

Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Life's a Parade!

AILEEN MARSHALL

Have you ever watched the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and wondered who all those people under the giant balloons were? I had the privilege to find out for myself in 2002. A Macy's employee I knew invited me to join the balloon vehicle team. It has been a real thrill these past twelve years to be part of such a classic American event.

For those of you not familiar with the parade, it has been a tradition in New York for years. The parade started in 1924, organized by a group of Macy's employees. The 1927 parade featured the first giant helium character balloons. Until 1998 about two dozen balloon handlers managed the ropes attached to the balloon. That year two Toro Workman vehicles were added to each balloon to add stability. Attending the parade has been part of a Thanksgiving routine for many families in the metropolitan area.

To take part in the parade, one must be a Macy's employee or sponsored by one, as I am. The first year I had to attend a class at Macy's with very detailed information on how the balloons fly. I also had to attend two practices. Finally I had to help at the press event a few weeks before the parade. In subsequent years it is still required to attend at least one practice.

In the class I learned about how a balloon is created, and things such as properties of helium, drag, blow down angles, and free lift. I was impressed by how much flying these balloons involve principles from sailing and aviation.

During the practices, early on a Saturday morning in an empty Meadowlands parking lot, I learned to interpret the pilot's hand signals. The pilot walks backwards in front of each balloon, issues commands to direct the flight of the balloon, and makes sure it stays within the "safety zone", the area between the curbs. I learned about emergency landing and about deflation procedures. Since I had my position is vehicle manager, I had to learn about the Toro Workmans. The front vehicle acts as an anchor and is attached to the "super patch" at the center of the balloon with a rope, somewhat like an umbilical cord. This line is used to determine the flying height of the balloon. The rear vehicle acts as a guide, like a rudder on a boat. My job as a vehicle manager is to maintain radio communications between the pilot and my vehicle team. I also watch out for potential obstacles along the way, and track the position of the tether line attached to that vehicle.

Each year Macy's introduces the new balloons to the media in early November at a press event. The identities of the new balloons are a closely guarded secret until then. (There are six this year!) NBC, which covers the parade, and other networks are there. It is always a little exciting to watch the news that evening and look for glimpses of yourself and your friends there.

Specific assignments are mailed out in early November. I report to the New Yorker Hotel at 6:00 a.m. parade morning and stand

in a very long line in the cold to get my coveralls and radio. It is rather surreal to see 34th Street at dawn filled with people dressed as clowns or cartoon characters. Buses take us to the staging area near the beginning of the parade route. Then I find my balloon and report to the pilot. After getting our instructions and radio check, we try to keep warm while waiting for our cue to launch. I find that my adrenaline pumping in anticipation of the job I have to do and the thrill of being in the parade helps to keep me warm.

While on the parade route, I do need to focus on my task. Yet, it is such a kick to hear the crowds cheer as your balloon approaches, even to hear them ooh as a gust of wind blows the balloon to one side. It is satisfying to see the children look at us with such awe, knowing I was once one of them. Glimpsing friends and family who come to watch is encouraging. These are the rewards for all the practices and getting up so early in the morning. This will be my twelfth year and I still get a buzz out of being on the balloon team.

The parade starts at 9:00 a.m. Thanksgiving morning at 77th Street and Central Park West. It proceeds down Central Park West to 59th Street, and then turns onto 6th Avenue to 34th Street in front of Macy's. It is broadcast on NBC from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon. For one of the best New York experiences, come and watch the parade!



Woody Woodpecker surveys the scene. Photo credit: dbking, flickr.com

Twenty-four visits to Stockholm: a concise history of the Rockefeller Nobel Prizes

Part III: Herbert Gasser, 1944 Prize in Physiology or Medicine

JOSEPH LUNA

It started with a twitch. Sometime around 1770 in Bologna, Luigi Galvani charged his Leiden jar, an early capacitor, with static electricity using a hand cranked friction machine. He then took a wire connected to the jar and touched it to the exposed spinal cord of a dissected frog. We don't fully know the original purpose of the experiment, but we remember Galvani's name for what happened next. The dead frog's legs moved.

