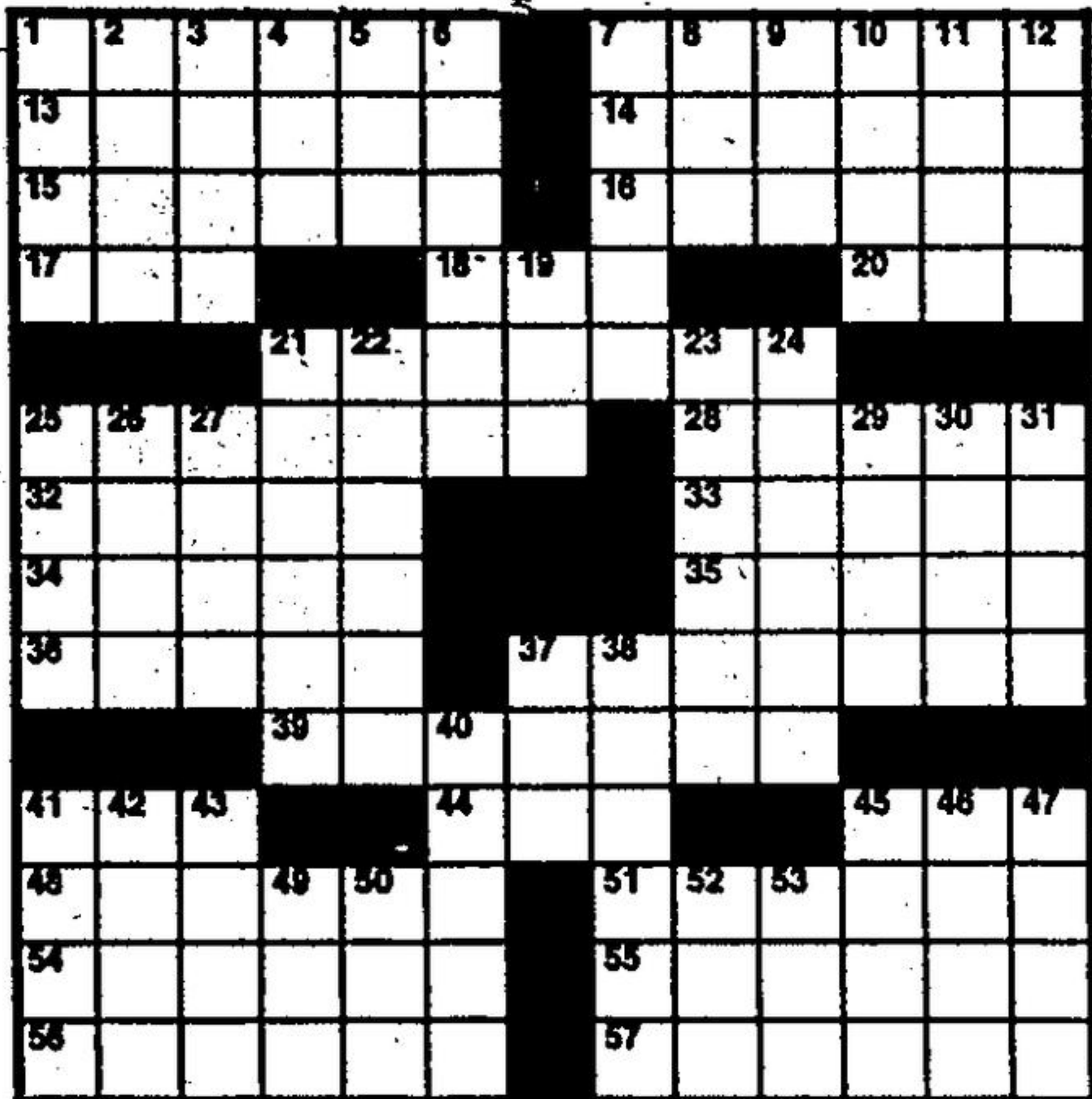


Saturday Crossword



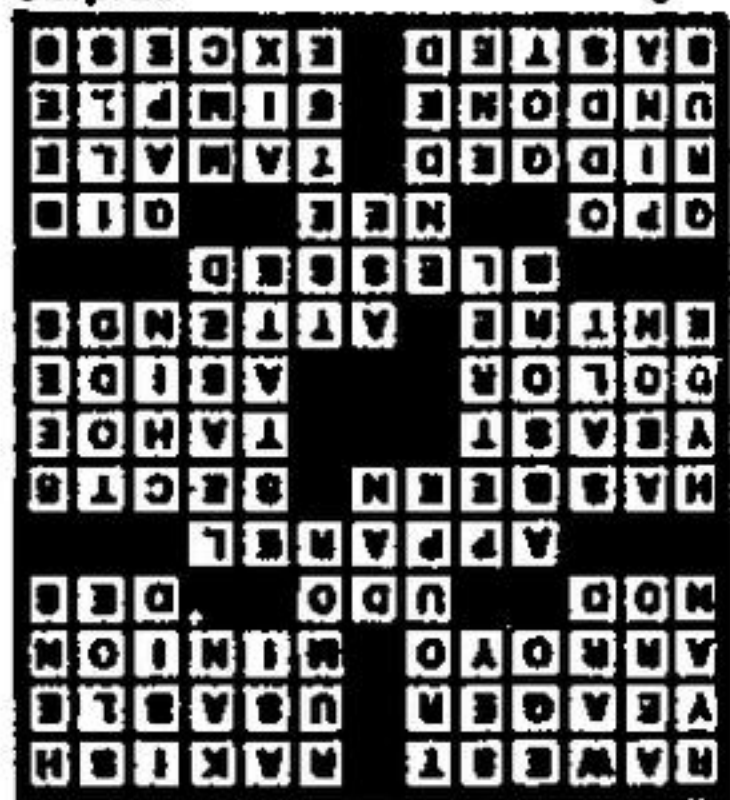
ACROSS

- 1 Most bleak
- 7 Jaunty
- 13 Aviation hero Chuck
- 14 In good working order
- 15 Ravine
- 16 Henchman
- 17 Incline the head
- 18 Ginseng plant
- 20 — Moines
- 21 Dress
- 25 Once famous person
- 28 Divisions
- 32 Leavening agent
- 33 Nevada lake
- 34 Sorrow
- 35 Stage whisper
- 36 — nous
- 37 is present at
- 39 Consecrated
- 41 Mail center abbr.
- 44 By birth
- 45 Crane arm part
- 48 Having raised strips
- 51 Hot Mexican specialty.
- 54 Not performed
