

# SUGAR AND SPICE

by Bill Smiley



There's nothing more pleasant than getting back to your own home after a holiday. Unless, of course, you've been spending a month in a posh resort, and your own home is that unpainted two-room shack behind the town dump.

This week, we were looking forward to it more than ever. It had been hotter than Hades, and our house, surrounded by oaks and maples, is always cool. It had been a long drive, and we were tired. And while we were away, with the co-operation of our friendly banker we'd had the trim painted.

When we pulled off the highway and headed down our own street, we were practically purring with anticipation. A long, cold drink under the oaks. A leisurely inspection of the paint job. A quiet evening of idiot box or reading. Luverly.

As we drew up to the house, my wife squealed with delight. It looked splendid, with the shutters and trim whiter than white against the rosy brick and deep-green ivy. I agreed but couldn't help noticing that the grass was shin-high, and that an oak branch, thicker than a man's head and thirty feet long, had been blown down and straddled the fence, or what was left of it.

However, after three hours of dodging suicidal maniacs on the highway, all I wanted to do was fall into a chair and nuzzle a cold one.

As soon as I opened the door, my wife shrieked, "Bill, there's a terrible smell in here."

"Nonsense!" My standard reply. For one thing, my wife has a nose like a bloodhound. This faculty is allied with a vivid imagination. She frequently smells smells that I swear are non-existent. She has even said my column stinks, on occasion. Imagine.

But this time, "Dad she's right," Kim backed her up. "Yich. It's horrible. And look at the flies, everywhere, Yich!"

"All right, all right," I sighed, as only a father and husband can sigh. "Don't get excited. It's probably just dampness from the cellar, because the house has been closed."

The old lady was distracted for a moment by the pile of mail inside the front door. She pawed through it, looking for a letter from her first-born. She found it. As I staggered upstairs with the suit-cases, she shouted excerpts from the letter, interspersed with comments on the horrible smell.

I came down and headed for the refrigerator. Wiped my forehead, licked my lips and opened the door. Even with my three per cent, I was knocked flat on my back on the floor. I hadn't smelled anything like it since the fields of Normandy, 1944. Pure putrefaction.

Two inches of blood on the bottom of the fridge. Streamers of what looked like coagulated intestines hanging from the shelves. I opened the freezing compartment.

Six steaks, bought when they were on special at 89 cent. A five-pound roast. A two-pound bag of chicken livers. Hamburg, pork chops, frozen vegetables and orange juice from burst cans. All clinging together in a soggy, stinking corpse.

I'd prefer to draw a veil over the next few hours of domestic discord. But I'll give just the skeleton. Half an hour of bawling and mutual recriminations disclosed that we were both to blame. She had decided to defrost the fridge the day we left, ten days before. I had insisted we didn't have time. Finally, she had agreed. But she turned off the freezing unit and forgot to turn it on again, in the confusion of getting ready to go.

A trip to the town dump with two garbage cans and 400 flies. Two hours of scrubbing the thing out with soda, vinegar and good salt tears. Net result, zero. All doors and windows open all night but it was still like sleeping in a slaughter-house.

