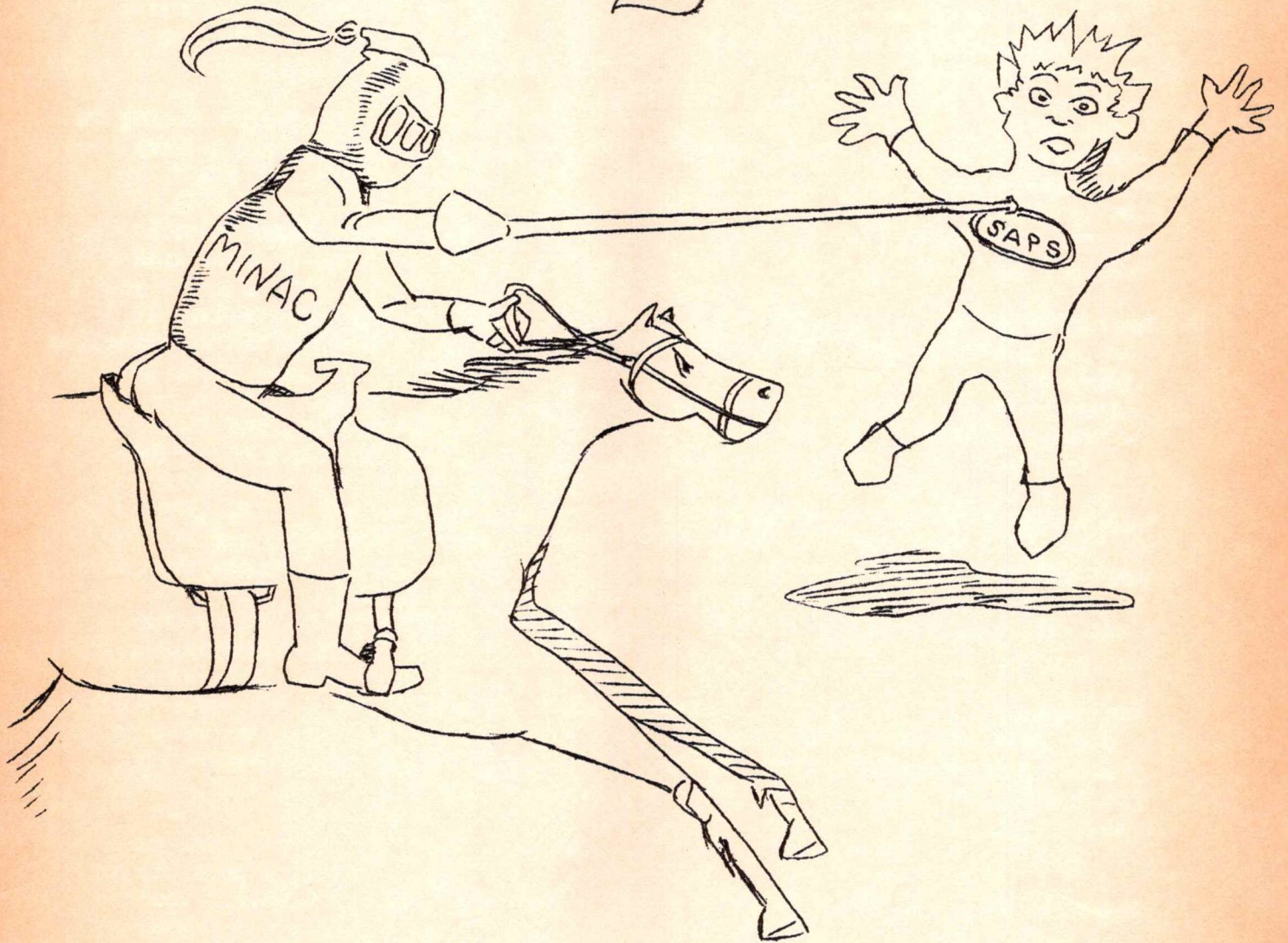


DOWN THE XYLEM

2



This is Down the Xylem number two, being the mailing comments on the SAPS mailing of Winter 70/71, number 94; Spring 71, number 95; and early Summer 71, number 95.5. It is produced by Gary H. Labowitz with a little help from my friends.

