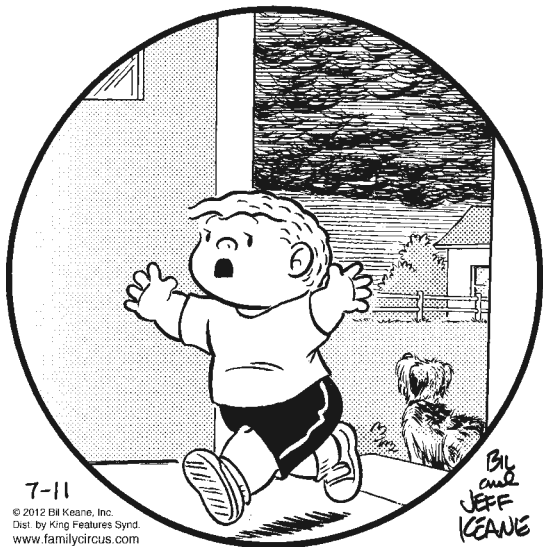
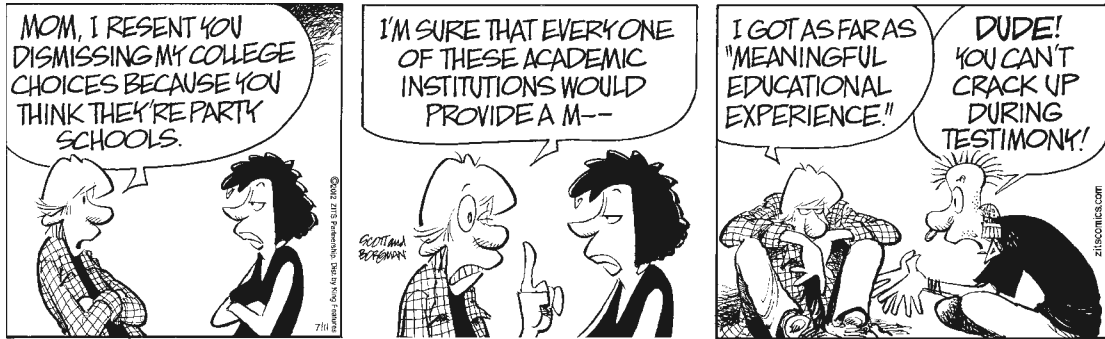
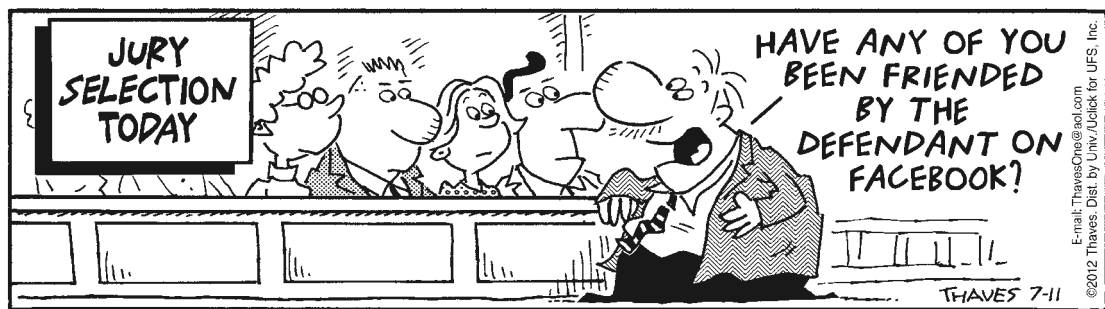
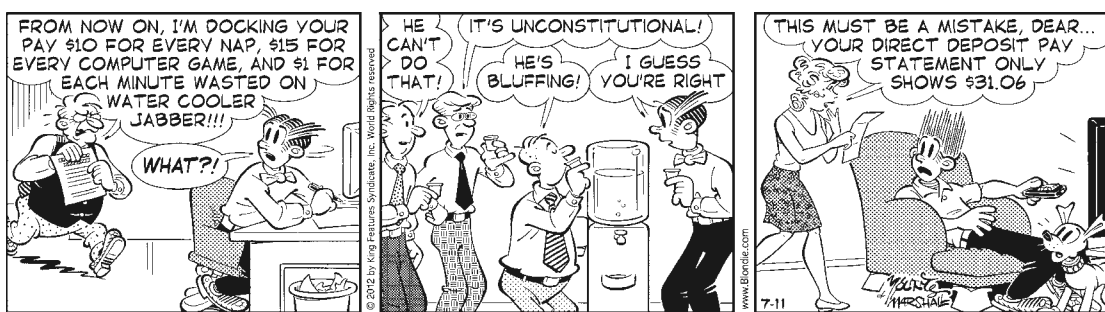
