

# LIVING

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## MOTHERLODE

### Those noisy babies in the attic gotta go



LORRAINE SOMMERFELD

"Did you hear that?" I whispered around midnight the other night. "Bffmffffbbsbbbbbb," was the only sound from the sleeping lump beside me. Poor Sod has been working seven days a week, and midnight finds him suspended in some etherlike coma. Someone could break in and steal his fillings. "Something is bowling in the attic," I continued. I could hear something rolling up and down the floor overhead, and so could the cats. Happy for the extracurricular excitement, Jojo boisterously jumped up into Poor Sod's sock drawer, left open three inches. Unfortunately, her butt is about six inches wide, and it was her inevitable five-foot tumble that finally woke him up. "It's squirrels," he muttered and started to get up. "You can't do anything now. We'll deal with it tomorrow," I told him. "Then why'd you wake me up?" The next day, two cats stayed on high alert as squirrels ran around in the attic. We always get birds up there each spring, and we're too soft-hearted to turf them out. But I do mind squirrels taking up residence in my attic without a reservation or a valid credit card. After work, Poor Sod got the ladder, a headlamp thing, a face mask and a garbage bag. This was his squirrel hunting uniform. As I held the base of the ladder, I could hear a squirrel laughing. The halogen headlamp has two settings: One is a strong beam, the other flashes like a strobe. Accidentally hitting the wrong switch, Poor Sod set it to pulse. I saw the

light change in the darkened attic. "What's going on up there?" I called. "Dancing With Squirrels, what-dya think?" he snipped. After a spirited chase amid rafters and aging fibreglass insulation, Poor Sod won and closed over the holes. The next morning, I awoke to a familiar scampering overhead. Sighing, I pulled out the phone book, realizing that Poor Sod - 1, Squirrel - 0 had had a flag on the play. I called Humane Wildlife Control, rather liking the sporting chance the word "Humane" seemed to offer. My father would have used a .22. I was using a chequebook. "Oh, you have to be careful with squirrels. There's probably babies involved," said Jason. "And squirrel mothers will rip your house apart to get to their babies. I'll send Moe over this afternoon." Moe and Guy showed up in a white van and proceeded to put wire over every opening in the roof. They checked the attic; they checked the eaves; they sprayed Eau du Stay Away, and told me I was clear. Poor Sod came home, and I told him the decision I had made. I focused on the babies, rather than the cost. I made him consider the hysteria of a pregnant squirrel. "Babies?" he asked, wide-eyed. "I don't know nuthin' about birthin' babies..." The idea of birds building a nest and hatching some eggs in my attic each spring doesn't creep me out. But extending the same hospitality to squirrels or raccoons wasn't going to happen. Something I read explained that I'm exhibiting biobigotry - when you can like feeding chickadees, but not crows, squirrels but not rats. I'm feeling a sliver of guilt about turfing a creature even the control guy termed a "fabulous mother." I rather like the appellation. Maybe I'll chew through somebody's roof vent to earn it myself.

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# Stressed out?

Turmoil takes a toll on diet and exercise

BY CANDICE CHOI

NEW YORK ♦ Breakfast is diet Pepsi and two packets of M&Ms. For lunch, macaroons and white chocolates filled with marzipan from the farmers' market near Wall Street. After learning her job would be cut this summer, Kelly Daly started reaching more frequently for the soothing effects of sugar. "It's a stress reliever. Especially now that a bunch of us are going to be laid off," said 49-year-old Daly. Her job reviewing medical insurance records in Manhattan's financial district is being cut after 11 years. As the credit and housing crises rattle the U.S. economy, pressures over bigger workloads, job security and shrinking savings are upending diets and fuelling unhealthy habits around the country. And in Canada, the economy has sharply deteriorated in the past three months and largely stalled as a result of woes south of the border, the Bank of Canada says. Stressed workers often reach for calorie-rich foods, skip the gym after a taxing day or forego meals because of heavy workloads. Or they indulge in other bad-for-you behaviour such as smoking, drinking or staying out late. But it is in times of duress, experts say, that minding your health is more critical than ever. Eating right and exercising may seem burdensome and even frivolous under such circumstances, but it actually gives people a greater sense of control and calm, said registered dietician Heather Bauer, author of *The Wall Street Diet* (HarperCollins Canada, \$26.95). "It's one less thing to stress you out," Bauer said. "If you're out of a job or in a financial slump, it can give you a sense of inspiration as well." For Aleksandra Cogura, heftier workloads in recent months mean skipping lunch. If she's lucky, she'll manage to grab breakfast on the go. Once a gym regular, she hasn't been in four months. "I just feel like I need to complete my work," said Cogura, a 44-year-old sales analyst in publishing in Manhattan.



