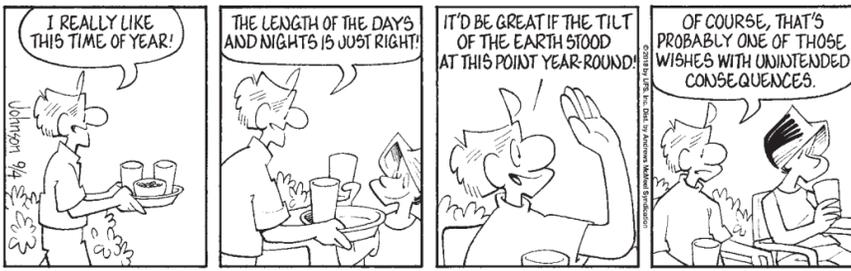


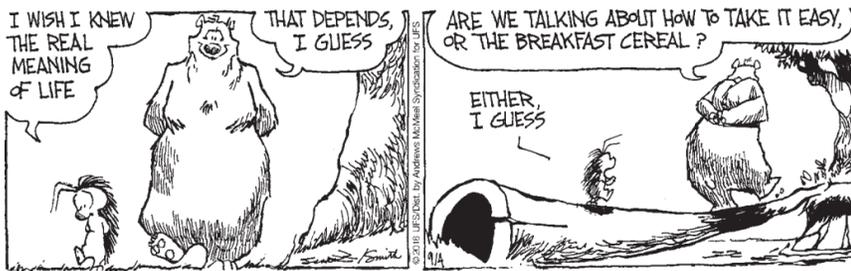
ARLO AND JANIS® by Jimmy Johnson



FRANK & ERNEST® by Bob Thaves



THE GRIZZWELLS® by Bill Schorr



BIG NATE® by Lincoln Peirce



ALLEY OOP by Jack and Carole Bender



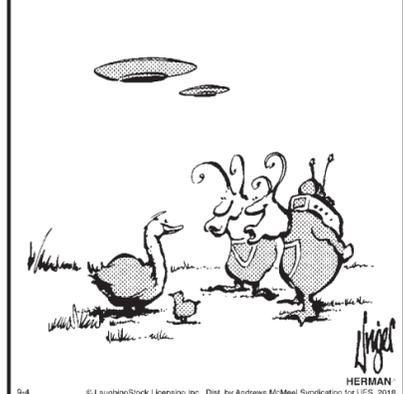
HEART OF THE CITY by Mark Tatulli



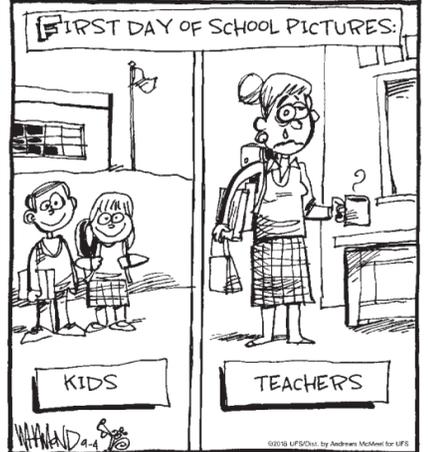
THE BORN LOSER™ by Art & Chip Sansom



HERMAN® by Jim Unger



REALITY CHECK® by Dave Whamond



SENSE AND SENSITIVITY

By Harriette Cole

Constructive criticism can be very helpful tool

DEAR HARRIETTE: I went to a dinner party where the food wasn't good. I was sitting in the kitchen toward the end of the evening, chilling, when the chef started talking to me. She was nice and had worked hard to make the event fun. She asked me what I thought of the meal, and I wasn't sure what to say. The party's host is my friend, so I wanted to be sensitive to the situation, but honestly, the food was not good. It was bland and boring. I didn't really answer her, and I'm not sure if that was helpful. Feedback can be helpful if people want to improve. I didn't want to make waves. What do you think I should have done?

