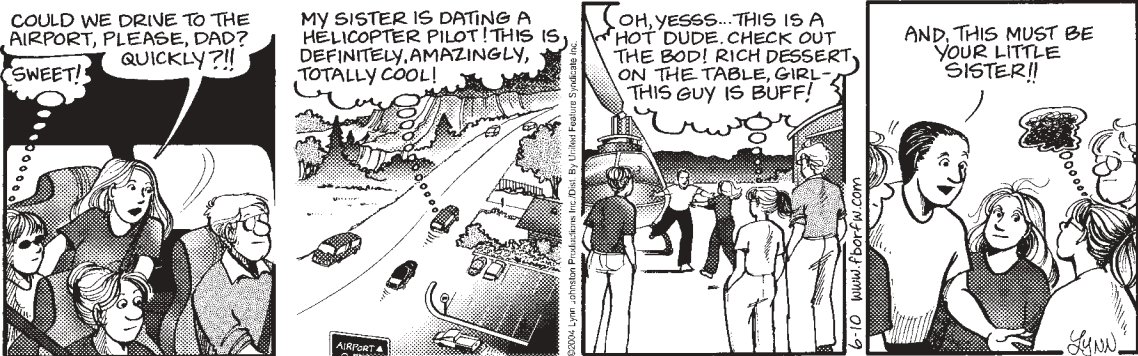
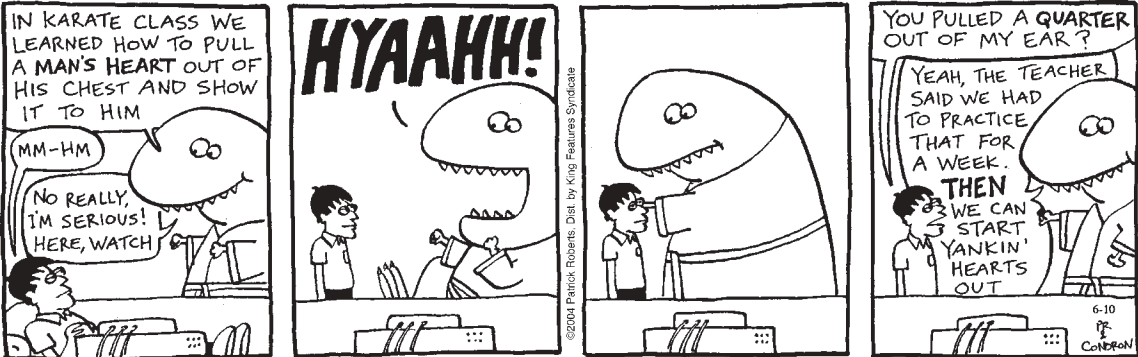


