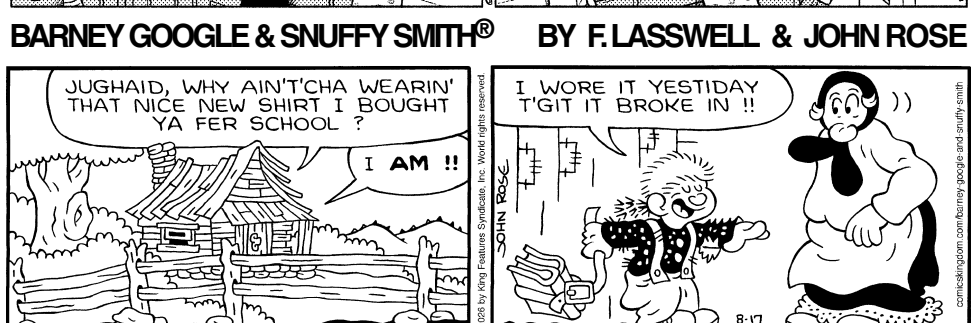
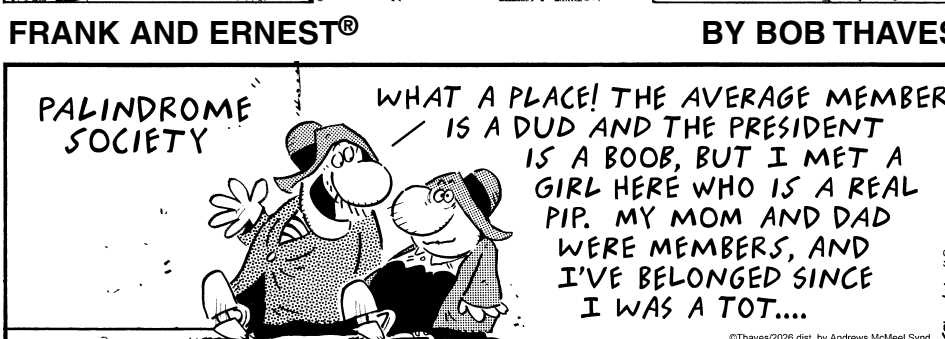
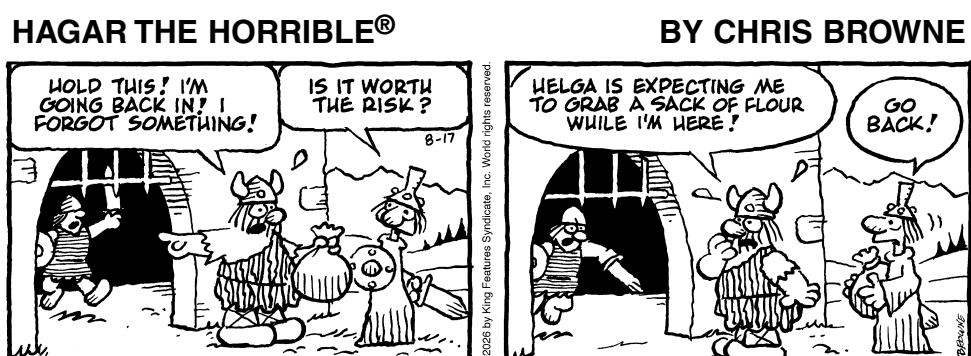
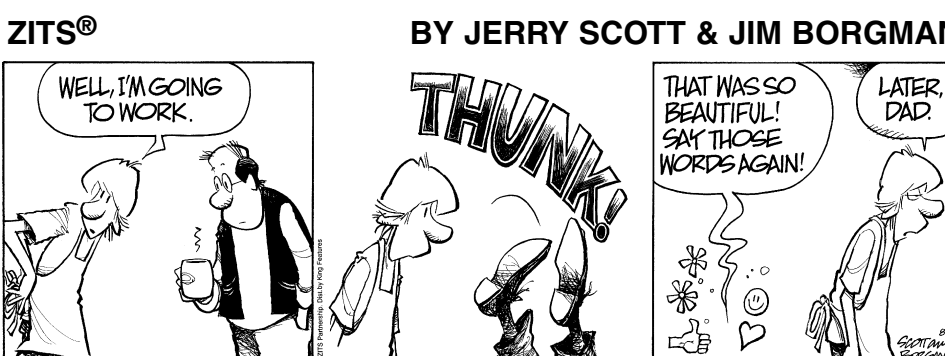
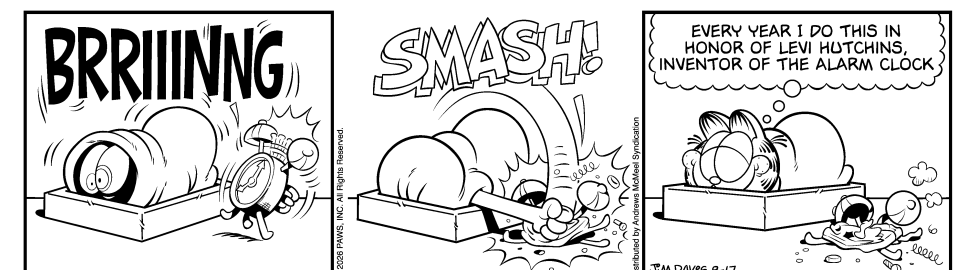
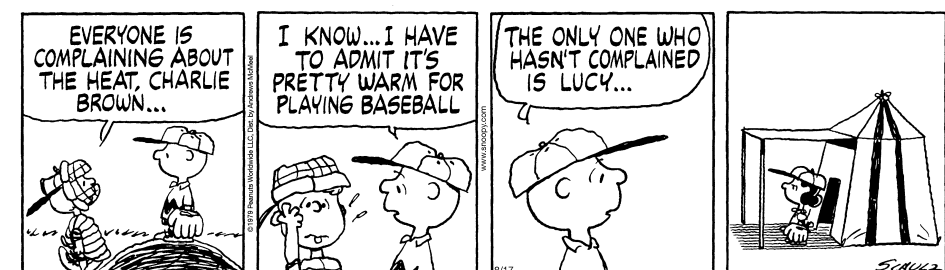


