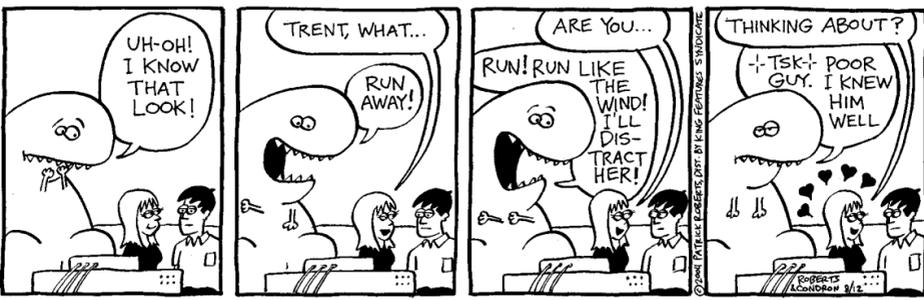


For Better or Worse • Lynn Johnston



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



Cryptoquip

GS LZQN LSGSUWDGD

UHGUVWXCGWSQ LZN

UWYBGICPPN XH GBSCYBC

SI ZD Z GSSG ISU Z GSSG

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN A MARRIAGE CEREMONY BECOMES REALLY DULL, I GUESS THAT'S A WEDDING BLAND.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals O

'Apron strings' may still be tied



Abigail Van Buren

• Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: I'm writing in response to "The Girlfriend," who is having problems because of nasty comments from her boyfriend's mother.

I know all too well the damage that can result from such a situation. For 15 years, I endured potshots from the mother-in-law from hell. She ended up talking to my now 16-year-old daughter (her granddaughter) the same way she had talked to me. After 13 years of staying on the sidelines, my husband finally told her to lay off. Of course, by then our marriage was almost over. Ironically, our divorce was finalized on my former mother-in-law's birthday — a fact from which I'm sure she got great pleasure. My advice to "Girlfriend" is to check her boyfriend carefully for apron strings before tying the knot with him. If he's afraid to speak in her defense, perhaps he is no more ready for marriage than his mother wishes him to be.

— WISER NOW IN WICHITA
DEAR WISER NOW: Thank you for sharing your own experience, and for pointing out that if verbal abuse is tolerated, the acid can spill over and damage innocent bystanders. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: My advice to "The Girlfriend" is to deal with those cutting remarks from her boyfriend's mother by herself.

When the mother criticizes her manner of dress, she should say something like, "Oh! You've hurt my feelings. I would never think of criticizing how YOU dress," and then change the subject. Under no circumstances should she allow herself to be drawn into an argument. If the mother criticizes her cooking, she should say, "I tried so hard to please you. I'm sorry you don't like it. The next time we have dinner with you, we'll come to your house and you can cook or take us out." Do not cry, become hysterical or critical of

her. You'll be surprised what you can accomplish if you refuse to be baited or put on the defensive.

One last thing: Explain to your future husband how you will handle his mother after you are married. You will not give her a house key, you'll expect her to call before she comes over, you will control how often you see her and when she will see the grandchildren, and you will not tolerate any marital interference.

— QUEEN OF MY OWN HOUSEHOLD
DEAR QUEEN: Something tells me your mother-in-law had a rude awakening when she found out who rules your roost.

DEAR ABBY: Your response to "The Girlfriend" was right on the money. If her boyfriend won't stand up for her now, believe me, he never will. She can save herself years of grief if she wakes up to the fact that there are real men out there who are willing to love and respect a woman and treat her as an equal partner. I found one, and so will she.

— STANDING TALL
DEAR STANDING TALL: What you said is true. A healthy marriage is a partnership, in every sense of the word.

DEAR ABBY: I am a woman in my mid-20s with a B.A. degree and a full-time job. My parents refuse to accept that a self-supporting woman my age can be happy. They keep pestering me to find a boyfriend, get married and have children. I have calmly explained to my mother that I'm in no rush to settle down — but she says if I "really loved her," I'd

find a man to take care of me so she wouldn't have to worry.

My older brother followed my parents' wishes when he was my age. Now I am the "bad child" for refusing to conform. Ever since I was a child, I have put money into a savings account and — little by little — it has become a large sum. I would like to use that money to further my education, but my parents have denied me access to it. They claim that when I marry, the funds will be my "dowry" to buy a house. Abby, I don't want to cut off my family, but they aren't willing to accept me without a man to make me "complete."

— SINGLE AND HAPPY
DEAR SANDH: Your parents' thinking appears to be stuck in a time warp. A life partner can be wonderful, but it's no guarantee of happiness or security. Witness the number of marriages that fail and the number of households headed by single mothers who struggle to make ends meet.

You should contact the bank manager and find out how your account was set up and how you can access it now. Your parents should not hold your money hostage. If you wish to use it to further your education, you should be free to do so. You weren't put on the Earth to make your parents' dreams come true. As parents, it's their job to help you be the best that you can be. They should thank their lucky stars that you are self-supporting and motivated to do even better. Many parents would be proud to have a daughter like you.

