



For This Editor, A Puzzlement



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I'm puzzled by puzzles, especially the popularity of the Sudoku puzzles and the skill level needed to do the one we print each Sunday (five out of six stars), but you readers are not. In a two-week, admittedly unscientific survey, most callers and e-mailers said they like the level of difficulty, although some said they wouldn't mind an easier one now and then. Others confessed that working the puzzle had them banging their heads against walls. But a few people even called for us to move to the next level.

Readers liked the idea of being able to work their way up with the puzzles in the two daily newspapers. The Intell runs from one star Mondays to six stars Saturday. The Lancaster New Era puzzle climbs to a difficulty of four stars on Saturday. One reader said she loves doing the puzzle so much, it makes her late for work. Great. If the GNP is down in 2006, we'll know why. I read and heard many of you say that you could use some tips on doing the puzzle. Starting today, we will run a series of tips with the puzzle on A4. The series will run for four weeks and go from how to get started to raising numbers.

You told us you liked the size of the Sunday puzzle, and several readers said they like the use of color. But other readers asked that we not use color for different reasons: One said pencil is hard to see on the color (guess you don't use ink for this one) and another said clippings don't photocopy well. The latter person works at a plant where copies are passed around (at lunch, she said). Because of the color, the copies tend to fill in. Let me know what you think about color. I didn't ask, but several people said it took them up to two hours to do the Sunday puzzle. The fastest I heard was 45 minutes. One person wanted the answers moved to a different page, admitting she's tempted to peek. Others want the answer box at the bottom of the page. They fold the paper and aren't tempted, they say. The size of ads on A4 plays a big part in where we put the answers. I am locked in on the level puzzle we can use Sundays, so for now, we will leave things as they are, with the addition of the tips. We will try to keep the solution box at the bottom of A4.

I don't do puzzles or get involved in fantasy baseball or football. **I'm still going through a 12-step program to recover from an APBA baseball addiction.** "Issue" is the new word for "problems," although I'm not sure why. There are many definitions for "issue," but none that come that close to being used for "problem." You can issue a ruling; take issue (which I guess could be a problem) or join the issue. You can buy an issue of this newspaper (please). You can "issue" (have) children. My dentist greeted me by saying he understood that I had issues with a tooth. No issues; it hurt. And whatever happened to dentists who did it all? I went from a dentist for a toothache, to an endodontist for a root canal, which was unsuccessful, and then to an oral surgeon to have the offending tooth pulled. I think I have an issue with the dental profession.

Forget it, readers, 10-year-old daughter Abigail will not get her own column. I don't care how clever you think she is. By the way, when she has a disagreement (issue) with her mother, she comes to me and complains, "Your wife"

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