

Deepening Desuetude

A NUMBER OF YOU FAILED TO NOTE my email address change. I collected as many of your submissions as I could before my former employer turned off the tap, but it's possible that some of you, through your own negligence, won't be included in the solver list below. It's important to keep current.

I've been able to relax even more than expected because of a puzzle that was sent to me by my redoubtable test solvers Bob Fink and Jerry Miccolis. What a lucky antediluvian am I! I get another break. Between that and the quarantine, if I were any more relaxed, I'd be dead.

I leave you with Bob and Jerry's intro:

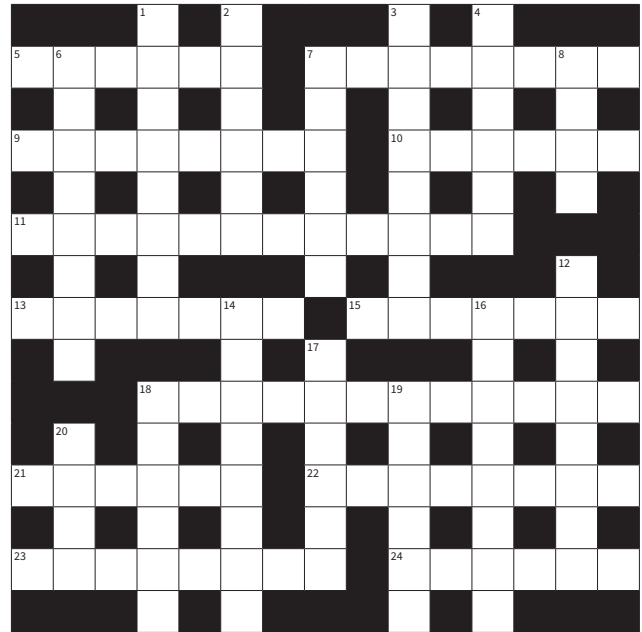
Contingencies' Cunningly Convoluted Cryptic Concoction

The first part of this puzzle is a standard cryptic crossword. The answers include one two-word phrase and no proper nouns or obscure words. There is one alternate spelling. All words are playable in Scrabble. As always, be wary of punctuation, which has been known to deceive.

Once you've completely filled the grid, you'll need to uncover the deeply encoded 26-letter phrase within it—a purposely and particularly permuted payoff phrase that self-referentially describes what you will have constructed. A set of blank cells is included on the next page for your convenience.

The decoding algorithm may not be immediately obvious, but you will find two helpful pointers in the successfully completed grid. One pair of symmetric entries identifies what you will need to extract from all the grid entries to populate the 26 blank cells. That will still leave you with myriad possibilities. A second pair of symmetric entries suggests a way to view the associated clues to narrow those possibilities down to one. More explicit hints can be found upside down in the box below if needed.

Delightful deciphering!



Across

5. Whirl within westward planetary galewinds (6)
7. Notable night before, with New Testament nearly unabridged (8)
9. Adherent's afflicted arm is red (8)
10. Vowed end to vodka voraciousness (6)
11. Kept in KLMN-order as kinky baptized heal (12)
13. Heath hit highest (7)
15. Quarterly, qualified entrants query proposed keepers of quarters (7)
18. Concatenation of consistent consonants (commonly), complete with continued calculation (12)
21. Born-again bumbling broadcaster Burgundy broadcasted brainy bit (6)
22. One-track Orlando operation for oilman or oddball (8)
23. Twirling, teen aced to timely take lead (8)
24. Zeke, Zac, or Zeppo, e.g., (not Zoe, Zelda, or ZsaZsa, e.g.) get on, get by (6)

Down

1. Fished around forenoon, forlorn for food (8)
2. Dynamic deflection endlessly disrupts disheartened director Reiner (6)
3. Provide pallet before a puzzler's pivotal pieces perplex (8)
4. Loaded, Lewis tore dress lining (6)
6. Jay, Jo, Jed, Jane & Joel chill while Jennifer tails Jura warbler (8)

HINTS

Hint 1: The helpful information relating to the grid entries can be found at 13- and 15-Across in the successfully completed grid.

Hint 2: The guidance relating to the clues can be found at 1- and 18-Across in the successfully completed grid.

Hint 3: Alphabetize the clues based on each clue's alliterative letter, then use the corresponding order of their associated answers to arrange the grid entries' leading letters into the final phrase.

