



GRAFFITI ON THE SPHINX

Dec 2013 Well, now, I guess I'll have to use my musical pimple scissors. #264

I was sure I'd get GotS out on time again this month; after all, two weeks after mailed Enigma = 28 Dec. But I procrastinated, reading Black Wings and Jane Yellowrock novels, *The Girl Who Soared Above Fairyland* and *Cut the Moon in Two* (she didn't, really), *Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children*, *Captain Vorpatri's Alliance*, and stuff; cleaning out my inbox (which is now down below 10,000 items) (later: 9871); Free Cell frenzy; and so on. But here it is at last. I hope you enjoy it, and I hope you'll find something in it to provoke a response. Or comments on December or January puzzles.

MY PERSONAL ERRATA AND ADDENDA:

December: there's a TETCNBNy flat this issue. 25 - just to make it totally obvious, two answers are phrases: *5 *6 and a subpart. 39 - 6 is not in my 1981 NI3 but, as Teki found, made it into the Addenda by 2002. Not having that NI3, I can't say anything about the usage. 46 - italicize 6.

HARD, REFERENCE, AND FAVORITE FLATS:

My last flat sols were 11, 1, 12, 28, and 25, with 10 and 37 unsolved. Of those I have, I think 21, 25, and 28 are hard even with modest research. I'd add 4, 6, 14, 27, and 35 to the easy list. I used references (including MW) to get 2, 5, 15, 16, 18, 20, 24, 25, 26, 32, 40, and 43, and think 27, 5, 15, 16, 20, 24, 25, 26?, 29, 32, 39, 40, 43, and 46 may call for reffing (particu-

larly if you're not up on the latest movies). Source-tagged flats that can be solved without refs: 11, 33, 34, 35, and 44. My current favorites include 8, 17, 23, 28, 33, 38, 41, F3, and X2!.

GotS SOLUTIONS:

SSB 22.11.3b: Israel defense forces.

A.A. 22.11.4b: Prostitution. Mobile telephones. Hurricane Frances. Weight Watchers International, Inc. A place by the sea. Party Chairman Mao Tse-Tung. The two thousand four elections. The end is nigh. Human resources department. The House of Lords. The Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Ceiling murals of the Sistine Chapel. The bikini model. Scottish salmon. Blarney Stone. The actress Marilyn Monroe. A volcano eruption. An endangered species. Naysayer. Snow tire. To go on a bender. Sight hound. The elections in November, two thousand four. Bill Clinton, the former president of the USA.

THE SPHINX LOOKS BACK:

Each flat number marks a change of commenter; if no new one's given, it's me.

October: 2 - I considered 'salmon' and 'herring' for BESET; unnecessarily tricky. 3 - 'junkyard hound' is a clue-by-omission to 'dog'. 6 - a place I knew from my stamp-collecting days. Only recently did I realize the Portuguese pronunciation wasn't like 2-3 4, and

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22.12.2

GotS

Dec 2013

Oct #6, continued

that inspired this flat. Ee-nyahm-bah-nay, if you wondered. 10 - what Dmitri Borgman called an 'anchored palindrome'. Wabbit: Wow! Never noticed that about the word! Mind you, I don't come across that word very often. But still...nice find! R/EDS: this is just brilliant. I thought at first I was looking for a 3-letter word as the small part, so that delayed me for some time. 13 - Baising drinks (sopie?), liquor, and dwelling didn't work, so I went through all the South Africa items and found 6 under *camp*. R/EDS: most of us beer drinkers are aware of this neat base. 15 - re Groucho quote, 22.10.3b: even after Googling to find she was Totie Fields, I had to be pointed to B before I got the pun. 18 - Wabbit: just had to Google the meds mentioned to get HOSE. 19 - Wabbit: went through lots of ideas solving this one, but glad I was the one to get it! 'Across' told me what I had to watch for as I wended my long way down all the 11-letter NI3 words (yes, I was desperate enough to do that!) and there it was. Letter Bank function gave me DONE. Nice find. R/EDS: another wonderful puzzle with limited, but fair, clueing. [You shoulda seen the first draft.] 20 - do many nongeezers know about Ming and the Hawkmen? (That's not a band; they're *Flash Gordon* characters.) 21 - I missed the blatant clue in the last line, but went from -ing to -line to the answer. 24 - 'xyzyzy' is a magic teleportation word in the long-ago Colossal Cave text adventure game. It's spread far beyond that in the computer world; see the Wikipedia article. 25 - R/EDS: once you research 'feng shui' (as I needed to) it falls quickly. 30 - given that he calls for 'more Iberian' verses, I presumed *6 was something un-Iberian like Mexico, Belize, or Panama. No luck. Then I considered the title: EN becomes PARAD. E's PA. Aha! Even after solving, I didn't understand why '*Portugal*' was italicized. It's because Portuguese for 'Portugal' is '*Portugal*', as Spanish for 'Spain' is '*España*'. R/EDS: nicely parallel. 32 - I liked the red herring of valor = COURage, but 'current strength' is even better. Using a rhyme word as the clue is also tricky. 33 - pinto, mustang, dapple...I Baised 'horse' and got it. Duh. 34 - R/EDS: well, I certainly wasn't aware of that meaning for 4. [A lot of people aren't, and as a result it seems to have developed a rather antonymous second meaning, roughly 'in the words of'. And of course even if you know the meaning there's the question of whether to pronounce it 'pah-chay' or 'pay-see'. Or 'pah-kay': my preference, but not 11C.] 37 - R/EDS: easy enough for us seniors. 38 - R/EDS: thank goodness for the model. 39 - I didn't know of any recent one-million march and Google News only offered something in the Philippines and a One-Million Muslim March on 9/11 that fortunately only amounted to a few hundred. So just going by the letters: the Miracle Monnillo, the American Lollimon, the Islamic...oops, no S. Time to try the Internet Anagram

Oct #39, continued

Server: ill Loather Mnemonic, con Minaret Molehill (mega-Muslim reference?), lone Lichen Immortal. But I noticed 'memorial' among the subwords, and that gave me the rest. I gather it refers to the observance of the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington.

