Don't count on boyfriend's ex for unbiased appraisal

DEAR ABBY

DEAR ABBY: I'm considering marrying a man who is divorced. We get along great, and I love and trust him.

Is it ever appropriate to call the ex and discuss her side of the story? Or should I ask my boyfriend what she'd say if I were to contact her? — **COVERING MY BASES IN CALIFORNIA**

DEAR COVERING YOUR BASES: If you call the ex, you can count on hearing something negative about your boyfriend or they wouldn't be exes. Also, the things the ex might consider to be flaws may be the qualities you love best about him.

That you would say you love and trust your boyfriend, and in the next sentence indicate you're considering a chat with his former wife, makes me wonder how deep your level of trust is. However, if your gut tells you to do some digging, then you should listen to it -- even if it results in an argument, which it probably will.

DEAR ABBY: I'm proud of my daughter, "Celia." She has a master's degree, a successful career and is soon to be married to a wonderful man.

Through three moves my wife and I have cared for our daughter's one-ton-plus of "stuff," which includes the big dollhouse her grandpa built, her doll collection, high school and college memorabilia, her diaries, dishes for her future home, etc. When she visited, I'd ask her to sort through the boxes and throw some things out. Didn't happen.

My wife and I have downsized to a condo. The room that was supposed to be my "man cave" is half-filled with Celia's things. It is TIME!

Should I request that our daughter pay for storage, or rent a U-Haul so I can deliver a one-ton-plus "wedding gift"? — **DISGRUNTLED DAD IN WASHINGTON STATE**

DEAR DAD: I can think of few things that would destroy the ambiance of a man cave more than a dollhouse. With a successful career, your daughter can afford to pay for a storage unit for her memorabilia. Set a date by which it must be out of your condo, with the understanding that if it isn't, YOU will dispose of it. You should not have to deliver it to her. You have been patient long enough, and the responsibility is hers.

DEAR ABBY: I am a longtime practicing Pagan. Because of the media, Pagans are considered to be evil devil-worshippers instead of the nature-loving people with knowledge of home remedies we are. This makes it difficult in the dating world.

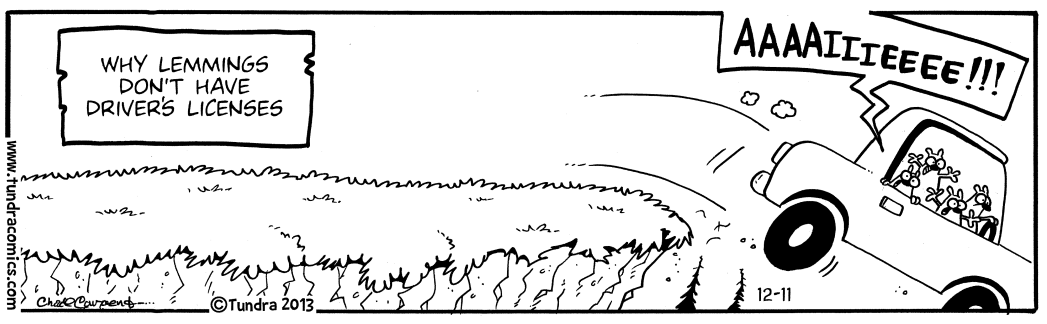
A friend of mine wants to hook me up with a friend of his. When is it appropriate to tell the gentleman that I'm a practicing Pagan? I dress like everyone else, so at first glance you wouldn't suspect my religion isn't Christian. — **LOVER OF NATURE**

DEAR LOVER OF NATURE: Nothing compels you and a stranger to get into a discussion about religious beliefs on a first date, but you should mention it when the opportunity arises. If the man seems to be put off by it, suggest he consult patheos.com, an online library on the subject of religions, in which there is a section describing Paganism, its practices and origins. It should make for a stimulating discussion.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

