

How to cut dinner costs?

Dear Annie: Our son is marrying a lovely girl from out of state. "Jill's" family offered to pay for the cost of the wedding, which is expected to have more than 200 guests. My son asked us whether we would pay for the rehearsal dinner. Thinking this would consist of the wedding party and 20 to 30 additional people, we agreed.

Well, now this "rehearsal dinner" is about 70 folks, including numerous "close relatives" on the bride's side. We are told that these people are to be included, that there is no room for negotiation and that it shouldn't be an issue because Jill's parents are paying for the wedding. I feel as if Jill has hijacked the so-called rehearsal dinner for a pre-wedding family dinner that is basically out of our control. Is this what weddings have come down to these days? How should my wife and I handle this? — *Budgeting Father of the Groom*

Dear Budgeting: A) Pick a more affordable venue and/or dining option. Buffets are great for this situation, as they're not billed per person. Or B) ask Jill's family members to chip in. If they're truly that married to the idea of having so many relatives included, they ought to be willing to help.

Dear Annie



By Annie Lane

Creators Syndicate Inc.

Dear Annie: Being the dutiful husband that I am, I drive my non-driving wife to work every day, and I pick her up after work. At her request, I also have been giving a lift home in the evenings to one of her co-workers. It's not far out of our way, and the fellow is pleasant and likable — well, with the exception that he smells like a farm animal and is totally oblivious to that fact.

It seems to me this man seldom bathes or changes his clothes. I drive with the windows open in the dead of winter, and in the summer, the odor is even more horrific. My wife acknowledges this issue but doesn't want to confront him or address it. I have no problem talking to this guy diplomatically and letting him know what's going on, but my wife has strongly asked me not to. So I suffer in silence.

How do I get out of this pickle without upsetting my wife or causing anyone any further embarrassment? — *Need Oxygen*

Dear Oxygen: It's time to put this animal out to pasture. Your wife isn't considering the matter from your nose's perspective. It's nice enough you give them both rides; you shouldn't have to hold your breath the whole way. Tell your wife that either she needs to come up with a polite excuse for why you can't give this man rides anymore or you're going to have a frank discussion with him about personal hygiene. If she doesn't like it, they can both catch a lift on the hayride.

Dear Annie: I'd like to reply to your recent correspondence with the son struggling with what to do after discovering his father smoking again. Nicotine Anonymous (once known as Smokers Anonymous), with support groups based on the book "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions," is a resource for people seeking freedom from nicotine addiction. Its website (<http://nicotine-anonymous.org>) has literature — including a pamphlet that might be helpful to your nonsmoking reader, titled "Are You Concerned About Someone Who Smokes or Chews Tobacco?"

Tomorrow's horoscope

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Self-centeredness is an epidemic these days, and, to some extent, we all are part of it. So before you make your presentation, pitch or explanation, make sure the others know why it's relevant to them.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). This endeavor that once terrified you — well, now as you skip past your trepidation and get straight to the rewards for taking action, you can hardly believe you were ever afraid.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). From Vito Corleone to Mike Tyson to Anjelica Huston in any role she's ever played, the ones who speak softly often have such strong intentions and methods that taxing their vocal cords seems completely unnecessary.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Even those who claim that there are no stupid questions have the power to elevate. Someone will prove his or her intelligence by asking you a thought-provoking question.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Post an opinion; change the world! Wait... it doesn't work like that? Nope. The world still changes by making a connection, having a conversation, coming to a new understanding and making agreements that reflect that.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You know where the sugar is going to come from, and you also know what leaves a bitter taste. In today's case, there will be no surprises. You'll get precisely the flavor you put into the recipe.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You're someone's favorite. Does the preferential treatment make you uncomfortable? If you can handle it, your gracious reception of all this delicious attention keeps it coming your way.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Power is subjective. The one who is extremely revered in some circles is totally unknown and without influence in others. Your perception of how powerful a person is will matter, but it won't translate.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The words get prettier when people are trying to impress each other. You'll find yourself on both sides of the equation, alternately throwing out the high-minded sentiments and catching them.

