

A Competitive Bunch

by Ucaoinhu

It's ACPT time again, and a new bunch of competitors have shown up around here. When the grid is complete, three of its rows will show key stops on the last leg of their journey; the rows in between will correspond to other stops. Also:

(1) Most Down clues have one wrong letter, which you must correct before solving. The wrong letters, in clue order, will give a (non-cryptic) clue for the mode of transport; the correct letters, in *reverse* order, will say what's at the final stop.

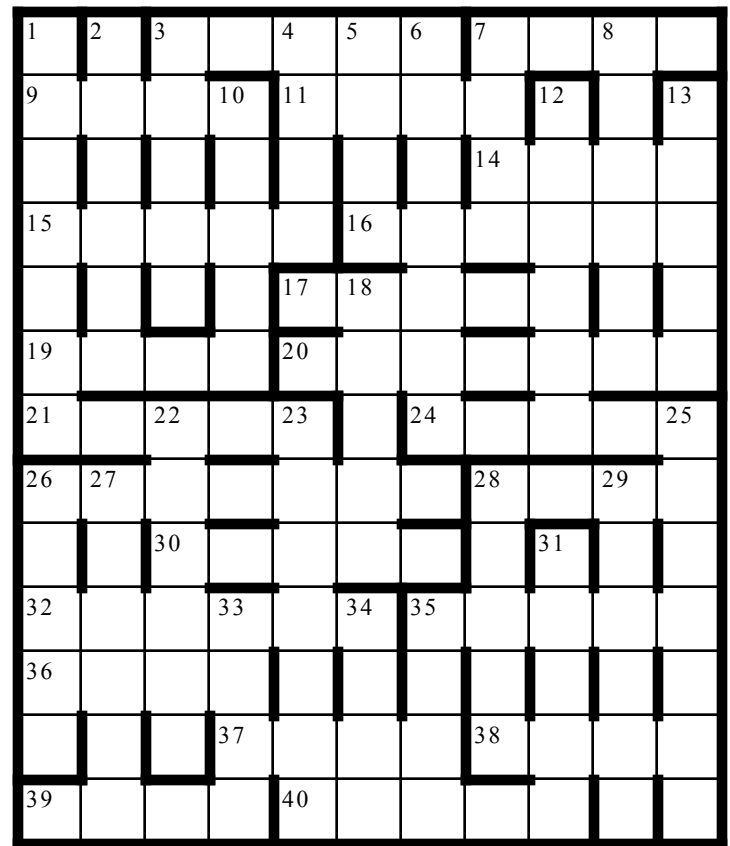
(2) Half of the Across clues have an extra word, which you must remove before solving. These words can be taken one or two at a time, in clue order, to form a list of non-cryptic "bonus" clues whose answers *almost* match the Down entries not involved in (1), in clue order; there will be one letter different in each case. Change these Down entries in the grid to the bonus clue answers to see who this bunch might have met near the first stop, and precisely where (briefly stated).

(3) Each of the remaining Across clues (one at each "stop") has one word that is missing a bigram (two-letter sequence), which you must restore before solving; the bigram will be the same in all cases. The phrases from (1) describe this bigram and what I did to delete it, respectively. Match these Across clues with those from (2), both in clue order, and where the *n*th word of a clue is missing the bigram, take the first letter in the *n*th word of the matching (2) clue; read from the first key stop to the intermediate one, then from there to the final key stop, these letters will identify the bunch.

(4) Finally, a few Down answers (some from clues used in (1), some not) must have an extra letter added before they are entered in the grid. Circle these letters in the grid, and "connect the dots" in clue order; the resulting figure and what its letters spell will say more specifically what mode of transport was used for the last leg of the journey. Moreover, the figure can also be applied (in a way you must determine) to the Down clues not used in (1) to see how the *previous* leg of the journey might have been accomplished.

ACROSS

3. Outfit biaseth East Belgian who is alongside Penny (5)
7. Locate flower quote received via radio (4)
9. Outspoken writer and partner of Teller part (4)
11. Left sting marks on the skin immediately (4)
14. Name from Lennon's "Bald" is remarkably ooky (4)
15. Getting hot, like a goon Les finally makes less dull (5)
16. Duck planting one tree for an orator (6)
17. Fattened and ate figures from Renaissance art placed next to pair of Titians (5)
19. Parisian very arduously travels, not keeping kosher instruments (4)
20. Chic beauties, thirdly, seem unlikely to Rex (7)
21. Joel's forerunner displays stockings at end of novel (5)
24. Fix up earth goddess guys damaged, at last (5)
26. Ring and pit reshaped to adorn Mike best (7)
28. Nineteen scolders yelled while imitating Elmer Fudd II in Scotland (4)
30. Similar to burp depicted in rare Hugo novel (5)
32. Test bits from California girl who again alludes to the



- first name of Don Quixote (6)
35. Shelters crime nuts Norman thanks (5)
36. The casing east of 1,001,320 rods (4)
37. Con misread tin, omitting the L (4)
38. Etch uncentered hole in actor Rock (4)
39. Tolerate Matthew Paddington, say (4)
40. My ladies stuck furze inside a game club (5)

DOWN

1. Sendeth out the pews, mistakenly
2. Abjure, gutlessly, the red, luminiferous substance once thought to permeate all of space
3. A stopper or top removed from an automobile part
4. Stratagems with no real applications
5. That thing is a suffix used in names of inflammations
6. Support foe mixing paints with taste, reportedly
7. Pigen initially experienced a bit of lye damage
8. Ganja users stroke bats
10. Misguided one's negative remarks
12. Heifer who was seeing Zeus eat element 53
13. To the audience, Japanese drama's something snooty
18. Let Salk upset half-gamy wildebeest
22. Move cot very rapidly in back of this monster
23. Pondering Greek character with bolt, perhaps
25. One who digs up Rex, criticizer of Pius, around 5:50
26. The president's boa-sporting aunt's sin
27. Mat festival's symbol has sex appeal without crudity
28. Dr. Huxtable's led Charlie's former TV show (2 wds.)
29. A rake north of an inlet or nook
31. Marshal Earp's pore is touched by a light beam
33. Seconds from deadline, Jack paints a corny item
34. Knowing about Lone Ranger's companion losing herd
35. Sounded like a toy's messages