

# CROSS

# ARRIER

**W**hat's a 10-letter word for a letter carrier who designs crossword puzzles?

**JULESMARKEY.**

Markey, a member of Philadelphia Branch 157, has created and published more than a dozen crossword puzzles. Really hard crossword puzzles. *New York Times* crossword puzzles. But for Markey, creating crosswords isn't just something he does in his spare time—he is constantly thinking of clever new clues as he walks his route.

“You're not daydreaming—you are still focused—but your creative mind is free,” Markey said. Anything can inspire him, from people he sees, to addresses, to items in the mail or on the street. Sometimes he is thinking through a puzzle; other times, ideas just pop into his head. Either way, the world along his route is a treasure chest of wordplay.

Markey remembers the first time crossword clues formed in his mind. On his route in downtown Philadelphia, he passed some construction debris. “I deal with doors every day,” he said, but it took a pile of old doors a landlord had dumped on the sidewalk to prompt his brain to think of words associated with doors. He thought of words that can describe a door and how they can combine to form other words.

Barn door. Storm door. *Barnstorm.*

Dutch door. Oven door. *Dutch oven.*

He and his wife, Piljo, had often worked on the *Times* crossword together. Using a simple computer worksheet Piljo created as a template for a crossword puzzle, Markey tinkered with his ideas at home. He submitted about 10 puzzles to *The New York Times*—the major leagues of crosswords—before one was accepted and published on May 10, 2012. The door clues ended up



in a later puzzle, one of seven of his puzzles published by the *Times* so far, with four more accepted and awaiting publication. Other publications have printed his puzzles, including the *Journal of Higher Education*.

Markey's first *Times* puzzle was a challenge, even for hardcore puzzle players. Parts of some words were circled—for instance, the “rope” in “European.” Other circled parts of words included “suit,” “seat,” “ball” and “bail.” These words all pointed to one word that can precede them all—“jump”—which was the key to solving the puzzle, because some clues had to jump over others instead of simply intersecting. Some players loved it, others hated it, but it made an impression.

And the clues were no less clever—or frustrating, depending on your outlook: “Facilities housing large planes”

# WORD

yielded “sawmills.” The answer for “Phone voice” was “Siri,” the talking assistant on iPhones. The puzzle stumped many players, including his colleagues at the Fairmount post office.

*Times* crossword puzzle editor Will Shortz called Markey’s puzzles “expert constructions.”

It’s no surprise that postal themes creep into some of his puzzles. Sometimes the answers involve simple postal terms, such as “USPS” or “mail.” Other times, the clues play on classes of mail: “first class” led to “cabin,” “priority” to “seating,” “express” to “checkout” and “registered” to “nurse.” In a rebus puzzle, a type of crossword that involves pairs of letters at the beginning of answers, Markey used “p” and “o” to generate answers such as “popcorn popper.” Once solved, the puzzle’s center revealed the words “Post Office boxes.”

Markey majored in mathematics at the University of Albany in his native New York. While math may not seem like the typical background for a maker of word puzzles, Markey said the thinking power and creative leaps found in math fit well with puzzles. “There are quite a few puzzle authors who are in the science or math or music fields,” he said.

Likewise, many of his fellow postal workers have a wide variety of educational backgrounds and abilities. “I work with a lot of other talented people,” he said. Markey wants managers and critics of the Postal Service to understand the level of thought required to deliver the mail. “To do the job, you not only have to care, you have to have the capacity to take in a lot of information,” he said.

