

#MIND-GAME

International Chess Day

Intro: Chess is one of the ancient games with a combination of sport, scientific thinking, and elements of arts.



Chess is a game of strategy and wits. It has long been considered to be the thinking game. It is a wonderful game to play anytime, anywhere, and with almost everyone. International Chess Day is celebrated on 20 July annually. Chess is one of the ancient games with a combination of sport, scientific thinking, and elements of arts. As we know that sports have helped humanity to survive in times of crisis by improving mental health and reducing anxiety.

Since ancient times Chess is a popular game and played around the world. With time Chess game and their rules are evolving. It became the game of classes. Only the upper class could afford this challenging game in a long way. However, the merchant class later introduce this game to the rest of the popu-



lation while travelling around the world.

History

- Chess was invented in Northern Indian Subcontinent during the Gupta period (319-543 CE). At that time it was named as "Chaturanga". No doubt this is one of the oldest games of the era. Then this game spread to Persia.
- When Persia was conquered by the Arabs, Chess became an important part of the life of the Muslim population and from there it spread to Southern Europe. In Europe, Chess evolved in its current form. And later on, it takes the shape of the modern game.
- Now the game became more popular. Various Chess tournaments are held with exciting new variations. Further, the timing mechanism was also introduced in the game in 1861 with effective rules and charismatic players.
- In the eighth Summer Olympic Games in Paris, France on 20 July 1924, FIDE that is World Chess Foundation was established. And from 20 July, 1966, International Chess Day started celebrating to honour the founding of FIDE.
- To celebrate International Chess Day on 20 July was proposed by UNESCO. All over the World now Chess tourna-

ments are held. In 1851 in London, the first modern chess tournament was held and it was won by German Adolf Anderssen.

About Chess Game

In a chess game, two opponents go head to head with 16 playing pieces each. These pieces include eight pawns, two rooks, two knights, two bishops, one queen, and one king in each colour. Their main objective is to capture the opponent's king via a series of strategic moves.

The universal appeal of chess lies in the fact that it is an affordable and inclusive activity that can be conducted and exercised anywhere across the barriers of language, age, gender, physical ability or social status. Chess combines sport, scientific thinking and elements of art beautifully into an ancient sport of testing our intellectual abilities and is a reflection of the socio-cultural development of humanity over centuries.

According to UN, "Chess is a global game, which promotes fairness, inclusion and mutual respect, and noting in this regard that it can contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding among peoples and nations."

Facts related to Chess game

- Chess is a mental game and it can end as quickly as two moves.
- The longest game of chess is possible and that is 5,949 moves.
- The "checkmate" word is derived from the Arabic word namely "shah mat" which means "The king is dead".
- In 1280 in Spain, the new move was introduced where the pawn could move two steps instead of one.
- Do you know for the most time a German Dr. Emanuel Lasker retained the Champion title that is for 26 years and 337 days?
- In 1060 in Europe, the modern chessboard that we see today was the first time appeared.
- In 1125, the folding chessboard was invented.
- The players in their first year are known as "Rookies".
- In 1951, Alan Turing developed the first computer program for playing chess.
- Chess is also known as the "Game of Kings" as earlier in the past, it was just played by the Nobel and Kings.
- A chess match between Ivan Nikolic and Goran Arsovic in Belgrade in 1989 ended with a draw in the game. It was recorded as the longest official check game and lasted 268 moves.

Towards the end of World War II, when the Germans were defending north-central Italy, the 1/2 Punjab was constantly engaged in operations. My father's Battalion fought notable actions and it was in early spring of 1945 that the final thrust was under-taken from the Lamone river to secure the German held line on the Idice river that was christened by the Germans as the Dschingis Khan-Line (Ghengis Khan Line). Military men are conditioned to place great faith in fate and testimony to this is not only because it took me 72 yrs to discover a glorious chapter in my family's history

A Pilgrimage of Discovery (...1)



Lt Gen Aditya Singh (Retd)
Deccan Horse Veteran

#BATTLEFIELD

War II, he was deployed in Iraq and thereafter served with the 8th Army in North Africa. After the battle of El Alamein, he was deputed for the Staff Course at the Staff College in Quetta and on its completion, retained there as an instructor. After his tenure as Instructor Staff College, he re-joined 1/2 Punjab in Italy as the Second-in-Command in August 1944. He took over command on 20 November 1944 as its first Indian Commanding Officer (CO). He was thus one of the first Indians to command an active unit in the European theatre. While in command, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO), the second highest award for military gallantry.

