

# Trouble 'child' in his 50s

Dear Annie: I'm writing about my 53-year-old stepson, "Sam." I helped to raise Sam starting when he was 11. His first mom was murdered with a handgun a year before. He was already difficult as a younger child and already into drugs, including alcohol. Things got worse. My husband and I made mistakes, mostly on the side of enabling. We've gotten some helpful counseling and learned a lot from Al-Anon.

## DEAR ANNIE



Annie Lane  
Creators  
Syndicate Inc.

Sam did a little therapy years ago (some of it court-ordered) and used to go to Alcoholics Anonymous, but he doesn't anymore. Too bad. AA helped him.

Sam is smart and kind and sensitive and tends to set himself up to be exploited and codependent, perhaps as a way of buying friends. I ache to see his patterns change, but they are out of my control. A few years ago, he lost his house because he didn't pay his mortgage. His dad and I had bailed him out a couple of times, through loans that never got entirely paid back despite the written agreements and careful repayment schedules; the last time, he chose not to tell us he was ignoring

the legal notices in the mail. We don't give him guilt trips about the money or mention it or even care, really. It's cheaper than college would have been. But I'm sure he feels a lot of guilt. He's a sensitive and principled guy.

Sam now lives in a sleazy efficiency apartment about 10 minutes from us. At least it gives him some kind of community. He is holding down a job, and things seem stable financially. But he has stopped returning his father's texts asking him to get together for breakfast, and there's been no acknowledgment of the birthday check we mailed him last week. (This letter is not about wanting a thank-you note!) A couple of weeks ago, I got my son-in-law to call him and say, "Hey, phone your folks!" He did, and we had the usual upbeat chat. We made a breakfast date. But he ended up flaking on that.

My husband's heart is quietly breaking. We aren't demanding a lot of Sam's time, and we know it's his life to live as best he can. But total noncommunication has meant bad things in the past. I don't want

to have to go visit him in prison again.

My role these days is basically nagging his dad to text him one more time. (My husband of 40-plus years is a truly wonderful man, but he's the passive/denying one; I'm the doer/rescuer. That's not a brag.) I don't know whether either of us is willing to devote more time to Al-Anon or counseling. Our lives are getting shorter every day, and we've already poured a lot of emotional energy into the sinkhole. Should we keep trying to get Sam to respond? Or what? — *Sad Stepmom*

**Dear Sad Stepmom:** If it were that easy for you to detach from your stepson, you already would have. For most friends and family members of people with addiction, it's difficult to set boundaries without outside support. I encourage you to give Al-Anon another shot. I think you'll find that it actually helps retrieve some of your emotional energy from the sinkhole. It's great that you went before, but Al-Anon, like Alcoholics Anonymous, is not a program you graduate from.

For more information and a list of meetings in your area, visit <https://al-anon.org>

## TOMORROW'S HOROSCOPE

By Holiday Mathis, Creators Syndicate Inc.

**ARIES (March 21-April 19).** To prevent miscommunication, ask people to explain — to spell it out, to paint you a picture. There is no shame in wanting to make sure that your understanding is thorough.

**TAURUS (April 20-May 20).** Brave people aren't fearless. The fear is what makes an action brave. It may be the case that your body and mind feel anxious about a choice, but your spirit will be strong and undaunted as you move forward.

**GEMINI (May 21-June 21).** You've a clear idea as to the next step. The ones who are in your way may very well be standing there just because they don't understand your plan. Break it down into smaller ideas, and explain it again.

**CANCER (June 22-July 22).** Maybe you're feeling a little bored with a job you've done time and again, but the other options don't seem any more thrilling than what you already have. Not true! A "lateral move" will turn out to be a huge boost.

**LEO (July 23-Aug. 22).** You do not have to work hard to be charming, and it's also not a complicated matter. You simply give each person the attention and respect that he or she deserves, to tremendous effect.

**VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).** Your realm of influence will grow, though this is not your aim. You're just trying to do your thing to the best of your ability. It turns out that this is precisely why people trust you and give you power.

**LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).** If the problem seems to remain the same, consider that you may be currently a bit too narrow with your definition of the solution. What else

can you do to try to knock a problem out of deadlock?

**SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).** You'll be a director today — perhaps not in title (not officially, anyway), but directing this action is what you'll do very well. You'll assemble and align all the elements to represent your vision.

**SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).** It will be wonderful for your heart to spend time with those who know you well and think of you often. Familiarity will bring a feeling of comfort and security.

