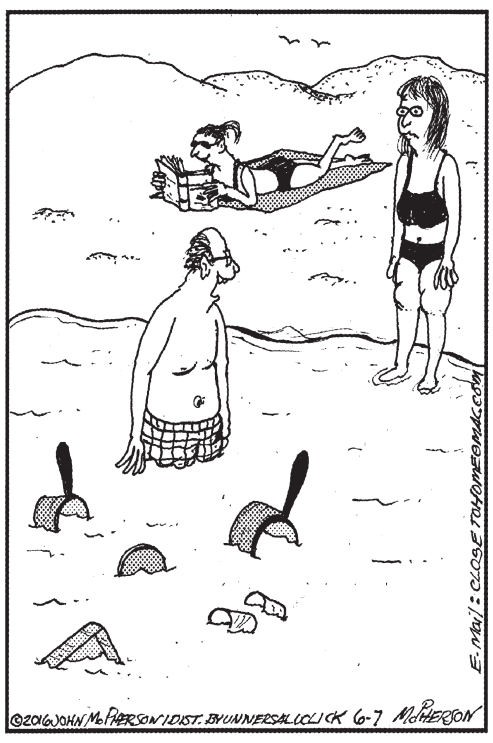
CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



"Come on in! The water is like dishwater!"

Daughter struggles to help her mother

Dear Abby: Mom is 61. She lost her husband (my dad) six months ago. They had been married for 37 years. He used to do almost everything for her. Now her world has changed because she must do things for herself — like doing the dishes or paying the bills.

When we talk, she constantly complains about tasks that have the simplest of solutions. If I offer advice, she gets defensive and says, "Fine! Tell me how I should live my life." I have reached the conclusion that she doesn't want advice, but she continues to complain and be upset. My siblings and I don't live close by. How can we help her? — *Caring Daughter in Colorado*

JEANNE PHILLIPS
DEAR ABBY

Dear Daughter: Six months ago, your mother lost half of her "self." Tasks that seem ordinary to you are still new to her. Resist the urge to help with advice unless you are specifically asked. And recognize that when she complains, rather than looking for advice, she may be venting about her pain and frustration.

Dear Abby: I often see parents "help" their elementary school-age kids violate safety laws.

For example, if they are running late, they'll hurry their kids across an intersection against the flashing red hand signal, or jaywalk across the middle of a busy street instead of going to the corner. This saves them about two minutes.

I also see parents watch their kids playing on their skateboards right under a sign that says "No skateboards." These kids are old enough to read and understand the signs and signals.

Sometimes I call out to the parent, "Nice job teaching your kids how to get away with something!" or, "I hope your kids remind you about this when they are teenagers and want to do something stupid!"

The parents always ignore me. Can you suggest a better comment I can yell out? — *Don in California*

Dear Don: What you are witnessing is regrettable. However, my advice is to keep your mouth shut, because you're not going to teach parents like the ones you have described anything with a shout-out.

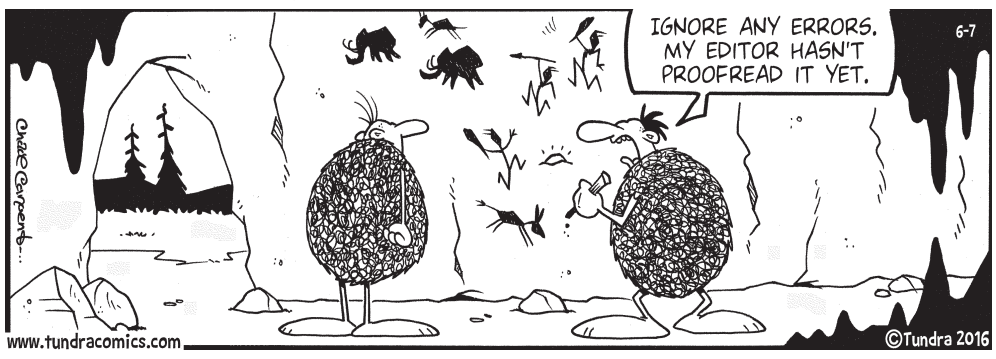
Dear Abby: My husband and I have an ongoing disagreement. He said I should write to you to see what you thought.

