# Triathlete should race away from her patronizing doctor

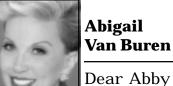
DEARABBY: I am a 55-year-old female who competes in triathlons for fun, fitness and health. I consulted my doctor because I was having foot pain. When I told him I was a runner and was preparing for a marathon race, his response was, "At your age, you could hardly call

I was shocked. I repeated the insulting comment to my husband, who has never supported me in this nor attended my races. He replied, "Well, you don't actually consider yourself an athlete, do you?"

I am so offended that I want to dismiss both my doctor and my husband. I just finished a race with 5,000 women. Every one of them was fabulous and serious, no matter how old or what they looked like. It was the spirit of the sport that mattered. At what age does one stop being an athlete?

OLDER ATHLETE **DEAR OLDER ATHLETE:** When one becomes a couch po-

tato — perhaps like your husband. According to Merriam-



(11th Edition), an athlete is "a person who is trained or skilled in exercise, sports, or games requiring physical strength, agility or stamina." And whether your husband chooses to acknowledge it or

not is beside the point. As for your doctor, I'd say his attempt at humor was demeaning, and he should practice his profession only if he's wearing a you "laugh" your way to another process. It will help to guilt-proof doctor who practices preventive medicine by encouraging, and

DEAR ABBY: I have been married for 18 years — 13 of them uncowboy, wants to know the proper happily. We have three teenage chiletiquette for a groom wearing a

regimens.

but allowed my husband to talk me emony. The ceremony will take occupants when fires start and giv- wax. Keep them out of reach of chilout of it both times — "for the sake place next July in a small Methodof the kids" and his own emotional ist church in Kansas. He really health. He has panic attacks and is wants to wear his cowboy hat. Can of fire continue to decline, one catverbally and emotionally abusive.

I want this divorce more than I want to breathe. I feel I deserve ARK. some happiness, too.

– MISERABLE have paid good money to a licensed professional counselor, and have been told that for the sake of your own emotional wellbeing you need to move on. Don't you think it's time to follow through on the advice you paid for? If you decide to move forward, I urge you to continue with muzzle. I wouldn't blame you if counseling during the divorce you and your children from what you know will follow. A divorce supporting, his patients' fitness may be best for everyone concerned.

DEAR ABBY: My son, a rodeo Webster's Collegiate Dictionary dren. I have filed for divorce twice, cowboy hat during the wedding cer-

- SUZIE IN SMACKOVER,

come a standard part of many cusing its efforts on offering impor-DEAR MISERABLE: You men's wardrobes in recent years, and the rules for wearing them have become less rigid. According to "Emily Post's Etiquette" (17th Edition), "hats can be left on ... at religious services, as required." However, your son should check with the clergyperson who will be officiating at the ceremony, just to be sure it's acceptable in his or her church.

> DEAR ABBY: Over the last 25 years, Americans have done a great deal to prevent fires in their homes. Home fire fatalities in the United States have dropped 50 percent since the 1970s, thanks in part to public awareness and education. going to sleep. Make sure all can- Dear Abby at www.Dear Abby.com Technology such as smoke alarms has helped, too—by alerting home large enough to collect dripping *Calif.* 90069.

ing them time to escape.

egory is on the upswing: candle fires. That is why this year, during Fire Prevention Week, the National **DEAR SUZIE: Hats have be-** Fire Protection Association is fotant candle safety information to Dear Abby readers. Some facts to consider about candle fires: More candles are now being sold, and the result has been more fires. Candles have become such popular decorative accessories that during the last decade in the U.S., fires caused by candles have tripled in number to 18,000 per year. Forty percent of these fires begin in the bedroom, causing one-quarter of the deaths associated with candles! (December has almost twice the number of home candle fires as any other month.) How can you safely enjoy candles at home? Extinguish them when leaving the room or before ten by Abigail Van Buren. Write dles are placed in sturdy holders,

dren or pets. And use a flashlight -However, while most categories not a candle—for emergency lighting. — JAMES M. SHANNON, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

**DEAR JAMES: Thank you for** wanting to protect my readers. Candles have, indeed, become popular home accessories — just open the cover of any home decorating magazine and see the many ways they are displayed in the decor of patios, living rooms, dining rooms, bathrooms and

"romantic" bedrooms. (Two fatalities occurred in Chicago when a woman lighted a candle in her bedroom and then left the room. Her bed caught fire, and the smoke spread to her neighbors' apartments. She escaped, but tragically two of her neighbors died of smoke inhalation.)

Editor's note: Dear Abby is writor P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles,

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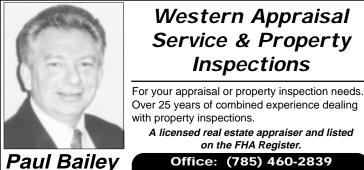


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