

COMICS

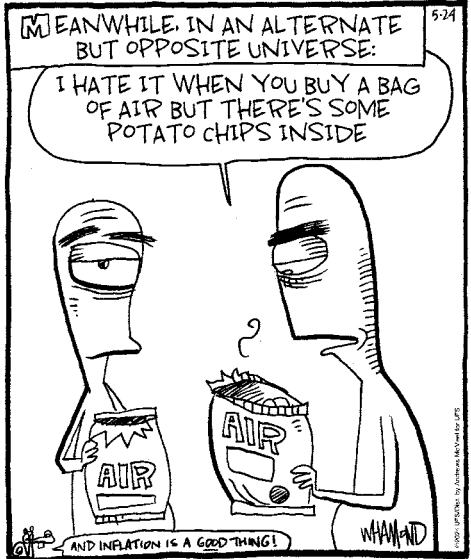
MARMADUKE



HERMAN



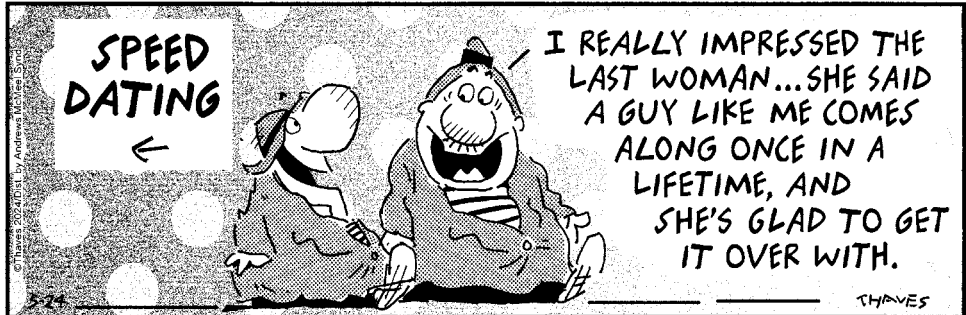
REALITY CHECK



MODERATELY CONFUSED



FRANK & ERNEST



THE GRIZZWELLS



PICKLES



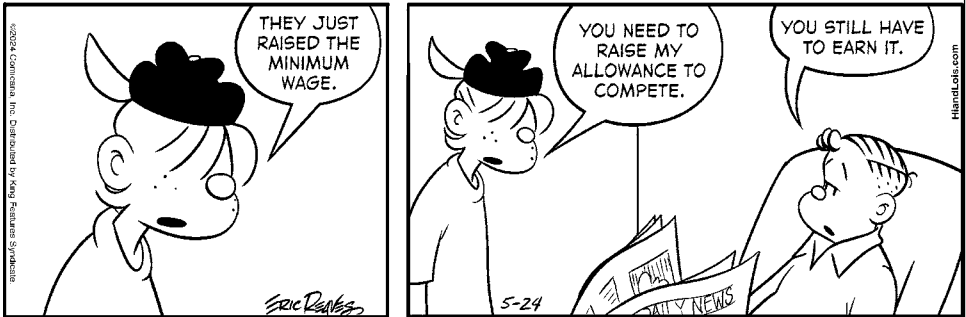
BLONDIE



BORN LOSER



HI AND LOIS



CRABGRASS



Story of Son's Recovery to Inspire Families of Addicts

Dear Annie: My son survived heroin addiction 18 years ago. He was quite young and only used the drug for around two years, but they were a terrifying two years. During that time, I helped enroll him in a methadone program, a live-in program (three times) and other programs.

People around me were critical and told me no program would help him until he wanted to get better. I explained that my goal was to keep him alive until he decided he wanted to get better. He eventually decided he was tired of stealing and feeling sick all the time. He admitted that he had thought about suicide but knew that it would ruin my life forever and he didn't want that. He enrolled in a local live-in program for the third time -- his idea, not mine. This program was free of charge to people without health insurance. A wonderful counselor took my son under his wing and took him seriously when my son said he wanted to get better.

Things worked out, and he has not gone back on opiates. He also quit drinking alcohol and smoking cigarettes. My son thanks me for saving his life. He did all the work, though, and is now a wonderful father of a young boy and partner to his son's mother. He is the oldest of three children, and everyone in my family is proud of him (his dad is out of the picture).

I know I was lucky. Plenty of parents with addicted children do everything right and their children still die. I hope my letter inspires the parents of addicts to



ANNIE LANE

Dear Annie

not give up on their children. I know some addicts aren't going to get better, and I would never criticize family members who gave up on someone after doing all the right things and seeing no results. This letter is meant to encourage people who feel helpless in the face of a family member who is addicted. Thank you. -- Blessed Mom

Dear Blessed: Thank you for sharing this moving story. I hope it inspires any struggling parents out there to never lose hope.

Dear Annie: Can you help me get over my irritation with things that I find, well, irritating? Things like people who look up into space while they talk, as if pontificating great wisdom for the masses. I just want to snap my fingers in their faces and say, "Hey! I'm down here!" Or people who talk with their hands, even while driving! I've noticed more and more talking heads on TV with this habit. I wish the cameras would only shoot them from the neck up!

And speaking of TV, is there some sort of contest among women as to who can have the longest hair cascading down their right shoulders? And what's with

their high-pitched little girl voices?

