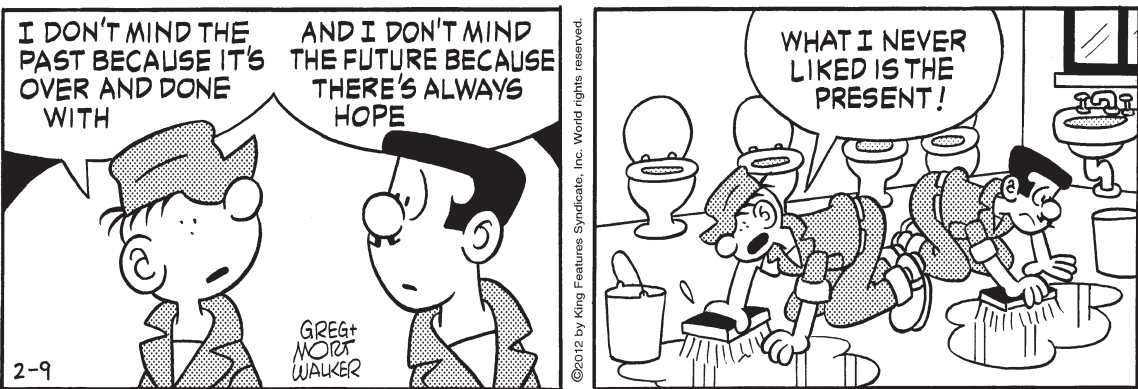


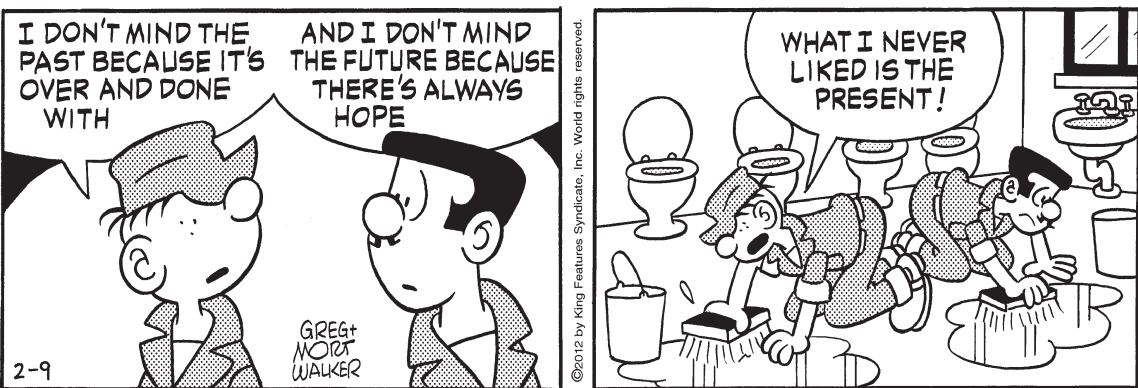
**Baby Blues** • Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



**Beetle Bailey** • Mort Walker



**Blondie** • Chic Young



**Hagar the Horrible** • Chris Browne



**Mother Goose and Grimm** • Mike Peters



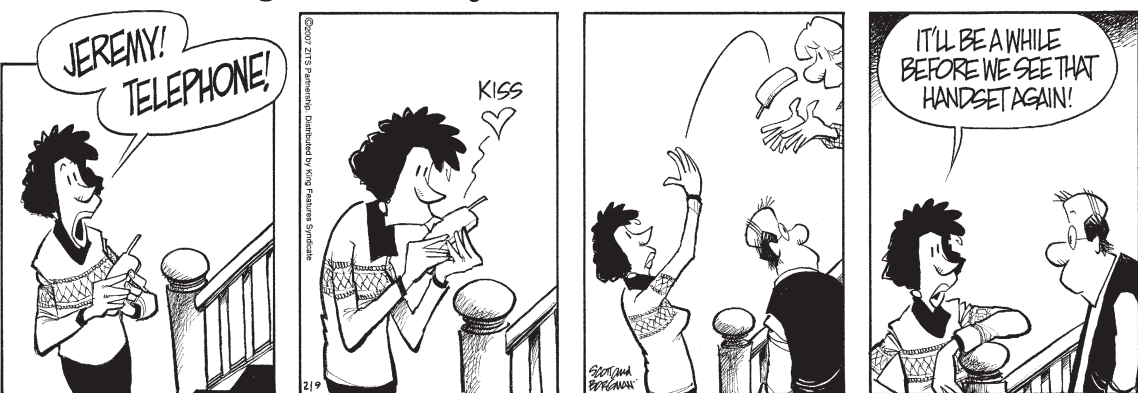
**Sally Forth** • Greg Howard



**Todd the Dinosaur** • Patrick Roberts



**Zits** • Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



**Dr. Joyce Brothers**

• Ask Dr. Brothers

**Mom worries about daughter**

**Dear Dr. Brothers:** I'm a single mom with a 5-year-old daughter. Her father has never been in the picture; he lives nearby and is married now. I have a good job, so I have never asked him for support. I know there is a need for a dad, especially for boys, but will my daughter do OK without one? I don't have any relatives nearby, and it's pretty much just the two of us. After she starts school, will that be enough? — L.Y.

