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East Sacramento News

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Legacy of Joan Didion remains strong in Sacramento

See page 2

Cover photo courtesy of Jennifer Goto



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Legacy of Joan Didion remains strong in Sacramento

Didion family, others share recollections about famous writer

By Lance Armstrong

Editor's note: This is part two of a three-part series, with the first part featuring artist Wayne Thiebaud. Parts two and three of the series are about writer Joan Didion. Both Didion and Thiebaud spent years living in Sacramento. They died two days apart in late December 2021.

Joan Didion, a renowned Sacramento-born novelist, essayist, journalist and screenwriter, died from complications associated with Parkinson's disease on Dec. 23. She was 87.

In announcing her death, her publisher, Penguin Random House, noted: "Didion was one of the country's most trenchant writers and astute observers. Her best-selling works of fiction, commentary and memoir have received numerous honors and are considered modern classics."

Among her many notable books are "The Year of Magical Thinking," "The White Album," "Blue Nights" and "Slouching Towards Bethlehem."

She also joined Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote and others as part of the 1960s and 1970s "new journalism" movement, which combined traditional journalism with nonfiction writing.

As one of Sacramento's most well-known native daughters, Joan spent her earliest years in this capital city. However, her roots ran much deeper in the Golden State, as she was a fifth-generation Californian.



Photo courtesy of Jennifer Goto

Jennifer Goto, a bookseller at the Avid Reader bookstore in Sacramento, holds the store's last unsold copy of a Joan Didion book, on Jan. 5.

Born on Dec. 5, 1934, Joan was the first-born child of Frank and Eduene (Jerrett) Didion, who were married at the Trinity Episcopal Pro-Cathedral at 2620 M Street (now Capitol Avenue) on Jan. 1, 1934.

According to Sacramento city directories, Frank and Eduene were living at 1011 23rd St. in 1934 and 2941 Highland Ave. in Curtis Park by 1935.

The Didions, including Joan's then-3 ½-year-old brother, James, are listed in the 1940 U.S. census as living at 2211 U St. James, an El Camino High School graduate, died two years ago at the age of 80.

Joan graduated from C.K. McClatchy High School in Sacramento's Land Park neighborhood in 1952.

Long before she planted new roots in Southern California and New York, Joan gained experience as a journalist in the city of her birth, as she contributed to both The Sacramento Union and The Sacramento Bee.

In one of those articles, which was published in The Bee on Aug. 18, 1951, Joan highlighted Sacramento High School student Carol Joan Bennetts, who was then dancing in musicals of the inaugural season of the Sacramento Music Circus.

During her senior year at the University of California, Berkeley, where she earned a bachelor's degree in English in 1956, Joan won first place in an essay contest sponsored by Vogue fashion and lifestyle magazine.

Vogue awarded Joan a job as a research assistant. She accepted the position and eventually became one of that publication's editors

During her seven years with Vogue, Joan wrote her first novel, "Run River." It was published in 1963.

The book's editor was journalist John Gregory Dunne, who became her husband on Jan. 30, 1964. Two years later, they adopted their daughter, Quintana Roo Dunne.

With Dunne, Joan co-wrote several screenplays, including the film adaption of her 1970 novel, "Play It As It Lays."

Although Joan spent most of her life living away from California's capital city, a variety of references to Sacramento are present in her writings.

In her book, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," Joan wrote about the "boom mentality" of California, and that "Sacramento is California."

She also referred to an Eden-like California of old, noting: "Did not the Donner-Reed Party, after all, eat its own dead to reach Sacramento?"

Didion relatives share thoughts on their cousin, Joan

Julie Didion, a local artist, responded to the passing of her famous relative.

"As Joan's Sacramento cousins, we have always been honored to count an important, incisive and downright brilliant writer as one of our family," she said. "Her books have affected and inspired our lives in so many ways, and her legacy will be huge.

"Our only regret is that our father, Bob Didion, who was the brother of Joan's father, Frank Didion, didn't grow up in the same family. Owing to the death of their mother during the 1918 flu pandemic, the boys were separated into different families. Because of this tragic event, the two families were not as close as they might have been, and we didn't have the opportunity to know Joan as well as we might have."

