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November 2008



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HE SNARLED AND SAID
"OH THANKS A BUNCH"

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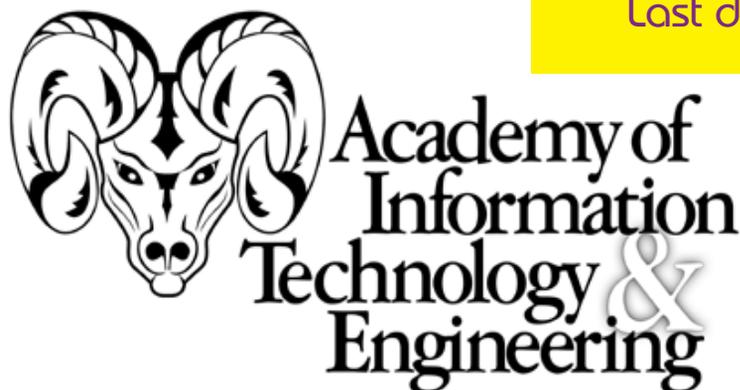
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DEBBIE TRAVIS' HOUSE TO HOME



GET CREATIVE FOR PARTY BY DEBBIE TRAVIS

The holiday season is ramping up, and although it's hectic and you sometimes wonder why you put yourself through all the frantic shopping and preparation, it really is worth the trouble. This is the most giving time of year, and for the most part, it brings out the best in people. Perhaps this is the year that you are going to host the family get-together for the first time. I know that feeling of panic well, the realization after the invitations are sent that you are in charge. I've hosted many a feast day, and it does get easier with practice. And there is nothing like the feeling of pride and accomplishment you will experience when you look around your table and see all those happy faces. Here are a few ideas for making this year's party your own.

Start with a bit of dreaming. Imagine what you'd get a wow out of if you were one of the guests. It doesn't have to be complicated. Do some homework on decorating the table or mantel. Arrange a few ornaments that you have collected and small framed photo-

graphs of holidays past along with holly sprigs, silver ribbon and glass bowls of floating candles for a centerpiece that sparkles with memories.

Personalize each place setting. Shown here are two simple ideas I discovered in a new book, "Party Basics for New Nesters," by Maria McBride, HarperCollins, that are sure to become keepsakes. You can buy votive candle holders by the carton, and they are so easy to decorate. These are decorated with stickers or seals found at the craft shop, ribbon, grapevine, wallpaper trim and copper leaf. The custom place mat is cut from Ultrasuede, a synthetic fabric that looks and feels like real suede but is durable and washable. It is easy to cut, no sewing required, and you can stamp on a design or use a marker to write a name or short message.

Mix and match plates, glasses and stemware. It's practical to have a set of white plates, and if you don't have enough, you can rent. But then add your own china to dress up the table.

Know your limits. If cooking for a crowd isn't what you do best, then commandeer help. You can buy pretty much everything, from easy-to-serve appetizers to a fully baked turkey and all the trimmings. There's a lot of pressure to serve the exact same delicacies year after year on special feast days. (No, I didn't forget the marshmallows on the sweet potatoes; I never liked them!) But you can branch out, especially if it's yummy. Learn to make one great signature dish.

Go for glamour and dazzle. Good lighting is a key ingredient of any party; it sets the mood for you and your guests and enhances your decor. Take advantage of this season of lights, and add a few strands of fairy lights, lots of candles in safe containers and glass

and crystal for sparkle. Mirrors double the effect; serve drinks on a mirrored tray.

Make lists and prepare ahead. Most important, when the party starts, plan to be part of the action, not stuck in the kitchen the whole time. Your family and friends are there to see you. Enjoy the friendship and the spirit. Cheers.

* * *

(c) 2008 Debbie Travis

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Debbie Travis' House to Home column is produced by Debbie Travis and Barbara Dingle. Please e-mail your questions to house2home@debbietravis.com. For more ideas, look for Debbie's newest book,



Personalize your table with custom-cut Ultrasuede place mats and hand-decorated votives. Photo Credit: Photographs from "Party Basics for New Nesters," by Maria McBride, HarperCollins.





BOARDING YOUR PET

BY HELOISE

Dear Readers: The holidays are almost here, which means it is time to think about making a reservation if you are going out of town and need to board your pet. Here are some doggone good hints to help you select a boarding facility.

In an emergency, will there be a vet on call? Is written proof of vaccination and shot records required of all boarders? This helps to protect your pet from catching something from another guest boarder.

Visit in the morning to see the care the staff gives boarders when it is feeding and cage-cleaning time.

Tour the area where your pet will be kept. Notice the cleanliness of the whole facility and the types and sizes of cages.

Will they provide food, or will you have to bring food for your pet?

Ask about the routine for boarders — how often and how long are they walked; when are they fed; do they have access to a dog run, and how often are cages cleaned?

If your pet is going to be boarded for a while, have a friend or family member check on it, and call the facility every so often to check up.

Remember to make reservations far enough in advance so you will be assured a place. — *Heloise*

P.S.: We take Cabbie's pillow and a few favorite toys when we board her, plus a T-shirt that I've worn.

LOST DOG

Dear Heloise: Our son lost his beloved dog Angus and had about given up hope. He got a call asking if he had found his dog. When he said no, the caller said she thought she had, and indeed, she had! What we did was go to the Internet. Angus was found because we posted his picture and relevant information online, and someone saw it and called my son. There are several Internet searches to help find lost pets that are great resources. — *Donna Wigley, Dallas*

CAT FUR

Dear Heloise: Recently, your column mentioned a solution

for getting cat hair off furniture.

My cat is a Cornish Rex, with very short, wavy hair. I groom her with a sticky roller and then use a clean roller sheet for her "favorite" place on the back of the couch. Works great! — *Kathy Wood, Dallas*

A TRIP OVERSEAS

Dear Heloise: When my husband and I moved overseas with our dog, I took a clean, old sheet and put it between us in bed overnight. Then I took that sheet to put in our dog's kennel on the flight. — *Kathy Dees, Fayetteville, Ark.*

STITCH SALVE

Dear Heloise: When my dog had surgery, I had to put salve on the stitches. When Bobby Lee would jump up on the couch, the salve would leave little grease marks where he usually lies. They were quite difficult to remove and required a lot of work.

