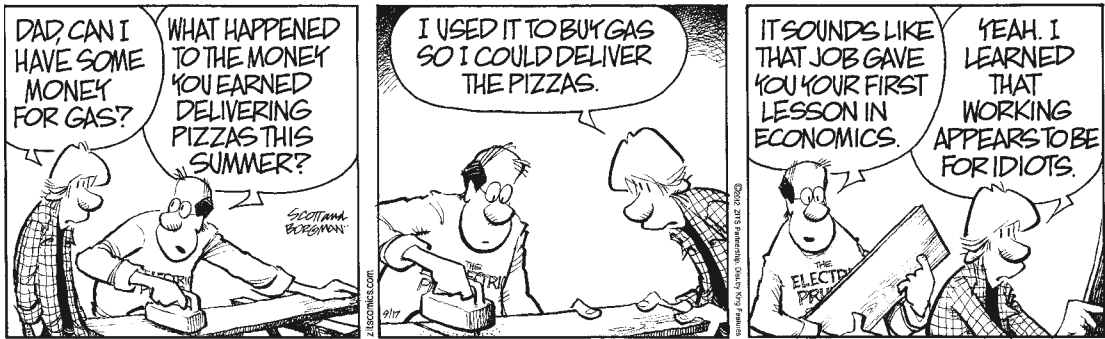


FAMILY CIRCUS | BIL KEANE



ZITS | JERRY SCOTT AND JIM BORGMAN



FRANK AND ERNEST | BOB THAVES



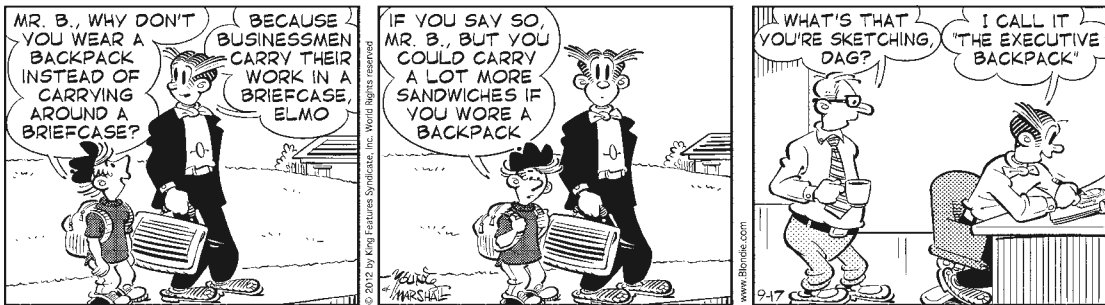
PEANUTS | CHARLES M. SCHULZ



DICK TRACY | JOE STATON AND MIKE CURTIS



BLONDIE | YOUNG & DRAKE



GARFIELD | JIM DAVIS



BEEBLE BAILEY | MORT WALKER



HI AND LOIS | BRIAN AND GREG WALKER



THE BORN LOSER | ART SANSON



Talented Tradesmen Keep Our Country Up And Running

DEAR ABBY: America's tradesmen — plumbers, electricians, auto mechanics, roofers, masons and more — get very little respect. In fact, the only time these skilled professionals get our attention is when we have an emergency.

This lack of regard is leading our nation down an unfortunate pathway, as fewer and fewer young people pursue jobs in these professions. If we don't change our attitude about the worth of tradesmen, who will build our homes and schools, repair our cars, keep our water flowing and our power turned on?

On Sept. 21, we have a chance to thank a tradesman. The date has been earmarked as National Tradesmen Day. Everyone can participate: Drop a box of doughnuts at the job site near your home. Call your plumber and say, "Thank you for your help over the years." Invite a skilled tradesman to speak at your child's school. The ways to honor them are limitless. Abby, would you help to get the word out? — JEFF D. IN GREENVILLE, S.C.

DEAR JEFF: I'm pleased to help because I agree with your message. Tradespeople don't often receive the respect and gratitude they deserve. Everyone needs to know his or her efforts are valued and appreciated, and failure to extend this courtesy may affect our quality of life in the coming decades.

In years past, skilled trades were handed down with pride from one generation to the next. However, as baby boomers have been retiring, fewer young people have been stepping forward to take their place. In fact, according to a recent talent shortage survey by ManpowerGroup, more jobs for skilled tradesmen go unfilled than any other category of employment.

Why? Because there aren't enough trained replacements to fill openings for electricians, welders,

mechanics, plumbers, roofers and more.

Part of the reason may be our emphasis on pursuing advanced college degrees for almost everyone. But another may be the lack of respect that has been shown for these vital occupations. The result has been, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, that for every three tradesmen who retire, only one person is stepping up to fill the gap.

I hear from many readers whose young adult children are unable to find work. Talk with them about this. People in the trades can earn good money. Visit a local community college with your son or daughter and learn more about classes and certifications available for skilled trades.

And please, show tradespeople how much their contributions are valued. Call your favorite handyman, plumber and HVAC technician not to once again scream for help, but to express your appreciation. Treat them to a box of your special home-baked cookies or brownies, refer them to your friends and family so they can get additional business, write to your local newspapers, websites or blogs expressing your appreciation.

