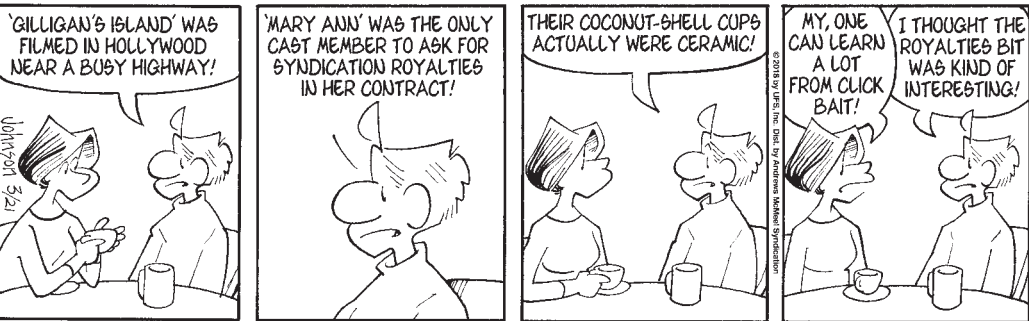
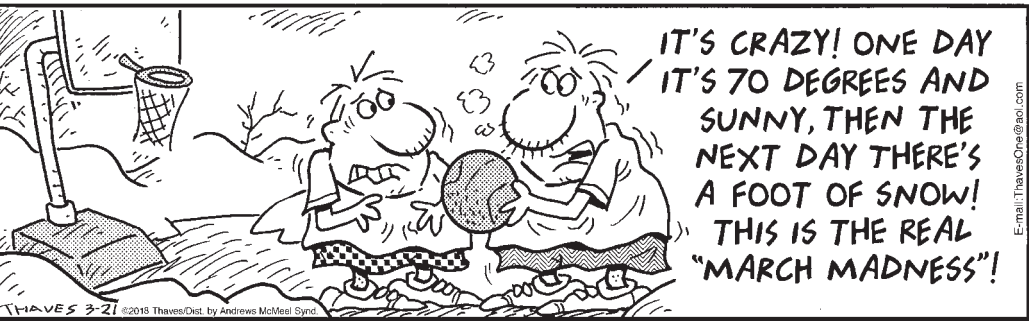


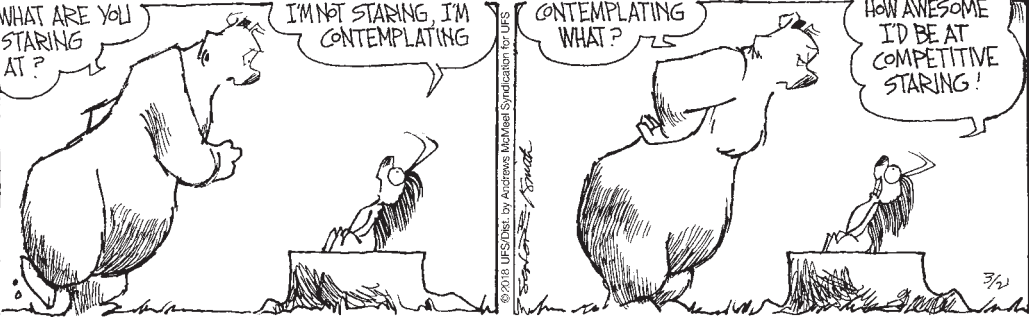
ARLO AND JANIS® by Jimmy Johnson



FRANK & ERNEST® by Bob Thaves



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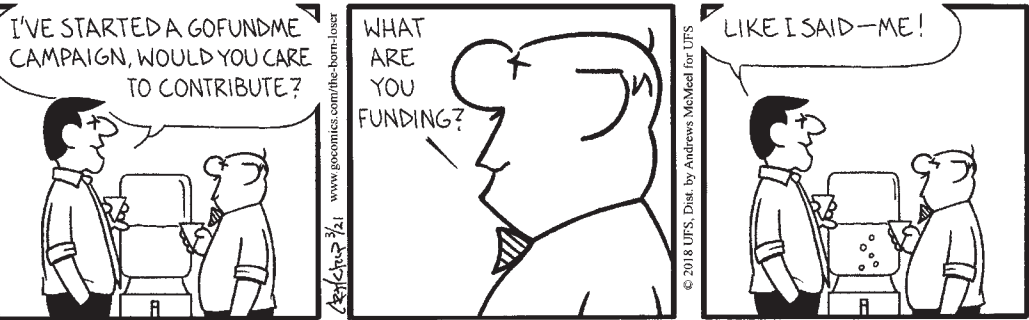
ALLEY OOP by Jack and Carole Bender



