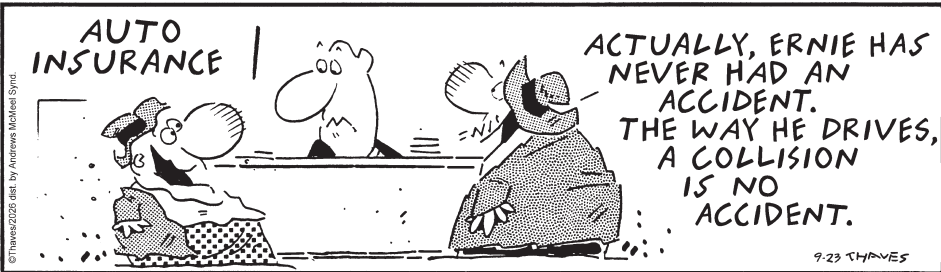




Frank & Ernest



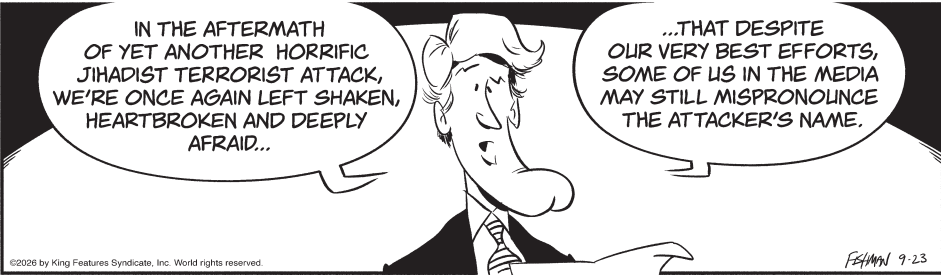
Born Loser



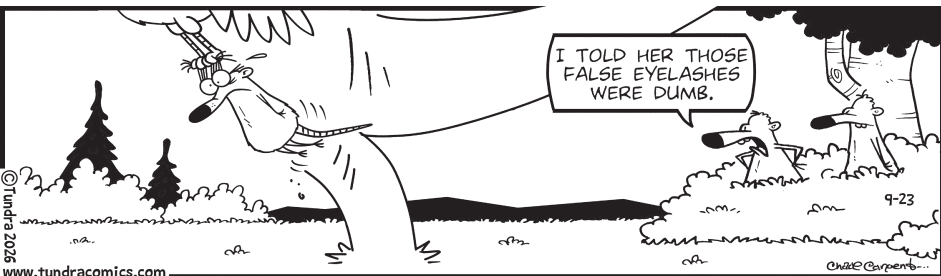
Baby Blues



Mallard Fillmore



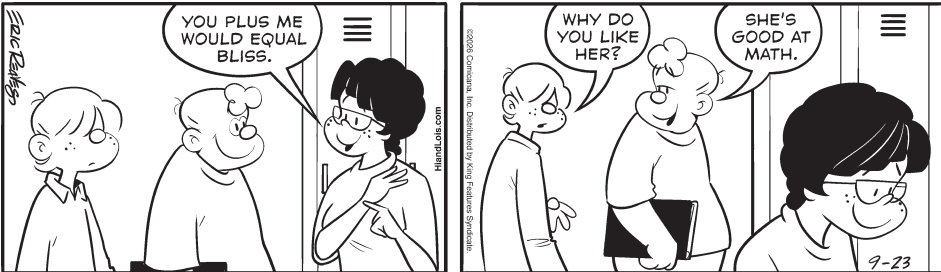
Tundra



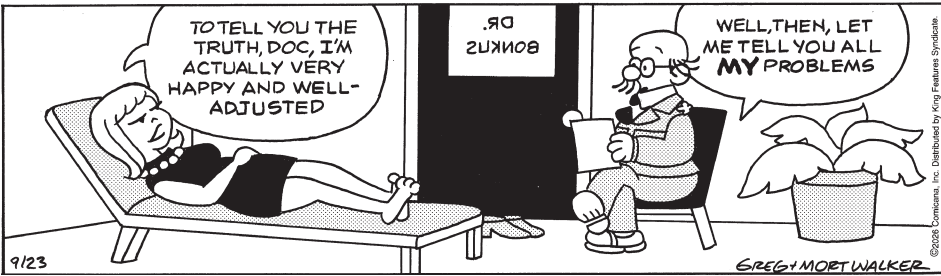
Blondie



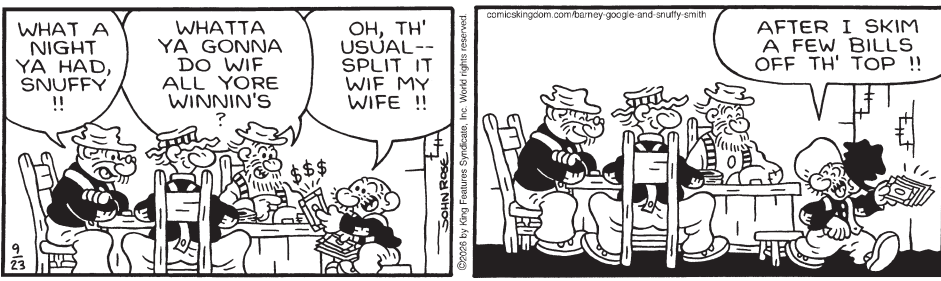
Hi & Lois



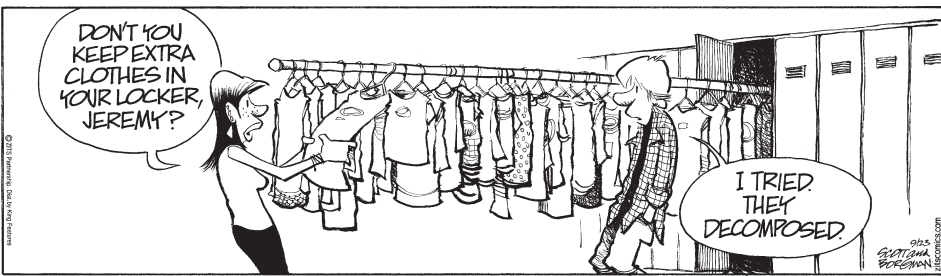
Beetle Bailey



Snuffy Smith



Zits



Crossword — By Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

1 Suspects' stories

7 Musical work

11 Bleaching chemical

12 Civil rights great

13 Clash

14 Resting on

15 Web site feature

17 Guitar bar

20 Coldly distant

23 Hoopla

24 Kneecap

26 Turn bad

27 Hurricane part

28 Poorly lit

29 Satellite

31 Genesis name

32 Director Sergio

33 Wilma's husband

34 Jordan neighbor

37 Bulldog's school

39 Queen Anne's house

43 Company bigwig

44 Hearty dish

45 Fresh

46 Allergy sign

DOWN

1 Fitting

2 Baseball's Gehrig

3 "— been swell!"

4 Low singer

5 Cruise stop

6 Citi

7 Field's forerunner

8 Wise answerer

9 GI-entertaining org.

10 Easy target

16 Critic, at times

17 Yule song

18 Cherish

19 Hack novel

21 Green shade

22 Prominent

24 Piper of rhyme

25 Yeoman's "yes"

30 Fly, e.g.

33 Champagne glass

35 Pharaoh symbols

36 School near

37 Slangy agreement

38 Feller in the woods

40 Clumsy galoot

41 Ahmed of "Sound of Metal"

42 Casual top

Yesterday's answer

19 Hack novel

21 Green shade

22 Prominent

24 Piper of rhyme

25 Yeoman's "yes"

30 Fly, e.g.

33 Champagne glass

35 Pharaoh symbols

36 School near

37 Slangy agreement

38 Feller in the woods

40 Clumsy galoot

41 Ahmed of "Sound of Metal"

42 Casual top

Bridge — By Steven Becker

Performing the impossible

North dealer.
North-South vulnerable.

NORTH

♠ K J 2
♥ J 10 9 8 3
♦ Q J 2
♣ A J

WEST

♠ 6 3
♥ A Q 6 4 2
♦ 8
♣ K 9 7 3 2

EAST

♠ 8 5
♥ K
♦ 9 7 5 4 3
♣ Q 10 8 6 4

SOUTH

♠ A Q 10 9 7 4
♥ 7 5
♦ A K 10 6
♣ 5

