

Merlin

NPL Sep 1968 - Jul 2010



Murray Ridgely Pearce

18 Aug 1938 - 5 Jul 2010

In Memoriam



Clockwise from upper left: Marlene and Steve Pearce, Delores Pearce, Mark and Karen Batts, Murray Pearce, Bertha Anton (Delores's mom), and Nik Pearce. ~2004. Pearce family photo.



This memorial is a special edition of *The Enigma*. Mercury (Joe Adamski) compiled and edited all the material, wrote all unattributed text, and designed the memorial. Philana (Judy Adamski) proofread and copyedited all material. Smaug (Eric Bagai) printed the memorial.

Special thanks to all the contributors, especially to family members Delores Pearce, Steve Pearce, and Karen Batts; friend Doug Wick; and to the following members of the NPL: Ai, Canon, Evita, faRO, Hart King, Jo the Loiterer, Junebug, Minimus, Newrow, 144, Qaqaq, Señor, Tyger, and Willz. Parts of the first section of the memorial were taken from Murray Pearce's obituary. Thank you to Feral for permitting the use of passages from *Word Ways*.

Front photo: 10 Oct 1999. Pearce family photo.

The Enigma (ISSN 1932-4448) is the monthly publication of the National Puzzlers' League, a nonprofit educational organization founded in 1883. The editor is Crax (Craig Hamilton, 2782 Waverley St, Palo Alto CA 94306).

- C-1. Zounds! Zany zebra zigzags zealously, zippy zebu zooms zestfully, puzzling zoologist.
- C-2. Swami, yogi fakir, foretold epochal cataclysm, exact date unknown. Ouija board vague about details.
- C-3. Homo sapiens manifestly cannot maintain continued existence solely through edible starch consumption.
- C-4. Unkempt voyagers espy unlighted switchyard, slumbering guard; nimbly invade empty boxcar.
- C-5. When mercury drops, North Dakotans sport button reading, “forty below keeps the riffraff out.”
- X-1. cattlebush, sheepberry, caimitillo, louseberry (all trees)

F-1.	F-4.	F-6.
D	CHRISTMASDAY	QUALTAGH
GUM	SANTACLAUS	AUNTIEM
SOPEs	STRIGATE	TRESTLES
PHILANA	OOLITE	NONSPILL
CORTISONE	PYLE	SONATINE
MERCURY	EL	DAVITING
DEARE		AILANTOS
STE		UCALEGON
E		
F-2.	F-5.	
JUDYADAMSKI	B	
PICROLITE	EN	
PHILANA	BEDAD	
ASIDE	NAIAD	
TUA	DAMAC	
M	DARE	
	CERES	
	ERA	
	SANA	
	AMOR	
F-3.	OLA	
TWOGRAVES	RAJA	
WORRIMENT	AJDE	
ORGANISTE	DRB	
GRAPECURE	EBEAM	
RINERIVER	AJAX	
AMICITIAL	MAC	
VESUVIATE	X	
ENTREATES		
STEERLESS		

MURRAY RIDGELY PEARCE

Murray Ridgely Pearce was born August 18, 1938, in Valley City, North Dakota, to William R. Pearce and Jean Katherine (Murray) Pearce. The family moved in 1941 to Bismarck, where his dad established the law firm, Pearce & Durick. Murray graduated from Bismarck High School in 1956 and attended Purdue University and the University of North Dakota. Murray's dad and his two brothers, Bill and Harry, were lawyers, but he never wanted to be a lawyer. He moved around in his youth, taking jobs as a bank teller in Sacramento and as a casino shill in Las Vegas.

From April 1963 to April 1966, he served in the United States Army Intelligence Corps. Just before starting his stint in the service, Murray met Delores Anton on a blind date. While Murray was in the service, Delores earned her nursing degree. After Murray returned from the service, Delores and Murray married on June 8, 1966, and they had two children: Steven was born on January 27, 1968; and Karen was born on May 15, 1971.

He became a licensed CPA and worked as an accountant in Bismarck and then acted also as office manager for the Pearce & Durick law firm from 1970 to 1998. From the March 1972 *Enigma*: “Congratulations to Merlin [*Editor*: Murray's nom in the NPL] for passing the tough CPA exam; he did it the first time around, too!”

From **Doug Wick**—

Professionally Murray and I were both accountants. Murray was the office manager for Pearce & Durick, and he did a considerable amount of self-employed CPA work, primarily on tax-related issues. I opted for the corporate route, eventually being chief accountant-operations for a nine-stamp electric generation rural electric cooperative.

Over the years I worked with many professional accounting people, external auditors, internal auditors, and all those *awful* people. Murray Pearce was, without question, one of the sharpest accounting minds that I ever encountered. We both preferred to *talk hobbies* when together, but at times we would *talk shop*, and Murray was about as good at his profession as they come. I knew quite a few of Murray's personal clients, and all were just as praiseworthy about his professionalism and his kindness. He was a true gentleman.

From **Qaqaq**—

Merlin was my accountant for many years; I figured it made sense to hire a tax consultant who was not only good but who could be a reasonable sounding board about what deductions would be legitimate for a professional puzzlemaker. And he definitely was good. One year, after he retired, I had H&R Block do my taxes; when I realized that the numbers looked wrong, I asked Merlin to take a look, and sure enough, he found several thousand

dollars in deductions that they had overlooked. Even though he was retired, he went back to doing my taxes for a few more years after that, until he simply couldn't do them for anyone anymore.

Murray suffered a health setback in 1995, but he continued to work.
From **Doug Wick**—

In 1998 Murray and Delores made a major decision to leave Bismarck and move to Gilbert, Arizona. Both of their children, Steve and Karen, were now adults with successful lives in the Phoenix area, and Murray and Delores opted to live close to them. Needless to say, there were a lot of us in Bismarck who hated to see them leave, but we all understood and respected their decision. Murray truly was one of my best friends, and I will forever treasure the many times that we went to shows together, spent endless hours at each other's house, and so on.

Murray continued to do accounting work on a part-time basis and then decided to fully retire several years ago. During the past several years, Murray's health declined, but he managed to contribute his final NPL puzzle for the special 125th anniversary issue of the NPL in July 2008. He died July 5, 2010 at a hospital in Phoenix, of natural causes. He is survived by his wife of 44 years, Delores, his son Steven and daughter Karen Batts, his daughter-in-law Marlene Pearce and son-in-law Mark Batts, grandson Niklas Pearce, and brothers William P. Pearce and Harry J. Pearce.

The NPL made a donation in Murray's memory to the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library.

From **Delores Pearce**—

In spite of his numerous health issues through the years, Murray maintained a dignity about him and was not one to complain. He enjoyed living in Arizona, mainly because we were near our family. We've been here to see our only grandchild, Nik, grow up; he is nine years old now. We had enough of the severe ND winters as well. Murray often said we don't have to shovel snow in Gilbert.

Murray was quite a guy. The world is a better place because of him, and I miss him tremendously. He could engage in a conversation about most anything. He was my walking dictionary/encyclopedia. The NPL was a big part of his life, and most of his good friends were NPL members. I was pleased that I had the opportunity to meet several of them; one of the most memorable was Sherlock Holmes. When the Enigma arrived in the mail, Murray would read off some of the puzzles, and I would try to solve with him. He amazed me, and I learned to appreciate the clever mind and knowledge he had. It was fun.

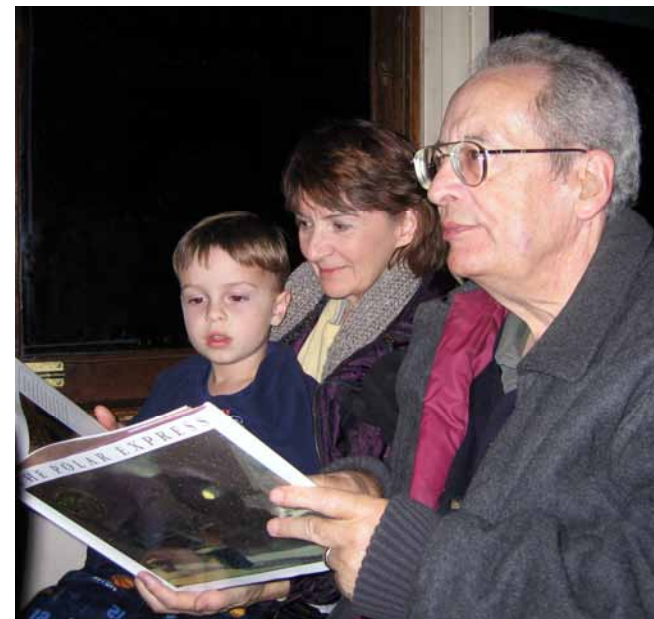
48. animal starch, charlatanism
49. Eric Clapton, narcoleptic
50. ice storm, micrometeorites
51. square one
52. 5over-look
53. c(ur[mud]ge)on
54. onslaught
55. CRUCIfix, VERBatim, LIcit, Stop
56. way back, when Caesar shifted [NPL is a Caesar shift of YAW]
57. un(icy)cle
58. went off in all directions
59. fla[m(boy)an]t
60. full-acorned, uncalled-for
61. wail, williwaw
62. rodential, trial and error, international date line
63. invest, insensitiveness
64. (haw)ks(haw)
65. skywrote, Cairo
66. percolating, general practitioner
67. b(l)ack ho(l)e
68. hop(pester)e
69. make both ends meet
70. Thomas, hoopster, samurai [Athos, Porthos, Aramis]
71. skipjack
72. Ar(chimed)es
73. Whitehead, Blackfoot
74. handreader, hard-earned
75. l/h-ooker
76. pilger, pirlie-pig
78. un(de)(rstu)dying
79. im(macu)late
80. the Federal incomes taxes
81. tradesmen
82. a somnolent person
83. devil incarnate
84. discourteous
85. April showers bring May flowers
86. desperate criminal
87. maledictions
88. pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth
89. nectar and ambrosia
90. pistou
91. Penetralia
92. verbosity
93. faintheartedness
94. antipathetic
95. "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny"
96. this is not an anagram

