



Brief answers  
to short questions  
**Sheila's  
Shorts**  
By Sheila Miller

**Puzzling results.**  
In my August 30 column, I ran a request from R.G. Rauhauser, Box 766 Thomasville, PA 17364 for help in solving a puzzle.

Since that time, I have received two letters where folks have written in with advice on how to get the contraption apart.

As a matter of fact, one of our Lancaster Farming employees read the column and brought in the gadget for me to see — and to tempt me into picking it up and trying to solve it.

Let me first share with R.G. and the rest of our readers the letters on how to solve the puzzle. Then I'm going to tackle this heap of rings and wood all pieced together with leather ... even if it takes me all week.

Here's a letter from Nancy A. Fay, 2623 Egypt Road, Norristown, PA. She writes:

I believe I can solve the puzzle described in Lancaster Farming. I have been a victim of this little monster in the past, but I think I have mastered it.

In the drawing, the puzzle is shown with 8 rings and the puzzle I have only has 7. But it really makes no difference once you find the pattern for

taking the rings off.

It helps if you hold the large horizontal loop in your right hand, sliding it back and forth and working the rings with your left hand.

Start with ring 2. Bring unattached end up over end of large loop so the ring rests above the bars of the large loop. Then slip the ring sideways down through the loop so the entire ring is below the bars of the large loop.

Do the same thing with ring 1 so both rings are below the large loop.

Then slide the large loop back and remove ring 4 the same as you did ring 2. Now you have rings 1, 2, and 4 below the large loop.

Pick up rings 1 and 2 by slipping them sideways up through the large loop and dropping unattached ends over the end of the large loop. Now only ring 4 is down.

Drop ring 1, then ring 3. Pick up ring 1 and drop rings 2 and 1. Now the first four rings are down — and that's the easy part.

Drop ring 6 and pick up rings 1 and 2; drop ring 1, pick up ring 3; pick up ring 1, drop rings 1 and 2; pick up ring 4, pick up rings 1 and 2,

drop ring 1, drop ring 3; pick up ring 1 and drop rings 1 and 2, drop ring 5; pick up ring 1 and 2, drop ring 1 and pick up ring 3; pick up ring 1, drop rings 1 and 2, drop ring 4; pick up rings 1 and 2, drop ring 1, drop ring 3; pick up ring 1, drop rings 1 and 2, and drop ring 8.

Obviously to get the last ring is most difficult and time consuming. If anyone comes up with a short cut, please enlighten me.

Okay, from drop ring 8, here's is the last step in solving the puzzle. I'm going to abbreviate drop as "D" and pick up as "P", followed by the ring numbers to make the directions easier.

Here goes — P1&2, D1, P3, P1, D1&2, P4, P1&2, D1, D3, P1, D1&2, P5, P1&2, D1, P3, P1, D1&2, D4, P1&2, D1, D3, P1, D1&2, P6, P1&2, D1, P3, P1, D1&2, P4, P1&2.

Now all but ring 8 are on the loop. From here — D1, D3, P1, D1&2, D5, P1&2, D1, P3, P1, D1&2, D4, P1&2, D1, D3, P1, D1&2, D7, P1&2, D1, P3, P1, D1&2, P4, P1&2, D1, D3, P1, D1&2, P5, P1&2, D1, P3, P1.

Rings 7 and 8 are off. It's a piece of cake from here — D1&2, D4, P1&2, D1, D3, P1, D1&2, D6, P1&2, D1, P3, P1, D1&2, P4, P1&2, D1, D3, P1, D1&2, D5, P1&2, D1, P3, P1, D1&2, D4, P1&2, D1, D3, P1, D1&2.

You have now taken the puzzle apart. If you've been able to follow this, it's like knitting. The pattern comes through — really.

If you've gotten this far and you want to put it back together, it's a little easier ... but not much.

To get ring 8 on, start with 2 and work all rings on. You

still have to drop and pick up everything about 8 times until ring 8 is on.

Then start with ring 1 to get ring 7 on, then 2 to get ring 6, 1 to get ring 5 and from 4 down, it's easy.

As I said before, if there are any quicker ways to do this, I'd like to know. But then again, there aren't any short cuts for knit 1, purl 2 are there?

(Thanks, Nancy, for the directions. Let's hope no one mistakes these for a pattern for an afghan or sweater — can you imagine what that would look like!)

Next we have a letter from John W. Foster, Sr. R3 Foster Road, Middletown, N.Y., who writes:

This is a very old puzzle in the same category as scrimshaw to a seaman — something to pass the time before the advent of television. This type of puzzle has passed down through our family for several generations.

Now, the way to get it apart is to count the number of rings — in your case 8. This is an even number.

Drop off 1 and 2 and 4. Replace 1 and 2. Drop off 1 and 3. Replace 1. Drop off 1 and 2. 6 is now able to be dropped off.

Replace all except 6. This leaves an odd number. Drop off 1 and 3. Replace 1 and 2. Drop off 1, 2, and 5. Replace 1, 2, 3, 4. Drop off 1, 2, and 4. Replace 1 and 2. Drop off 3.

Now repeat for 7 and 8 by dropping 8, replacing all back. Then drop 7, replacing all back. Then 6, and so on.

I've seen a couple of guys remove and replace an 8 ring unit in about a minute and a half.

Just a bit of a side line — my dad was a machinist during the time of the depression, the men in the machine shops used to make up these puzzles as a way to occupy their spare time. Dad told me that one fellow made one up that had 50 rings and took about 3 hours to take apart.

Also, in one of the old houses in this area, there was one of these puzzles on a mantle for well over 100 years. Everyone had tried to take it apart but no one could. Dad had occasion to be at the house and showed the owner the "key". I've

often wondered if they remember it.

As you can see I've not given the whole instructions. But I'm sure that I've given enough for most any one to figure out the "impossible puzzle."

(Thanks, Mr. Foster for the most interesting story and directions. Don't be too sure though that they were enough for this "someone" to solve the puzzle. I may be at this for weeks!)

Anyone else have a problem or a question that need's an answer? Send it in to Sheila's Shorts and I'll see if I can help.

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