C5 - AFHFQ suggested F was a vowel. QFEW- WO and VTHNVMZWO with O uncommon suggested 'ly' and 'really' to me. Lucky guess. Then OFB would be 'yet', which led to 'interesting', and that was it. C6 - was UGJG 'were'? Didn't seem to work. G occurring word-final early in three comma-separated chunks of crypt suggested parallel verbs with G = s, so 'asks'? That verb suggested WNL = for. Then GSLUPAG - sRaPAs, where PA is a two-letter word. 'Strains'? That cracked it. C7 - LXB XU and QXISXBFLXSE suggested X was a vowel. Maybe 'i'? Misnitching. UXBFUOU and PU made U look like 's'. Ein-- sinuses? Blah.Maybe O wasn't a vowel; in that case, -sts looked promising. Sexists? Yeah! An unrefred crypt complete!

X4 - oh, this is so 2006. Good fun, pretty easy (took me 15:18). 9Ac - I don't suppose Hestia (asteroid 46) is thematic. 10Ac - 'vibrantly alive' is a great anagram clue, and the two stars (are they thematic?) make the whole surface topnotch. 13Ac - lots of betting about who gets on it? 16 - totally natural surface; I also like those of 19Ac, 29Ac, 4Dn, 8Dn (better hyphenless, though), and 25Dn. 24Ac - Roger PhilLips. I didn't notice this while test-solving because I almost always have to correct LL to L. 1Dn - good use of 'One Direction'. 5Dn - how did that happen? 6Dn - interesting subtraction clue. It occurs to me that subtraction clues are more common in recent Enigma cryptics than in the general run of cryptics. Anyone else think so? 20Dn - I believe this was the toughest clue for me.

X5 - good construction, and also easy; got the 'fads' theme in 4:03 from 'hula hoop' and 'hot pants', finished in 19:54. Favorite surfaces: 4Ac, 14Ac, 19Ac, 43Ac, 1Dn, 7Dn, 9Dn, 11Dn, 36Dn, 37Dn, 40Dn. More forced: 32Ac, 10Dn, 32Dn. 12Ac - reminds me of X4's 10Ac. 13Ac - speaking of subtraction clues, there's this, 15Ac, 31Dn, 13Dn, 20Dn, 24Dn, 25Dn, and 33Dn (not counting clues like 38Ac and 44Ac that remove starts and ends rather than defined chunks). 15Ac - is this a geezer clue? I remember her well from *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* but wasn't aware of her subsequent career. I also remember her as Dom Deluise's assistant 'Shagoondala', which I realized maybe twenty years later was 'Shakuntala', as in the *Mahabharata*. And S. Devi, who had a Google Doodle on 4 Nov. 26Ac - cute definition. 27Ac - three pieces nicely coordinated. 32Ac - how can SURETIUS pursue something that precedes it? 38Ac - the surface and cryptic part are rather labored, but I like it for the unique way of clueing. 41Ac - 'cell with zero volts' is nicely misleading. 44Ac - and so is 'r]avel, removing

Oct X5, continued

edges'. 45Ac - good pairing of Anchorage and Denali. Can a mountain have an entrance? 7Dn - 'rounds' misled me for a bit. 29Dn - my favorite clue of the puzzle: funny, with a well concealed split. 32Dn - I was sure I had this but had to ask Teki to explain it. 'Moving', but 'just' the part that's 'in front of' the 'ocean'-sounding part. Well, OK.... 34Dn - I like the connection of 'US Treasury' and 'usury'. Though it's being criticized lately for charging too little interest.

X9 - trying 'you', 'one', and 'is' in the first line didn't work, nor did 'the' in the second, nor -tion in the 10s, nor 'Norman' in the name. 'And' for the second 3 made the first name Th-, and 'Thomas' made everything (including 'everything') fall into place.

GotS PotShots:

I'm getting back into the welcoming biz. I sent welcoming letters to the 44 joiners from June to November, along with some GotSim. Zero response. This is discouraging but I refuse to be discouraged. I don't know why it doesn't work any more.

PUZZLE PATTERN:

R/EDS re Oct #7: Here is the other end of the spectrum [from #3]. Not only is the inferable part a huge stretch, I can't even parse it in context. When I have to ask the composer (both here and for #22) whether or not I have the right (or intended) answer, then I think that he is really stretching. I've said it before and I'll say it again. Uc is perhaps the most intelligent person I've met on this planet, but some of these inferables just don't cut it.