I find myself seeing these mannerisms more and more, and becoming more and more irritated with them. I don't believe I'm an intolerant or judgmental person ordinarily (you can spot one a mile away, after all!), but I guess I am. Help, please. -- Intolerant

Dear Intolerant: It's normal to have pet peeves, but persistent irritation with things of this nature is not. Ultimately, getting yourself so worked up over things you can't control only hurts you more than it does anything else.

Reflect on what these annoyances might really be about for you. When you notice yourself feeling annoyed, try redirecting your focus to something positive or use humor to lighten your perspective on these human quirks. Make an active effort to show grace for others. Life is far better lived with empathy, understanding and compassion than criticism and judgment.

"How Can I Forgive My Cheating Partner?" is out now! Annie Lane's second anthology -- featuring favorite columns on marriage, infidelity, communication and reconciliation -- is available as a paperback and e-book. Visit <http://www.creatorspublishing.com> for more information. Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

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ASTROGRAPH BY EUGENIA LAST

Preparation is your key to overcoming adversity this year. Don't be afraid to apply pressure when necessary; you'll set the standard you want others to follow. Stand behind your word, and you'll gain respect and a leadership position. A commitment will lead to stability and security.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) -- Sign up for something interesting. What you discover about yourself will put your mind at rest. Expanding your credentials and updating your resume will point you in an exciting direction.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) -- Reposition yourself for success. Put your skills, knowledge and experience to the test. Don't fear a challenge; use your imagination to make the impossible happen.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) -- Blow off steam and test your physical skills. A personal challenge will encourage you to show off to someone you want to impress. Set the bar high and give your all. Relax and enjoy the moment.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) -- Take a moment to review, recover and redo what isn't working for you, and you will find a solution that helps you gain momentum and point you in a positive direction.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) -- Set a budget, make plans and pursue your dream. Associate with positive people. Nothing will stand in your way once you establish what you want to do and whom you want to stand beside.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) -- Believe in your abilities, skills and experience. Leave nothing to chance; be clear about the important details. Take

responsibility, run the show and control the outcome.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) -- Emotional matters will fluctuate, leaving you vulnerable. Refrain from limiting what you can achieve by wasting time on something unimportant. Stick to what you know, and be precise with details. A change or move is in your best interest.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) -- Try something new. You will meet people who will offer valuable suggestions. A lifestyle change will prove eye-opening and help you gain financial insight.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) -- Get out of the house and do something that can brighten your day. Spending time with someone special or getting back to nature or a hobby you enjoy will give you the boost you need.

PISCES (Feb. 20-March 20) -- Shake things up and see what's left. Question anything and anyone who doesn't appear to be on the same page as you. Seek out individuals who can offer you support and guidelines.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) -- Don't limit what you can do. Work around obstacles, and you'll prove you can handle whatever responsibility you face. Actions speak louder than words and will win you a seat at the table.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) -- You need time to ponder your options. Change will arrive unexpectedly, and being ready mentally, physically and financially will help you make better decisions and get stellar results.

ACROSS

1 "— Pinafore"

4 Insert mark

9 Raven's cry

12 "You are what you —"

13 Last letter

14 Santa —

15 Always

16 Bravery

17 Offer a price

18 Theft

20 Pester in fun

22 Put down

23 Visitor

24 Turn pages

26 Armor's flaw

28 Writer — Fleming

29 Pole

30 Fly unaccompanied

34 Nervous

36 Simian creature

37 By way of

38 Ray flower

40 Bashful

41 Good opportunity

44 Ventilate

45 Rocky ridge

46 Spotted animal

50 Finale

51 Artless

53 Once around a track

54 High card

55 Key

56 Mine's yield

57 Wine choice

58 Go after

59 Tiny

DOWN

1 Get better

2 Poet — Angelou

3 U.K. money

4 Flock

Answer to this puzzle

E	E	M		E	S	V	H	C		D	E	R	
E	R	O		T	E	T	S	I		E	C	V	
P	V	T		E	V	I	A	N		D	N	E	
E	F	E		R	I	G		E	D	E	T		
		R	I	V	A			E	C	N	V	H	C
K	E	E	M		R	E	T	S	V				
V	I	V			E	P	V		A	G	D	E	
O	T	O	S		D	O	R		N	V	I		
			K	N	I	H	C		P	I	T		
R	E	T	T	V	C			V	I				
E	S	V	E	T		A	N	E	C	R	V	T	
D	I	B		R	O	T	V	A		E	A	V	
M	V	C		V	G	E	M	O		T	V	E	
			A	V	C	T	E	V	O		S	M	H

5 "— for All Seasons"

6 Depend

7 Swellhead's problem

8 Cloth pattern

9 Plot

10 Cordial flavoring

11 Water bird

19 Ceiling

21 Club members

23 Fruity drink

24 Old cry of disgust

25 Youth

26 Wooden box

27 Aspiration

31 Spillage

32 Tell a fib

33 Wood for floors

35 Yin and —

39 Picturesque

40 Actress — Farrow

41 Lucid

42 Therefore

43 Said further

44 Mountain ridge

46 — monster

47 Currier's partner

48 Taxi charge

49 Foil relative

52 Fire result