

Partying with all the gnus that fit

Word on the street had the MMI All-Crosswords Shindig happening this été in Mali, Oslo, Osaka, Lyon, the Ural or the Loire, so it finally popped up at the Sicilian smoker, Mount Etna; go figure.

I entered through an adit. I'd worry later about an egress.

It was quite a fete, a strictly SRO gala. Pilsner and porter flowed to the strains of Copland's "Fanfare for the Common Man," a paean to peons.

Ezra Pound read the Edda. Yoko Ono read odes and epos in the oda as James Agee and Yogi Berra did yoga with some Ranis.

Chairman Mao was chatting up Buck Rogers' nemesis Ming as Una Merkle and Uma Thurman played mah jong with Erica Jong and guys in leis played jai alai.

A woman in a snood came with Hook's mate Smee, who carried a wicked-looking snee.

They'd brought quite a menagerie — an ani (from the Ainu), a whole herd of gnus. There were moas from Kauai, goas from Asia, newts and ewes. An anole from Sri Lanka, an anoa from the Celebes. Roccs chased satyr butterflies around the agora.

A zodiac cat eyed a shaggy-haired ox. There were rheas and Jodos from Ulan Bator, eggs and legs and vanes and panes, the ADA and the AKC, kit and kaboodle. A stoat swam the moat. Asta barked at Fala.

A luau like this, you get hangers-on like those social followers the ites and those true believers the ists.

Eva Marie Saint and Ava Gardner came with Artie Shaw and Arte Johnson. Sammy Sosa brought Bjorn Borg all the way from Sault Ste. Marie. Mab was there with a peri. Marshall Tito brought Judge Lance Ito.

"Don't you step on my blue-dye plant!" said Seth.

"Anal about your anil?" said Enos.

Under an aerie stood Ari, pooped after flying from Tyre playing rondos on a lyre. A pushy yenta yakked with a Yalley from Bali with an eerie aura.

Here and there were tell-tale iotas of slop, glop and what looked suspiciously like goop. Silent Cal was planting a yule ovule in the loess.

Grizzled editors mulled fonts and the stet, an erstwhile printer's mark from days of yore, as rowdy little tildes and accent agues ran amok.

Oprah ate okra and aspic as she watched an oater with Mia Farrow and Mia Hamm, who shared olla podrida.

"Pass the pecorino and the orts," said the Mayo Brothers, who came with Harpo and Chico. "An olio of oleo, but hold the mayo and skewer the ewers!"

Conrad Aiken shared bacon with his inamorata, Ms. Fitzgerald, née Ella.

"Loan me a sawbuck?" caded Paavo Nurmi in his fin de siècle threads.

"Nyet," said Elihu Yale.

Several abbés, some with épées, mulled the theistic tenets of an abbot's dogma, then ascended podia to talk about Baal before drifting off to the apse near the nave to strum on their ukes.

Horatio Alger came with Peter Lorre. Martin Buber flew in from Aruba. Ali Baba wore a lynate tiara festooned with alae. Isaac Asimov drove down in a Reo from the NNE and joined several Roués at the ATM.

"There's boron in Asia," he said in an ariose falsetto. "But no tsetse flies."

Herman Hesse came from Wiesbaden. Hesse, for Tet, you bet, singing the iambs of an epic aria, a myth with pith.

The shah showed up speaking Parsi and some Urdu with Leda and her large waterfowl. Aldo Ray brought the Omars, Bradley and Khayam, and the Eds, Begley and Begley.

Anton Chekhov rode from the Rhine on a rhino. Othello came in from the moors.

"Ante lucre for euchre?" Estes Ke-faufer asked an acne-stricken Billie Sol Estes.

It was the acme of elan, much ado, total glee, the definite article, for eons of eras.

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Between the Lines