[What are the limits of 'inferable'? Ucaimhu frequently pushes them in letter banks, and in October I think he went over the line. I don't think 'shan't rebuild' in Oct #1 can be called an inferable could-be-an-entry, any more than 'can explode' or 'might proliferate'. 'Shall rebuild' might turn into a single future-tense word in, say, French, but it doesn't have dictionary nature in English. In #7, no problem; using 'unheroical' to mean 'unheroical one' is the sort of adjective-nouning that goes on in English all the time. Admittedly, with the entire verse a single sentence, it takes some effort to go back for antecedents and construe 'the unheroical's' as 'the unheroical (not about honor, in contrast to ROB) play's paycheck'. But that's not the base's fault. 'Trouncedish' in #22, though, is another story. I don't think every conceivable noun + affix combination produces a plausible English word, and in particular '-ish' does not go well with participles. As evidence I note that a search for 9C 'ish\$' words in the NPL Dictionary Search gets 'actorish', 'aguish', 'amateurish', and 'apish' in the A's alone, but a search for 'edish\$' in all dictionaries gets only 23 hits, none of them participial, not even 'saucedish'.

Unlike R/EDS, I found all of these flats enjoy-

able and worth solving. I just don't think 'inferable' is a good label for them. 'Coinage', as in #22, isn't bad, but I think 'FREEWHEELING' is best for #1 and #22.

Your thoughts?]

THE SPHINX STRIKES BACK:

FOUND FLAT OF WITHHELD TYPES THAT WE NEVER STARTED READING

(ONE, TWO; 6) (ONE, THREE; 6)

... will ONE over the TWOy-clean Stuart Little THREE.

=FRONT PAGE OF THE 19 JUL 2002 *NATIONAL POST* (found by GABBY)

For extra credit: what word did he avoid quoting, and why?

A SURVEY OF CURRENT ENGLISH-LANGUAGE VERSE-PUZZLE MAGAZINES:

Great news that Teki is sticking with us. Thanks, Teki!

Purely personal puzzle patati patata: **1** - R/EDS: It took me the longest time to realize that a riddle doesn't normally have a cueword. Once that penny fell, the rest wasn't too difficult. Clever and enjoyable. **3** - don't forget to read the puzzle notes. **4** - actually, he'd been in a vegetative coma for eight years before his corpse died in January. **7** - what movies? R/EDS: Cute. I liked it. **11** - even if 'Halloween' is a valid clue, I think it's very unhelpful. R/EDS: Now this is really clever. Well done! **13** - R/EDS: My bang! He continues to be the master of the welded transpositional. **14** - no, she wasn't parsing. **17** - rather a lot of verse for two keywords, but worth it; lots of fun wordplay. R/EDS: Ah yes, that position. **19** - R/EDS: I guess it's not the "rhythm method." **21** - originated in a desperate attempt to solve Sep #66. **23** - R/EDS: Lovely, clean reading. **24** - bravo for timed all/Heimdall! **25** - did anyone solve this without reffing? I didn't; I think only one part is a good entry point. **26** - R/EDS: I can't remember the last time I saw this puzzle type. It's somewhat more difficult than it counterpart. [Having multiple keywords is a big help.] **28** - seems to me the end of the reading has it backwards. This has some intense clueing. **32** - R/EDS: I'm still not sure how he managed to get this varying subject matter into a plausible scenario. Only Uc could do this. **33** - this is one of the most remarkable letter banks ever! Do you think it would have been even better as a letter bankless? **34** - a new meaning of 2 3 for me. I only recall seeing it in this sense as a bare 3. **37** - George Groth: this is my only hole for Dec. I have no English word of any length that can fit this verse. **38** - one of the best recent Internet ideas, I think. Funny verse. **39** - in case it's not clear, the badge on the left shows a vertical bar bisecting a circle with an inverted V superimposed. R/EDS: I had a lot of trouble with this one, because I'd never heard of 6, despite its French origins. **40** - 9 is thoroughly clued

but I'd never heard of it. 10 is clearly clued but I still had no idea until I looked it up. R/EDS: I'd certainly never heard of 9 before, which made this somewhat more difficult. **41** - beautifully put together. **47** - R/EDS: Talk about nicely apposite. Beautiful!

Singables: **2** - 'Randolph the Red-Nosed Root Beer'. **8** - 'Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas'. **35** - the theme song of **I**I**I**I*. **46** - 'The Best of Both Worlds' (the theme song of **6 *7*).

F1 - nice way of being thematic. **C5** - bang goes outside quotation marks.

X3 - excellent, as usual for Wheels. Took me 56:35 to finish, but I never felt stuck, and the many thematic pieces fell one by one. Even after solving I didn't understand 8Dn, but I knew I had it. Many good surfaces; I think 10Ac, 12Ac, 14Ac, 17Ac, 40Ac, 39Dn, and 41Dn would not look out of place in a noncryptic. I have no idea what the solutions could be, though. 29Ac, 33Ac, 16Dn, and 42Dn seem more forced. King crab yes, king cab no. One thing that struck me about the puzzle was an unusual amount of constraint on the diagram as well as the clues, despite which he maintained symmetry. The last such puzzle was Ucaimhu's maze cryptic in March. R/EDS: Several nice aha moments.

/dev/joe: In December we finally saw the publication of solving reports for months lost during the last solution editor transition, based on solvers' honor-system resending of their solution lists, as well as resending of kudos lists. That allows us to present, for one time only...

