

LIND ARTIST REINVENTS THE WHEELS



Photos by Charles H. Featherstone/Columbia Basin Herald
Lind artist Tom Strohmaier works with leftover buggy parts and farm implements to create abstract art that reflects life in the region.

By CHARLES H. FEATHERSTONE
Staff Writer

LIND — Tom Strohmaier never set out to be an artist.

“My father-in-law used to restore buggies, horse-drawn buggies, sleighs and wagons,” Strohmaier said. “And when he died in 2014, he left me this huge pile of (stuff)”

The retired farmer pauses as he stands over a pile of rusting cast-iron and steel parts — springs, spindles, axles — sitting behind his home in Lind.

“This sort of thing,” he said.

He didn’t want to build wagons.

So, looking at the giant pile of parts, Strohmaier said he got an idea.

He started tinkering with the old spare parts, seeing something he could make with them.

Sculptures. As varied as a trio of salmon trying to swim upstream to the 12th Seahawk feeding her young a football fish to a farmer scything a field of wheat.

“Now I’m on my 35th piece, and I find this stuff all around this area,” Strohmaier said.

Strohmaier said he grew up south of Lind, on the family farm he managed for three decades while he farmed the rolling hills of Eastern Washington when he retired at age 53 about 10 years ago. He didn’t start making art until late in life, when after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, he decided to paint a giant American flag with the 50 stars arranged symmetrically in the shape of the twin towers in the field.

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Tom Strohmaier shows off the farmer scything wheat sculpture he created from old buggy and combine parts. The work, which is painted in Washington State University’s official crimson, has more than 10,000 individual welds, Strohmaier said. The individual heads of wheat are made from segments of chain taken from old combines.

How COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy may protect babies

By DEEDEE STIEPAN
Mayo Clinic News Network

Getting vaccinated for COVID-19 during pregnancy might protect not only the pregnant woman, but also the baby after birth. That’s what a recent Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study suggests.

Data show that being vaccinated, even before pregnancy, can prevent COVID-19 hospitaliza-

tions among infants 6 months and younger.

Dr. Myra Wick, a Mayo Clinic OB-GYN, explains why the findings are significant.

...

The study looked at two groups of infants 6 months and younger who had been admitted to the hospital. One group was admitted for COVID-19 infection. The second was admitted for various other reasons.

Researchers then looked at the vaccination statuses of the mothers during pregnancy to see if being vaccinated provided some protection after delivery for the infants.

The babies whose mothers were vaccinated during pregnancy were found to be protected for up to six months after birth.

See BABIES, Page C2

Child marriage a legal loophole in custody fights

By REBECCA BOONE
Associated Press

BOISE — Ryan Small was trying to keep his ex-wife from moving out of state with their son early last winter when he found out the 16-year-old boy had been married off to another teen, with his mother’s permission, in an apparent bid to end

the custody battle.

Months earlier, Erin Carver was embroiled in a battle with her ex-husband over whether their 16-year-old girl would remain in Idaho or move to Florida with her father when she learned a similar “sham marriage” had taken place.

See CUSTODY, Page C3

LOCAL EVENTS

Note: All events are subject to postponement or cancellation in compliance with COVID-19 regulations.

MARCH 5

Youth Outdoors Unlimited banquet

4:30 p.m. at the Best Western Plus Lake Front Hotel, 3000 W. Marina Drive. Dinner, silent auction and live auction. YOU participants who were successful on their fishing or hunting trip receive their trophies. Info and tickets: www.youthoutdoorsu.org

MARCH 12

Moses Lake Distinguished Young Women

7 p.m. at the Moses Lake High School theater, 803 E. Sharon Ave. Tickets \$10, available at the door. Info: moseslake.wa.distinguishedyw.org.

MARCH 22

Branden & James in concert

7 p.m. at Moses Lake Alliance Church 1100 N. Grape Drive. The soulful timbre of James on cello combined with Branden’s emotional and powerful vocals create a sound that leaves audiences feeling moved and inspired. Their program borrows from genres ranging from Broadway, classical mashups and popular music. The duo weaves familiar melodies of pop tunes in classical style with their own unique sound. A powerhouse cello and vocal duo. Presented by Central Basin Community Concert Association. Info: 406-590-0932 or <https://communityconcertsml.com>.

MARCH 25

Double Crossed: The American Missionary Spies of World War II

6 p.m. at the Moses Lake Civic Center auditorium, 401 S. Balsam St. Historian Matthew Avery Sutton tells the extraordinary story of the missionaries, priests and rabbis who played an outsized role in leading the United States to victory in World War II. This talk is an untold story of wartime spy craft and a profound account of the compromises and doubts that war forces on those who wage it. Sponsored by Humanities Washington. Info: www.humanities.org.

Promote your organization’s local events on the Herald’s website and in this column: <https://columbiabasinherald.com/events>.



