

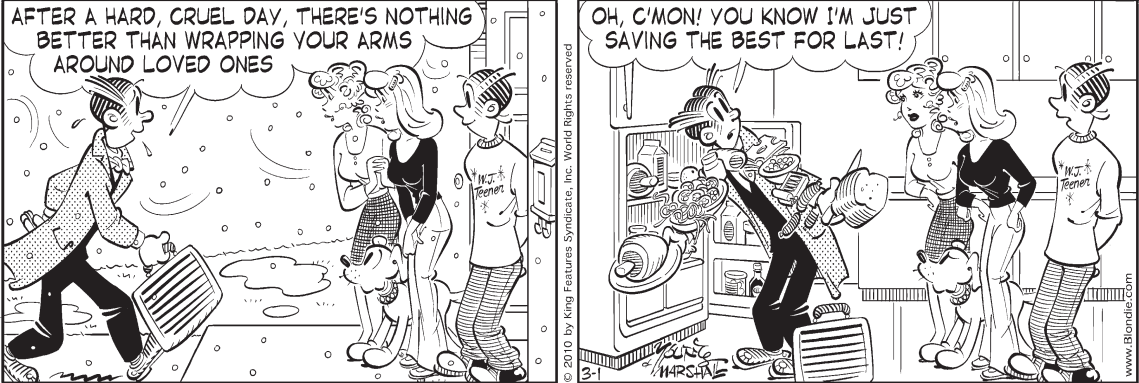
Baby Blues • Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