The Kudos Kount Looks Back

In March there were 18 solution lists representing 40 solvers, or 2.2 per list. There were a total of 771 solutions for 52 flats, an average of 42.8 per list and 14.8 per puzzle, 82% of maximum. Forms: 54 / (18-3) * 4 = 90%. Crypts: 103 / (18-2) * 7 = 92.0%. Extras: 129 / (18-2) * 10 = 80.6%.

The hardest flat, with only 10 solvers, was #20, a Wrybosh welded transpositional on 'lost in thought, tool-using'. I didn't get this one myself; I guess the clueing is there, barely, but both ends of this one are hard. There were four runners-up with 11 solvers each. #3, Newrow/Nanew's phonigmatic picture rebus on 'glow, Blue Nile' is another toughie with just a couplet of verse. #18, R/EDS's letter shift on tangram, tangram, had very subtle clueing for 'tangram', using triangle as the musical instrument and diamond as the gemstone. #21, Panther/Dischorran's welded transpositional on 'memorial commercial', didn't seem too hard, but I got sidetracked on trying to make the first word 'business', getting lost by matching the clues to the wrong halves of the solution. #29, another Wrybosh welded transpositional, this time on 'Crimean, Americana', plays on the fact that there are cities named

Odessa in the United States and the Ukraine. Also of note was #14, Next Lingo's palindrome deletion and terminal palindrome deletion. It had 14 solvers, but 5 of them found the alternate answer 'St. Kitt's, kit' instead of 'St. Bart's, bar' for the second part. [As a St. Kittsist, I must give thanks for the mercy. Chic water in kits?] Only 9 solvers found the intended solution. There were 8 flats tied for easiest, solved on all 18 lists: #23, an enigmatic rebus by Ucaimhu; #26, a sixth-letter change by Aleph and LeXman; #28, a palindrome curtailment and homonym by Next Lingo; #31, a heteronym by Joker; #32, a phonigmatic rebus by raw; #36, a palindrome deletion by LeXman; #38, a word deletion by Lirath; and #45, a false comparative by Lirath.

The hardest form was F1, a trigram square with 12-letter words by Loki-5, solved by 12. The easiest was F3, a vowelless inverted pyramid by Ai, solved by 15. The crypts followed the standard pattern, with C7 by Newrow the hardest with 13 solvers and C1 by raw and C2 by Neendy tied for easiest with 16 solvers each. Among the extras, the hardest was X9, Ucaimhu's 'Games on the 17th' cryptic, solved by 11. The easiest was a three-way tie with 14 solvers each: X2, an ananote by Lirath, X6, a vertical ananote by raw, and X8, a block-style cryptic by Wabbit.

13 favelists gave 58 kude to 31 of 52 flats for an average of 1.1, 4 kude to 2 of 4 forms for an average of 1, 2 kude to 2 of 7 crypts for an average of 0.3, and 22 kude to 4 of 10 extras for an average of 2.2. 9 bangs were given to 4 flats and 2 extras.

There was a tie for top flat. #19 (4 kude, 1 bang) was Newrow/Rae Bamberger's phonigmatic picture rebus on 'two can play next'. This one stumped me. I never correctly identified the bird, though I have 'no jet bird? plane? eagle? hawk?' in notes next to it. At least 'plane' was right. #35 (4 kude, 1 bang) was Newrow/Canew's phonigmatic picture rebus on 'gray towels on a pile of'. I had 'owl', 'love', and 'on a pie' but not in the right order. #6 (4 kude) was Wrybosh's letter bank on nightmares, Margaret Sanger née Higgins. This also stumped me, but if I had done some research on the history of birth control I might have found the name. The top form was a tie, with 2 kude each, between F2, LeXman's double right star, and F3, Ai's vowelless inverted pyramid. The top crypt was also a tie, the only kude (1 each) going to raw's C3 and LeXman's C6. The top extra with 8 kude and 2 bangs was X3, Wheels's iWork cryptic, where the wordplay-only theme entries were various kinds of tiredness, with a punchline based on the iPhone slogan 'there's an app for that'. X9 got 7 kude and 3 bangs, and was my personal bang for this issue. This was Ucaimhu's 'Games on the 17th' cryptic, where the 17th letter in each 4x4 square was a NATO phonetic alphabet letter appearing along the diagonal. I found this theme more entertaining than the one in X3.

For April there were 19 solution lists representing 41 solvers, an average of 2.2 per list. There were 915 flat solutions for the 56 flats, an average of 48.2 per list and 16.3 per puzzle, for 86.0% of maximum. Forms: $107 / ((19-3) * 7) = 95.5\%$. Crypts: $114 / (19-2) * 7 = 95.8\%$. Extras: $142 / (19-1) * 7 = 78.9\%$. Ralfs: $175 / ((19-10) * 22) = 88.4\%$

Since there were 6 completes, 3 lists short by a single flat, and one list short by only 2 flats, a form, and an extra, the hard flats this month were serious complete-killers. The hardest flat, with 8 solvers, was #46, a welded transposal by Wrybosh on 'shapeliest telepathists'. This is a common Wrybosh design, with present but difficult cluing in a short verse. Runners-up with 9 solvers each were #21, a third-letter change on Biden, bizen by Joker, and #38, a word deletion on sorceries, orc, series by Andreas. There were twelve flats tied for easiest, solved on all 19 lists, and one of those lists only had these 12 flat solutions. Another 12 were solved on all the other lists. A big easy-list month.

