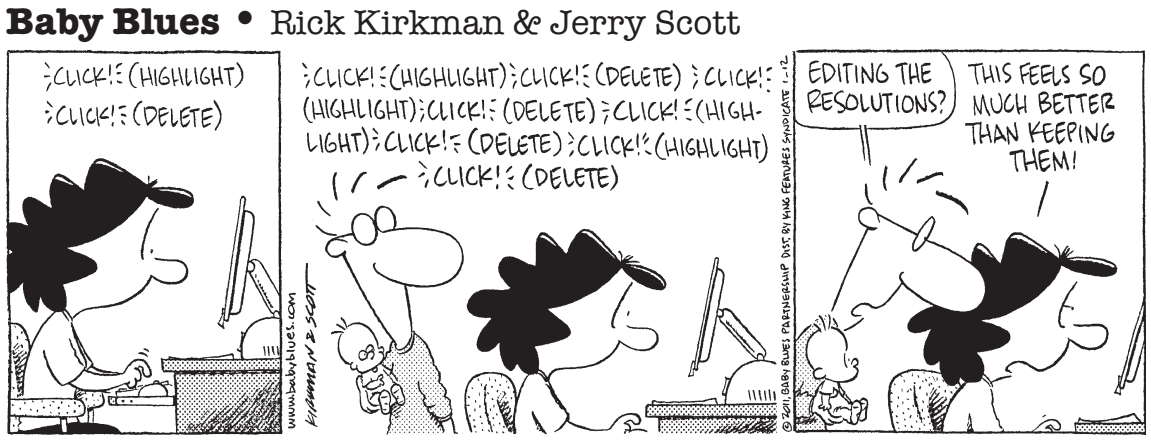
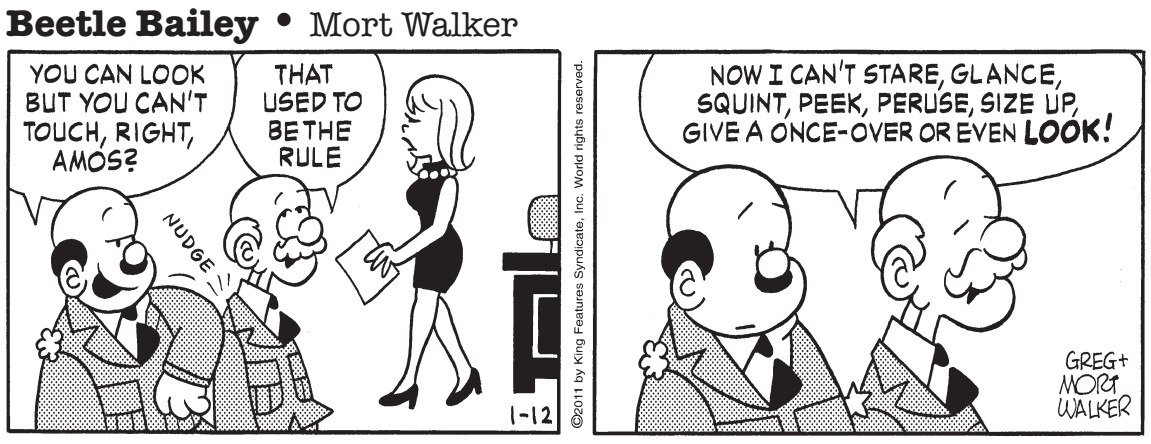
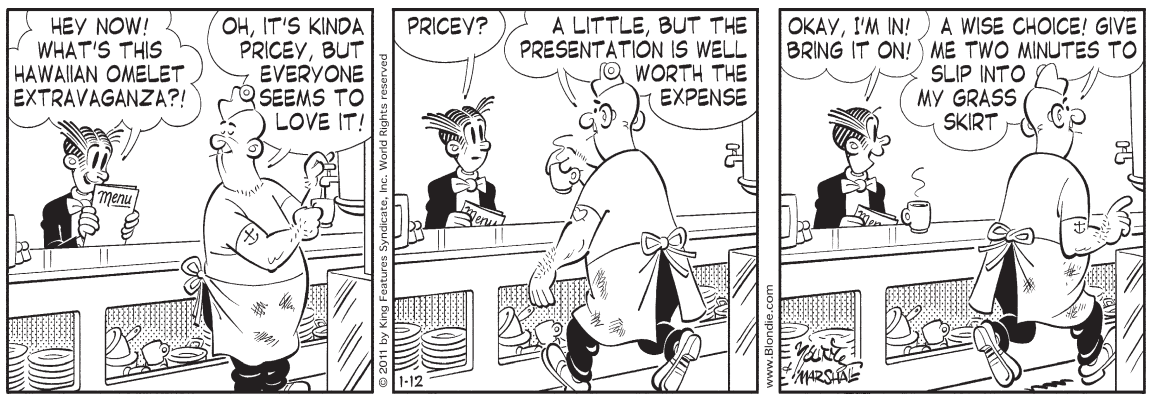
Baby Blues • Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



