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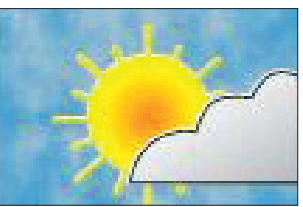
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FARMERS

H BIG SPRING HERALD

WEDNESDAY
 DECEMBER 29, 2010



VOLUME 106, NUMBER 23 COPYRIGHT 2010 50 CENTS DAILY/\$1.25 SUNDAY

Cops: Don't drink and drive

By STEVE REAGAN
 Staff Writer
 Law enforcement officials want area drivers to have a safe — and sober — New Year's Eve celebration. But those officials added that people who might be tempted to celebrate a bit too much should reconsider.

Area police, sheriff deputies and state troopers will be out in force through New Year's Eve, and they will not be looking kindly on those who are drinking and driving. The Department of Public Safety has adopted a zero-tolerance policy toward drunk drivers as part of their annual holiday oversight operation,

which has been in effect since the Christmas holiday season began earlier this month. DPS troopers will be looking for unsafe drivers in general, and three offenses in particular: speeding, driving without seat belts and driving while intoxicated. Officials emphasize that the agency's zero-tolerance

stance extends toward both DWIs and driving without seat belts. Absolutely no warnings will be written for either, officials say, because troopers anticipate traffic will be very heavy this season, leaving no room for these type of mistakes. Big Spring Police Department officials said the agency

will not have extra officers patrolling the streets on New Year's Eve, but the ones on duty will be on the lookout for apparent drunk drivers.
 Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331 ext. 234 or by e-mail at reporter@big-springherald.com

1st-class stamps 'forever'

DOUGLASS K. DANIEL
 Associated Press
 WASHINGTON — Rumormongering around for 1- and 2-cent postage stamps when postal rates go up is heading the way of the Pony Express. Beginning in January, all new stamps good for 1 ounce of first-class mail will be marked as "forever." The move is designed to help customers cope with postage increases, a U.S. Postal Service official told The Associated Press on Tuesday. The official requested anonymity to discuss a policy that hasn't been announced formally. Postmaster General Patrick R. Donahoe plans to announce the new policy Jan. 14, the official said. "I think that's a great idea," Sean Swilling, a research analyst for commercial property, said inside a downtown Washington post office during a mail run. "For me, a guy who uses snail-mail regularly, it's a hassle to get 1- or 2-cent stamps. Streamline things — that would be perfect." When the Postal Service unveiled its first-class commemorative stamps for 2011 on Tuesday, all were marked "forever" instead of the current rate of 44 cents. The initial first-class stamp under the new policy will be



In April 2007, the United States Postal Service introduced The Forever Stamp, and since then, more than six billion have been sold. According to the USPS, these stamps can be used to mail one-ounce letters regardless of when they were purchased or if prices increase in the future.

the Lunar New Year: Year of the Rabbit stamp, to be issued Jan. 22. It will be followed by stamps commemorating Kansas statehood on Jan. 29 and, in February, the centennial of President Ronald Reagan's birth. The Forever Stamp, first issued in April 2007 and featuring the Liberty Bell, was designed for use regardless of changes in postal rates. They are sold at the prevailing price of 1 ounce of domestic first-class postage. The Postal Service says that

28 billion Forever Stamps have been sold since, generating \$12.1 billion in total revenue. The stamps without denominations already account for 85 percent of its stamp program, the service says. The Postal Service sought a 2-cent increase in postage rates for 2011, but the independent Postal Rate Commission rejected the request. The post office is appealing the decision in federal court. Use of the Internet as well See **STAMPS**, Page 3A

Festival of Lights draws thousands, organizers claim

Display open through Friday night.
By STEVE REAGAN
 Staff Writer
 As the Comanche Trail Festival of Lights enters the home stretch of its 14th annual run, almost 20,000 people have visited the holiday attraction, officials say. Pat Simmons, who has directed the event since its inception, said 19,435 people have toured the festival as of Tuesday morning. The busiest night was Christmas Eve, when more than 2,200 people came through the gates at Comanche Trail Park. People from 36 states and 12 countries have visited the event, Simmons said. "I don't think we'll get the 25,000 goal I wanted, but it's going good," Simmons said. "In fact, it's gone exceptionally well. We had an attempted theft of some floodlights the other night, but other than that, things have gone well." The festival runs nightly from 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Co-



Simmons

manche Trail Park. Visitors are asked to enter the park at the intersection of Whipkey Drive and U.S. Highway 87. Admission is free, although donations, which go toward financing future festivals, are welcome. Aside from dozens of lighted poinsettias, which have become the event's trademark, the festival features many other attractions, including stage coaches, buffaloes, snow men, gingerbread men and angels, all brightly lit. Organizers say more than 1 million bulbs are used in the various exhibits. Recent health issues have forced Simmons to take more of a back seat role during this year's festival. Most of the day-to-day responsibility rests with the Stewart family — Howard, Vickie, Quintinn and Stephanie. "I think they've done a great job," Simmons said. "I couldn't have done it after my back surgery ... but I still go out there every night and open it up and close it down. Howard and his family have done an outstanding job." Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331 ext. 234 or by e-mail at reporter@big-springherald.com

Storybook brings slain child's imagination to life

MATT SEDENSKY
 Associated Press
 JUPITER, Fla. (AP) — The little girl's white, four-post bed is empty, her favorite doll Natalie atop it. Her pink plate and cup are set on the kitchen table; her vitamins await. The last CD she listened to is in her little stereo, the last lesson she learned on the blackboard, the last month she was

alive frozen on the unturned page of the calendar. Since a relative's Thanksgiving Day 2009 shooting rampage at their home, Jim and Muriel Sitton have faced a horrific balancing act: moving on past the time-stopping grief of losing their 6-year-old daughter Makayla Joy, See **BOOK**, Page 3A



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Mackenzie Stone had 17 points in the Big Spring Lady Steers' win over Whiteface Tuesday in the Slaton tournament.

Area basketball: Tournament play heats up for teams

Big Spring girls

SLATON — The Big Spring Lady Steers got a big boost from guard Mackenzie Stone in their win over Whiteface to open the Slaton tournament.