So I got several big beach towels and placed them on the couch and chairs. I can just throw them in the washer when dirty, and no more furniture spots. — *Michelle from Fair Oaks Ranch, Texas*

PET PAL

Dear Readers: Virginia C. Reilly of Ocean, N.J., sent in a photo of her daughter's two black-and-white dogs, Zoey (the small one) and Eva (the larger dog). They are embroiled in a hearty game of tug of war! Virginia says, "Zoey always wins the challenge!"

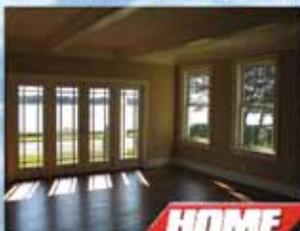
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FROMMER'S BUDGET TRAVEL



BY ARTHUR FROMMER

TRAVEL OPPORTUNITIES, DIFFICULTIES EMERGE FROM ECONOMIC TURMOIL

There's a long list of nations whose currencies recently plunged in value against the U.S. dollar (and thus became attractive destinations for the American tourist).

The recordholder is Iceland, but now in second place is South Africa. One year ago, the U.S. dollar bought 6.60 South African rand. Today, the dollar buys almost 11 South African rand — an increase of 67 percent. Those U.S. honeymooning couples choosing Cape Town for a blissful vacation are now able to buy almost double what they could earlier — hotels, meals, shopping purchases and more. I'm reminded that just several months ago, I drew attention to the air-and-land package to South Africa, operated by South African Holidays for under \$2,000, called "South Africa in Style." It's still available at that price, and brings you airfare, accommodations and a safari in a private game reserve (see www.flysaavacations.com).

But the world financial crisis also has claimed its first touristic victim: Japan. Because such immense sums of money are flooding into the "safe haven" of the Japanese yen, that currency has soared in

value: You now receive only 96 yen to the dollar (as compared with 115 yen to the dollar a few months ago). And nearly all the financial commentators agree that the yen still is moving higher. Several actually have predicted that it will strengthen to 90 yen to the dollar in just a few weeks, and one currency broker is claiming the rate will be only 80 yen to the dollar in just a few months.

Even in the days when you received 115 yen to the dollar, Japan was mighty expensive. At 96 yen to the dollar, it is fiendishly so. For a long time to come, U.S. visitors to Japan will be limited to business visitors traveling on expense accounts, and only the most gold-plated of affluent tourists will be joining them. This is a pity, but it is offset by the fact that the U.S. dollar has risen considerably against most other foreign currencies (and, thus, destinations) — especially the euro (currently \$1.24 for one euro) and British pound (\$1.55 for one pound).

And then there's Australia. Although it's dropped a tiny bit from its recent low, the Australian dollar still is being exchanged at an amazing rate — one U.S. dollar equals 1.53 Australian dollars. And at that exchange, you can live awfully cheap in Aussie-land.

Qantas Airways currently is offering stunning airfare sales to Australia. Recently, and for a short time, it offered a round-trip price between Los Angeles or San Francisco and Sydney, Australia, of \$695, for travel until Nov. 17 or in May 2009. Though seats at that price undoubtedly have been sold out by the time you read this, it's clear that prices almost as good will be available throughout the remainder of November and possibly in early December, too. Go to www.qantasvacations.com, or else phone 866-458-9348.



Australia is currently on sale.

Photo by Matthew Field

(c) 2008 by Arthur Frommer

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NASCAR THIS WEEK

By Monte Dutton

Casey Mears takes his quest for success to his third Sprint Cup team next year.

Mears, whose uncle Rick won the Indianapolis 500 four times, has one Sprint Cup victory, in the 2007 Coca-Cola 600 at Lowe's Motor Speedway, to his credit.

After four years at Chip Ganassi Racing, Mears moved to NASCAR's most prestigious team, Hendrick Motorsports, in 2007.

At Hendrick, though, Mears has been unable to improve on the 14th-place finish in points he had in his final season at Ganassi. He finished 15th in 2007 and, entering the final two races, he is 20th this year.

Next year Mears will move to Richard Childress Racing, which is adding a fourth team.

Mears will drive the No. 07, while Clint Bowyer will move into the team's new No. 33 Chevrolet.

Mears, 30, is, like Kevin Harvick, from Bakersfield, Calif. The two will be teammates next year.

"Hendrick Motorsports is a great organization," said



John Clark/NASCAR This Week

Casey Mears hasn't exactly had a great year with Hendrick Motorsports in 2008. He is currently 20th in the points standings with only one top-five and five top-10s.

Mears. "We've definitely had a rough year for probably several reasons, but everybody has worked hard. (Crew chief) Alan (Gustafson) and Rick (Hendrick) and everybody else have worked hard to try to do what we can to help improve the program, and we just haven't had the luck.

"I don't feel a whole lot differently about the team or the organization or the guys than I did at the beginning of the year."

Mark Martin, running only part time this year, will replace Mears at Hendrick next year.

Mears has been at his best in big races. His Coca-Cola 600 victory was quite an upset, and he also finished second in the 2006 Daytona 500.

As for being replaced at Hendrick, Mears has no hard feelings.

"I think, because I've got such good friends over at Hendrick Motorsports, I understand more than ever that it's business and you can separate that," he said. "At the end of the day, obviously Rick is trying to run the best possible business he can and do the best things he can for his company. At the same time, we're all really good friends still.

"In some ways, that makes leaving easier, and in some ways, it makes it harder."

Junior Johnson, the last American hero?

Robert Glenn Johnson, better known as Junior, was famously called "the last American hero" by author Tom Wolfe in a 1965 Esquire article. Johnson, who served time in a federal penitentiary for moonshine-related charges, won 50 races as a driver and added 139 more — and six championships — as an owner. Johnson's driving career was the inspiration for the movie "The Last American Hero," starring Jeff Bridges and Valerie Perrine.

Want to read more from Monte Dutton?