Beetle Bailey • Mort Walker



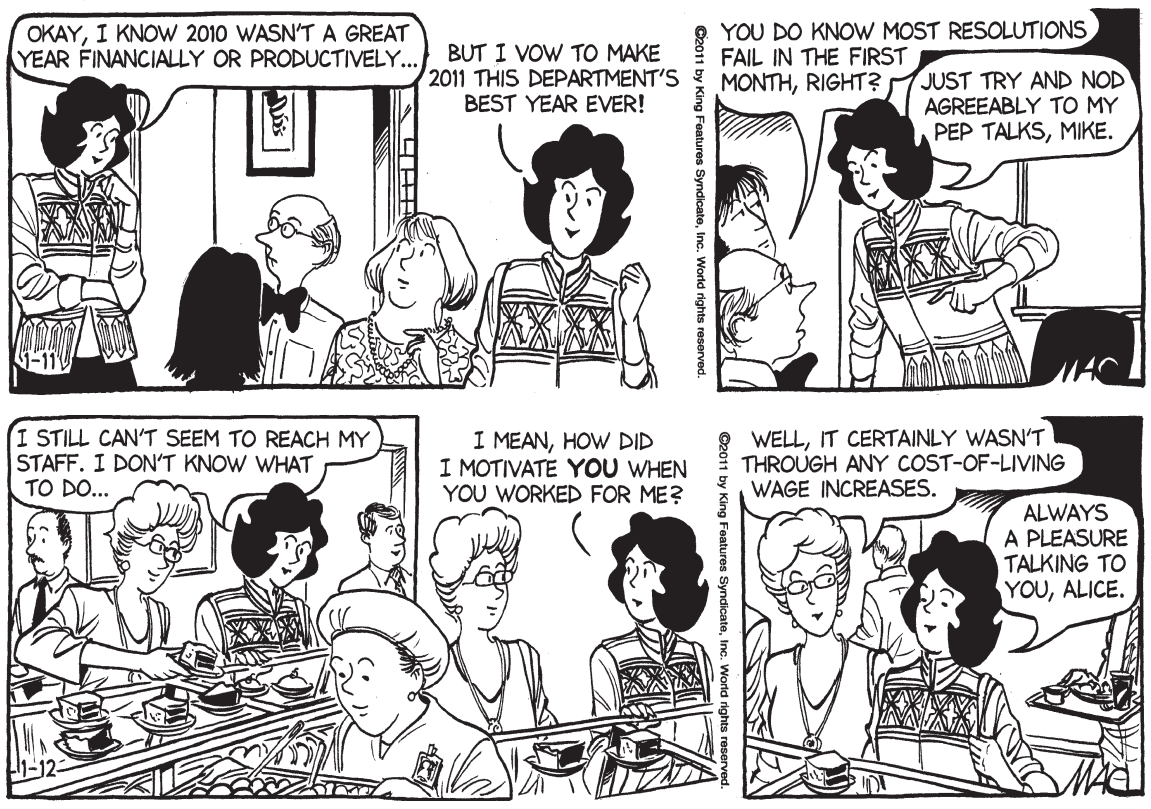
Blondie • Chic Young



Hagar the Horrible • Chris Browne

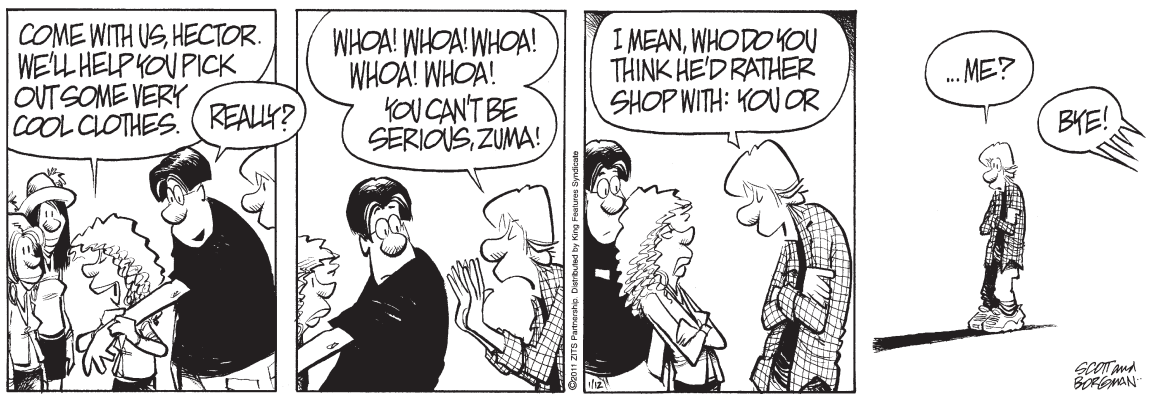
Mother Goose and Grimm • Mike Peters

Sally Forth • Greg Howard



Todd the Dinosaur • Patrick Roberts

Zits • Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



Heloise

• Hints from Heloise

Slow cooker tops for winter

Dear Readers: With winter here, it's a perfect time to use your SLOW COOKER for some delicious comfort food and to save on your food budget! Here are some helpful hints:

• Can't find the lid of your slow cooker? Check out resale shops for a match.

• If the pot of your slow cooker is not removable, clean with water and some dish soap. If baked-on food remains, fill the pot with water and plug in for about 20-30 minutes. Stuck food should loosen and be easier to clean.

• Newer models of slow cookers have a "warm" setting to keep foods, dips and even beverages, well, warm!

• No peeking! Every time you look in on your food cooking, it adds 20 to 30 minutes to your cook time, which means dinner is late and you use more energy.

• Cut up veggies the night before, or use frozen ones.

• Concerned about leaving the cooker on all day while not at home? Don't be. They can be safely used while no one is watching.

Once you use one, you'll ask yourself, "Why didn't I do this before?" – Heloise

SEND A GREAT HINT TO:

Heloise
P.O. Box 795000
San Antonio, TX 78279-5000
Fax: 210-HELOISE
E-mail: Heloise(at)Heloise.com

KEEPING GRAVY WARM

Dear Heloise: For big family dinners, I use my insulated, glass-lined coffee carafes for the gravy. It works great for a large family dinner, and everyone can be assured that the gravy will be hot, especially for those return trips. I also use my slow cookers for keeping mashed potatoes and dressing warm. – Susanne in La Habra Heights, Calif.

CEREAL HINT