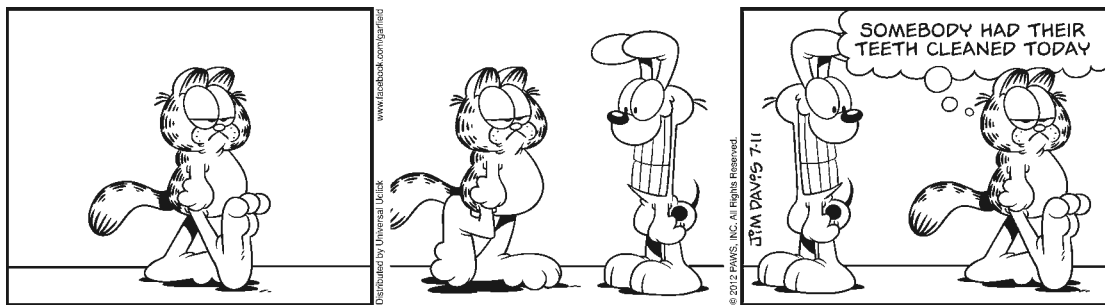
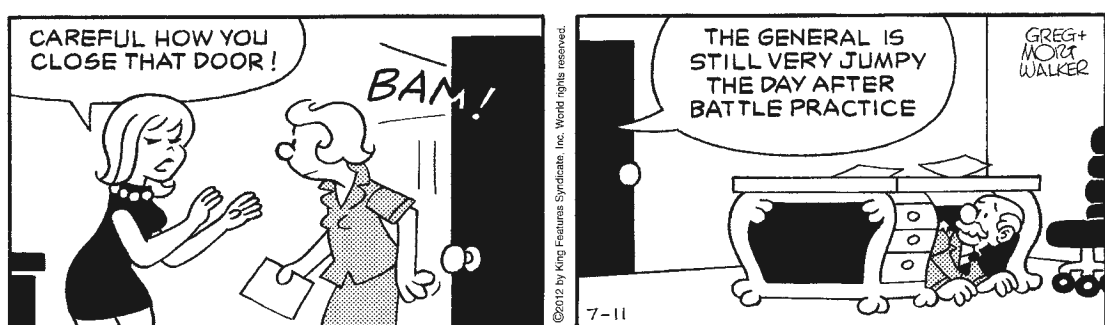
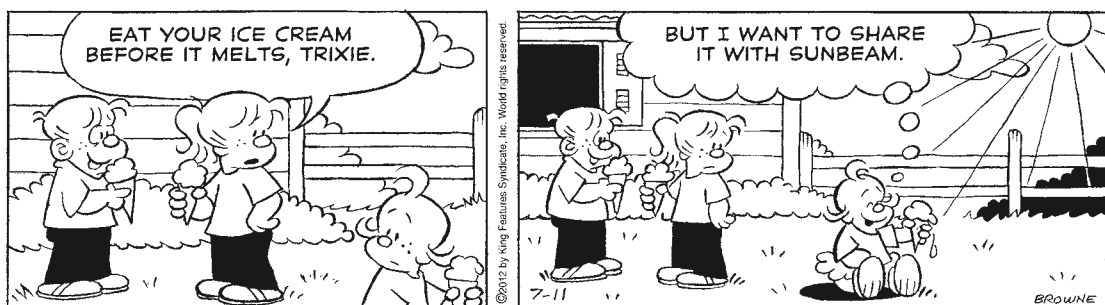