Beetle Bailey • Mort Walker



Blondie • Chic Young



Hagar the Horrible • Chris Browne



Mother Goose and Grimm • Mike Peters



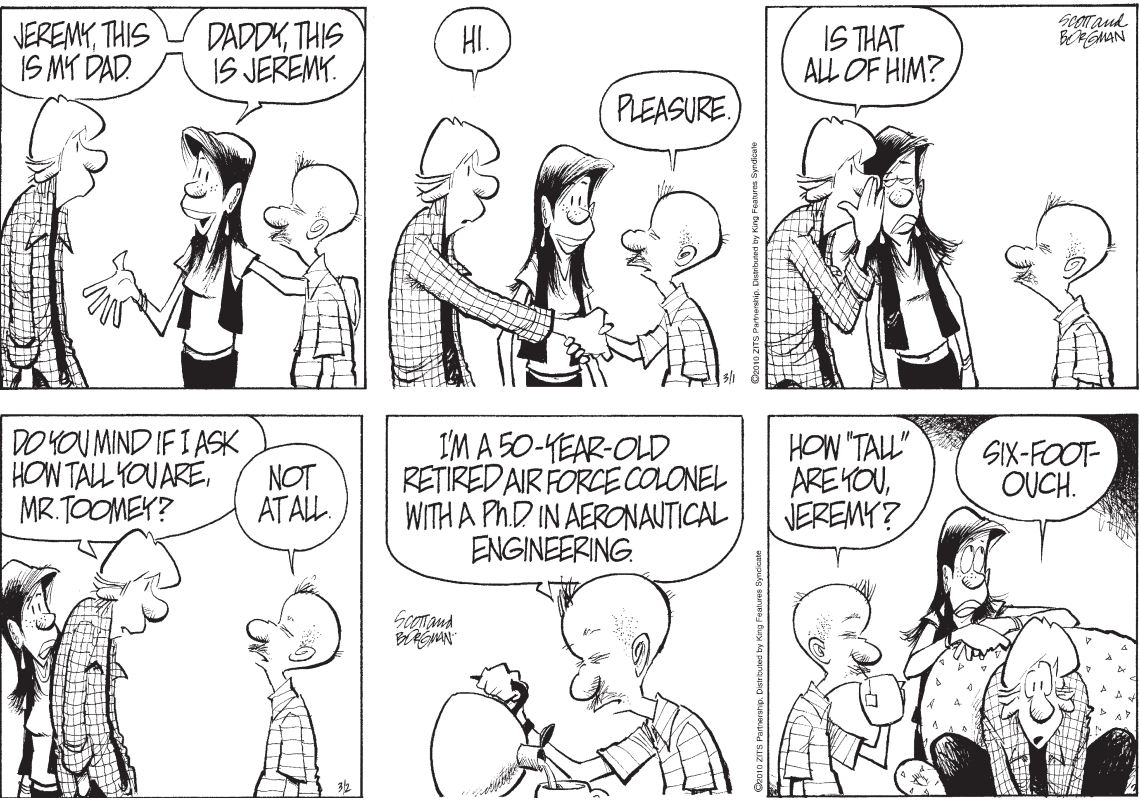
Sally Forth • Greg Howard



Todd the Dinosaur • Patrick Roberts



Zits • Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



Dr. Joyce Brothers  
• Ask Dr. Brothers

Team member is weakest link

Dear Dr. Brothers: I'm a manager in a business where we've had a lot of shake-ups due to the economy. I've inherited a group to supervise. This bunch has been together awhile, and I quickly identified one weak link. He is clearly incompetent, but the others cover for him because they think he's got a good personality or something. I have no power to fire or hire – how do I make this work with one guy dragging us all down? – D.B.

Dear D.B.: It is not too difficult to read between the lines. It seems this person has really ticked you off, and you've made up your mind he is less than useless – being carried by others because he's fun. This may be true. But since you haven't been in this position very long, you might want to take more time to investigate what the employee's performance and abilities consist of before you try to find a way to throw him under the bus. Wouldn't you rather have him get up to speed, set goals and reach them, and become a productive member of the team than see him go down in flames and bring the others with him?

Try to assess what is going on. It might be good to hold team meetings and brainstorm strategies for improving productivity. Make sure each person contributes. Try to reach a consensus. Perhaps all he needs is a jump-start. Ask for his input. Make sure assignments are clear and understood by all – including the underperforming guy. Call upon your leadership skills to draw the best from this employee. Consider it a challenge, and make sure you are acting professionally. Good luck.

Dear Dr. Brothers: My son is a senior in high school, and plans to work after graduation, as college isn't in the cards for him – he doesn't have good grades, and we can't afford it. For the past six months, he's been trying to get us to let him join the local fire department. They are only a volunteer group, and we are concerned about his safety. We don't want him to join a dangerous profession. How do we talk to him? – H.W.

Dear H.W.: I understand how you are feeling about your son. Although he has a dream you don't want to be responsible for quashing, it seems his safety is paramount in your mind. Most parents would prefer their children go into low-risk and lucrative careers. But some young people are drawn to occupations that offer service and excitement, and you should be proud. I can see why it is your desire to influence his decision without interfering with his happiness. You've got a fine line to walk, one that could have implications for your relationship with your son.

Look at the benefits of his choice. Your son will learn about responsibility, service and hard work. He probably will be happy with himself once he has achieved competence, even if it is only a volunteer job now. He will learn valuable skills in the emergency-response field, and have marketable skills when finished. The bottom line remains: Very shortly, your son will be old enough to make his own decisions about career choices. It would be better if you could be on board should he choose to explore the world of the firefighter. Your son sounds as though he will be just fine, especially if you are in his corner.

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Bridge • Steve Becker

South dealer. East-West vulnerable.

NORTH  
A 10 3  
K Q 9 7  
A K Q 9  
5 4

WEST  
K 6 4  
A 10 8 6  
10 7 4  
6 2

EAST  
J 8 7 2  
4 3  
8 6 2  
Q 10 8

SOUTH  
Q 9 5  
2  
5 3  
A K J 9 7 3

The bidding:  
South West North East  
1 Pass 1 Pass  
2 Pass 2 Pass  
3 Pass 3 Pass  
3 NT Pass 4 Pass  
5 Pass 6 Pass

Opening lead – four of diamonds.

Famous Hand

Everyone is occasionally guilty of becoming enamored of a particular hand and overestimating its value. All players should, of course, strive to keep such excesses to a minimum, as steady overbidding is a serious fault in anyone's game. The best policy in bridge is to try to bid your hands as accurately as possible -- neither overbidding nor underbidding them -- but this is not always easy to do.

Consider this deal from the Italy-U.S. match in 1951. Howard Schenken was South for the American team and, at favorable vulnerability, decided to open one club.