Stone had 17 points and three 3-pointers in the win. Holding Whiteface to three points in the first and two points in the third quarter was also key in the win.

Whiteface 3 11 2 11 - 27
Big Spring 16 13 11 3 - 43

Big Spring — Mackenzie Stone 17, Diamond Mayes 9, Bridgette Tuitt 6, LaShaunte Anderson 5, Cerbi Ritchey 4, Logan Yarbar 2

Whiteface — Villanueva 7, Davis 5
Records: Big Spring (13-3)
Next game: Big Spring vs. Slaton at 6:30 p.m.

Forsan girls

STERLING CITY — It was a close game for the Forsan Lady Buffs, but as long as they had Ambra Hill, everything was going to fall into place.

Hill had 24 points and the Forsan clinched a berth in the championship game of the Sterling City tournament.

The win gives Forsan another victory coming off a win against Coahoma at home to open district play.

Sterling City 9 13 13 7 - 42
Forsan 11 10 14 10 - 45

Forsan — Ambra Hill 24, Shelby Roemer 9, Morgan Forshee 4, Stevie Wilson 4, Miranda Park 2, Kay/C Stanley 1, Megan Crane 1

Next game: Forsan vs. Roscoe at 4:30 p.m.

Forsan boys

STERLING CITY — It was a busy day for the Forsan Buffaloes Tuesday, but a win over Rankin and a loss to Sterling City put them in the third-place game against Miles at 3 p.m. today.

Kolten Self was big in the win over Rankin with 19 points, but Ty Johnson's 10 points wasn't enough to get Forsan past Sterling City. Forsan did not score a point in the final quarter of the Sterling City game.

Rankin 2 12 9 4 - 27
Forsan 8 7 22 15 - 52

Forsan — Kolten Self 19, B. Phillips 8, Ty Johnson 7,

See **BASKETBALL**, Page 2B

Spurs rout reeling Lakers

The Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Tim Duncan and Manu Ginobili were on the bench before the final horn, and not because of their bad shooting nights. That's how easy it was for the San Antonio Spurs.

On the other end, Kobe Bryant was also out of the game early. That's how bad it's getting for the Los Angeles Lakers.

Tony Parker scored 23 points and the Spurs, backing up their NBA-best record against the defending champions, beat a still-frustrated Bryant and the reeling Lakers 97-82 on Tuesday night.

"It's always great to beat the champion," Ginobili said.

The Spurs improved to 27-4, and if there are any doubts about that record being inflated, they can likely put those to rest this week. Next up is Dallas, one of the only teams to beat them this season, followed by games against Oklahoma City, New York and Boston.

The Lakers, meanwhile, can't seem to beat anyone.

It was another humiliation for the Lakers, who lost a week ago by 19 at home to lowly Milwaukee. That was followed by letting LeBron James and the Miami Heat leave the Staples Center with another easy victory on Christmas Day, in one of the highest-rated televised NBA games in recent years.

Bryant railed on his team's lack of focus following the Heat loss, but had a more quiet disappointment after the Spurs became the third straight team to crush the Lakers.

Bryant had 21 points on 8-of-27 shooting, at one point missing 13 shots in a row. He answered questions in clipped sentences before saying he was confident the Lakers can steer out of their stumbling tailspin.

"I'm just (mad) at myself," Bryant said. "(Mad) I didn't play well."

He wasn't the only one on the Lakers. Bryant alluded to Derek Fisher's technical foul, after getting into a confrontation

See **SPURS**, Page 2B

Webb, Peterson help Vikings upset Eagles

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Considering everything else the Minnesota Vikings have endured this season, it was silly to think two extra days sitting around a hotel room would bring 'em down.

No way a determined rookie quarterback named Joe Webb was going to let that happen.

Webb threw for 195 yards and ran for a touchdown in his first career start fill-

ing in for an injured Brett Favre, and the lowly Vikings stunned Michael Vick and the NFC East champion Philadelphia Eagles 24-14 in the NFL's first Tuesday game since 1946.

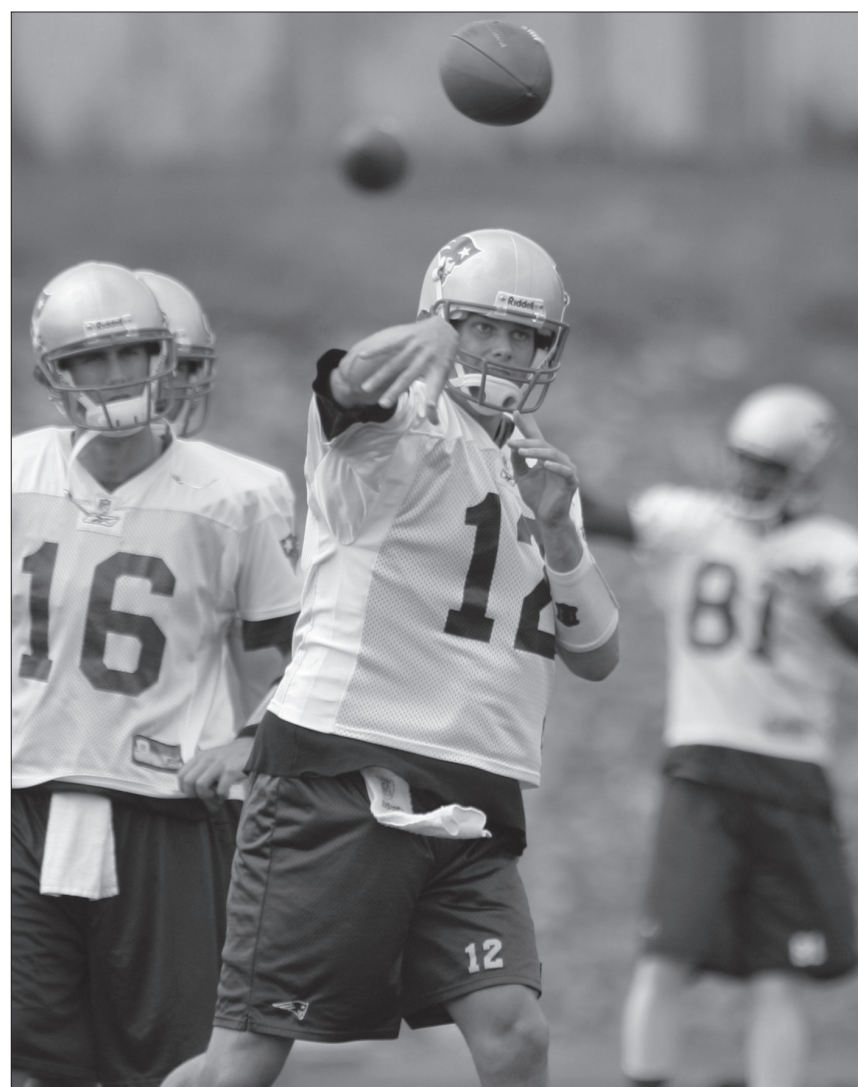
"It was a big win, especially with what we have gone through," Webb said. "It was a long trip for us and to get a win against the Eagles, we are trying to finish the season on a high note."