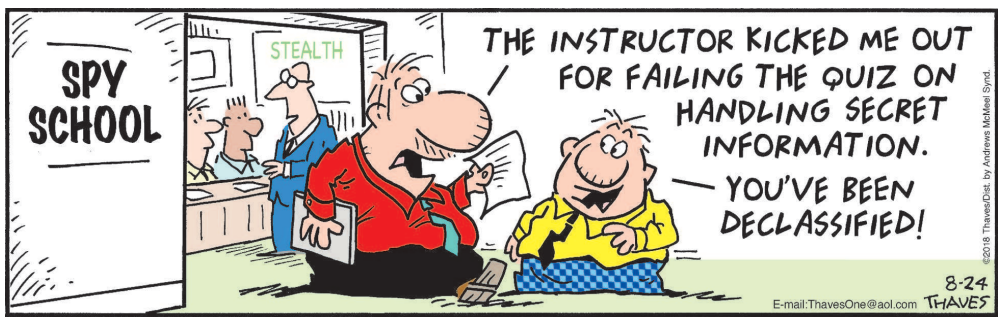
**CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).** Creative dilemmas are your favorite kind. Almost anything you choose will be tasteful, but the question now, dear artist, is which choice most represents you.

**AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).** Fight for your own happiness. After all, no one else can feel it, really. And as much as they might like to see you smile, your happiness can only truly belong to you.

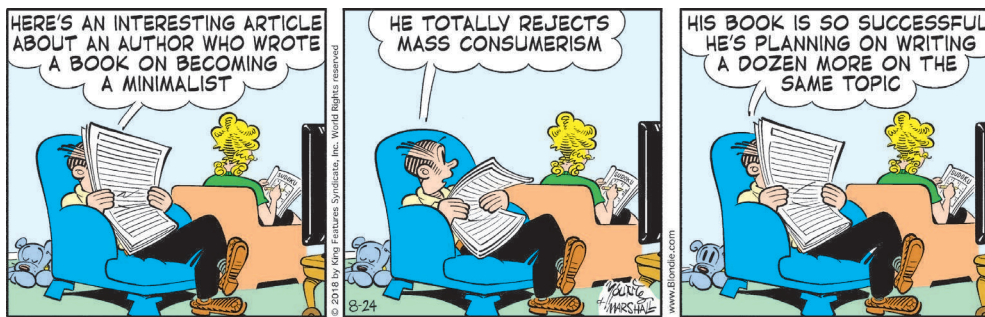
**PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).** You'll wonder when the right time to call someone out is, and how best to do this. If you're not sure, wait. It's the mature thing to do. And you'll likely feel differently about it later.

**TOMORROW'S BIRTHDAY (Aug. 25).** You'll put yourself in just the situation to grow your talent. So it's no accident that your skills compound and that you're paid much more for them, too. New lands and cultures will attract you in 2019, and this will be a year of research, education and travel. Also, loyal and loving new people will come into your world. Libra and Aquarius adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 7, 3, 13, 29 and 44.