When we're in a group, I say it's rude to make plans that don't include others who are standing with us. He has no problem with it. I'm uncomfortable discussing where to go for dinner with four members of a group when others are standing beside us. He says I am too sensitive and too easily embarrassed. What do you think? — *Disagreement in Ohio*

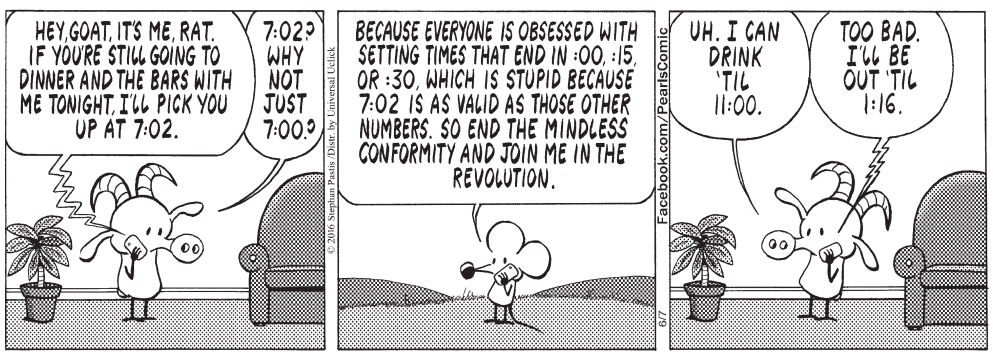
Dear Disagreement: I don't think that you are too sensitive. While discussing where to go for dinner in front of people who haven't been invited isn't "rude," it is insensitive because they may feel excluded.

Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

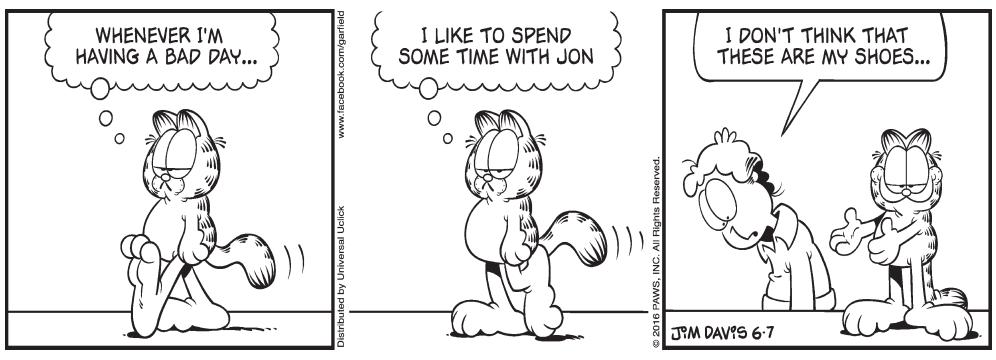
TUNDRA by Chad Carpenter



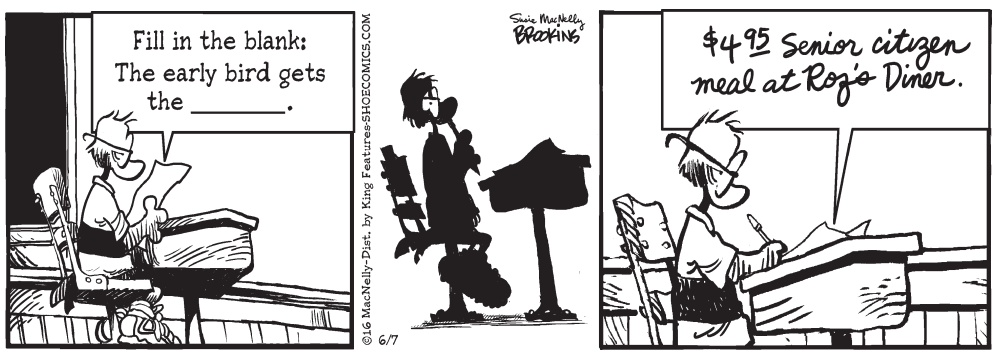
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE by Stephan Pastis