Adriatic Cruise

I joined the Army in 1967 and have always proudly displayed our family medals. A retired friend from the British Army, on seeing the DSO, obtained for me in 1993 a copy of the Citation for this award from Whitehall, the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) strategic tri-service headquarters in London. For me, it was a special document as it listed major operations during his WWII command.

Last year, a close friend of mine and I, along with our wives planned an Adriatic cruise. Something made me ask my elder sister, brother and his wife to come along with us. They agreed. The five of us then planned to undertake a tour of Italy after the cruise.

I remembered my father's citation and when working out the itinerary decided to set aside one day to visit the battlefields mentioned in it. With all the planning for the trip, there was very little time to obtain other details.

Whilst in Italy, I contacted Col Rohit Teotia, our Military Adviser in the Indian Embassy, to seek his advice. He put me in touch with Dr Daniel Cesaretti, a dentist in the

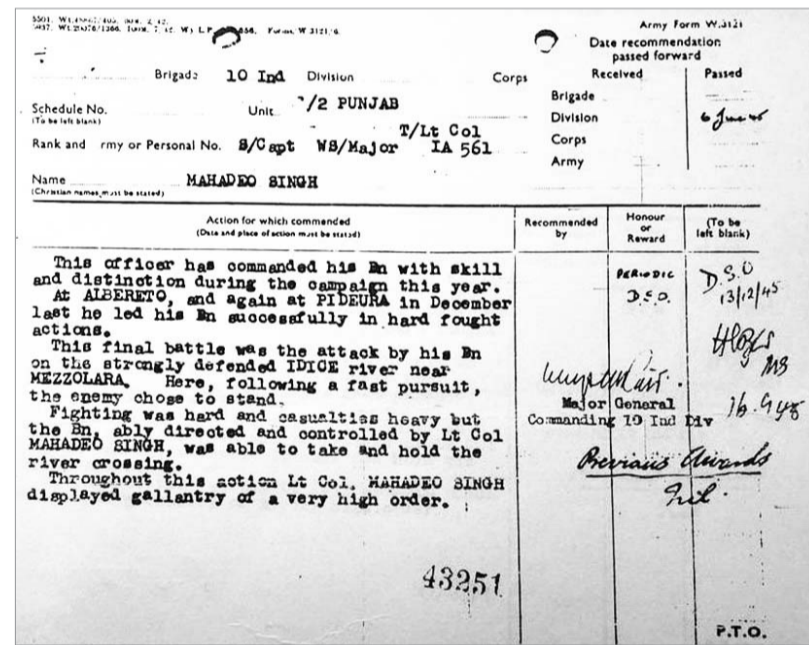


View and field of fire from the near bank bund. In 1945, the trees in the distance would have been saplings. The railway line on the embankment is to the left.

Principality of San Marino within Italy. I could not have asked for better godsend. Dr Cesaretti's hobby is the study of the operations of the Indian Army in World War II. On seeing the Citation, he was most forthcoming and immediately provided all the maps and write-ups.

I was amazed and queried him as to their source. He replied it was from the Official History of the Indian Army in World War II, a Ministry of Defence publication. It put me to shame. Here was I, a senior retired officer from India, desirous of visiting WWII battle sites and not aware of this reference. Trust destiny to intervene and make up the shortfall.

We planned for this trip from Rome. The places mentioned in the Citation were South and South-East of Bologna some 430 km away. We had



Mahadeo Singh's DSO citation.

one day - 1 July 2019 - to visit these. The excellent Italian rail system could get us there in two hours, the minor deterrent being the high last-minute fares, Lira 125 for each of us.

