has no effective way of heating itself, what with electric baseboard heaters and no walls between the kitchen, dining room and living room, and with a huge single-pane glass sliding door for the outside wall. It was just a day ago that you took notice of the four-inch thick mold residue clinging to the sides of the windows, hidden by the blinds.

Instinctively, you head for the fridge to get, what else, a beer. And on your merry way to the kitchen, you pass the bathroom and notice that you have unknowingly stepped in something wet. You turn the hall light on, then the bathroom light, and notice for the first time that there is a small waterfall gurgling

from the toilet bowl to the hallway linoleum, cascading gently from underneath the lid to form rivulets about your ankles. And, for some reason, it is another two to three minutes before you think to call out to your roommate, "Uh, I think we have a problem."

By the time either of you have figured out what is going on, the raging river has deepened to two inches between the tub and the sink cupboards and is on the verge of snaring your bicycles near the outside door.

Luckily, the water has been partially absorbed by the rugs on the living room floor and at the edges of your bedrooms, but still the water comes and your five bath towels and three extra bed sheets are not enough to stem the tide. You cannot think how else to stop the toilet from running, so you twist a metal coat hanger around the plunger and attach it to a hand towel rack above the tank. This you think is pure genius.

Then there is that moment of truth when you discover that the lease has lied to you. There are no emergency maintenance numbers on the office answering machine. You try to reach the landlords at their personal numbers, but nobody's home. The downstairs neighbor, whose name you never quite remember, has now shown up four times to complain that water is seeping down his bedroom wall. Your roommate seems to recall that the maintenance man himself lives across the street, somewhere, and eventually locates the man's apartment. But he is not there, most likely because tonight is Monday Night Football and he is probably at a bar somewhere enjoying the game. You leave messages at every answering

machine and hope someone gets them tomorrow morning.

All you can do is get rid of the water. By now, you have exhausted your towel supply, but fortunately you finally find a use for the pennysaver, which the paperboy leaves in bundles outside the apartment building's front door. It takes only fourteen or so of them to soak up the mess. Congratulations, you have now been standing in cold sewage water on a moldy tile floor in a frigid apartment in bare feet and inky newsprint hands for two hours. It is now time for Beavis and Butthead.

For some reason, you are not surprised when you wake up with an ear infection the following morning. And you have to go to work for four more hours. The health services gives you antibiotics for the ear infection, which may last two weeks, and you take decongestants as well, giving you a constant headache and runny nose. Now you can't even drink rum and eggnog on Thanksgiving.

This is all theoretical, of course. I'm not even going to tell you the embarrassing theoretical reason for the overflow.

The Thanksgiving Break would not be complete without a short and nasty diatribe concerning South Bend's pathetic bus system. At first, I was told that the busses here were perpetually late and never went anywhere useful. Then I found out that, for the most part, they are on time during the week and go pretty much where you need to go. Then I found out that the busses have limited hours on Saturday and no hours on Sunday, which is always a drawback for anyone without a car who needs to work

on the weekend.

This past Saturday, however, simply blew my mind. Black Friday, the first official shopping day of the "holiday season," enjoyed full and complete bus service, up to the usual 9:30 pm time slot. Saturday (I don't know if it's called "Black Saturday," but it should be)

was as busy if not busier than Friday, yet the bus services did not change their times. A phone call to the headquarters revealed that in fact there will be no extended holiday service for any bus line at any time during November or December.

You'd think that more people would want to shop on the weekend in South Bend for Christmas. You'd think that plenty of people with no cars would want to shop on the weekend

during the next five weeks. You'd think that, in fact, there are plenty of poor schmucks such as myself who cannot afford a car and do not have reliable access to a car (or cannot or do not want to force their friends to drive them everywhere at whim) who will need to take the bus to go to work for busy merchants on the busy weekends. Where is the sense of not having a later bus schedule for a Saturday? And I suppose nobody ever wants to go to the movies on a Saturday night?

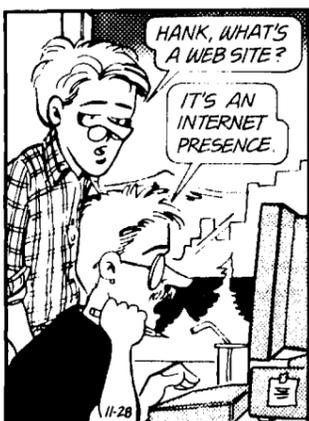
There is no sense in this. None. Either sense or cents. Obviously local merchants don't want students or local residents without cars to spend money. Or they simply expect any decent American citizen to own one.

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Matt Apple

'The Thanksgiving Break would not be complete without a short and nasty diatribe concerning South Bend's pathetic bus system... Obviously local merchants don't want students without cars to spend money.'

■ BURT



GARRY TRUDEAU

■ QUOTE OF THE DAY

"A culture which leaves unsatisfied and drives to rebelliousness so large a number of its members neither has a prospect of continued existence nor deserves it."

—Sigmund Freud