That first demonstration of life's animation as the product of a then mysterious electrical force became a founding moment of neuroscience. Over the next hundred years, studies of bioelectricity would reveal that the physics of moving electrons applied to everything with a nervous system and could be measured with a device named for Luigi, the galvanometer. By the late 1800's, nerves had been thoroughly described anatomically, and budding neurophysiologists were able to measure voltages and describe the impulses carried across scores of them. But there was a problem. While the galvanometer could measure impulses across collections of nerves, it wasn't sensitive enough to make measurements from single nerve cells, nor was there a device fast enough to record them.



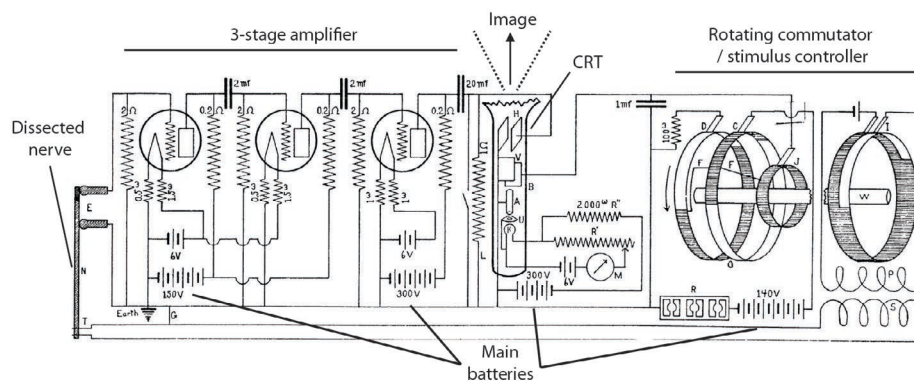
Herbert Gasser

Credit: Wellcome Library, London.

The chance overlapping of two scientific meetings in Chicago in 1920 helped change that. Attending the American Physiological Society meeting was Herbert Gasser, recently appointed to the faculty at Washington University in St. Louis by his mentor Joseph Erlanger. Gasser and an old medical school classmate, Sidney New-

switches and needing a stack of dry cell batteries to operate, filled a room and took hours to set up properly each day, but it worked. In 1922, this time with a proper Western Electric tube, Gasser, Erlanger and George Bishop faithfully recorded the impulses of single cells in the frog sciatic nerve. This particular bit of frog wire was

what Galvani had triggered to make frog's legs jerk, and had become a favorite of neurophysiologists for its large size and stability at room temperature. It was composed, however, not of a single nerve cell but a collection of nerve cells of various diameters. Gasser, Erlanger, and Bishop showed for the first time that size mattered: far



Annotated schematic for a cathode ray oscilloscope, adapted by the author, from: *Am. J of Physiol.* (1922) 62:496-524.

comer had recently built an amplifier to boost the signal from galvanometer measurements of the canine phrenic nerve, though they couldn't get fast enough recordings and much remained to improve. Gasser learned from a colleague that the Physical Society's meeting across town featured a speaker from the Western Electric Company, describing a new heated cathode ray tube (CRT). Aware of its potential, Gasser slipped out of the APA meeting and heard the company's presentation to physicists. He left convinced that he had found the right tool.

Western Electric tubes were then commercially unavailable, but Gasser and Erlanger were undeterred, and started building one using an Erlenmeyer flask coated in fluorescent paint. Coupling their homemade CRT to their amplifier, and designing the control circuit to govern the sweep of the electron beam to form an image on the bottom of the flask, Gasser and Erlanger succeeded in creating the first practical cathode ray oscilloscope for electrophysiological measurements (see image below).

The device they created, with over 57

from every nerve propagating its impulse at the same speed, larger cells had faster conduction velocities than smaller cells. This unexpected observation helped explain the complex waveforms of measurements across many nerves at once, and Gasser correctly deduced that these complex waveforms could be mathematically recreated if one knew the number and size of the nerve cells contributing to it. In a sense, many of the basic conclusions reached by Gasser on the nature of the nerve impulse had been predicted or partially confirmed previously, particularly by colleagues in Britain, Charles Scott Sherrington and Edgar Douglas Adrian foremost. Still, the instantaneousness and sensitivity of the cathode ray oscilloscope was indeed a breakthrough, and before long it became a rite of passage for electrophysiologists to construct their own oscilloscopes before starting experiments.