ANSWERS TO MERLIN'S PUZZLES

1. containers, resanction
2. remain, marine, airmen
3. s-w-allow
4. erection, neoteric
5. c/p-orrect
6. acquiescent [a C quiescent]
7. Isaac Newton, Taiwan cones
8. an(t)onymous
9. wrecked Oriole, rectorial
10. cupflower [C up, F lower]
11. mendacity, dynamite, amenity, inmate, meant, ante, ten
12. comely daughter, dumbly caught her
13. p(arson)age
14. manslaughter
15. signorina [an IR on G is]
16. unpositive
17. apprehend; are, pen, PhD
18. c(hasten)ess
19. b(r)ouillon
20. twi(n) bill
21. jack-among-the-maids [J, A, C, K among the M, A, I, D, S]
22. histrio [H is trio]
23. twinkledum [twin K led UM]
24. importunes, resumption
25. ru(pest)ral
26. misquotation, antimosquito
27. co(loss)al
28. xenoparasite, exasperation
29. com(port)ment
30. leashless, seashells
31. breadthwise, whitebeards
32. lam(plight)er
33. generating, Green Giant
34. liquidated [liquid (=R) at ED]
35. want-only
36. brise-bise; b(r)ise
37. tribunal, antitintinnabularian
38. put it another way [put IT another way]
39. world-beater, two-barreled
40. see them return to Latin
41. misc/arried, t/hief
42. sleigh, chute
43. compensatory, company store
44. slouchiness, cushionless
45. loud-screaming, Nero Claudius Caesar Drusus Germanicus
46. coin-separating, angina pectoris
47. contaminated, no admittance



Delores, Karen, Murray, and Steve Pearce with Larry in Bismarck. 1971. Pearce family photo.



Nik, Delores, and Murray Pearce. 11 Dec 2005. Pearce family photo.

MURRAY'S NON-NPL LEISURE INTERESTS

In addition to his 42-year involvement in the NPL, Murray had several other leisure activities he pursued at various times over the years. He was interested in mysteries, science fiction, and science-related books. He bowled and played 3-cushion billiards (he owned hundreds of videos). He was a cat person, and he listened to a variety of music. He enjoyed playing the piano, especially ragtime music, but he played all types of music, including classical music. He enjoyed solving crossword puzzles, often working with Delores, and he would ask for her help on other puzzles he sought to solve. Murray was an avid supporter of the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Public Library and served as a member of the Library's Board of Directors and the Board of Directors of the Library Foundation, Inc.



Murray at Clearwater Beach convention. Jul 1990.
Willz photo.

CRYPTOGRAMS

C-1. Strange behavior. MERLIN, Mar 1969
NDQUYZ! NOUG NCFEO NWKNOKZ NCOJDQZJG,
NWT TG NCFQ NDDAZ NCZIPQJJG, TQNNJWUK
NDDJDKWZI.

C-2. Prediction. MERLIN, Dec 1969
TODAY, QCJY IDLYX, ICXHUCMG HNCFKDM
FDUDFMQTA, HPDFU GDUH VBLBCOB. CVYZD
ECDXG WDJVH DECVU GHUDYMT.

C-3. Not by bread alone. MERLIN, Feb 1970
*OKEK LGYFTRL EGRFITLZXB HGRRKZ
EGFRZGFR HKRZFRCTV TAFLZTRHT LKXTXB
ZOQKCWO TVFUXT LZGQHO HKRLCEYZFKR.

C-4. Shelter MERLIN, Jun 1970
IOWPKVM QCRDSPUT PTVR IOAXSBMPY TNX-
MEBRDUY, TAIKZPUXOS SIDUY; OXKZAR XO-
QDYP PKVMR ZCHEDU.

C-5. Winter sport. MERLIN, Jan 1973
COLD PLATEAU QAZIB, *DZAFO *QJHZFJDB BI-
ZAF GEFFZD ALJQVDR, "MZAFU GLYZC HLLIB
FOL AVMAJMM ZEF."

F-5. DIAGAMORPH (1, 2, 5, 5, 4, 5,
3, 4, 4, 3, 4, 4, 3, 5, 4, 3)

1-17. Seventeen different noms.
=MERLIN, Nov 1986

F-6. RIGHT RHOMBOID

Across:

1. The first person one sees on going out from home on a particular day
2. A relative of Dorothy (*Oz* books)
3. Braced frameworks of timbers
4. Designed to reduce spillage
5. Short condensed sonata
6. Hanging from a boat crane
7. East Indian and Chinese trees
8. A neighbor whose house is on fire

Down:

1. Upper class
 2. Actinium
 3. Medical preparation
 4. Shall
 5. Stars with suddenly increased light output
 6. Mellowing, with "down"
 7. The color salmon
 8. Ask
 9. Untwists
 10. Hatting
 11. French lace
 12. Til
 13. Bronze or copper
 14. Auto maker (Wall Street Journal)
 15. Planck's constant
- =MERLIN, *The Former* 1.3 (#T)

EXTRAS

X-1. PIECEMEAL SQUARE (all words belong to a common category)

BU CA EB EE ER ER IL IM IT LE LO
PB RY SH TT US

=MERLIN, Sep 1975 (X-1)

From Willz—

One of my fond memories was my visit with Merlin at his home in Bismarck ND in July 1985. I remember being in awe of his library, which filled a good-sized room wall to wall and from floor to ceiling. Of course, a large part of this was devoted to puzzles and wordplay. But Merlin was also an avid reader of mysteries. He was proud of his complete set of the *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*. He also had nearly complete collections of the mysteries of Ellery Queen, Agatha Christie, John Dickson Carr, Rex Stout, Dorothy Sayers, and Ross MacDonald. Plus books on many other subjects.

When I arrived, Merlin's wife, Delores, gave me a T-shirt with a cartoon of a "Far Side"-like woman. Underneath it said *North Dakota — So Many Women, So Little Time*. It still makes me laugh.

After my visit, Merlin and I drove together from Bismarck to the NPL convention in Boulder CO and had a blast.

Murray was a collector of books and videos in his fields of interest and, for a number of years, he collected coins, stamps, and postal history. Murray went full bore into things, and the following is illustrative of his passions and his ability to let go of them after a certain point.

From Doug Wick—

I first knew Murray back in the early 1960s through coin collecting, but at the time he was in early 20s and I was in my early teens, so the age difference, difference in purchasing power, etc., made our relationship a minor one. Years later we both wound up back in Bismarck, and we reconnected around 1972 with the age difference now more or less irrelevant. At the time I was big in stamp collecting with coins as a secondary hobby, and Murray was big in coin collecting with various other areas as secondary hobbies.

By 1975 Murray was clearly becoming interested in collecting North Dakota postal history. My stamp collecting interest along with interest in geography and history led us to develop a much closer friendship at this time. I had long considered getting into postal history as well. During the late 1970s we started going to area collectibles shows. Murray would look for ND postal history material, but he always seemed to find some nice real photo postcards (RPPC). I would concentrate on RPPCs, but often I found some nice ND postal history material. At the end of the day we'd play show-and-tell and exchange the other guy's interests at cost. Memories of these little outings remain a treasured memory.

The firm that I worked for had a major management change in 1985, and I was consequently out of a job. It so happened that Ernie Peyton, a postal history dealer in Arizona, whom both Murray and I dealt with, was having his own personal crises. After

being unemployed for a year-and-a-half and after considerable thought, I purchased Ernie Peyton's business, at first with the thought that it would be a very temporary thing, primarily an inventory liquidation. But 23 years later I'm still a postal history dealer.

Murray's North Dakota postal history collection was probably the second best ever assembled. (The late Gordon Twedt, who began collecting as a kid in the early 1930s had what will likely always be the best collection.) In the 1990s Murray decided to sell his collection, and he placed his collection with me to auction for him. Selling Murray's collection was a mixed bag—obviously a superb chance to sell choice material, but with a sadness that Murray was leaving the hobby.

However, that was just how Murray operated. Over his lifetime he built and sold several collections of various things. He realized, early on, that the real joy of collecting anything is the thrill of the chase, and once his postal history collection reached the point where new acquisitions were becoming rarer and rarer, he switched to a new hobby, in this particular case traditional stamp collecting.

From **Steve Pearce**—

Doug's observations about Dad's collecting style are certainly true. He sold at least one major collection to help fund college for one of us. I remember asking him about it at the time, feeling bad that he was parting with something to which he had devoted so much time and effort. He had no regrets and said he had planned for it to work out that way from the start.

Murray had interests and accomplishments related to words and language outside the NPL, and here are a few examples of them. In the August 1971 issue of *Word Ways*, he coined the word *synanagram* for a word that is an apt anagram of other single words—for example, angered and enraged, abode and adobe, and laudation and adulation.

Also, Pearce's Conjecture is named for Murray.

From **Steve Pearce**—

One point of pride, with which he used to playfully taunt his brother Bill, was that he had a conjecture named for him. While not, as Bill would point out, as prestigious as a theory or a law, Pearce's Conjecture is the best any of them could muster.

A discussion about Pearce's Conjecture appears in Martin Gardner's *The Colossal Book of Short Puzzles and Problems*. The conjecture postulates mathematically the maximum number of 1 x 1 "holes" that can be obtained by arranging dominoes on an m x n field under certain conditions. Murray first published his conjecture in the November 1973 issue of *Games & Puzzles*.

Murray was a frequent contributor to *Word Ways* magazine, and the following excerpts are a few samples of his work.