Dear Heloise: When I buy boxes of cereal, I immediately pour the contents into a clear, gallon-size zipper bag and throw away the big, bulky boxes. Now it's easy to determine which cereal you want, and the sealed bag keeps it fresher. Takes up less space on the shelf, too! – Jean in Torrington, Conn.

Good point, and one I do sometimes. I cut off the label and the nutritional info and slip it in the bag for later reference. – Heloise

LIDS AS COOKIE CUTTERS

Dear Heloise: I keep the tops of spray-oil cans. After washing them, I use them as biscuit and cookie cutters. – Treva Easterling in Florida

POST-HOLIDAY CANDY

Dear Heloise: After the holidays, I always have leftover candy-coated chocolates. I separate them into two different bags – red for Valentine's Day and green for St. Patrick's Day. I put them in cookies when baking for those holidays! – Linda in Dublin, Ohio

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Bridge • Steve Becker

North dealer.
Both sides vulnerable.

NORTH
♠ A 5
♥ A Q J 9 3
♦ A K 10 2
♣ 7 4

WEST
♠ 8 2
♥ 8 7 6 2
♦ 9 7 5
♣ A 9 6 5

EAST
♠ Q J 10 9 6
♥ K 4
♦ Q 8 3
♣ K 8 2

SOUTH
♠ K 7 4 3
♥ 10 5
♦ J 6 4
♣ Q J 10 3

The bidding:

North	East	South	West
1 ♥	1 ♠	1 NT	Pass
3 NT			

Opening lead — eight of spades.

Keeping an Open Mind

There are times when a defender must revise his initial plan to defeat the contract and look elsewhere for the setting trick(s). Today's deal from a 2010 team contest provides a case in point.

Declarer won the opening spade lead in his hand in order to try the heart finesse, and East took the king and returned a spade to establish his suit. East hoped to regain the lead with a diamond or a club, in which case his three spade winners would set the contract.

After taking the spade return, declarer ran dummy's hearts, forcing East to make three discards. The first discard – a club – was easy, but the last two were not. To keep all of his spades as well as protection for the queen of diamonds, East decided to get rid of his K-8 of clubs, hoping his partner could guard against that suit.

