This one’s about me, and a trip I took earlier across three regions. Of the Across or Down answers here, 28 are “too long”; for each, put (a) one letter on a thin grid line (so all those lines form one linked path with four turns), (b) two letters in one square (so no two such squares are in the same row or column), or (c) some letter(s) outside the grid. Then split the grid into three rectangular regions, A, B, and C so that (a), (b), and (c) only occur in, in, and next to them, respectively.

The Out answers go outside the grid, crossing each other and the (c) letters so no Out answer has two “unchecked” letters in a row; the Gray answer goes in the shaded squares.

When the grid is complete, add all external letters to region C; you will then have a stylized map, with the Gray answer saying how a certain water area is indicated. As for land: In all non-Gray clues except those 28 above, the letter sequence the wordplay gives has an extra letter at the start and end. To the left of the grid, enter each letter next to its corresponding start letter, under the wedge indicating the way the entry goes. All of the end letters will name (in partly abbreviated form) the land areas in A, B, and C; just the ▲ ones will list four verbs, saying what you’ve seen the grid lines through letters, overfilled squares, and accumulated external letters do.

My trip can now be extended. Read the (a) letters along their path, the (b) bigrams west to east, and four Out letters heading due east to a point on the shore (thus tracing my old route, roughly) to get a phrase saying where to go from that point; the Gray answer will say how this last leg of the trip starts. Travel on this page as that phrase says, and look to the east to see where this last leg gets you.

ACROSS (▲)
1. The discount retailer that now owns Sears brings in cup-painter Chagall
9. Sheep appearing in the German plays
13. Retro Norse god seizing Glinda’s land and preppy clothing company
16. Taboo, naked smut shown in reverse with one audio track
17. Zinc’s coating my bad henhouse
18. Hire Songbird™
19. Male sib hugs Abel’s mom all the time
20. Five filling veld with pixieishness
22. One who applies color to rotating card
23. Actor Harrison claims odd FX confused the star of Sanford and Son (2 wds.)
26. Windwood instrument left by aunt in Spanish wine-growing city
31. “E” is an unusual ingredient in absinthe
32. Reaction to being hit in the stomach when blocking that female dancer
34. African country had to obstruct FCC
35. Misspelled word before “Tag” in a Hasbro game where you zap people in blazers
36. Don’t reveal Chicago lair
37. Request from a lover of mold he misunderstood (2 wds.)
38. First pair of grocers carrying cereal primarily choose oats, say
39. Herb’s age, as stated on the radio
40. This hollow Village People song makes Mike Nesmith’s lead-in harmonize
41. Podium occupied by Y’ actress Geena

DOWN (▼)
2. Parent/author Emile’s corn oil brand
3. Teachers having zero airtight arguments
4. Raised beast’s plate
5. Like an athletic shirt or undershirt possessed by a secret agent
6. Zines Greer edited would be exciting ones
7. Sell halved wraps with Cuban quickbread
8. Thus, old slugger Cobb is begrimed
10. Doctor Wald has to operate a car
11. A boy Edward burdened with cargo
12. Before triple ending of Clue, Scarlet can upset Mr. Boddy, say
13. Itchy aces redesign boats that go over frozen water (2 wds.) [N13]
16. Back of a page unloved relocation specialists attached to interior of john
21. I wait, May, in the place cited above
24. Spoiled one’s, er, first months in Peru
25. The hosts around expert decathlete Jim
26. Soya, if cooked, is capital in Bulgaria
27. Telly assumes he’d originally misstated where one renews a license (2 wds., abbr.)
29. Quiet core of laconic Wyoming becomes flamboyant
30. Behold inside of brown claw
31. A Low German novelist named Horatio
32. Temperature often written “32°” here in the US by rushed, gyrating drug

OUT (direction indicated in enumeration)
Curse on penetrating Greek character’s oil company (5 ▼
Hints Charlie left in . . . what, in Mexico?
Yes, in Mexico (5 ▼
Jim, before curtailed pull backwards, uses brief bursts of force (8 ▲
Many awful flus occurring in the center of Okla. after singer Elliott heads north (8 ▲
Native’s toe, gripped by actor Knotts (4 ▲
Nude witch holding antlers and sharp parts of plants (6 ▲
Philadelphia college sweethearts embraced by Step as a place do (sob!) de-crypt! (5 wds.)