In 1935, Gasser undertook a new challenge, succeeding Simon Flexner as the second director of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. This would mark the beginning of a long legacy of

neurophysiology at Rockefeller, one that continues to this day (and one to which we will return frequently in this series). And it was an auspicious start: in 1944, no doubt interrupting a meeting in the suc-

cession of daily meetings and not experiments that constitute the core responsibilities of an institute head, Gasser learned that he and Erlanger had won the Nobel prize in physiology or medicine. For an

MD turned engineer turned neurophysiologist turned institutional leader, it was a culmination that took Gasser by surprise. He was and is the only Rockefeller president to win while in office.

Culture Corner

Concert Review: Steve Winwood and Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers at Madison Square Garden, Sept. 10, 2014

BERNIE LANGS

Suffice it to say I expect a lot from music, including filling the need for a communal experience of substance now that I've shed the tedium of liturgical gatherings of the established religions. Not only do I desire that a concert experience will bind me to those in the audience in having shared in something unique and special, but that the music itself will bring me to an individual experience of gain—gain in philosophical ideas or a flow within the soulful river of pure being and an experience on a higher plane of existence. Or I can also tap my toe and dance! But in the case of popular music, there have been so many disappointments in recent



Steve Winwood. Photo credit: Rock Cousteau

years that I usually shun the genre of live performances.

Given this somber introduction and my tentativeness in seeing rock music live, I made a spur-of-the-moment decision to take up my good friend Curtis's offer to join him at Madison Square Garden to see the great British musician/composer Steve Winwood and the all-American, long-lasting band, Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. I met Curtis years ago in college where we'd often do musical jams in the evenings, experimenting in that time of youth with long solos and emotional musical communions. A couple of years ago, we rejoined forces to

write some new songs, one being an "homage" to the late Beatle, George Harrison.

The concert at the Garden was scheduled to begin at 7:30 p.m. Since no one in New York shows up to a concert on time, the venue must have been about one tenth full when Steve Winwood took the stage at 7:31 p.m. Ah, those punctual Brits.

So began the magic. Winwood broke out as a boy wonder in his early teens as a performer in the 1960s with his smooth, silky, high register voice and his ability not only to navigate the organ and piano with unique, tasteful playing, but to do the same with the electric guitar. Winwood was part of the esoteric group Traffic and also a member of the short-lived super group Blind Faith, featuring bandmates Eric Clapton on guitar and drummer Ginger Baker, both who had just split from the mighty band, Cream. If you listen to their one studio album, you can hear Steve Winwood trading complex guitar riffs and holding his own with the brilliant virtuoso Clapton, who many still were calling by the nickname "God" at the time. Throughout the evening at the Garden, Winwood's voice was as strong as it has ever been throughout his career. It almost defied reason, age, and nature. He never strained and there were no moments of cracked notes, but smooth, steady, soothing and pleasantly reassuring that for the night we could pretend that nothing had changed since the sixties and those early days of excitement and the belief in limitless possibilities for change in the world for the better.

For years, I've owned a recording of a live version of Eric Clapton in his solo years doing an acous-

tic version of the Blind Faith song "Can't Find My Home." When Steve Winwood and began that song, I recalled he'd sung the album's original version and, as the sorrowful lament progressed, I became emotionally transfixed. It was a simple yet extraordinarily beautiful rendition of the tune. The more Winwood played (and the more the Garden's seats filled up), the more involved the audience became, and by the time he announced that he'd be playing some songs that had put the band Traffic on the charts, he had us in the palm of his hands. "Empty Pages" bounced along majestically, but when the opening notes of the famously long meditative song "Low Sparks of High Heeled Boys" began, I'm sure everyone knew we were in for something special. It is said the radio disc jockeys would put "Low Spark" on the air if they wanted to take a break. When they would place that record on the turntable, I'd tune up my guitar, and given its long running time, would give myself a good practice period to try out new riffs. At the Garden, Winwood's "Low Spark" keyboard solo began to build and build, and suddenly the sound of his organ filled the arena and the guitarist's sailing notes were solidly placed within the keyboard's sound, as if surrounded and enveloped within it. The emotion and excitement rose and rose to an incredible



Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. Photo credit: Mary Ellen Matthews

and surprising crescendo. One really has to wonder not only how the musicians, but also the technicians working the soundboard, crafted that unbelievable soaring moment.

After playing a few more hits, such as the soulful “Dear Mr. Fantasy,” Windwood was done and the crowd gave him a great ovation. I effused to my friend Curtis about how unbelievable it was and we wondered how Tom Petty and his band could possibly match such a high bar set by Winwood and his troupe.

