

LIFESTYLES

Be prepared before taking on meddling grandma

Dear Ann Landers: I have been married to "Rick" for 25 years. When we first married, Rick's mother welcomed me into the family and gave me a lot of attention.

I enjoyed it initially, but soon, it became smothering. She often came into our home while we were at work, and would clean the refrigerator, rearrange the furniture, set aside items to be given away, straighten out my lingerie drawers, and replace my husband's underwear.

She also went through our mail. We were nice about it, and said she didn't need to work so hard, but that made



ADVICE ON LIFE

by Ann Landers

no difference. She tried to give us money, but we told her we wanted the pride of our own hard work. She then bought us gifts we could not return.

After tolerating this for too many years, I told her it was impolite to go

through another person's dresser drawers and closets and that we valued our privacy. She was hurt, and claimed we didn't love her or need her anymore.

Since then, she no longer visits us or

allows us to take her out to dinner. The only time we see her is when she comes to visit the grandchildren.

Ann, the children are teenagers now, and my mother-in-law spoils them rotten. She gives them money and gifts, does their homework, buys them cars, and takes their side in all arguments.

She says they should not have to do household chores or be given curfews, and that they should "enjoy their childhood." Of course, the children think she is wonderful. When we tell Mom to please knock it off, she claims she is having chest pains and can't take the stress. Is there a solution to this prob-

lem, or are we — **Trapped in D.C.**

Dear D.C.: Rick's mother has been in control for 25 years. You and Rick are going to need counseling to learn how to deal with her, because it is apparent that you have been unable to do it on your own.

She is wily, shrewd and manipulative. Please get some professional help on a continual basis, because Grandma is going to fight you every inch of the way. Be prepared.

Dear Ann Landers: I have been married for 22 years and have three children. My husband and I love them dearly, and they know it. Unfortunately, my husband and I do not love each other, and never have. I don't know why we married.

"Cliff" and I have been in this loveless arrangement since the wedding, and we haven't had sex for the last 10 years. He was never very good at it.

The sex part doesn't bother me. I actually prefer it this way. I've been sleeping in the guest room because Cliff snores and I need my rest.

Divorce is not an option right now — I simply cannot afford to be a single mother with three children. We barely manage our mortgage payments, and have no savings.

I am envious of my friends, who seem to be happily married. On my birthday, a male friend gave me a hug, and I still dream about it every night, even though I know it meant nothing to him.

A marriage counselor won't help, because there is no love to recapture. Cliff once told me I was the ugliest woman he had ever seen. I am no beauty, but I do try to look nice and keep my figure in good shape.

I'm only 47, Ann, and don't want to wait forever to find love and happiness. I am utterly miserable, and don't know what to do. Please, please, give me some advice. — **Stuck Forever in Kentucky**

Dear Kentucky: You need outside help. Your notion that marriage counseling can "recapture love" is a false one. Counseling can, however, help people mend the broken places in relationships and learn to cope with the hand life has dealt them.

I urge you to seek this kind of assistance. For openers, it might help if you'd get out of the guest room and try to thaw him out a little. That would be a good place to start.

Y2K mistake makes man billion richer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — It was a Y2K fantasy glitch.

A journalist in Cologne checked his online banking account on New Year's Day and an unexplained deposit of three billion marks (\$1.56 billion US) beamed out at him from his computer screen.

The software problem caused a momentary stir, but it was one of only a few blips in an otherwise flawless German transition into 2000.

Germany's hospitals reported only 11 minor problems that posed no threat to patients, the Interior Ministry reported Monday.

Even the billion-dollar glitch in Cologne turned out to be small change. It was not a true Y2K breakdown but a date-reading software error, said Ulricke Kohl, spokeswoman for Stadt Sparkasse Cologne, who declined to identify the customer.

The error may affect any year's turnover — not just 1999 to 2000, but 1998 to 1999 and so on. And it tripped up only customers who ignored bank warnings to upgrade their software.

"The problem showed up only on their computer screen. None of the actual account balances were ever altered," Kohl said.

Marriage education to become common says bridal report

NEW YORK (AP) — The future of marriage looks like this: later wedding vows, later parenthood, and efforts to ensure the longevity of the union, according to Bridal Guide magazine.

The bi-monthly publication reports on marriage trends in a coming issue, with these key findings:

■ In 1998, the median age for a first marriage was 25 for women and 27 for men. Ages will continue to rise as more people postpone marrying to establish their careers, the magazine says. This bodes well for marital success because couples will be more mature and better established financially.

■ "Marriage education" classes before the ceremony — an effort to ensure solid, lasting unions — will become commonplace.

■ Interracial and interfaith marriages will continue to increase. Census figures between 1960 and 1990 show a tenfold rise.

■ The birthrate for women between 30 and 34 grew more than any other age group between 1980 and 1990. Experts predict more one-child families, the magazine says.



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