

Myles Mellor: Crossword Puzzles for Everyone!

With a twinkle in his eye and a delighted smile on his face, Myles Mellor begins to talk about how he came to be a crossword puzzle writer. Several years ago, when his mother passed away, Mellor began devising amateur puzzles and sent them back to his native England where his father stills lives. He was hoping to ease his father's burden and depression about his wife's passing. Mellor would hand mark the squares, placing the proper amount of blanks and solids needed to process the puzzle and, of course, devising the clues!

He painstakingly hand mapped out the arrangement, carefully drawing each little square and wrote each clue for his father to work out. Even though he sent along the solution with each puzzle, his father would send it back to see if he was correct and offer his own comments regarding the puzzle. Little by little, he began offering constructive critiques and as the game continued, urged his son to consider making a profession out of his game. Fortunately for crossword puzzle fans, Mellor listened to his father and began a whole new career.

For several months, as he sent his puzzles off to different magazines, he received rejection after rejection. Not giving up, he continued to send off his puzzles and slowly began to get them published. He now publishes about 40 crosswords per month in over 100 magazines and web sites. What began as a little diversion for his father, is now a bustling, interesting career that has become a full time occupation. He began to break through about approximately 4 years ago in 2002 and has not looked back. Formerly an executive with a printer maintenance company on Glendale, he left during the past year to concentrate on his crossword career.

Mellor now has his own website and a mentor in another puzzle writer named David Hoyt. Hoyt is famous for Jumble Puzzles and other forms of puzzles appearing in publications such as USA Today. He was able to give Mellor a lot of advice and help in getting his career started and they now converse regularly as colleagues rather than competitors.

A basic crossword puzzle is 15 by 15 squares which equals about 225 letters. Special Sunday crosswords are 17 by 17, giving the puzzle addict a little more for his Sunday morning amusement. An average puzzle can take from 3 hours to a day to construct, depending upon the type of word requirements: some have to be symmetrical, meaning that all blank spaces have to match exactly. Mellor has composed various puzzles with intricate shapes for architectural and art magazines which are far from symmetrical!

Although Mellor uses a software program now, rather than his former "by hand" construction, the puzzle making is NOT a computer-generated program. He begins with a blank grid and maps out each puzzle one-by-one. Puzzles are

constructed to suit whatever magazine he happens to be writing for. For example: the “Daily Mini” is a New York fashion magazine dedicated to fashion, social gossip and fashion entrepreneurs. Obviously, the puzzle should relate to the field, so, taking words that have been given to him by the magazine, Mellor then puts together the puzzle. He creates puzzles filled with humor as well as skill and are easily understandable for the basic puzzle solver. Of course, the level of difficulty depends upon the magazine he is writing for. Some of those magazines are: American Airlines Eagle, History Channel, America’s Community Bankers, Los Angeles Architect, Financial Executive International, Interval International, International Watch, Orange Coast, New Canadian, Rotary International, The Fashion Daily, Health and Wellness, Gambling Times and over 100 other publications. Some of his more obscure magazines include: the Canadian Institute of Mining; Ground Water Wells (how do you dig a well??); and Sanitation (humorous notes on a toilet).

He is even writing for the Gulf News, the major English speaking newspaper in Dubai. It is obviously specific to this educated, multicultural Arab country. “ Did you know that they have built 300 islands in the sea with the islands being made into the shapes of different countries? They are encouraging tourist trade and investment in the country, so you may buy an island in the shape of Canada or the U.S. or England! I have learned so many things since I began doing my puzzles!” declared Mellor. “I really love what I am doing!” One can tell merely by watching him discuss his profession.

Mr. Mellor’s own personal favorite is a personal puzzle he did for a gentleman in Toronto, Ontario, who wanted to propose to his girlfriend. The fellow – Bram Goldstein – (his name is used with permission of the gentleman) had very precise specifications for the puzzle. He wanted to use items like the venue of their first date, favorite vacation place, favorite song, and so on. After many back and forth communications via e mail, Mellor completed the puzzle to the delight and exact qualifications of the client. Goldstein then had a mock up made of the Toronto “National Post”, which he and his girlfriend read and did the crossword, every Sunday morning. He called it “Wordplay” after the movie about the making of crosswords and the crossword editor of the New York Times. He then had it blown up to the size of the “National Post” and slid it into the paper as a “special insert”. Thus he and she had a special puzzle to solve.

However, even after she solved it; she didn’t get the connection despite the many personal references! Goldstein then asked her if she saw anything odd in the puzzle and after pointing out the relevant clues (which were well hidden: e.g. “U “ for “you” and “Mary” for “marry”) but she finally got it. She was so delighted and of course, accepted the proposal. They will be married in March of this year and they will always have a memory of the proposal in a framed copy of the crossword hanging on the wall of their home!

One of his other personal crosswords was for a group of fishing friends in Wisconsin. When they were on their fishing trips, they delighted in solving crosswords, so the leader had Mellor work up a “fishing” crossword.

Mellor has now gone on to making up interactive puzzles and Sudoku for the numbers fans. Although his wife was never a crossword fan, she will now do the “USA Today” puzzle with him. Myles says. “ She gets all the food clues, since she loves to cook! We do them together although she still prefers to do Sudoku.”

If you would like to have a personal puzzle made for you, you may contact Myles Mellor via his web site at www.themecrosswords.com or by telephone at 818/522-4126. His rates are set according to the scope and size of the puzzle, but how wonderful to present your crossword addict with a puzzle of his/her own!

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Erna Taylor-Stark
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