This made things simple for declarer, who next led a club to the queen. West allowed the queen to hold (South would have made an overtrick if West had taken the ace), and declarer had his ninth trick.

Nine tricks would also have accrued if East had thrown one of his spades in order to keep the club king. In that event, East would win the club lead from dummy at trick eight and cash his two remaining spades, but would then have to return a diamond from the queen to yield the contract.

The trouble with East's defense was that he had his heart so set on scoring his spades that he missed an obvious alternative. All he had to do was to discard two spades on the last two hearts and hold the K-8 of clubs. East could then put up the king on the first club lead (if South had the ace, declarer had nine tricks), cash his good spade and lead a club to West's ace.

West's diamond return would leave declarer with no recourse, and the defenders would wind up scoring two clubs, a heart, a spade and a diamond for a one-trick set.

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Family Circus • Bil Keane

"She can't listen to you right now. Her ears are all full."

Conceptis Sudoku • Dave Green

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

Difficulty Level ★★★ 1/12

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.

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

Difficulty Level ★ 1/10

Cryptoquip

RV "KGWWM NV VNJSPFW" ON-GNBS KGRSW WUWJ OGYFIWQ GNDWB, R KNPMQ ONFBRQWJ GWJ Y DNURFI UYFFY.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHENEVER OBAMA'S VICE PRESIDENT WAITS FOR THE PERFECT MOMENT TO ACT, IS HE BIDEN HIS TIME?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: V equals F

Crossword • Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS
1 Cornfield cry
4 Exec's deg.
7 Sea eagle
8 First Lady before Michelle
10 Sports venue
11 Science of light
13 Body of water in Utah
16 Cleopatra's slayer
17 Detests
18 U.S. spy org.
19 — support
20 Filth
21 Sly smile
23 Halloween option
25 — and carrots
26 Subject, often
27 Early bird?
28 Shows signs of aging
30 Hot tub
33 Something insignificant
36 Midday rest
37 Quaff
38 Art support
39 On the rocks
40 Part of UCLA
41 Curvy character

DOWN
1 Hardly Mr. Right
2 Faris or Paquin
3 Newscast portion
4 Syrup choice
5 Ashtray fill
6 Seed cover
7 Makes a mistake
8 Averse
9 Gum arabic
10 Khan title
12 Blouse companion
14 Santa's load
15 Consume
19 "— the season ..."
20 Lair
21 Bell-shaped flowers
22 The youngest Simpson
23 14-Down's contents
24 "The Satanic Verses" author
25 Corral
26 Of birth
28 Painting surface
29 Hotel room posting
30 Heavens above
31 Be in abeyance
32 Request
34 Authentic
35 Curved paths

Solution time: 21 mins.

A	M	I	R		R	A	P		L	A	V	E
S	A	R	I		E	G	O		A	C	I	D
P	L	O	P		C	O	L	D	C	A	S	E
S	E	N	S	E	I		L	O	U	D	E	R
			A	T	T	U		E	N	E		
S	H	O	W	C	A	S	E		A	M	M	O
P	A	D		S	L	E	D	S		I	A	N
A	L	I	T		S	U	I	T	C	A	S	E
			O	A	R		P	F	U	I		
O	P	U	S	E	S		I	N	C	O	M	E
T	E	S	T	C	A	S	E		A	V	O	W
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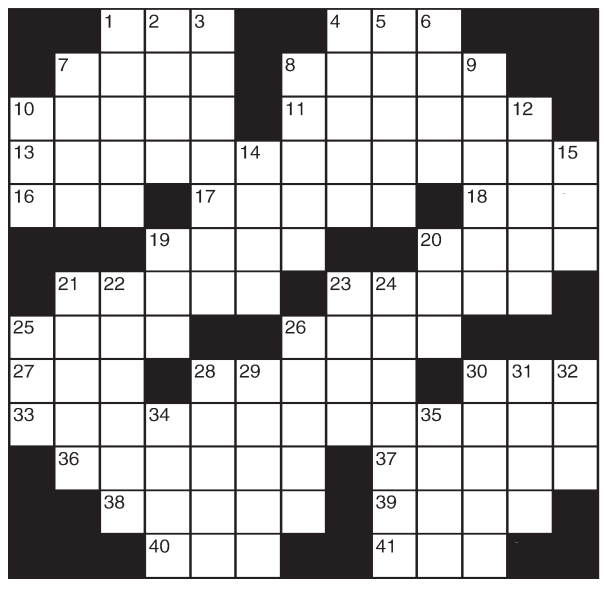
S	O	Y	S		E	D	S		A	N	T	S

Yesterday's answer 1-12