



*The Skinnie team is a loyal and dedicated group. Some of us – Teri Grayson, my father (Ron Lauretti), and I have been doing this since the magazine’s beginning (in 2003).*

Chuck Hendrix has been my right hand for a decade and a half. Philip Schweier conceives and creates our book, fortnight after fortnight, as he has done since 2013. Jim Toole cultivates advertisers, a role he has filled since the mid 20-teens.

One of our core colleagues flies under the relative radar. Maybe it’s because his consistent contributions regularly appear among our last pages. Maybe it’s because he left the Landings for Chapel Hill, North Carolina, a while back. Yet, he’s as reliable and important to our work as anyone. And he is very, very skilled at his craft. Jack Hammond, aka “The Puzzler,” has been constructing crosswords for us since shortly after we entered the magazine business. If memory serves, he approached us and came on board roughly two weeks after we opened our newsroom doors. In this issue, you’ll find Hammond’s Skinnie puzzle #233.

If you’re not familiar with Hammond’s work, each of his puzzles runs twice. In its first incarnation, a puzzle includes The Puzzler’s Challenger clues, designed to test the most seasoned solvers. The same puzzle runs again in the subsequent issue, but with Hammond’s Standard clues, a somewhat easier roadmap to a completed grid.

In this issue of *The Skinnie*, as in the last, Hammond

offers a double treat. Two puzzles for the price of one (which, for you, is nothing). “Mystery Makers” and “Mystery Breakers” are cleverly linked, using color-coded interconnected clues (I’ll leave it to you to unravel the specifics). In the edition you hold in your hands, Mystery Makers and Mystery Breakers are accompanied by their Standard clue packages, a good introduction for those of you as-yet-unacquainted with Hammond’s output.

The Puzzler is representative of the ethos of our publishing endeavor. He works hard to produce the highest quality content possible; the fruits of his labor are on par with his peers at much larger magazines. He chooses to work with us, connected to you, our community. And my suspicion is that he will continue to do so as long as his sharp mind and linguistic trickery permit.

Try your hand at a Hammond original this week and let us know how you do.



To contact us with your ideas, responses, letters and more, email us at [mail@theskinnie.com](mailto:mail@theskinnie.com)



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