Tom Petty delivered. The infamous Heartbreakers are the perfect backing band for Petty’s songs, ideas, and lyrical musings. Their vocal harmonies were impressively strong and sent many songs to flights of excellence that if done by lesser talents would have been mediocre. Most famously, Tom Petty’s lead guitarist is the wonder Mike Campbell, who can alternate between quiet moments of tasteful leads to loud and strong

flares of quick-noted bursts of energy. Campbell was brilliant on two Petty songs, the odd and haunting “Mary Jane’s Last Dance” and the upbeat ode to the meditative solo car journey, “Running Down a Dream.” I was in awe as Campbell drove that song home with his song-ending emotional solo.

Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers is a band made on the layering of clanging guitars. Again and again during their set, we were treated to walls of guitars with overtones and resonations that delighted. It made for a very happy crowd, myself and my friend included. Petty played up to the crowd now and then, waving us on to cheer or forcing us into a ubiquitous sing-a-long. I wondered how I’d react to hearing his biggest hit “Free Fallin’” given that it has been played to death on the radio over the years. But when the band struck those first chords, they rang out like the freedom of the Liberty

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Bell to me. Towards the end of the show, Tom Petty made a brief speech about the healing and uniting powers of Rock and Roll. All of us thought, “Amen to that, brother.”

Thanksgiving’s Traditional Main Course

SUSAN RUSSO

Benjamin Franklin, an American founder, philosopher, diplomat, and bon vivant, famously wrote to his daughter Sarah, “I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen as the Representation of our Country; he is a bird of bad moral Character....The turkey is a much more respectable bird, and withal a true original Native of America....”

Your mother’s or grandmother’s turkey roasting recipe may be the one you always use, but you will find recipes, traditional and nouveau, in abundance on the Web.

Below are some chefs’ suggestions that you might want to consider, whether you select a frozen turkey, a “heritage” or “heirloom” turkey (which might have an earthier flavor), or a kosher bird. For size, allow one to one-and-a-half pounds of turkey per person. If your family or guests are mostly white meat-eaters, you could roast a turkey breast in addition to the whole bird.

Most chefs and cooks recommend strongly that you buy or borrow a meat thermometer to test for doneness (as over-cooked turkey has been likened by one chef to “jerky”).

If you use a frozen bird, defrost it in the refrigerator for two to four days, depending on the size, and take it out of the refrigerator 30 minutes before preparing to roast.

Brining is a common method to render the turkey juicier, but it’s not necessary if you have a kosher bird, which is prepared using salt.

Pat the turkey skin and inside dry, and then rub with generous amounts of butter (or oil). If you are not adding the stuffing, add lemon, salt and pepper (omit this step if the bird is brined or kosher), onions, celery, and herbs to the cavity of the bird, in order to enhance the flavor of the meat and the gravy.

Many food authorities recommend that you not put the stuffing in the turkey, but prepare it in a separate pan.

Another suggestion is to layer carrots, onions and celery in the prepared buttered (or oiled) pan, and put the roast on top, adding more moisture.

Traditional cooks favor basting the bird every half hour or so, but many chefs judge that the opening and closing of the oven results in drying out the meat and not providing the crispiest skin and deepest color.

The turkey is done when the thermometer, inserted into the thickest part of the thigh (avoiding the bone!) reaches 160-165°F.

Loosely “tent” the top of the turkey with aluminum foil for 15-20 minutes before carving. Meanwhile, prepare the gravy, using the strained drippings from the roasting pan.

For more ideas, you could check out *Thanksgiving at Bobby’s* with Chef Bobby Flay on TV’s Food Network on Saturday, November 22 at noon.

The recipe below, from the *American Heritage Cookbook*, is one that I have used for

years to prepare stuffing outside the turkey.

Corn Bread Stuffing

Preheat oven to 450°F (or whatever temperature you are using for the turkey)

1-1/2 cups corn meal
2 cups flour
2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon salt
4 teaspoon baking powder
2 eggs, lightly beaten
2 cups milk
4 teaspoon bacon drippings or butter

Grease two 9-inch square pans. Sift the corn meal, flour, sugar, salt, and baking powder in a bowl, then stir in eggs, milk, and drippings or butter until mixed. Spread in pans and bake for 30 minutes. Cool, then crumble. (Or buy good store-bought corn bread, but make sure that some sugar is used in its preparation, to counter-balance the sausage).