FORMS

F-1. DOUBLE DIAMOND

Across:

1. 500
2. Rubber overshoe
3. Drinks
4. Nom of spouse of 6 Across
5. Colorless crystalline steroid hormone used to treat rheumatoid arthritis
6. Nom of spouse of 4 Across
7. To stare
8. _____-Marie de Madagascar, island off E. Coast of Madagascar
9. 250

Down:

1. 100
 2. Bang
 3. Piece
 4. Enlargements of the thyroid gland
 5. Fold
 6. Melody
 7. To roar
 8. One or all
 9. Eccentricity of a curve
- =MERLIN, Aug 1985 (F-5)

F-2. INVERTED PYRAMID

Across:

1. Philana
2. Dark green variety of serpentine
3. Mercury's spouse
4. Apart
5. Philippine tree
6. 1000

DOWN:

1. One
2. Out of bed
3. Immerse
4. Each one (NI2 obsolete variant)
5. A rising
6. Earthenware cask
7. Abyssinian four kasm weight
8. Rich source
9. Stall (+)

10. Knight of the Elephant

11. Iodine

=MERLIN, May 1986 (F-2)

F-3. SQUARE (Word in all caps = answer word)

1. TWOGRAVES (Stieler's Atlas Index)
 2. Trouble
 3. West Indian songbird (OED, citation under "organist")
 4. Treatment of disease by the free use of grapes as food
 5. RINERIVER (Index Geographicus)
 6. Friendly (OED)
 7. To burst forth in intense heat
 8. Deals with (OED)
 9. Rudderless
- =MERLIN, Dec 1987 (F-1)

F-4. INVERTED TRUNCATED PYRAMID

Across:

1. December 25
2. Reindeer driver
3. Having rigid hairlike bristles
4. Rock consisting of small round grains of calcium carbonate
5. American journalist Ernie, 1900-1945
6. Urban railway

Down:

1. Grade
 2. Letters
 3. Ethiopian prince
 4. Against
 5. Sharpen a razor
 6. Slice of meat (obs.)
 7. Canadian businessman and philanthropist James, 1744-1813
 8. Having wings
 9. Glut
 10. Owed
 11. Ancient Roman bronze coin
 12. International organization
- =MERLIN, Dec 1996 (F-2)

79. WORD DELETION (10) (*FIRST = NI3; SECOND = non-MW phrase, details withheld)

My Puinavean friend was both natty and ALL,

But he was never, not ever, on time.
“SECOND, yes SECOND. Oh, what can be done?”

The *FIRST people think that’s a crime.

=MERLIN, Jul 2008 (#99)

88. THEN TOTE UP SEVEN
GRAVEST SINS ONLY
UNGODLY LADS COURT
(enumeration withheld)

=MERLIN, Jul 1977 (#77)

89. RANCID AROMA ABSENT (6 3 8)
—DONE

=MERLIN, Dec 1977 (#76)

90. SOUP, IT (NI3)

=MERLIN, Nov 1996 (#86)

91. NPL-ITE AREA (^10)

=MERLIN, Dec 1996 (#89)

ANAGRAMS

80. LOATHED FEE I.R.S. MEN
EXACT (3 *7 6 5)

=MERLIN, Apr 1971 (#35)

81. NEED MARTS

=MERLIN, Oct 1971 (#31)

82. SLEEPS AT MORN, NOON,
(1 9 6)

=MERLIN, Mar 1972 (#49)

83. CAN TRADE IN EVIL (5 9)

=MERLIN, Oct 1972 (#49)

84. RUDE; I CUSS, TOO

=MERLIN, Aug 1974 (#58)

85. HARBINGERS WILL FRAME

POSY ROWS (*5 7 5 *3 7)

=MERLIN, May 1975 (#73)

86. A PERILED MISCREANT (9 8)

=MERLIN, Jul 1975 (#72)

87. LO, I CITE DAMNS

=MERLIN, Mar 1977 (#72)

ANTIGRAMS

92. SO, BREVITY

=MERLIN, May 1972 (#47)

93. ENDS HESITANT FEAR

=MERLIN, Mar 1974 (#62)

94. TIP: I CAN’T HATE

=MERLIN, Sep 1974 (#66)

95. YOU GET PHONEY

ANCESTRAL-TYPE LINGO

(“8 13 9”)

=MERLIN, Jan 1993 (#78)

RALFAGRAMS

96. A MAN RANTS IN HIS TOGA (4 2
3 2 7)

=MERLIN, Apr 1997 (#R-22)

David L. Silverman [*Editor*: Stilicho in the NPL] wrote in his “Kickshaws” column in the February 1970 *Word Ways*: “In the August 1969 issue I listed what I thought was a complete list of four-letter words of three syllables: AERO, AERY, AIDA, AREA, ARIA, IDEA, IOTA, IOWA, OHIO, OLEO, OLIO and UREA. This was the result of communication among Noel Longmore of London, former editor Howard Bergerson, and me. Murray Pearce of Bismarck, North Dakota responded in such a way as to make us feel that we had been hasty in thinking our list was exhaustive. He added the following words, all taken from Webster’s *New International Dictionary, Second Edition*.” The list of 34 words that followed in the column represented nearly three times the number of words in the original list.

Mr. Silverman further writes: “Mr. Pearce adds that the expanded list is still probably incomplete, since he limited his checking to words beginning with a vowel. But what really took the magic out of the whole four-letter, three-syllable words were his discoveries that OII is a three-letter word with three syllables, and AALII, ILIAU and LAUIA are five-letter words with four syllables. About the only thing left that would really surprise me now would be the discovery of a word with more syllables than letters.”

Mr. Silverman later writes: “Mr. Pearce also has done definitive research on another kickshaw from the same issue, A College of Interesting Cardinals. I listed NI, SAN, TPI, FOUR, VIER and CINCO, meaning, respectively, 2 and 3 in Japanese, 3 in Russian, 4 in English and German, and 5 in Spanish, as words which denote the number of letters in their respective word-forms. I asserted that no other words of this type exist in any of the languages mentioned, and invited the readership to extend the list using other languages, including dead ones. Using the Second Edition of Webster’s *New International Dictionary*, Eric Partridge’s *Origins*, and Peter Bergman’s *Concise Dictionary of 26 Languages*, Mr. Pearce added to and extended my modest list.” The list by Murray that followed contains 30 additional examples.

From **Canon**—

Merlin recruited me into the NPL. As the compiler of the rec.puzzles archive on Usenet, I was very familiar with the “three words ending in –gry” puzzle, and I thought I knew all about it, until one day someone posted an enormous list of obscure words ending in –gry. I immediately contacted the person, who turned out to be Merlin, and he informed me of the NPL and *Word Ways* and, in general, connected me to the body of work in logology prior to the Internet. This was in 1989, so I guess he had just started to read Usenet. At any rate, I joined and met Merlin in person at several conventions. He was an incredibly friendly and charming man. I miss him.

Murray’s article, “Who’s Flaithbhertach MacLoingry?”, in the February 1990 *Word Ways* added 35 more –gry words to the 51 such words previously reported. He wrote: “My favorite new –gry find was Flaithbhertach MacLoingry, bishop of Clonmacnois in 1038.”

[*Editor*: Although the following excerpt from the December 1990 issue of *The Enigma* doesn’t fit here, I thought it belonged somewhere, as Murray enjoyed

telling the story. It appeared titled, "A Christmas Story."] "Merlin's father, a lawyer, was an amateur printer with an old-style letterpress. He sent out eight-page Christmas newsletters, with photos, color sections, false ads—all in hand-set type. Over five hundred copies went out to friends, relatives, and members of amateur-printer organizations. The whole family proofread copy, reading backwards to catch each word, and finding how hard it was to produce eight perfect pages, even just once a year. A year later, all the missed typos having been found, Mr. Pearce put a section in his letter: 'Here are all the corrections and missing items:)) :))', and, " " " " . . . Dele the. And so on."



Murray and Delores Pearce at Grand Canyon. 12 Dec 2005. Pearce family photo.



Murray Pearce. 20 Nov 2005. Pearce family photo.

71. ENIGMATIC REBUS (8)

10QKA

I named my sailboat Ace-High
Straight;
I won it playing cards with Cy.
Now Cy (in rowboat) glares with hate,
And you should see my TOTAL fly!
=MERLIN, Sep 1998 (#47)

72. WORD DELETION (*10)

Was TOTAL favored by the gods
Or just a little offbeat?
He moved the world, or said he could,
And ran naked through the street.

No, *TWO, a mighty god, did not
Grant favor to this man,
And a Roman soldier cut him down
To end his earthly span.

Now many famous scientists
Have all ONE in to say
That here was one who stood above
The others of his day.
=MERLIN, Oct 1998 (#26)

73. DOUBLY FALSE OPPOSITE (*9, *9)

When FIRST dashed off "A Charge to Poets"
200 years ago,
He wrote to those who criticized
His laureate, you know.

You'll need to know odd facts like that
At July's Montana con.
Where SECOND Indians, Uncanny
says,
Will attack each day at dawn.
=MERLIN, Jun 1999 (#60)

74. TRANSPOSAL (10, 4-6) (FIRST = NI3; SECOND = NI2)

I pay out lots of SECOND dough
To learn about what lies ahead.

The FIRST inspects my palm just so
And says, "Some day you will be dead."
=MERLIN, Sep 1999 (#55)

75. FIRST-LETTER CHANGE (6)

A FIRST was swivel-hipping down the street
As all the guys just gawked in admiration.
"A LAST?" I asked the sergeant on the beat.
"Dunno, but she's a moving violation!"
=MERLIN, May 2000 (#81)

76. LETTER BANK (6, 6-3) (SHORT = NI2+, LONG = NI3+)

I keep my eel spear in my LONG,
A bank supposed to hold my money.
You wouldn't want to rob that bank;
You'd only find my SHORT there, sonny.
=MERLIN, Jul 2000 (#36)

77. RALF DELETION (8)

My sweetie has a birthday in October;
The purchase of a gift is not COMPLETE.
I must buy something pretty and romantic;
A bracelet made of SHORTERs would be sweet.
=MERLIN, Apr 2004 (R-7)

78. ORDER TAKEOUT (13)

My SHORTER admiration for
The lead in our local play
Is such that I am LONGER him
And learning every day.
=MERLIN, May 2005 (#43)

65. PHONETIC TERMINAL
DELETION (8)

Once a formist named Cheops from
*SMALL
Built a pyramid monstrous and tall.
The form was so big
It wouldn't fit in the 'Nig,
So the editor placed a quick call.