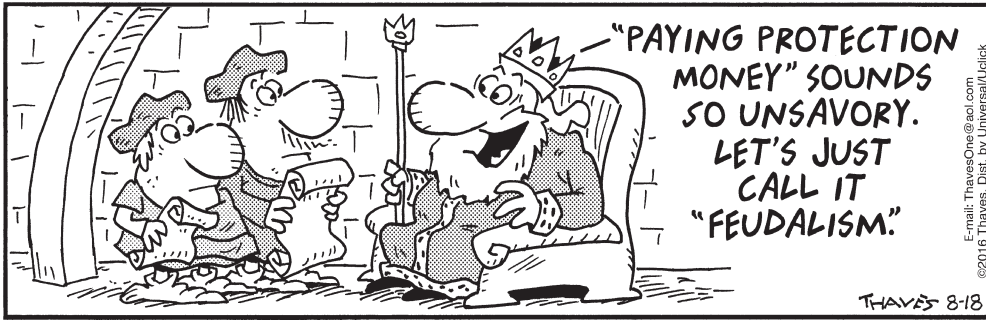
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You have access to the things that will fortify your soul. Do you know what your soul needs? Because the soul nutrition maybe doesn't come in the brand-name packaging you thought it would come in.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). You've a new attitude and your elevated confidence will inspire moves that you wouldn't have thought to make this time last month (or even last week).

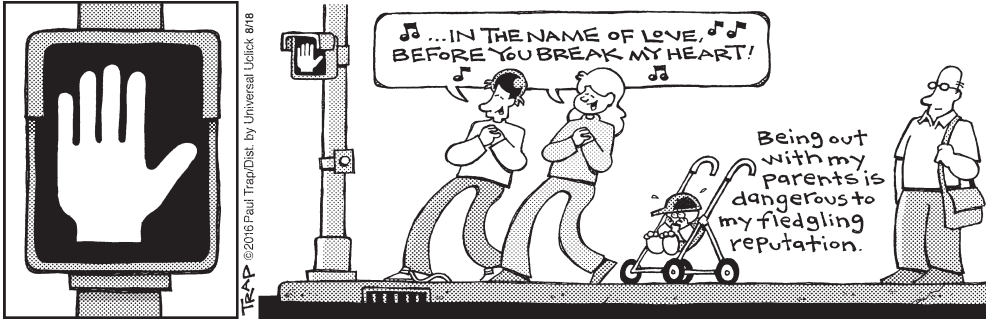
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Your good feelings about the day are warranted, as important and fortuitous happenings are likely. A strong yet effortless connection will be made with your fellow water signs, Cancer and Scorpio.

FRIDAY'S BIRTHDAY (Aug. 19). Do not miss the opportunity to travel, especially to foreign lands. Long after the expensive of this has been forgotten, the experience will continue to invigorate your life on every level, including spiritually and socially. The end of the year will bring miraculous connections for family and finance. Libra and Cancer adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 5, 17, 2, 27 and 31.