- 55 Primitive
- 56 Moistened
- 57 Surplus

DOWN

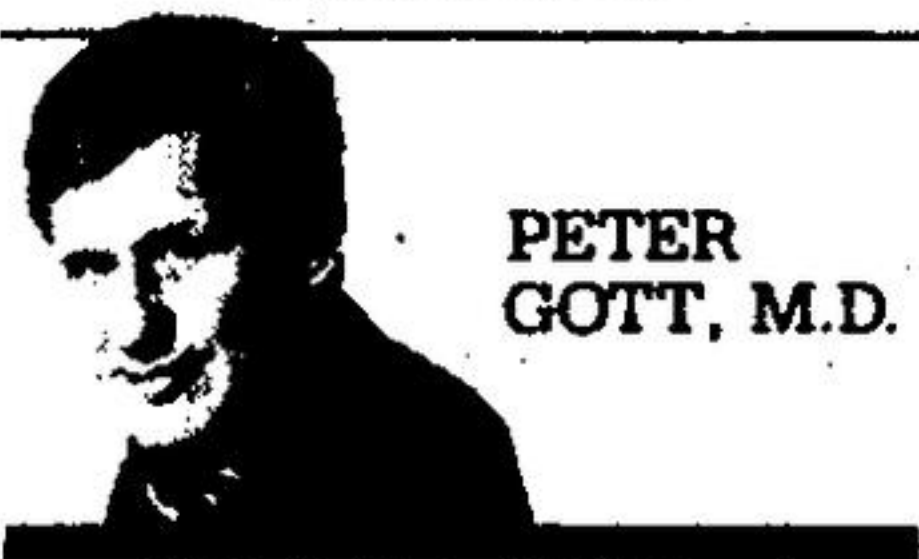
- 1 Actor — O'Neal
- 2 Of aircraft
- 3 Protege
- 4 Self
- 5 Pollack fish
- 6 Group of actors
- 7 Unverified report
- 8 As far — know
- 9 North of Okla.
- 10 In the same place (abbr.)
- 11 Wild plum
- 12 Female birds
- 19 TV's — Rather
- 21 Asmilate
- 22 Bird
- 23 Property
- 24 Rented
- 25 Jekyll's opposite
- 26 Vast period of time
- 27 Sodium chloride
- 29 Face part
- 30 An ex of Liz Taylor
- 31 Watches
- 37 Enzyme
- 38 — fly
- 40 Stopped
- 41 Food (sl.)
- 42 — colada
- 43 Betting factor