He found his partner with a huge hand, and North never did let go until a small slam was reached. Schenken did everything he could to slow his partner down, but North had the bit firmly in his teeth and refused to let go.

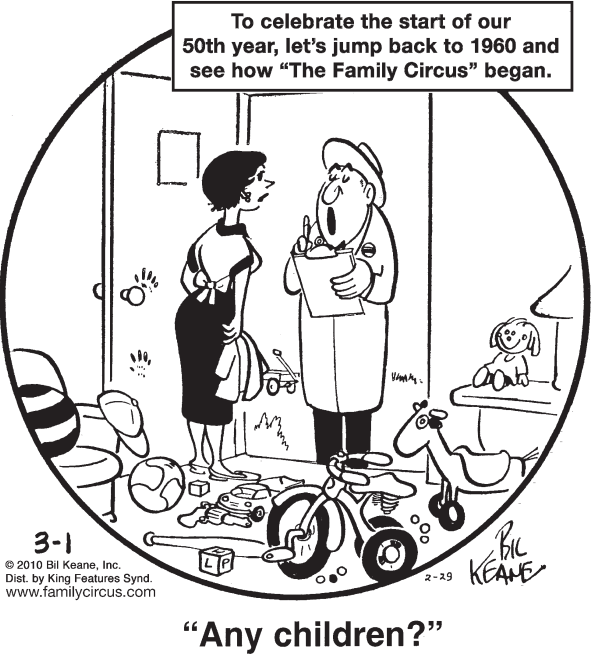
The Americans were exceptionally lucky on the deal because, as the cards were divided, the slam could not be stopped. West led a diamond. Schenken won the trick with dummy's queen, finessed the jack of clubs, led a heart to the queen and cashed the A-K of trumps. When he next led another heart, West took the ace, and that was that. Declarer had 12 ice-cold tricks.

Schenken would have gone down had West held the queen of clubs, or had East held the Q-10 -x-x of trumps, or had East held the ace of hearts, or if West had led a spade initially and East had the king.

North was extremely pleased by the favorable outcome, which was attributable for the most part to his highly optimistic series of bids. He knew he had dodged a bullet, and no doubt vowed not to press his luck quite as much in the future.

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Family Circus • Bil Keane



Conceptis Sudoku • Dave Green

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

Difficulty Level ★

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.

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

Cryptoquip

L M E P H X F E W Q X X T P C ' L  
E H G D H U A F B L F W C H X U M B D  
Z F Y E M E A Z F M L B T Y H , G H F G Q H  
P W Q Q D M Z X H U J X H U H J .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: A PEEVED SWEATER MAKER MARCHED IN AND YELLED TO HIS STUDENT "I HAVE A KNIT TO PICK WITH YOU!"

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: G equals P

Crossword • Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Attorneys' org.

4 Faux —

7 Frizzy hairdo

11 Old Italian money

13 Illustrations

14 Cattle rancher's device

15 Suitcase

16 Kids' card game

17 Frogs' hangout

18 Rework

20 Loutish one

22 Fish eggs

24 Not tardy

28 Rocket launcher

32 Banish

33 Vicinity

34 Recede

36 Persia, now

37 Alder or hazel

39 Remark

41 Island greetings

43 Bikini half

44 Master-Card alternative

46 Wields a teaspoon

50 Mary's follower

53 Paid player

55 Fix a manuscript

56 "American —"

57 Author Fleming

58 Say it isn't so

59 Nitwit

60 Nay undoer

61 Get older

DOWN

1 Seaweed, e.g.

2 Shuttlecock

3 Met melody

4 Dog's foot

5 Speedy steed

6 Razor sharpener

7 Came close to

8 To and —

9 Texas politico

10 Peculiar

12 Easy to meet or deal with

19 As well

21 Raw rock

23 — out a living

25 Swampy terrain

26 Blueprint

27 Bivouac shelter

28 Rum cake

29 Seed coat

30 Nil

31 1970 Jackson 5 hit

35 Go up and down

38 Scenery chewer

40 "— Miniver"

42 Old photograph color

45 Picture of health?

47 Concept

48 Boxing venue

49 Eyelid

50 Cover

51 Commotion

52 Swabbie's prop

54 Washington's bill

Solution time: 27 mins.

Saturday's answer 3-1