The pilot she called on came through,
As he BIG the whole form in the blue.
It took him all day,
And it soon blew away.
So the question is: is it KU?
=MERLIN, Sep 1994 (#6)

66. LETTER BANK (11, 7 12)

I see my family doctor when I'm sick.
He's really nothing special in his field,
But still he often knows a helpful
trick;
And sure enough I'm soon completely
healed.

He pours a drink, and when the booze
is SMALL
Throughout his system he will start to
bitch:
"I never should have been a BIG at all;
If I had been a surgeon I'd be rich."
=MERLIN, Aug 1995 (#5)

67. REPEATED-LETTER DELETION
(5 4)

I hired a guy with a LAST
To dig up my underground pipes.
His machine has been working quite
fast,
So that I don't have any gripes.
But repairing these pipes costs a
bunch,
And this is the third time this week!
I've a FIRST that eats money for
lunch,
And it's sucking up bucks as I speak.
=MERLIN, Nov 1995 (#23)

68. WORD DELETION (10) (SUM =
NI2+)

Kate's only six but not so dumb:
She loves to browse in NI2.
And now she says to be a SUM
Would be "My lifelong dream come
true."

She FIRSTs her Mom and Dad each
day
To take her to one more ballet.
They LAST this current craze will dim
As just another childhood whim.
=MERLIN, Aug 1996 (#3)

69. REBUS [4 4 4 4] (NI2) (similar
three-word version in 11C and
NI3)

NDND

North Dakota, North Dakota;
Just ask me why I live up here.
It's not as warm as Sarasota,
But crime is low and skies are clear.

North Dakota, North Dakota;
Where living costs are not so high
As right next door in Minnesota;
It's not so hard to WHAT YOU SPY.
=MERLIN, Oct 1996 (#17)

70. TRANSADDITION GROUP (*6, 8,
7) (FIRST = not MW usage)

When Isiah FIRST played basketball
Detroit was in its fullest glory.
For two years straight they won it all;
Each MIDDLE seemed to have his
story.

No FINAL warriors, just a team,
And all for one and one for all
Appeared to be the Pistons' theme
As they played first-rate basketball.
=MERLIN, Jun 1997 (#15)

MERLIN'S NPL CAREER

Merlin credits the mention of the NPL in Dmitri Borgmann's [*Editor: El Uqsor* in the NPL] *Language on Vacation* as being the catalyst for his joining the NPL in September 1968. Merlin explained further: "Since my father was the person who first mentioned *Language on Vacation* to me as a book I might be interested in, I suppose I could add him to the tree ahead of Borgmann's book." Merlin's nom first appeared in the November 1968 issue in Blackstone's financial report, and then next appeared in the December 1968 issue as one of 24 solvers for the September issue. Merlin was very active in the NPL and made numerous contributions during more than three decades, as described in the following sections.

Catalyst

In the February 1969 issue, editor B. Natural included a three-page insert, titled "The League and Its Future," in which he described the crisis facing the NPL. As he assessed the situation, the problems were insufficient funds in the treasury and dwindling membership—both were at all-time lows. Although B. Natural tried to end his discussion on an upbeat note, behind the scenes he felt very negative about the future of the NPL.

In the May 1969 issue, B. Natural published responses to his insert from five members, including Merlin, who wrote in part: "The subscription rate must be increased, perhaps doubled. If it is argued that if this is done we may lose some of the present members, it must be pointed out that if we do not do this we may go out of existence completely." In the same issue, B. Natural wrote: "The Board of Trustees recommends the raising of dues to \$5 [from \$4] a year." Increasing dues solved the immediate funds problem.

From **FaRO**—

In 1968, the year than Merlin joined, the National Puzzlers' League was dying. It consisted of only one hundred members, and it had been more than a decade since the last convention. When I wrote the editor, B. Natural, about the League and *Word Ways* exchanging advertisements to increase circulation, he replied that the League consisted of a few dozen people with an average age of 70. (The NPL history notes that for the 276 solutions lists submitted in 1968, the average age of the solvers of 183 was 73; furthermore, the 1968 *Enigma* listed only three new members, and the 1969 *Enigma*, six).

I received my first letter from Merlin in December 1969 when he renewed his *Word Ways* subscription and complimented me on various articles. In June 1970 he noted that the League had recently elected new editors (Pamapama), and urged me to try again to exchange advertisements to build our respective circulations:

We in the National Puzzlers' League find ourselves facing the same problems that you are—a dwindling membership. Yet the persons who subscribe seem to me to be the type who would be interested in the word puzzles offered in the *Enigma*—and vice versa....Perhaps this is

It doesn't take a ONE to find a clue
To how top pitchers gather all their
fame.
They throw more strikes than balls
and get more *TWO.
That's how the good ones always win
the game.
=MERLIN, Nov 1996 (#24)

53. PROGRESSIVE WORD
DELETION (10)

Our Senator Bear is a cranky old ALL
Who just grumbles and growls when
you meet him.

I TWO all you young politicians to
call,
And we'll work out a plan to unseat
him.

Perhaps we can THREE one or two of
the press
Into writing of sex, booze, and money.
And, to help spread some ONE, here's
a certain address

Where we'll hint that a Bear keeps his
honey.

=MERLIN, Apr 1989 (#81)

54. REBUS (9)

L O
S

I had Webster and Baus and EB and
Roget;

I had word lists both forward and
back.

I had Chambers and Oxford and Long-
man. I'd say

That of refs there was clearly no lack.

But one flat wouldn't fall, although
God knows I tried,

And my REBUS went on through the
night.

Next day came a call from Philana,
who cried,

"Oh, that one? I solved it at sight!"

=MERLIN, May 1989 (#16)

55. ACROSTICAL ENIGMA (11) (not
MW)

A. Fix your gaze upon each square
Where words by Willz will cross
with flair.

B. Timid solver, word for word:
"Harth is awfully tough, I've heard."

C. Cite a legal rule from Manx:
"Black squares can't outnumber
blanks."

D. "Open girds can daunt the setter."
Wrote Famulus in March Newslet-
ter.

There's Double-H, Señor, and Hex;
Panache and Amber, too.

There's Ginger Ella, Qaqaq, Quip;
And more amongst the Krewe.

They write, construct, or solve, and
earn

Unanimous acclaim

For bringing joy to all who like
To play the "Wynne-ing" game.

=MERLIN, Dec 1990 (#15)

56. ENIGMATIC REBUS (3 4, 4 *6 7)

(Puzzle note: NI3 will surely help,
not only to verify the reading, but
also to exclude alternate sols.)

NPL

Oh, Julius rode out on the gray
To check his perimeter guard.

But on the COMPLETE to the bay,
It threw him—all laughter was

barred.

=MERLIN, May 1990 (#66)

57. WORD DELETION (8)

My LEAVE took me out to the circus
last night,

And we saw the most wonderful bear:
While he rode on a TOTAL, he juggled

a kite

With two balls and a hoop and a chair.
Then he bowed to the crowd and

jumped down to the ground,

Where he left for a bar down on First
And a TAKE OUT cold brew, for the

bruin had found

He had brewed an unbearable thirst.

=MERLIN, Sep 1990 (#8)

do likewise!"

He served as first vice president September 1970 to December 1971, and as second vice president September 1969 to September 1970. For the two-year period 1994-95, Merlin was forms editor.

Merlin also served as elected historian 1990-91 and as unelected historian 1976-89. Regarding the latter position, the minutes of the 1977 business meeting reported in the October 1977 issue included: "The nature of the office of Historian was discussed. It was voted that Merlin serves as Historian at the pleasure of the Board for as long as he is willing."

From the time he joined the NPL, Merlin acted as its unofficial historian, researching the NPL's past and attempting to find and preserve back issues and other past materials. In the July 1970 issue, it was reported: "Merlin recently received a batch of old Enigmas from Larry of the '40-'50 era, and is overjoyed by this gift."

From Willz—

Perhaps Merlin's greatest service to the League was rescuing the NPL library from likely destruction. In the 1930s the NPL had a fair-sized collection of old puzzle journals, which were donated to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. For years *The Enigma* carried a notice about this collection and invited members to go to the Institute to see it. But few, if any, people did. Eventually the Institute lost track of the collection. Merlin visited the Institute in 1969, where they had no record of it. I'll let Merlin tell the rest of the story (from his letter of 5 Jul 1975).

After my article about the Franklin Institute appeared in *The Enigma*, I had a letter from Mephisto. He had written the Institute sometime after my visit in 1969 and at first had also been told that they no longer had any puzzle material. Later they wrote to tell him that the collection had been found and was available for perusal. I immediately wrote the Institute to find out just what they had. Their inventory was disappointingly short: *The Enigma* from 1937-64; *Golden Days* from 1880-1905; and a few volumes of *Argosy* from the 1880s and 1890s. In April I wrote to ask them if they could find out what had happened to what the February 1940 *Enigma* refers to as "70 volumes" of puzzle material, and to ask if they would be willing to transfer all of their puzzle material to the NPL so that the League could maintain its own library. Somewhat to my surprise they [said yes]. I contacted most of the League officers and got their approval for me to act for the time being as unofficial League librarian, and three days ago the Institute called to say the material was about to be shipped. I gathered from the phone call that they had found some additional material, but I won't know what it is until the package arrives. I think it's clear that the Franklin Institute had all of this puzzle material packed up and stored

away somewhere and had even removed the cards from their card catalog.

So thanks to Merlin's persistence and quick action when the opportunity arose, the NPL library was saved. In 1986 he sent the library to me for safekeeping, along with items from Sherlock Holmes and others. And this material is still available for the League's use.