Adrian Peterson ran for

118 yards and a score, helping the 14-point underdogs knock Philadelphia out of contention for a first-round playoff bye.

The Eagles (10-5) could've secured a victory over the Vikings (6-9) and Dallas and with a loss by either Chicago or Atlanta next week.

"We don't deserve it after that performance," Eagles coach Andy Reid said. "Every phase was terrible. We didn't coach well enough."



AP File Photo

Tom Brady will be the starting quarterback for the AFC in the Pro Bowl this year.

Vick, Brady make Pro Bowl

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Michael Vick's sensational comeback season made a big impression throughout the NFL, not just in Philadelphia.

The Eagles' quarterback, who sat out two seasons while serving a federal sentence for dog-

fighting, was voted to start for the NFC in the Jan. 30 Pro Bowl in Honolulu.

Vick was selected in a league-wide vote by NFL players, coaches and fans.

Vick made three Pro Bowls with Atlanta before he was sus-

See **PRO BOWL**, Page 2B

News in brief

New York airports struggle to ease blizzard backlog

NEW YORK (AP) — Snow plows churned through the night, snack bars stayed open late and cleaning crews scrubbed round-the-clock to keep the terminals clean as New York's airports struggled to clear a huge backlog of flights that has stranded thousands of passengers across the United States.

Jetways were packed at New York's Kennedy airport, where at least three airliners — two Cathay Pacific planes and a British Airways plane — were stuck for more than seven hours on Tuesday while they waited for an open gate.

On Tuesday night the airport remained filled with passengers on cell phones and laptops, trying to re-book flights, make hotel reservations or figure out alternate plans. Lines at counters for rental cars, ground transportation and lost luggage remained long throughout the day.

More than 5,000 flights were canceled at the three main airports in New York — 1,000 on Tuesday alone.

But the blizzard that hit the northeast on Sunday crippled more than just air travel. Streets across New York remained unplowed, with hundreds of buses and dozens of ambulances stuck in the snowdrifts. Subway lines and commuter trains were running slower because of signal problems and short-circuits caused by the snow. In New Jersey, tow trucks worked to clear abandoned cars from the interstates.

U.S. commander: Troops defend towns, fight Taliban on Afghan soil, but border can't be sealed

WASHINGTON (AP) — American troops are focusing on fighting Taliban militants and defending vulnerable towns on Afghan soil, as it has become practically impossible to stop insurgents from slipping across Afghanistan's vast border with Pakistan, a senior U.S. military commander said.

"To secure the border in the traditional sense" would "take an inordinate amount of resources," Army Col. Viet Luong acknowledged Tuesday. It also would require far more cooperation from the tribes inside Pakistan who often provide Taliban fighters safe passage, he said.

Other senior U.S. military officials have said they hope the Pakistan military does more to shut down Taliban hideouts. But the U.S. has denied reports that American forces are pushing to expand special operations raids inside Pakistan's tribal areas to target militants.

Luong said he is choosing to fight insurgents outside Afghan villages, where they are more vulnerable anyway.

"It's naive to say that we can stop . . . forces coming through the border," said Luong, who oversees troops in a part of eastern Afghanistan that includes the volatile Khost province and 162 miles of border.

Fuel consumption falls by 20 percent in Iran after subsidy cuts quadruple prices

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Fuel consumption has fallen by a fifth since the government began slashing energy and food subsidies earlier this month, a top government official said Wednesday, claiming an early sign of success in the controversial program.

Gasoline prices quadrupled and bread prices tripled after the cuts came into effect Dec. 19, part of a government effort to boost Iran's ailing economy by reducing the massive drain on the state budget from the subsidies.

The economic shock has brought heavy criticism from reformists and even from some hard-liners — the political base of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad — who say the price hikes are too fast and steep. There have been fears of unrest among a population already struggling economically, though so far there has been no serious outbreak of protests or violence.

Ahmadinejad has called the subsidy cut plan the "biggest surgery" in Iran's economy in half a century and vowed to fully cut all subsidies by the end of his term in 2013. The government says it is paying some \$100 billion in subsidies annually, although experts believe the real amount is about \$30 billion.

Under the subsidy-cut plan, the government says part of the budget savings will be returned to the people through cash payments. Every family member has already received the equivalent of about \$80 for two months.

Skier: Nearly 2 feet of fresh snow at Maine ski resort softened fall after chair lift fails

CARRABASSETT VALLEY, Maine (AP) — All of that snow from the recent Northeast blizzard proved to be a blessing for at least one of the skiers who tumbled from a chair lift at a Maine ski resort.

Rebecca London, who was aboard the crippled lift, credited fresh, ungroomed snow for softening her landing Tuesday; the resort said it got 20 to 22 inches of snow a day earlier.

"The snow was all soft," said London, of Carrabassett Valley, whose goggles also protected her face when it hit the chair lift's retaining bar during the 30-foot fall.