FRANK AND ERNEST



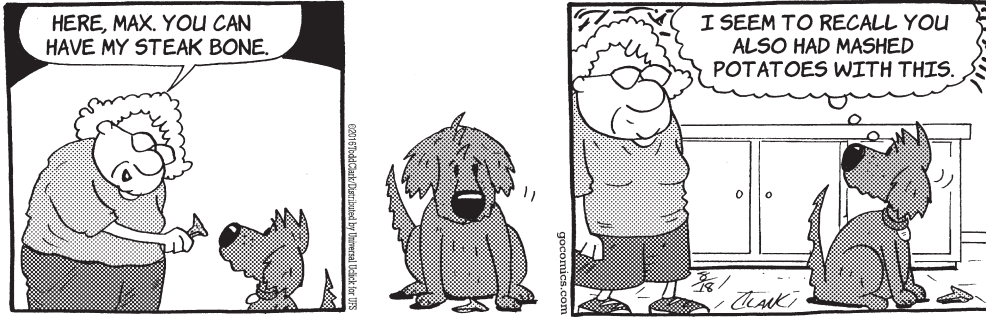
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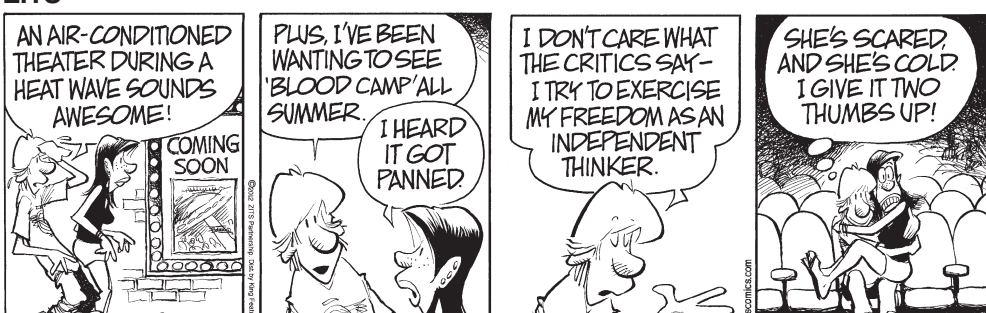
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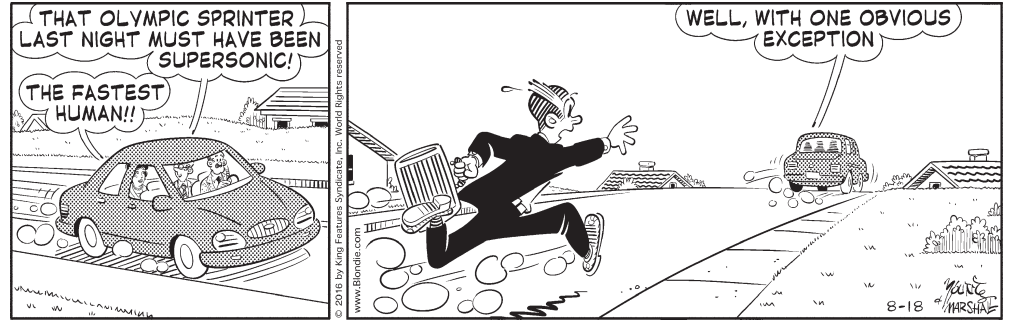
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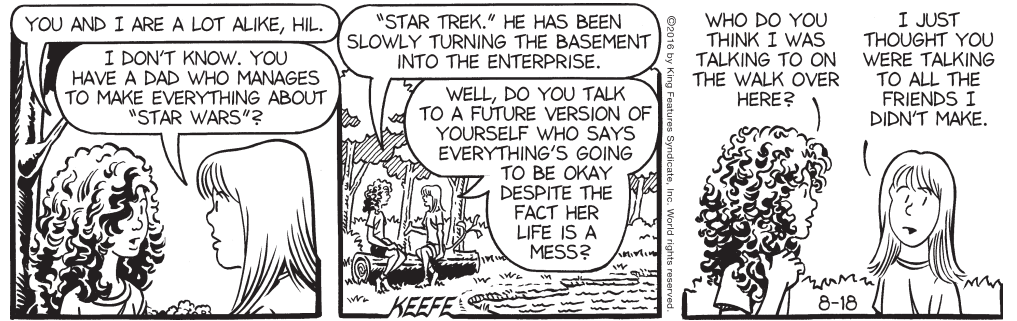