There was no charge by the Franklin Institute for the transfer. The heart of this collection consists of 11 bound volumes/scrapbooks of puzzle periodicals from 1890-1901, each volume containing a year's worth of issues.



Willz and Merlin at Princeton convention. 29 Jul 1978. Willz photo.

46. TRANSPOSAL (4-10, 6 8)
(PRIMAL = NI2)

Poor Tillie the teller was sorting her
cents
And each nickel and quarter and
dime.
The PRIMAL machine was not work-
ing, and hence
Tillie's job took a much longer time.
She claimed that her work caused a
pain in her chest,
So Doc Hotshot was called in to see.
"It's FINAL; I'd say a small change
would be best
(But small change will not do for my
fee),"
=MERLIN, Sep 1986 (#15)

47. TRANSPOSAL (12, 2 10) (TWO
WORDS = not MW)

When Sam and Ella went to eat
At Tootsie's Bar and Grill,
They both consumed some SOLID
meat
And soon became quite ill.
A sign ("TWO WORDS") went up that
night,
Though Tootsie fumed and cried:
"What's all this fuss and fear and
fright?
You'd think those folks had died!"
=MERLIN, Jul 1987 (#71)

48. TRANSPOSAL ([6 6], 12)

He mixed a little glycogen
With red dye number 2.
This reddish ONE he said would cure
The common cold or flu.
The FDA cried "TWO" and said
"You're nothing but a fake.
Not only can't you cure a cold,
Your stuff's unsafe to take."
=MERLIN, May 1988 (#8)

49. TRANSPOSAL (*4 *7, 11) (ONE =
not MW)

Rock, rock, rock.
Remarkable guitar.
Still the cream of all-time greats,
Super ONE's a star.
Nod, nod, nod.
Is he stoned? No way:
Kicked the habit long ago.
Could be TWO. (Oy, veh.)
=MERLIN, May 1988 (#60)

50. LETTER BANK ([3 5], 15)

It started to freeze as it started to
rain,
And a LITTLE is not any fun.
But worse was the shower of BIG, I
maintain
That rocked us until it was done.
=MERLIN, Sep 1988 (#68)

51. ENIGMATIC REBUS [6 3]

41

The best laid plans of mice and men
At times will just not hatch.
So then it's back to ALL again
To start once more from scratch.
=MERLIN, Feb 1989 (#48)

52. CHARADE (8)

ONE:
Done.
TWO:
View.
THIS:
Miss.
=THEM, Sep 1989 (#42)

38. REBUS (3 2 7 3)

TI

"Ah, Smithers, we've decided we
Can do without your work;
Or let me REBUS and just say
You're fired — scram, you jerk!"
=MERLIN, Nov 1983 (#52)

39. TRANSPOSAL (5-6, 3-8)
(SECOND = NI2)

My SECOND shotgun is the best
Of all the guns I've owned.
A FIRST, it outshines all the rest;
I wish it could be cloned.
=MERLIN, Jul 1985 (#52)

40. REBUS (3 4 6 2 *5)

MERLIN

Some students now wish to restore
A classical curriculum;
We MERLIN which they once fores-
wore —
Ad unum omnes? No, but some.
=MERLIN, Aug 1985 (#87)

41. DOUBLE-CROSS (10, 5, 8, 7)

The TWO had planned a perfect crime;
Too bad for him it ONE.
He FOUR too long, took too much time
Ere leaving on the run.

His grandma caught him with the
loot:
A cookie in each hand.
"You're up to THREE, but you're so
cute,
I'll spare the reprimand."
=MERLIN, Nov 1985 (#12)

42. HOMOSYNONYM (6, 5)

It may rain deer for quite a while:
A bomb was on the PRIME.
Poor Santa has no FINE, so he'll
Be down ahead of time.
=MERLIN, Dec 1985 (#15)

43. TRANSPOSAL (12, 7 5) (SECOND
= NI3) (to be sung)

You load sixteen tons, and what do
you get?
Another day older and deeper in debt.
Oh, you owe your soul to the SE-
COND, I hear;
Their FIRST plan leaves you flat
broke all year.
=MERLIN, Mar 1986 (#11)

44. TRANSPOSAL (11)

"Sit up straight!" our teacher said,
"In class I won't allow such ONE."
But we complained, "These seats are
TWO
And hard, so sitting is no fun."
=MERLIN, Apr 1986 (#14)

45. LETTER BANK (4-9, *4 *8 *6 *6
*10) (both = NI2; LONGER = 11C-
findable)

He killed his mother and his wife
He may have burned his town.
Young LONGER led a bloody life
The while he wore the crown.

Some SHORTER folk were clearly
heard
To yell and shriek at him,
And soon his suicide occurred:
No fairy tale - - just grim.
=MERLIN, Aug 1986 (#50)

Conventioneer

Between July 4, 1883 and August 31, 1958, the NPL held 136 conventions, and then the conventions stopped due to low attendance and dwindling membership. In the December 1971 issue of *The Enigma*, editor Nightowl wrote: "Merlin wonders if the Krewe is interested in reactivating the conventions that the NPL used to have. Many of the Krewe take extensive vacation trips in the summer. Would any of you like to use some of your vacation meeting other Krewe friends at an annual (or biennial, perhaps??) convention? You who are interested, please drop a line to Merlin or me, and give us your ideas ... Could be lots of fun." There was an evident limited response, as no immediate conventions were held.

Conventions finally resumed (through Willz's initiative and Helene's hosting) on an annual basis in 1976, and Merlin attended this convention and 20 of the next 22 conventions through 1997, missing only the 1982 and 1996 conventions. At the 1976 convention, Merlin gave the Saturday evening address ("History of the National Puzzlers' League"), was one of five members to donate prizes, and had the program printed by The Occasional Press, Bismarck, North Dakota.

From Willz—

I have so many good memories of Merlin. We first met in 1976 at the Princeton convention, which Helene (then Ginger Ella) hosted, with me directing the program. The con ran from Friday night through Sunday morning. It was the first modern convention. Helene, Treesong, and I may have been the only people present under the age of 35. The total attendance for the weekend was 25 members and five guests. Merlin and I arrived a day early on Thursday and had dinner that evening at Helene's place. Helene even cooked, which we were told was an exceedingly rare occurrence, so we were honored. The puzzle talk was warm and long and went late into the evening.

Merlin was a pivotal member at that first con. As the NPL's president in 1976, he conducted the business meeting. He also made an evening presentation on the history of the League. He prepared a selection of old flats from *The Enigma* for everyone to solve. And his father, an amateur printer, typeset and reproduced the printed programs, which were the nicest-looking ones we've ever had.

At the 1977 convention, Merlin presented the Friday night game, "Homonymbles," and selected all the puzzles for and presented the Saturday afternoon main competition, "Ardmore Puzzles." This competition began a run of conventions through 1999 in which Merlin compiled, edited, and in most cases presented the Saturday afternoon main competition—exceptions being the 1982, 1986, and 1998 conventions. Some competitions consisted of puzzles from the past, and other competitions consisted of new puzzles created by the Krewe according to a theme or some rule/restriction.

Merlin enjoyed renewing friendships and forming new friendships at conventions. He wasn't the competitive type when participating in the organized games and contests; he preferred working with others to create and to solve puzzles, and he preferred humor and laughter over the serious during game times at

conventions. He was in his element at the 1994 Montreal convention for Tweaser's creative writing contest to create Little Willie verses. He didn't win in the first category, Traditional themes, but he placed first in the other two categories. His solo submission in the NPL-themes category was the winner: "Uncanny slaughtered half the town; / She set them up and mowed them down. / So Willie's rushing off to Butte / Before there's no one left to shoot." He also had the winning entry in the Gross & Disgusting category with this submission, co-written with Philana: "Willie screwed the local tramp / Into the socket of his lamp. / He used her when he needed light / And turned her on most every night."

From 1977-91 Merlin gave the historian's report at the business meeting. And Merlin made friends with many new members that he met for the first time at conventions.

From **Señor**—

I was shocked to hear of Merlin's passing at such a young age. I think it's fair to say that I owe much of my early enthusiasm for the League's activities to Merlin. In 1977, when I was still living in Buffalo, I took the bus downtown and having been in the Krewe for all of one week, I went to the annual NPL convention at the Holiday Inn, where I first met Merlin and others. All of you were very welcoming to this starry-eyed newcomer; and I can still remember, when I had some early good fortune at the Friday-night games (I think it was Willz's presentation of "Alphablanks"), Merlin catcalled, "can we blackball new members?" Later that night, Merlin and I got into some serious discussions of word oddities, a la Dmitri Borgmann; and we continued talking late into the night. Finally, at about 1:30 a.m., I realized that I'd probably missed the last bus home and asked at the front desk whether there were any rooms available. When I was told there weren't, Merlin quickly responded, "there's another bed in my room. You can stay with me." Well, we lay awake talking about forms and Krewe lore until about 5:30 in the morning. Needless to say, I became a most enthusiastic member and solver thereafter. Over the years, Merlin and I would correspond about forms when I was forms editor; his material was always top-notch and meticulously researched. Though in recent years I've been mostly a "lurker," I still remember fondly my early years of membership, for which I certainly have Merlin to thank for kindling the spark. He was truly a giant in the Krewe and in the field of logology, and he will be greatly missed.

31. TRANSPOSAL (11)

A hulk of a man was old President
Taft;
He never could get through an en-
tranceway PRIME,
Being bigger abeam than afore and
abaft,
As FINE can attest — they remember
his time.
=MERGIE, Sep 1977 (#83)

32. WORD DELETION (11)

Sympathize with the FIRST of the
poor crippled ALL
As he hobbles his way down the street,
Pushing darkness away as he goes,
but a fall
Leaves him LAST than before on his
beat.
=MERLIN, Feb 1978 (#28)

33. TRANSPOSAL (10, *5 *5) (tagging withheld)

He's jolly and happy
With goodies galore;
He's got little helpers
Around by the score.

