

Crossword Puzzle Dilemma

Exercising our aging brains, we are told, is just as important as exercising our bodies. While there are numerous ways to perform mental calisthenics, a favourite form for many is the crossword puzzle. Some people have also taken to sudokus, but to me they are the equivalent of heavy weightlifting, totally beyond me. I'm pretty good at crosswords, though. I have picked up so much information from them over the years, my mind is loaded with miscellaneous facts doing deep knee bends and sit-ups.

For one thing, I have acquired an outstanding grasp of foreign languages. I am fluent in Spanish words like dias, sala, and casa. I can greet you in Latin or Hawaiian or say goodbye in French, German, Italian, or Japanese. As well, I am familiar with anatomy. I know that tibia is a leg bone and ulna is an arm bone and I even know the difference between ilium, which is a bone, and ileum, which is something disgusting somewhere in our intestines.

But that's only scratching the surface of my vast store of knowledge. There is hardly a creature of the crossword animal world that I cannot identify, from the Assam silkworm to the Tibetan yak. I am equally well versed in history, able to come up with the Nina, the Pinta, or the Santa Maria without a moment's hesitation. While I admit to

sometimes having to fill in other squares to dredge up the name of a Sumerian or Polynesian deity, I have no problem with Odin or Thor, Eos, Ops, or Ares.

Another area of my expertise is geography. It was never my best subject in school, but thanks to crossword puzzles I now know that the longest river in Chile is the Loa. Even astronomy is not beyond me. The brightest star in Cygnus? A snap—it's Deneb of course.

Sometimes, though, I wish my brain would forget that Elon is the son of Zebulon and tell me where I left my glasses.