1 pound sausage meat (I use sweet Italian, with the casings removed)
4 medium onions, chopped fine
4 stalks celery, chopped fine
½ teaspoon dried sage
½ teaspoon dried thyme
1 teaspoon salt and dash pepper

Cook the sausage meat over a low heat, breaking into pieces until it is light-

ly browned

Add corn bread and mix. Remove from heat.

Cook onions in bacon drippings (or butter) until limp. Add to sausage/bread mix-

ture, then add celery, herbs, salt and pepper.

Mix well. Bake in oven for the last 30-45 minutes of roasting the turkey. (Moisten with a little chicken broth if the stuffing appears dry after 30 minutes.) Turn off the oven after

the turkey is removed, but keep the stuffing in the oven, lightly covered with aluminum foil, unless you think it could benefit from a little more browning.



This Month Natural Selections interviews Fred Leon, a clerk from The Darst Lab.

New York State of Mind

How long have you been living in the New York area?

I was born, raised and grazed here in New York City.

Where do you currently live?

I currently live in Woodhaven Queens but I grew up in Jamaica, Queens.

Which is your favorite neighborhood?

I have been to all boroughs and I have to say that I would like to move to Bayside in Queens because the neighborhood is clean and quiet. The homes there are very pretty but I don't want to sound like a Queens fan boy.

What do you think is the most overrated thing in the city?

I think that the most overrated thing in the city right now in my opinion would be those stupid Citibikes. I mean really, you have people all over the city riding them and they are ugly and they take up a lot of potential parking spaces (from this driver's perspective). We have cyclists here in the city already that drive erratically and there are rules that they don't abide by, throw in some tourists now with no sense of direction and, boom, a recipe for disaster. Those should be left to the rental store. Don't let me get started on the Halal carts. Also, I would have to say public transportation because most neighborhoods it's pretty hard to get to a bus or train without having to walk a few blocks to find one. It's not like the city where you can hop in cabs, buses and boats in a blink of an eye. If you live outside Manhattan you might want to invest in a car. It takes you everywhere on your own time instead of a schedule like some buses. In my final thought I think we need more lines.

What do you miss most when you are out of town?

The sounds and lights of the city. When I am far away especially on long drives you go through the long roads of the highways with no ambient sounds except the cars passing you by. I love when I am driving I see the city lights with The Empire State building and New World Trade One welcoming me home. The bright lights of the buildings and planes landing on both the same area airports is my beacon home. The sounds of life on the move, even at night, is always something to look forward to.

If you could change one thing about NYC, what would that be?

Our mayor, Ha! That is a topic of a different sort. I would have to say the school system needs help, our kids are in crowded classes and the elimination of arts and music in most schools I feel take away from potential creativity and it may make some, if not most, fall behind because there is no time for individual or concentrated help.



What is your favorite weekend activity in NYC?

Well for me it has to be shopping because many know me as a tech junkie, I have to have the latest or keep up with the times. Except you won't find me on any Apple products—they suck and the sheeple that buy them (just fanning the flames). I also love the park, since a kid my parents always took me to the park to go play and get some fresh air. Nowadays I go just to relax and go out to get some air. I like to go out and eat, even if it's bad Chinese food and end it with a movie.

What is the most memorable experience you have had in NYC?

I can say the most memorable day in NYC for me was the first time I stepped into Yankee Stadium (the old one). I was in awe just to see the vastness of the field and the crowd of people just surrounding me. The atmosphere was electric. I remember going to the field and meeting the players to take pictures and get autographs. Oh yeah, when I got married here on campus, but I should have mentioned that first—well moving along....

If you could live anywhere else, where would that be?

Hmm, I would say in Tokyo Japan. Where else can I hang out in a crazy setting other than New York where the crowd seems like a blast to hang out with, crazy shops where you find the weirdest and yet coolest items. I always have had a fascination with Asian culture.