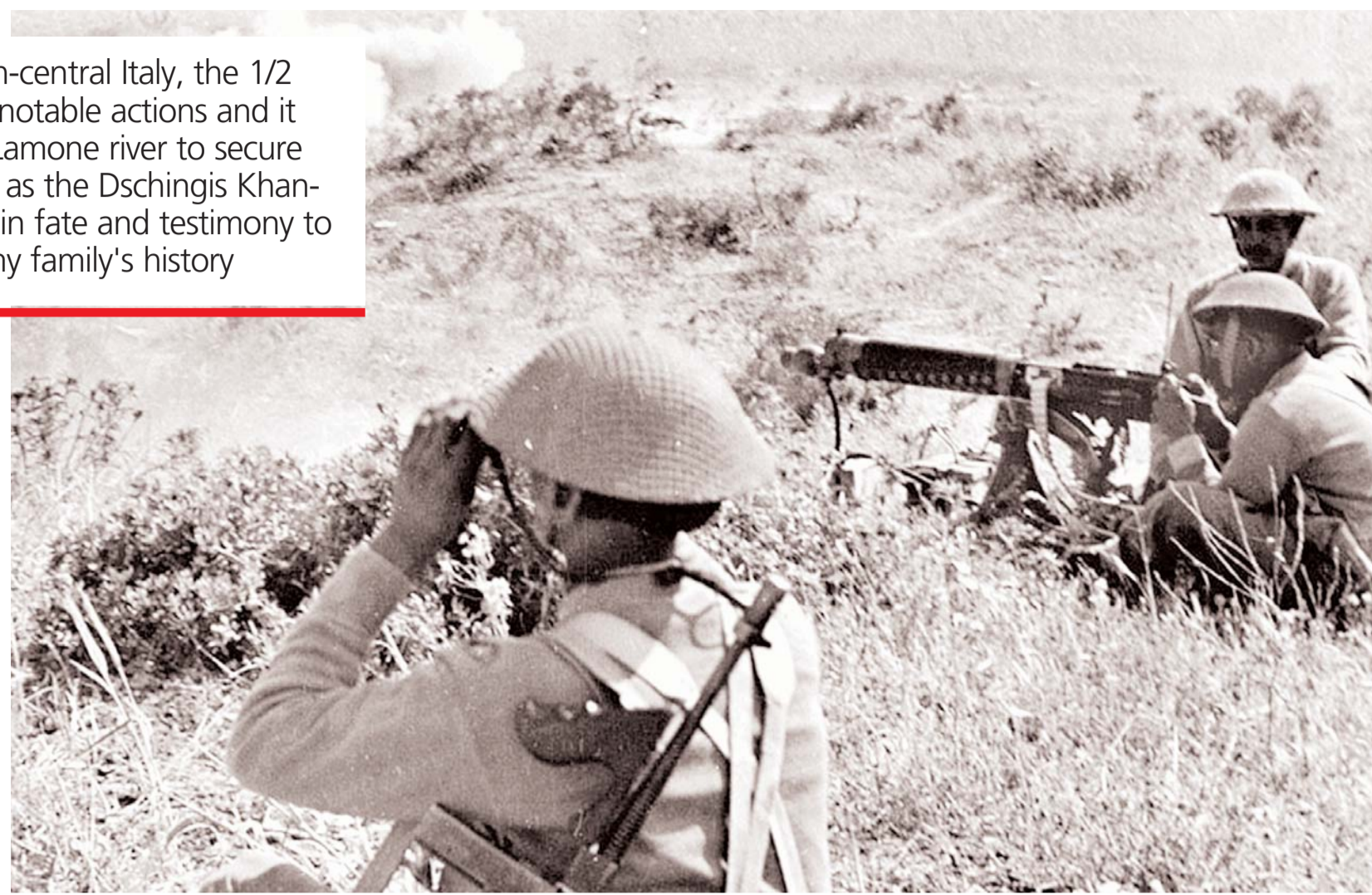
The next challenge was to hire a van for the 250 km drive with an English-speaking driver. With the tourist season on, this was insurmountable. Dr Cesaretti once again came to the rescue. He suggested I hire a car from Bologna Railway Station. I did so online, the night before. It was a bold decision because I had last driven in Europe as a 24-year-old in 1971, i.e. 48 years ago. The pilgrim's progress was thus on.

The five of us took the train from Rome. The salesman at the car rental counter had never seen a Gurgoon driving licence and was sceptical. Here too luck intervened as my sister-in-law, who is a US citizen, was carrying her driving licence and agreed to register as a co-driver. We were thus able to set off on our adventure by early after-

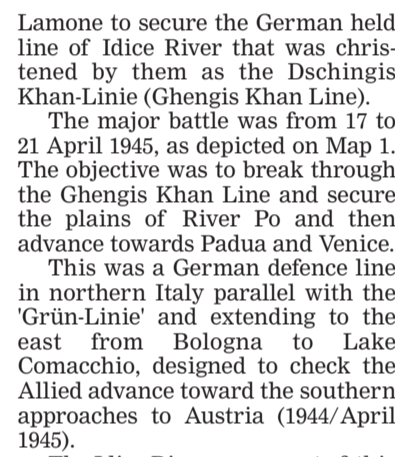


Space Exploration Day

The 20th century was a time of extreme growth in technology and science on scales large and small, not the least of which was planet-wide interest in space. Society has benefited from space exploration in a variety of ways, including health and medicine, communication, consumer goods, information technology, transportation and so much more. Space Exploration Day is the perfect time to show some appreciation for and celebrate the advances that the world has gained through the exploration of space!