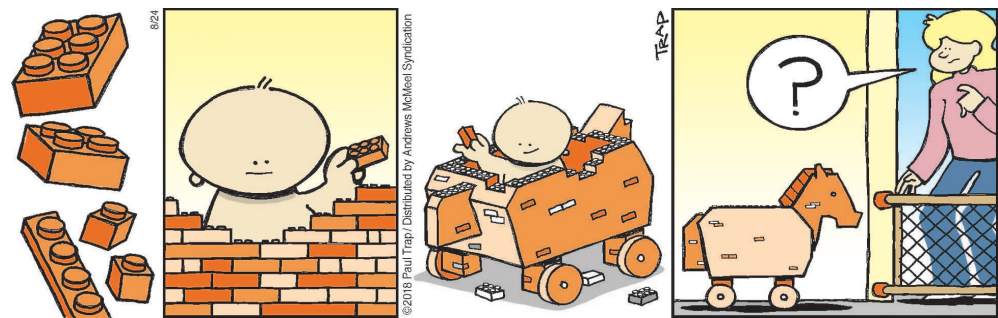
## FRANK AND ERNEST



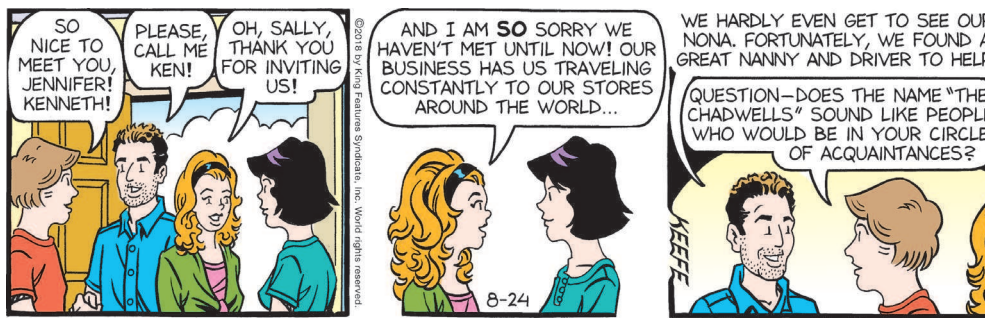
## BLONDIE



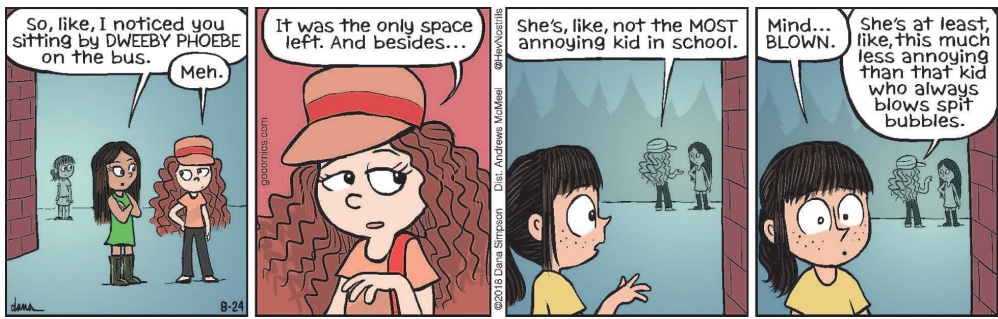
## THATABABY



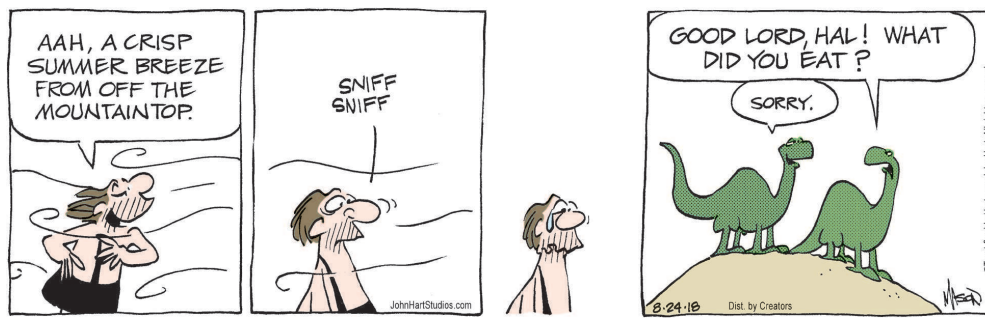
## SALLY FORTH



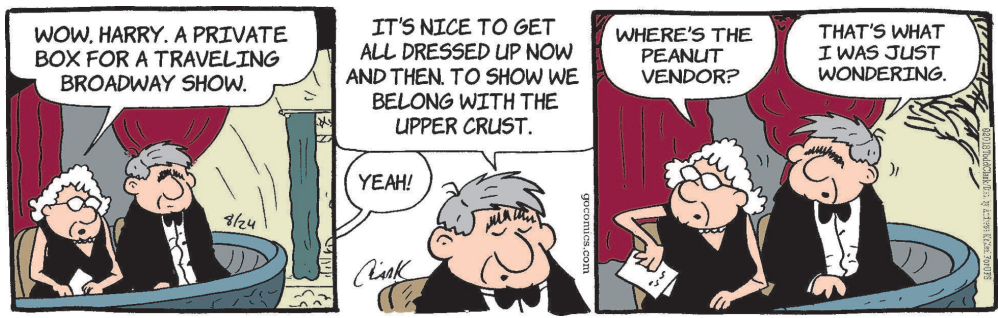