See DIDION on Page 3



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Editorial questions: (916) 267-8992

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1109 Markham Way
Sacramento,
CA 95818
t: (916) 429-9901
f: (916) 429-9906

Cover by:
Jennifer Goto

Didion:

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Julie also shared her family's favorite quote by Joan.

"We have a favorite quote of hers, from an interview in New York magazine," she said. "She was serving lunch to the journalist and set the table with beautiful antique silver. Surprised, the writer asked, 'You use your good silver for every day?' And Joan replied, 'Every day is all [there is].'

"My husband, my daughter and I try to keep those wise words in mind, always."

Julie added that her family is appreciative of the many kind condolences they received from the Sacramento community.

"We know that Sacramento will be mourning the loss of one of its most talented native daughters," she said.

Also sharing her thoughts about Joan was Jeanne Didion Huggins, another daughter of Bob Didion.

"Joan was such a warm and welcoming hostess during our last visit in New York," she said. "In casual social settings she didn't like to discuss her published work or what she was working on at that time. She loved to laugh and tell funny stories. In addition, she was a gourmet cook."

Didion left lasting impression on Sacramentans

Maurice Read mentioned that he met Joan while he was attending Sacramento Junior College (now Sacramento City College) in 1952.

"(Joan) was in her last year (at McClatchy High)," he said. "Through her, I met Nancy Kennedy, one of her best friends. And that was (then-future U.S. Supreme Court Justice) Anthony Kennedy's older sister."

Read also shared something that Joan said many years ago.

"Somewhere along the lines, she told me that somebody asked her why she majored in English, and she said so she would always have a quote for every occasion," he said. "I've never seen that in print anywhere."

Read noted that he eventually "lost touch" with Joan.

"Joan visited us here in Sacramento once and for some reason she didn't have a place to stay, so she stayed with us for one night," he said. "That's about the last time I saw her. She and her husband moved to New York, and we just kind of lost touch."

Sacramento resident Moni Van Camp told this paper that although she never met Joan in person, she was greatly inspired by the words that she wrote.

"Joan just was my inspiration for moving to Sacramento from (the University of California, Berkeley) and (the city of) Berkeley (in 1965), and 'Run River' gave me the heart of Sacramento and our (Sacramento-San Joaquin) Delta, and she did it beautifully. And I've been a fan ever since I read her first book."

Van Camp, who read four of Joan's books, also mentioned that she could relate to her writings on the loss of her loved ones.

"You know, I lost my daughter and she lost hers, then she lost her husband, and she's wrote beautiful books about losses," she said. "It just hit home for me a lot."

Pocket resident Mary Snyder (formerly Carol Monahan), a 1963 graduate of McClatchy High, where she was a classmate of Jeanne Didion (later Huggins), recalled reading "Run River," which has its setting in the Sacramento Valley.

"I was a librarian at one time, so I've done a lot of reading in my time, so (Joan wrote) something about the river (in that novel) and what it was (like living in Sacramento), which was true, being raised in Sacramento," she said.

Snyder also mentioned how Joan wrote about trying to adjust to living in New York.

"My mother was a New Yorker, but I could never go to New York with my mother," she said. "It's a total different pace of life compared to Sacramento, and I love Sacramento myself and I could relate to (Joan's) feelings, her emotions that way."

Jennifer Goto, a book seller at the Avid Reader bookstore on Broadway, just a short drive from the high school that Joan attended, told this publication last week that all but one of this business's Joan Didion books were sold out.

"We have one Joan Didion book left; it's called 'A Book of Common Prayer,'" she said on Jan. 5. "When she passed away, we had customers come in asking for her books. So, we've sold out of the rest of our stock, and many of the titles are now back ordered. So, we're waiting for more to come in – hopefully later this week."

Goto added that customers of various ages have been visiting this store recently, speaking fondly about this famous Sacramento-born author.

"Many of them just (talk) about what a loss her voice will be, and that the first time that they read (one of her books), they were really moved."



Photo courtesy of the Lance Armstrong Collection

Joan Didion is shown in her senior year photograph in the 1952 C.K. McClatchy High School yearbook.





Access Sacramento is proud to announce the "Call for Scripts"

Nine family-friendly, 10-minute winning scripts will be selected for production this spring followed by a red-carpet world premiere movie showing on Oct. 7, 2022, at 7pm in the historic Crest Theater in downtown Sacramento.

