

For Heaven’s Sake

Mike Morgan



The flag

When my husband makes up his mind that he wants something, he is like young Ralphie in A Christmas Story. He does not give up. Remember when Ralphie wanted the Red Rider BB gun?

He had all kinds of tricks up his sleeve to get what he wanted. And, just like Ralphie, Tink’s relentless. In giving it a good think, it would probably not be best to watch that movie every Christmas for 24 hours. Both of us will wake up in the night and watch bits and pieces. On Christmas day, we watch it back-to-back until it finally goes off at 9 p.m.

In retrospect, perhaps this hasn’t been a good idea at all. It reinforces Tink’s ability to believe that if you don’t give up, you’ll get what you want.

He’s strategic and very good at it. First, he brings it up. With a shrug. It’s just a thought. It doesn’t even require an answer. Then, two weeks later, he’ll come into the kitchen while I’m cooking. He’ll have a snack, leaning against the cabinet, looking upwards and say, “You know, that was just a thought that ran through my mind the other day but in pondering it, I like it.”

I stirred the soup, remaining silent. I was hopeful it would go away without an argument or, worse, a deeper discussion.

It didn’t. It was probably a month before he broached the subject again. This time he was firmer. No softball.

“I’d like an American flag. My father and grandfather had flags at every house they lived.”

“Maybe one day,” I



Ronda Rich

Dixie Divas

responded. All I could think was the hard rock beneath the grass on the Rondarosa.

I built that house, before we married, and watched painfully, every day, for a week as a giant bulldozer pushed and huffed, moving rock for a driveway. Barely, just barely, he pushed enough aside to leave a high rock embankment. The house had to be moved forty feet over in order to set the house on the easier ground.

When Tink makes up his mind he wants something – this happens rarely – it’s like a child begging for a motor scooter.

“Tink,” I finally said. “I don’t know how you’d get a flagpole in the ground.” I brightened up. I had an idea. “Let’s hang a flag from the front porch.”

His face darkened. “It’s so much better on a tall pole — like my father and grandfather.”

My people are patriots, too. They got the dirty jobs like digging latrines and rushing the front line into the battles. My great-great-Grandfather was the first wounded at the Battle of Savannah. He was 16.

Fourteen of my ancestors fought in the War of Independence then ten

(some wounded, others captured) fought in the Civil War. Daddy served in the South Pacific in World War II and, until recently, when I found his honorable discharge papers, I had no idea that he had been awarded five medals including one for the medal of Midway. The medals are nowhere to be found.

Tink’s Grandfather, Arthur, was wounded so badly in France during World I that he almost lost his leg. His medals are missing, too.

Tink’s father was drafted out of Dartmouth College, between his freshman and sophomore year, but never saw battle because the war ended.

During the Civil War, Tink’s great-great-Grandfather never pulled a trigger. He worked for President Lincoln in the White House as a telegrapher.

Never got his hands dirty. But we have his diaries of life with the President during this serious war and that’s as important as any bullet fired.

Conversation about the flagpole ceased. Then one day, two boxes arrived.