-- Withholding Feedback, Syracuse, New York

DEAR HARRIETTE: My daughter was invited to a sleepover by a new friend from camp. I have met her, but not her parents. I don't love the idea of allowing my child to stay anywhere until I meet and talk to the parents. My daughter is a teenager; to me, that makes it even more important that I know where she is. What if the teens aren't telling the whole truth?

I don't mean to be a prude, but I think I need to check out this girl and her family before I allow my child to sleep over. Do you think I am overreacting? What would you advise?

-- Sleepover Invite, Easthampton, New York

DEAR WITHHOLDING FEEDBACK: In the moment, you might have shared your feedback in a private and honest way. You were asked directly what you thought. Ideally, you would have pointed out something that you liked about a dish, the presentation or something else, before you made any criticisms. Interaction between you and the chef could have been helpful and could have stayed private -- between you two -- had you simply told the truth.

Since you did not answer her, it is time to let it go. You missed your best opportunity to be helpful without being hurtful. Telling your friend what you think about the food can be embarrassing for her and detrimental to her relationship with the chef. At this point, keep the feedback to yourself. Next time, be attuned to the moment. When you have a clear chance of offering constructive feedback to someone, take it. Otherwise, stay quiet.

I agree that you should make a human connection with a new friend's parents before you allow your child to spend the night, especially if that child is a teenager. As grown up as they may seem, teens are still capable of making bad choices. You can diminish the gravity of those choices by doing basic safeguard testing first. That includes meeting the parents and assessing the situation before allowing your child to spend the night.

Speak to the mom or dad and find out what they know about the planned sleepover. Get a sense of who they are and what they value, and then make your decision from there.

(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 P.O. service
- 4 Wapiti
- 7 WWW addresses
- 11 Jackie's tycoon
- 12 Shoestring
- 13 Toe pain
- 14 Hazard
- 16 Folk teachings
- 17 Rely on
- 18 Biologist's study
- 19 Library warning
- 20 Dead heat
- 21 Bending with ease
- 24 Party
- 27 Famous cathedral town
- 28 Make watertight
- 30 Bridge fare
- 32 Gumbo veggie

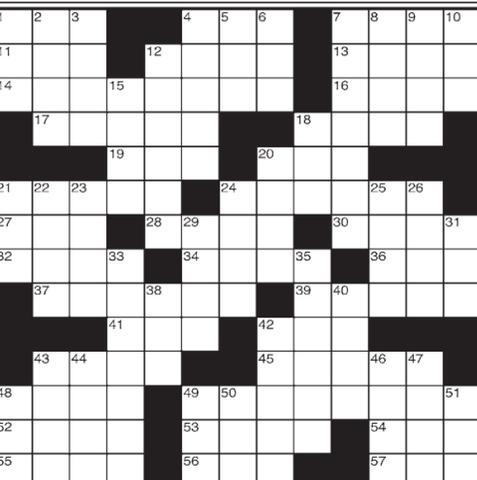
DOWN

- 1 British rule in India
- 2 Worry
- 3 Designer label
- 4 It has a crust
- 5 Arith. term
- 6 Sardine-can opener
- 7 Most unbecoming
- 8 Car top
- 9 Artificial fly
- 10 Sault -- Marie
- 12 Eye protectors

Answer to Previous Puzzle



Want more puzzles? Check out the "Just Right Crossword Puzzles" books at QuillDriverBooks.com



- 15 Shove
- 18 Fib
- 20 Scrabble piece
- 21 August sign
- 22 Classes
- 23 Greenhorn
- 24 Equitable
- 25 Muscle quality
- 26 Sir
- 29 Guinness
- 31 TV genie portrayer
- 33 Scale meas.
- 35 Performer
- 38 Pasture
- 40 Abridged
- 42 Comic-book heroes (hyph.)
- 44 Stacked
- 46 Former Mets stadium
- 47 Reviews harshly
- 48 Verdi's princess
- 49 Chips brand
- 50 Eiger, e.g.
- 51 LP successors
- 52 Incan treasure
- 53 Meadow