The forms were mostly of equal difficulty, all solved by 15 or 16 solvers. The two easier ones were F4 and F6. The crypts were likewise, all solved by 16 or 17, with C1 and C2 easier. Four extras, X1, X2, X5, and X10 were tied for hardest with 13 solvers; X8, an anaquip by R/EDS, was easiest with 17 solvers. The hardest Ralf, solved by only 2, was R16, an enigmatic rebus on 'loathsome' by 'R, WA' (presumably raw), in which an n in the rubric was interpreted to be part ('some') of an h.

[/dev's comment on R16 reminds me that the Ralf pseudonyms were apparently not explained this year (or last). Most are simple transposals but a few aren't. So, for the record: R1 = Ucaomihu, R2 = LeXman, R3 = Ucaomihu, R4 = s, R6 = Wabbit, R8 = ?, R9 = YoMama, R10 = s/LeXman?, R12 = Lirath, R14 = me (letter bank of 'Philip Cohen?'), R16 = raw, R17 = ?, R18 = YoMama, R19 = LeXman, R21 = Marcus Asparagus?]

13 favelists gave 51 kude to 27 of 56 flats for an average of 0.9, 17 kude to 6 of 7 forms for an average of 2.4, 3 kude to 2 of 7 crypts for an average of 0.4, 11 kude to 3 of 10 extras for an average of 1.1, and 19 kude to 14 of 22 ralfs for an average of 0.9. 9 bangs were given to three flats, a form, an extra, and a Ralf.

The top flat, with 6 kude and a bang, was #44, a freewheeling transposal by Mr. Machine Tool/Next Lingo, on the surprisingly apt base bad credit, debit card. There were two runners-up. #11, with 5 kude, was an enigmatic rebus by Wrybosh on 'Miss Universe Pageant' which included in its rubric all of the following: a replacement in the flat type, a single letter in the usual rubric position, the verse, the page it was written on, and, upon turning the page, the word 'insect' at the top of the next page. #19, with 5 kude and 2 bangs, a freewheeling letter bank by Wrybosh on 'bar knew flight' and the flat type, in which he

goes for a joyride in a plane with a drunk girl he met in a bar. The top forms were F2, with 5 kude, a rectangle by Aleph with stalactite and stalagmite (the latter being entered upward), and F7, with 4 kude and a bang (mine), a trapezoid by Aleph in which all the letters spell 'boustrophedonic' written, as the word indicates, in alternating directions. These are two great examples of the April playfulness that escapes from the Ralf section into the main part of the issue. The top crypt with 2 kude was Next Lingo's C6. The top extra was X10, LeXman's 'Where You Least Expect It' cryptic with the gimmick that the definition appears in the middle of the wordplay in each clue instead of at one end or the other. There were several Ralves tied with 2 kude, but both of those who kudized R17 made it their bang. This was a 'Ralfagram' by 'Mint Jello NV' whose solution describes its uniqueness: 'Solve as anagram or cryptogram, either one.'

For May there were 20 solution lists representing 42 solvers, an average of 2.1 per list. There were 1001 flat solutions for the 57 flats, an average of 50.1 per list and 17.6 per puzzle, or 87.8% of maximum. Forms: $64 / ((20-3) * 4) = 94.1\%$. Crypts: $123 / ((20-2) * 7) = 97.6\%$. Extras: $146 / ((20-1) * 9) = 85.4\%$.

The hardest flat, with 12 solvers, was #16, Wrybosh's reversed terminal letter change on animes, resuming. I was on the right track but never found the correct words, with enmities, dislikes, and restored written in my notes. Four runners-up had 14 solvers each: #5, Wrybosh's welded transposal on Twelfth Night, left-wing; #24, Joker's homonym on gleyde, glide (I had glide as an option but didn't know the other word); #26, R/EDS's word deletion on banlieue, lieu, bane; and #27, Wrybosh's rebus on 'Babylonian dismal. Last, Hel'. Seven flats were tied for easiest, solved on all 20 lists: #2, a letter bank by Ucaomihu; #13, a charade by R/EDS; #14, a progressive phonetic deletion by Treesong; #15, a homonym by Next Lingo; #19, a letter bank by Ucaomihu; #44, a spoonergram by Andreas; and #46, a phonetic deletion by Lirath.

The hardest form, solved by 15, was F1, a vowelless square by Ai. The easiest form was F3, a left windmill by Jo the Loiterer that all 17 form solvers got. The crypts were all solved by 17 or 18; the harder ones were C4, C6, and C7. The hardest extra was X1, a knight's tour crypt by Te-Zir-Man. The easiest extra was X5, an anaquote by LeXman.

15 favelists gave 87 kude to 39 of 57 flats for an average of 1.5, 11 kude to all four forms for an average of 2.8, 10 kude to 5 of 7 crypts for an average of 1.4, and 12 kude to 2 of 9 extras for an average of 1.3. Counting a single-item favelist as a bang, there were 9 bangs given to 2 flats, 2 forms, and one extra.

The top flat, with 6 kude, was #41, Ucaomihu's phonetic palindrome on 'May, Southerner, the same'.

I'm not sure if people were voting for this one on the quality of the base or agreeing with the sentiment that our Mays in the North can have quite varied weather. The runner-up with 5 kude and 2 bangs was #52, raw's anagram on Joshua Kosman and Henri Picciotto, commemorating their appointment as cryptic editors for The Nation. The top form with 6 kude and 2 bangs was F4, s's vowelless truncated pyramid in which each of the twenty consonants was used once. The top crypt with 5 kude was C4, Next Lingo's pun on 'cue' as the stick for playing pool and an actor's signal. The top extra was X3, turk/andma-Gray's cryptic commemorating Mother's Day and its creator many years past, Anna M. Jarvis. 11 kude, 3 bangs.