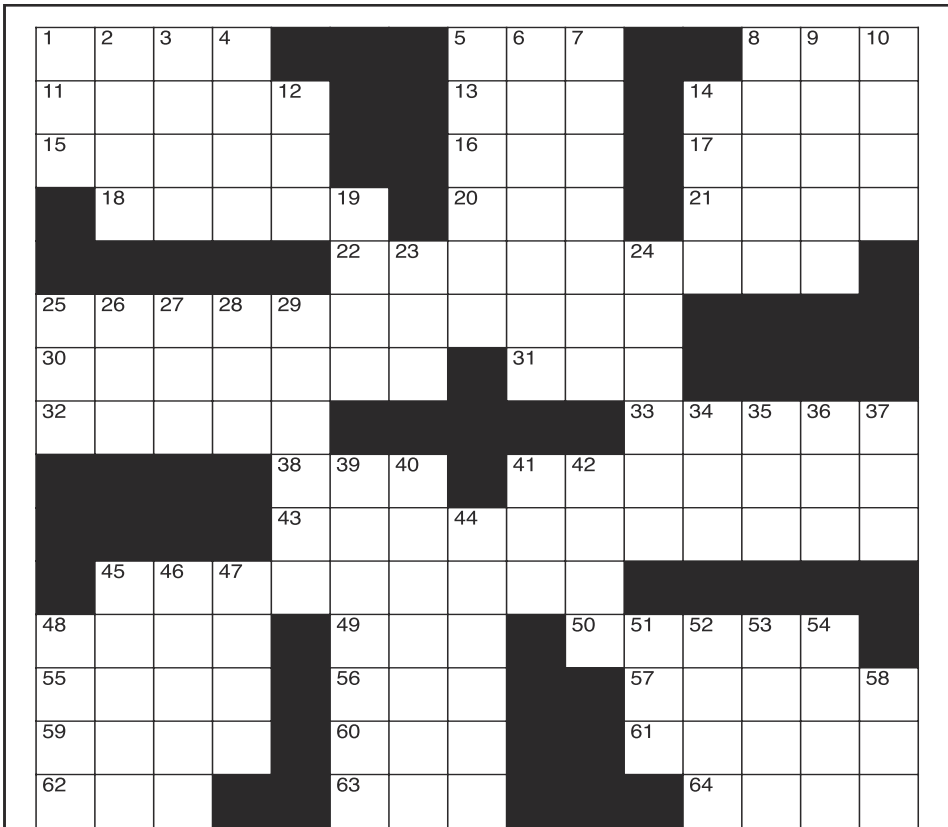
“What are those?” I asked.

“An American flag and a 20 feet pole.”

On the backside of the Rondarosa, Tink found soil, near the pasture fence, soft enough to plunge the pole into the ground.

I see it now as an honor for all the brave men in our families.

Ronda Rich is the best-selling author of *St. Simons Island: A Stella Bankswell Mystery*. Visit www.rondarich.com to sign up for her weekly newsletter.



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Bar bills
- 5. Recipe measurement (abbr.)
- 8. Swiss river
- 11. Czech Republic capital
- 13. “Officially known as”
- 14. A French abbot
- 15. Having a strong sharp smell or taste
- 16. Local area network
- 17. Data transmission speed measure
- 18. Embarrass
- 20. When you hope to get there
- 21. This (Spanish)
- 22. Gives up
- 25. Churchgoer
- 30. Current
- 31. Slang for gun
- 32. Small drum
- 33. Vanished union bigwig
- 38. Rocker’s tool of the trade
- 41. Dearth
- 43. 2024 Olympics host
- 45. Excess blood in the vessels
- 48. Afrikaans
- 49. Agreement between provider and customer

- 50. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
- 55. Ancient Syrian city
- 56. Witch
- 57. Celebrations
- 59. Long period of time
- 60. A team’s best pitcher
- 61. Current unit
- 62. One-time aerospace company
- 63. French/Belgian river
- 64. Swedish rock group

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Yearly tonnage (abbr.)
- 2. Genus of clams
- 3. Remark
- 4. Actor LaBeouf
- 5. Ohio town
- 6. Olympic sport
- 7. Cure
- 8. Behave in a way that belittles
- 9. Shares a boundary with
- 10. Give advice
- 12. Promotional materials
- 14. Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing
- 19. “Agatha All Along” actress Kathryn
- 23. Small piece

- 24. King of Camelot
- 25. Parts per thousand (abbr.)
- 26. Small Milky Way constellation
- 27. One who challenges authority (abbr.)
- 28. Equal (prefix)
- 29. Shawl
- 34. S. American wood sorrel relative
- 35. The end
- 36. Supervises interstate commerce
- 37. Yes vote
- 39. Officer of high rank
- 40. Church office
- 41. Tire pressure measurement
- 42. From a distance
- 44. Photographs
- 45. Industrial process
- 46. Nobel Prize-winning physicist
- 47. Map out
- 48. Mammary gland part of female mammal
- 51. Honorable title (Turkish)
- 52. Spongelike cake leavened with yeast
- 53. Speak incessantly
- 54. Poetry term
- 58. Relaxing space

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