At least eight others — including three children — were taken to hospitals after the double-chair lift at Sugarloaf derailed during a busy vacation week at the popular resort 120 miles north of Portland. Dozens of skiers remained on the crippled lift for more than an hour until the ski patrol could get them down.

An investigation will determine whether the accident was wind-related or mechanical, officials said. The ski resort was being buffeted by winds gusting up to 40 mph a day after the blizzard blew through. A witness said he saw a Sugarloaf employee working on the lift before the derailment.

Ivory Coast president clings to power despite West African nations' threat of military action

ABIDJAN, Ivory Coast (AP) — Laurent Gbagbo clung to power on Wednesday as West African leaders conferred on what to do next after he rebuffed their ultimatum to step down or face military intervention.

The presidents of Sierra Leone, Benin and Cape Verde were to brief Nigeria's president later Wednesday in Abuja, Nigeria, after they left Ivory Coast without Gbagbo, whom they hoped to accompany into exile. Nigeria is the most powerful member of the 15-nation regional bloc ECOWAS, which has vowed to use "legitimate force" if Gbagbo does

not relinquish power.

The military option apparently remained on the table for ECOWAS, which has sent combat troops to at least three African states in the past two decades.

Tensions have escalated in Ivory Coast, the world's main cocoa producer. A crowd in a pro-Gbagbo neighborhood on Tuesday surrounded a small U.N. convoy and wounded a peacekeeper with a machete, the U.N. said. Gbagbo has ordered peacekeepers out but the U.N. mission in Ivory Coast said after the attack that it "reiterates its determination to pursue its work in the service of the Ivorian people."

The United Nations declared Gbagbo the loser by of presidential elections on Nov. 28. The U.N., which was tasked with certifying the results of the election, the United States and other world powers have insisted Gbagbo leave the presidency.

Belgian Third World activist priest admits sexual abuse of minor 40 years ago

BRUSSELS (AP) — A Belgian priest and prominent Third World development activist has admitted he sexually abused a minor 40 years ago, according to the director of the development aid organization he founded.

The case of Francois Houtart came to light after the victim's sister came forward in reaction to a campaign to nominate the priest for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Bernard Duterme, director of Cetri, says Houtart resigned from the organization's board in November.

Houtart, who is currently in Ecuador, didn't immediately respond to phone calls and e-mail Wednesday, but in an interview with Belgian newspaper Le Soir, Houtart is quoted as saying he twice touched "the intimate parts" of a boy he describes as his cousin 40 years ago. He calls the incident "inconsiderate and irresponsible."

SKorea's leader calls for urgency in dismantling NKorea's nuclear program

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's president said Wednesday that urgent progress must be made next year in dismantling North Korea's atomic weapons program ahead of a key anniversary that could spur Pyongyang to bolster its nuclear capabilities.

President Lee Myung-bak said diplomats must quickly persuade the North to abandon its nuclear aspirations because Pyongyang is pushing to create a "powerful, prosperous nation" by 2012. The year is the 100th since the birth of Kim Il Sung, the revered guerrilla fighter-turned-political leader who founded the communist state in 1948 and the father of current leader Kim Jong Il.

That push could involve more aggressive behavior, and a South Korean Foreign Ministry-affiliated think tank, the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, warned in a recent report that North Korea could be planning another nuclear test for next year.

The two Koreas are still technically at war because their 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty. Last month, the North shelled southern-held Yeonpyeong Island along the disputed sea border, killing four people.

13th Month Closeouts

Legacy King Poster Bed Suite
List \$5400 7 Pc. Set \$1288



YEAR-END DISCOUNTS

Radio Remotes Monday & Tuesday
5 to 7 pm

Best Recliner
List \$569 NOW \$188

Ashley Sofa & Loveseat
List \$1300 NOW \$388



Now Through Friday
* LAST CHANCE *
Items Subject To Prior Sale

We Pay The Tax During This Event

Assortment Of Loveseats
List \$699-\$799 now \$188



Pfaltzgraff China Cabinet
List \$1669 As is \$488

Pennies on the Dollar!

Broyhill Entertainment Armoire
List \$2169 NOW \$648

Financing Available (WAC)

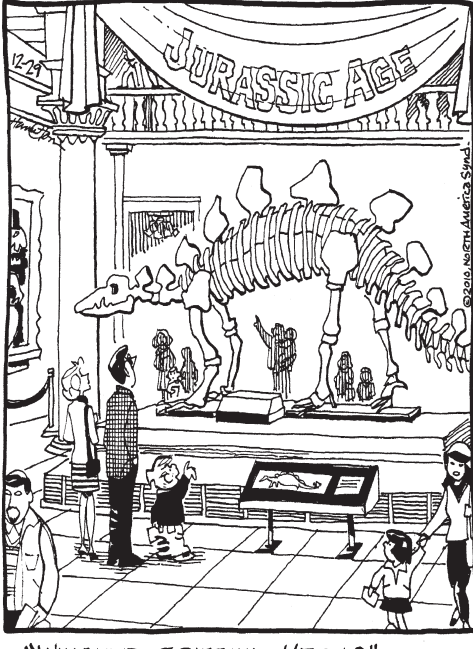
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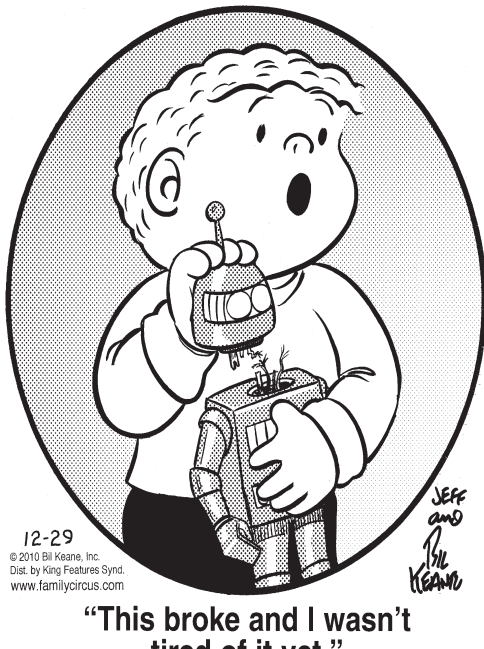
Table with 18 columns (KMidland, UNISpanish, KPEJ, KOSA, KTLT, KWES, WTBS, KMLM, KPBT, KWWT, DISC, AMC, SPIKE, TNT, BET, DISN, ESPN2, ESPN) and 13 rows of program listings for various channels and times.

