DEAR ABBY | JEANNE PHILLIPS

Simple precautions prevent deadly, costly house fires

DEAR ABBY: The number of fires in the United States has declined over the years, and while that's encouraging, there is still a real cause for concern today. In 2007, eight in 10 people who died in a fire were killed in a home fire.

Practically everyone runs the risk of experiencing a home fire. Most -- if not all -- home fires can be prevented. However, while it may be overwhelming to think about the risk, especially when spending time at home doing routine things like whipping up a meal or relaxing in a warm living room on a brisk fall evening, thinking about the risk and doing something to eliminate it can prevent a home fire from happening in the first place.

This year's Fire Prevention Week public awareness campaign (Oct. 5 to Oct. 11) focuses on preventing home fires and highlights personal actions the public can take to become familiar with fire safety hazards and learn to avoid them. Since 1922, this fire safety observance has brought attention to fire safety issues.

Everyone can eliminate fires with a little extra care. When it's time to prepare a meal or snack, remember that cooking is the leading cause of home fires. Keeping fire safety in mind when cooking, and paying attention to what is on the stovetop or in the oven, can pay off when it comes to reducing the risk of cooking fires.

Most often, these fires start when cooking is left unattended. It's also a good idea to monitor the cooking area to make sure that curtains and other things that can burn are a safe distance away from the stovetop.

Cooking causes the largest number of fires, but more people die in fires involving smoking materials or heating equipment. Taking recommended precautions where they are involved will also help to reduce the risk of people dying in home fires.

Each year, home fires kill approximately 2,500 to 3,000 people, injure another 12,000 to 13,000, and cause between $6 billion and $7 billion in property loss. Don't take the chance of becoming one of these statistics. -- JAMES M. SHANNON, PRESIDENT AND CEO, NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

DEAR JAMES: Every year we hear tragic reports in the news about lives that are lost because of fires in the home, caused by carelessness or lack of preparedness. That's why it's so important to prepare for a fire even before one occurs.

Start by making sure that smoke alarms are installed in bedrooms and outside each sleeping area on every level of your dwelling. And remember, they should be maintained and tested monthly.

It is also vital to develop and practice a home fire escape plan, which includes identifying two ways to exit every room, and practicing the plan with everyone living in your home -- especially children. Being alerted to a fire and being prepared to escape from it will help residents to act more quickly in an emergency. The time saved because everyone knows exactly what to do could literally be life-saving.

Also, if you can afford it, in addition to having smoke alarms, consider installing residential sprinklers for added protection. To learn more about fire prevention and safety, visit www.fireprevention-week.org.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

YOUR HEALTH | DR. DONOHUE

Canker sores-infection or immune attack?

DEAR DR. DONOHUE: Since my 26-year-old son was a child, he has suffered with numerous canker sores. He has tried every over-the-counter product and has asked every doctor and dentist he has seen for advice. Nothing works for him. Is it possible to culture these sores and determine the cause? -- S.B.

ANSWER: Just about everyone has had at least one canker sore. Most heal on their own in a week to 10 days even without treatment, but it's a miserable time while they're present.

Many causes have been advanced. Some feel that mouth bacteria, which have been cultured, are responsible. Others propose that canker sores are the result of an immune attack on the mouth membranes. Food allergies, hormonal changes and a genetic predisposition also have been advanced as possible causes. In a few instances, canker sores are seen in conjunction with other illnesses, like celiac disease, Crohn's disease and Behcet's disease.

There are some things your son can do to lessen the frequency of outbreaks. He has to protect his mouth from any injury, which means his toothbrush should be soft, he shouldn't eat hard, crunchy foods like toast, and he should stay away from acidic foods and drinks. Readers write in to say that when they have changed toothpastes from ones containing sodium lauryl sulfate to ones without that ingredient, their canker sores left. Others proclaim the efficacy of L-lysine. Milk of magnesia, Kaopectate and liquid Benadryl can be swished around in the mouth and then spit out, and they have helped canker sore victims. A new product, Cankermelts, is an adhesive patch containing licorice extract and has been recently featured in the dental literature as being an effective treatment. The patch dissolves. The manufacturer is Orahealth.

Cortisone drugs incorporated into gels and applied to the sore have had good reviews. Some examples are Lidex, Diprolene and Temovate. Kenalog in orabase is a pastelike cortisone product that sticks to the sores. Aphthasol oral paste is another, somewhat newer treatment that often brings relief.

DEAR DR. DONOHUE: Are you ever going to get back to me about the numbing sensation around my ankles? I have had tests and have been to three different doctors. My circulation is good, and I don't have any nerve damage. What's causing this? -- K.R.