FRANCES ROBERTS, THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**Kelly Daly has been eating a lot more sugar recently after learning she will lose her job soon. 'It's a stress reliever.'**

People under great stress release hormones and nerve chemicals that weaken the immune system, rendering them more susceptible to illness, said Dr. Esther Sternberg of the National Institute of Mental Health. Stress can also slow the body's ability to heal wounds, she said. That could also translate into higher worker absenteeism, and those who do show up are likely not as productive when under great stress, said David Ballard, who specializes in work stress issues at the American Psychological Association. Some ingredients for happy, productive workers include a flexible work-life balance, employee recognition programs and an at-

mosphere that lets employees take part in decisions, he said. For individuals, reducing stress means "controlling the things you can control" when work gets too chaotic, said Marlene Clark, a dietician with Cedar Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. Taking a brisk, 10-minute walk can do wonders for clearing the head, Clark said. She suggests scheduling the breaks and giving them as much priority as other tasks or meetings. Getting enough sleep is critical, too, especially when faced with more demanding work and hours, Clark said.

The Associated Press with files from The Canadian Press

## LIFE WITH CHILDREN will return

### BRIDGE AND CHESS

## From weak hands to invitational

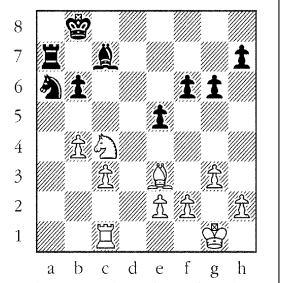
BY PHILLIP ALDER

Last week we looked at bidding with weak hands. This week let's move to game-invitational sequences. In the early days of bridge, under Culbertson, there were very few invitational auctions apart from raising one no-trump to two no-trump. To see the troubles this caused, look at the North hand in the diagram. Partner opens one spade. After a pass on your right, what would you respond? In the old days, there was no bid for this hand. It was too strong for two spades, but

not strong enough for a game-forcing three spades. What often happened was that North, to quote a leading authority, would bid two spades in ringing tones. Now, though, North can jump to three spades as a game-invitational raise. It shows at least four trumps, 10-12 total points (high-card points plus shortage points) and eight losers. (If you have a book that says you may make this immediate jump-raise with only three trumps, give it to your opponents and tell them how good it is!) Moving on, how should South plan the play

in four spades after West leads the club queen? Declarer has four potential losers: one in each suit. He must avoid a club loser. The only way to do that is to take a discard on the third round of hearts. However, if East ducks his heart ace for one round, South will need a hand entry. Since declarer is establishing a trick in hand, he should keep an entry there by winning trick one with dummy's club ace. Then South drives out the heart ace, wins the next club, discards dummy's last club on his third heart, and at last plays a trump.

### CHESS QUIZ



**WHITE'S BEST MOVE?**  
Hint: Not Bxb6 (or Nxb6).  
Solution: 1. b5! Nc5 2. Bxc5! bxc5 3. b6 wins a piece [Khalifman-Sanduleac '08].

By Shelby Lyman

Look for the Saturday Bridge and Chess and local Bridge results in Wits & Pieces

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