West dealer.
East-West vulnerable.

NORTH		
♠ K 6 3		
♥ K 9 5 3		
♦ K J 7		
♣ K 8 7		
WEST		
♠ 7 5		
♥ A J 2		
♦ Q 10 9 2		
♣ 10 9 6 4		
EAST		
♠ A Q J 9		
♥ Q 4		
♦ 6 5		
♣ Q J 5 3 2		
SOUTH		
♠ 10 8 4 2		
♥ 10 8 7 6		
♦ A 8 4 3		
♣ A		

The bidding:

	North	East	South
West	1 ♠	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	2 ♥	Dble	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 ♠	3 ♥
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead — seven of spades.

If you play in events scored by International Match Points — mostly team contests — you know that at this form of scoring, overtricks or undertricks usually are of little consequence. The loss of an IMP here or there, it is said, will rarely make a difference in the outcome.

Remarkably, within less than a half-year's time, a single IMP or two proved to be the deciding factor in two major events. First, in 2003 the United States defeated Italy by just 1 IMP to win the world championship. Then, just five months later, the outcome of the

Vanderbilt team championship was altered twice in the same match by an equally infinitesimal margin.

The drama unfolded in the final quarter of the Vanderbilt semifinal between teams led by Nick Nickell and Richard Schwartz. Going into the last 16 deals, Schwartz trailed by the seemingly insurmountable margin of 53 IMPs.

Nevertheless, Schwartz had cut the deficit to 5 IMPs with just this last deal remaining. When it was first played, Larry Cohen and David Berkowitz of the Schwartz team bid and made two hearts, a normal result that seemed unlikely to generate a 5-IMP swing. Even if Nickell's North-South pair at the other table somehow went down in two hearts, this would yield only a 4-IMP gain.

But to the amazement of onlookers, the auction shown transpired with Mike Becker and Schwartz pushing North-South into three hearts. Down one in this contract would not have sufficed, but Becker, desperately fighting for every IMP, elected to make a very close double, knowing that if he was wrong, it would probably cost him the match.

Becker's double made all the difference. The contract went down one, -100. This, combined with +110 at the other table, gave Schwartz's team a gain of 210 points, worth exactly 5 IMPs, and sent the match into an eight-deal playoff. There, a single undertrick determined the outcome, as we shall see tomorrow.

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JUMBLE

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

ALSSH
LJLEY
ORMCHE
LWEOBB

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Print your answer here: _____

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: IDIOT SNIFF LIQUID DRAGON
Answer: He had the small dent in his wife's car repaired to keep her from — "FIND-DING" OUT