ANSWER: I'm sorry but I don't have a clue.

Dr. Donohue regrets that he is unable to answer individual letters, but he will incorporate them in his column whenever possible. Readers may write him or request an order form of available health newsletters at P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475. Readers may also order health newsletters from www.rbmamall.com.

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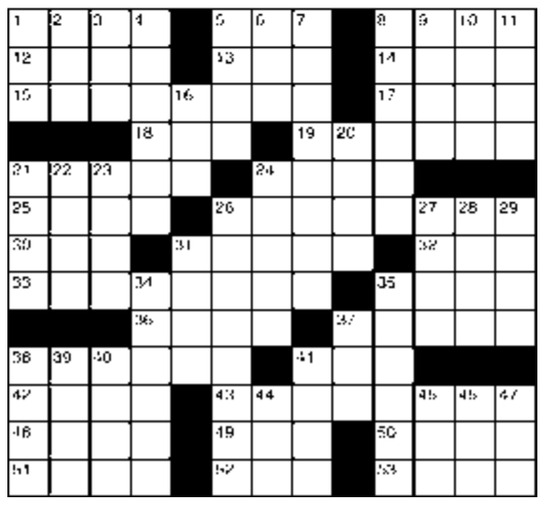
CROSSWORD | EUGENE SHEFFER

ACROSS
1 Junk in the in-box
5 Stir-fry pan
8 Greet the villain
12 Operatic show-stopper
13 Rage
14 Reverberate
15 "Yellow" band
17 Horse of a different color?
18 Scoundrel
19 Cognac, e.g.
21 Lieu
24 Brat's stocking stuffer
25 "— Fiction"
26 Make like a caught possum
30 Recede
31 10 million rupees
32 Sticky stuff
33 Jerry Garcia fan
35 Lion's pride?
36 Feeble
37 Autumnal quaff
38 Dramatist Molnar
41 Swindle
42 Satan's field
43 Winter woe
48 Snitch
49 Mess up
50 Squared away
51 War god
52 Urban scurrier
53 Information

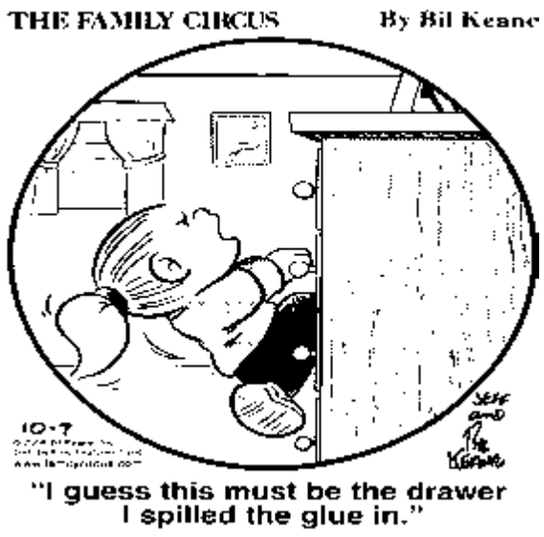
DOWN
1 Pouch
2 Expert
3 Have 43-Across, maybe
4 Capricious and reckless
5 Untamed
6 Feast-famine link
7 PC requirement
8 Boston newspaper
9 Pic to click
10 Roe provider
11 PlayStation maker
16 Cush on
20 Bygone comic Martha
21 Raced
22 Toothpaste holder
23 Exile isle
24 Mantle
26 Pulpit VIP
27 "Zounds!"
28 Top-notch
29 Active person
31 "Big Brother" host Julie
34 Resides
35 Chopped finely
37 Cape —
38 Greek cheese
39 Always
40 Anger
41 Wagon
44 Historic time
45 Eggs
46 Allow
47 "CSI" evidence

Solution time: 21 mins.

