

Chasing down the fridge with a bat

My wife is afraid of our ice machine.

As for me, I was at first very happy to even have an ice machine. Growing up in Queens, my family's idea of a new refrigerator was to get the old one professionally painted. Even that was anticlimactic because the guy my parents hired painted our fridge the wrong color. He actually sprayed it white when he was supposed to do beige, explaining to my mom that our last name, which was written on the order ticket, threw him off. He got it right eventually. Still, I remained envious of my friends whose homes boasted ice machines.

MICHAEL



WHITE

How I yearned to be able to simply press my Batman cup against a machine of my own during breaks from Super Mario Bros. or Nintendo Ice Hockey. Instead, I had to comb through bags of peas and frozen tomato sauce just to crack open a tray of low-grade cubes, which always seemed to take on the subtle flavor of leftovers.

Refilling the ice tray was especially torturous.

Now that I have arrived, having purchased my first home in December, I can say this: Never did I imagine that this long-coveted machine would throw my life into such a tizzy.

Let me quickly note that my wife, Suzanne, is afraid of her own shadow. God forbid I get home 10 minutes early and happen to stumble upon her blow-drying her hair; one day the neighbors are going to hear her screams and call the police.

My working nights in Manhattan a few years back was also a challenge for us. Waking Suzanne at 12:45 a.m. to let her know I was home was always heart-wrenching. It was tough to see my companion of six years stare at me with a look of terror before she realized who I was. I tried different approaches, but the results were always the same. I always felt bad for her, too, considering she had just three or four hours of sleep left after each ordeal.

Now I just feel bad for me. Especially when ice levels in the house are low.

You see, when that magical ice machine, like an outer space nebula spinning dust into a newborn star, pushes that perfectly formed piece of crystal into the

tray with its brothers, my wife wakes up.

The lower the ice level, the louder the clunk of ice on ice.

She's usually not sure what woke her up, she just knows it's something. And she's not going back to sleep unless I walk through the house like a maniac in my boxer shorts and socks with a T-ball bat in hand.

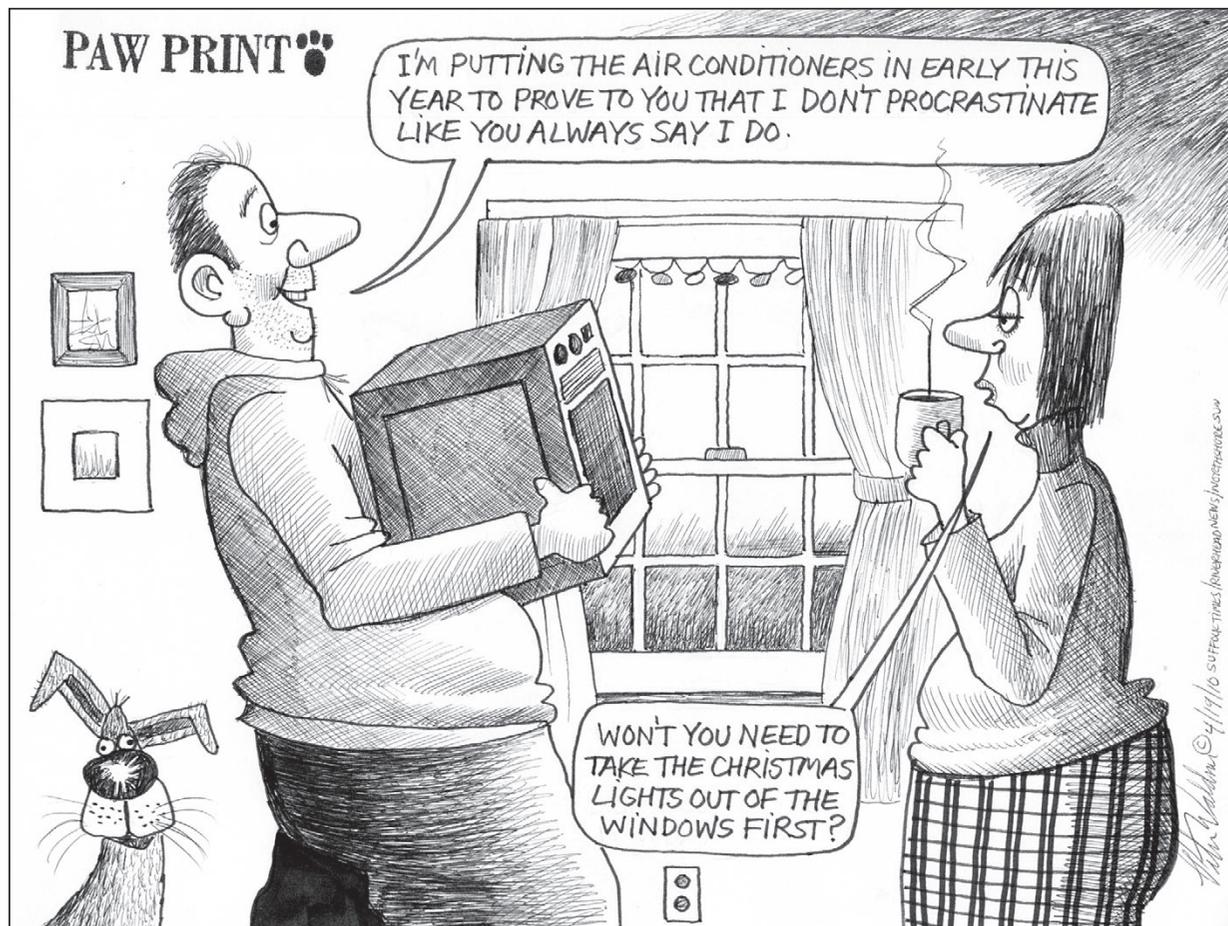
I even have to check the unfinished basement just in case brazen burglars decide it would make sense to play some Ping-Pong in the middle of a heist that, incidentally, wouldn't net them much unless pawn shops are now paying top dollar for antiquated computers and old Time magazines.