The "A Place Called Sacramento" Film Festival showcases original stories that demonstrate our region's diversity & rich culture.

Script entries are due Tuesday, March 15 at 5 p.m. and may be submitted online at AccessSacramento.org or dropped off at the Access Sacramento office at 4623 T Street, Suite A, Sacramento. There is a $25 entry fee.

This festival does more than award great writing. It is the only festival that makes filmmaking accessible by offering mentorship, low-cost workshops, a gear lending library, and other resources to help scriptwriters turn their scripts into high-quality HD movies, with little cost to the filmmaker.



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Access Sacramento provides four specialty low-cost workshops to help build skills in the filmmaking community as they prepare for the "A Place Called Sacramento" Film Festival. All of the details are available at Access Sacramento.org Neither previous experience nor Access Sac membership are required for these trainings.

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Instructor Dawn Spinella is an award-winning writer, actor, director, and producer. Her students in the last two years have had considerable success in having their films chosen for this film competition. Her first biographical screenplay won The Alfred P. Sloan Science Screenwriting award. This led to additional biographical screenplay assignments plus other original materials with lifetime rights for production. Dawn is an adjunct professor of screenwriting at the University of the Pacific and holds an MFA from UCLA. She has taught other workshops for the California Film Foundation. The $50 class fee must be paid for in advance. Call Access Sacramento to reserve your place in the workshop, 916-456-8600 ext. 0.

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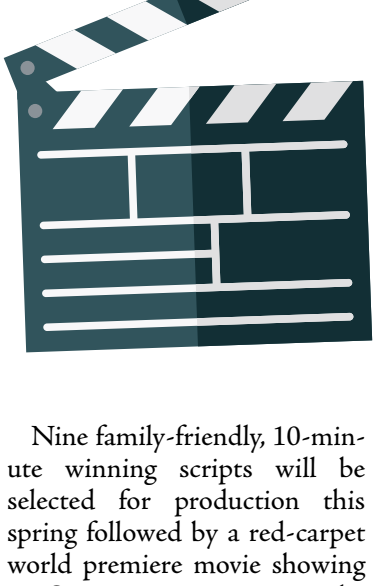

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Introducing our new publisher: Bonnie Rodriguez



Caption: Photo courtesy
Bonnie Rodriguez is the new publisher of Valley Oak Press, which includes Valley Community Newspapers, The Galt Herald, The Elk Grove Citizen, and the River Valley Times, as well as a printing press that services Northern California publishing companies.

By Monica Stark

Bonnie Rodriguez, longtime Galt Herald Editor, is now the publisher of Valley Community Newspapers.

VCN has been under the umbrella of the former news company, Herburger Publications, since 2016 when David Herburger bought the company from George Macko.

Herburger Publications is now known as Valley Oak Press and oversees VCN, as well as The Elk Grove Citizen, Galt Herald, and the River Valley Times in Rancho Murieta. It also includes a printing press that prints each of those publications as well as contracts with other publishing businesses. The press will remain active and the pun "press" plays into the name Valley Oak Press as a printing press and news outlet.

The Herburgers owned Herburger Publications since 1959 when David Herburger's parents bought The Galt Herald and the Elk Grove Citizen.

The new publisher said she will strive to uphold the Herburger legacy. "I know that these are huge shoes to fill. The Herburgers are a household name. That has been the most overwhelming aspect of this. How do I earn any type of merit under their shadow because they have been so good? There are a lot of expectations out there," Rodriguez said.

Having worked for David Herburger since 2006, first in production and graphics, she moved on to become the Editor of the Galt Herald. She said she always appreciated the "family feel" of having worked for Herburger Publications.

"It's absolutely inviting and wonderful to work for," Rodriguez said, making that work environment a priority in her new position to retain. "I want to keep that. I want the whole company to feel like family. It's the greatest thing the Herburgers did. Happy employees are productive employees," she said.

As David Herburger walked back into his office after announcing the pay cuts, Rodriguez said she followed him in and told him, "I don't know if this is offensive, but if you ever shut these doors, I want the Galt Herald." Having jumped into the Galt community, including leading the

See BONNIE on Page 6

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Bonnie:

Continue from page 5

Chamber of Commerce as its president, she said she loved the Galt community.