The bidding:

1 ♥ Pass
3 ♠ Pass
5 ♦ Pass

East Pass
2 ♠ Pass
4 NT Pass
6 ♣ Pass

Opening lead — eight of diamonds.

When you're playing a seemingly hopeless contract, you can sometimes accomplish your mission by enlisting the aid of the enemy. For example, take this deal where South bid and made six spades.

This overly ambitious undertaking was entirely South's fault. His jump-shift to two spades on only 13 points in high cards, while marginally acceptable, suggested a possible slam.

But having already stretched his

initial response by several points, South should not have gone to six unilaterally, which is what he essentially did later. He could have bid four spades over three to indicate minimum values for the jump-shift, or four diamonds over three spades to see whether North was interested in going beyond game.

West led a diamond, and declarer saw that he had two apparently inescapable heart losers. But he also saw he might make the slam if he got phenomenally lucky. So after winning the diamond in dummy and drawing two rounds of trump, South cashed the club ace and three more diamonds, discarding the jack of clubs from dummy. Then he led the five of hearts.

West went up with the queen, and it was all over but the shouting. East had to win with the king and return a diamond or a club, either of which allowed South to discard his remaining heart as he ruffed in dummy.

West should have realized that declarer could not have the K-x of hearts and play the hand the way he did. Had South held the K-x, he surely would have led a heart from dummy toward his hand at some point. West should therefore have played the ace of hearts rather than the queen on the assumption that East had the singleton king.

Tomorrow: Reducing the element of risk.
©2026 King Features Syndicate Inc.

DAILY CRYPTOQUOTES — HERE'S HOW TO WORK IT:

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

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.