Well, here I sit with mixed emotions about that extra mailing (95.5). That sure is nice of Doreen to do that isn't it? Why didn't I think of just sending my zine to her late and hope for the best. No, I have to figure that it is better to get my zine out to the members and make up the difference in the next mailing (by being on time).

Guess what! I'm still working on the 94th mailing!

is: Hey! is there music to "Letter to Jesus" or am I free to make up my own? Actually, as I read it I was making up music along with it. This is a good song -- I may work it up on guitar. If those of us who make music have tape recorders should we send talking, singing tapes to one another?

April? Gosh, Chaucer liked April. How does it go? "When the sweet showers of April fall and shoot / Down through the drought of March to pierce the root, ..."

As far as your Jacob's Ladder goes I found this remarkably interesting. However, I was under the impression that women were fertile for several days a month. Where did you get that 24 hour figure?

I have read some Graham Greene and found him deadly dull; that was in college. I tried an installment of Travels in Playboy and didn't like it either.

From your quotations I wonder if you are a quote collector? My brother reads stuff and jots down (on index cards) lines he finds perceptive or witty. He has a whole box full. They are fun to read through since they are in random order. He's been doing this for years. Plan ahead. He is also a compulsive stamp collector. From early youth he has been tearing stamps off envelopes and storing them away in shoeboxes. All stamps, not just commemoratives and like that. He keeps each type in a separate envelope. I bet he has hundreds and the common variety six cent by now. Of course, it seems less funny when I glance through his stock and find several hundred of the old two cent Washington's. He could start a lot of kids out in the hobby if he wanted to.

As for minac; I try to use the previous mailing(s) as a springboard for comments. At the same time, I do try to have some original comments and games and stuff in a separate section of the zine. After all, the various discussions on any topic must start somewhere. Funny thing though; I don't sit there trying to stretch out six pages. Rather, I find myself trying to keep the material down. And then, having sent out an 18 page issue get no credit for it. I don't quite follow the reason -- just some sort of perversity in the organization. I don't see why credit shouldn't be given for publications produced solely for SAPS. It's not as if I put out a genzine (which I do) and sent it through SAPS to get credit. This zine is produced solely for SAPS (though I send a few copies out to close friends).

As I finished reading "is" I found myself smiling -- well done. Thank you for your efforts on our behalf.

My apologies to the remainder of the mailing. I've read it -- but I will push onward to:

((Aside to Markstein: ask at IBM about the APL (A Programming Language) printing element for the 2741 (same tilt/rotate code as Selectric); it has most math symbols on it. Also many of the logical symbols. And some Greek letters. It is used at remote terminals calling up the APL time-sharing system, or by users running the APL program in-house.))

This time I'm going to read the Spectator first. Hmmm ... yes, deadline is July 15. Ok, since this is typed May 25 I presume I have plenty of time. What's all this crap about me being on the IMMORAL roll? I think that "Toilet roll" is stupid and juvenile. If a member needs a certain number of pages to meet his minac it should merely be noted by his name in the roster. Like, that's the way adult organizations do it. Toilet roll indeed. At least if you're going to indulge in this sort of thing stop copping out and call it the "Shit list."

The Tattered Dragon Strikes Back!: Very interesting. Just how long has this series been going on, anyway. I have an old Tattooed Dragon (from 1957) which as I remember was distributed through FAPA. I'm almost sure that's where I got it, since that would be about the time I was in last time. It isn't marked for FAPA, so if it was just a pub you can let me know. Anyway, your zine strikes me as being patterned after that Rotsler zine. It is ins't it? And if so, has there been a lot of these sent through the apas? You were late, weren't you?

Bagarthachi: Ha! your juxtaposition of topics gave me a little chuckle. Talking about ftl travel in one breath and then mentioning speed freaks in the next gave me a start. This type of pun-transformation runs through a game we play occasionally here in the family. I first heard it played on the BBC overseas broadcast late one morning. It was called Ping-Pong and played in teams, there. Here, it's everybody for himself. Here's how it goes:

One person starts by saying any word that he cares to. The next person must say a word that 1) rhymes with the previous word, or 2) bears some logical relation to the previous word. No one may use a word that has already been used in the current game. On the radio they had a judge and a little clock (tick-tick-tick) that gave each team member five seconds to come up with a word. And it really got exciting. Also, my enjoyment of the broadcast game was heightened because the players were clever word-players, which is really the point of the game. As you hear a word you start thinking along the lines that it suggests and just when it's your turn the guy ahead of you switches the thought-track by treating the last word as a homonym.