In 1944, 1/2 Punjab was a part of 110th Indian Division with the British 8th Army in this theatre and was constantly engaged in operations. These continued after my father took command in November 1944 with brief periods of respite. The Battalion fought notable actions at Pideura, Faenza and Albereto all listed in the Official History.



Lamone to secure the German held line of Idice River that was christened by them as the Dschingis Khan-Line (Ghengis Khan Line). The major battle was from 17 to 21 April 1945, as depicted on Map 1. The objective was to break through the Ghengis Khan Line and secure the plains of River Po and then advance towards Padua and Venice.

This was a German defence line in northern Italy parallel with the 'Grün-Linie' and extending to the east from Bologna to Lake Comacchio, designed to check the Allied advance toward the southern approaches to Austria (1944/April 1945).

The Idice River was a part of this defensive line and strongly held by the Germans. The 10th Indian Division was tasked to secure crossings across the river. This attack commenced at 22:00 hours on 19 April 1945 with 1/2 Punjab in the vanguard.

The start line was Florentine and the Battalion was first tasked to advance and captured the village of Il Cassino. Thereafter, it was to go North and secure a crossing over the Idice River at Lupara. 1/2 Punjab fought through the night and captured Il Cassino by 06:00 hours on 20 April 1945.

While consolidating after battle at Il Cassino, orders were received at 09:20 hours that the objective was changed and the Battalion was now to capture the rail and road bridges South of Mezzolara "at the earliest and at any cost". No plan survives the first shot' is an old military



adage, but to suddenly be told that the objective has been shifted from a relatively obscure site to two very strongly held bridges must have come as a shocker.

Ditch-cum-Bund

The Idice River is 100 meters wide. It comprises of a 10m deep river which is about 30m across. On either side are 15m wide floodplains protected by 8m high and 20m wide embankments. Anyone in the Indian Army will find it familiar as the classic 'ditch-cum-bund', or DCBs which were constructed as formidable defence lines in Punjab in late 1960s and form part of the obstacle network on both sides of the Indo-Pak border even today. To the physical obstacle, gradients, thick foliage, water, slush, would be added mines and wire. The

high embankments provide for ideal defensive positions with vast fields of fire. It is something that only an actual site visit can reveal. Even a satellite image of the crossing site today does not really bring out what 1/2 Punjab was confronted with.

Photograph taken on a peaceful summer day cannot reveal the defence potential and difficulty anyone would have in securing the strongly held river and both bridges. Nevertheless, some images are necessary to understand what it must have been.

While standing on the near bank bund with a vista of the open Italian countryside on a glorious summer day, I tried to visualise what must have been churning in my father's mind on receipt of the changed orders at the village of Il Cassino some 1800m from the Idice River 75 years ago.

To be continued...

writetoarbit@ashtradoot.com

Lt Gen Aditya Singh, PVSM, AVSM** (Retd) is an alumnus of Mayo College, Ajmer, the National Defence Academy and National Defence College, New Delhi. A fourth-generation Army Officer, he was commissioned into The Deccan Horse, in 1967. He is a graduate of Staff College, Camberly (UK). He was Commander-in-Chief of the Andaman and Nicobar Tri-Service Command post the *Isurani* of Dec 2004 and thereafter commanded the Southern Army till his retirement in 2007. He later served as member of the NSAB.

#CYCLING

Riding In The Rain

These wet season routes take on Himalayan mountain passes, weave through Assam's vast tea estates and amble along strawberry fields of Mahabaleshwar



Bengaluru to Kollur

Duration: 8 days (approximately 300 km)
When: During the entire monsoon season
Bicycles offered: Hybrid bikes
The route: Start off in Bengaluru and ride through Sakleshpur, Mudigere, Devaramane and Kalasa across undulating roads. Along the ghats stop at Kudremukh National Park for a short trek; Maravanthe Beach is also recommended for regional delicacies such as prawn gassi, as is the Udipi District town of Kollur, your final destination.