For Better or Worse • Lynn Johnston



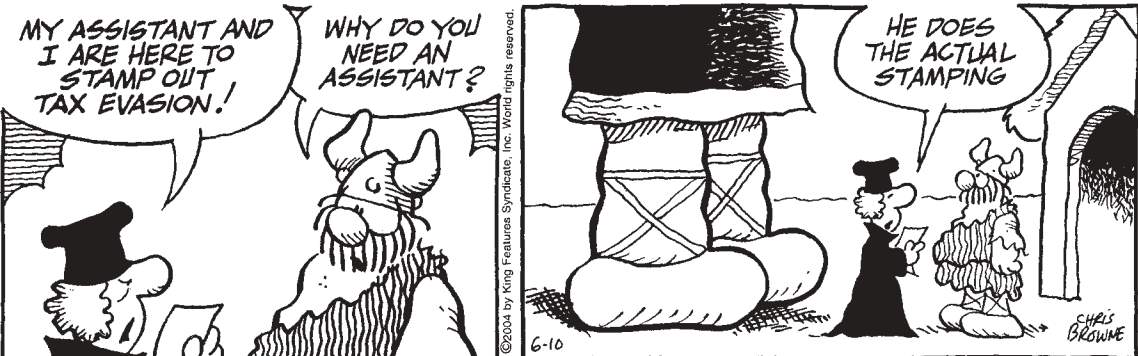
Tod The Dinosaur • PR Condron



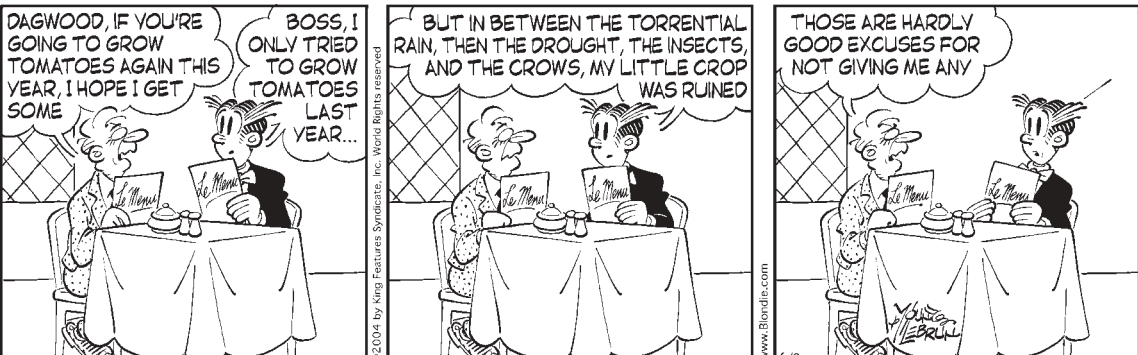
Garfield • Jim Davis



Hagar the Horrible • Chris Browne



Blondie • Chic Young



Beetle Bailey • Mort Walker



Zits • Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



Sally Forth • Greg Howard



Children are innocent victims of abuse

DEAR ABBY: After reading the letter from the 23-year-old mother of three whose husband is verbally abusive to her and the children, I had to write. She said she's ambivalent about divorcing him; she "just wants him to change." She signed her letter "Crazy in Tennessee."

You urged her to leave. I absolutely agree. That letter could have been written about my own family. I have been married 14 years. My husband was verbally abusive for many of those years. He said horrible things to me (including wishing I was dead, etc.) in front of our three children. He also instigated arguments with the children — ages 6, 9 and 11 — seemingly just to make them cry. I finally filed for divorce, which will be final in a few months.

Our 9-year-old has become nervous and sick to her stomach recently. She gets particularly upset when her father and I are in the same room. I asked what the problem is. She said: "It scares me when you and Daddy are together. He has been mad at you for so long, and yelled so much. I'm afraid that now that you're getting the divorce, when you start fighting he might have a gun or something." Imagine how heartbreaking it was to hear that!

Please tell "Crazy in Tennessee" her best bet is to get out while the children are still too young to have sustained much damage from the verbal abuse they've been exposed to. I only wish I had done it sooner.

—ALMOST TOO LATE
DEARALMOST TOO LATE: I'm pleased you had the courage to take that important step. Now, I hope you will waste no time in taking another one.

Your children will stand a better chance of healing if you'll get them into therapy right away, although I am sad to say there are no guarantees. Read on:

Bridge

East dealer.

East-West vulnerable.

| NORTH | | | |
|-------|-------------|------|---------|
| ♠ | 9 5 3 | ♠ | J 7 4 2 |
| ♥ | A | ♥ | K 7 4 3 |
| ♦ | K 6 4 | ♦ | 10 8 5 |
| ♣ | 9 7 6 4 3 2 | ♣ | J 5 |
| WEST | | EAST | |
| ♠ | 10 8 6 | ♠ | J 7 4 2 |
| ♥ | Q 9 8 6 2 | ♥ | K 7 4 3 |
| ♦ | J 9 3 | ♦ | 10 8 5 |
| ♣ | K 10 | ♣ | J 5 |
| SOUTH | | | |
| ♠ | A K Q | ♠ | A K Q |
| ♥ | J 10 5 | ♥ | J 10 5 |
| ♦ | A Q 7 2 | ♦ | A Q 7 2 |
| ♣ | A Q 8 | ♣ | A Q 8 |

The bidding:

| East | South | West | North |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|-------|
| Pass | 2 NT | Pass | 3 NT |
| Opening lead — six of hearts. | | | |

Choosing the Line of Play

When declarer has a choice of several ways to play a hand, his best bet is to rely on mathematical probabilities.