DENNIS THE MENACE



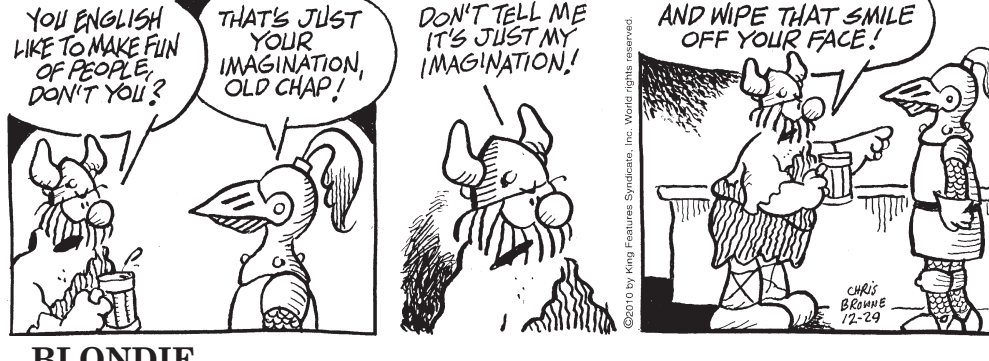
“WHAT KIND OF DIET WAS HE ON?”

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

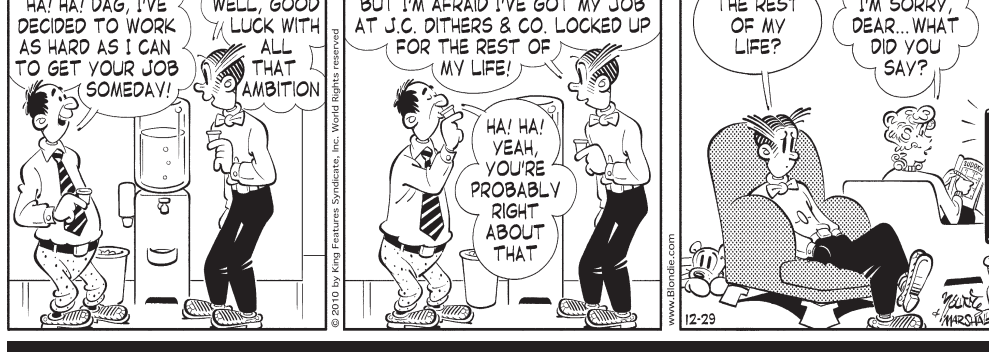


“This broke and I wasn't tired of it yet.”

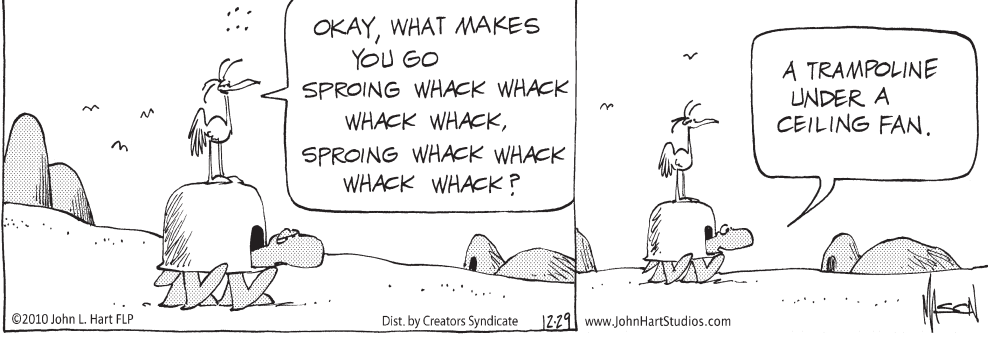
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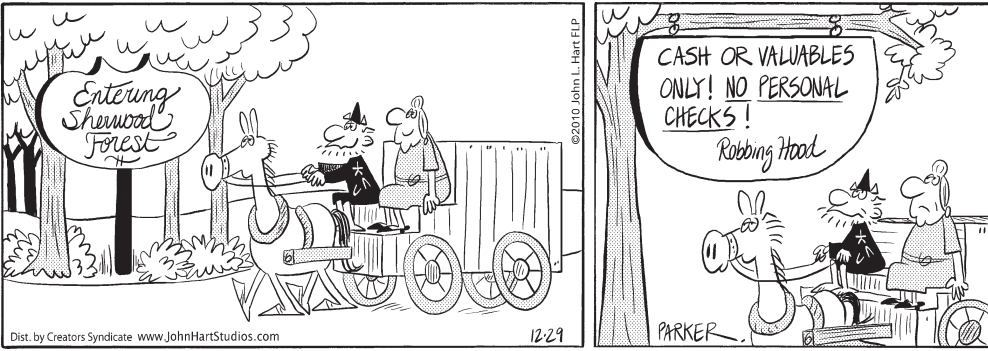
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WIZARD OF ID



