

## Nob Yoshigahara

By Jerry Slocum



Puzzlemaster, genius, International Ambassador of Puzzles, legend and one of the best puzzle inventors the world has ever known, are some of the terms that have been used to describe Nob. His enormous accomplishments encompass inventing and designing about two hundred mechanical puzzles which were produced commercially, with at least eight million sold in Japan and America. Rush Hour, made and sold by ThinkFun, is one of the most popular puzzles of all time. It has received fourteen awards from educational and popular publications. Nob also invented or helped to develop other ThinkFun puzzles; Hoppers, Flip-it, Shape-by-Shape, and Lunar Lockout.

Nob invented his first mechanical puzzle in 1955 at age nineteen. During the last twenty-five years he has been a driving force in developing, promoting and popularizing puzzles in Japan. He designed or helped develop almost all of the forty-nine unusual and elegant glass puzzles for Toyo Glass Company, fifty-seven wooden puzzles made by Hikimi and Hanayama's thirty-five Cast Puzzle series. Customers found that his silhouette on the boxes guaranteed a very high quality and fun puzzle. And his television appearances and continuous video sales pitch in 3,000 stores has increased the sales of Hanayama's Cast Puzzles ten-fold in the last several years. Amazingly Nob redesigned the 100 year old classic "T" Puzzle, provided twenty additional problems to be solved with the slightly modified four pieces, and more than four million copies have been sold.

He also developed word (in Japanese and English), mathematical and logic puzzles too numerous to count, wrote sixty puzzle books, as many as sixteen monthly columns and translated puzzle books into Japanese. Nob has helped and taught many puzzle designers in Japan, Europe and America and has helped get puzzles of other designers produced. Nob's Studio in Tokyo was a friendly gathering place for puzzlers from around the world, with thousands of puzzles to play with.

He is quite famous for his impossible puzzles, magic, jokes, wit, puns in English and sense of humor. He loved to entertain with his slight-of-hand skills using

coins, by making them penetrate table tops and magically appear from the ears of amazed, and adoring, children.

In 1982 he brought his son, Takayuki, along to his first International Puzzle Party and Nob never missed one since. He was an IPP advisor and host of the first IPP in Japan in 1988. He was proud of his family and often brought his wife, Takako, or one of his children with him on his frequent trips to Europe and America.

Last year in the “Biographical Information” section of the *Directory of Puzzle Collectors and Sellers*, he wrote, “Petroleum engineer, teacher of chemistry, retired, now. I want to be invited to any place in the world. It is my **MUST!**”

As we miss him, let us celebrate his life and friendship. Nob would want to say “Goodbye” with his appropriate tag line, “Happy Puzzling Forever! “

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