Sometimes, making this determination is difficult, but in the great majority of cases — even if you're not a whiz at math — finding the correct percentage play can be resolved on a common-sense basis.

Consider this deal where South was in three notrump.

He won the heart lead in dummy, counted eight sure tricks and saw that a ninth might come from either a successful club finesse or a 3-3 diamond break.

Declarer knew he had a 50 percent chance of winning the club finesse but only a 36 percent chance of finding a 3-3 diamond division. Accordingly, at trick two he led a club to the queen. West took the king and returned a heart, and three notrump went down one.

South's failure to make the contract was a case of misapplied knowledge. Mathematically, his thinking was correct, but it didn't go far enough.

After winning the heart lead, declarer should have played the A-K-Q of diamonds, in that order.

As it happens, the suit would have divided 3-3, and he would have had nine tricks without risking the club finesse.

If the diamonds failed to break, he would still have had the club finesse to fall back on.

By tackling diamonds first, South could have given himself two chances for the contract instead of just one, and would have elevated his chances from 50 percent to 68 percent.

Tomorrow: Test your play.

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Abigail Van Buren

• Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: My dad was just like her husband. For more than 20 years, literally hours on end, day in and day out, I'd hear, "You're ugly! No girl in her right mind would ever want you!" As a result, I am painfully shy around females. Counseling has helped some, but there's always that little voice in the back of your mind that you hear over and over for as long as you live.

When I looked for work, Dad told me I was stupid and would never be hired or amount to anything. Because of it, I gave up looking for a job. I'm working now, but only because my mother encouraged me.

I hope for her children's sake that "Crazy in Tennessee" will find someone who will treat them all better. If she doesn't, I know that her children will wind up like me.

—BEEN THERE
DEAR BEEN THERE: Thank you for writing. Don't sell yourself short. That you are functioning at all is a tribute to your inner strength. I'll repeat part of what I said in my original answer: Cruel words erode self-esteem like the ocean eats away the shore. I hope "Crazy in Tennessee" takes to heart your hard-earned wisdom, because even children who aren't picked on by the abuser can emerge from that lifestyle with "survivor guilt" for not being able to intervene.

I'll quote from a letter that arrived from another survivor, a woman in Wisconsin: "Abby, the one who will receive the most damage from that relationship is the daughter. She will grow up

craving the one and only thing her father will never give her — his approval. And she'll continue to try to get it from other men who are as cruel and withholding as he is, because she thinks their behavior is normal."

DEAR ABBY: I can identify with that 23-year-old girl because I had a similar experience. My pride and self-confidence were also crushed. I felt worthless. After five years, I took matters into my own hands.

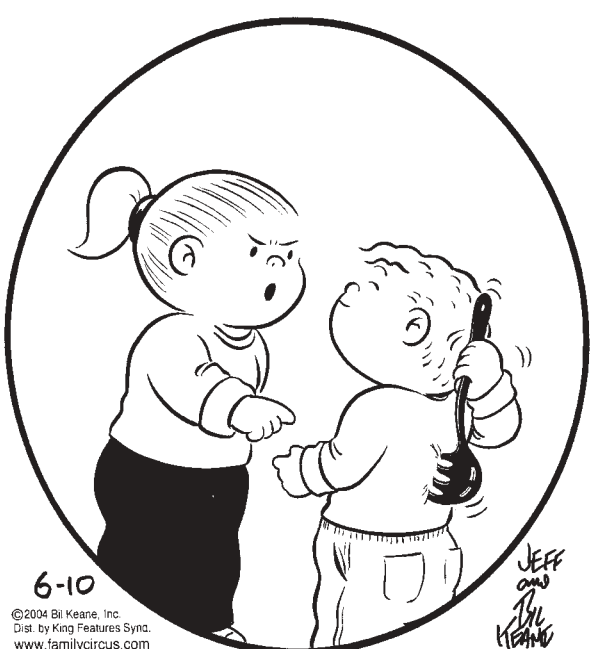
On my 30th birthday, I got the best gift God could have given me. A friend and I began dating. I asked HIM out for our first date (something I'd sworn I'd never do). I haven't looked back since. We were married last June.