AGNES



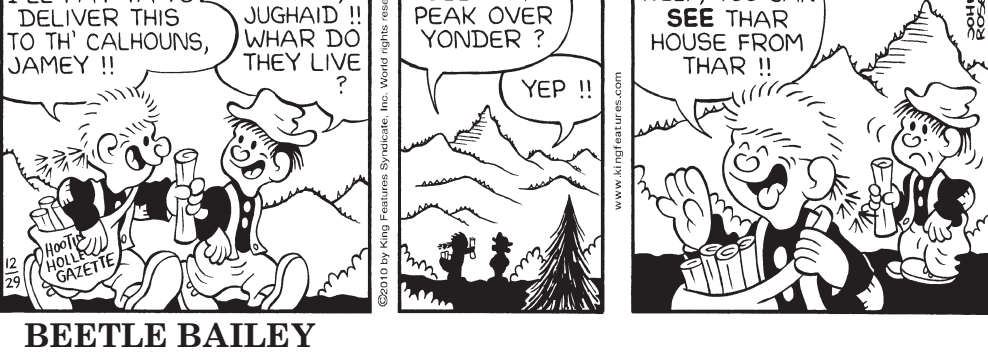
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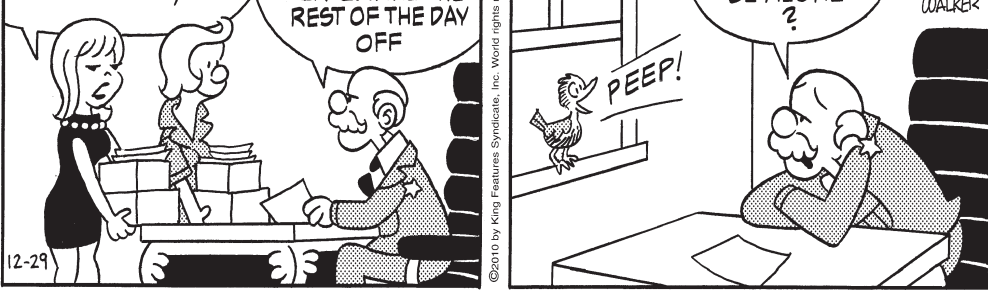
THE OTHER COAST



SNUFFY SMITH



BEEBLE BAILY



This Date In History

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 29, the 363rd day of 2010. There are two days left in the year. Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 29, 1910, the capital of Oklahoma was moved from Guthrie to Oklahoma City as the state legislature approved a bill which was signed by Gov. Charles N. Haskell. (Although the move was challenged in court, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the action.) On this date: In 1170, Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by knights loyal to King Henry II. In 1808, the 17th president of the United States, Andrew Johnson, was born in Raleigh, N.C. In 1845, Texas was admitted as the 28th state. In 1851, the first American Young Men's Christian Association was organized in Boston. In 1890, the Wounded Knee massacre took place in South Dakota as an estimated 300 Sioux Indians were killed by U.S. troops sent to disarm them. In 1916, Grigory Rasputin, the so-called "Mad Monk" who'd wielded great influence with Czar Nicholas II, was murdered by a group of Russian noblemen in St. Petersburg. In 1934, Japan formally renounced the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922. In 1940, during World War II, Germany dropped incendiary bombs on London, setting off what came to be known as "The Second Great Fire of London." In 1975, a bomb exploded in the main terminal of New York's LaGuardia Airport, killing 11 people. In 1986, former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan died at his home in Sussex, England, at age 92. Today's Birthdays: Actress Inga Swenson is 78. ABC newscaster Tom Jarriel is 76. Actress Mary Tyler Moore is 74. Actor Jon Voight is 72. Country singer Ed Bruce is 71. Rock musician Ray Thomas is 69. Singer Marianne Faithfull is 64. Jockey Laffit Pincay, Jr. is 64. Actor Ted Danson is 63. Actor Jon Polito is 60. Singer-actress Yvonne Elliman is 59. Actress Patricia Clarkson is 51. Comedian Paula Poundstone is 51. Rock singer-musician Jim Reid (The Jesus and Mary Chain) is 49. Actor Michael Cudlitz is 46. Rock singer Dexter Holland (The Offspring) is 45. Actor-comedian Mystro Clark is 44. Actor Jason Gould is 44. Movie director Andy Wachowski is 43. Actress Jennifer Ehle is 41. Actor Patrick Fischler is 41. Rock singer-musician Glen Phillips is 40. Actor Kevin Weisman is 40. Actor Jude Law is 38. Actor Mekhi Phifer is 36. Actor Shawn Hatosy is 35. Actress Katherine Moennig is 33.

Answer to previous puzzle: A crossword grid with words THAW, STRAY, FLOE, GATE, PROBE, IOWA, IDOL, RULES, RUNS, FINDFAUL, ASSET, LIPS, ALTER, CONFINE, HOOF, ADULT, WINELIST, SODA, ABATE, OSLO, TRESTLES, BONES, HOLE, TIERODS, LEFTY, NONE, REELS, FOODFIGHT, AERO, ALIKE, SOAR, TRIO, BASIN, LATE, EYED, SPENT, ELSE.

Newsday Crossword

- ACROSS 1 Choir voices 6 Earth tone 11 Enclosed part of a locomotive 14 Like most people 15 Easily fooled 16 Soccer chant 17 Insincere expression of gratitude 19 Ending for "inhabitant" 20 Skirt edge 21 Turn away from 22 Gabbed away 24 Minor misunderstanding 25 Management levels 27 Go ballistic 31 Vacant, as an apartment 33 Feedbag filler 34 Took the gold 35 Frog cousin 36 Prefix for physics 38 Yawn inducer 39 UFO crew 40 Whodunit lead 41 Carried 42 Infield feature 46 Wipe clean 47 River of Florence 48 Was wearing 50 Ran in the wash 51 Sky safety org. 54 "Green" prefix 55 Senators' milieu 59 Comics bark 60 Please greatly 61 Trevi fountain coins

- DOWN 1 Rubber duckie's place 2 US Open tennis stadium 3 The King and I land 4 __ Fernando Valley 5 Result of a leaky pen 6 Running by itself 7 "High Hopes" lyricist 8 Step on it 9 Actress Mendes 10 Hold back 11 Adds to the language 12 Choir voice 13 Existed 18 Pygmalion writer 23 Busts, oils, etc. 24 Gravity-powered vehicle 25 Pull apart 26 Ratio phrase 27 Had a good launch 28 Makes mention of 29 Oil source 30 Place for a pants patch 31 Lone Star State sch. 32 "It wasn't me!"

PILEUP by Fred Piscop Edited by Stanley Newman www.stanxwords.com

A crossword grid with numbers 1-64 indicating starting points for words.

A year of iPads, Betty, 'Glee' and Palins

JOCELYN NOVECK

AP National Writer

Politics and pop culture. Remember when they used to be, well, separate? In recent years these two worlds have seemed to inch ever closer, or maybe to overlap, but in 2010, nobody traveled between them more successfully than Sarah Palin.