"He looked up at me, and said, 'Shut the door.' I thought I got myself fired," she said. But instead, he offered the Galt Herald as a package deal with all of its sister papers as well as the printing press operations and outside jobs, she said.

Her initial thought was affirmative, as long as no there were no layoffs. Sleeping on the offer for three weeks, Rodriguez said she expressed her serious interest in the business.

Time passed and there were months when the issue wasn't discussed, but whenever it was, mutual interest was shared. She helped clear a warehouse on the press's property in Galt and fill it with a tenant. Herburger put her in front of the operations for over a year. "Just ask Bonnie," he would say to customers, recalls Rodriguez.

"He put my face out there, so (the ownership change) wasn't a shock …I just want readers and clients to know that new management cares about them and this is not a hostile takeover. David left us so that we could succeed. I am here for the long haul. I don't know if I could match 61 years. I don't think I have 61 years ahead of me. One of my children is semi interested so we will see. One child is 24 and doesn't want to do anything with it," Rodriguez said.

Keeping up with the changing media landscape hasn't necessarily been a priority in the past, but Rodriguez is making it one of hers. She's applied for new computer grants; a podcaster room may be in the future and adjustments for the press are in the works. "We'll have a better product as well and to be able to communicate with the outside world-- those are two initial changes. We also need to be more digital. We have trust with print readers but we need to engage online as well."

While computers are about 15 years old and some cannot open attachments or access some web pages, the company focus, however, has always been on getting into the community, knowing the ins and outs of what's happening and reporting it with integrity.

Roy Herburger had local schools produce the contents for pages in the Elk Grove Citizen, on a regular basis. Roy Herburger has an elementary school named after him in Elk Grove. David's mother, Mary Lewis, the Citizen's former Society Editor, was involved with local organizations like the Soroptimist Club and had a column called "About Town." A park in Elk Grove is named after her.

While Rodriguez never held the role of publisher until this year, she began her tenure at Herburger Publications as a graphic artist in 2006, and by 2012 became the Editor of The Galt Herald, a position she held until year's end, 2021, along with the managing editor of the River Valley Times, which she added to her resume in November, 2016.

Her background in newspapers began when computers just began filling newsrooms and were still utilizing the "paste-up" method for production, rather than desktop publishing programs. Originally from the Granite Bay area, she fondly recalls yearbook class at Oakmont High School where their innovative teacher had them paginating their own pages. "I started with the old pagemaker and freehand and these programs that don't exist these days," she says.

After high school, she moved to Utah, lived near extended family and attended Brigham Young University. She worked at newspapers in the area there before realizing that the grind of a daily newspaper was too much for a young, growing family. So she moved on, promising herself she would never work for another newspaper. But,then about six years later, she had moved to Galt, and saw that there was a posting that the local newspaper was looking for help. She thought to herself, "'Oh, what the heck? A weekly would be much easier than daily," she recalled.

So she said she turned in her resume, not really thinking much about it, since it had been about six years since she worked in the industry, and she knew it was changing. Meanwhile, she had her second child who was just an infant at the time, and she had gone through a divorce.

But, two years later, she got a phone call from David Herberger saying, "'Hey, you submitted a resume two years ago. Are you still looking for a job? Just kind of laughing at him say, oh, gosh, now it's been eight years that I've been out of the industry. I'm sure you guys are so much further advanced than what I know. So I don't know that I you know, you guys even want me and he laughed harder than I did, and said, 'Oh, no, you need to come in and come in and come talk to us.'" So she did and found out that they were just about where she left off technology-wise at her previous job and the rest is history in the making.

Rodriguez says that probably the most daunting part of taking this leadership role is filling the difficult-to-fill Herburger shoes. "The Herburgers are a household name for the good. That has been the most overwhelming aspect of this. How do I earn any type of merit under their shadow because they have been so good. There are a lot of expectations out there."

But truth be told, from Galt Herald graphic artist to publisher of Valley Oak Press, Rodriguez has the resume, connection and heart to take on this huge task.