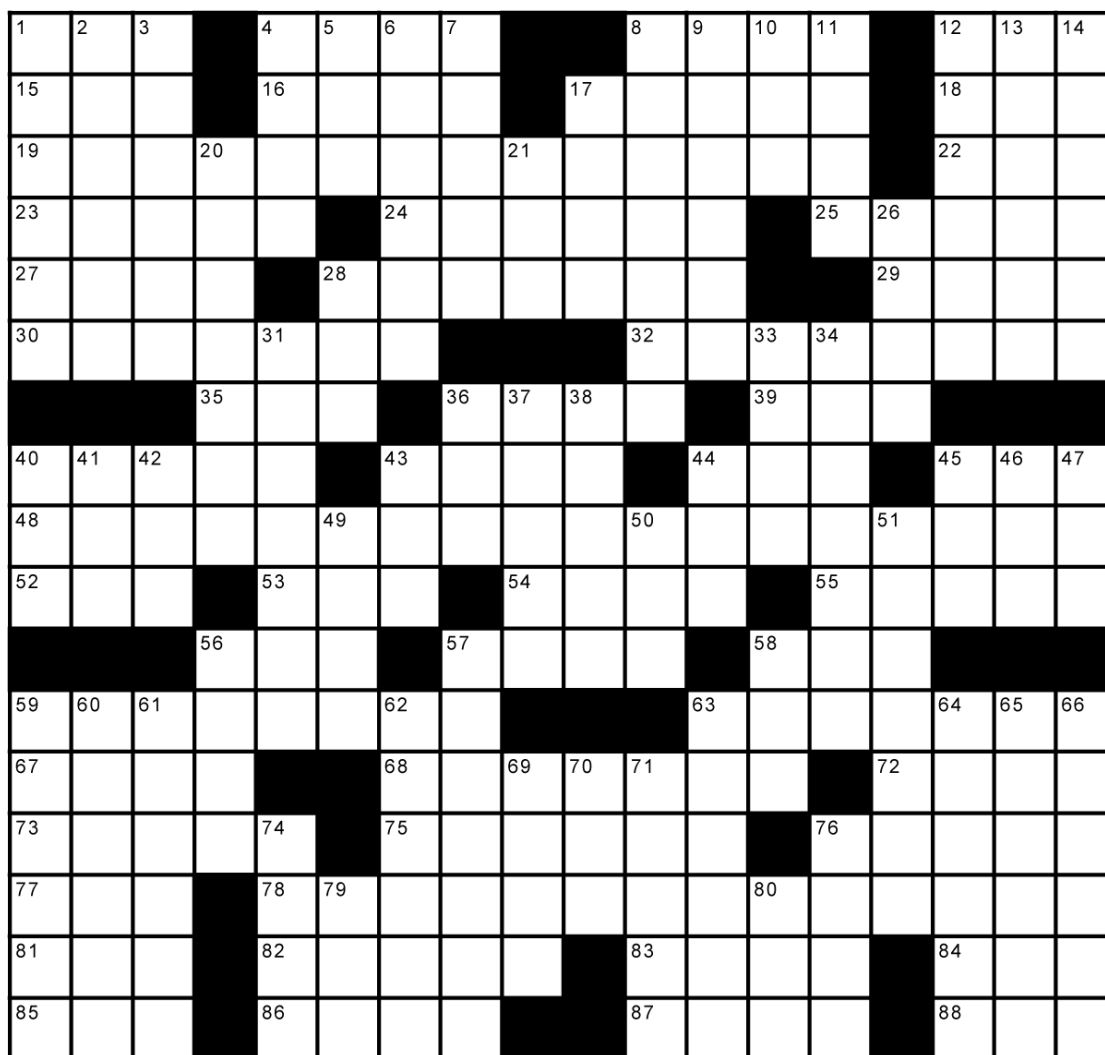
Do you think of yourself as a New Yorker?

Man, I tell you this city has given me a lot to be thankful for. There is no place that can beat these streets—nuff said. I got my attitude from here so heck yeah, I'm a New Yorker. Peace!