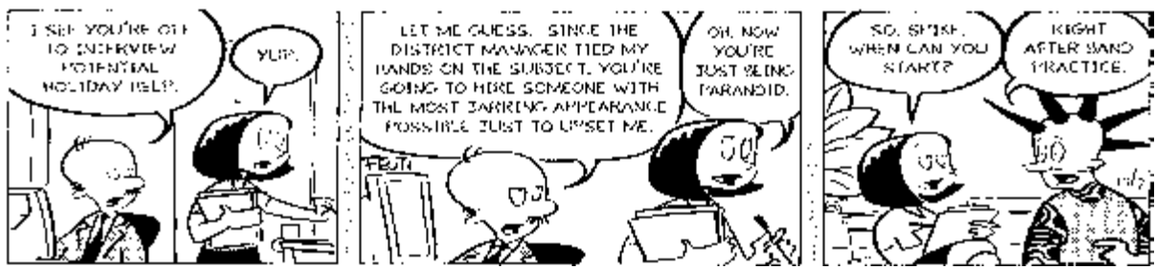
Saturday's answer 10-6



FAMILY CIRCUS | BILL KEANE



RETAIL | NORMAN FAUTI



HOROSCOPE | JACQUELINE BIGAR

FORECAST FOR WED., OCTOBER 8, 2008

ARIES (March 21-April 19) ★★★★ Curbing another's enthusiasm could be a huge mistake, as resentment could start to build. Let someone do what he or she wants. This person will anyway. You might want to try a different approach with friends and associates. Look to a different communication style. Tonight: Where your friends are.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) ★★★ You have an appearance that you cannot skip or cancel. At the same time, you might be overwhelmed by what you are hearing. Your ability to brainstorm and let ingenuity float up could be significant. The unexpected occurs with a friend. Tonight: Where the action is.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) ★★★★★ Be willing to adopt a long-term view and not let a detail stop you. You come from a basic point of view. Bosses seem to get into a bizarre or strange pattern. Follow-through counts. Tonight: Take in new vistas.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) ★★★★★ Deal with one issue at a time. Do not get scattered. Consider an option more carefully. You drive a hard bargain and come up with some interesting ideas. Work on a one-on-one level with a dear associate or friend this evening. Tonight: Let your hair down.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) ★★★★★ Investigate possibilities rather than eliminate them. Note that someone close is on the warpath. You could feel a lot of frustration or anger building within. Resist an urge to start a fight or make a major expenditure. Tonight: Easy does it.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) ★★★ Easy does it, and you come out on top of your game. Notice what is worth having behind the scenes with a partner. You might need to do more than your share at work or at home. Know when you have had enough. Tonight: Squeeze in some exercise.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) ★★★★ You could be more interested in making changes than in the past. Honor what is happening within a relationship. A risk might be worth it, if you are sure you also can handle a loss. Think carefully about financial ties. Tonight: Ever playful.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) ★★★★★ You could wonder what might be the best way to go on a key project. You are unusually energetic today, but that is no guarantee that you still will be in a few days. Be reasonable about what you accept. Tonight: Head on home.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) ★★★★ Listen well to what someone is sharing. Otherwise you could jump to an incorrect conclusion, making it difficult to work well and communicate. If you're feeling angry or hurt, detach rather than react. Tonight: Easy does it.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) ★★★★ Take your time, and do not jump to a conclusion. You might not understand what someone is saying or where you are coming from. Investigate and be in touch with your feelings. A friend, most likely male, is pushing you very hard. Tonight: Your treat.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) ★★★★★ Your high energy, though it works for you, might not be the best for someone else. Think positively about a boss or someone you look up to. He or she might be angry or touchy right now, but that will pass in a few months. Tonight: A must appearance.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) ★★★ Listen to your inner voice, and do not deal with a problem that you are very uncomfortable with. If it doesn't work for you, or if you do not want to touch it, don't. Follow your sixth sense. Find experts if need be. Tonight: Only what you want.

10-7 CRYPTOQUIP

OWBDM GFE PD SOC TDPDMOU OCEUB YDPDMOKDT FV O WUAKSB, GFE UU ZMFYOYUG YD WDDUAVK VF ZUOVD.

Saturday's Cryptoquip: MY UNIVERSITY IS OFFERING STUDENTS A CLASS IN HORSEMANSHIP THAT'S CALLED "CREATIVE RIDING."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals V