No longer Alaska governor (wow, that does seem a long time ago) but omnipresent on the political scene nonetheless, she also had a multi-format presence in our culture: as a TV commentator, a best-selling author, and of course, a reality show star. Heck, she even almost won "Dancing With the Stars" — oh wait, that was daughter Bristol.

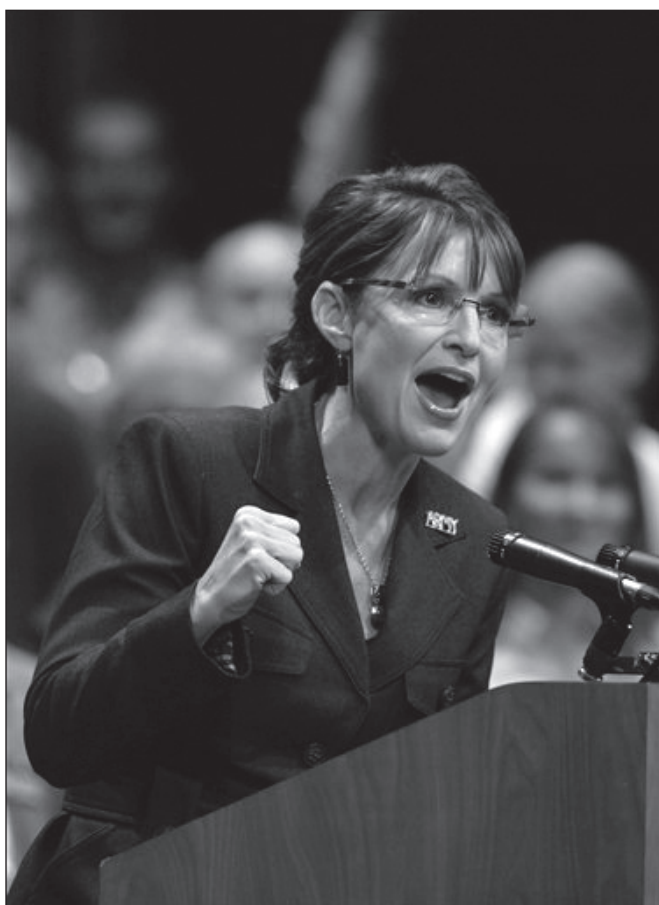
No matter. In our annual look at pop culture moments, Sarah Palin, with some help from her family, gets star billing.

JANUARY:

The iPad tablet debuts, briefly raising the vexing philosophical question: Do we really need yet another gadget? Answer: Yup, apparently we do. Ending a dreadfully botched experiment, NBC removes Jay Leno from 10 p.m., restoring him to 11:35 and thus displacing CONAN O'BRIEN, who is, shall we say, a little annoyed. SARAH PALIN, no doubt annoying opponents who were hoping she'd eventually disappear, becomes a commentator at Fox News Channel. An actual career shift, or a canny step toward a 2012 run? She's not telling. Maybe by the end of the year ...

FEBRUARY:

The sly, sly BETTY WHITE scores big in a Snickers Super Bowl ad, beginning an incredible year for the 88-year-old actress that will include a Facebook-generated "Saturday Night Live" hosting gig. As Betty rises, TIGER speaks: "What I did was not acceptable," the fallen golf great says with econom-



ical understatement in a carefully stage-managed appearance that will be analyzed ad nauseam. PALIN watch: During a speech to tea party activists, the words "energy," "tax" and "lift American spirits" are seen scribbled on her hand. Later, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs will mock her with the words "hope" and "change" scribbled on his own palm. Somehow, we think Palin will not only recover but turn this into a catchy joke ...

MARCH:

We were right. On Leno's "Tonight Show," Palin flashes "Good evening and welcome to 'The Tonight Show'" on her palm. She also says she's going to play TINA FEY in an upcoming Vegas show (ba dum-dum.) But there's much more from Palin this month: Publishers announce she's working on her second book. Heavyweight TV producer Mark Burnett pitches her Alaska-themed reality show, which lands at TLC. There's room for politics, too: Palin lends a hand to former GOP running mate John McCain by appearing at his campaign rally. And in a Facebook post, she makes waves by declaring: "Don't Retreat, In-

stead - RELOAD!"

Bristol Palin, perhaps foreseeing she'll be a hit on the upcoming "Dancing With the Stars," signs with a speakers agency. Her mom tells a crowd: "If you thought pit bulls were tough, you don't want to mess with mama grizzlies." And the uber mama grizzly is the subject of a comedic monologue by none other than the president: He tells the White House Correspondents dinner that he's popular on Twitter and Facebook — "or as Sarah Palin calls it, the socialized media."

JUNE:

Winner, most ill-advised remark: BP's Tony Hayward, who apologizes this month for his "I'd like my life back" comment. Winner, most ill-advised media interview: Gen. Stanley McChrystal, fired after criticizing the Obama administration in Rolling Stone. Winners, most surprising marital split: Al and Tipper Gore, previous winners of most surprising liplock at a political convention, who announce their separation after 40 years of marriage. PALIN watch: Reports emerge of a thawing in relations between exes Bristol Palin and Levi Johnston. More on this later ...

JULY:

WONDER WOMAN gets a wardrobe change from DC Comics — no more star-spangled hot pants. Once an awkward-looking teen, Chelsea Clinton is a beautiful bride in Rhinebeck, N.Y. — and Americans are clearly still obsessed with royal weddings. President Obama goes on "The View," revealing a huge gap in his pop culture knowledge when he can't say who Snooki and The Situation are. PALIN watch: The word "refudiate," her unintentional splicing of "refute" and "repudiate," enters the lexicon. Bristol and Levi promptly "refudiate" their breakup — the engagement, they an-

nounce, is back on.

