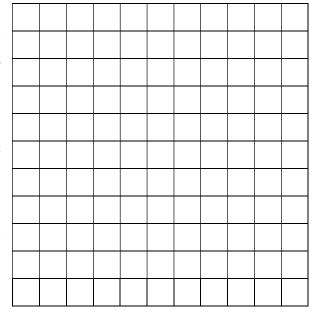
Puzzle #31 – December 2003 "Yuletide Greetings"

Instructions: Guess the words defined by the cryptic clues (words vary in length from four to nine letters and include one proper name), then enter them in the grid one after another in the same order as their clues, starting in the upper left corner. Across words that don't end at the right margin continue on the next line below; down words that don't end at the bottom margin continue in the next column to the right. Some words won't fit in the grid unless one or more of their letters is omitted; solvers are left to determine which those words and letters are, and the import thereof. As ever, I am grateful to Kevin Wald for help with the clues.



Across

- 1. Bond with one man in uniform
- 2. Range of motion of gold mouthpiece
- 3. Droll and flaky innkeeper
- 4. Straddle optimal mount
- 5. Spiritual leader starting toward animal
- 6. Run in and out with cooker
- 7. About to interrupt uncommonly seen calm
- 8. Domestic is at home before lunch begins, and after
- 9. Cover a serpent with rubber
- 10. Carry kid east
- 11. Pictures him headless a long time
- 12. Author of big hit
- 13. Animals from act let out
- 14. Base, worn, and daring
- 15. Endless book-shelf
- 16. Part of a helmet or hat
- 17. Initially dirty and greasy table mat
- 18. Hang us in sacrifice
- 19. There's a catch in her answering back
- 20. Wrap two pennies found in trough
- 21. Remembrance of earl in odd moment
- 22. Phooey! I'm out of bail money

Down

- 1. Pollute vital sea water at the mouth
- 2. No girl flipped penny for jewel
- 3. Modeling of green slingshot's power
- 4. Three notes and a letter reveal shame
- 5. Cut to bits by start of deathly chill
- 6. Older one assuming title
- 7. Salem? Wrong city
- 8. Bright light after start of big blow
- 9. Supply gas to a European, originally at cost
- 10. Use of force and small talk
- 11. Dress up and boast
- 12. Drain water from a bark
- 13. Fumble with lead pellets in trunk
- 14. So-called thread is part of garment
- 15. Challenge limits of day care
- 16. Covers inside dialogue of play
- 17. Brother left to die in compound
- 18. Crustacean moves clumsily before starting to eject roe
- 19. Mongol tribe gathering reported
- 20. Fool is in on it, withal
- 21. Concern of bookmaker in love with dentist
- 22. More men to upset timekeeper
- 23. Mess only with the Spanish in solitary