## PHOEBE AND HER UNICORN



## B.C.



## LOLA



## DILBERT



## SIX CHIX



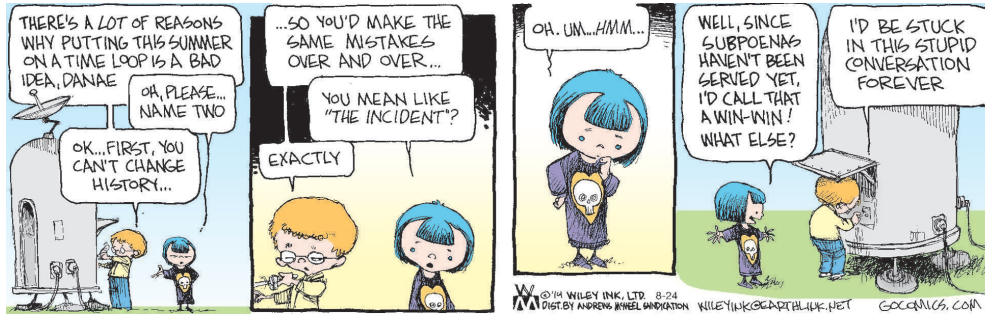
## BIZARRO



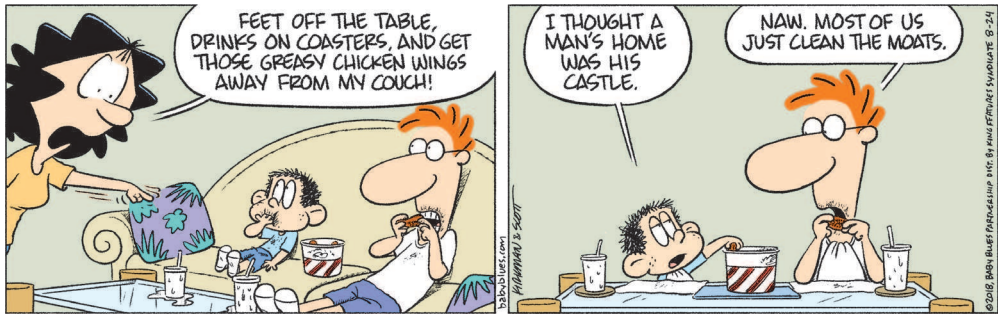
## MUTTS



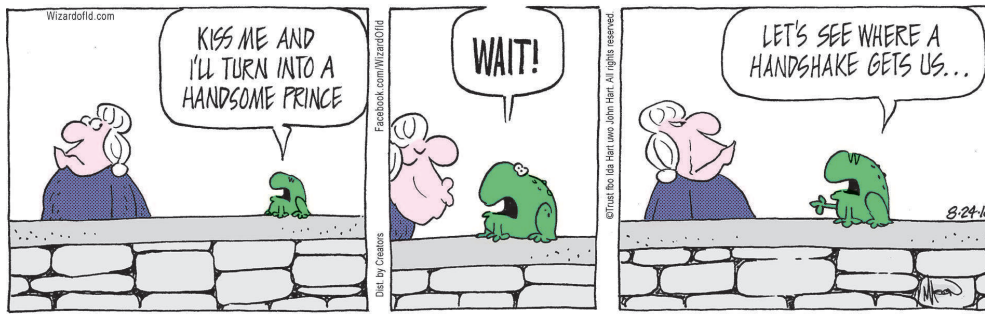
## NON SEQUITUR



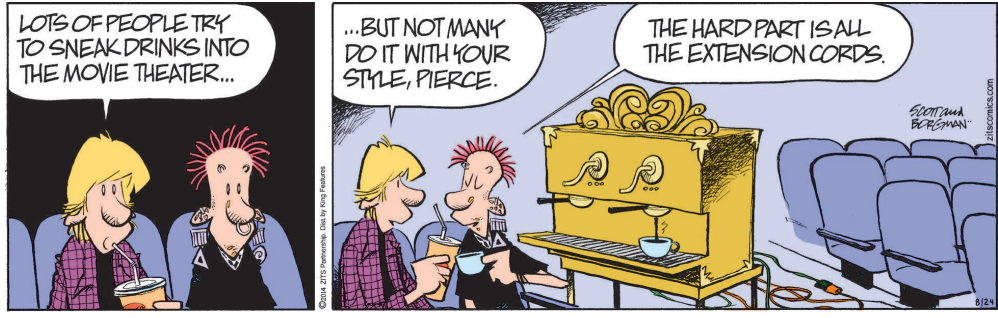
## BABY BLUES



## WIZARD OF ID



## ZITS



## ROSE IS ROSE

