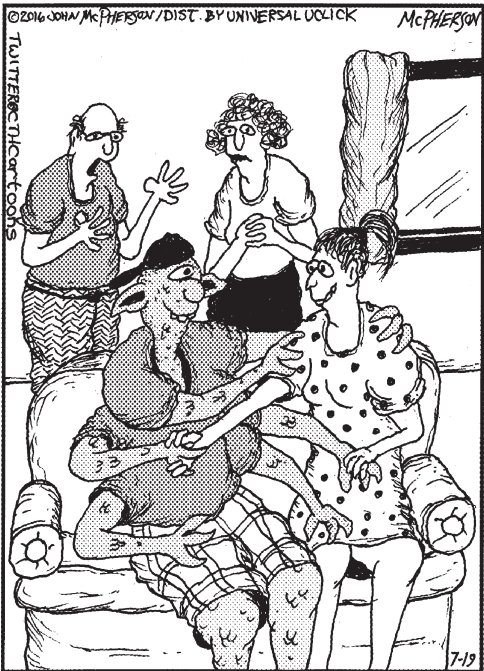


CLOSE TO HOME by John McPherson



"I have no problem with Betsy dating an alien, there's just something about Zormbog that makes me uncomfortable."

# Story of abuse taints reader's memories

Dear Abby: I am in shock. My grown son, "Ryan," recently told me he was molested by his late father when he was a young boy. I had no idea, but I believe him. Ryan is an only child and has recently started seeing a counselor.

I loved my husband very much and I believed he loved me, but I no longer know what to think. If he were still alive, I would most likely leave him. But what do I do with more than 40 years of mostly good memories? Please help. — *Not a Clue in Indiana*



JEANNE PHILLIPS  
DEAR ABBY

Dear Not a Clue: That your son didn't tell you sooner, while you could have intervened, is regrettable. That he is now seeing a counselor about it is laudable. I don't blame you for having mixed emotions, but at this point it is too late for you to change anything. Hang onto the good memories, because you can't change history.

Dear Abby: I saw myself in the Jan. 15 letter from "Diana in San Diego," the lifelong

compulsive nail biter who wants to stop. I was diagnosed with trichotillomania (hair pulling and skin picking) three years ago, and it is closely related to nail biting. The trichotillomania learning center website, [www.trich.org](http://www.trich.org), is worth checking out for treatment options such as medications, behavioral therapy and support groups. — *Erica in Massachusetts*

Dear Erica: Thank you for the information. I received a deluge of helpful, caring responses to Diana's letter, and several readers mentioned trichotillomania in the more severe cases. Some had taken my advice to keep an emery board and cuticle scissors nearby a step further, by learning to do a full manicure and suggested she paint her nails a dark or bright color to help her stop biting.

Buffing was mentioned as a way to smooth imperfections that could be "triggers." A reader in Virginia added decorations to her nails — decals, stencils and rhinestones — that served as an impediment and cured her of the habit.

Other readers have used artificial (acrylic) nails as a way to allow their natural fingernails to grow out. James in Delaware helped

his ashamed then-fiancee hide her bitten-off, stubby nails when showing off her engagement ring by suggesting she put on artificial ones. While she proudly showed off the ring to everyone, her own nails grew out beautifully and she never chewed them again.

Additional growing-out tips mentioned by readers were: coating the nails with a hardening solution, keeping the cuticles moist with petroleum jelly, cuticle cream — even lip balm. A reader reassured Diana that there are indeed "bad-tasting" products that successfully work as a deterrent.

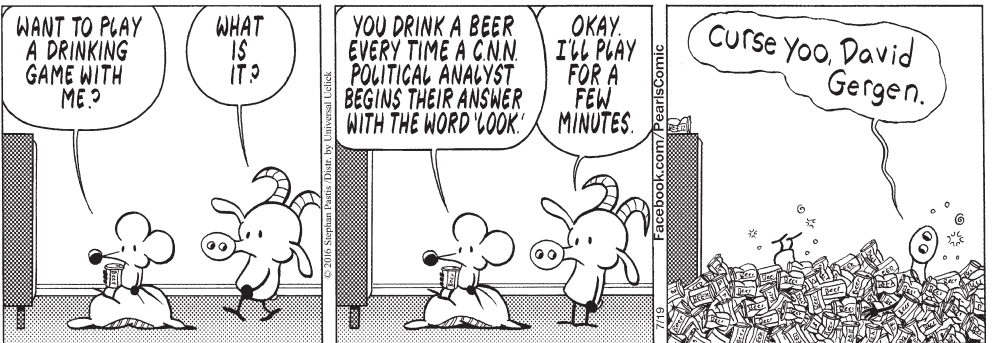
Keeping the hands busy has helped many readers. Breaking off a corner of one of her front teeth stopped Pat in Texas. Others found addressing a vitamin deficiency did the trick for them. Wearing a tight rubber band around the wrist to snap when the urge hits can give a nail-biter the incentive to stop. And from Sandi in San Francisco: "A teacher showed me an enlarged picture taken from a microscope of what was under fingernails. Now I don't even think about biting!"