My wife is often fast asleep upon my return. Having no one to talk to, I usually just put the bat away and lie down with my heart pumping — because even after circling houses and apartments hundreds of times in my life with a bat or blade, there's still a part of my brain gearing up for that long-awaited, rage-fueled encounter.

That day may come just yet.

And after I get finished with the bat, we'll probably have to buy a new fridge.

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PETER WALDNER CARTOON

Uninformed? No, Tea Partiers are alarmed

Although I am not a member of the Tea Party, and as far as I know am not even acquainted with any member, I was bothered by Peter Waldner's cheap-shot cartoon which slandered Tea Partiers as uninformed, unpleasant dopes.

Ironic, no? The Left inevitably waxes self-righteously indignant should any of their "preferred" groups be subjected to such ugly stereotyping, yet it thinks nothing of maliciously caricaturing any group so foolish as to organize against its policies.

Besides "uninformed," I believe the left-leaning media's favorite Tea Party adjective is "angry." Well, perhaps "alarmed" might be the more appropriate word, and one I certainly can relate to. Why on earth shouldn't people be alarmed? Despite our president's countless speeches and our mainstream media's unquestioning validation, the public was clearly against the health-care bill. But in a triumph of ideology over cold, hard facts, the Democrats shoved this half-baked 10-ton turkey down our reluctant throats.

It is worth noting that no such expansive, significant bill has ever before been forced through Congress with no bipartisan support whatsoever.

It was obvious — to anyone who cared to look — that what this administration dearly desired was never just to "fix" health care, but rather to implement sweeping, all-encompassing government-run health care.

Our president is on video record stating as much in several precampaign speeches. Had the Dems been able to muster enough votes from their own party, we would now be saddled with the "public option," which would have put America on the fast track to socialized medicine.

And here, a question is begged: If it is a "right" and a moral obligation for the government to provide all citizens with health care, why isn't it a right and moral obligation for our government to provide decent housing for all its citizens as well? And shouldn't all citizens have the "right" to a nutritious, well-balanced diet and a decent job? But hold on, this is sounding suspiciously

like full-blown socialism, an ideology that has a remarkable record of bringing out the worst in human nature.

Many of us believe government-run health care will have the same unintended consequences and failures. To make matters worse, besides the typical inefficiency and ineptitude of any large government-run bureaucracy, today all U.S. Government-run agencies have an additional, self-inflicted shortcoming, namely quotas. Thus, in the leftist dreamed-of world of U.S. government-run health care, a significant percentage of the thousands upon thousands of jobs in this gigantic new bureaucracy, including your doctors, nurses, lab technicians, etc., would be set aside for race/sex preferences. I'd guess as much as a third of all jobs.

Whoa there, quick-draw race-card P.C. gunslingers. I truly don't care what "group" my doctor or nurse or technician comes from as long as I'm confident that they were hired for their expertise from among the best candidates available, rather than to "meet the numbers." Unfortunately, meeting mandatory quotas inevitably fosters the lowering

of standards, much as it does with college admission standards. As has been its practice for several decades now, our government would have no intention of simply hiring the best-credentialed health-care applicants, regardless of ethnicity or sex. That colorblind practice wouldn't satisfy the quotas.

The other extremely problematic characteristic of civil-service meets quotas meets unions is it is essentially impossible to fire even the most inept employees. Between quota-hiring, no firing, adding 30 million people to the same number of doctors, the trillions of dollars needed — which we assuredly do not have — and the typical federal bureaucracy's waste, fraud and inefficiency, my enthusiasm for nationalized health care is closer to dread.

As for the Waldner cartoon, at least on this government-run health-care issue, consider me a member — not of the Tea Party or the so-called "Party of No" — but a proud, card-carrying member of the party of "Hell No!"

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GUEST SPOT

HUGH PRESTWOOD