Check out <http://www.gastongazette.com/sections/sports/nascar>



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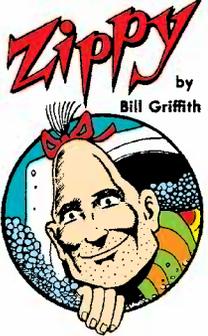
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ZIPPY by Bill Griffith

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JOLT COLA? OR JOLT CHERRY BOMB?

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Chicken Soup for the Soul



OSCAR WINS OVER GROUCHY DAD

Oscar was named after the "Sesame Street" character who lives in a garbage can, because that is where we first became acquainted. I was working at a pizza-delivery chain and had been assigned garbage duty. While tossing bags into a Dumpster, I heard a faint meow. I began digging through the trash, and several layers down, I found a cat — bruised and thin. I wasn't sure if the cat had crawled into the Dumpster to scavenge for food, or if he had been put there on purpose. Our establishment sat directly behind an apartment complex, and unsupervised and abandoned pets were common.

Back on solid ground, it became evident that the cat had an injured leg. He couldn't put any weight on his right hind-quarters. The situation created a dilemma for me. Finances were tight, and I was moving back home to my parents' house — with two cats already in tow. Dad barely tolerated the two established felines. His reaction to another injured stray was sure to be less than receptive.

I took the stray to the vet, hoping to patch him up. After shots and X-rays, the vet discovered that the cat had a cracked pelvis. I posted notices, hoping someone would claim the cat or adopt him.

Meanwhile, the response at home was swift and firm: No more cats! Dad insisted I take the cat to the Humane Society immediately. I protested that the cat would be put to sleep. Luckily, my mother intervened. She agreed that the injury would make the cat unadoptable, so we would keep him long enough for his hip to heal. Then he would have to go — no arguments.

Somehow Oscar must have understood his situation. He seemed to study the other two cats and their interactions with my father. We suspect he bribed Tanner, our golden retriever, with table scraps in exchange for etiquette lessons. When the other cats were aloof, Oscar was attentive. He came when his name was called, and he would roll over on his back to have his belly scratched. As his injury began to heal, he would jump on the ottoman by my father's favorite chair, and, eventually, into his lap. Initially, Dad pushed Oscar away, but persistence paid off. Soon, Oscar and a muttering Dad shared the chair.

At mealtimes, Oscar would come to sit with us. Positioned on the floor by my father's chair, every so often Oscar would reach up with one paw and tap Dad on the knee. At first, this provoked great irritation and colorful expletives expressed in harsh tones. Oscar, however, refused to be put off. Repetitive knee taps soon led to semi-covert handouts of choice morsels.

Oscar greeted my father at the top of the stairs every morning and waited for him at the door every evening. My father sometimes ignored Oscar, and, at other times, stepped over him, complaining the whole time. Oscar mastered opening doors by sticking his paw underneath the door and rocking it back and forth until it opened. Soon, he was sleeping in the master bedroom at the foot of the bed. My father was completely disgusted, but couldn't stop the cat from sneaking onto the bed while they were sleeping. Eventually, Dad gave up.

Before long, Oscar, aspiring to his own place at the table during meals, began jumping up into my lap. He was allowed to stay as long as his head remained below table level. Of course, an occasional paw would appear as a reminder of his presence.

Three months passed, and the vet pronounced Oscar healthy and healed. I was heartbroken. How could I take this loving soul away from what had become his home, from the people he trusted? Sick at heart, I brought Oscar home and told my parents what should have been good news: Oscar was a healthy cat with a healed hip. "I'll take him to the Humane Society like I promised," I said dully.

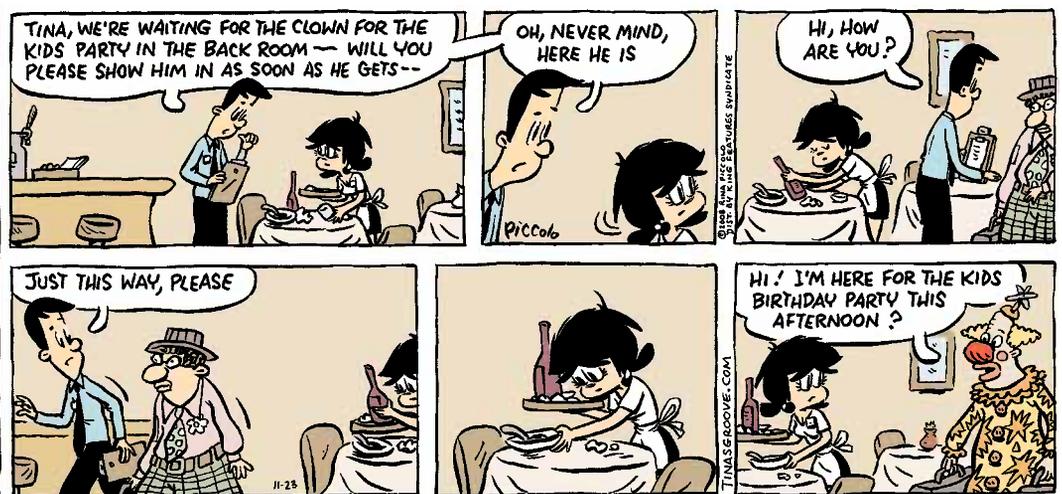
As I turned to put Oscar in the carrier for the trip, my father spoke, uttering three magic words: "Not my cat!"