AUGUST:

RIHANNA, who made headlines in 2009 when she was assaulted by then boyfriend Chris Brown, collaborates with rapper Eminem in a chart-topping song, "Love the Way You Lie," that graphically depicts a physically abusive relationship. The debate: Is the song a tool to fight domestic violence, or does it glorify it? And remember the party-crashing Salahis? Well, they're baaaack ... this time as reality stars, in "The Real Housewives of DC." The pop culture hero of the month, though,

is STEVEN SLATER, the JetBlue flight attendant who, having had quite enough, leaves his job — and career — via the plane's emergency chute, beer in hand. PALIN watch: NEVER MIND! Bristol Palin refudiate, er, breaks off her engagement to Johnston, after he tells her he may have fathered a child with another woman.

SEPTEMBER:

You're LADY GAGA and you want to make a sartorial statement at the VMA awards. Tough proposition, since you look pretty unique all

See YEAR, Page 8A

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© Puzzles by Pappocom

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9 with no repeats. That means no number is repeated in any row, column or box. Solution, tips and computer program at www.sudoku.com

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

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Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker

Choosing the Right Line of Play

East dealer.
East-West vulnerable.

NORTH
♠ A 8
♥ 9 4 3
♦ K 9 7 4 2
♣ A J 3

WEST
♠ J 9 4 3
♥ Q 10 8 5 2
♦ 6
♣ 8 7 5

EAST
♠ 10 7 5
♥ J 7 6
♦ A 10 8 3
♣ K 6 2

SOUTH
♠ K Q 6 2
♥ A K
♦ Q J 5
♣ Q 10 9 4

The bidding:
East South West North
Pass 1 NT Pass 3 NT
Opening lead — five of hearts.

Declarer is often confronted with a choice of several lines of play. Obviously, he should try to select the most promising one, but it is not always easy to find the approach that offers the best chance.

Consider this deal where West leads a heart against three notrump and declarer wins East's jack with the ace. What should South do next?

It would clearly be wrong to try a club finesse at this point — first, because the contract would be in great jeopardy if it lost, and second, because the club finesse can just as

easily be taken later on, if necessary.

The proper suit to attack initially is diamonds. If the suit divides 3-2 (the normal expectancy), South is sure to score at least 10 tricks without risking the dangerous club finesse. Furthermore, he has a much better chance of finding the diamonds favorably divided than of finding West with the king of clubs.

However, despite the decided advantage of attacking diamonds rather than clubs, it would be wrong to lead a diamond from the closed hand at trick two. The correct play by declarer is to lead a low spade to the ace followed by a low diamond from dummy.

After East follows low, as he should, South wins the trick with the queen. Declarer must now be careful of his next step. Sheer momentum might cause him to lead another diamond. But this would be a serious mistake (and would be fatal in the actual case because of the 4-1 diamond division).

Instead, South should now take the club finesse because, by doing so, he is sure to make nine tricks even if the finesse loses. But if, at trick two, he leads a diamond from his hand or attempts a club finesse, or, on the recommended line of play, continues diamonds after the queen wins at trick three, it eventually costs him the contract.

Tomorrow: Born of despair.
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In Sunday's Big Spring Herald

Healthy Towns

Forming perhaps the ultimate weight-loss support group, three small towns united their citizenry with a common goal of losing extra pounds.

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YEAR

Continued from Page 7A

the time. What are you gonna do, dress up in raw meat or something? (Yup.) The movie "SOCIAL NETWORK" debuts, becoming an instant Oscar front-runner and beginning Facebook co-founder MARK ZUCKERBERG's year of pop culture fame. PALIN watch: Apparently they wanted Todd Palin first, but it's Bristol who makes her debut on "Dancing with the Stars." Mama apparently didn't tell her not to come — so she dances a cha-cha, to Three Dog Night's "Mama Told Me (Not To Come)." Satirist BILL MAHER gets a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame and thanks "George Bush, Sarah Palin and the pope."

OCTOBER:

So many of us love the fun, creative Fox hit "GLEE." But those ultra-sexed-up photos a couple of cast members pose for in Esquire this month? Not so much, especially Lea Michele's spread-eagled number in panties — in a high school locker room. And we've seen strange political ads before, but maybe not THIS strange: "I'm not a witch," says Delaware Senate hopeful Christine O'Donnell. "I'm you." In November, voters would decide not to elect ... themselves. PALIN watch: A Washington think tank finds that Obama was the most joked-about political figure this year. Coming in second? A certain former Alaska governor.

NOVEMBER:

There will be a real royal wedding! Brit-

ain's Prince William proposes to Kate Middleton, promising an April 29 extravaganza. But otherwise, on our pop culture clock, it's a Palin month. "Sarah Palin's Alaska" premieres on TLC, and her second book, "America by Heart: Reflections on Family, Faith and Flag," hits stores. A reality show, a best-selling book, and a bunch of her "mamma grizzlies" headed for office after the midterm elections ... what more can you ask?

Well, Bristol Palin makes the finals on "Dancing," setting off a furious debate over whether the voting is just all politics. Winning, she says before the finale, "would be like a big middle finger" to the Palin haters; she ends up coming in third. FEY accepts her Mark Twain Prize for American Humor, and she, too, thanks ... you betcha!



DECEMBER:

Sorry, JULIAN ASSANGE: Facebook may be nearly 7 years old, but ZUCKERBERG, its 26-year-old CEO, is Time Magazine's Person of the Year, the youngest since Charles Lindbergh in 1927. Assange, the WikiLeaks founder and a top contender for the honor, sure is ticked

off — oh wait, that's the faux Assange, in a popular SNL skit skewering both of them. OPRAH WINFREY launches the final season of her talk show with a typically understated gesture — bringing her entire audience on an eight-day trip to Australia. SNOOKI and her "Jersey Shore" mates — are you listening, Mr. Presi-

dent? — snag a spot on Barbara Walters' annual list of most fascinating people.

Who else is on the list? Sarah Palin, the only person to be on it three times in a row. And at year's end, though she's dropping more and more hints of a 2012 presidential run, she's still not telling.

Christmas is the happiness that lights our children's eyes.

Christmas is a song of bells ringing through the skies.

Christmas is a time of peace, of contentment deep within,

A time of love and silent hope that years will never dim.

- Sherrill Thompson (Christmas Is...)

Wishing you and your loved ones every happiness this holiday season.

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