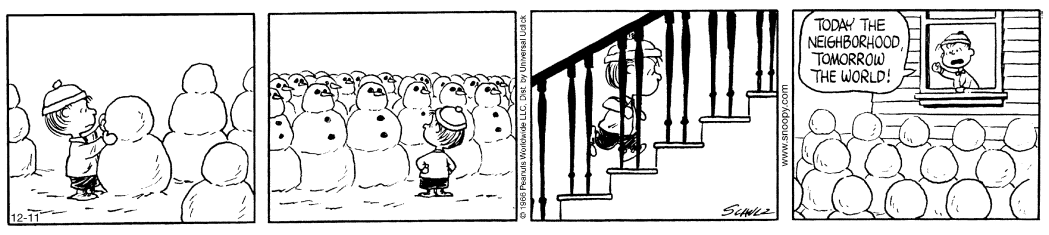
COMICS

Tundra

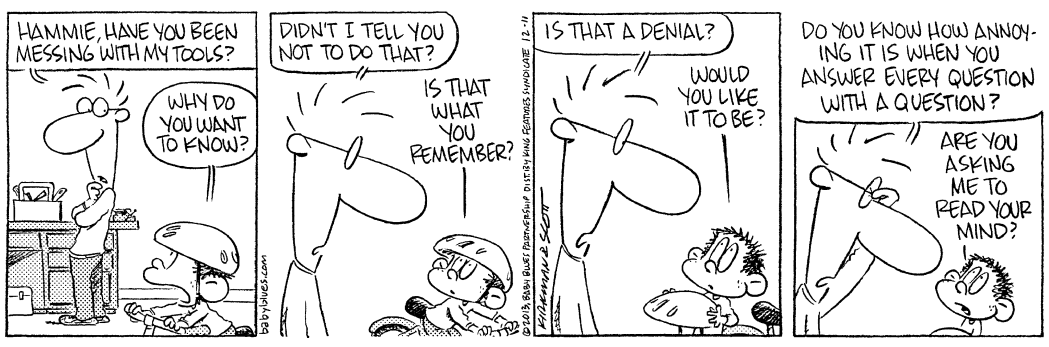


Hagar the Horrible

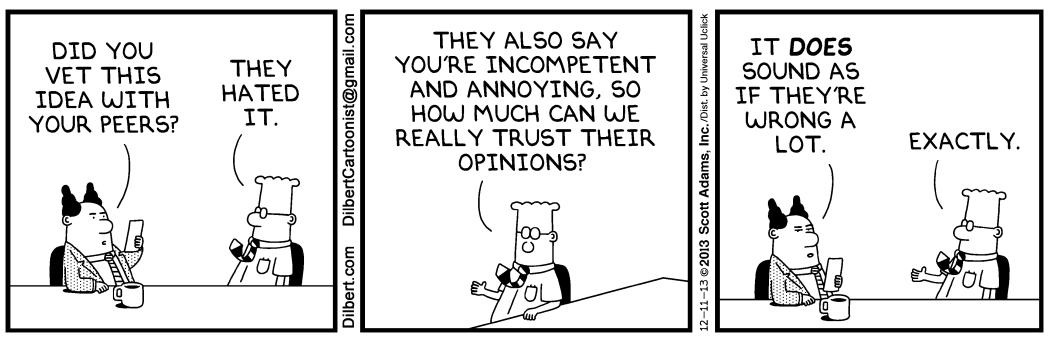
Peanuts



Baby Blues



Dilbert



su|do|ku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

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

Instructions for play: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9.

That's all there is to it. There's no math involved. The grid has numbers, but nothing has to add up to anything else. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic. It's fun. It's challenging. It's addictive!

Solving time is typically from 10 to 30 minutes, depending on your skill and experience. The solution for today's puzzle will be published in Saturday's paper. Or you can go to www.sudoku.com to find the solution.

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

HELOISE'S KITCHENEERING
BY HELOISE

Dear Heloise: I enjoy your column in the Omaha (Neb.) World-Herald. Here is a hint for LEFTOVER CANDY CANES. I make holiday cookies and use crushed candy canes in some recipes.

