

Puzzles Old & New - Awards & Reviews - 1986

Martin Gardner, Pres.
Woods End, Inc.
103 Woods End Drive
Hendersonville, North Carolina 28739

Dear Jerry:

What a marvelous, beautiful book! I am proud to be in it. Thanks for the inscribed copy.

PUZZLES OLD AND NEW. By Jerry Slocum and Jack Botermans. Distributed by University of Washington. 160 pp. Illustrations. \$19.95

Every once in a while a book comes along that is a one-of-a-kind treasure, not because of its subject matter, but because of the author's treatment of that subject matter.

Such books shine with the author's love of the topic and some of the joy the author feels rubs off onto the reader. It's as though the author was saying, "Look — here's something absolutely wonderful," and the reader obediently looks and says, "You know, I see what you mean — that is sort of wonderful."

As readers, we're answering the author's delight with a corresponding delight of our own in the same way that, watching a happy child, we too feel happy.

Puzzles is this kind of book. You can open it to virtually any page and within minutes you'll be completely absorbed in it. First of all there are the pictures — superb color photographs of every kind of mechanical puzzle imaginable.

Then comes that moment of recognition when you see a puzzle you used to do, lo these many years ago. Next you find yourself thinking through once again how you solved it — and the memory is so sharp that you can feel the puzzle in your hands, as though your fingers remember the intricate, patient movements involved. Now you read the history of the puzzle, the mathematical odds of solving it,

BOOKS



JOAN GARCIA KOTKER
freelance columnist

and directions for making one for yourself ... absolute fascination.

THE AUTHORS, a collector and a designer of puzzles, have concentrated on the mechanical puzzle, which they define as "a puzzle made of solid pieces that must be manipulated by one's hands to obtain a solution."

They have 10 categories of mechanical puzzle: Put-Together Puzzles, Take-Apart Puzzles, Interlocking Solid Puzzles, Disentanglement Puzzles, Sequential Movement Puzzles, Puzzle Vessels, Dexterity Puzzles, Vanish Puzzles, Impossible Object Puzzles and Folding Puzzles. In each category, you'll find something familiar.

In the introduction Martin Gardner, who used to do the "Mathematical Games" column in *Scientific American*, discusses puzzles as a form of "recreational mathematics," a theme that will add to the book's enjoyment for those interested in the theoretical aspects of puzzle-solving.

Overall, *Puzzles* is the sort of book that should be in every dentist or doctor's waiting room, and I do not say this to trivialize the book: It is a very special, beautifully illustrated, thoroughly rewarding work. Anyone who picks it up will be enthralled by it. It is, in fact, the quintessential coffee table book: something special to entertain guests or clients so that they are reimbursed for being made to wait.

SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN

Mathematics and Perception

PUZZLES OLD & NEW: HOW TO MAKE AND SOLVE THEM, created by Jerry Slocum and Jack Botermans; text by Carla van Splunteren and Tony Burrett. University of Washington Press (\$19.95). Martin Gardner himself happily reports that this book presents, "for the first time in history, ... a comprehensive survey" of mechanical puzzles. The term is used for those puzzles made of solid parts that must be manipulated to arrive at a solution. Even a count of the objects displayed here is difficult, but there must be between 400 and 500 distinct puzzles. This volume arises out of the annual international puzzle parties that are held around the prodigious collection of Jerry Slocum of Los Angeles, and it enhances a traveling exhibition originated by the Craft and Folk Art Museum of Los Angeles.



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Special Award For An Exhibition Catalogue Of
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to

JERRY SLOCUM

for the book submitted in competition titled
Puzzles Old & New

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