

THE PUBLIC SERVICE PUZZLER

NOVEMBER 2025

Editor: Rob Casimir

FAMILY FEUD

My father does not work for the Conflicts of Interest Board. He doesn't even work for the City anymore – like so many great New Yorkers, he did his public service, served his community, and then headed off to an officially-designated New Yorker Retirement Zone (in this case: Miami, Florida). Outside of the [Particular Matter Ban](#), there isn't a single section of Chapter 68 that remains relevant to a former public servant like him. But he keeps up with the *Puzzler* – and he has notes.

On last month's *Where in the World* photo challenge: "Whattaya, gotta be a James Bond to win the ethics newsletter now? Come on." Or July's logic puzzles: "Buddy, you won't trick *me* into taking the LSAT." And last year's holiday caption contest didn't fare much better, either. "Remember in *Tom Sawyer* how he tries to trick the local kids into painting the fence for him? This one's kind of like that." Fair enough.

I can take notes. At the end of the day, I really do want this to be **America's #1 Municipal Ethics-themed Puzzle Newsletter**, and nobody gets that right straight out the gate – nobody. So how, Dear Reader, can we right the ship? The answer, I have now been informed, is something I call "Dad Riddles." A polarizing cousin to the Dad Joke, the Dad Riddle sets the expectation that a moment of ambiguity or mystery will lead to a sudden and satisfying realization – but this never happens. It never, ever, ever happens. Dad Jokes never satisfy; Dad Riddles cannot be reasoned with: you either get the answer immediately (boring) or you lose (frustrating), there is no logic you can apply to get out of the problem. You either get it or you don't.

But really: I **can** take notes. So, this month's *Puzzler* has our intrepid and ethical public service heroes (that's what I call *Puzzler* readers; yes, it is a mouthful) taking on the best, and the worst, Dad Riddles I know for a place in the hallowed halls of **THE JONATHAN HOFFMAN + PETER KONTOGIANNIS HALL OF ETHICS AND EXCELLENCE**. The winner will be chosen at random from entries with the most correct answers. Feeling confident? Well, go right ahead:

#1: El Classico

You arrive early to your COIB training and decide to amuse yourself until the facilitator arrives. You notice, then, that outside of the training room are three switches and a closed door. The switches control three light bulbs inside the training room on the other side of the door. Once you open the door, you may never touch the switches again. How can you definitively tell which switch is connected to each of the light bulbs?

#2: Can Only Really Be One Place

You get assigned to take your Chapter 68 training offsite at an unusual location. During the lunch break, you decide to look for a restaurant selling expensive, take-out salad solutions. You walk south for three miles and find nothing. So, you walk east for 3 miles. Nothing. You go north for 3 miles, then, and somehow you are back at the training with everyone. Except now there's a bear sitting in your seat – what color is he? (It's a boy bear.)

#3: Age is Just a Number

In 1990, a person is 35 years old. In 1995, that same person is 40 years old. How can this be?

#4: It is Not Ethical to Hate, But I Do Hate This Riddle

A sundial has the fewest moving parts of any timepiece. Which has the most?

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#5: When You Get the Answer, You Will Be Less Happy Than You Were Before

Explain the pattern that makes the following number so unique: 8,549,176,320.

#6: Does It Upset You That the Person Who Wrote This Dad Riddle is Most Likely Not in Prison?

What five-letter word becomes shorter when you add two letters to it?

#7: Pretty Sure This Was a Scene from “Succession”

An elderly and deranged billionaire decides to leave his fortune to one of his two sons. He makes a proposition: both sons will ride their prize horses in a race, and whichever horse crosses the finish line last will win the fortune for its owner. During the race, the two brothers wander aimlessly for days, neither willing to cross the finish line. In desperation, they ask a wise man – COIB’s Attorney of the Day, in this case – for advice. He tells them something; then the brothers leap onto the horses and charge toward the finish line. What did the COIB attorney tell them?

#8: Some People Say It Made Him More Handsome

A man was walking in the rain. He was in the middle of nowhere. He had nothing and nowhere to hide. He came home all wet, but without a single wet hair on his head. Why?

#9: I Am So Sorry to Give You this Dad Riddle, but I Am Bound by Duty

Paul’s height is 6 feet, he’s an assistant at a New York City butcher’s shop, and he wears size 9 shoes. What does he weigh?