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GARFIELD
BABY BLUES
BIG NATE

Black female WWII unit recognized with congressional honor

By MICHAEL CASEY
Associated Press

BOSTON — The House voted Monday to award the only all-female, Black unit to serve in Europe during World War II with the Congressional Gold Medal.

The 422-0 vote follows a long-running campaign to recognize the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion. The Senate passed the legislation last year. The unit, known in short as the Six Triple Eight, was tasked with sorting and routing mail for millions of American service members and civilians. Only a half-dozen of the more than 850 members are still alive.

"It's overwhelming," Maj. Fannie Griffin McClendon, who is 101 and lives in Arizona, said when told of the vote. "It's something I never even thought about it. I don't know if I can stand this."

The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion was credited with solving a growing mail crisis during its stint in England and, upon their return, serving as a role model to generations of Black women who joined the military.

But for decades, the exploits of the 855 members never got wider recognition. But that has changed, starting several years ago. A monument was erected in 2018 at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to honor

them, and the 6888th was given the Meritorious Unit Commendation in 2019. A documentary "The Six Triple Eight" was made about them. There is talk of a movie. Retired Army Col. Edna Cummings was among those advocating for the 6888th.

"The Six Triple Eight was a trailblazing group of heroes who were the only all-Black, Women Army Corps Battalion to serve overseas during World War II," said Wisconsin Rep. Gwen Moore, who sponsored the bill after being contacted by the daughter of 6888th members Anna Mae Robertson.

"Facing both racism and sexism in a warzone, these women sorted millions of pieces of mail, closing massive mail backlogs, and ensuring service members received letters from their loved ones," she said. "A Congressional Gold Medal is only fitting for these veterans who received little recognition for their service after returning home."

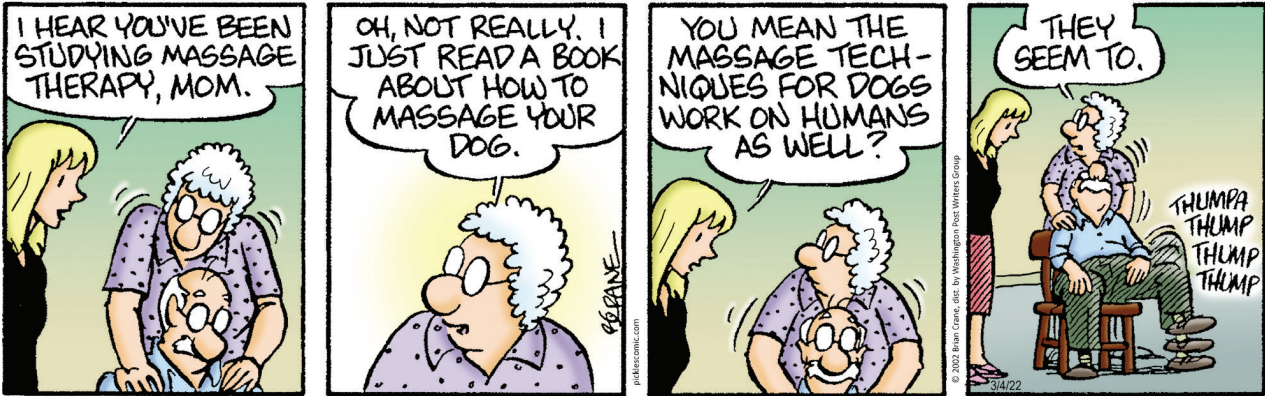
The House also voted to rename the Central Post Office in Buffalo as the "Indiana Hunt-Martin Post Office Building" after veteran Indiana Hunt-Martin, a member of the 6888th. Hunt-Martin died in 2020 at the age of 98.

"Throughout her life and military service, Indiana Hunt-Martin experienced racism and sexism firsthand, but no amount of discrimination prevented her from serving her country," New York Democratic Rep. Brian Higgins, who sponsored the post office bill and was co-sponsor of the Congressional Gold Medal bill, said in a statement.



