

## #ART EXHIBITION

### Inspired By Her

Evocative portraits of 22 powerful Indian women like Gita Gopinath, Nita Ambani, Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Roshni Nadar Malhotra, Natasha Poonawalla, Vandana Luthra painted by Ashok Shah are on display till 21 May at the 'Inspired by Her' Art Exhibition in WelcomArt Gallery of ITC Rajputana



With the objective of motivating young girls and women to work hard and strive for success, Ashok Shah, who is a renowned jeweller by profession, painted evocative portraits of as many as 22 exceptional Indian women during the Covid-19 pandemic. These acrylic paintings are now being exhibited at the WelcomArt Gallery of ITC Rajputana till May 21.

**Motivating Young Women Through Art**  
On being asked what got his interest in creating portraits, Shah says: "When I was a child, I used to make pencil sketches but never paintings. My first painting was of my wife after she passed away in 2009. During the Covid-19 pandemic, I start-

**Art always has room for improvement**  
Even though Shah has no formal training in art, his area of work (earlier carpets and now jewellery) has been such that he has an eye for aesthetics, design and colour. To make one portrait, the artist takes around a week where he paints for 6-7 hours daily. However, refining the work is an ongoing process that never really ends. "After making a portrait, I keep it in my bedroom and every time I look at it, I can see some room for improvement," says Shah, for whom art translates as the constant urge to do better and serves as a perennial source of inspiration.

**Future Plans**  
To fulfill his desire to inspire young women, the artist plans to take this exhibition to several colleges in the city. Later, he also plans to exhibit his work in Mumbai and invite the women whose portraits he has painted. "Though currently I am not working on a new series but I would love to paint portraits of top 20 women from Rajasthan who have made a name for themselves nationally as well as globally," tells Shah.

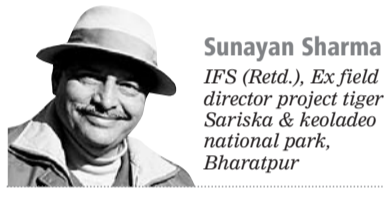
The exhibition was inaugurated by Rolee Agarwal, Commissioner of Income Tax Department, Rishi Mattu, General Manager of ITC Rajputana and Apra Kuchhal, Chairperson of We Care, on May 14. It will be on display till May 21.

**Date:** 15 May to 21 May  
**Time:** 11 am to 6 pm  
**Venue:** Welcom Art Gallery, ITC Rajputana



## Looking For Wolves Met With Bees

It was only 10 in the morning yet it had become pretty hot. Continuous gypsy ride and walking through tough terrain coupled with almost no sleep last night had brought a kind of fatigue and tiredness. The rocky bed, still under shadow of the overhanging hill and trees lured us to stretch on for a while. Sharma, the warden was quite a smoker and he could not resist the temptation of enjoying a fag now. He lit the cigarette and exhaled a 'wow' emitting a bust of tobacco smoke in a stylish spiralled pattern. He had not finished his cigarette that I sensed a humming sound in the atmosphere. Shortly I viewed 2-3 honey bees fluttering close to us.



**Sunayn Sharma**  
IFS (Retd.), Ex field director project tiger Sariska & Keoladeo national park, Bharatpur

It was 1st of May, the international Labour Day that we started tiger/panther pugmark census to culminate on coming 15th. Unlike the present, those days in 1990s we were dependent upon the sole technique of pugmark identification for counting big cats.

For the counting of major herbivores, the oldest technique, yet in practice is counting individual heads, species wise, visiting water holes for drinking water within 24 hours span. The limitation of this technique is the assumption that an animal visits a water hole only once a day. These days transect census technique too is being used but none of these techniques can give accurate results. But of course these techniques help in reaching an estimation of the wild population inhabiting a reserve.

That year the 24 hours waterhole census was scheduled for the coming 6th and 7th May.

**The Reserve Management**  
Though it was the beginning of May, yet the sun's scorching heat had dried several waterholes. Wild animals especially the herbivores like chital, sambar, wild pigs, and blue bull had started clustering around the surviving waterholes spread over the entire reserve. Most of these water holes were created by the reserve management over a period of years in the form of



ly to identify the animals but chiefly to stay safely on the machans, without disturbing the animals by vocalization and snoring during night. I coached them personally, after all they were going to be our ambassadors in public. Also partially I succeeded in my effort as many of these joined me in the next census as well.