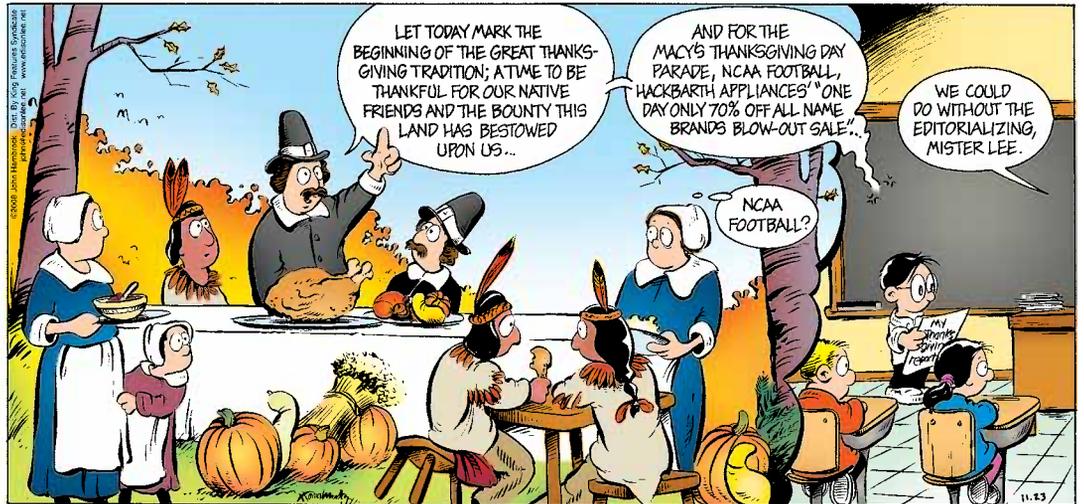
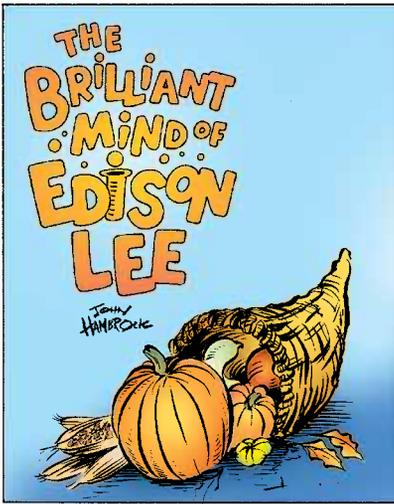
Oscar is home to stay. He now has his own chair at the table and sleeps — where else? — in the master bedroom between my mother and father. He is their official "grandkitten," and living proof that deep within even the most unlikely heart, there is a cat lover in all of us.

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KOVELS ANTIQUES

By Ralph and Terry Kovel

CONVERTIBLE DINING TABLE

Q: I have a Castro Convertible combination coffee-dining table that has been in my family for more years than I can remember. It's in nearly perfect condition, too. Is it rare?

A: It's not particularly rare. You can find tables like yours for sale around the country and online. Prices range from \$300 to \$600. It's a handy table for an apartment or small house, because it can serve as a coffee table in the living room, then convert to a dining table comfortable for four people. The legs expand to dining height and the top lifts up on a hinge to double in size. Castro Convertible Corp.'s original patent for the table was issued in 1972, but the company may have been manufacturing the tables before then. Castro, founded in New York in 1931, was better known for its convertible sofa beds. The company was sold to Krause's Furniture, Inc., in 1993. Krause closed in 2002.

Q: How does an Atmos Clock work? I have one that belonged to my mother.

A: The Atmos clock doesn't need to be wound or plugged in, and doesn't require batteries. It is powered by the atmosphere — changes in the temperature. Gas and liquid expand and contract in a sealed capsule when the temperature changes and that is enough power to wind the clock's mainspring. The Atmos clock was developed in 1928 by Jean-Léon Reutter, a Swiss engineer.

LeCoultre & Cie bought the patent in 1935 and began making the clocks a year later. The company became Jaeger-LeCoultre in 1937 and is still in business in Switzerland.

Q: I've heard the term "Sunday toys." Can you tell me what this means?

A: In the 18th century, Sundays were reserved strictly for religious observances. Nothing as frivolous as playing with toys was allowed in a religious home. By the early 1800s children were allowed to play with certain toys that had some connection to a Bible story or had religious virtue. Books of Bible stories, puzzles illustrating Bible stories and Noah's ark toys were popular. By the late 1800s most families were less strict about children's playthings, and family activities and Sunday outings were considered acceptable pastimes.

Q: My



Rorstand, a Swedish firm started in 1726, made this 45-inch-tall majolica pedestal with four women's faces and other decorations. It was new in 1893 at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. James Julia auctions got \$4,025 for it this year.

father-in-law gave us a 7 1/2-inch tall blue teardrop-shape glass vase with a matador and bull worked into the design. It is signed "Orrefors, Edvin Óhrstrom, Ariel." Can you tell us about it?

A: Edvin Óhrstrom (1906-1994) was an artist and sculptor who worked at Orrefors in Orrefors, Sweden, from 1936 until 1958. The Ariel technique, which creates a design by trapping air bubbles between the two layers of glass, was developed by Óhrstrom and two others in 1937. Many Ariel pieces were made. Orrefors merged with Kosta Boda in 1990 and is now part of Orrefors Kosta Boda AB, a glassworks group which includes Kosta, Boda and Aförs. It became part of the New Wave Group in 2005.

Q: I have been trying to research penny dolls but haven't had any success. What do you know about them?

A: The term "penny doll" can mean different things. Originally it referred to carved and jointed wooden dolls that sold for a few pennies. They are sometimes called "peg wooden dolls" or "Dutch dolls," though most were made in Germany. This kind of penny doll was popular in the 1800s. Today you frequently find small all-bisque dolls advertised as penny dolls.