He comes bearing gifts
For both lassie and lad:
Something corny for Sally
And a beanie for Brad.

Commercialization;
Too much some would say,
Thus ONE some complaints —
To the sponsor's dismay.

Don't brand TWO as bad, though,
For playing his part,
As his "Ho ho" and "Ho" find
The way to your heart.
=MERLIN, Dec 1978 (#6)

34. ENIGMATIC REBUS (10) RED

Sales were down and costs were up;
I was running in the red.
I couldn't keep my store afloat,
So I ALL the place instead.
=MERLIN, Aug 1980 (#48)

35. CHARADE (8)

"It's SECOND you I FIRST," I said,
As we lay snuggled on the bed.
"No other woman can there be
Who'd mean so very much to me."

She wriggled ALL upon the bed,
But, hand outstretched, she tartly
said,
"Come on, pay up; it's getting late.
The next guy's due at half past eight."
=MERLIN, Mar 1981 (#42)

36. CHARADE (5-4) (ALL, ONE, TWO) (ALL, ONE, TWO = NI3) DELETION (5) (ONE, TWO)

At home in her apartment she
Is practicing ballet.
She executes a ONE with ease;
Her feet click thrice today.

Her window's open to the breeze;
A TWO brings in a chill
And swirls the ALL that covers half
The window from the sill.
=MERLIN, Mar 1981 (#36)

37. LETTER BANK (8, 20) (LONGER = NI2)

I do not like Poe's poem,
The one about the bells.
I mean it — I'm a LONGER;
I hate those hellish knells.

I wish there were a SHORTER
Before which I could rise
And maybe get bells outlawed
And win the "Nobell" prize.
=MERLIN, Nov 1983 (#46)

23. REBUS (19) (NI2)

KKUM

At a music seminar
Hear "the strum of a guitar."
=MERLIN, Jun 1975 (#15)

24. TRANSPOSAL (10)

His team is winning ten to one
In the bottom of the third.
When heavy rains begin to fall
He growls a dirty word.

The game's held up; he FIRST the
gods
Of fate to stop the rain.
He prays for SECOND of the game
Before it's down the drain.
=MERLIN, Aug 1975 (#20)

25. WORD DELETION (9) (TOTAL = NI3)

I bought a farm and thought I'd try
The SECOND style of life.
But I'm beginning now to think
It's too much toil and strife.

The TOTAL ground's so hard to work,
It must be solid rock;
And gophers, crows, and other FIRSTs
Throughout my fields do flock.
=MERLIN, Aug 1975 (#36)

26. TRANSPOSAL (12)

According to my puzzled son
I said, "Let's spay the pugs";
But that's a FIRST, because in fact
I said, "Let's spray the bugs."

Those summer pests are back and
they
Are out in swarms tonight.
We need some SECOND spray or we'll
Be bitten left and right.
=MERLIN, Jul 1976 (#57)

27. WORD DELETION (8)

Expect some day a TOTAL blow,
A ONE too great to bear,
When all our oil and all our TWO
Are gone with none to spare.
=MERLIN, Sep 1975 (#9)

28. TRANSPOSAL (12) (PRIME = NI2)

It irked me when I learned today
I can get ill in one more way.
Though I am not its host, the PRIME
Can still infect me; it's a crime.

In FINE at finding out this fact
I told my source that he was sacked.
For now on top of grippe and gout
I've one more thing to fret about.
=MERLIN, Aug 1976 (#54)

29. WORD DELETION (11)

The gal next door sure likes her wine;
A quart of FIRST each day
Removes her inhibitions till
Her clothes are tossed away.

Her frolics in the nude are seen
By neighbors on our street
Who criticize such ALL with talk
And LAST that's none too sweet.
=MERLIN, Nov 1976 (#33)

30. TRANSPOSAL (9) (PRIMAL = NI2, 11C-inferable)

My PRIMAL dog runs free, unchained,
Along the ocean shore
And brings me FINAL so that I
Might hear the ocean's roar.
=MERLIN, Aug 1977 (#24)

Writer

In the April 1972 issue of *The Enigma*, Merlin wrote a humorous article, titled "A Matter of Form," accompanied by a "drunken" double diamond.

Between September 1974 and September 1975, Merlin wrote in *The Enigma* a series of ten articles, titled "Omnium-Gatherum." His first article was a review of two crossword puzzle dictionaries, and his second compared the state of the NPL in 1899 versus today. Along with the second article, he presented the following poem, titled "Three Little Words."

Homeward from his labors goes
The husband to his wife;
Wearied from his duties, irked
With all the day-long strife.

Waiting at his domicile,
The lovely girl he wed
Prepares herself to welcome home
The winner of the bread.

Knowing when he reaches her
His spirits will be low,
She knows the words she plans to speak
Will spark a new-born glow.

Hearing now his steps, her love
Bursts forth, we hear her say
Three little words that mean so much,
"Enigma came today!"

His other "Omnium-Gatherum" articles discussed topics such as form tagging, book reviews, and the NPL past. Merlin wrote other poems and articles over the years, mostly during the 1970s when the NPL was undergoing the initial stages of its revival.



Helene and Merlin at Princeton convention. 29 Jul 1978. Willz photo.

Statistician

In the December 1972 *Enigma*, editor Nightowl wrote: "Several members have suggested that we have a cumulative solving record throughout the year. Merlin has agreed to compile the statistics necessary for this, and once a year (or perhaps oftener) the list will be published and a prize given to the solver with the best cumulative record at the end of the year." For the first time in many decades, the NPL would have a report reviewing and summarizing the puzzle content in *The Enigma* for the year.

Merlin's "1972 in Review" two-page article, which appeared in the June 1973 issue, presented a simple one-page summary of the puzzles, constructors, and solvers that appeared in the twelve issues of *The Enigma* during 1972. The report also included a one-page review of the NPL's membership growth, treasury increase, and advertising efforts.

FaRO's article, "Analysis of the 1973 Solver's List," appeared in the June 1974 issue, and Merlin followed with his "1973 Solving Contest Results" article in the July 1974 issue. FaRO continued to do the annual statistics from 1974 to 1985, and then Tweaser took over from 1986 to 1989.

By this time, even though the report of the annual statistics had become complex and long, Qaqaq and Merlin volunteered and presented the 1990 report in the August 1991 issue. The one-page report for 1972 had now grown to five pages!

Not having learned their lesson from doing the 1990 report, Qaqaq and Merlin prepared the 1991 report (June 1992, 5 pages), the 1992 report (June 1993, 6.5 pages), and the 1993 report (June 1994, 5 pages). At the end of their 1993 report, they wrote: "Doing the stats these last four years has been fun, in a severely masochistic sort of way...This was Merlin's second stint as number-cruncher to the stars...and Qaqaq couldn't have even done his own half without Merlin's expertise and diligence."

Volunteer

Merlin frequently volunteered to take on projects in service to the NPL, or to do things to increase interest among the Krewe. The following represent just a few of these projects and some of his thoughts about improving the NPL.

In the October 1970 issue, Merlin ran a contest: "Merlin is offering his paper-back copy of *A Key to Puzzledom* to the first member of The Krewe to submit to your editors in Austin the correct solutions to both of the following puzzles." [Editor: The puzzles were transposals, and Faro won the contest.]

In the March 1971 issue: "NPL President Viking collaborated with Merlin to produce a less scary introduction to the NPL for prospective members."

In the December 1971 issue: "The deadline for the Literatim contest is extended to January 1, 1972. Merlin has decided to give as the prize a year's subscription to *The Enigma*; something any Krewe member can use."

In the October 1977 issue, from the minutes of the 1977 convention business meeting: "Merlin and Willz would work on an annotated puzzle bibliography and a list of references used as 'tags' in forms...Merlin went on record that the latest *Guide* is the best ever produced by the NPL...Merlin emphasized the importance of members' stating the desired disposition of puzzle material in their wills."

In the October 1978 issue, from the minutes of the 1978 convention business

15. SUBER (9)

IR
G

I met an ALL from Italy
Who wore no wedding bands.
She said I had a Roman nose,
And also roamin' hands.
=MERLIN, Aug 1973 (#41)

16. ENIGMATIC REBUS (10) (REBUS = NI2, 11C-inferable)

-

There are some men who have no
doubts;
They're sure they're always right.
But me, I'm always REBUS since
I might be wrong — I might.
=MERLIN, Oct 1973 (#15)

17. TRINADE (9) (THREE = * abbr.)

The rhymes we TWO sometimes ONE
poor
So here's what I suggest:
Award a THREE in puzzling to
The one who writes the best.

The perfect flat with perfect verse
Is a goal that's still pursued.
To TOTAL such a gem refined
We must be super-Krewed.
=MERLIN, Jan 1974 (#30)

18. WORD DELETION (10) (TWO = +)

Prudence was a Puritan,
Her ALL was not in doubt.
She never dallied with the boys
Though oft they sought her out.
A goodly soul, she never wished
Bad TWO to man or maid.
If you were sick, she was the first
Who would ONE to your aid.
=MERLIN, Apr 1974 (#21)

19. DELETION (9) (ONE = NI3)

The lawyer's on a diet,
Just liquids, nothing more;
For lunch, a bowl of TWO,
As solids he forswore.

Then back to draw a will —
Rough draft for now will do.
This ONE is then perused
And marked with pencil blue.
=MERLIN, Mar 1975 (#2)

20. DELETION (4 4; 7) (LAST = NI3)

At a FIRST I attended (we won both
the games)
The style of one batter was queer.
You'd have thought he was swinging
an axe or a LAST
Instead of a bat at a sphere.
=MERLIN, May 1975 (#70)

21. REBUS (4-5-3-5) (NI2)

MJAAICDKS

No other than
A ladies' man.
=MERLIN, Jun 1975 (#11)

22. REBUS (7) (NI3)

HHH

On stage or screen
In every scene
We see him strive
To bring alive
The role he chose to play.
He does his best
At our behest
To make each part
A work of art.
The REBUS earns his pay.
=MERLIN, Jun 1975 (#39)

9. HOMONYM (7 *6; 9) (*6 = not MW)

'Twas nineteen seventy and one
When the Pirates had their year.
They PRIMAL hopes for a champion-
ship
That the "Birds" had thought quite
near.