I'll give you an example: Milk, butter, cheese, smile, camera, film, develop, grow, shrink, drink, sink, ship, anchor, cankor, sore, boor, tore, rent, tear, swear, profane, propane, gas, car, automobile, bus, truss, pain, gain, etc.

This is an actual game, by the way, between me and my wife (who's up there watching the Avengers while I sit down here typing). I just pressed her into service so that the example would be like the regular game. You'll notice we both jump around with opposites and similars, but sometimes we get onto a rhyming string. The idea is to do it FAST. She started, and my responses are the even-positioned ones above.

Your calendar, hmmm. Does it have anything to do with space travel? Does it go backwards? Is it in octal? Is it bigger than a breadbox?

Concerning the 10/12 pitch typewriter debate: I can't see why IBM doesn't offer a selectric that could change pitch with the flip of a switch. I believe there's only a single gear wheel that controls the spacing. Of course, there's economics in there somewhere.

This is getting embarrassing;; I haven't even finished reading your zine and I get a chilly feeling up my back that I've already spent (wasted) more room than I should on your zine. Look at all those other zines lying there. Gosh! is this issue of Down going to be that big?

I've taken the opposite approach to letters vs. mailing comments. By forcing myself to finish off my letters before starting on SAPS mailings, and with the SAPS mailing sitting there next to the typer nagging me to get busy, I've managed to get my letters all finished in order to get to this thing. If I did it the other way round I'm sure that I'd never get to the letters. And some of them were over a month old. It's very hard to get around to all the things one has to do... Right now I'd much rather be upstairs practicing the guitar, but I guess I can do that later after everybody has gone to bed. I try to get in at least an hour each night. Also, I've begun working at the piano again and that has to be done while the family is up, Chopin being so LOUD, you know.

As I think of it, I now feel that I could probably sit down and do two pages or so each evening -- this making my SAPS zine a 40 page monster every mailing (leaving me time to run it off and staple). However, even if I stuck to this schedule I'd much prefer to have the mailings kept at four a year. This bi-monthly kick is a crazy thing. If you have time to do that much fanac you're not doing the necessary mundane things you should.

For example, you obviously don't own a house. With all the fixing, mowing, shopping, tidying, etc. that a house takes you have to be very devoted to get in a few pages once in a while. And then there's the various school-type affairs you get dragged into once in a while: meet the teacher, see a play, Fun and Fair day, etc. The civic association comes next (I'm treasurer of mine), and things like the Jaycees or Boy Scouts or somesuch are always looking for someone to work (I drive the Girl Scouts to various outings). Then there's family stuff like planning visits and writing letters (not answering letters, originating them). I also like to do a skywatching now and then when the air is clear (that can take hours -- they literally roll by) and when I get into the darkroom for a little printing session that takes the whole night. And there are so many books to be read. Non-sf, technical (I'm in computers), little press items people send you for review, etc. I certainly wish they'd hurry with a pill that would eliminate the need for sleep. I could use the time.

But a bi-monthly deadline would kill me.

It really isn't reasonable to ask someone who uses grass or who is on grass to make a judgment about it. True, it may be extremely harmless but it just isn't good practice to measure effects with the object of the measurement. An impartial observer, making the normal statistical checks would be the way to do it. I suspect, however, that the topic of grass has gone so far to pot (ha-ha) that an impartial observer would be impossible to get. Maybe an alien from another planet could do it. "These crazy Earthmen. The only difference I notice is that they change color when they drink water." Anyway, I'm pretty high myself as I type this and as you can plainly see there isn't really enough of a change for you to notice ANYTHING w****r***o***n***g with my glimsomorke.....whoooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

Just foolin', folks!

Your comments on MENSA go for me too. I've known several members, and we've have some discussions about why it's more interesting to get a bunch of capable minds together and talk than to just talk to anybody on his level. I've tried to talk with everybody I meet, and usually you can find something that interests them enough to get them to talk about it freely. The only thing I can't stand is trying to talk with someone who has MADE UP HIS MIND -- about something controversial. Very tough.

On the other hand, my conversation with some MENSA members has been a real pain in the ass. Pardon, that's "arse." I don't own an ass. Anyway, they don't really discuss a topic; they play mental gymnastics -- you know ala Dr. Berne. We'll be sitting there discussing the current political scene ("It stinks") and one of these very extra special minds makes some remark about Nietzsche and then a second jumps in with "Yes, but in the 16th Century feudal states" and so forth. Now, don't get me wrong. Nietzsche is peachy and so are feudal states, but it's a switch in the topic just for the purpose of showing how clever you are, not to contribute anything to the topic under discussion. I like to talk about something and talk about it. Not everything I know at once. Sure, conversations drift a bit and change focus, but the kind of topic changing I mean is giant leaps. Talk about brilliance!

I'd rather sit down with some ordinary Joe and discuss baseball (which I know very little about) than to go through a PhD oral in Everything.

Naturally, all the above is some of the MENSA people. But any organization that is founded on the idea that the members are brilliant is going to attract a lot of the "brilliant" people I'm talking about. Bah!

What's this business about metals decomposing eventually. And glass not. I always thought the various metals were elements (you know, like Gold). If that's the case, what do they decompose into -- protons and neutrons? That implies that the atomic forces aren't all they're cracked up to be. On the other hand glass is a compound, made of silicon and lead and other impurities. Can't it decompose into its component elements? If not, why not? Just what do you mean? I'm not, repeat not, a chemist and I am asking seriously. You see, this could be an interesting topic.

And also, I thought I knew something about physics and the limiting velocity of light theories. You mention something about newer theories suggesting that ftl travel is possible. Please, if you have this info at your fingertips (without a lot of complicated formulae) I'd be very interested. I know some of Einstein's theories have been coming under attack lately. I hadn't heard anything about them breaking down, however. On the other foot, I don't spend a lot of time reading physics journals either.

Twelve pages wouldn't be enough if I had made it in time -- yes?

On the subject of prayer: this is a very misunderstood item. Lots of people have the feeling that prayer is like a one-way telephone chat with God. You know, Hi, how are you, I'm trying to be good, please send money, etc. This is only half right. If you dig it, it is supposed to be that one-way telephone chat; but it is strictly illogical to "ask" for things, and especially ask for intervention from a higher power on your behalf.

Consider: if you ask for some material thing, or a bettering of your position over someone else you are not just asking for something, you're asking God to take something away from another. Of course, you could just shrug and say "Well, that other guy was bad, so he's being punished." But he might be praying too. Do two payers cancel out?

Also consider: if God is perfect (our "Western" idea of God) then He (or She, for you Woman Libbyists) cannot change, for change implies imperfection. I mean, something can't change to something it wasn't before unless it wasn't what it changed to before -- that means it lacked something, it didn't have some quality or attribute before it changed -- and thus, it was imperfect. Therefore, God cannot change, and therefore He cannot interfere in the events of Man.

There are a couple of answers to this. You might say God exists in eternity and we exist in a temporal existence. Since our modes of existence are different the "rules" don't operate the same way for God and us. Of course, I contend that this means that it doesn't really matter what you do then; this way lies Fatalism. Or you could say that God isn't the way we have pictured Him in the Western world; rather He is more like humans, changing and swayable, only differing from us in that He always makes the "pious" decision and is incorruptable, doesn't age and can't die.

Discussing this with a Jesuit (actually, there were a couple of others sitting around, but they defered to him since he was head of the Theology Department and had a Doctor of Divinity degree) we eventually got around to the point where he admitted that I had him on the horns of a dilemma and that the only answer he could give was one based on faith. He then gave me an answer from St. Thomas Aquinas which I cannot fault. It is from the topic "The Efficacy of Prayer" and in which the Good Doctor explained that the purpose of prayer was to incline the person praying toward an attitude to accept whatever happens. That is, it is a release of pent-up frustration, anger, pain, and doubt and an admission on the part of the person praying that there are indeed powers and effects over which he has no control whatever. The person praying generally promises to strive to do the best he can, to realize his limitations, and to trust that what does happen will be the best that he could expect at this time. The faith that is needed to accept what appear to be harmful, painful, outcomes now in order to savor a better, eternal happiness later must be deep. I guess that's why so many prayers are of the "gimme, gimme, gimme" variety.

I'm trying to condense what is a very complex topic, without all the technical terms that have been invented to make it a little easier to discuss; if you see lots of little nits and semantic problems, please give me the benefit of the doubt. Also note: I am not discussing religion; as far as I am concerned it is a dead-end for discussion unless held on the technical level. Everything I've presented above falls into the area of Philosophy. Or at least I've tried to keep it there.

Of course, if you want to discuss Philosophy and tear me apart, go ahead. But any reference to what the "Good Book" says about prayer and I pass. I'm not a Biblical scholar (and strongly suspect you aren't either) so I won't get dragged into that.

I'm curious about something else, too. Whenever I go flying off like I did above I start getting the feeling that anybody reading it is forming an idea of "what I believe" and "what I'm like." And yet I realize that I could just as easily talk for the other side (and sometimes do) since I happen to like a good debate. I always try to be consistant and hide my personal feelings on the subject. Of course, I can't remove myself from me so there is always some of what I believe in it -- I hope I manage to only let in the logical-functioning aspects of my personality. So, the thought occurs to me: what do you think I'm like?? Who out there is willing to try a little personality analysis?

I have always declined to give blood, for similar reasons to yours. When I was blood tested for the marriage rites I damned near fainted while waiting for the elevator. And later, after having a mumps vaccine shot, the doctor insisted I lie down because I "looked pale." I felt fine. I suppose in some dire emergency I would give; but as long as they get it from others who are capable of giving it, I pass.

Good lord! here I am on page 5 and plenty more to review. I better finish with you.
.....Barg!

Well, this may well be my swansong. Is it? Only the POD can tell for sure. The reason? Here it is the 11th of July and I'm sitting down here to add some more comments after close to a month away from the typer. Things around here change with some rapidity. For example, I now have a new job and have been on it for two weeks now. It is really a grind, what with driving to and from Philadelphia every day. By the time I get home I really don't feel like doing much. And haven't. However, since one of the new (to me) workers on the new job is a ham, it gave me a push to get my antenna back up into the air (it's been down since last August). Now that it's back up I want to operate down there in the basement, so I've virtually dropped my stf. Gad, what a way to go. I even missed the last PSFS meeting.

I even had a nice fun and games set up to get into this issue, but I'm not sure now if I'll have the time to get it stenciled and run off. It's a crossword puzzle, but not the conventional kind. If the fates are good I'll still be a member after this mailing and stick it in later. If not, perhaps I use it in my own little zine, which I must get out before too long.

Spy Ray: Yikes! Do you really know all this stuff or is this a reprint from a doctoral dissertation? Very interesting and well written. There was an article somewhere (just recently, but can't remember where; Penthouse? Cavalier?) that discusses the castrated "rulers" of China. This is probably another topic you'd be familiar with. I believe the correct term is "eunuch."

Shot Who?: Well, my idea of cable TV was much different from what you describe. I still think there are some rather far-reaching changes that will come about from cable TV and allied services. I understand that IBM and others are going to test out a system whereby the cable user not only gets a variety of TV choices but a news service, connection to his bank, a calculator/reference service for school-age children, etc. There's any number of things you can do once you get hooked up to a computer-driven communication network. I really hope they test it somewhere around here so I can get in on it. But they'll probably pick Podunk, W. Va. They always do.

The Pirsi: Concerning endangered species: I just heard on the radio a list of the various endangered species released by the US Gommint. It includes species in what they call "rare" class also, which apparently means they are not sure they are about to die out, but there aren't many of them and are hard to spot. Anyway, among the listing were the names of various species that have become extinct during the previous few decades (included North Atlantic Great Auk, Passenger Pigeon, etc.). But they never make a point out of the passing of a species. It's always: "The species is dead. Oh, sob." What I want to know is, did that species serve any purpose for other species? The cry was: "The parakeet (some variety found in the Southeastern US) was last seen in 1922. It was exterminated by man, who hunted it for it's plumage." Ok, so now it's gone. So what? So is the woolly mamouth, who was hunted by man (and other animals) also. I personally won't go about killing animals just for the fun of it, and I enjoy looking and seeing the various types of animals that are still around, but when they go -- well, then they go. One shouldn't become so emotional about nature. It is like some scientist crying over the loss of certain types of atoms when they are changed by atomic bombardment. One could lose a lot of sleep thinking of all the stars (and probably beings) that are destroyed by nova and burnout. That's the universe, folks!

This is awful. I'm out of room, I'm out of time, I'm out of patience. I ccan't believe this (minac) is happening to me. Me. Labowitz, the publisher! How the... mighty are fallen. Let's see -- if I start tomorrow and review two pages a day I should be up to fifty pages by next deadline. Hmmmmmmmmmm.....

Well, I've just run off the minimum stuff I had onto stencil and I just realize that ye old dragon has somehow got me listed as oweing eight pages. Naturally, I have sever. So, regardless of whatever else I had planned to do tonight (put in a ground system on my amateur radio equipment) I will go ahead and stencil and run the fun and games department. Read on.

FUN AND GAMES DEPT.

The following puzzle was made up by me for your edification. I hope that once you'll understand it, you'll like it. It is a somewhat different type of puzzle in that the definitions are not simply asking for an unknown word. To a large degree they imply the answer, rather than specify it. Often the "definition" is a pun for the correct answer. Sometimes the correct answer is an anagram of a group of the words in the "definition." When this is the case, the definition bears some sort of sense to the answer. The answers can be words, phrases, abbreviations, etc.

For example: 53. Across reads "A small flat in London." "Flats" in London are apartments; a small apartment might be a "pad." However, in this case it is "apt" which is "small" for apartment. If there's any response I'll publish the answers next issue.

ACROSS

1. Hangs around the river and cries a lot.
3. Where a lot of teas come from.
5. How the Consuls split the workload.
7. What an ist believes in.
9. Inky aid in a bottle.
11. A very small number.
13. A promise, when broken, leads to a hot fight.
15. Wha' happen to the capon? 'e killed it!
16. Bounce back from a knockout. That's right.
17. Stay out of this is you're prone to catch colds in Asia.
19. Just the opposite of making up secret writing.
21. Most new football heros start out this way.
22. Help! I'm all asea.
23. Brigham Young was asked to pass the salt, but he stopped here anyway.
24. A gale at sea makes the little plants grow.
26. Where all the rejected politicians want to be.
27. Prison garb made him famous, and vice versa.
28. These fish were never coal miners.
30. A part of much that's Greek.
31. Take a deep breath and pretend it's fresh.
32. The morning newspaper editions always start out this way.
33. A junior executive can still be this.
34. The breeze made him achè. (Sounded like it, anyway.)
36. Some regret is lacking for this bird.
38. He couldn't hear, so said this.
39. Fruity musicians playing together.
40. Fire became plentiful.
41. A month you're allowed to eat anything.
42. An obvious confession.
43. Used to plow at a wake.
45. I am an eccentric with a compulsion.
47. We make up the whole country.
48. see 51. Across.

ACROSS (cont.)

49. If I didn't know better I'd think this was a pair of cattle.
51. Nannette is backward and needs a reprimand.
52. A kind of committee in Italy.
54. A small flat in London.
55. Someone in Maine.
56. When the brandy's gone, this is always left.
57. Something wrong? No, she was just divorced.

DOWN

1. One who plugs up a fan?
2. When you have half of this you have none.
3. The N. Y. Times uses this to see if the news they print fits.
4. Send for Superman. Lois is in a grain elevator!
5. The way some students enjoy their extracurricular activity.
6. A small town out West.
8. Try to be a little quiet.
10. Take your time when on the stand.
12. It isn't either!
13. Don't let this get on anybody.
14. Is religious or isn't. Depends on how you look at it.
15. Some of the shortest sales pitches on record.
18. Sounds like some sea animals are hunting for you.
19. This takes a long time.
20. Stick a ball in one of your pockets.
22. A short nun might be called this.
25. One of the things you need to know when all at sea.
27. When they have lunch at the convent. (It's a pun.)
29. He stammered a backward reference.
30. Look at the music. Take a deep breath. Now, what's the third thing you do when you sing a scale?
34. Initially, those who heard you wondered at the reason.
35. A French author made us mad.
37. A slippery fellow.
38. In the army, you must listen.
41. Some women don't want these, they want to be these.
44. Some kind of motive for acting crazy.
46. A number of little indians.
49. Part of a gallery opening -- it's art!
50. Some papers don't put as much in an extra as they used to.
52. A kind of radio that still is.
53. see 49. Down. What? Again?
54. Is this where it is really?

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