For June there were 22 solution lists representing 47 solvers, an average of 2.1 per list. There were 685 flat solutions for the 34 flats, an average of 31.1 per list and 20.1 per puzzle, for 91.6% of maximum. Forms: $141 / ((22-3) * 8) = 92.8\%$. Crypts: $128 / ((22-2) * 7) = 96.2\%$. Extras: $104 / ((22-1) * 6) = 82.5\%$.

This was a relatively easy issue that led to a large number of completes (12). The hardest flat was #15, Aleph/LeXman's metathesis on potshot, hotspot. I had written 'netcafe' for the non-MW word in this one, then crossed it out when I determined it did not have any metathesis. Certainly on the right track. Runners-up with 17 solvers each were #1, Ucaomihu's enigmatic rebus on 'tor on Sardinia' (for which I had the right idea, writing down 'tor in Sardinia' but no idea about the reading), and #20, Wrybosh's pair of fourth-letter changes on simile/simple and verse/verve (for which I had the second letter change but I missed the first, which was perhaps harder because it changed a vowel to a consonant). The easiest flats, solved on all 22 lists, were #7, Ucaomihu's homonym on Metro station, 'met roast, eh? shun'; #11, Wabbit's spoonergram on jack-of-all-trades, track of all jades; #22, Joker's freewheeling transposal on Iolanthe, in a hotel; #24, Aerie's freewheeling sixth-sound change on San Diego and sandy Eggo; and #27, Andreas's spoonergram on prying fan, frying pan.

The hardest form was F2, Ai's vowelless left windmill, with 16 solvers. The easiest was a tie between all of F3 through F8 with 18 solvers each. The hardest crypt was C7 by Loki-5, with 17 solvers, which has Samson posing a riddle (what, not the Sphinx?). The easiest was a tie between C1, C2, and C4. The hardest extras, with 16 solvers each, were X4, a vertical anaquote by R/EDS, and X6, a shuffled verse by Vroo. The easiest, with 19 solvers, was X1, Tortoise's cryptic rose garden.

15 favelists gave 46 kude to 22 of 34 flats for an average of 1.4, 12 kude to 7 of 8 forms for an average of 1.5, 8 kude to 6 of 7 crypts for an average of 1.1, and 16 kude to 3 of 6 extras, for an average of 2.7. 11 bangs were given to one flat and one extra.

There was a two-way tie for top flat, with 6 kude each: #1, Ucaomihu's enigmatic rebus, which was also a runner-up for hardest; and #30, Hot's picture letter bank on comedians and second-in-command. The top form was a tie with 2 kude each between F1, F3, F4, F5, and F7. The top crypts, with 2 kude each, were C3 by Next Lingo and C4 by Wabbit. And the top extra and overwhelming favorite of this issue, with 14 kude and 10 bangs, was X1, Tortoise's cryptic rose garden, a tribute to Rose Ingols.

And now we're back to the present, or as current as Kudos Kount can be due to the time allowed for solving and scoring solutions. For September there were 25 solution lists representing 55 solvers, an average of 2.2 per list. I am glad to see the number of solvers coming back up. There were also more flats in this issue than in the recent past, 79 in all. There were 1687 flat solutions, an average of 67.5 per list and 21.4 per flat, or 85.4% of maximum. Forms: $123 / ((25-2) * 6) = 89.1\%$. Crypts: $146 / ((25-2) * 7) = 90.7\%$. Extras: $271 / ((25-2) * 8) = 84.1\%$.

And in familiar style, the hardest flat, with 11 solvers, was #66, a very terse welded transposal by Wrybosh on 'iamb ineliminable'. Many of Wrybosh's terse verses have adequate cluing but this one is pushing it. Sure, it's iambic (and the short lines do make this stand out) but it doesn't really clue 'ineliminable', though the statement is true. In this case, the base forced Wrybosh to write even terser than his norm, but it also provided little in the way of cluing this long word. I suspect many of the 11 solvers guessed iamb and applied word list searches to come up with the longer word. I had written 'line' for the short word and then was stuck. Bisyllabic? Too short. Monometrical? Right length, but a few letters off from making a welded transposal. The runner-up with 13 solvers was #41, Ucaomihu's enigmatic rebus on 'lye) art urned, live slayers'. I got 'live slayers' quickly but did not devote enough time to get the whole solution. Every word is clued, but clearly a number of other solvers didn't manage to puzzle the whole thing out. There was a tie between eleven flats for easiest, solved on all 25 lists.

The hardest form, by far, with 15 solvers, was F4, the hybrid left windmill by Newrow, a tribute to Martin Gardner. The 'hybrid' bit of this puzzle was that it was half normal and half vowelless, divided at the center square. The easiest forms, with 23 solvers each, were F2, a double square by Newrow, and F3, a cryptic square by Wabbit. The hardest crypt was C6 by Fuldu, with 18 solvers. The easiest, with 23 solvers each, were C1 by Vroo and C2 by Beyond. The hardest extra, with 13 solvers, was X4, the River Boat cryptic by Elfman. I suspect a lot of people had trouble sorting out the endgame of this one. I had taken each of the first two rows or cards as one player's hand, while actually it was intended that the

cards appeared in the grid in the order they are dealt, one to each player, then another to each player. As a result, I had the wrong winning hand (queens over tens, not queens over aces) and had no idea how to get a nom out of it. I ultimately named Elfman the winner, as the 'boat' (as a full house is sometimes slangily referred to in poker) was achieved on the 'river' (the last community card revealed), and the title said the river boat was by Elfman. The easiest extras, with 22 solvers each, were X1, a mosaic quip by raw, and X7, an anaquote by Lirath.