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7-11
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Longtime Boyfriend Needs A Nudge Toward The Altar

DEAR ABBY: I have been in an on-again/off-again relationship with a man for 16 years — more on than off. We have two boys together. He recently moved back in, and things are going well.

We're in our 30s, and I'm ready to be more than girlfriend and boyfriend. I'd like to ask this special man in my life to marry me, but I'm not sure if a woman should ever propose marriage to a man. Should I go ahead and do it, or just be patient and hope that one day he will ask me to take the next big step? — LONGING FOR MORE IN TEXAS

DEAR LONGING FOR MORE: By all means, ask him to formalize your relationship. After 16 years and two children, you deserve to know where the relationship is going. And when you do, mention that you'd like him to go to the altar WILLINGLY — before the boys are big enough to hog-tie and drag him there to make an "honest woman" of their mother.

DEAR ABBY: I have been a vegetarian and anti-fur advocate for many years, and most of my friends and family know it. I feel strongly that wearing fur and leather is cruel and unnecessary, but I don't lecture anyone who doesn't ask my opinion. What would be the proper response when someone gives me an item with real animal fur or genuine leather? It has happened before, and while I appreciate that someone has bought me a gift, I'm horrified and heartbroken seeing what's inside the box when I open it, and disappointed knowing that the person has contributed to the unkind and atrocious fur industry. I find it difficult to bring myself to say "thank you" for something I find so morally abhorrent.

What is the appropriate response in this situation? Is it acceptable for me to use this as an opportunity to educate the person on the horrors of fur fashions? — VEGGIE IN NEW YORK

DEAR VEGGIE: No, it isn't. Good manners dictate that you graciously thank the giver and then, if you wish, give the gift a respectful, private burial or regift it to a carnivore.

DEAR ABBY: My ex-husband is remarrying. We have always tried to be civil toward each other because of our daughter, who is 16. I try to be the bigger person in dealing with him in order to set a good example for her.

He called her last night after not having called her in several weeks and told her that if she wants to be in his wedding, I (meaning me) should purchase her dress. I thought it was inappropriate for him not only to tell her that, but also to expect me to pay for it.

When I remarried years ago, I never would have dreamed of asking him for money for her attire. My daughter even thinks this is unrealistic.

I usually try to keep things positive when it comes to situations with him, but I don't think I'm giving in on this one. Do you agree? — EX IN ILLINOIS

DEAR EX: You said you try to keep things positive to set a good example for your daughter. While I agree your ex's demand that you pay for the dress is petty (and cheap), be the bigger person one more time and buy it for her if she wishes to participate rather than argue about it. Then cross your fingers and hope it's his last wedding.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

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JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bigar's Stars is based on the degree of your sun at birth. The sign name is simply a label astrologers put on a set of degrees for convenience. For best results, readers should refer to the dates following each sign.

A baby born today has a Sun in Cancer and a Moon in Aries if born before 4:30 p.m. (PST). Afterward, the Moon will be in Taurus.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FOR WEDNESDAY, JULY 11, 2012:

You are often so determined to achieve a goal that you push yourself to the point of exhaustion. As a result, sometimes your best ideas go up in flames. Learn to pace yourself, and many dreams could become realities. You will expand your circle of friends and even more possibilities. If you are single, you could meet someone intense and appealing. Be careful; this person could be emotionally unavailable. If you are attached, the two of you can achieve one of your life desires if you remain focused. TAURUS points the way.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (MARCH 21-APRIL 19)

★★★★ Move forward with a project early on in the morning. You could find that others are very serious, especially a key person in your life. You might be more upset than you realize and need to have a heart-to-heart talk. Follow your instincts. Tonight: Treat someone to his or her favorite dessert.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20)