Pan Rajasthan Tour



The hill station pass of MalshejGhat is known for its streaking silver and white waterfalls and alluring wildlife, from leopards and tigers to peacocks and rabbits.

Goa

Duration: 3 hours, depending on each route (approximately 15-18 km)
When: During the entire monsoon season
Bicycles offered: E-bikes
The route: Blive E-bike tours takes riders on a southern trail in Cansaulim, along Velsalolake and Velsao-Dando bridge, passing one of the finest viewpoints of South Goa, Three Kings Chapel. Other Goa-based tours under their banner include exploring Divar Island or Panjim, weaving in wildlife and culture into an afternoon of cycling.

Panchgani to Mahabaleshwar

Duration: 2-3 hours (approximately 44 km)
Bicycles offered: Mountain bikes
When: During the entire monsoon season
The route: If you are looking for a leisurely ride that lets you enjoy a combination of pavement and off-road trails, this course explores secluded strawberry farms with forests bowering the way forward.

There isn't just one specific trail to follow, however starting through the Bhilar village of Mahabaleshwar generally boasts the least amount of traffic.



Panchgani to Mahabaleshwar.

Duration: 12-14 days (approximately 479 km)
When: 26th August-9th September
Bicycles offered: Mountain or hybrid bikes
The route: Including camping and river rafting options, this epic cycling journey takes you through heady Himalayan mountain passes-Rohatang La, Baralacha La, Nakee La, Lachung La and Tanglang La. You'll also pedal past the beautiful blue Bhaga and Indus rivers and Pangong and Tso Kar lakes.

If you're not an advanced rider, training beforehand is highly recommended in order to conquer the challenging terrain with the added hurdle of potentially torrential rain.

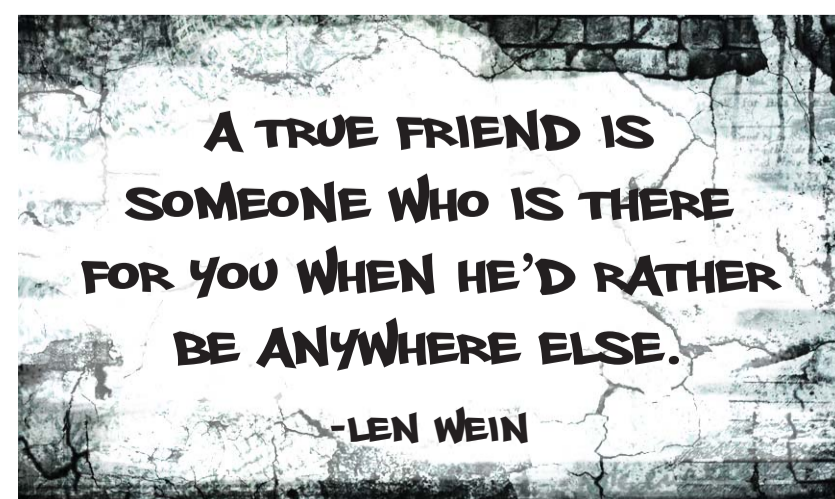
Mumbai to MalshejGhat

Duration: 1-2 days, depending on route (approximately 90-115 km)
When: During the entire monsoon season
Bicycles offered: Mountain, hybrid or gravel bikes
The route: The two recommended routes are loops that both start and end in Mumbai. The eastern loop takes riders through Murband, Mhasa, Dhasai,