**Dear L.Y.:** I know you have your child's best interests at heart and will do everything you can to provide a good home. You sound independent, and that's great, because you can have every hope your daughter will turn out to be strong and capable like you. But you might want to make a few adjustments that will help her as the years go by. Even though you don't need child support, it doesn't mean your daughter doesn't need a father or father figure. It won't be long before she will be investigating why she is alone with you and pressuring you about her father. So if you can, investigate whether he can be a part of her life — if he passes your inspection — beginning now.

If you don't plan to ask for child support, and his new wife is aware — or has to be made aware — that he has a daughter, it may not be hard to incorporate him into her world just to be a father figure, even if only part-time. If this sounds impossible, then perhaps find a nice male relative who will talk to her, call her, etc. Every study points to a father figure being beneficial to children, and it's common sense as well. As she grows, she may have teachers or coaches to act as mentors. But you can start now, with her biological father.

**Dear Dr. Brothers:** I am concerned about my niece, who has a weight problem. She's 16 and has started dieting. I see her about once a week, and each time I visit, she is thinner. My sister, who has always been overweight, is proud of her. But I looked in the bathroom cabinet and saw diet pills and laxatives, and I don't think she is going about this the right way. My niece loves to cook, but when it comes to her plate, she just pushes the food around. Should I be worried? — T.H.

**Dear T.H.:** If your niece is serious about losing weight, she may go to drastic lengths to do so, and you have reason to be concerned. Regardless of the diet, the guidelines for safe and lasting weight loss emphasize losing no more than a couple of pounds a week, and that's usually too slow for impatient teenagers hell-bent on changing their lives. The fact that she seems to be using methods beyond reducing calories and exercising also is troubling. Rapid weight loss can be achieved with the aids you mentioned, but they are not recommended for the average young person.

Perhaps the most alarming part of the story is the fact that the mother, who never has mastered the weight issues that have plagued her, may be contributing to the problem through her support. She may be getting a vicarious satisfaction as she watches the pounds melt away from her child's body. And of course she wants her daughter to be happy, not guaranteed no matter what a person weighs. You should talk with your sister and ask her to monitor your niece's weight-management strategies before a serious problem arises.

(c) 2012 by King Features Syndicate

**Bridge** • Steve Becker

North dealer.  
Neither side vulnerable.  
**NORTH**  
♠ Q 9 8 5  
♥ Q 2  
♦ K 9  
♣ K 10 8 7 3  
**WEST**  
♠ 7 4  
♥ K 10 9 6 3  
♦ Q J 10 6 4  
♣ 2  
**EAST**  
♠ 2  
♥ 8 7 4  
♦ A 8 7 5 3 2  
♣ Q 6 5  
**SOUTH**  
♠ A K J 10 6 3  
♥ A J 5  
♦ —  
♣ A J 9 4

The bidding:  
North East South West  
Pass Pass 1♠ Pass  
3♠ Pass 6♣  
Opening lead — queen of diamonds.

**The Case of the Missing Damself**

Assume you're in six spades and West leads a diamond. Obviously there's a chance of going down if the heart finesse loses and you also misjudge how to play the clubs, so all your thoughts should be riveted on how to handle the club suit. Fortunately, there's a way to play the hand that virtually assures the slam. The correct approach is to ruff the diamond lead, draw trumps, ruff another diamond and then play a club to dummy's king.

Let's say that both opponents follow suit, and, when you continue with a low club from dummy, East plays low again. You can now guarantee the slam by finessing the jack, not concerned with whether West wins with the queen or shows out.