#10: Another Commute Ruined

You are once again tasked with navigating a literal labyrinth on your way to a live, in-person Chapter 68 training. Honestly, you should have just taken the online version. Anyway, you make it to the final room, where you discover three doors marked “exit.” The door on the left leads to a large pit of lava. The door in the center leads to a room filled with poison gas. The door on the right leads to a lion that hasn’t eaten in over three months. Which door do you choose?

#BONUS: This Dad Riddle WILL Cause You Physical Pain

If I am holding a bee, what do I have in my eye?

Now, you might be asking yourself: is it really ethical to use the power of government to prove a point to one’s father? **Yes**, and we wouldn’t have some of our most successful elected officials otherwise. So [submit your answers by December 15th – along with your vote on SHOULD DAD RIDDLES BE LEGAL](#) – for a chance to win! Whoever gets the most answers correct will be our winner for the month (in the case of ties, we’ll do a random draw), and join last month’s winner, [Isaac Kirk-Davidoff](#) in the **JONATHAN HOFFMAN + PETER KONTOGIANNIS HALL OF ETHICS AND EXCELLENCE!**

*Last Month’s Answers:

1. Titanic Museum in Branson, MO (not the one in Pigeon Forge, TN) / 2. Fort Zachary Taylor Historic State Park, Key West, FL / 3. Eastern Island Dock, Midway Atoll, Unincorporated Territory / 4. Utqiagvik Whale Bone Arch, Utqiagvik, AK / 5. Harpers Ferry, WV

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THE JONATHAN HOFFMAN + PETER KONTOGIANNIS

HALL OF ETHICS AND EXCELLENCE

LUKE SZABADOS – BUILDINGS

AMY HOM – DFTA

ELISABETH TOPALTZAS – DORIS

CHRISTOPHER LYNCH – LAW DEPT

HUNTER IGOE – LAW DEPT

HEATHER MURAKAMI – HONOLULU ETHICS COMMISSION

MELISSA HESTER – ACS

MARY LANE – FINANCE

KATIE MILLER – TIC

EVA GAMBINO – FINANCE

TOBY SINGER – DEP

ROBERT ROLANDI – FINANCE

JAMES TOBACK – OCME

FLORENCE MALLETTE – FINANCE

SHAWNORA GULLEY – BUILDINGS

MELINDA CALDERON – OCME

IVAN SANTIAGO – DSS

WILLIAM FLETCHER – NYPD

STYLIANI KARPADAKIS – OCME

BERNARD BRAUN – LAW DEPT

NIGEL C.O. MANUEL – BUILDINGS

MICHELE SIMENSKY – LAW DEPT

NANCY SULTAN-LORMIL – BUILDINGS

SHIVAJEET CHAKRABORTY – TIC

CHARLOTTE YIH – COMPTROLLER

JONATHAN HOFFMAN – DEP

MICHAEL GREENE – DSS

JACK SHVARTS – EDUCATION

PETER FAHERTY – DOC

JOHANNA BJORKEN – EDUCATION

GARFIELD S. SCARDER – SCA

SARAH ROBERSON – PARKS

KIMFA GARRINGTON – DOT

VINCENT RIVELLESE – BRONX DA

YVONNE CHOW – DSAY

SIMONE KING – DOT

ALEXANDER YELLEN – NYCHA

LISA BRANDQUIST – FDNY

KELIAN STANNER – PARKS

PUI CHING – SBS

SANDRA COLLYMORE – FINANCE

JAMES DAVIE JR. – BUILDINGS

ROLANDA OSBOURNE – FINANCE

EUJEAN PARK – SBS

CHRIS K. PAPA – ACS

KATHY TUZNIK – DDC

MONICA DOYLE – FINANCE

DIANA HERRERA – FISA-OPA

MARIE SAMPLES – OCME

LAURA GODFREY – DCA

JOHN RAYALI – FINANCE

TORREY FISHMAN – MOIA

MICHAEL LEVARIO – APPOINTMENTS

PETER KONTOGIANNIS – DEP

EUGENE MASSEY (2X) – DOHMH

CINDY CHEN – DOT

VALERIE WALD – EDUCATION

NOWSHIN FARA – CB 17 BROOKLYN

KEVIN SHULMAN – DEP

ISAAC KIRK-DAVIDOFF – PARKS