Bridge

South dealer.

North-South vulnerable.

NORTH

♠ 9 7 6
♥ A 4 2
♦ Q 10 4
♣ J 9 7 5

WEST

♠ J
♥ K Q J 9 7
♦ 9 8 6 2
♣ K Q 3

EAST

♠ Q 10 3 2
♥ 10 6 5
♦ 7 3
♣ 10 6 4 2

SOUTH

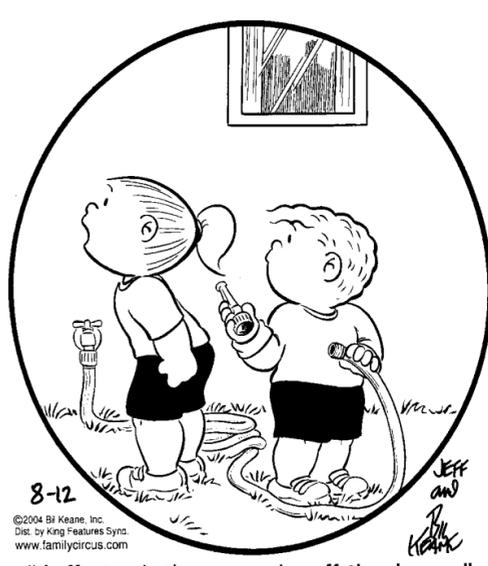
♠ A K 8 5 4
♥ 8 3
♦ A K J 5
♣ A 8

The bidding:

South 1 ♠
West 2 ♥
North 2 ♠
East Pass

Opening lead — king of hearts.

Family Circus • Bil Keane



The Better Way

Safety plays come in all shapes and sizes, and are necessary for successful play. Sometimes, though, declarer must not get so carried away with guarding against an unfavorable division that he winds up more sorry than safe.

Take this case where South was in four spades and West led the king of hearts. Declarer won with dummy's ace and, intent on guarding against a 4-1 trump division — the only real threat to his contract — led the nine of spades and let it ride after East followed low.

West won with the jack, cashed the heart queen and continued with the jack. Declarer ruffed and mulled over how to handle the remaining trumps.

One possibility was to cross to dummy with a diamond, lead a trump and repeat the finesse. This would succeed if East had all the remaining spades, but would lose if West had started with two or three spades including a second honor card. In that case, South would lose two spades, a heart and a club for down one.

South decided that the remaining spades were much more likely to be divided 2-1 than 3-0, so he cashed the ace. When West showed out, declarer had to lose another trump trick, and he finished down one.

South had the right idea about protecting against a 4-1 trump break, but he went about it the wrong way. A superior approach is to cash the spade ace first and then lead a low spade to dummy's nine.

In the actual deal, East wins with the ten, but declarer later picks up East's queen via a finesse and winds up with 10 tricks.

The suggested play has more to recommend it than the obvious advantage of averting a guess on the second round of trumps. It is also the correct play mathematically. Cashing the ace first guards against West's having started with the singleton ten, jack or queen, while the first-round finesse wins only when West started with the singleton two or three. The odds are therefore 3-to-2 in favor of playing the ace first. Tomorrow: Test your play.

Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Apiece
- 4 Domes-ticate
- 8 Prejudice
- 12 "The Greatest"
- 13 Paradise
- 14 Tend texts
- 15 CSA capital
- 17 Say it isn't so
- 18 Ball in a gym
- 19 Toothed
- 21 Nicholson wears them
- 24 Pair
- 25 Noted space station
- 26 Pirates' potable
- 28 He hit his 3,000th in 1999
- 32 Probability
- 34 Treasure seeker's aid
- 36 Marathon fraction
- 37 "Beau —"
- 39 AAA request
- 41 Born
- 42 West st.

DOWN

- 2 Yale student
- 3 "Seinfeld" cast member
- 4 Mood
- 5 Big surface
- 6 — rea (criminal intent)
- 7 Over and done with
- 8 Word with eyes or community
- 9 Conception
- 10 "— We Got Fun?"
- 11 Eyelid woe
- 16 Scuttle
- 1 Standard 20 Message
- 1 Solution time: 25 mins.
- 21 Urban blight
- 22 Conceal
- 23 Bottom line
- 27 WWE
- 29 Former House Speaker
- 30 Merriment
- 31 Crystal gazer
- 33 Surprise suddenly
- 35 School of dolphins
- 38 Enos' granny
- 40 Walk like a duck
- 43 Two under 1-Down
- 45 Postal Creed word
- 46 Roller-coaster outcry
- 47 Get wind of
- 48 Make
- 49 Liquid entree
- 53 Flamenco call
- 54 Bill's partner
- 55 Chop

Yesterday's answer 8-12

THANK YOU FOR READING THE

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