**Adventurous Exercises**  
Though most of the possibly safe masonry platforms and buildings located by the side of the waterholes were designated for such volunteers, yet several parties comprising these had to be accommodated on temporary hide outs, mostly made on trees using forked branches. Apparently participation in such exercises seems pretty adventurous but is highly cumbersome. The members of these census parties have to sit quietly and have to suffice with food and water provided to them once or twice in this 24 hours period. Unbearable heat was another factor. Safety of these volunteers was my prime concern especially against cunning panther which is an excellent climber. There had been instances when some of these less experienced volunteers fell down from their machans during storms. One may visualize dropping of any such volunteer during night hours from the machan and finding a tiger or panther sitting next to them. How adventurous but horrifying it may be?



ponds, lakes, anicuts and aquifers. A seasonal river called Rupareil too had been serving as life line to a huge wild population foraging on its left and right banks. This seasonal river meandering through a large area flows only during rains but certain pockets in the river bed hold water, though shallow but almost throughout the year, proving to be a boon to wildlife here.

We had pressed all the resources to fill the manmade water holes through pipe lines and water tanks where ever possible.

As per the latest survey presently around 250+ water holes were alive in the entire reserve. Though it was a matter of great relief for us from the wild animals' welfare point of view but certainly from round the clock census point of view larger number of the water holes tougher the exercise for the reserve management, as arranging at least 2 peoples' census team for every water hole was a tough task looking to the dearth of trained staff.

We got few forest guard trainees from the Alwar based Forestry training institute, who were being trained by our research officer Chandni Ramani. Yet we were falling short of right kind of people required for this special purpose. I decided to engage people from outside especially wildlife enthusiasts. More than 20 people offered their services. Though sighting tiger/panther like major fauna was their chief interest but they lacked the endurance to withstand the hardships of this task.

But beggars are not the choosers; thus necessity bound I selected half of these and trained them not mere-

ly to identify the animals but chiefly to stay safely on the machans, without disturbing the animals by vocalization and snoring during night. I coached them personally, after all they were going to be our ambassadors in public. Also partially I succeeded in my effort as many of these joined me in the next census as well.

**Fascinating Rendezvous**  
Nothing unusual was found except what had been experienced in past years. At places forest guards were found absent, leaving their partners alone in the deep down jungles. At Bhagani I waited at one such point for an hour as the other member of this party was a student volunteer from Alwar and the hideout was made on a state time abandoned shikar howdy (tower). It was core tiger area and the tower was located on a hillock overlooking a perennial water stream called Tuda. The young lad seemed quite scared.

The guard had come to bring chhachh (butter milk) from the Bhagani guwada (cattle camp). Sambar and chital were coming to the water hole individually or in small groups. Apart from the scary atmosphere another big problem

Among these volunteers was Mr Kumavat, a middle aged, plump bodied person clad in white shirt and pyjama. He was a teacher in a primary school at Dausa but by appearance looked more like some small kirana store merchant. He could be good enough for humans census but seemed totally unfit for the wildlife census. So justly he was dropped in the first interaction but on his insistence I placed him at a hideout made on a comfortable masonry structure, a remnant of an abandoned forest outpost close to Madhogarh village located on the bank of the Rupareil River. The State Highway No 13, joining Alwar to Jaipur passes through Madhogarh and thus being a disturbed point probability of large cats' visits was negligible here. Also a forest guard was put with him. He was not happy as he desired his placement at points like Kalighati and Slopha having highest probability of tiger sightings. But I could not agree to his demand and consequently he had to move to Madhogarh with a wary face.

The census was scheduled for 24 hours from 4 pm today so accordingly all the parties were transported to the designated machans. As usual about 4.30 pm, I too started in my

gypsy to check if the parties were properly placed? Meeting various parties of far flung areas like Silbert, Rotkyala, Sukola and Dahl at about 11 pm when I reached Tehla range headquarters, the range officer informed that the party sitting at Dabkan close to the Manasarovar Lake had reported sighting of a pack of wolves at the lake. It was unbelievable as wolf had never been reported in Sariska forests till date. I decided to meet this party to verify the facts but it could be possible only next day as I wished to complete my round, to ensure the census is going on properly.

