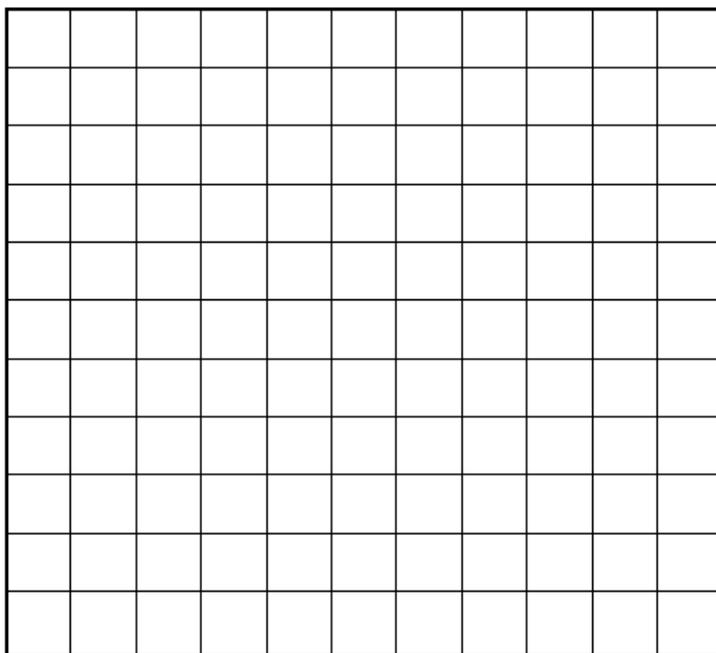


**Puzzle #31 — December 2003 "Yuletide Greetings"**

**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