Our parish head had placed some bets
On Baltimore, I know;
But even FINE support like that
Couldn't stop the Pirates' show.
=MERLIN, Jan 1972 (#24)

10. REBUS (9) (NI3)

C
F

A Chilean plant or a Mexican shrub
Makes a rebus to solve for the puz-
zlers' club.
=MERLIN, Sep 1972 (#13)

11. TRANSDELETION (9)

"Blast" McGee was in court again
Accused of cracking a safe.
He claimed he didn't do it though,
"I'm innocent as a waif!"
Such NINE didn't get very far with
the judge,
"You bought some EIGHT, I know.
You claim you FIVE to remove some
stumps,
But into the lockup you go."
So Blast is serving five to THREE
As a SIX of the county jail.
The SEVENS of life are gone now for
him,
And it's too late to FOUR up his bail.
=MERLIN, Oct 1972 (#16)

12. SPOONERGRAM (6 8; 6 6 3)

The farmer's FIRST was quite a gal,
A beauty sure enough;
And suitors came in droves to woo
This diamond in the rough.

She spurned them all until one day
Our hero chanced along.
By accident he came upon
The maiden sans sarong.

Our speechless gallant stood and
stared;
The lass just breathed a sigh.
He SECOND as she swooned and fell;
Bid bachelorhood goodbye.

'Twas love of course, there was no
doubt;
They made a handsome pair.
But to his friends he later claimed,
"I was captured by a bare!"
=MERLIN, Nov 1972 (#35)

13. WORD DELETION (9)

The minister ran from the church to
his home.
"My TOTAL is burning," he cried.
"TWO the fire department, I think
this is ONE,"
As a man running off he espied.
=MERLIN, Mar 1973 (#31)

14. HETERONYM (12; 3'1 8)

A car is speeding down the road;
It's Joe with girlfriend Katie.
A FINE rings out, he's feeling gay;
His speed goes up to eighty.
He doesn't see the child ahead,
He cannot stop in time.
A scream — a crash — then silence
falls;
The verdict here is PRIME.
=MERLIN, Jul 1973 (#52)

meeting: "Merlin suggested that, in addition to memorial issues, occasional special Enigmas to honor living members would be a good idea. There was general approval, but no official action."

In the December 1988 issue: "Merlin has done a new History section [for the new *Guide*] and is updating all references. Qaqaq has just about finished the Forms section; he'll run it by Señor and Merlin."

In the Acknowledgments to FaRO's 1998 *NPL History*: "Merlin and Tweaser put most of the chapters in computer-readable form." [Editor: Merlin and Tweaser typed the chapters from printed copies.]



Philana and Merlin at New Brunswick convention. 22 Jul 1983. Willz photo.

Auctioneer

Prior to 1981 members would sell dictionaries and other printed puzzle-related materials. For example, Merlin sold off an NI2 in 1979.

From **Hart King**—

My best memory of Merlin is how well he handled the auction for the NPL of an NI2—which I won by bidding \$76.54—in 1979.

However, the NPL never had an auction of puzzle materials. That is, not until Merlin inherited Sherlock Holmes's entire library of reference books and back issues, and he decided to conduct an auction of duplicates and materials that didn't fit into his library. And so the NPL had its first auction. Mangie wrote in the May 1981 issue: "It could not have been easy for a busy accountant to manage all the correspondence involved in this auction—two rounds of bidding for 32 bidders! The organization of the materials, the packing and shipping must, likewise, have been time-consuming and exhausting. NPL is indebted to Merlin for this huge labor of love, and for the enrichment of our treasury by \$1382.31." Enriching the NPL treasury by \$1382.31 represented 26% of the \$5274.79 balance as of April 28, 1981.

Merlin conducted his second auction in 1987 with a net of \$813.03 added to the NPL treasury, and he followed with a third auction in 1988 with a net of \$616.45 added. Merlin's fourth auction had more than half its sales from Larry's estate, and its net was \$1402.85 in 1993. At this point, the NPL treasury balance of \$6074.94 would have been \$1860.30 without the \$4214.64 total net from the four auctions.

In 1996 Merlin conducted his fifth, and last, auction, which netted \$1714.82, another huge success.

The financial benefit to the NPL wasn't the only positive result from the auctions. Many Krewe added important references to their libraries.

From **Ai**—

Before abandoning Bismarck for Arizona, and thereby reducing North Dakota's NPL membership by 100%, Merlin auctioned off a large number of his formidable collection of puzzle books and reference works. I was lucky enough to be high bidder on Orchard Halliwell's wonderful *Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*, Craigie's *A Dictionary of American English*, and Mitford Mathews's *A Dictionary of Americanisms*. Having the latter on hand made it easy for me to compile a list of more than 200 Americanisms that Noah Webster unaccountably left out of his great 1828 dictionary, and then to give a paper on these omissions at the 2009 meeting of the Dictionary Society of North America. (I joined the DSNM for the occasion). I am sure that Merlin's friends and family will be pleased to learn of my debt to him. He was an important member of the League, and those of us who came to know him and his work will cherish his memory.

1. TRANSPOSAL (10) (TWO = NI2)

To the yippies the mayor had said,
"You can march
Down our streets in a protest parade.
But I warn you don't throw any ONE
full of filth
At our cops, or I'll have you repaid."

Next day he decided the risk was too great,
And he tore their permit into shreds.
But he later agreed to TWO the parade
When informed he'd have help from the
Feds.
=MERLIN, March 1969 (#26)

2. TRANSPOSAL (6)

Though some of us protest the war,
There are many who still will ONE
In Vietnam to continue on
With the fighting that must be done.

A TWO that I know is over there now
Knowing it's "do or die";
And soldiers and THREE are giving
their lives—
The cost of freedom comes high.
=MERLIN, June 1969 (#15)

3. BEHEADMENT (7)

There once was a miser named Kevin
Who would SIX in his coins like 'twas
Heaven,
But the T-men said "No,
We don't FIVE hoarding dough."
So the gold in his teeth he did SEVEN.
=MERLIN, October 1969 (#1)

4. TRANSPOSAL (8)

Our modern architecture is
A wonder to behold,
With the ONE of buildings nowadays
That are TWO and strange and bold.
=MERLIN, Jan 1970 (#21)

5. FIRST-LETTER CHANGE (7)

To reach your arm out for the food
Is not MY FIRST, 'tis said.
Your MY LAST arm is silent proof
That you're really not well-bred.
=MERLIN, Mar 1970 (#17)

6. REBUS (11)

C

She yields to his every little whim;
How ALL she is while in love with him.
=MERLIN, May 1970 (#3)

7. TRANSPOSAL (*5 *6, *6 5) (TWO = not MW)

December's cold, but even so
My children wanted me
To buy them ice cream piled in TWO
(Formosan-made, you see.)

They asked me what we celebrate
On Santa Claus's day.
"The birth of ONE—at least we should;
We oft forget, I'd say."

Born December twenty-fifth
(Though some dispute that date),
ONE's teachings spread around the
world;
A fact you can't debate.
=MERLIN

8. DELETION (10)

Some people say they want the facts
Put down in black and white.
But those two words are FIRST, so how
Can both of them be right?
Now I could never stay LAST long;
I like to sign what's mine.
So that's the reason why you see
My nom below this line.
=MERLIN, Mar 1971 (#10)

PUZZLE NOTES TO MERLIN'S PUZZLES

- 1 — Merlin's first flat.
- 3 — The first of Merlin's 11 beheadments.
- 6 — One of Merlin's 26 A-Z rebus flats in the May 1970 issue.
- 7 — One of Merlin's Christmas card puzzles; this one never appeared in *The Enigma*. Puzzle courtesy of FaRO.
- 31 — Merlin/Mangie.
- 33 — One of Merlin's Christmas card puzzles.
- 52 — Merlin/Philana/Mercury
- 79 — Merlin's last published puzzle in the 125th Anniversary issue with 141 contributors.
- F-3 — Mangie wrote: "This tour de force is gleaned from Graffiti on the Sphinx, where it appeared as an entry in a contest: to produce a diagamorph made from the longest string of noms. This is Merlin's entry, and I think it won the prize."
- F-4 — Merlin's nine-square form was the first nine-squares published in *The Enigma* in dozens of years. Ajax also composed a nine-square that appeared in the same issue, with the base word of terseness.
- C-1 — Merlin's first cryptogram.

From **Minimus**—

I'm quite sad at Merlin's passing, as we all are. He took the time and had the patience to make a new member (me) feel right at home with puzzle varieties, flats, and our NPL history. My fondest memories of him will always be the communication we had while he was directing the book auctions and the volume of quality puzzles he constructed for every issue. He was a great fellow and will be missed.



Hap, Mercury, and Merlin at New Brunswick convention. 23 Jul 1983. Willz photo.

Composer

Merlin's first published NPL puzzles appeared in the March 1969 issue, a transposal and a cryptogram, and his last puzzle was a word deletion in the July 2008 issue, which was the NPL's 125th anniversary issue. He published 1457 puzzles, most of which (1412) were published in three periods totaling 27 years: March 1969 to April 1978, August 1980 to January 1982, and June 1985 to December 2001. During these three productive periods, Merlin had an average of 4.3 puzzles appear per issue.

After his first break from composing, editor Mangie wrote in the August 1980 issue: “It’s fatted-calf time again at NPL. **Merlin**, after a silence of too many moons, has sent a batch of puzzles, accompanying them with the following explanation.”

Let it never be said
That old Merlin is dead
Or has lost the address of the Ed.

He was just off his feed,
Other callings did heed,
And the puzzler’s blahs he will plead.