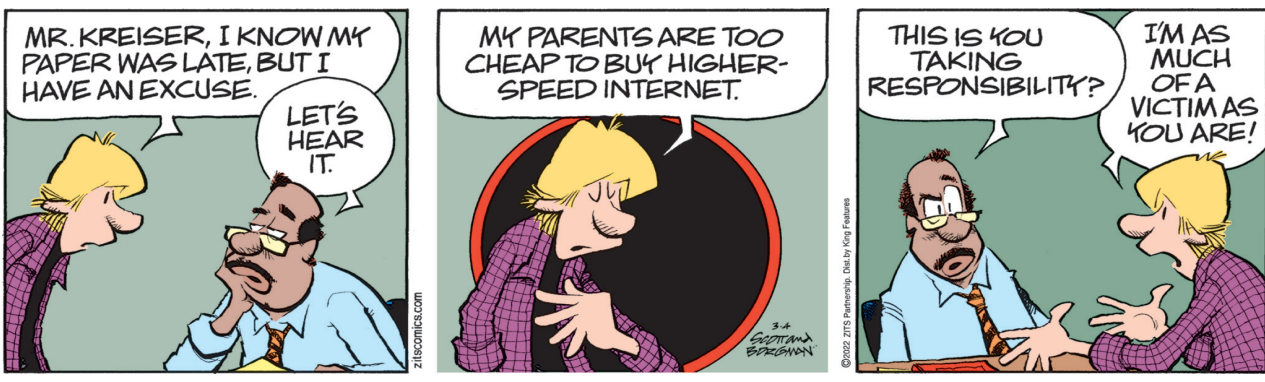
McClendon

PICKLES



Brian Crane

ZITS



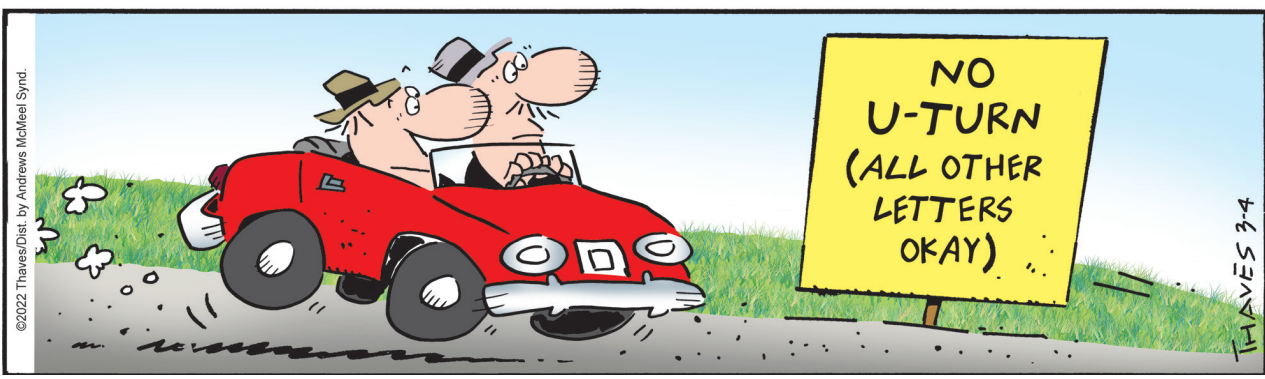
Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