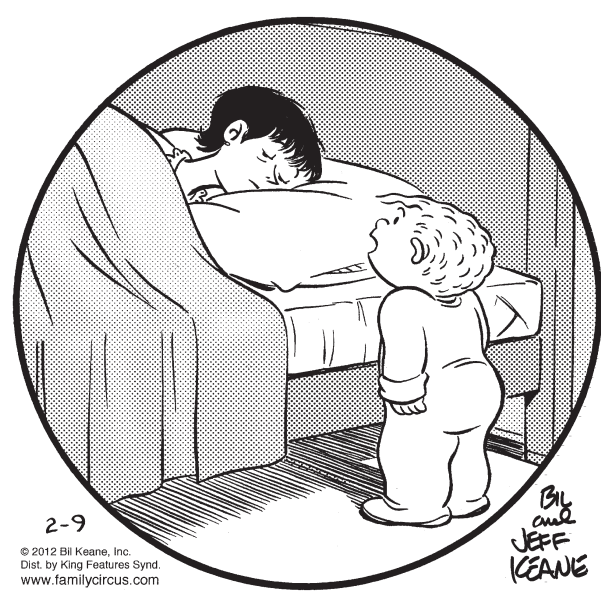
If West shows out, you have 12 sure tricks, and if he wins with the queen, you also have 12 sure tricks. In the latter case, West will have to return a heart or a diamond, and either return hands you the slam.

The outcome would be exactly the same if it turned out that West originally held three clubs to the queen. In that event, after East failed to follow to the club lead from dummy, you'd go up with the ace, throw West into the lead by conceding the jack of clubs to the queen and also make the slam.

From the start, the aim is to deal with the clubs in a manner designed not so much to guess the location of the missing damself as it is to make sure that if you misguess, you still have the slam safely in tow. It is far more important to make the contract than to concentrate solely on trying to make the maximum number of club tricks.

(c)2012 King Features Syndicate Inc.

**Family Circus** • Bil Keane



© 2012 Bil Keane, Inc. Dist. by King Features Synd. www.familycircus.com

**Conceptis Sudoku** • Dave Green

		5					9		
							9	6	
2	6					1			8
					4		5	2	
				1	3	8			
	7	9		2					
5			4				8		3
	4		6						
		1					7		

Difficulty Level ★★★ 2/09

This is a logic-based number placement puzzle. The goal is to enter a number, 1-9, in each cell in which each row, column and 3x3 region must contain only one instance of each numeral. The solution to the last Sudoku puzzle is at right.

8	1	5	7	2	9	3	4	6
2	4	7	3	6	8	1	5	9
3	9	6	4	5	1	8	2	7
7	5	4	2	9	3	6	1	8
9	3	8	6	1	5	4	7	2
6	2	1	8	4	7	5	9	3
4	7	3	1	8	2	9	6	5
5	6	2	9	3	4	7	8	1
1	8	9	5	7	6	2	3	4

**Cryptoquip**

SX DQNDWCKZ HDDPVKE QHI  
LACKLONL IP SVDQ, AQHE  
EQNX SHCO SN SCZQE HI  
ANOO GN GOHKW IEHENSKEI.

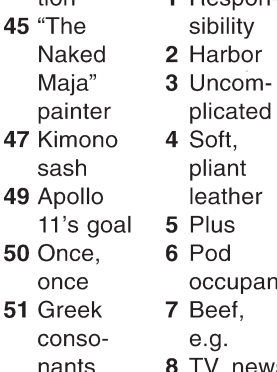
**Yesterday's Cryptoquip:** DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT FORCING ME TO CONSUME ROOT VEGETABLES. I DISLIKE THEM, FOR BEET'S SAKE!

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals M

**Crossword** • Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**  
1 Oil cartel acronym  
5 Spring mo.  
8 Hotel employee  
12 21-Down builder  
13 Witness in  
14 Black, in verse  
15 — Minor De-pressed  
17 Carvey or Delany  
18 Thwart  
20 Primary  
22 Donna Summer hit  
29 Tibetan beast  
30 Table scrap  
31 Weaponry  
32 Lustrous black  
33 Fit of peevishness  
34 "Golly!"
- DOWN**  
35 Wok, e.g.  
36 Lariat No longer drinking  
40 KFC additive  
41 Latest information  
45 "The Naked Maja" painter  
47 Kimono sash  
49 Apollo 11's goal  
50 Once, once  
51 Greek consonants  
52 Opposed to
- ACROSS**  
9 Leaves in the lurch  
10 Lithium-battery  
11 "CSI" evidence  
19 Hostel  
21 See 12-Across  
23 Laughing critter  
24 Rainbow  
25 Director Preminger  
26 Palm starch  
27 Small songbird  
28 February birthstone  
32 Mandible  
33 Sleep-inducing visitor  
35 Apiece  
36 Prune  
38 Moor  
39 False front  
42 Top-notch  
43 Carry  
44 Oklahoma city  
45 Jewel  
46 Raw rock  
48 Purchase

Solution time: 25 mins.



Yesterday's answer 2-9

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