

Lynn Johnston Says 'For Better' Comic Will Still Have New Content

By Dave Astor

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NEW YORK During the past couple of weeks, there have been newspaper and blog reports implying that the old/new "For Better or For Worse" hybrid may go completely into reruns later this year. That isn't true, said "FBorFW" creator Lynn Johnston. "I'm not quitting," she declared, when reached today by E&P. "I don't want to quit. I plan to keep working on the strip. I love what I do." But Johnston *has* been making adjustments since starting the hybrid version of her comic last year. For instance, the original plan was to frame earlier "FBorFW" content by having the Michael Patterson character look back from the present day. But Johnston said some readers found that confusing, so she's dropping it. The current plan: Continue tying up loose ends with various "FBorFW" characters (a process that's taking longer than Johnston expected). Then, no later than this September, freeze all these cast members in time. After that, the 1979-launched comic will focus on the younger versions of the characters. But that doesn't mean the post-September strips will consist entirely of rerun material. Johnston plans to change various elements of the comics, create new story lines, etc. -- but do all that in the drawing style she used to have. "I've become more of an illustrator," said the Canadian cartoonist. "My old drawing style is a lot less complicated, but it's more lively and free and joyful." Johnston might even make the younger Elly Patterson's nose bigger. "Large 'honkers' are funny," she laughed. Discussing her desire to tweak some content, Johnston recalled Charles M. Schulz remarking that he would have "liked to get a chance to fix things" in some of his past "Peanuts" comics. "This gives me that opportunity in 'For Better or For Worse,'" she said. Johnston intends to do the part-old/part-new "FBorFW" strips chronologically, and also create some completely new Sunday strips in the old drawing style. Reconfigured past story lines may even delve more into things like divorce, which Johnston is now experiencing in real life. But, if that happens, it will not be a divorce between the characters of Elly (partly based on Lynn) and John Patterson. How will readers know that the strips drawn in the older style include new material? When "FBorFW" transitions no later than this September, Johnston plans to explain that transition in the comic itself. Not all the post-September strips will have new content. "I don't want to quit entirely, but I do want to take some time off," said Johnston. She has already stopped working on her comic most holidays and weekends, and stopped putting in extra "FBorFW" hours before and after taking vacations. "It's been a blessing," she said. Her new schedule is not only allowing Johnston more time to travel, but to do other projects. For instance, a children's book is in the works starring the late and beloved "FBorFW" character of Farley the dog. And Johnston said there might be a book showing what various "FBorFW" cast members are doing in their future lives. In the present,

the "FBorFW" client list has remained fairly steady since the hybrid began. Johnston said some newspapers have dropped the strip, but others have picked it up. It still runs in more than 2,000 papers via Universal Press Syndicate. Johnston concluded that she'd like to continue doing "FBorFW" as long as her health allows.

Dave Astor (dastor@editorandpublisher.com) is a senior editor at E&P.

www.fborfw.com is the official website for the comic strip For Better or For Worse.