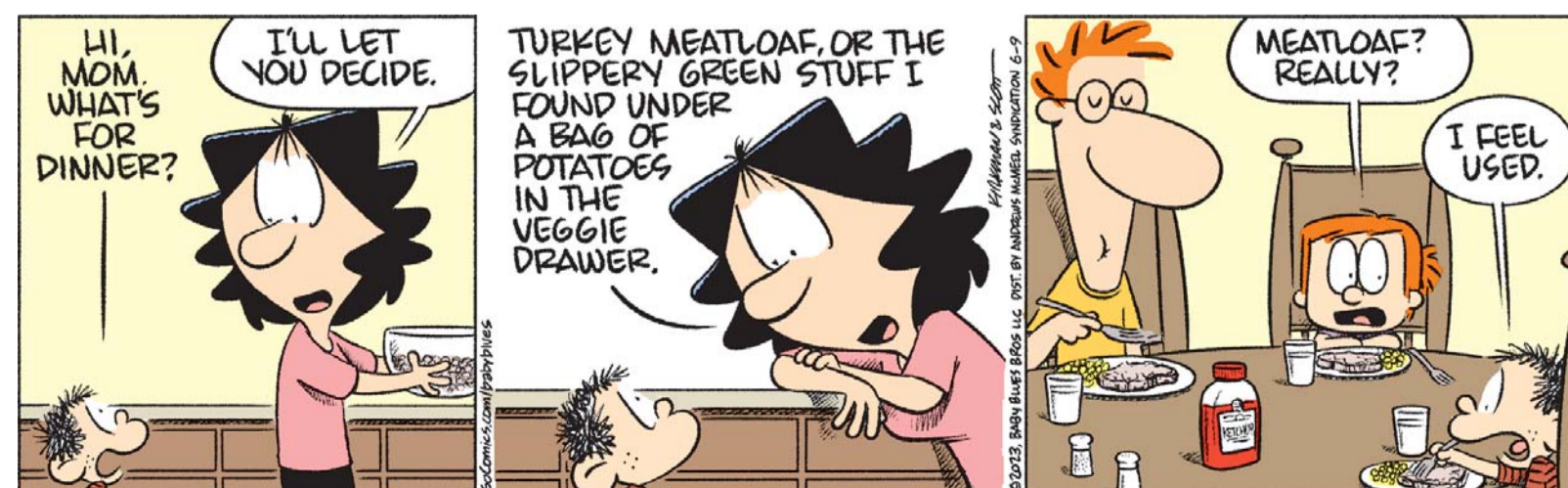
Shimla to Manali

Duration: 11-13 days, depending on the route (approximately 650 km)
When: During the entire monsoon season
Bicycles offered: Mountain, hybrid or gravel bikes
The route: Himalachal Pradesh's Spiti Valley can be navigated via a variety of engaging routes. The recommended course is from Shimla to Manali, with respec-

THE WALL

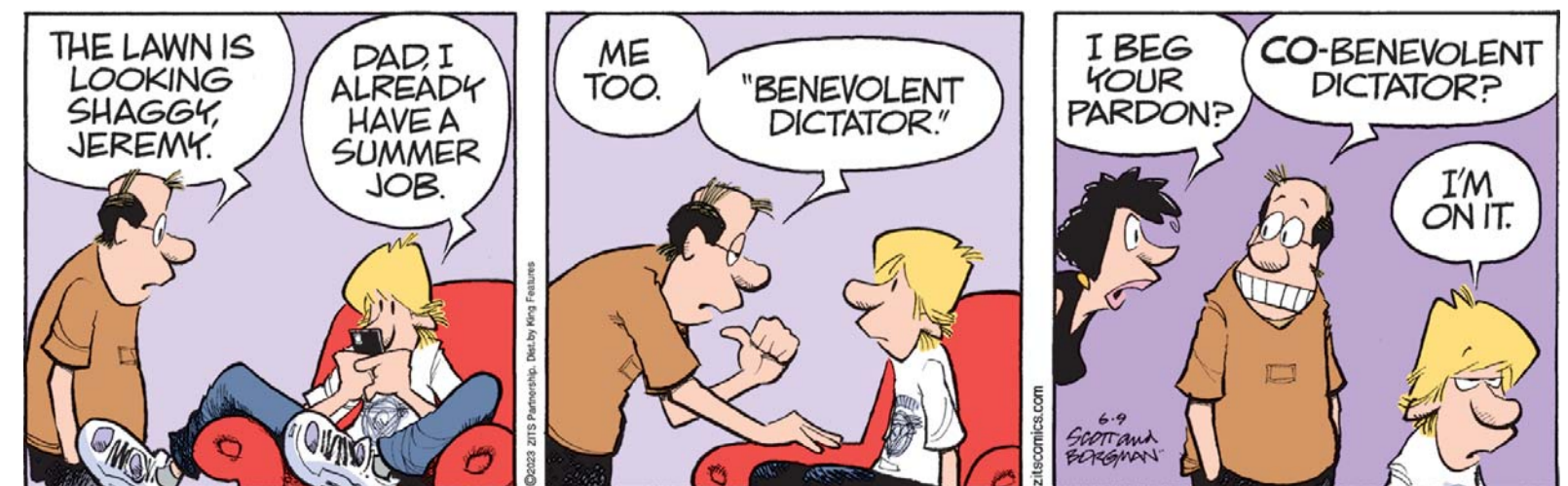


BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman