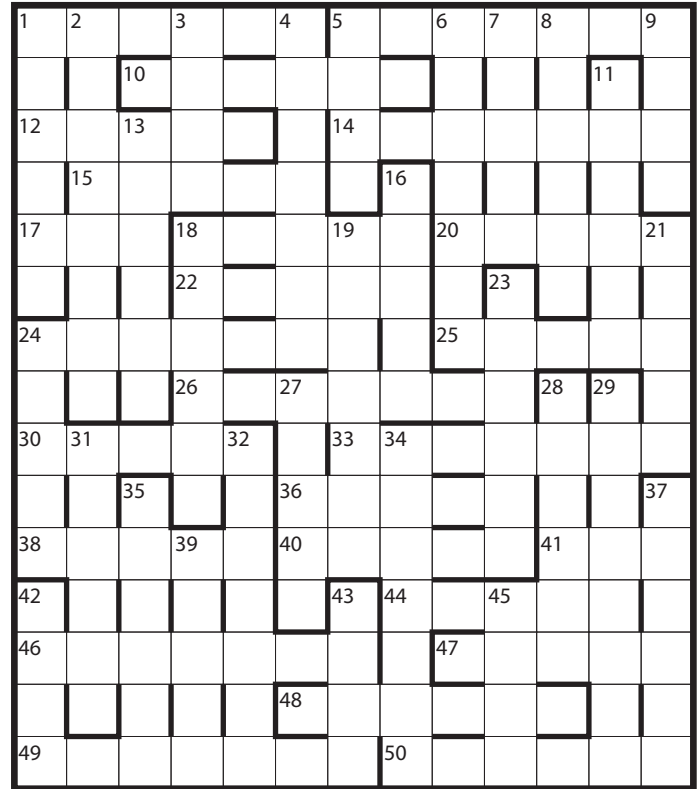


IN COMES COMPANY

by Mark Halpin

Phone rings, door chimes, and suddenly your place is filled with company telling you to blow out your candles and make a wish. In this puzzle, seventeen clues have been invaded by company, which must be overlooked to correctly solve those clues.

The good news is that in each case the company is bearing the gift of a single extra letter. Reading these letters in clue order will tell where to look in the completed grid for a card to accompany the gifts.



ACROSS

- 1 Get drinks all over second-rate drive-in waiter losing face (6)
- 5 Those engaged in antics notice scamp playing about (7)
- 10 Face other way around, pruning first fruit (6)
- 12 State overrun by soldiers matters (5)
- 14 Much trumpeting at an art organization (7)
- 15 Bungle identical notes and note two steps below (5)
- 17 Express disapproval for young monarch (3)
- 18 One racing is clearly happy person, though not in the lead (5)
- 20 He set apart items indicated (5)
- 22 Those heading up any regional elections nearly allways (sic) vote for sports programs (5)
- 24 You and I and Henry captivated by that lady's silences (7)
- 25 One attendant left goddess (5)
- 26 Flying ace owns Fokker (only the back half is more finely appointed) (7)
- 30 Lush spots bit of ouzo across alehouse, at last absorbed (5)
- 33 Plant used for dyeing kerchiefs primarily (in a lacy one, twist at either end) (7)
- 36 Wild horse bucking at first trampled corn (5)
- 38 Finger empty seat at leaderless D.C. forum (5)
- 40 Pryor learned retro part: youngster in space-age cartoon (5)
- 41 Typically sharp staff neglects cooking dessert (3)
- 44 Hang around medic and monkey (5)
- 46 Green formation at center of vacuole is not uncommon (7)
- 47 Controversial publisher sounds like incendiary element (5)
- 48 Squash big crab scuttling right and left (6)
- 49 Note La Crosse's almost infiltrated by four from way back (7)
- 50 Old guy acting like complete klutz beside nuclear reactors (6)

DOWN

- 1 Shoreline features things to eat, we hear (6)
- 2 School's positions may be partly determined by these extreme characters; thus I'm upset (8)
- 3 Troy has written about *Topper*, etc. (4)
- 4 Former prisoner's cheer cut short on the outside (7)
- 5 Fabulous yarn used to make dreamy clothing (4)
- 6 Not dead, with treatment given (7)
- 7 Arrest one hundred by church (5)
- 8 Eat bad stew reduced by a few degrees (6)
- 9 Butcher's vehicle discussed (4)
- 11 Stir, initially putting spice on? Absolutely not (6)
- 13 Outwardly obstinate, I decline to participate (6, 2 wds)
- 16 Bellyacher bent handle (5)
- 18 Gathers together some octopuses (6)
- 19 Criminal learns about new snag in a tangled situation (7)
- 21 Levy on the money (5)
- 23 A pricy novel is a rip-off (6)
- 24 Stage managers go back inside noxious vapors (5)
- 27 Chambermaid smuggling fossil (5)
- 28 Dashing secret agent getting forty winks (6)
- 29 Sweeney portrayer ordered niece's indulgence (8)
- 31 The man composed inspirational music (6)
- 32 Maui actors cast as Japanese military class (7)
- 34 Don mixed up with girl putting on airs (7)
- 35 Circles behind black bears (6)
- 37 Mice once bred to figure with red ink (6)
- 39 Those employing microscopy sure near the vanguard of science (5)
- 42 Ancient writing featured in video game (4, *variant*)
- 43 A library opening Housman wings (4)
- 45 Eagle-eye, not oddly, facing away from the wind (4)