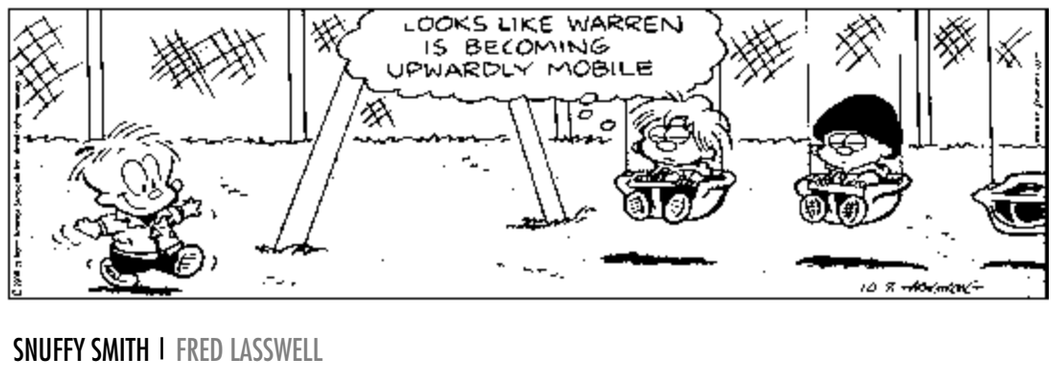
BEETLE BAILEY | MORT WALKER

BLONDIE | YOUNG & DRAKE

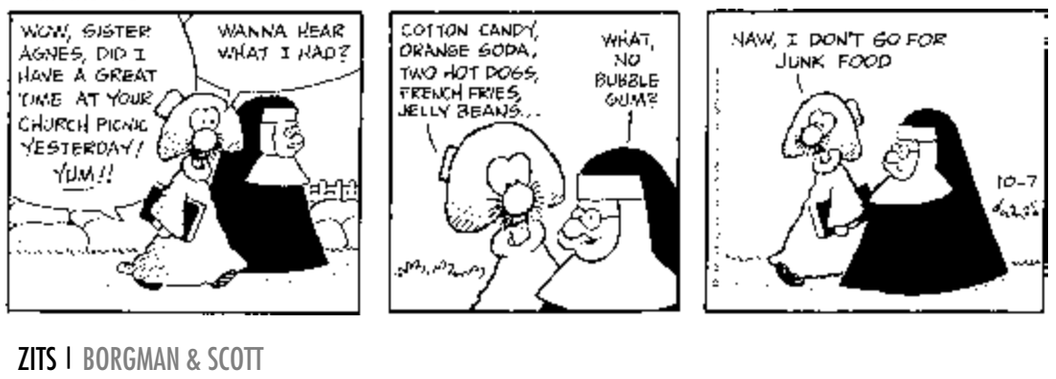
GARFIELD | JIM DAVIS

DOONESBURY | GARRY TRUDEAU

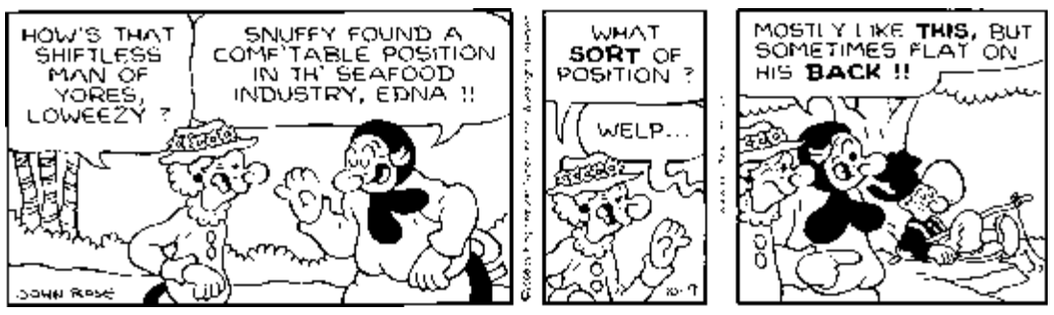
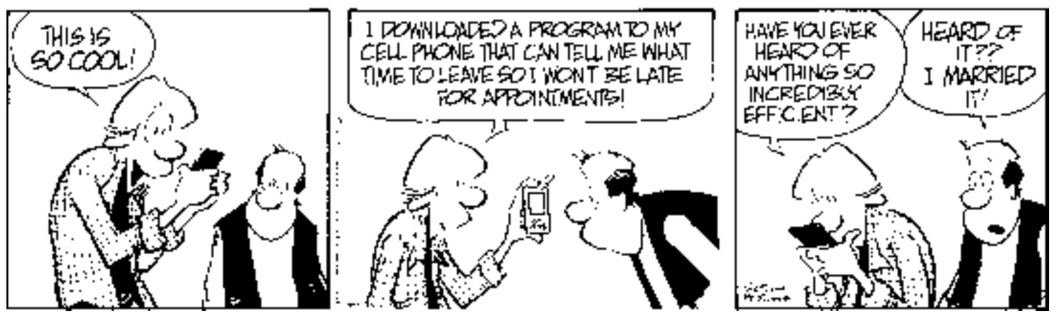
MARVIN | TOM ARMSTRONG



SAM AND SILO | DUMAS



SNUFFY SMITH | FRED LASSWELL



ZITS | BORGMAN & SCOTT