Write Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](mailto:www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

TUNDRA by Chad Carpenter



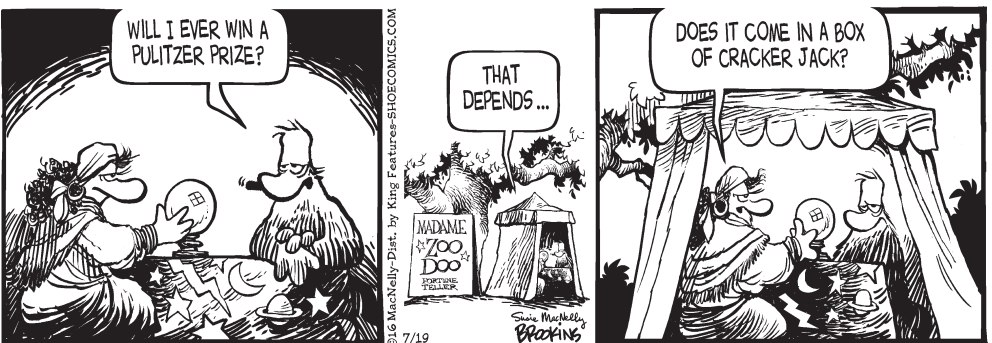
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE by Stephan Pastis



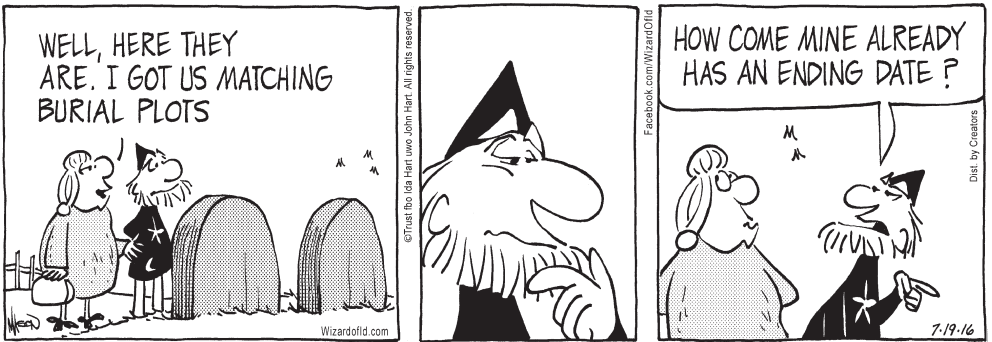
GARFIELD by Jim Davis



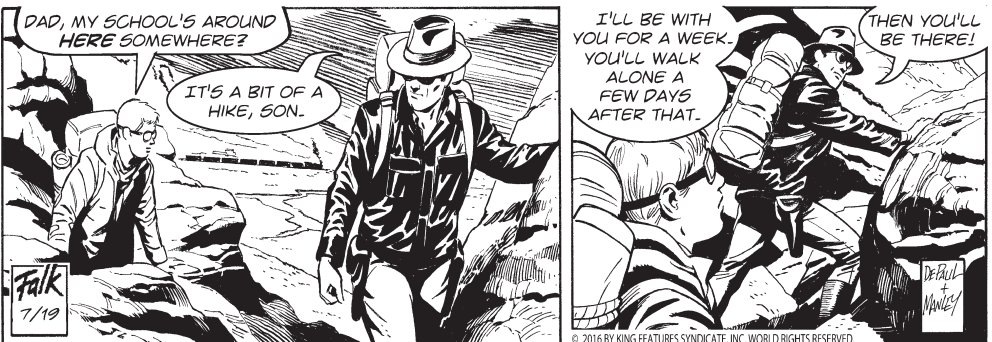
JEFF MACNELLY'S SHOE by Chris Cassatt and Gary Brookins



WIZARD OF ID by Brant Parker



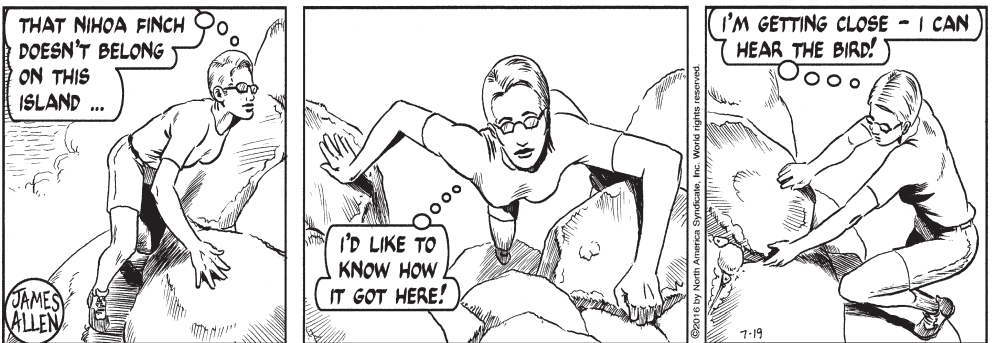
THE PHANTOM by Lee Falk



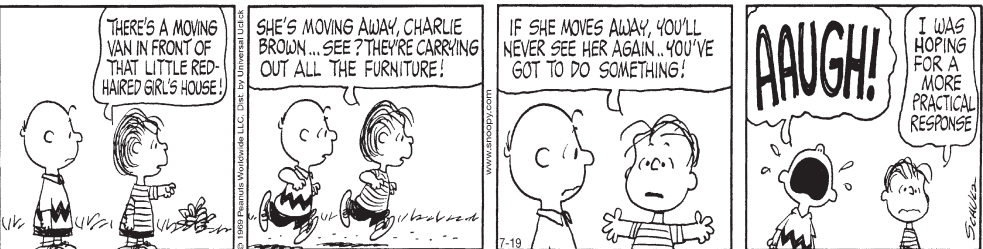
DILBERT by Scott Adams



MARK TRAIL by James Allen



PEANUTS by Charles Schulz



PICKLES by Brian Crane