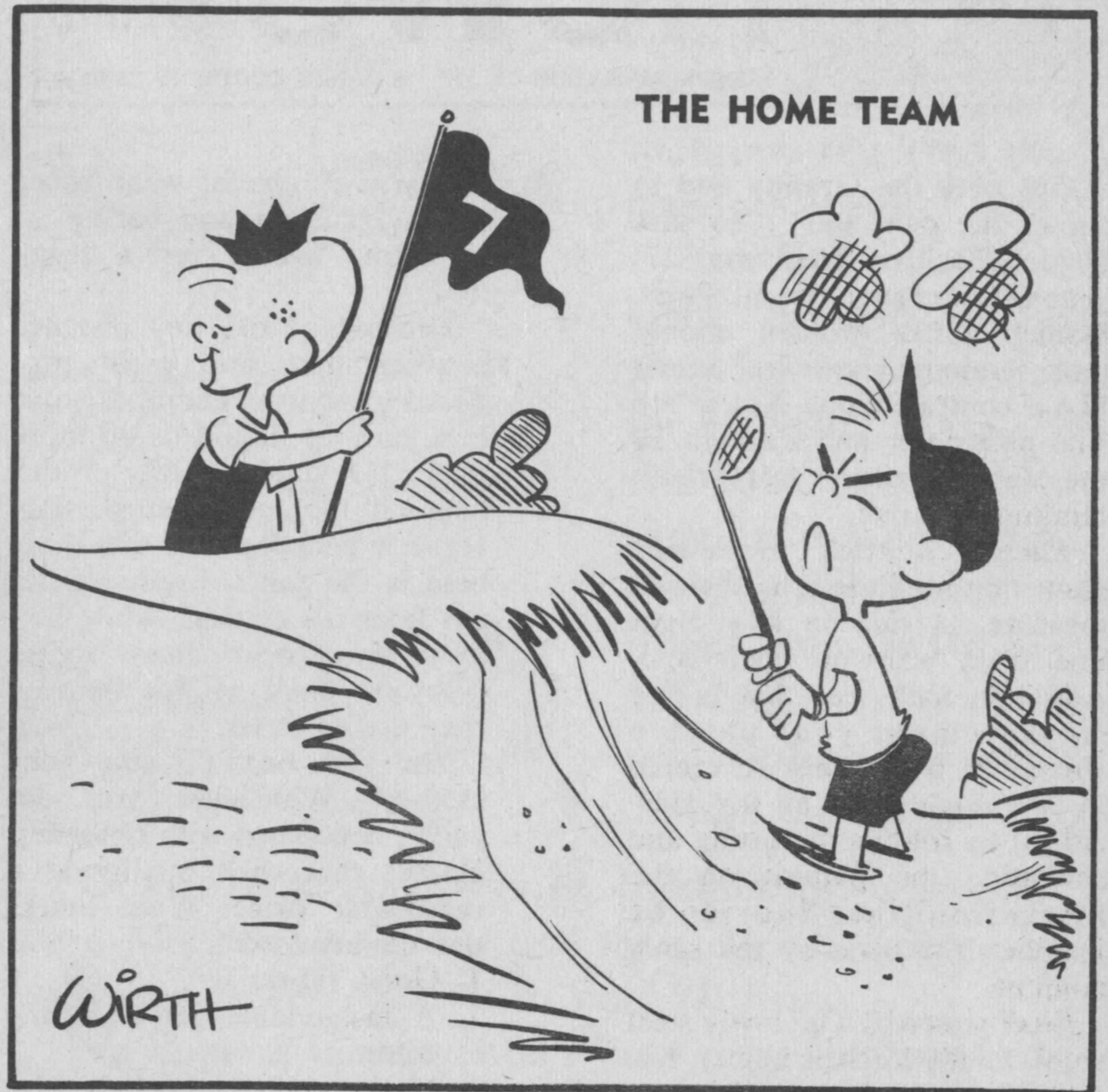
Call next day to friendly insurance agent. No dice. We weren't covered for stupidity. Visit to friendly appliance dealer whose eyes lit up even as his head wagged dolefully. "You'll never get rid of the smell." Dealer related various horror stories from past experience.

Net loss: fridge, \$300; food, \$50. Plus our planned trip to the

coast.

Oh, well. We couldn't afford that trip anyway. But we'd probably have gone. Now, we really

can't afford it. So look at the money we've saved. Or something.



"There it goes... splash!"

Golf news is lacking this week so we thought we'd give you a cartoon instead. Can't think of a spot on the local course like the terrain above but-- there is water (with its attraction for golf balls) and sand--ugh.

After going around the course the other day we were tempted to ask for the concession to conduct escorted tours for non-golfers. There is some of the most beautiful scenery in the country down there. We envisioned a motorized 'surray with a fringe on top' slowly meandering around down there with maybe a stop for picnic lunch in a particularly nice spot. We even picked out the spot.

### "PLEASE, SIR, I WANT SOME MORE"

📖 HIGHER LEARNING is in fashion again. Now that the government has made a large amount of money available for student loans, Oliver Twist is asking for more. Free tuition.

Gone are the days when university students (sometimes in formal evening dress) could be seen slipping in and out of cellars where they tended furnaces at ten dollars a month. The furnaces have changed too.