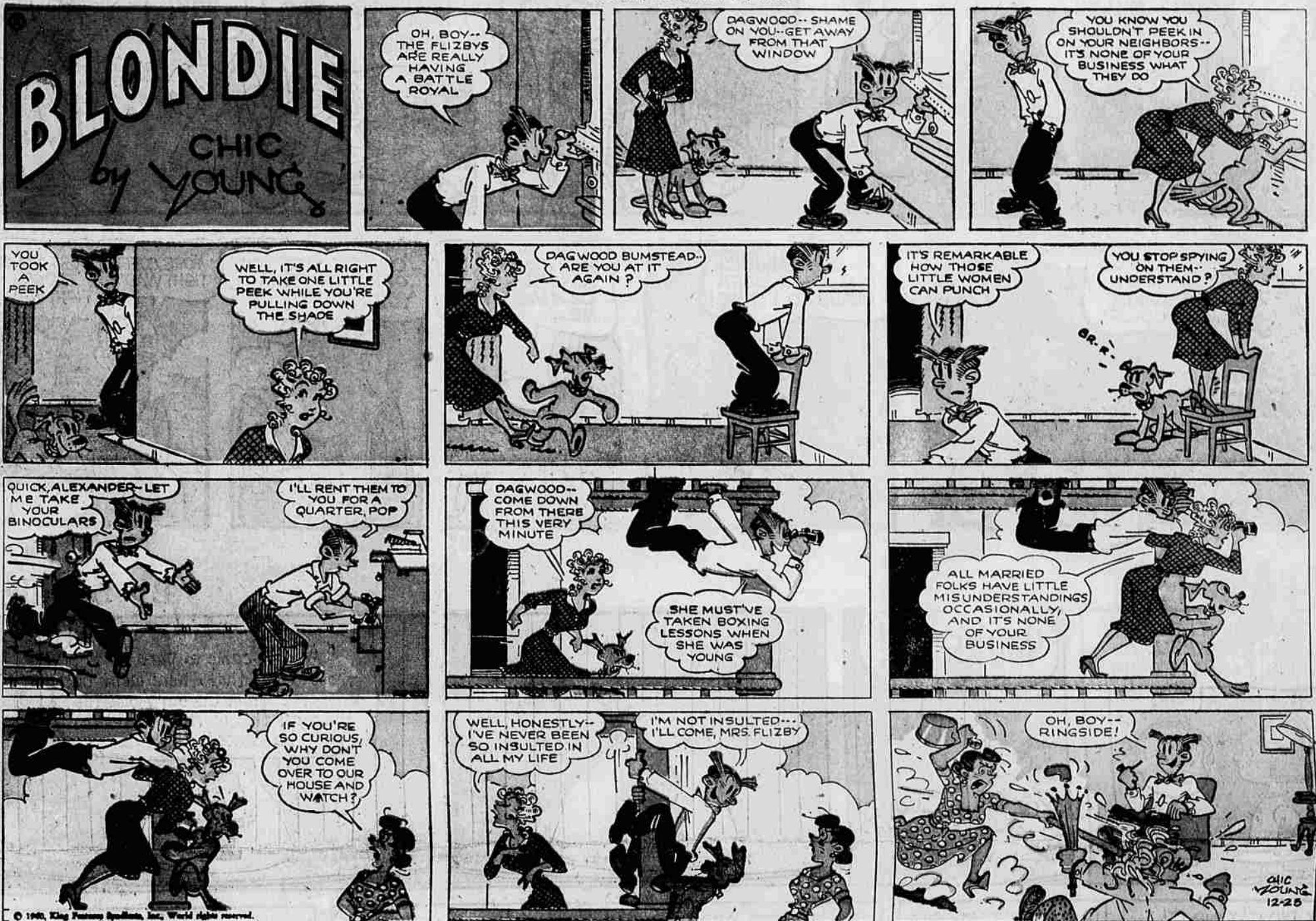


MEDFORD MAIL TRIBUNE

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1960



STEVE CANYON

DAYTON KID

My earliest childhood heroes were of an Ancient Time;
Remote and fleshless symbols; strange in dress and tongue.
Then, from the untracked sky came present glory—gallant as knight-hood!
Courage; raw and pioneer reckless.

No saviors of a nation then, those crazy kids I knew
When Dayton was the only place to test the birds.
Not yet the Second War—with World attention on Full Rich,
To spawn the fame, the medals and hoorahs.

I watched them fly—and sometimes score small victories;
Surmounting gravity and other drags bred in bureaus by mere men,
For pay so low their wives stayed on the Post,
Where last year's dress was not so obvious.

One provident statesman helped sow Pearl Harbor's seed
By loudly vowing that the U.S. should buy one fighter aircraft,
Which officers would then take turns learning to fly.

Somewhat they held on, those wild ones, scorning security,
Knowing humiliation, losing good friends, beating the percentages...
And when the World blew up the thin line took the blow—and held!
The Pros regrouped, forged prairie boys and city elegants
Into a fighting force unmatched in Time.

They won it—and that is History, but so is the shameful era,
When small men tried and failed to trim the Eagle's wings
And dull his claws.

All of us share the heritage whether in or out of uniform,
And when they add the score on what we did, each here,
To justify his toast to yesterday: the fact of Flight will be our common bond.

So much has happened since I sat upon the levee near McCook
To watch a New Breed rise and break the natural law...

Milton Caniff

12-25

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