**Unfolded Hidden Secrets**  
It was my sixth sense that shaking off lethargy with a quick jerk I stood back on the ground to check if everything was ok. And what I witnessed was something I could not wash off my mind for decades. There was a huge honey comb barely a foot away from our stretched hands. Sharma's one hand was almost touching the lower border of the comb. Instantly I shook him and yelled for the staff who were also resting few yards away from us and totally ignorant of this develop-



ment. Before Sharma could understand the situation we were all surrounded by several bees. The staff suggested entering the stream, expecting the bees to leave us. We ran for life, entering the stream but the bees did not leave their chase. To my bad luck they unanimously identified me as the main culprit and consequently attacked me in the brutal short manner. I was wearing a jungle cap. Some bees entered it. I knew well that bees become ineffective in darkness but the sudden attack had soaked my wits and I committed the blunder of removing my cap to free the trapped bees. Instead of leaving me the freed bees attacked me ferociously.

I was running crossing the stream and the bees were chasing me. Sharma and the staff personnel all were running for their lives too. The semi dry stream was about 40 feet wide. There was a bagichi (small garden like common place) on the other side of the stream where a seer used to live since long. Sensing our trouble he came running to help us out of the situation. The bees had started returning, as if showing respect to the saint. Taking us to the shelter of his hut he pulled out all the stings from our body and then gave us a hot concoction made of ghee, black pepper and some other herbs. This first aid brought us enough relief to enable us to reach Sariska. The assistant field director had already brought a doctor from Thanagazi, who provided allopathic treatment as well.

Every census unfolded hidden secrets of nature to me and this too thrilled me with unique experiences full of adventure and excitement.

Few more of such escapades I will try to share with the readers in the sequel to follow.

vilagers but could find no dependable evidence. Checking the pug marks of wild animals including the suspected pack of wolves, I reached a rocky forest pocket by the side of a stream discharging into the Manasarovar Lake. With me were few field personnel and the honorary wildlife warden of Sariska, nominated by the state government, who had accompanied me on this trip.

It was only 10 am in the morning yet it had become pretty hot. Continuous gypsy ride and walking through the tough terrain coupled with almost no sleep last night had brought a kind of fatigue and tiredness. The rocky bed still under shadow of the over-hanging hill and trees lured us to stretch on for a while. Sharma, the warden was quite a smoker and he could not resist the temptation of enjoying a fag now. He lit the cigarette and exhaled a 'wow' emitting a bust of tobacco smoke in a stylish spiralled pattern. He had not finished his cigarette that I sensed a humming sound in the atmosphere. Shortly, I viewed 2-3 honey bees fluttering close to us. I was yet to make out the real purpose of the bees just than few more appeared on the scene with the humming sound rising multifold.

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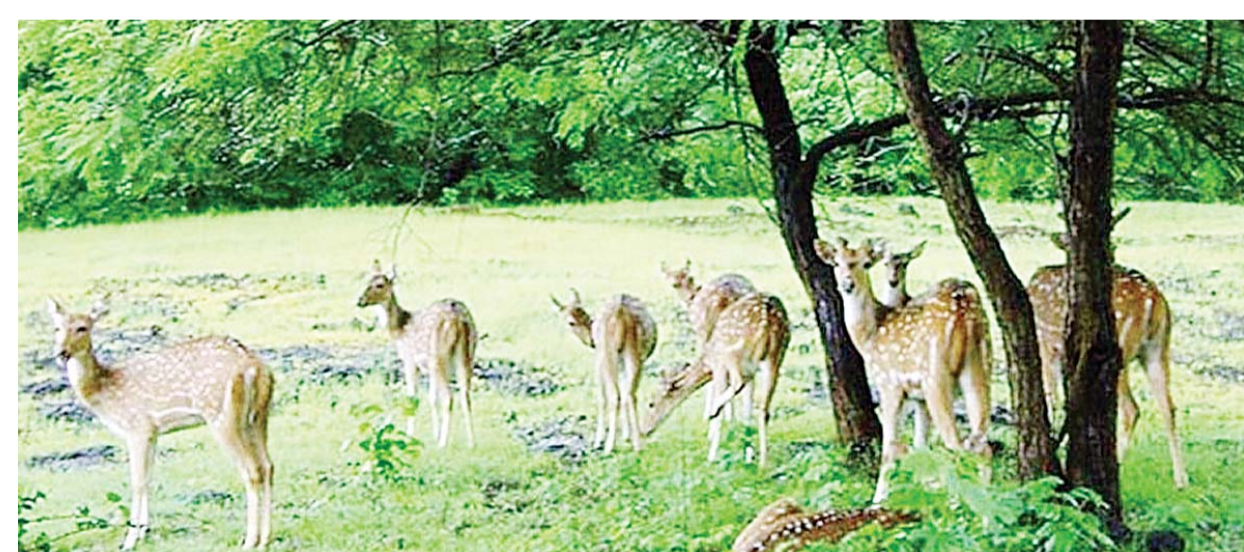
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## World Bee Day