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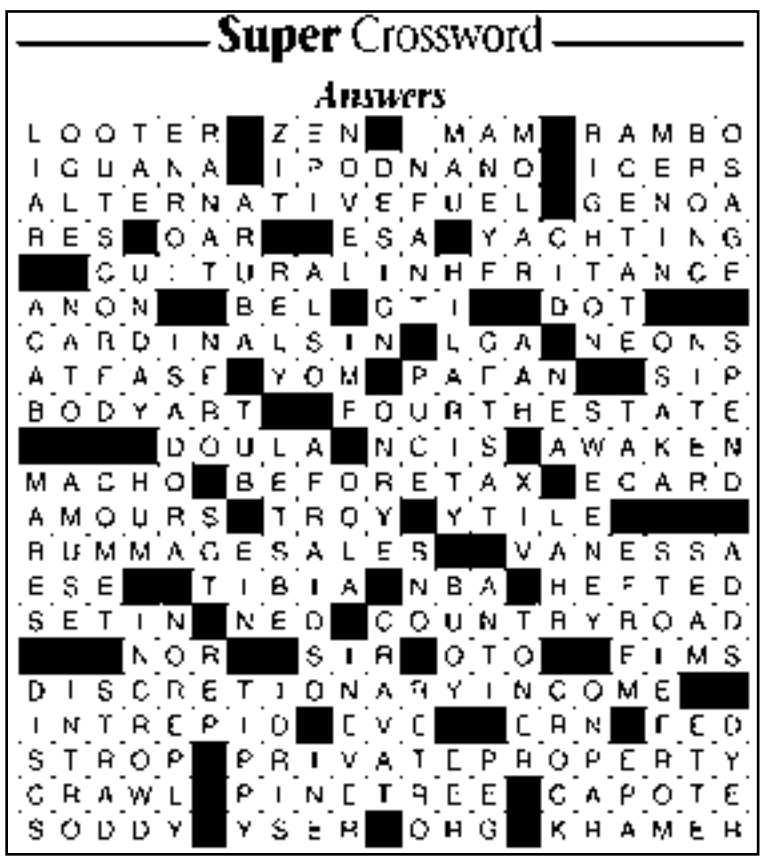

Puzzles4Kids

Answer



Riddle Answer:

Chilly sauce.

Weekly SUDOKU

Answer

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

Americanisms





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By Fairytale Town

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Key Features of the Expansion:

Story Center – Children will be able to write, act out, and produce their own story in this inspiring, indoor space! The Story Center will include more hands-on interaction and all-weather programming.

New Admissions Building for Faster Entry – We will be adding more ticket windows, including a dedicated entrance just for members. This will improve accessibility and allow guests to get in the park faster.

Outdoor Classroom – An outdoor classroom will provide a more focused venue for Fairytale Town to welcome school field trips and offer workshops.

Improved and increased numbers of visitor and public restrooms – The number of visitors long ago outgrew the Fairytale Town restroom amenities currently available. The restrooms will be expanded and updated to accommodate the greater numbers of visitors we receive.

Gift Shop and enhanced concessions – The addition of a gift shop and an expanded concession stand offering a wider variety of food and drink

See TALES on Page 8

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Site Plan showing Fairytale Town's Expansion

Tales:

Continue from page 7

will be a revenue generator for Fairytale Town.

New Playsets – New playsets will add stories from different cultures to the park! And the playsets will be designed to serve children between the ages of 8 and 12 as well as our core audience of ages 1 to 7.

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Fairytale Town Story Center
Conceptual Plan

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Weekly SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ◆◆

◆ Moderate ◆◆ Challenging
◆◆◆ HOO BOY!

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Puzzles4Kids

by Helene Hovanec

RIDDLE SEARCH – UNUSUAL HAMBURGER TOPPINGS

[illegible] What do [illegible] put on their [illegible]?

AVOCADO	P	I	C	K	L	E	V	I	L	O
BACON	E	E	G	G	P	L	A	N	T	D
CHEESE	P	C	S	O	T	A	M	O	T	A
HAY	P	K	E	T	C	H	U	P	S	C
KATCHUP	E	M	A	Y	O	H	S	I	A	O
MAYO	R	L	E	C	U	T	T	E	L	V
MUSTARD	S	L	O	Y	M	L	A	L	S	A
ONION	S	R	A	A	U	A	R	A	A	R
PICKLE	N	C	H	I	P	S	D	K	C	K
SALSA	E	B	A	C	O	N	O	I	N	O
SALT										
TOMATO										