You were right, Abby, when you told "Burned" that her bad relationship was a learning experience. I hope she takes your advice to heart and doesn't let it keep her down. She needs to take that first step forward. You never know what you can accomplish until you try.

—VERY HAPPY
DEAR VERY HAPPY: Well said. I would like to extend that message: No one ever accomplished anything by sitting passively and waiting for success to come to them. The greatest rewards come to those who have the courage to stand up, step forward and take their swings at bat.

Editor's note: Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, Calif. 90069.

Family Circus • Bil Keane



"That's a spaghetti picker-upper, not a back-scratcher."

Crossword

| ACROSS | | | | DOWN | | | |
|--------|--------------------------------|----|--|------|-------------------------|----|--------------------|
| 1 | Elite alternative | 37 | Home of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy | 1 | Vatican VIP | 19 | Director's call |
| 5 | Fond du —, WI | 40 | Plumbing problem | 2 | Unyielding | 21 | Work with |
| 8 | Make a statement | 41 | Magnate | 3 | "It Must Be Him" singer | 23 | 52- |
| 12 | Algerian city | 45 | Wind instrument | 4 | It's nothing new | 24 | Across' Muse |
| 13 | Hole-making tool | 47 | Timetable abbr. | 5 | Woodshop machine | 25 | Micro-wave |
| 14 | Streamlet | 49 | Miss Daisy's driver | 6 | Shock partner | 26 | Turned red? |
| 15 | 12- | 50 | Jog | 7 | Make a killing | 27 | Criticism |
| 16 | Ball-bearing item | 51 | Cath. or Prot. | 8 | The little mermaid | 28 | Sites |
| 17 | Sorts | 52 | Pound of poetry | 9 | Townsperson | 29 | Freedom of access |
| 18 | Improve | 53 | The O'Hara estate | 10 | Wapiti | 32 | policy |
| 20 | "Clan of the Cave Bear" author | 54 | Opine | 11 | Literary monogram | 33 | They're on track |
| 22 | Australian state | 55 | Letter opener | | | 35 | Omega |
| 26 | Treat with | | | | | 36 | preceder |
| | | | | | | 38 | Unspecified amount |
| | | | | | | 39 | Ms. |
| | | | | | | | Garbo |
| | | | | | | | Cartographer's |

Solution time: 25 mins.



Yesterday's answer 6-10

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 12 | | | | 13 | | | 14 | | | |
| 15 | | | | 16 | | | 17 | | | |
| 18 | | | | 19 | | 20 | 21 | | | |
| | | 22 | | 23 | | | | | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | | 29 | | | | 30 | | |
| 31 | | | | 32 | | | 33 | | | |
| 34 | | | 35 | | | | 36 | | | |
| 37 | | | 38 | | | 39 | | | | |
| | 40 | | | | 41 | | | 42 | 43 | 44 |
| 45 | 46 | | | 47 | 48 | | | 49 | | |
| 50 | | | | 51 | | | | 52 | | |
| 53 | | | | 54 | | | | 55 | | |

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Cryptoquip

J T B L O Y U S Z A L R O B
L Z U B X S U T S P S R R J A ,
B L O ' U U T L P Q I A X I R O A Q X I P
A L D Y U J A X S P I D .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: THE JET'S PILOT IS MUCH TOO PESSIMISTIC. HE COULD USE AN ALTITUDE ADJUSTMENT.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: R equals B