DILBERT



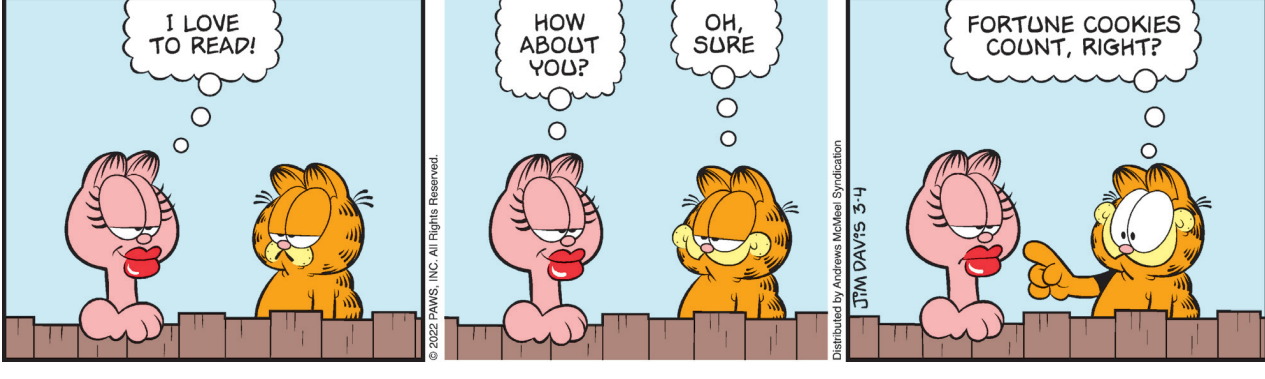
Scott Adams

FRANK & ERNEST



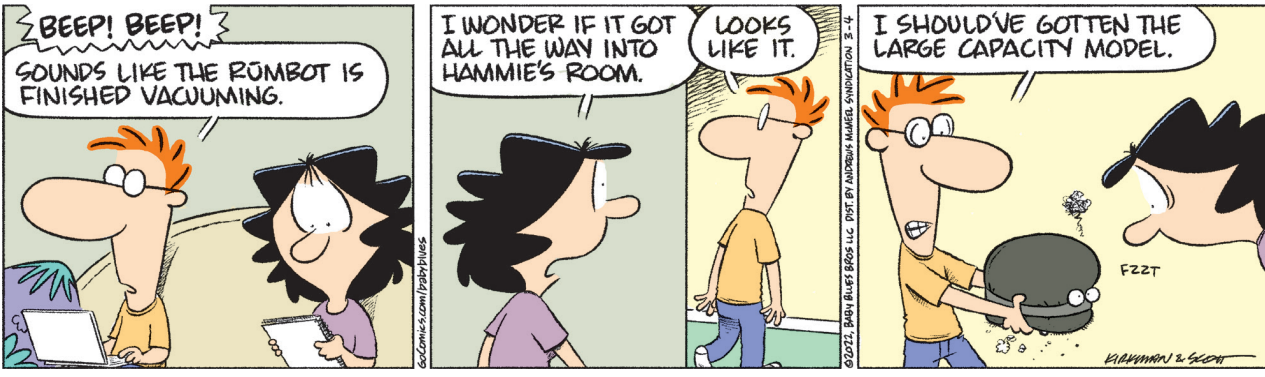
Bob Thaves

GARFIELD



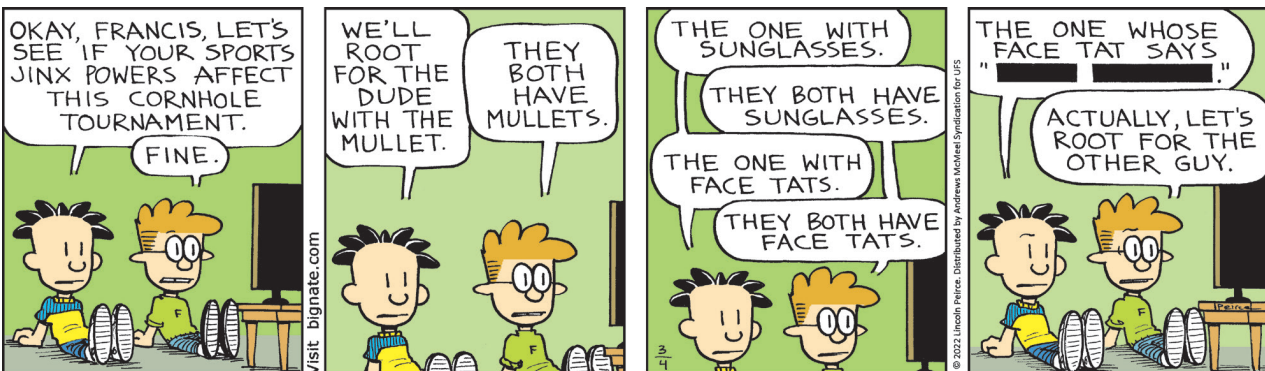
Jim Davis

BABY BLUES



Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

BIG NATE



Lincoln Peirce



Charles H. Featherstone/Columbia Basin Herald
The 12th Seahawk feeds her young in a nest. Tom Strohmaier created the sculpture to honor the Seattle Seahawks and their fans.

WHEELS

from Page C1

"I painted that on my shop door. It's 22 feet by 18 feet," he said. "The stars are seven inches across, and it's still out there on the farm."

Since moving into town, Strohmaier said he joined the fire department, got elected to the city council and the local school board, and started making art.

His first piece was a giant praying mantis, eight feet tall, one he tinkered with for years before he decided it was finished.

But standing in the large garage that doubles as his workshop built out back of his home, Strohmaier slowly unwraps a series of pieces he keeps covered so they protected from the dust and shavings of the piece he's currently working on.

Most striking is the farmer, painted in Washington State University colors, made of giant buggy springs, scything wheat stalks painted gold and made with clumps of chain taken from old combines. A WSU grad himself, Strohmaier said he originally wanted to make the wheat purple — WSU putting the University of Washington in its place — but when he tested it, things just didn't look right.

"This one took me eight months to make,

and there are over 10,000 welds in this piece," he said. "I built it about buy height, and this is a really old scythe that I bought when I moved into town. So I just made a guy to with it."

That's kind of how the creative process works, Strohmaier said. He looks at the parts and begins to envision what kinds of things they make, and from that he said he makes a series of drawings to plan out what he is trying to make.

"It just pops into my head," he said. "I've got notebooks on my desk, and I go from there."

So far, Strohmaier has made 35 sculptures — including several metal benches — and sold around 14 of them, including items on display in towns from Othello to Coeur d'Alene. He's currently working on a sculpture of a sandhill crane family, which he spends his time shaping, sanding on welding in the winter afternoons.

Strohmaier said he's open to selling his work, but he's also okay if he doesn't.

"I haven't really tried to sell anything. I don't know what this stuff is worth," he said. "I think it's worth some money, but I don't care if I don't sell it. I'm fairly comfortable. I don't need to sell it, and I like looking at it."

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