9-23 CRYPTOQUOTE

S D G Q J J N M S G

I M C I O W V S B X I Q V ; M

I C Q B S Q D H H D C S O X M S M Q V .

— TCOIQ JQQ
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: DELICIOUS AUTUMN! MY VERY SOUL IS WEDDED TO IT.
— GEORGE ELIOT

Word Sleuth

WORD SLEUTH • GOLDEN WORDS

F Y W U R P N L J H F D B Z X

V R T R G Q O M K G I H F D B

Z E Y GOLD I LOCKS W H

V D J O L T R L Q L O H N L C

K G O L D M I N E D S I H F N

D O N D R D L O G I R A M C I

A L A F U Z X W F E F V U S F

R D G E S N E D L O G D Q O D

N B O V H D L O G N A M L M L

K U L E J O D L O G I P S O O

I G D R G H T S E R C D L O G

Tuesday's unlisted clue: HOPE

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions - forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.

Wednesday's unlisted clue hint: ACTRESS — HAWN

Gold fever Gold field Gold mine Gold rush Goldbug Goldcrest Golden Goldfinch Goldfish Goldilocks Goldenrod Mangold Marigold Redgold Spigold

©2026 King Features, Inc. 9/23

Horoscope — By Georgia Nichols

Happy Birthday to Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026:

You are multitasking, charming, kind and intellectually inquisitive. You're also energetic and resourceful. This is a year of service for you, perhaps service to family. Take care of yourself so that you can be a resource to those who turn to you for guidance, comfort and courage.

The Stars Show the Kind of Day You'll Have: 5-Dynamic; 4-Positive; 3-Average; 2-So-so; 1-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ There's a Moon Alert all day, so restrict spending to food and gas, and postpone important decisions. However, you are the artisan of the zodiac, and a Moon Alert is an excellent time for socializing and making art! Tonight: Enjoy solitude.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ The Moon is at the top of your chart today, which means people notice you, whether you're aware of this or not. In fact, some know personal details about your private life. Meanwhile, there's a Moon Alert

all day! Avoid important decisions and shopping. Tonight: Be friendly.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ This is a creative day for you! Grab every chance to express your ideas and artistic talents. It's also a great day to socialize! Get out and enjoy sports events, fun diversions with friends and playful activities with kids. Tonight: You're admired!

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ There's a Moon Alert in effect all day, which means it's wise to restrict your spending to food and gas. In point of fact, this particular Moon Alert is taking place in one of your Money Houses, which means you'll be tempted to negotiate, borrow or discuss how to share something. Caution! Tonight: Explore and learn.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ The Moon Alert all day is opposite your sign, which means communications with those who are closest to you -- partners, spouses and dear friends -- are subject to misinterpretation. Don't volunteer for anything. Don't agree to anything important. Tonight: Check your finances.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Today's Moon Alert might

create goofy mistakes at work along with delays and shortages, which might be a bit frustrating for you. Be aware of this and give yourself extra time for wiggle room to deal with the unexpected. Tonight: Be cooperative.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ This is a wonderful day to socialize and enjoy the company of others! The theater, the arts, sports events and fun occasions will delight. There is a sense that anything can happen. Restrict your spending to food and gas because there is a Moon Alert all day. Tonight: Get better organized.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Home and family are your focus today. However, you also might want to hide at home and relax among familiar surroundings. This might be a good idea, because this entire day is a Moon Alert. Restrict your spending and avoid important decisions. Tonight: Socialize!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ This is a popular time for you and you're out there flying your colors talking to everyone! (Some of you are also dabbling in a secret love affair.) Meanwhile, this entire day is a Moon Alert, so be careful in your communications. Postpone important

decisions and commitments. Tonight: Relax at home.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Be careful today. This entire day is a Moon Alert and it is taking place in your primary Money House. Do not be tempted to shop. Restrict your spending to food and gas. Commit to nothing financially; however, it's OK to window shop and do your homework. Tonight: Learn and discuss things.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ This is a tricky day because there's a Moon Alert in effect all day and it's in your sign. In one way, it's a marvelous day to schmooze with others. You'll enjoy socializing. You'll also enjoy the arts and opportunities to be creative. But don't volunteer for anything. Restrict spending to food and gas. Tonight: Check your belongings.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Travel if possible, because you have a desire to expand your world and seek out new experiences. Competitive sports will also appeal. Meanwhile, this entire day is a Moon Alert. Keep your head down and your powder dry. Tonight: You win!

JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

EARVG

MEPIL

OYKJCE

REVEBA

©2026 Tribune Content Agency, LLC All Rights Reserved.

Yesterday's Jumbles: CHALK STOOD MARKET BETTER
Answer: When the hikers came across a pit viper on the trail, it — RATTLED THEM

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

In the past, I've made these reversible. I can put logos on each side.

That's incredible! I could go as Superman and Batman at the same comic con.

WHEN IT CAME TO MAKING SUPERHERO COSTUMES, THE TAILOR WAS ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

“ ”