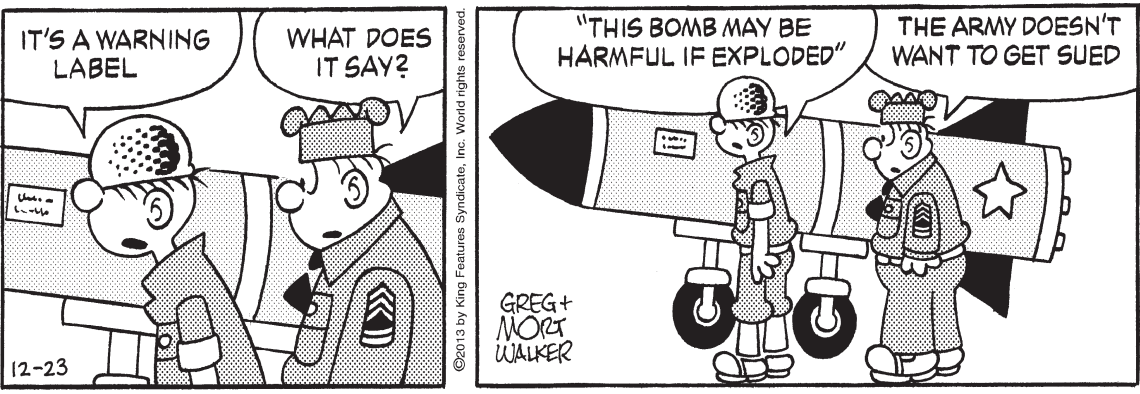


Baby Blues • Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



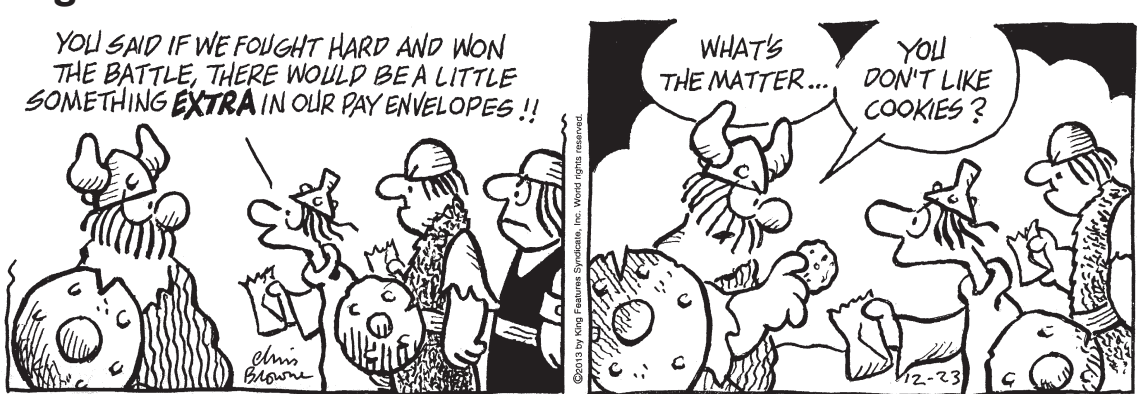
Beetle Bailey • Mort Walker



Blondie • Chic Young



Hagar the Horrible • Chris Browne



Mother Goose and Grimm • Mike Peters



Sally Forth • Greg Howard



Todd the Dinosaur • Patrick Roberts



Zits • Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



Terry Kovel

• Antiques and Collecting

Tree stands reflect the times

Holiday-related collectibles are especially popular if they relate to Christmas, Halloween, Fourth of July, Easter, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day and even St. Patrick's Day. But the most popular holiday for collectors is Christmas.

Families save tree ornaments, toppers, trim and lights, but it is harder to find a Christmas tree stand or fence. Early commercial tree stands were made of cast iron. Three or more legs held a tube large enough for the trunk of a tree and had large screws that dug into the tree trunk. The designs for the iron legs were much like the patterns found on iron stove feet or garden benches.

The stands kept changing in style to match dominant furniture styles. By the 1920s, cone-shaped metal stands with lithographed tin pictures of Santa were popular. They resembled lithographed tin toys. Some were electrified for lights or hid a revolving mechanism.

Noma, the American company that made strings of Christmas tree lights and developed the bubble light in 1945, had started making stands in about 1926. By the 1960s, the Art Deco aluminum tree was popular, and stands with colored lights were made of shining metal to match.

The most expensive antique stands are the early 1900 figural iron stands that look like a small Santa, a group of people or even reindeer. They sell for \$200 to \$750 each. Noma stands sell for about \$200 to \$300, and old aluminum stands with lights are \$250 to \$350. But beware. These have all been copied.



This Noma Christmas-tree stand was made in the late 1920s or 1930s. The base is 14 1/2 inches in diameter. The stand is made of lithographed tin and pictures Santa's sleigh and reindeer. It sold for \$270 at a November auction in Iowa.

Q: About 25 years ago, I bought an "M.I. Hummel" signed print of the Madonna for \$12. It's 12 by 18 inches. My children had it framed for me. My daughter tried to search online for information about Hummel prints, but all she could find were figurines. Can you help?