- 45 Yawn
- 46 Infirmities
- 47 Stinging insects
- 49 Acquired
- 50 Chemical suffix
- 52 French city
- 53 2100, Roman



Here's to the price-gouge advantage

DR. GOTT



PETER GOTT, M.D.

I was treated to quite a surprise when I opened my December fuel-oil bill. The cost of oil had risen from 86 cents to \$1.37 a gallon in one month. I thought surely there had been an accounting error, so — as an educated consumer — I telephoned the distributor.

"I think there's been a mistake," I pointed out, referring to the huge increase.

"No mistake," he replied. "The wholesaler raised the price on us, and we passed it on."

"Why the increase?"

"The cold weather. December was a very cold month."

"Let me try to understand this," I said. "You're telling me that the price of heating oil practically doubled in a month because of cold weather?"

"Right. The wholesaler didn't have enough reserves on hand. They were caught short."

"Well," I reasoned, "if people need more oil, why can't the wholesalers buy more? Then they'd sell it at 86 cents a gallon, and people would purchase more fuel. The transaction

would cost more, but we'd be getting more oil for our money."

"It doesn't work that way," he said. "I can see that. How do you maximize reserves by raising the price? Do people choose to stay cold and not buy oil?" I asked.

"I dunno," he responded. "All I know is that when the cold weather hit, the wholesaler raised the price. You're lucky. In some parts of the Northeast, there isn't enough oil to go around."

I can understand rationing. As a kid, I went through that during World War II. However, arbitrarily raising the price on oil, without rationing, is something else again.

It's price-gouging, pure and simple.

The fuel-oil company raised the price of its product because industry executives, sitting on their fat fannies in overheated 20-story office buildings, decided that an uncharacteristic cold snap was a great opportunity to make a fast buck. I predict that millions of citizens are going to contribute to industry profits, as the oil price increase hits electric utility companies and trickles down to the consumer — who as far as I can see — has absolutely no say in the matter.

I'm not going to take this lying down. I hereby recommend that all doctors take a cue from the oil industry: Increase fees in accordance with acts of nature.

For example, physicians see a lot of patients with flu in the winter. I suggest practitioners increase their fees by 50 percent during the flu season. After all, if we're caught unaware and

our resources are limited, we shouldn't have to work harder. Let's just see the same number of patients — but charge each one more.

As long as hospitals are not overcrowded, they can charge their usual fees. However, when running at capacity, they should charge more. When resources are at a premium, the true entrepreneur makes a profit. This is the American way.

Speaking for myself, my rates for treating sunburn are going to double in the summer. Skiing injuries must be worth a good deal more in the winter; broken legs in the off-season are merely routine. Football injuries should provide a cornucopia for harried physicians in the autumn; I'm going to add a surcharge on all such injuries in October and November. Being more common in early spring, colds and upper respiratory infections should cost patients at least double the usual rate during March and April.

Actually, I thank the oil companies for instructing me in this little bit of highway robbery. Heretofore, I hadn't realized that by adopting the petroleum standard to overcharge for seasonal ailments, I could actually make enough extra cash to pay my heating-oil and electric bills.

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