18 favelists gave 134 kude to 54 of 79 flats for an average of 1.7, 11 kude to 5 of 6 forms for an average of 1.8, 5 kude to 4 of 7 crypts for an average of 0.7, and 23 kude to 3 of 14 extras for an average of 1.6. Counting a single-item favelist as a bang, 14 bangs were given to six flats and two extras.

The top flat, with 9 kude and a bang, was #69, a phonetic change of heart by Jangler. This was my bang, for its awesome base, which fit in the thematic con location Austin, Texas with Seychelles, ostentatious, and 'sex sells'. Runner-up, with 8 kude and 3 bangs, was #5, a stealth suber (masquerading as a rebus) by Wrybosh, on 'you Erse, Dart'. With only 17 solvers, this was a distant runner-up in the hard category, probably because of its stealthiness; I had both Dart and Erse quickly from the cluing. Third place with 7 kude and a bang was #55, a short (but easy) welded transposal by Newrow on 'Ronald Reagan or Gerald'. This was on my favelist due to the base, which, despite including a partial name, flows smoothly into the short verse. The top form was F5, a large right star by LeXman, with 4 kude. The top crypt was C7 by raw, with 2 kude. And the top extra with 12 kude and 2 bangs was X3, the Lone Star cryptic by Elfman, with 12 kude and 2 bangs, though his River Boat X4 was a close runner up: 10 kude and 4 bangs.

CYBERBABBLE:

25 Sep 2002 note from Eternal, subject 'Dream Team': Tiger Woods and Jeremy Irons in a celebrity golf tournament.

ALT.ANAGRAMS:

These are anagrams from the alt.anagrams newsgroup, 13 Oct to 10 Nov 2004. @ = antigram, @@ = ambigram, ~ = not apposite but fit together well, T = topical at the time, ♥ = try this if you just want to do a few. Composer abbs. from 22.3.4a. Answers next month. MK is on a roll here.

♥Did upset (MK).

@♥Cut herbs (MK).

TThis caped hero is revered (MK) (*11 *5 2 4).

♥Hello! Ride a train! (MK) (3 8 4).

I captured lust (MK) (5 8).

@Trees' limbs (MK).

A stout tenor chap, airing live (MT) (3 6 *7 *9).

Strategy unspecified. (Not oil?) (MT) (*6 *6 *7 6).

@@♥Gee, babe. After you. (CS) (3 6 6).

O, principal tractor dealer! (MT) (^11 ^12).

♥Expect online terrors from it (MK) (*9 ^8 ^8).

Negative man-made script (RR) (8 13).

Opt now, you'd win profit (MT) (6 2 11).

♥Cease, I'm portly! (MK) (5 8).

♥See, I'm a doll! (MK).

♥Theistical corps (MK) (*8 6).

Oh, fine! Babe Ruth cost me (RR;DB) (3 ^5 2 3 ^7).

♥How Coppola eyes Vietnam (MK) (3 5 ^10 ^3).

Aimless daze is here (RM), realize head is mess (MT) (*9 1 7).

I hear Doc list my... (MK) (7 7).

♥I type maladies into charts (MK) (1 7 1 7 7). [Seems familiar, somehow.]

♥I am deflecting (MK), it made Fe cling (MT) (8 5).

Point? Age range (RR) (10 3).

Rush up to it (MK) (3 7).

Patient got heart here (MK) (3 9 7).

'Aliens abduct me' rant (MK) (1 6 11).

Wow, gas reeks! (MK) (6 5).

Worth a look, but too British, contrived, inapt, unfamiliar, unspecific, or otherwise unsuitable for solving:

Lard-laden hens, also corn = Colonel Harland Sanders (MT). @@Popeye's Chicken and Biscuits ~ bypassed cuisine checkpoint (David Monk). Inspector Morse ~ monitors creeps (MT). D'oh! For I see I'll return via TWA! = the World's Favourite Airline (CS fix of MT) [British Airlines slogan]. VW's trendier ad = 'Drivers wanted' (MT) [Volkswagen slogan]. @@Rather uninteresting = the singer Tina Turner (DB). @@TI am not scared, ~ a Democrat's in (RR/MT). @@TPain's incurable ~ a Republican's in (Lon Chaney). Not a nice trade. Endless barking (csa-enemy), breed nice land's angora kittens (MT) = boarding kennels and catteries. I may get instant legover! = 'Let's Get It On' - Marvin Gaye (DB). I implant nice teeth at record cost (DB) = The cosmetic dental practitioner. The cosmetic dental practitioner ~ claims, 'I'd correct teeth on patient.'; Doctor claim: 'Nicer patients' teeth.' (RR). Amtrak ≠ a K-Mart (MK). (Reminiscent of MT anagramming a car company into a gravy slogan familiar to Brits: Toyota ≠ Ah! Bisto!) A pandemic ~ made panic (MK). Manchester football team? Gulp! Zero chance! War, maybe! = Malcolm Glazer, the owner of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (DB) [amusing reaction to a baseball team owner trying to buy a UK soccer team]. The Mad Hatter's question to Alice: 'Why is a raven like a writing-desk?' ~ Ah, I got it! I created an answer: 'It seems the two have inky-dark quills!' (MK). Teflon pots ~ lost no PTFE (MT). See doubted chief kept in White House...great letters for anagrams! = George Walker Bush, the President of the United States of America (DB). @A cold violent union = Unconditional love (csa-enemy). Gee, that's odd - a scan