Over the Moon

GEORGE BARANY AND ELLEN ROSS

George Barany is a Rockefeller alum (1977) and Ellen Ross is a Chicago-based humorist. This puzzle, which celebrates a recent birth in a well-known American family, may be found specifically at <http://tinyurl.com/moonpuz>, which includes links to on-line solving, the solution, and a “midrash” that explains much about it. More Barany and Friends crosswords are at <http://tinyurl.com/gbpuzzle>



Across

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. 007 had one to kill: Abbr. | 27. Yesterday, in Pisa | 52. Long division? |
| 4. These come before 21-Down (slang about male priorities) | 28. Destination for Shackleton | 53. Football gains: Abbr. |
| 8. Budgetary setbacks | 29. Poetic contraction | 54. Political or religious mentor |
| 12. “Ciao!” | 30. DeWitt or George | 55. Bit of frivolity |
| 15. Ames inst. | 32. White who was with the girl in the red velvet swing | 56. Palindromic exclamation |
| 16. Slave in a love triangle | 35. Dennings who plays one of 2 Broke Girls | 57. It’s covered by the WSJ |
| 17. Terror haute? | 36. Suave competitor | 58. ____ Bingle |
| 18. Ref. work featured in “The Professor and the Madman” | 39. Animal house | 59. Main, Rawlings, or Post |
| 19. Collaborators responsible for 48-Across | 40. Motivate | 63. Eponymous school founder whose motto was “Eluceat omnibus lux” |
| 22. Unprocessed | 43. Not too bright | 67. Buffalo Mini-Me (and a crossword puzzle standby) |
| 23. Hoops | 44. Wee pub drinkie | 68. Joins forces |
| 24. Eliza’s response to “On the Street Where You Live” | 45. Cologne cooler | 72. Long fellow? |
| 25. “Does this ____ bell?” | 48. This puzzle’s honoree, who shares a birthdate with Saint Francis of Assisi, Johnny Appleseed, and Serena Williams | 73. Ashley’s sister |
| | | 75. Includes, as a tip |



76. Healer of Hellas
 77. ____-di-dah
 78. Their address was once 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue ... and may be yet again
 81. Guido's high note (another crossword puzzle standby)
 82. Has a bawl?
 83. One hanging around the house
 84. It's good for "absolutely nothing" according to a 1970 hit
 85. British mil. decoration
 86. They don't count as ABs in calculating BAs
 87. Eyesore?
 88. Norm: Abbr.

Down

1. ____ system (primitive brain system)
 2. Novelist Allende (niece of a President)
 3. Amazon muscle relaxant: Var.
 4. Jezebel's idol
 5. First name in dog stars
 6. Type of favorite
 7. Meistersinger Hans
 8. Most serene
 9. Dethrone
10. No-win situation?
 11. The Lion King's brother
 12. Third largest island in the world
 13. He was played by Shepard in "The Right Stuff"
 14. Kennedy or Teller
 17. Church seating
 20. Sour note
 21. See 4-Across
 26. Skinny?
 28. Bunk
 31. "Yoicks! A fox!"
 33. ____ Battalion (Ukrainian detachment funded by oligarchs)
 34. Saw
 36. "____ the Bunny"
 37. Gray's grave words?
 38. Tar Baby's uncle
 40. Secure, as a victory
 41. Measure of conductance
 42. Put down in writing?
 43. Scoreboard fig.
 44. Shih ____
 45. Clairvoyance, e.g.
 46. "Ukelele ____" (Cliff Edwards)
 47. ISIS stronghold in the news
49. What the nose knows
 50. Before, before
 51. "Unicorn of the Sea"
 56. Cali's Shangri-La
 57. First Florida-bred horse to win the Kentucky Derby
 58. Pickpocket
 59. Sent
 60. They're history
 61. Dorothy ____ of Park Ridge, Illinois, who was remembered in a White House ceremony on November 1, 2011
 62. Right-leaning?
 63. Martha's Vineyard accessory for 48-Across, soon enough
 64. Continental code?
 65. Ogle
 66. ____ Skynyrd (Southern rock band)
 69. Lovelace and Huxtable
 70. ISP with a multicolored butterfly logo
 71. Combatants
 74. Kindergarten stuff
 76. Ryan Murphy's "baby"
 79. Roth wroth this
 80. Flora in the Friendly Confines

Ten Years of *Natural Selections*

DANIEL BRISKIN

Continuing on with our salute to the tenth anniversary of *Natural Selections*, here is a comic republished from 2004. ◉



by Sean Taverna



On a Sunday afternoon, I decided to have a walk in Paris, to enjoy the city, take a few pictures, and keep an eye open: what has changed in the past years? As my footsteps were inexorably leading me towards the river Seine, I was struck by the evidence: I don't remember seeing any seagulls—or at least not so many—in the city. I must admit they do look better than ugly fat pigeons!