ately, the concerns about bees being endangered have become widely noted among people all over the world, but information on how to take action about it has become scarce in the age. That's why World Bee Day exists to educate people about the importance of bees and other pollinators for our ecosystem, and how they can help preserve them for the sake of the future.

## #RESEARCH

### Improving Stroke Recovery

By scanning the whole genomes of nearly 6,000 people who had experienced strokes, researchers identified two genes associated with recovery within the pivotal first 24 hours after stroke.

A new study has prompted scientists to reconsider a once-popular yet controversial idea in stroke research.

The researchers believed that, in the aftermath of a stroke, calming overexcited neurons might prevent them from releasing a toxic molecule that can kill neurons already damaged by lack of oxygen. This idea was supported by studies in cells and animals, but it lost favour in the early 2000s after numerous clinical trials failed to improve outcomes for stroke patients.

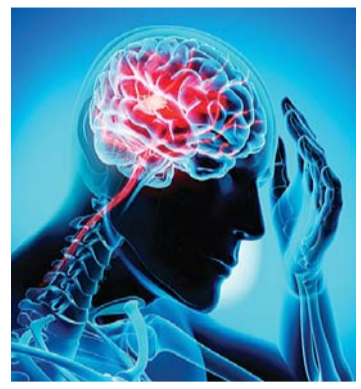


But a fresh approach has yielded evidence that the idea may have been discarded too hastily. The new findings appear in the journal Brain.

By scanning the whole genomes of nearly 6,000 people who had experienced strokes, researchers identified two genes associated with recovery within the pivotal first 24 hours after stroke. Events good or bad that occur in the first day set stroke patients on their courses toward long-term recovery.

**Regulating Neuronal Excitability**  
Both genes turned out to be involved in regulating neuronal excitability, providing evidence that over stimulated neurons influence stroke outcomes.

"There's been this lingering question about whether excitotoxicity really matters for stroke recovery in people," says co-senior author Jin-Moo Lee, professor



and head of the neurology department at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. "We can cure stroke in a mouse using blockers of excitotoxicity. But in humans we performed numerous clinical trials, and we couldn't move the needle. Every last one of them was negative."

In this study, out of 20,000 genes, the top two genetic hits point to mechanisms involving neuronal excitation. That's pretty remarkable. This is the first genetic evidence that shows excitotoxicity matters in people and not just in mice.

Every year nearly 800,000 people in the US have ischemic strokes, the most common kind of stroke. Ischemic strokes occur when a clot blocks a blood vessel and cuts off oxygen to part of the brain, triggering sudden numbness, weakness, confusion, difficulty speaking, or other symptoms. Over the next 24 hours, some people's symptoms continue to worsen while

others' stabilize or improve.

**Excitotoxicity in Stroke**  
In the 1990s, Dennis Choi, then head of the neurology department, performed ground-breaking research on excitotoxicity in stroke. He and others showed that stroke can cause neurons to release large amounts of glutamate, a molecule that transmits excitatory messages between neurons. Glutamate is constantly being released by neurons as part of the normal functioning of the nervous system, but too much all at once can be toxic. Efforts to translate this basic research into therapies for people did not pan out, and eventually pharmaceutical companies let their anti-excitotoxic drug development programs lapse.