finds no 'milk' here ≠ the ingredients of a McDonald's shake (MK). @@Hath large rodents, no? = Sheraton Grand Hotel (MT) [he's anagramming the Edinburgh one]. Many hurt, fail. = human frailty (MK). Aping one = an epigon (MK). 'It's OK to rape children.' = Polanski, the director (MK). Nation's modern flight = the first moon landing (MK). Wants ya celibate, right? = Wearing a chastity belt (RR). @Ah, depressing news brought woe: President George W. Bush has won (MK). @The post-coital conversation ~ is not a chatter on love topics (HPR).

Also worth a look is <https://groups.google.com/forum/?hl=en#!topic/alt.anagrams/mWTA8SuFdk0>, in which MK anagrams Shakespeare's sonnet 76 into a paraphrase that also acrostically shows (twice!) that it was written by Bacon. Look for 'The Shakespeare-Bacon theory' in Google Groups if the link doesn't work.

TALES FROM THE NPL CHAT ROOM:

There was a huge 23 Sep 2002 chat, but nothing I feel like quoting eleven years later.

On 25 Sep there was a high percentage of Canadians, so I asked a riddle: Who was the architect of Green Gables?

Around this time Artistry was trying to get permission to use photographs from everyone who had ever been any NPL-related event in their life. On the 30th:

Artistry: jangler checked 'i don't show up on film'

Loki-5: I once declined to have a driver's license photo taken 'for religious reasons'. My DL said 'Valid Without Photo' where the photo was supposed to be. It had my birthdate on it, which made it fairly useless to would-be underage drinkers.

Jangler: Was this on a lark, or do you actually have religious reasons not to have your photo taken?

Loki-5: The DL renewal came with a form you were to fill out if you were out of state and thus couldn't get to where they took the photos. I crossed out 'out of state', wrote in 'for religious reasons', and added 'I believe the camera captures one's spirit.' PA now requires an affidavit from clergy to get away with this. Loki-5: It was a lot of fun using it to get into military bases and such. A few security people said they'd never seen anything like that.

...

Fuldu [profile]: Found backswitch (4) on Walgreen's sign 'Free ONE for TWO'

Jangler: Not Free Beer for Free, certainly?!? [no, that's a switchback.]

Treesong: autumn/mutual is a backswitch.

Treesong: Free dike for kids. Only Dutch kids, though.

Jangler: OK. Free Bird for Ribs.

Treesong: Free dope for pods. Free love for volt. Free hand for nahh.

Fuldu: The actual second line of the sign wasn't

particularly cluey, but pretend it said this...

Fuldu: 'Unlimited rolls for \$175!!!'

Jangler: Free XXLCR for CLXXV!

Loki-5: Walgreen's is a drug store, no? Balm for labs? Pill for lips? Dose for sods?

Fuldu: Think other stuff they sell at drug stores

Gabby [profile]: I invented that!

Gabby: (Subject line is the name of a fun Jeopardy category where what 'I invented' is not quite the real thing: two examples were the cotton rum and the Geiger clucker. :)

Gabby: The answers were either the real thing or the inventor of the real thing.

Loki-5: I invented a cocktail, Sherman's March to the Sea. Southern Comfort and clam juice.

[And of course you set it on fire before serving.]

...

Treesong: Apropos of boots, I see that the eight of us in the room include Gabby, mazy, and Ziggy. But no Gummy or Zeppy. The rest of us (Treesong, Artistry, Kray, En, Kite) do not seem to admit of a second thematic subgroup.

30 Sep also had a lively chat but nothing much of 2014 interest. Mazy's lost cat came home hungry, clawed her leg, and ate her, but she came out of it OK so ho hum.

Later, 2 Oct occurred:

Treesong: In at 1939 and there's Kea! Have you ever been here before?

Kea: Uh-huh, on 1 occasion only

Treesong: This may be an odd day to be around, as we may be testing another chatroom.

Kea: I'm just finishing up a cryptic for Hot and Trazom to put in NovNig

Treesong: Excellent.

Kea: I saw Gabby's mail about that chatroom ... might try it.

Treesong: I'm trying to get in. No luck so far.

Kea: Probably I won't stay up too long anyway - it's past midnight now, and I gotta go to work as usual tomorrow.

Kea: (If you didn't spot it so far, I'm practising using a linguistic constraint.)

Gabby: ...AFK for supper and Wheel of Jeopardy.

Kea: AFK? What's that? Away From Komputr?

Gabby: Away from K-board, actually.

Kea: Ah. No cigar for this guy.

Gabby: How long do you think you and I can do this without anybody noticing?

Gabby: (I doubt I can do it right for too long, but I'll try. :)

Kea: Moi aussi :-)

CLIPPINGS:

Editing finished 1 Feb 2014. Praise **HERBIE!**