Last year, I bought a box of 60 candy canes and had plenty left over. Instead of putting them out plain, I dipped the straight end in melted chocolate and let them cool off. After the chocolate dried, I put each into its original wrapper. The hook part was out, so the guest could pull out the candy without touching the chocolate. They were a hit, and looked festive and attractive. — Sue B. in Nebraska

Your hint is a yummy money-saver, too! — Heloise

WHAT TO USE?

Dear Heloise: I am an avid reader of your column in the Mansfield (Ohio) News Journal. Heloise, I love to bake, especially cream pies, but I can't find the ingredient cream of tartar at any grocery store. Do you know how to make a home version of cream of tartar for use in pie meringue? I would appreciate it. — Sadie R., Mansfield, Ohio

For meringue, substitute the same amount of white vinegar or lemon juice for cream of tartar. For example, if the recipe calls for 1/2 teaspoon of cream of tartar, add 1/2 teaspoon of vinegar or lemon juice. Check out my pamphlet for more money-saving hints using vinegar for cooking, cleaning and beauty tips. For Heloise's Fantabulous Vinegar Hints and More, please send $5 and a long, self-addressed, stamped (66 cents) envelope to: Heloise/Vinegar, P.O. Box 795001, San Antonio, TX 78279-5001. Add 1/4 teaspoon of white vinegar to three egg whites if you want to make the meringue extra fluffy. You should be able to find cream of tartar in the spice section at the grocery store. If not, just ask the manager. — Heloise

PERFECT PASTA

Dear Heloise: Every pasta recipe calls for 4 to 6 quarts of water for each pound of pasta. Why do we need to use so much water? — Ellen in Washington, D.C.

There are a couple of reasons to use that much water. It makes it easier to fit larger, longer pastas like spaghetti into the pot. It also helps keep the pasta from sticking together, since there is a lot of room and water.

An additional hint for helping the sauce to stick to hot pasta is to NEVER rinse it. The starch left on the pasta helps the sauce adhere. Rinse if making a cold pasta dish. -- Heloise

RUINED WINE?

Dear Heloise: My wife and I bought a fairly expensive bottle of wine, and I had a hard time removing the cork. I couldn't get all of it out; the bottom crumbled and dropped fragments into the wine, many too small to pluck out. I discovered that the cork could be separated by filtering the wine through a coffee filter. — A.S. in New York

A good way to save a bottle of wine! — Heloise

CROSSWORD
By THOMAS JOSEPH

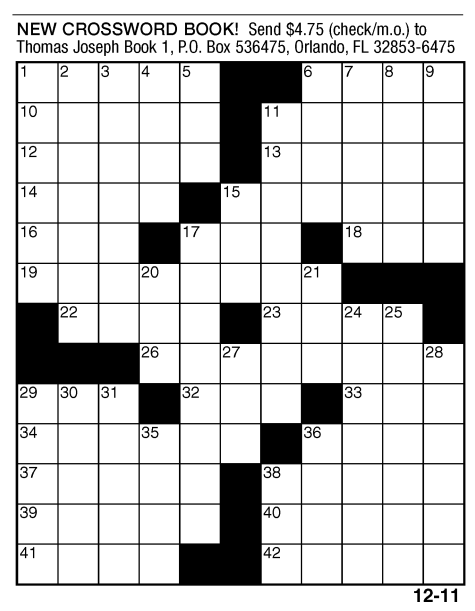
ACROSS
1 Constellation makeup
6 No longer fizzy
10 Suggest
11 Move smoothly
12 Prepared
13 Grapevine item
14 Concerning
15 Alternative to briefs
16 Letter after sigma
17 Do yard work
18 Spot
19 Too many to count
22 Free from fat
23 Gumbo vegetable
26 Passenger seats on motorcycles
29 Work wk. start
32 Zeus or Apollo
33 Guidebook feature
34 Counterpart
36 Cook's mint
37 Competitor
38 Director Kurosawa
39 Neck wrap
40 Kuwaiti coin
41 Grasped
42 Flower parts