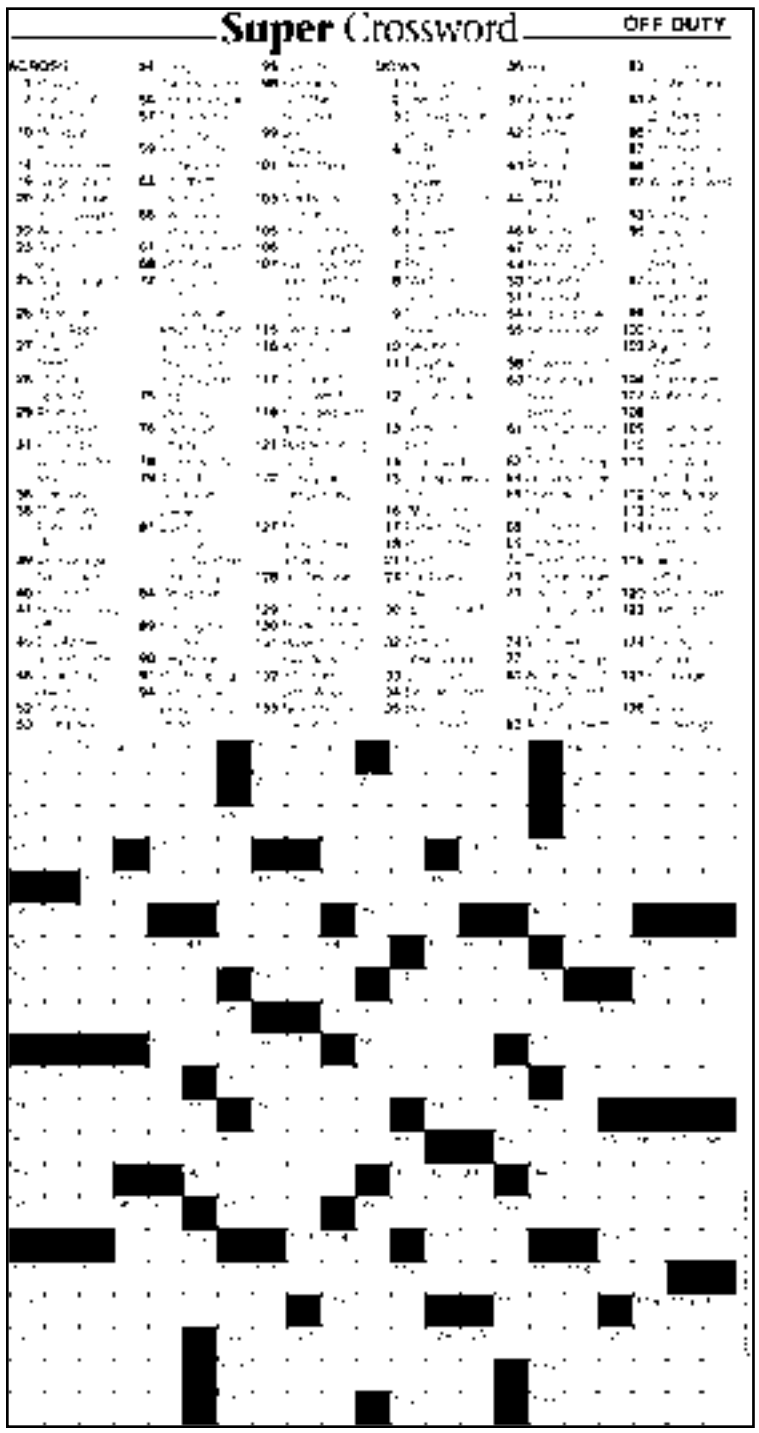
Riddle answer

Super Crossword

OFF DUTY

ACROSS

DOWN





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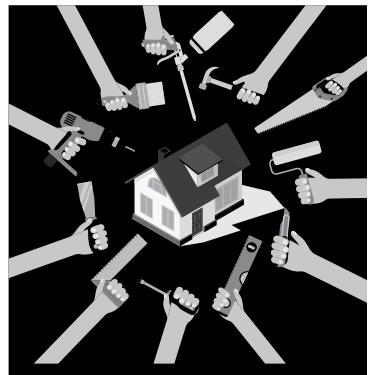

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