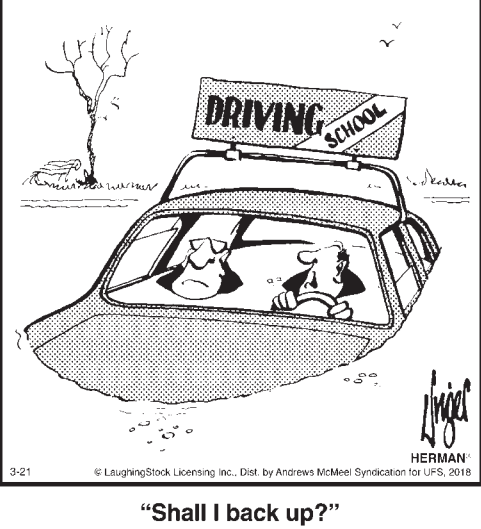
SOUP TO NUTZ by Rick Stromoski



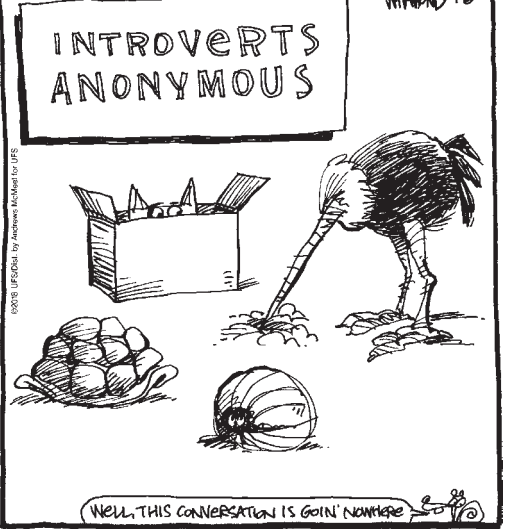
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SENSE AND SENSITIVITY

By Harriette Cole

Age differences cause conflicts

DEAR HARRIETTE: My parents have been married for over 15 years. They met in medical school. (My father is a surgeon, and my mother was a nurse.) There is a big age gap between them, as my father is 10 years older than my mother.

Growing up, I never noticed the age different, but as we all get older, I can see how such a huge age gap affects their relationship. My father is very traditional in the sense that he doesn't bother with new trends in the world or updating his lifestyle.

On the other hand, my mother is more up-to-date with technology and knows more about the way the world works nowadays. Yesterday, they had a huge argument about getting a new car. My father wants to keep the car our family has now, but my mother wants an updated, safer car. Is there a way I can help my parents solve this dispute? What is your take on marital age gaps?

DEAR HARRIETTE: I am a pretty busy person. I have a full-time job and a full social calendar, and I love spending the free time I do have just relaxing.

My friend recently brought up the idea of joining a book club with him. I love to read and find that it relaxes me when I'm stressed, so my initial reaction was to say yes. When I went home after accepting the offer, I started to doubt my decision. I read when I feel like it, not when I'm told to.

I'm afraid that being part of this book group with make me feel obligated to finish the book on a timeline, which I'm not sure I'll like.

Have you had any experience with book groups? Does being in one ruin the relaxing experience of reading?

DEAR BOOK CLUB NEWBIE: Many people enjoy book clubs because they create the opportunity for a social experience designed around a particular topic.

If you like talking about the storyline, plot, character development and other aspects of books, you may enjoy this type of engagement. These clubs work best when the size of the group is manageable -- no more than a dozen or so participants.

They tend to meet once a month or even once a quarter. Yes, the discussion can veer toward the social, but the books do get discussed. You should try it out.

-- Book Club Newbie, Akron, Ohio

DEAR PARENTS' AGE GAP: It may be that the issue here is the age difference. It may also be that your father prefers to be in the role of decision-maker and doesn't appreciate your mother's pushback. Strategy may be useful here.

Perhaps your mother can invite your father to go for a test drive of cars that she finds interesting. She can pose it as a fun activity that does not need to involve buying a car. She should ask him to humor her by going along for the ride -- literally.

Exposing him to the new technology firsthand may open his eyes to what is available on the market and how much it costs. If your mother is able to give him this experience, they may be able to move past the rigidity that is currently standing in their way.

(Harriette Cole is a lifestyleist and founder of DREAMLEAPERS, an initiative to help people access and activate their dreams. You can send questions to askharriette@harriettecole.com or c/o Andrews McMeel Syndication, 1130 Walnut St., Kansas City, MO 64106.)

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS

1 Bottleneck

4 Library sect.

7 Sassy

11 Take advantage of

12 Liverpool

13 Han Solo's love

14 Formerly Siam

16 Slugger

17 Moises —

17 Carrie

17 Fisher's dad

18 Fine spray

19 Inc. cousin

20 Not hither

21 Morticia's husband

24 Willoway

27 Width of a cir.

28 Holy cow!

30 Sturdy lock

32 Trim

34 Poet Ogden

36 Wire gauge

37 Special skills

39 Push forward

41 Without warmth

42 Kind of humor

43 Grates

45 Orange peels

48 Myrrh donors

49 Ayla's creator (2 wds.)

52 Before long

53 Told

54 Jazz's —

54 Winding

55 Burglar

56 B'way notice of yore

57 Summer in Cannes

DOWN

1 Stick out

2 Tennis great

3 Arthur

3 Beowulf's drink

4 Sounded sheepish?

5 Am —

5 Am — time?

6 Passe

7 Obviously

8 Morays

9 Warden's fear

10 Frat letter

12 Like Las Vegas

15 Like some fears

18 A Stooze

20 Montand of the movies

21 Mdse.

22 Porker's plaint

23 Foremost

24 Jacuzzi

25 Pack firmly

26 Nobelist

29 Black as night

31 Plumbing bend

33 Sorting socks

35 Chartering

38 ICU units

40 Talking bird

42 Sink unclogger

43 Chimp expert —

43 Goodall

44 In a dither

46 Durham university

47 Chair, e.g.

48 Indy 500 month

49 Next year's grads

50 It borders the Atl.

51 Falsehood

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