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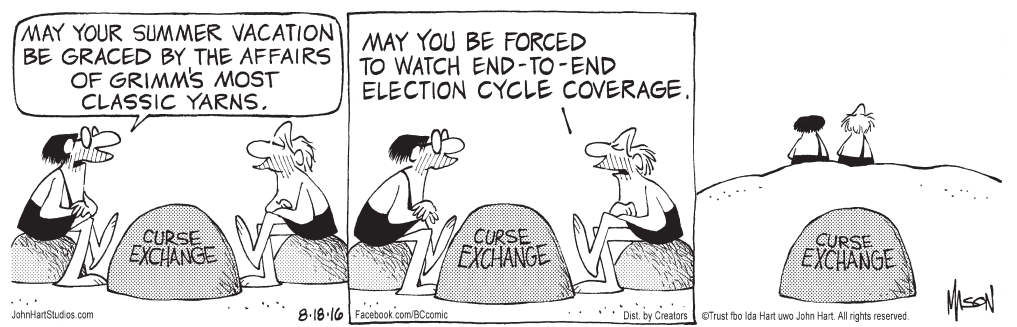
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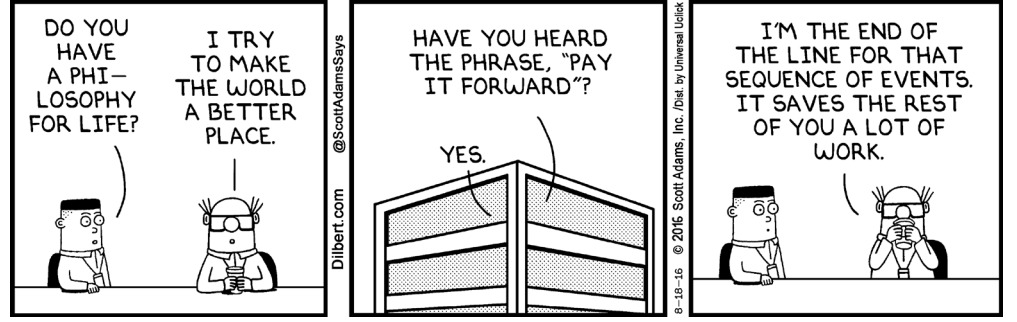
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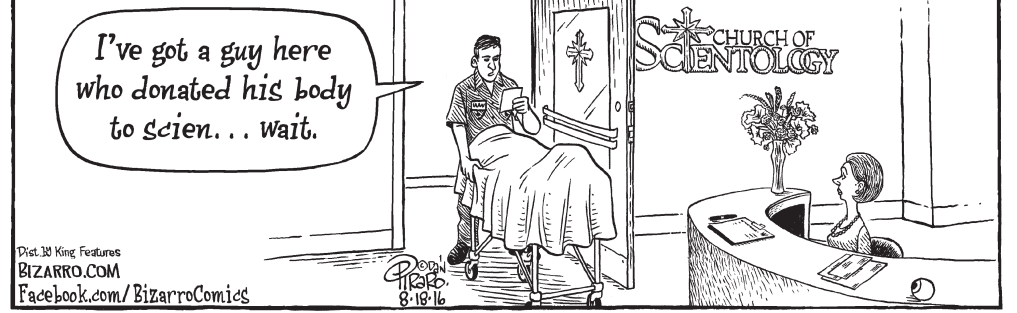
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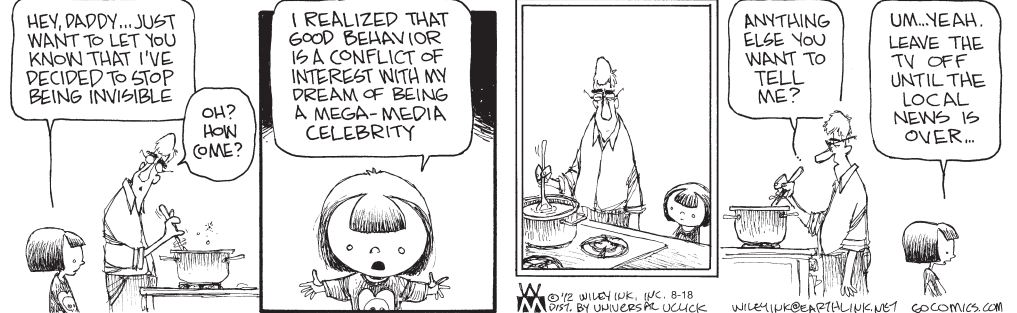
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