Visit nationaltradesmenday.com, and please remember, these hardworking individuals need to know that although National Tradesmen Day is Friday, we are grateful for their efforts the other 364 days a year, too.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)



DEAR ABBY

Jeanne Phillips

■ 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, CA 90069.

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 Virgo and a Moon in Libra all day.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FOR MONDAY, SEPT. 17, 2012:

This year you express your compassion, which you demonstrate through your actions. You often will carry more than your share of responsibilities, and will handle them magnificently. The result could be that others will want you to accept more and more responsibility. Know when to say "no," or you might not have any free time this year. If you are single, you could attract someone who is emotionally unavailable. Take a full year before considering this bond seriously. If you are attached, the two of you gain through mini escapes from reality into your own world. Try to take more weekends away together. Try not to be possessive of LIBRA.

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)

★★★★ Defer to others, and you will enjoy watching them deal with various issues that you face every day. Hopefully, you will be appreciated more as a result. Optimism surrounds communication. Some of you will have a long-awaited call come in. Tonight: Go through your choices.

TAURUS (APRIL 20-MAY 20)

★★★★ An unexpected revelation could encourage you to slow down. Express your feelings with sensitivity, and note the response you get. Your sixth sense comes through, especially with finances and your dealings with others. Tonight: Work through a problem by getting some exercise.

GEMINI (MAY 21-JUNE 20)

★★★★ Where others seem to hit a dead end, you naturally continue in the right direction. Whether or not you are aware of it, you are an endless source of information and creativity to many people. Rethink a problematic situation with confidence. Tonight: Whatever puts a smile on your face.

CANCER (JUNE 21-JULY 22)

★★★★ You juggle different concerns, especially involving your home and domestic life. More often than not, your concerns revolve around this area of your life. Stop to get a token of affection for a not-too-happy camper in your life. Tonight: Chill at home.

LEO (JULY 23-AUG. 22)

★★★★ You share, and others respond; however, there is no guarantee that you will like their answer. Be ready to take a leap of faith and handle a personal matter. You might want to reorganize your schedule in order to deal with another issue. Tonight: Meet with friends.

VIRGO (AUG. 23-SEPT. 22)

★★★ Be aware of your finances and how much you need to spend. Revise your budget, and be careful not to strap yourself too tight. A higher-up or supervisor lets you know how impressed he or she is with your actions. Tonight: Take a risk, but do so carefully.

LIBRA (SEPT. 23-OCT. 22)

★★★★ You smile, and others find your positive mood contagious. When you reach out to have an important discussion with someone, keep that smile on your face. Do not feel as if a problem cannot be solved. It can — just not on your schedule. Tonight: Be prepared to take a risk.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23-NOV. 21)

★★★ The less said right now, the better. You know the power of words, and whether or not you are aware of it, you are experiencing a change that could transform your opinions. For this reason, keep your thoughts and judgments to yourself. Tonight: Vanish while you can.

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22-DEC. 21)

★★★★ Meetings with groups and individuals punctuate your day. You gain through open conversation and mutual respect. An opportunity comes in the form of another person, and simply could walk right through your door. Be careful with financial risks. Tonight: Where your friends are.

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22-JAN. 19)

★★★★ A must appearance arises again when in a leadership position. You might wonder what would be the best way to proceed. You laugh, and someone responds. People naturally seem to follow you. Others appreciate your sense of responsibility and your efforts. Tonight: Get errands done.

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20-FEB. 18)

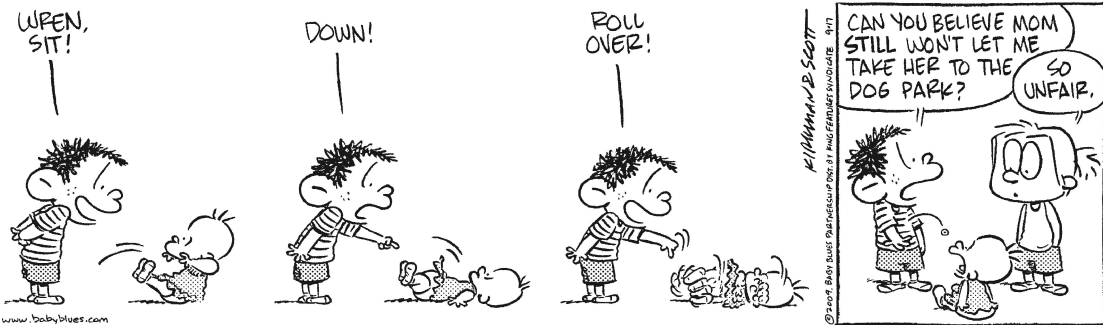
★★★★ Listen to your need to reach out for someone at a distance. You could feel very uncomfortable at first, but ultimately you'll feel much better. Reveal your feelings. Remain cool in your dealings, even if you need to process a substantial change. Tonight: Detach from a hot situation.

PISCES (FEB. 19-MARCH 20)

★★★★ Work with a key partner directly; you could find the interaction exciting. You might decide to change the direction of an idea or project. A family member or domestic issue demands your attention, no matter what you want to do. Tonight: With a favorite person.

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BABY BLUES | RICK KIRKMAN AND JERRY SCOTT



FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE | LYNN JOHNSTON



MOTHER GOOSE AND GRIMM | MIKE PETERS