★★★★ As bad as you can be, you also are capable of being just as good. Keep reaching out for someone who might need your time. By late afternoon, others will not be able to resist you to the same level. Tonight: Beam in what you want.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20)

★★★ Take a hint from Aries, and make your morning and midday count. You will want to retreat to your private world as day becomes night. You could do research and catch up on emails, but the reality is that you very much want to maintain a low profile. Tonight: Not to be found.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22)

★★★★ Your natural beat is right-on. You start out on top of your game, ready to deal with others. Your confidence carries you far — so much so that you have reason to celebrate. A meeting could be very important. Enjoy the social ramifications. Tonight: Where the maddening crowds are.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22)

★★★★ Explore alternatives for as long as you need

to. You might want to do some research until you are confident about your choice. Do not close off this process until you are sure of yourself. Others tend to look to you for leadership. Tonight: A must statement.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEPT. 22)

★★★★ You are smart to relate directly to one individual at a time. You'll see the difference it makes. You might feel short on confidence, funds or talent. Don't worry — this phase will be ending in the next few months. Tonight: Let your imagination take the lead.

LIBRA (SEPT. 23-OCT. 22)

★★★★ It's all about others right now. You can barely have a complete conversation without a knock on the door, a phone call or some other type of interruption. You could feel down that you cannot accomplish everything you want to. Tonight: Be with a favorite person.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21)

★★★★ Clear out as much as you can before you decide to socialize or even have an extended conversation. Once you decide to change venues, you might find it difficult to return to your starting point. Make sure you are ready to move on before you do. Tonight: Out and about.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

★★★★ You cannot contain your creativity, but you can choose not to share all your ideas all the time. Someone seems to close down whenever this type of discussion emerges. Let go, and relax with the moment. Tonight: Run errands and go to the gym.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19)

★★★★ Getting going could be a bit challenging. Why not put your feet up and relax? You cannot keep pushing yourself so hard, which is why there is an issue right now. Make fun plans later today where you can recycle your energy. Tonight: Let the fun begin.

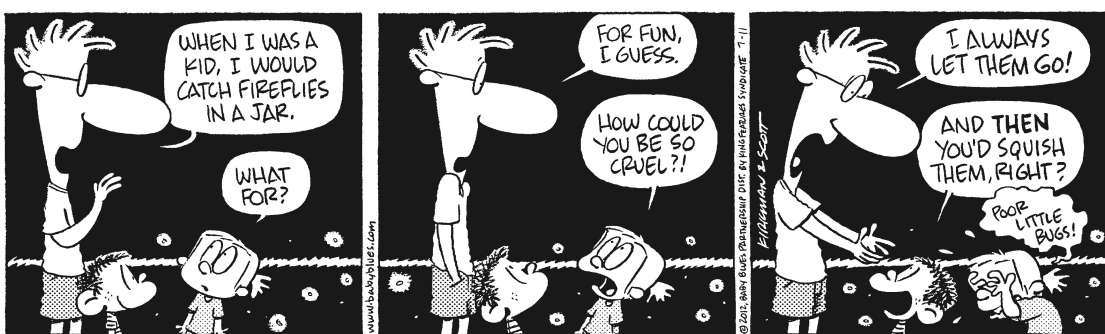
AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18)

★★★★ You choose the right words, even if you might not get the reaction you would like. There are some situations you cannot change, and you certainly cannot change someone else's reaction. Let go of an implicit demand. Tonight: Head home.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20)

★★★ Handle a money situation as quickly as possible before it handles you. You might want to speak to someone in the know. You express yourself directly and with clarity. Others will get the gist of your thoughts. Tonight: Hang out with friends.

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BABY BLUES | RICK KIRKMAN AND JERRY SCOTT

FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE | LYNN JOHNSTON

MOTHER GOOSE AND GRIMM | MIKE PETERS