The convention that’s nigh
Brings a light to the eye,
And to puzzle again he will try.

For this puzzling craze
Is not simply a phase;
It’s addiction the rest of your days.

Merlin composed 1416 solo puzzles; the remaining 41 puzzles were co-composed with these individuals: Brutus (1 puzzle as Mertus), Eric (1 puzzle as Erlin, 6 puzzles as Merlic), Joker (1 puzzle as Joklin), Jo the Loiterer and Qaqaq (1 puzzle as Merl the Qaterer), Junebug (2 puzzles as Juneberlin), Mangie (2 puzzles as Mergie), Newrow (1 puzzle as Merlin/Newrow), Panache (1 puzzle as Merlache), Philana (1 puzzle as Philin), Philana and Mercury (1 puzzle as Merphimer, 11 puzzles as Them), Qaqaq (1 puzzle as Meraq, 1 puzzle as Merqaq, 3 puzzles as Qarlin), Sherlock Holmes (1 puzzle as Merlin & Sherlock Holmes), Sibyl (3 puzzles as Merbyl), Stilicho (1 puzzle as Merlich), Wabbit (1 puzzle as Wabbit/Merlin), and Xemu (1 puzzle as Mermu).

Merlin composed most every puzzle type in the *Guide* at least once. He published 171 forms, 67 cryptograms, 12 extras, and 1207 flats. The flat puzzle types he composed the most were: rebus (435), letter bank (137), and deletion (100). In the latter part of his composing career, Merlin most enjoyed the letter bank. He kept track of all published letter banks, and he placed this notice in the March 1994 issue: “Send Merlin a #10 self-addressed envelope for his list of letter banks, updated through 1993.”

From **Newrow**—

I joined the NPL in 1981 and, to my mind, for that decade of the 1980s, Merlin was the star composer. I honored him in a flat in October 1985. [*Editor*: October 1985 flat #31 was an enigmatic rebus with a rubric of “MERLIN Bismarck, ND” with a solution of “earl in Minot to command.”] I met him once at the 1989 con in Cleveland. As we sat next to each other on a bus headed from one event to another, we contrived a combiflat, eventually published as flat #10, November 1989. [*Editor*: November 1989 flat #10 was a charade on “twelve-wired birds.”] I remember him as witty and gentle and a perfect traveling companion. I was most pleased to have had a chance to meet him and sample his creativity as it appeared.

discussions about creating larger forms. I would call him when I needed a certain word to fill a spot (“Do any of your books show an 8-letter word ending ...SERATA?”—that sort of thing), and would excitedly let him know whenever I built a larger form (say, an 8-square or a 17-pyramid) for the first time. I never managed to conquer the 9-square, but I was very proud when I saw him do so, creating the first one seen in the *Enigma* in many years. He also supported me and Jo the Loiterer when we created our short-lived magazine *The Former*; he was happy to advise us as well as supply us with plenty of great material.

Another of our common interests was puzzle history. I got to visit him once in Arizona and was awed by his collection of old puzzle materials. I had managed to get a decent-sized *Enigma* collection of my own through the years, thanks to various NPL auctions, but Merlin’s was much larger; in fact, it was the largest extant collection. A few years later, as he was paring down his possessions, he asked me to take them on. I sold my earlier collection to Xemu, and now I maintain Merlin’s collection for posterity. I look forward to the day when those issues can safely be digitized and shared with the entire League, and I know Merlin would be happy with that as well.

As an NPL puzzlemaker, Merlin was an absolute giant. I’m sure someone else will explain the huge role he played in the 1970s revival of the League. There are probably many NPLers today who don’t realize that Merlin was one of the few people about whom it could be said without exaggeration that without him, the NPL would probably not now exist. And over the years, he made innumerable clever flats and impressive forms. But personally, I miss my buddy—the guy with the quick wit and the hearty chortle. I kept hoping against hope that I would get to see him again, and I’m really sad that that’s not going to happen.

The November 1973 issue was dedicated to Hoodwink, and Merlin wrote a few paragraphs about how affected he was by Hoodwink’s death. Merlin ended his tribute with the following: “My own thoughts are perhaps best expressed by my five-year-old son, Steven. A year or two ago Hoodwink endeared himself to Steven by sending him occasional letters and cards. Steven treasured these missives, and when Hoodwink sent him a self-portrait he put it up in his room where it remains today. When I told Steven of Hoodwink’s death he was silent for a minute or two, and then looking up at me he said, ‘Daddy, why did Hoodwink have to die? He was my friend.’” Amen.

From **Junebug**—

I feel really bad about not maintaining closer contact with Merlin after he moved to the southwest. I probably didn't know him as well as some others did, but Eric and I both adored him and he was one of the pillars of the League for us for decades. If we didn't feel strongly about him, we wouldn't have named our kid after him. It's interesting that Iambic is very sad that he never got to meet Merlin when he was old enough to remember the interaction. I don't think they've met since Iambic was 2 or 3 years old. Iambic says his friends are all jealous of his name. We've always liked the exchange: "Wow, it's so cool that your middle name is that of a great wizard!", with the reply "Well, actually, I'm named after my parents' tax accountant." "Our" Merlin was a wizard with *people* and I'm proud to have my son carry on as his namesake.



Merlin, Eric, Iambic, and Junebug at New York convention. Jul 1993. Tyger photo.

From **Qaqaq**—

I first met Merlin in 1987 at my first NPL convention in Charlottesville, Virginia. We couldn't have been more different; I was a 19-year-old newbie who was dazzled by meeting many of these great puzzlers for the first time, and he was an older, very highly esteemed *Enigma* veteran. But we liked each other from the start; he was very approachable and easy to talk to, and we had a lot of common puzzle interests.

In particular, we both were interested in reviving forms to at least some of their former glory. Over the years, we had a lot of

Merlin loved words and dictionaries. As he combed through NI2 and NI3, he would often find words new to him that he absolutely had to share with the rest of us as a base for one of his puzzles—great as an educational exercise for solvers, but diabolical for hopeful completers. Although fairly clued, solvers knew they were in for a challenge with these puzzles, especially when they had multiple NI2+ or NI3+ tags.

Selecting a representation sample of Merlin's puzzles was difficult. Veteran Krewe have individual Merlin favorites or ones they find memorable for whatever reasons. For example, Qaqaq vividly remembers #56 and F-3, while Mercury is fond of #7 and #33. The puzzles included in this memorial should give newer members a taste for the variety of Merlin's puzzles.



Merlin at Cambridge convention. 18 Jul 1987. Willz photo.

Solver

Merlin submitted his first solution list for the puzzles in the September 1968 issue, his last solution list for the puzzles in the May 2006 issue, and a total of 247 solution lists out of the 448 issues in this time span. He solved solo (165 lists); solved with Eric (2 lists), with Eric/Junebug (38 lists), with Eric/Junebug/Krishna (1 list), and with Qaqaq (41 lists).

Merlin had 52 completes—32 solo and 20 with Qaqaq—but he was famous for scores such as $*.-0-0$ (33 such lists solo, and 19 with Eric/Junebug) and $*.-0-*$ (5 with Eric/Junebug and 19 with Qaqaq). [Editor: A complete means solving all the puzzles in an issue, and a complete is indicated as $*.-*.-*$, which means solving all flats, forms, crypts, and extras. So, $*.-0-0$ means solving all flats and forms, and zero crypts and extras. And $*.-0-*$ means solving all flats, forms, and extras; and zero crypts.]

Out of his 247 solution lists, Merlin had 164 flat completes and 164 form completes, but not all these completes (but most) were at the same time.

During the span of time he was solving, Merlin often went months, and even years, between submitting solution lists, as he focused on his family and career, and later on his health. On eight occasions, Merlin was the only solver to get a complete for an issue, so he likely could have achieved a formidable solving record if he had placed solving high on his list of priorities.

From **Qaqaq**—

Merlin and I were always looking for excuses to chat on the phone for a while. We were cosolvers for a few years, getting a pretty long string of completes; we were both good solvers individually, so we would generally be done in a hurry and could spend plenty of time shooting the breeze. (I often said that one of the biggest benefits to being Merlin's cosolver was not having to solve his flats. He would sometimes make wonderfully clever flats, but he would also take a fiendish glee in coming up with a hard-to-research two-line stumper.)

Friend

Just as Merlin considered many in the NPL to be his friends, many of us in the Krewe considered Merlin to be our friend. It was easy to get to know and to become friends with Merlin.

From **144**—

I was impressed by Merlin's kindness, his quick intelligence, and his class. So many of the Krewe I recall from the "golden days" are gone—Blackstone, Mangie, Hap, and now Merlin.

From **Willz**—

When I joined the League in 1972, Merlin was already one of the leading members, even though he'd joined only four years before. He'd made a huge impact in a short time by writing a large number of flats and articles for *The Enigma*, submitting solution lists, collecting a nearly complete run of *The Enigma* (becoming as a result the de facto NPL historian), and generally breathing new



Merlin and Mercury at San Diego convention.
17 Jul 1992. Philana photo.

life into the organization.

At the time, the NPL sorely needed new life. Membership was hovering around a hundred, mostly elderly. Conventions hadn't been held since 1958. The Enigma typically had only eight pages. There was discussion of closing down.

But things were starting to turn around, thanks to Merlin and others, and Merlin was just the sort of person I wanted to know. I was 20 years old, about to start my college major in Enigmatology. At editor Nightowl's suggestion, I wrote half a dozen NPLers with an interest in League history, asking for help with reading materials. Merlin responded with a full-page, single-spaced typewritten letter, the first of many such, with numerous suggestions. We became fast friends.

Over the years Merlin served the League in many capacities. He prepared the main flat-solving competitions for many of the early cons. He conducted NPL auctions five times, redistributing rare and valuable puzzle books to members who wanted them and earmarking the proceeds for the League. He served as president in 1972, 1974, and 1976, and as the historian from 1980-91.

Thank you, Merlin, for being a friend ... and for everything you did for the League.