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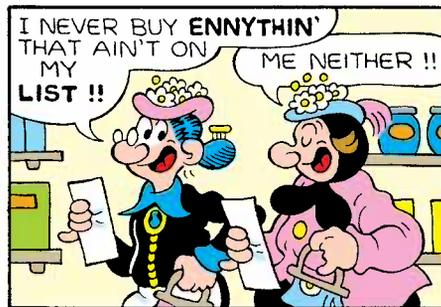
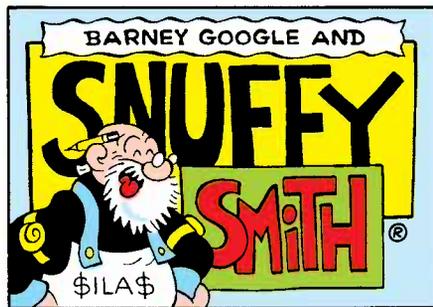
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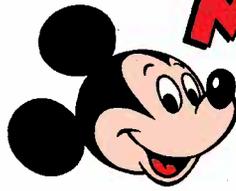
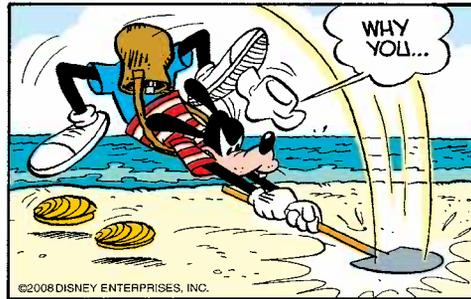
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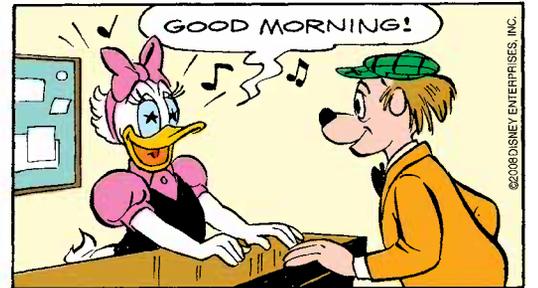
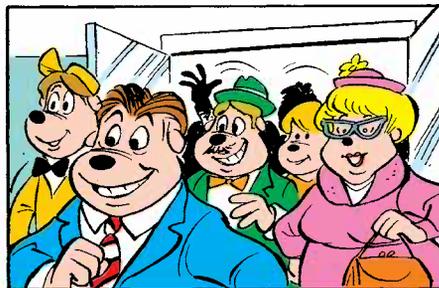
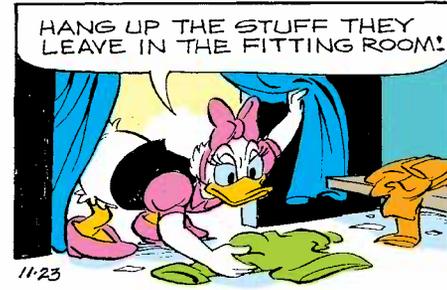
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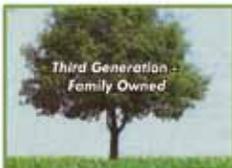
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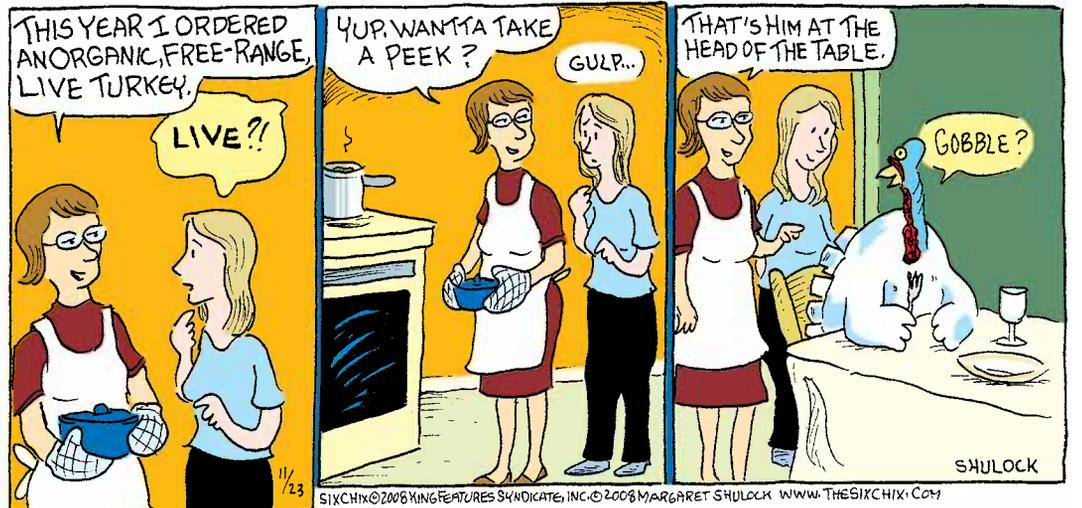
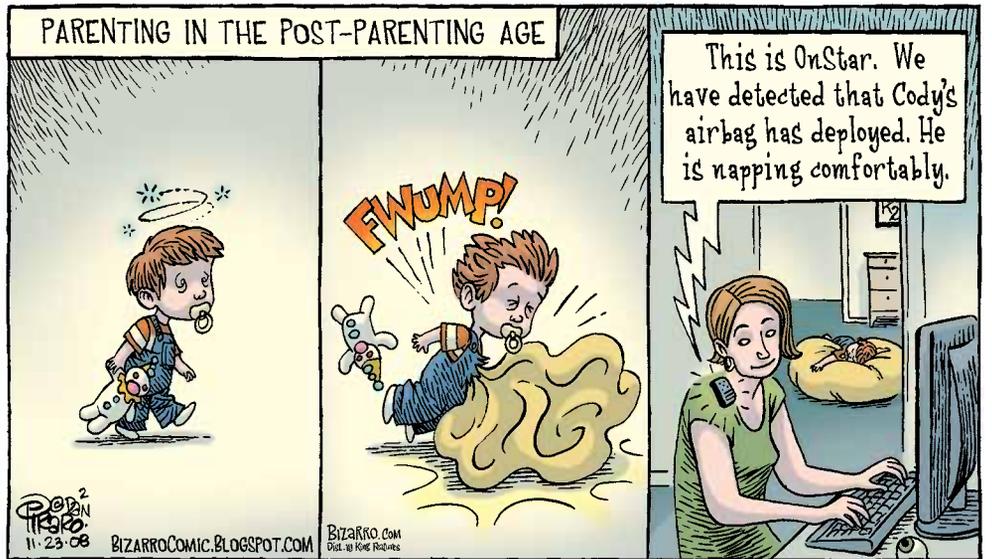
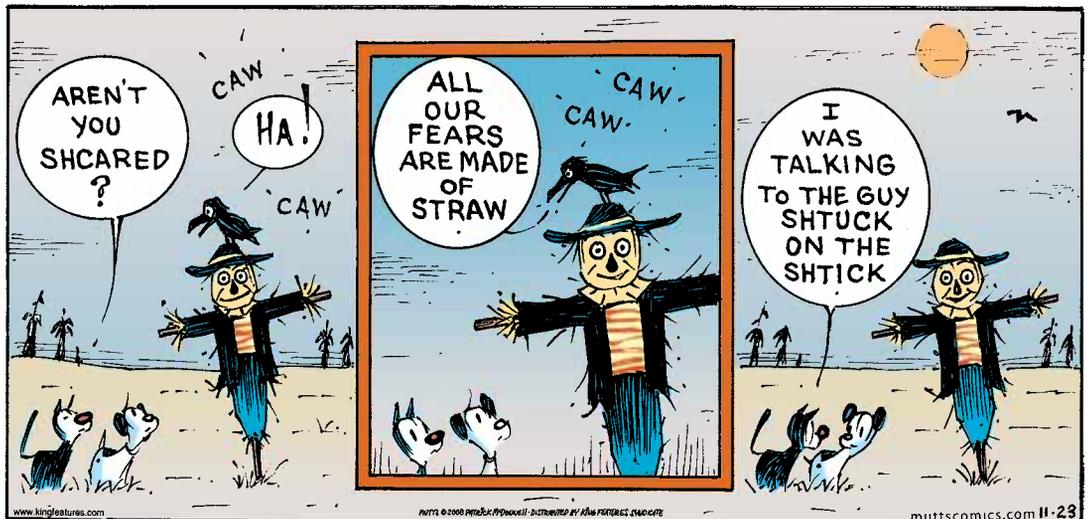
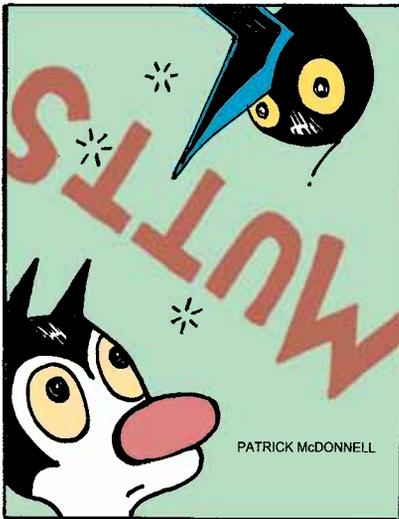
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THE SUPER HANDYMAN



