

The boyfriend could ruin the family photo

DEAR ABBY: My husband, "Keith," and I are eagerly awaiting the birth of our first child. Sadly, Keith's mother is in very poor health. She's not expected to live more than a few months after the birth of her newest grandchild.

For this reason, all of Keith's siblings are planning to visit after the baby arrives so that everyone can pose for one last family photo, complete with our new baby. My problem is with Keith's niece, "Bridget." I know when the time comes to snap the picture, Bridget will insist on including her latest loser boyfriend. I wouldn't care if it weren't for the fact that Bridget has a history of demanding that her current boyfriends be put in family photos and then insisting that the pictures never see the light of day again after the relationship has ended.

She threw a fit at my in-laws' anniversary party when she saw that their picture board contained family pictures with past boyfriends. She was even so bold as to tell everyone in Keith's family to get rid of any family pictures from our wedding because seeing images of her boyfriend at the time "dredged up too many painful memories." (That boyfriend would eventually become her ex-husband, to whom she was married for only one month.)

How do I inform Bridget that her newest boyfriend is not wanted in what will most likely be



Abigail Van Buren

• Dear Abby

the only family portrait to include my baby?

— MOTHER-TO-BE IN MICHIGAN

DEAR MOTHER-TO-BE: I see no reason to "inform" Bridget that the family regards her current boyfriend-to-be as yet another loser. It will only cause her to become hurt and defensive, and create resentment that could last for years. Instead, when everyone is lined up for the family picture, make sure that Bridget's boyfriend is posed on the end of the grouping. That way, if the romance tanks he can easily be photo-edited out.

DEAR ABBY: I often order a cup of herbal tea with dinner at restaurants. I use quite a bit of sugar, and end up with four to five empty packets after I've sweetened my tea. What should I do with them? I've tried hiding them under the saucer, but they never seem to fit.

— TEA LOVER IN NEW YORK

DEAR TEA LOVER: Be-

cause the "evidence" is making you self-conscious, you could sneak the packets into your purse (or even your brassiere). However, speaking as a fellow sugar addict, my advice is to start cutting back on the sugar, because not only is it addictive, it also makes you crave more and more. And an hour after you've consumed it, you'll feel as fatigued as you felt "energized" immediately afterward.

DEAR ABBY: I was adopted by a stepfather when I was 9. My real father died when I was 5. I am now 25 and want to change my last name back to that of my biological father. My mother divorced my stepfather seven years ago.

Abby, my stepfather abused me badly, so I have had a hard time dealing with this. I have since had counseling, which helped a great deal. I just need to know — is it worth it to go through the trouble of legally changing my name back, especially if I were to get married in the next five years or so? I just hate that I'm still associated with the man who hurt me

years ago.

— CONFUSED IN SOUTH CAROLINA

DEAR CONFUSED: Because the name has painful associations for you, it would not only be "worth it," it would also be cathartic. I say, go for it! Bury the name with all the unhappiness that was associated with it.

DEAR ABBY: Would it be OK to offer an interest-free loan to a prospective son-in-law to buy my daughter an engagement ring? They have been dating — indeed, living together — for more than two years. They talk about wedding plans all the time. He's already like part of the family.

We conjecture that he has not popped the question because he can't afford to purchase an engagement ring. He's currently working part-time, low-income jobs while he waits for our daughter to get her college degree before he/they go to graduate school.

— CARING DAD

DEAR CARING DAD: When in doubt — don't. Although your idea is generous, I think you should refrain from making the offer. Your daughter's boyfriend may have other reasons for not popping the question, including not feeling ready to make a lifetime commitment to your daughter.

DEAR ABBY: I recently went to a salon to have my hair dyed back to my natural color. The styl-

ist did a wonderful job and I'm happy with the results, as it's hard to match the color of someone's roots with hair dye.

However, later I went out to dinner with a friend, and she pointed out a large stain of hair dye on the back of my shirt. I'm not sure what to do. I'm fairly certain the stylist must have seen it as she walked me to the counter. It was a brand-new shirt and cost me \$40 the day before I went to the salon, and it was the first time I had ever worn it.

I'd like to ask the salon to pay for the cost of the shirt, but would this be proper?

— SCARLET WOMAN IN LEXINGTON, KY.

DEAR SCARLET: You are certainly within your rights to ask if you feel that the stylist saw the problem and kept it from you. When you went in for the procedure, you should have been offered the opportunity to change into a smock so there would be no chance that your clothing would be ruined. And in the future, when going to a beauty salon for color, you should ask for one.

Editor's note: 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, Calif. 90069.

Rocker to help premies

UNIONDALE, N.Y. (AP) — Twisted Sister singer Dee Snider and some of his biker buddies are planning a ride to raise money for premature babies.

Two of the Long Island native's four children were born 7 1/2 weeks premature, prompting his involvement in the March of Dimes' "Bikers for Babies" event May 21.

"When you're in there in that preemie ward, you see a lot of seriously ill babies," the 51-year-old singer says. "Your baby is in there at 4 pounds and you're so worried, and they're bringing in 1-pounders, 1 1/2-pounders. You look at these kids with respiratory problems and circulatory system issues and all kinds of problems, and the medical expenses are astronomical."

He's asking fans to sponsor him by pledging any amount through a link on his Web site.

"Bikers are real softies when it comes to babies," Snider says. "You see some of them with stuffed animals on their bikes."

On the Net:
<http://www.deesnider.com>

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