When word got out about his skills, postal patrons began giving Markey

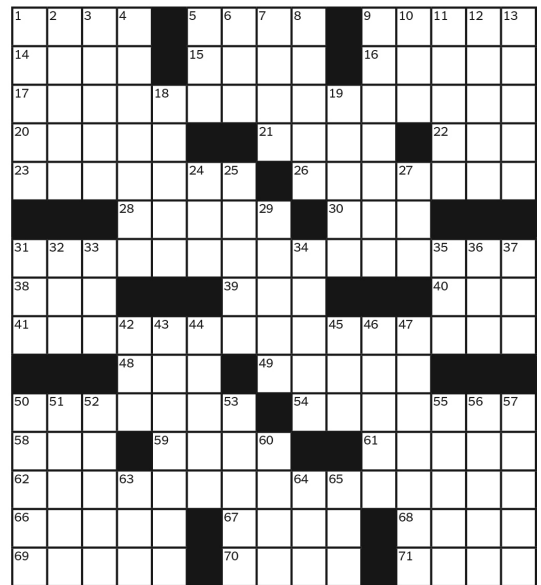
suggestions for clues or themes. He also exchanged ideas with a customer when he noticed a puzzle magazine, *Collector’s Crosswords*, in her mail. She was delighted when he

asked her, “Would you like to do my crossword?”

Chances are the more Markey walks his route and exercises his brain, the more crossword puzzles we’ll see. **PR**

**For your enjoyment, we’ve printed one of Jules Markey’s puzzles below. You can find the answers to this puzzle on page 52 of this magazine.**

PUZZLE BY JULES P. MARKEY



- ACROSS**
- 1 Mediterranean and Baltic, in Monopoly: Abbr.
  - 5 Org. suggested by the starts of 17-, 31-, 41- and 62-Across
  - 9 Kind of point
  - 14 Tora \_\_\_\_ (Afghan area)
  - 15 Pop
  - 16 One of the Dutch Antilles
  - 17 Pricey accommodations on a ship
  - 20 HI hi
  - 21 Kaput
  - 22 Fruit drink
  - 23 One who knows his beans?
  - 26 In a row
  - 28 “I \_\_\_\_ what I said”
  - 30 “+” thing
  - 31 Ward worker
  - 38 Like some highly-rated brands
  - 39 Grant-giving org.
  - 40 Dog command
  - 41 What disabled people are entitled to on a subway
  - 48 Mich./Minn. separator

- 49 Sei + uno
- 50 Bell site
- 54 “Hmmm . . .”
- 58 “ \_\_\_\_ ba-a-ack!”
- 59 Hemingway’s nickname
- 61 Words after hang or dash
- 62 Quick way to pay
- 66 Maker of Alevé
- 67 Western tribe
- 68 Prefix with European
- 69 Little helpers?
- 70 5-Across’s business
- 71 Olympic female gymnast, typically

- DOWN**
- 1 ‘90s-‘00s Britcom
  - 2 “Ta-da!”
  - 3 Overthrowing a base, e.g.
  - 4 Menu item often accompanied by wasabi
  - 5 Pac-12 school, for short
  - 6 Roman sun god
  - 7 Droids, e.g.
  - 8 Obama girl
  - 9 Group within a group
  - 10 Man-mouse link

- 11 Like the rumba, originally
- 12 Tolerate
- 13 Like interstates
- 18 Shocks, in a way
- 19 Sphere or pyramid
- 24 Bit of body art, informally
- 25 Regarding
- 27 Beast with a beard
- 29 Low poker holdings
- 31 Jay-Z’s genre
- 32 Musician’s asset
- 33 Moo goo \_\_\_\_ pan
- 34 Hotel meeting room amenity
- 35 Hitter’s stat
- 36 Statehouse worker: Abbr.
- 37 A snake may swallow one whole
- 42 Part of i.o.u.
- 43 Bodice-\_\_\_\_ (old-fashioned romance novels)
- 44 Puerto Rico y La Española
- 45 Summer on the 55-Down
- 46 High level?
- 47 Do-it-yourself diagnostic tool
- 50 Biblical land on the Arabian Peninsula
- 51 \_\_\_\_-size (big)
- 52 Awards won by LeBron James and David Beckham
- 53 British racetrack site
- 55 Rhône feeder
- 56 Avoid
- 57 Rocker John
- 60 Court records
- 63 Like many seniors: Abbr.
- 64 \_\_\_\_ polloi
- 65 Wiggly fish