DOWN
1 Use a mister on
2 Pedicure target
3 Generally
4 Take the bus
5 Pig's digs
6 State of change
7 Bar fruits
8 Cherish
9 Not wordy
11 Aged
15 Scary cry
17 It often includes a windmill
20 Pet perch
21 Enjoy Aspen
24 Lettuce variety
25 Rues, for sure
27 Fireplace item
28 Harpoons
29 Swampy area
30 Chilled
31 Fleet-related
35 Cooking fat
36 Revue piece
38 Spots on TV

■	P	A	P	A	■	V	A	S	E	■				
F	U	R	O	R	■	O	V	A	L	S				
A	S	C	O	T	■	L	A	N	A	I				
S	H	A	R	I	N	G	■	K	I	N				
T	O	N	■	S	O	A	R	I	N	G				
S	N	A	P	A	T	■	O	N	E	S				
■	■	■	E	N	D	E	D	■	■	■				
A	U	R	A	■	O	N	S	E	T	S				
S	N	A	R	I	N	G	■	L	E	E				
K	I	T	■	S	E	A	R	I	N	G				
E	T	H	E	L	■	G	O	O	S	E				
D	E	E	R	E	■	E	N	T	E	R				
■	D	R	A	T	■	S	A	S	S	■				

Previous Puzzle

NEW CROSSWORD BOOK! Send $4.75 (check/m.o.) to Thomas Joseph Book 1, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475



12-11

CROSSWORD
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 More polite
6 Bayou native
11 Skater Ohno
12 Tickle
13 Mike holders
14 Intolerant sort
15 Contract winner
17 Swerve, nautically
19 Long time
20 Farm grazer
23 Defend
25 "Damn Yankees" role
26 Cartoon penguin
28 Refer to
29 Supply, as data
30 Citrus quaff
31 Dyeing place
32 Tiny
33 Drink with scones
35 "Be quiet!"
38 Spare
41 Similar
42 Asparagus unit
43 Chorus songs
44 Rich dessert

DOWN
1 Collar
2 Wall St. debut
3 Light bulb choice
4 Sesame Street youngster
5 Alien landing spot
6 Rustic home
7 In the heart of
8 Moonshine holder
9 GI-entertaining org.
10 Court divider
16 Gym patron's concern
17 Desert plant
18 Garden pest
20 Washer choice
21 Stan's buddy
22 "Hondo" star
24 Bullring call
25 Tell tales
27 Having the most rain
31 Campaign goal
33 Walk in the woods
34 Trade fair
35 Turn sharply
36 Suffering
37 Diner dessert
39 Nogoodnik
40 "— we there yet?"

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

Previous Puzzle

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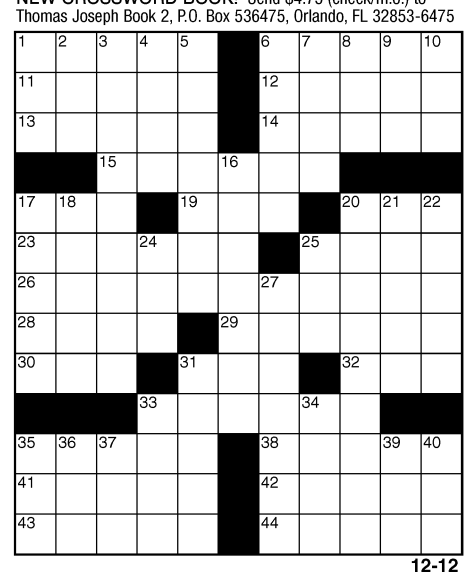

12-12

Daily Cryptoquote – Here's how to work it:

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

12-11 CRYPTOQUOTE

P K X G E I C I J W B I D R G K T I D S P J Z R I X G E ' W T I S S I B V D N I E U D J W D U G Y G Z P F I . — R E Q D R R D W D Y P

Previous Cryptoquote: MY ADVICE TO YOU IS NOT TO INQUIRE WHY OR WHITHER, BUT JUST ENJOY YOUR ICE CREAM WHILE IT'S ON YOUR PLATE. – Thornton Wilder