But Lee, who formerly worked on excitotoxicity with Choi, did not give up. He teamed up with genetics researcher and co-senior author Carlos Cruchaga, professor of neurology and a professor of psychiatry; first author Laura Ibanez, an assistant professor of psychiatry; and co-author Laura Heitsch, an assistant professor of emergency medicine and of neurology to tackle the question of what drives post-stroke brain injury. The team identified people who had experienced strokes, and they looked for genetic differences between those who naturally recovered substantial function in the first day and those who did not.

As members of the International Stroke Genetics Consortium, the research team was able to study 5,876 ischemic stroke patients from seven countries: Spain, Finland, Poland, the United States, Costa Rica, Mexico, and South Korea. They measured each person's recovery or deterioration over the first day using the difference between their scores on the National Institutes of Health

(NIH) Stroke Scale at six and 24 hours after symptoms first appeared. The scale gauges a person's degree of neurological impairment based on measures such as the ability to answer basic questions such as "How old are you?", to perform movements such as holding up the arm or leg, and to feel sensation when touched.

**Wide Association**  
The researchers performed a genome wide association study by scanning the participants' DNA for genetic variations related to the change in their NIH stroke scale scores. The top two hits were genes that coded for the proteins ADAM23 and GluR1. Both are related to sending excitatory messages between neurons. ADAM23 forms bridges between two neurons so that signalling molecules such as glutamate can be passed from one to the other; GluR1 is a receptor for glutamate.

"We started with no hypotheses about the mechanism of neuronal injury," Cruchaga says. "We started with the assumption that some genetic variants are associated with stroke recovery, but which ones are, we did not guess. We tested every single gene and genetic region. So the fact that an unbiased analysis yielded two genes involved in excitotoxicity tells us that it must be important."

In the years since anti-excitotoxic drug development was abandoned, clot-busting drugs have become the standard of care for ischemic stroke. Such drugs aim to restore blood flow so that oxygen and anything else in the bloodstream, including medication can reach affected brain tissue. Consequently, experimental neuroprotective therapies that failed in the past might be more effective now that they have a better chance of reaching the affected area.

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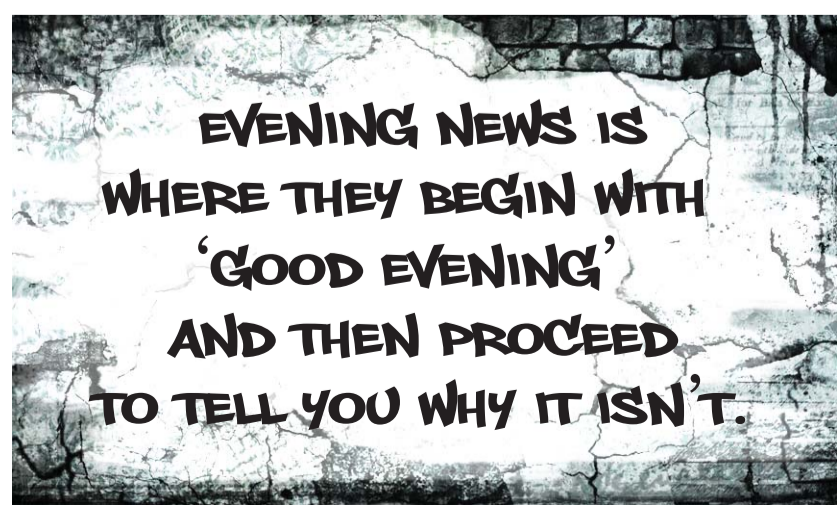
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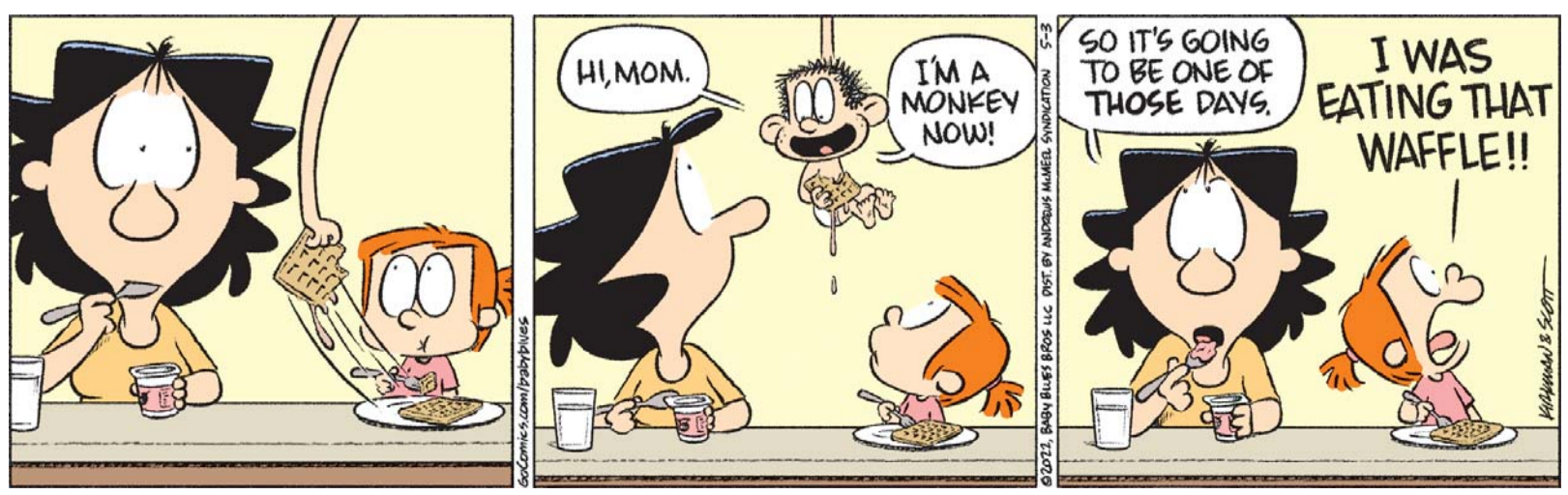
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## THE WALL