BY AL AND KELLY CARRELL
CLEAN DRIVEWAY

Some things should be "written in stone," but an oil stain on your driveway probably shouldn't. In fact, a lot of the stains on your driveway, sidewalk and patio can be easily removed, so why not take care of them?

Here are some ways to erase years from your concrete and give it a new life:

Pressure washers are super for washing concrete. You can use them with or without cleaners. You need to have a tip that delivers a wide pattern of spray. Once you have the initial cleaning finished, you can see what stains are left to deal with.

Oil and grease stains can

be dissolved by a solvent. Mineral spirits paint thinner, or even WD-40, can be used to dissolve and dilute the stain. Use a scrub brush to get the tough stains out. Then apply an absorbent, like clay cat litter, to soak up the residue, and sweep it away after it has had time to absorb the substance.

Mold and mildew stains can quickly spread and ruin a concrete surface. But most usually can be cleaned with regular liquid laundry bleach. Start with a mixture of half water, half bleach. Use a scrub brush to work the mold off the surface. If that doesn't do the job, you can reapply the solution or just use bleach at full strength.

There are a couple of other cleaners that we like to use on stubborn stains. Trisodium phosphate, or TSP, is sold in paint stores and is great for tough stains.

Oxalic acid is another great cleaner and is also available at most hardware stores. It's great for removing lots of tough stains, and is super on rust spots. Muriatic acid is another choice for really stubborn stains and spots.

Use precautions with

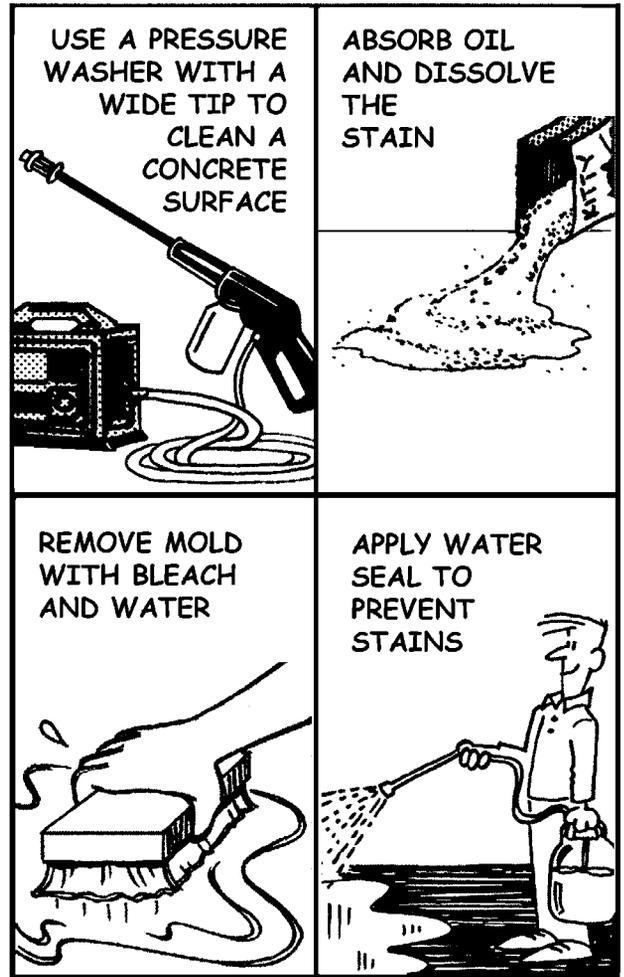
all of these cleaners. That might mean wearing gloves, eye protection or a mask, or all three. Read and follow all package directions for cleaners.

Once you have the surface clean, apply a water seal. Concrete is porous, which is why it absorbs stains so easily, so sealing it makes a lot of sense. You can do this once a year and prevent a lot of liquids from soaking into the surface. If you want, you could use epoxy paint on concrete. This is a great solution for garage, patio or basement floors.