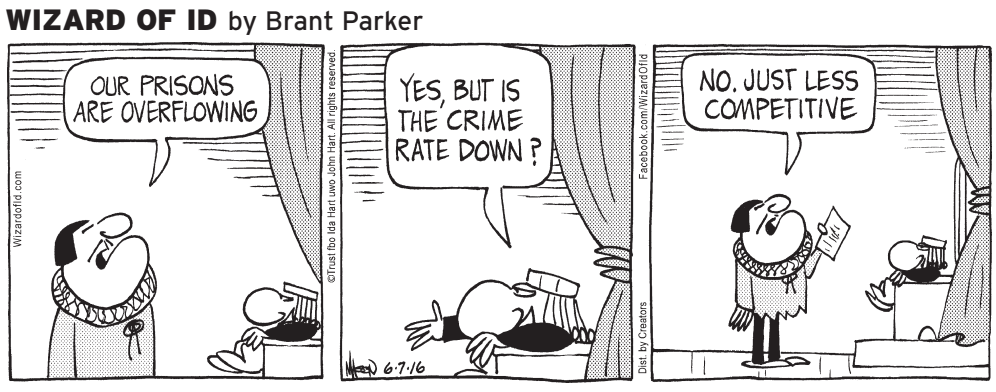
GARFIELD by Jim Davis



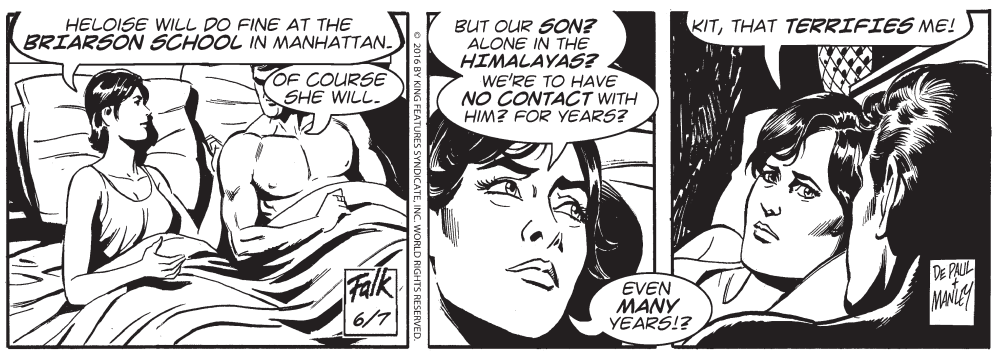
JEFF MACNELLY'S SHOE by Chris Cassatt and Gary Brookins