A: Sister Maria Innocentia (Berta) Hummel (1909-1946) is most famous for the Goebel figurines based on her artwork. But before and after she became a nun in 1933, she drew and painted pictures that were also published as prints. The signature she used on yours is her convent name and means the original painting was done in 1933 or later. Your print would not sell today for much more than you paid for it, even with the frame.

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Bridge • Steve Becker

North dealer.
North-South vulnerable.
East-West partscore of 90.

NORTH
♠ J 10 2
♥ 7 4
♦ A K 10 5 4
♣ A Q 8

WEST
♠ 9 7 5
♥ 8 5
♦ 8 7 6 2
♣ J 10 3

EAST
♠ K 3
♥ A K Q J 10 3 2
♦ —
♣ 9 6 4 2

SOUTH
♠ A Q 8 6 4
♥ 9 6
♦ Q 9 3
♣ K 7 5

The bidding:
North 1♦ East 1♥ South 1♠ West Pass
2♦ 2♥ 3♦ 3♥
3♠ 4♦! 3♥ Pass Pass!!
Dble 4♥ Dble Pass
4♠

Opening lead — six of diamonds.

Famous Hand

This deal occurred in a rubber-bridge game many years ago. The hero was Milton M. Miller of Toronto, who held the East hand.

The bidding progressed smoothly until Miller bid four diamonds, the opponents' suit. His intent was clear: He wanted West to lead a diamond if South became declarer in a spade contract.

But West, for reasons known only to himself, passed four diamonds! Perhaps he had made up his mind never to bid with such a dreadful hand, or perhaps the pass was strategic, since he would not have minded going down a few tricks undoubled.

With good prospects for a vulnerable game, North was unwilling to settle for a small penalty, so he doubled. This gave Miller a chance to rescue himself, after which North bid four spades.

Apparently, West did have some idea as to the meaning of East's four-diamond bid, because he led a diamond. Miller ruffed and, desperate to put West back on lead, returned the deuce of hearts!

Without giving the matter any thought, declarer played low, and West, to his astonishment, won the trick with the eight! When he had sufficiently recovered, he returned another diamond, ruffed with the king. Miller then cashed a heart, the defense's fourth trick, to set the contract.

There is no point in dwelling on the fact that South should have played the nine on East's heart return at trick two — it would have cost him nothing to do so. Rather, we would like to give full credit to Miller, who had the presence of mind to bid four diamonds and the daring to underlead his heart honors in a valiant attempt to defeat the contract.

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Family Circus • Bil Keane



12-23
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Conceptis Sudoku • Dave Green

6	7		3			1	
5				1	2		6
			5	9	6		4
8		1				8	9
	3	7				4	
7	8		6	2	7		
	4			8			3
							7
							2

Difficulty Level ★

This is a logic-based number placement puzzle. The goal is to enter a number, 1-9, in each cell in which each row, column and 3x3 region must contain only one instance of each numeral. The solution to the last Sudoku puzzle is at right.

2	6	8	4	7	1	9	5	3
7	4	1	9	3	5	2	8	6
9	5	3	8	2	6	1	4	7
3	2	4	7	5	9	6	1	8
1	9	5	2	6	8	7	3	4
8	7	6	3	1	4	5	9	2
5	1	7	6	8	3	4	2	9
6	3	9	5	4	2	8	7	1
4	8	2	1	9	7	3	6	5

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

Cryptoquip

WNH IZQZN FW HVFKV QRR
CNIFONWZI QCN FWIZCTKZNO
FW ZVN RQWLTQLN ZVQZ
LQWOVF TINO: VFWOF-QWQ.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: EVERYONE HERE SEEMS TO HAVE KITSCHY GARDEN STATUES. I THINK THEY CALL THIS GNOME-MAN'S LAND.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: R equals L

Crossword • Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Bath site gear, for short
4 Swiss ski resort
9 Poke wine
12 "— was saying ..."
13 Dodge Fleming
14 First lady
15 "Barbar-ella" star
17 Help
18 Lobbying org.
19 Tweaks texts
21 — party (sleep-over)
24 Knocks occupant
25 Swelled head
26 School's website suffix
28 Wanderer
31 Historic times
33 Man-mouse link
35 Turkey stuffing herb
36 Dashboard, e.g.
38 In the env.
40 Operate
41 On

DOWN

2 "Born in the —"
3 Crib
4 Malign
5 Guaca-mole base
6 Moving past or post
7 Stranger
8 Sailor
9 "Design-ing Women" actress
10 Enthusi-astic
11 Founda-tions
16 Ecologi-cal org.
20 Long narrative poem
21 Incubator noise
22 City of India
23 Oscar nominee
27 End for
29 Chills and fever
30 Hide-aways
32 Plant bristle
34 Really old
37 Impasse
39 Rubs the wrong way
42 Abdul or Zahn
44 Popular card game
45 Numbers course
46 Lotion additive
50 Neither mate
51 Disen-cumber
52 Expert
53 Ever-green type

Saturday's answer 12-23

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
12			13					14			
15			16					17			
			18					19	20		
21	22	23				24					
25			26		27		28		29	30	
31			32		33		34		35		
36			37		38		39		40		
			41		42		43		44		
45	46					47					
48			49		50				51	52	53
54			55						56		
57			58						59		