

Jerry Slocum



Biography:

Jerry Slocum began solving and saving mechanical puzzles in 1939 at age eight when his parents brought them back from their travels as presents. His collection now numbers over 30,000 puzzles and is housed in a Puzzle Museum building near his home in Beverly Hills, California. It includes over a hundred beautifully carved ivory puzzles from China, and thousands of French, British and American puzzles from the 19th century. The antique puzzles range from American Indian Puzzle Purses, to puzzle drinking vessels, to three-dimensional wooden interlocking puzzles, to secret opening puzzle padlocks, knives and matchsafes. All the puzzles are organized, displayed and stored in accordance with a taxonomy or classification system devised by Slocum.

He also has collected a library of four thousand books on puzzles and mathematical recreations, some dating to the 17th century, that are used in his research into the origin and history of mechanical puzzles. The library also includes periodicals, catalogs, and puzzle patents.

His first article, *Making and Solving Puzzles*, published in Science and Mechanics Magazine in 1955, started his correspondence and friendships with many other puzzle enthusiasts all over the world. In 1978 Jerry invited his puzzle friends to his home for the first International Puzzle Party. After seven more annual Puzzle Parties, the party outgrew his house and has been held in hotels, alternating between the U.S.A, Japan and Europe.

On April Fool's Day 1978, Jerry invited puzzle friends from all over the world to gather in his home in Beverly Hills, California for the first International Puzzle Collector's Party. The attendees were quite enthusiastic to continue the Parties and six more were held in Jerry's home before they had outgrown his living room and yard. IPP #9 was held in Tokyo and began an international rotation of the Parties to Europe, America and Asia. Last year the four-day Party was held in Helsinki and was attended by 350 Puzzlers. About a hundred of the attendees also took a 5-day side trip to St. Petersburg, Russia.

Jerry stumped Johnny Carson on *The Tonight Show* with eight of his puzzles, Martha Stewart on her *Living Television* program with ten puzzles and has been interviewed on five nationwide television and several radio programs. Numerous newspaper and magazine articles, and a book chapter, have described his collection.

He was the Curator of an exhibition of 600 puzzles from his collection and 80 hands-on puzzles, at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago during the summer of 1994. He curated exhibitions titled *Puzzles using Mathematics* at Indiana University and the St. Louis Science Center in 2002. In 1986 he was Guest Curator for an exhibition, *Puzzles Old and New* that was seen and played with by 750,000 people in Tokyo and Osaka, Japan, Ottawa and Vancouver, Canada, and Los Angeles, New York, Indianapolis, and Cambridge in the U.S.

Jerry's recent book, *The Tangram Book*, has been acclaimed as the first comprehensive and accurate history of the Tangram puzzle. Two of his books, *Swipe this Pencil* and *The Puzzle Arcade* were published by Klutz Press. The later book includes dozens of mechanical, word and picture puzzles. All the puzzles are included in the book and pouches. It sold over 100,000 copies in the first year.

Jerry has collaborated with co-author Jack Botermans on five books on mechanical puzzles. *Puzzles Old and New*, an award winning book, was published in 1986. It has sold over 100,000 copies in four languages. *The New Book of Puzzles*, also in four languages, was published by W.H. Freeman and Co. *The Book of Ingenious and Diabolical Puzzles* was published by Random House. *The Tangram Book* and *Tricky Optical Illusion Puzzles* are published by Sterling. Jerry collaborated with Co-Author Dic Sonneveld and Jack for their latest book, *The 15 Puzzle*. It will be available in May 2006.

The Slocum Puzzle Foundation was established in 1993 as a nonprofit public benefit Corporation. The purpose of the foundation is to educate the public on puzzles, their history, development and use in various cultures of the world and to support the use of puzzles for education. The Foundation has published six books and gave a grant to the Brooklyn Museum for a project to involve the New York Museum School in research leading to an exhibition of mechanical puzzles collected by anthropologist Stewart Cullen in the nineteenth century.

Jerry Slocum retired from his position as Acting President, Transportation Sector, Hughes Aircraft Co. in March 1993 after a 38 year career at Hughes. His career began with Jerry designing cockpits and cockpit displays for military fighter aircraft. For the last 6 years at Hughes he was responsible for the application of Hughes aerospace technology and expertise to the development of General Motors automotive products. Jerry served as a member of the SAE Technical Board and the SAE Aerospace Board. He was elected a Fellow of the Human Factors Society and of The Society for Information Display. Jerry was a member of the National Academy of Science Air Force Study Board in 1982, and lectured extensively in the U.S., Europe and the Middle East for Hughes, N.A.T.O. and several Universities.

Jerry Slocum was born July 5, 1931 in Chicago, Illinois. He received his B.S. in Mechanical Engineering, with a minor in Experimental Psychology from the University of Illinois in 1954 and his M.S. in engineering from U.C.L.A. in 1957. He also completed the executive program at the U.C.L.A. graduate school of management.

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