As Lady Macbeth said, "Out, damn'd spot!"

Q: I bought some glazed ceramic tiles at a salvage yard. I want to place them on my bathroom wall. The edge is straight and smooth. How can I cut these without damaging them? — L.P.

A: The safest way is to use a powered tile-cutter saw. You can rent a good one for the day. Buy some similar tiles that are inexpensive to practice on. You'll get the hang of it with a little practice. Be sure to wear hand and eye protection.



Got a question or a handy tip? Send it to The Super Handyman in care of this publication, or visit our Web site at www.thesuperhandyman.com. Those of general interest will be used in future columns.

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Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

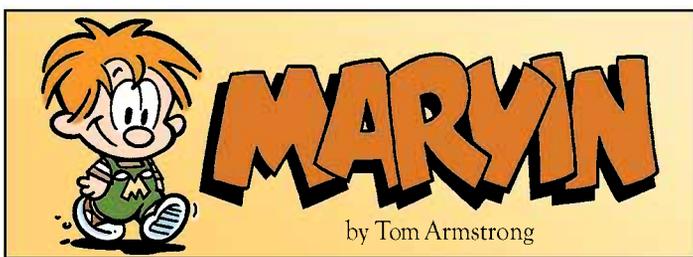
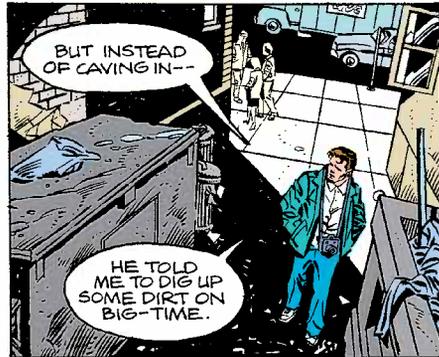
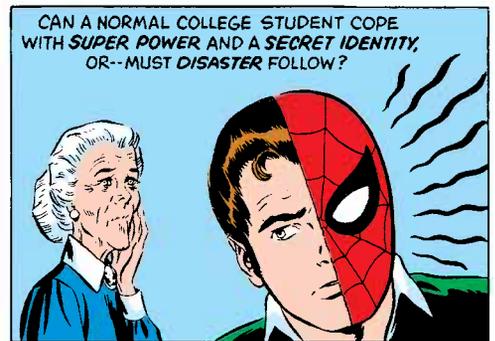
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Difficulty Level ★★★★★

11/16

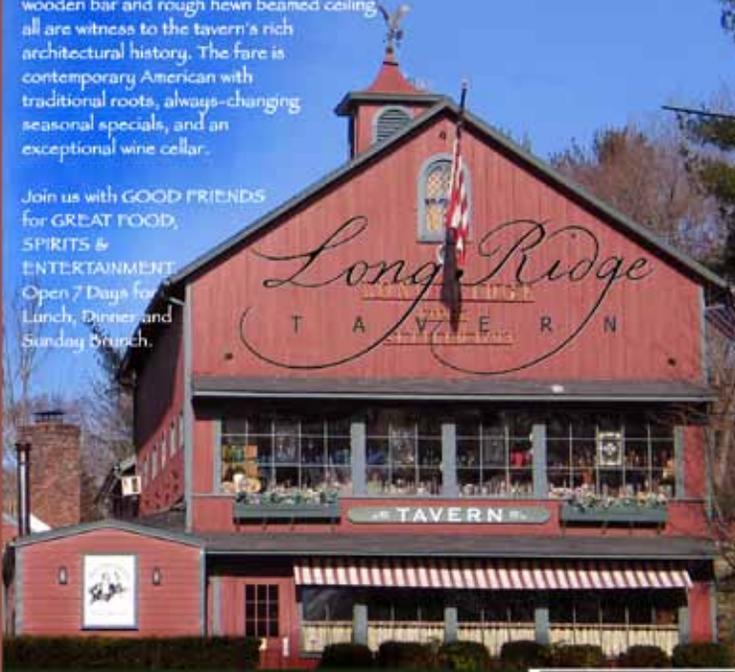
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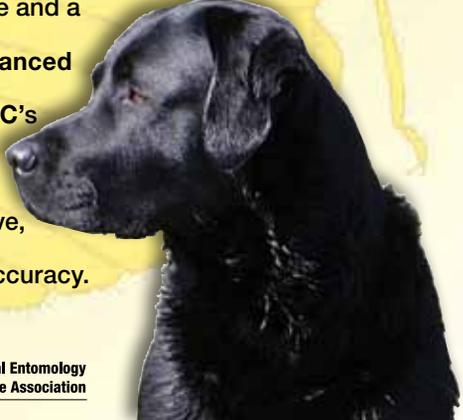
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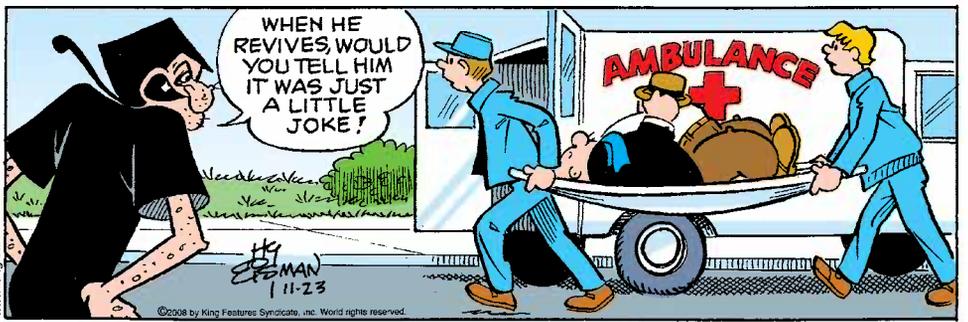
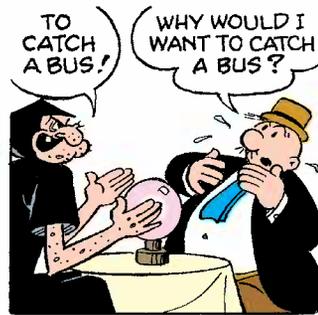
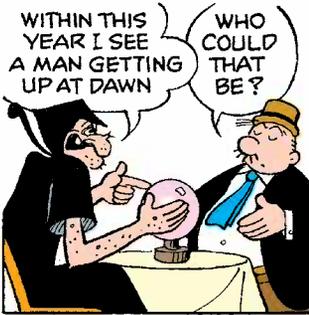
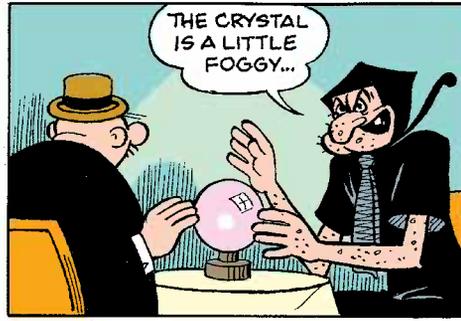
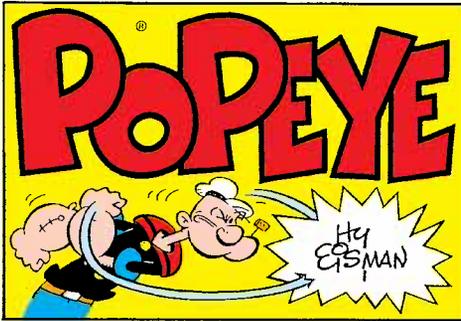
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by Sally Huss