WIZARD OF ID by Brant Parker



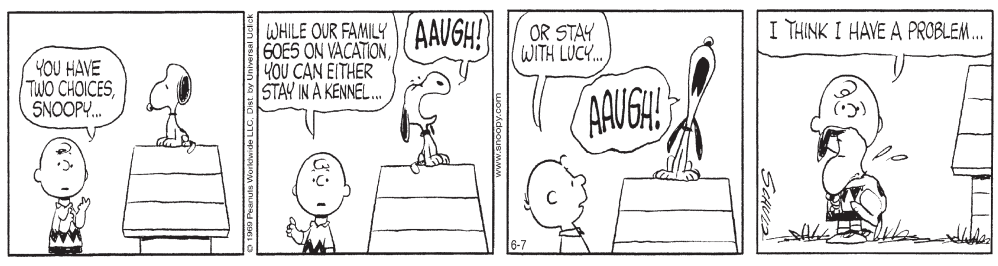
THE PHANTOM by Lee Falk



DILBERT by Scott Adams

MARK TRAIL by James Allen

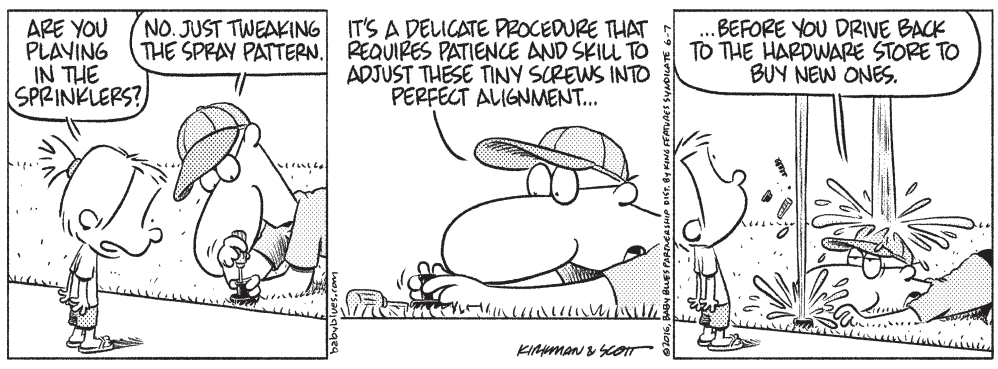
PEANUTS by Charles Schulz



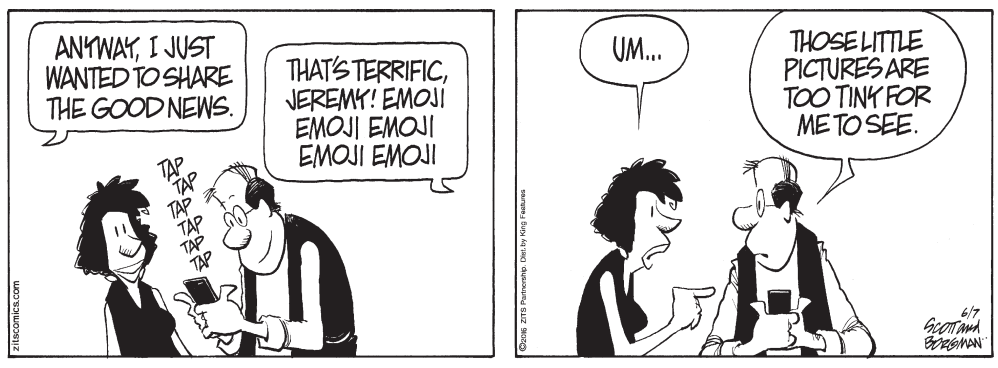
PICKLES by Brian Crane

FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE by Lynn Johnston

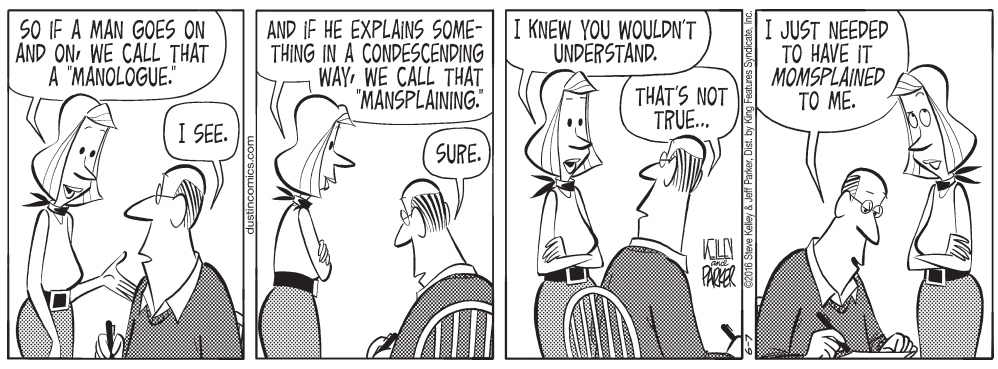
BABY BLUES by Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman



ZITS by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



DUSTIN by Steve Kelley and Jeff Parker



Daily Horoscope

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Your imagination will stretch into visual and musical directions. You'll explain the world in artistic, interesting and colorful ways — even the mundane parts.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Write the goal that is in your heart down on paper. It's better if your destination is committed in this way. Without a set destination and estimated time of arrival, there is no flight plan.

HOLIDAY MATHIS

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Maybe there are no stupid questions, but there are smart ones. Ask the question that wants to be asked and the answer will ring out like a marvelous celebration of church bells.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). You could face and overcome your opposition, but it would take an awful lot of energy. It's probable that this battle is not important in the scheme of things. Conserve your personal power.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). The opinion you voice may turn out to be wildly unpopular. In fact, you may stand alone in your views. But what if you're the only one who's right? Time will tell, but until then you'll certainly make the others think differently.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Today, when someone tells you the truth, but not the whole truth, it's a test to see how well you're listening. If you listen well enough, you can, and really should, tease the whole truth out.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). It takes someone special to appreciate the beauty in and/or take advantage of today's precious opportunity. You are aesthetically in tune and in a position to touch a one-of-a-kind item or gain access to a rare commodity.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Join the group. What's good for others will be good for you. You'll love the feeling of belonging and be very pleased with what you're able to accomplish by contributing to the larger picture.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You'll radiate warmth and charisma, though in a quiet way that will most suit today's conservative surroundings. The size of your gesture may be subliminally small and everyone will feel it anyway.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). If the first answer doesn't satisfy you, get another without hesitation ... and another still. You'll be rewarded for your persistence and your high standards.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Speak up about your preferences. Let yourself have one of the indulgences you so enjoy. Take your leisure time more seriously and it will reward you more richly.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You'll make your way around the obstacles by applying what you're so good at. You've a talent for finding easy compromises and executing fast adjustments.