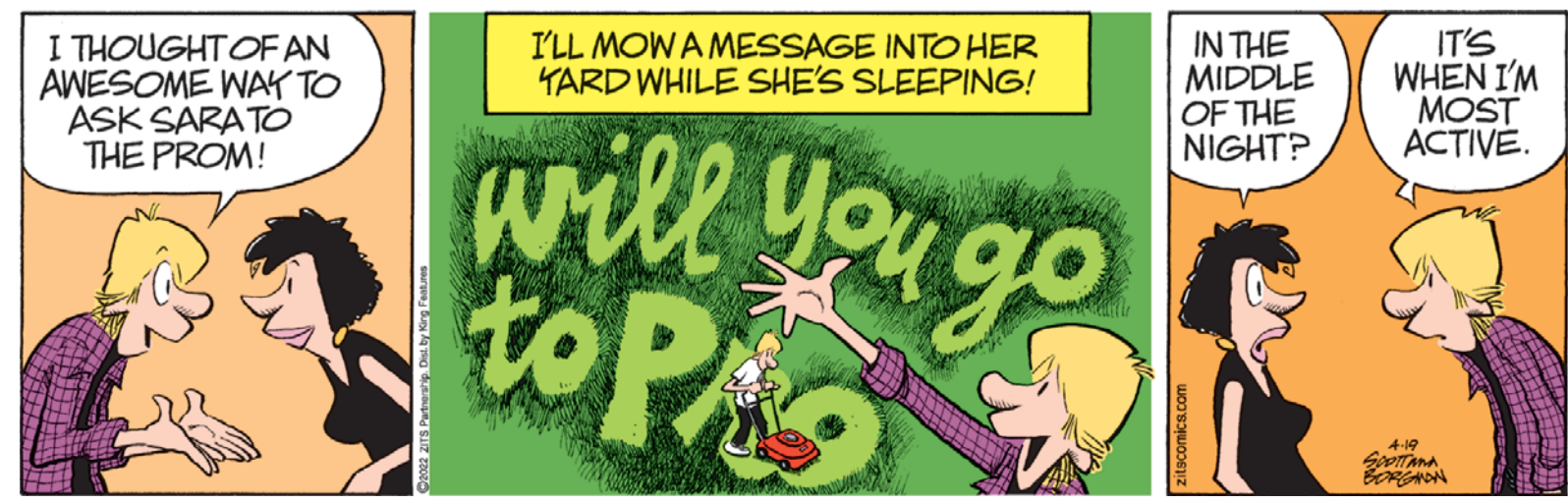


## BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

## ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