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

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

11/16

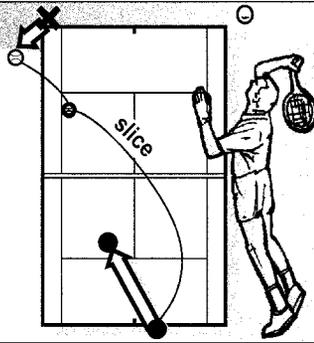
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STAN SMITH'S TENNIS CLASS

SERVING OUT WIDE

If you hit a slice serve to the deuce side, the spin will pull the returner wide off the court. You should move toward the net, just to the left of center stripe.

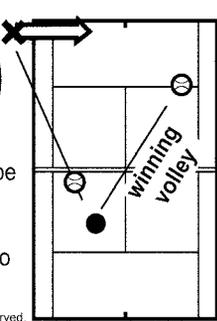


This forward rotation on the ball is called "topspin." Using topspin on the ball allows you to hit the ball higher over the net and still have it land in, since the forward spin helps to bring the ball down into the court.



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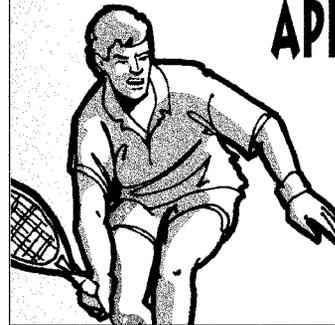
The opponent is in a tough position to hit the return. His easiest shot will be down the line, which you should be able to pick off as a winning volley. Just block your backhand volley into the open court.



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APPLY PRESSURE

Learn to put your opponent on the defensive, then recognize when you have him in trouble. If you've hit a good shot and he's barely going to reach the ball, move forward, anticipating a weak shot.



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Develop an instinct for when your opponent is in trouble – does he seem dejected? Does he look nervous or angry?

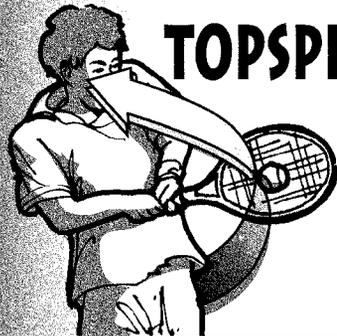


Learning to apply pressure when the other person is down can help you win matches.



TOPSPIN BASICS

To hit topspin, use a low-to-high swing when stroking the ball. By brushing up on the ball when making contact, you will give it a forward rotation.



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WHATEVER YOUR ROUTINE, BE SURE YOU INGRAIN IT.

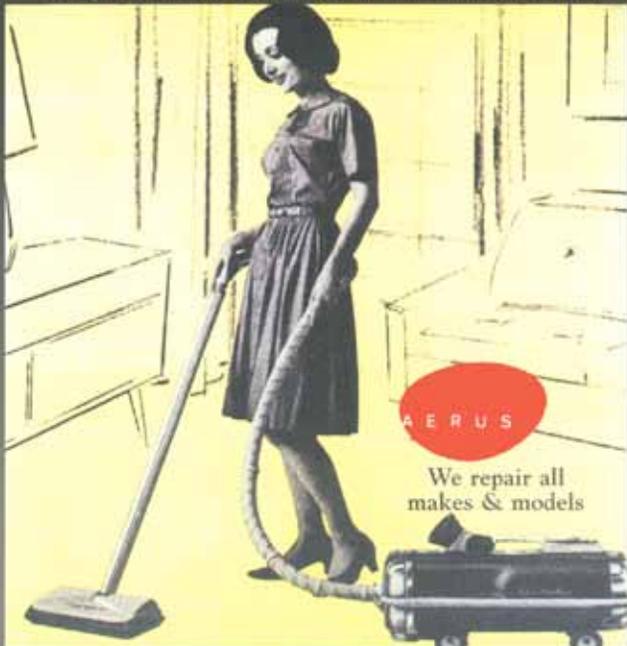
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We hope you enjoy all the features and entertainment in our fun magazine. Drop us a line if you have any suggestions, comments, or just to say "hello" neal@thebestoftimes.us

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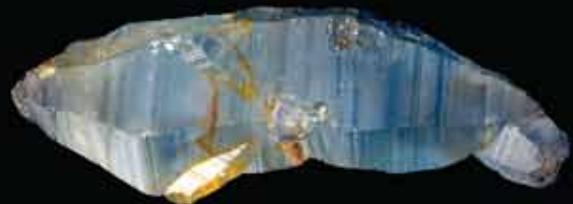
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