The Tangram Puzzle Pattern

Tangrams are puzzles made with seven geometrical pieces - five triangles (two small, one medium-size and two large), a rhomboid and a square. The trick is to arrange the pieces to form the silhouettes - people, animals and objects. You can't overlap the pieces, or trim them so they fit, and you must use all seven pieces.

Tangrams came to us from China, but we don't know how old they are. There are several explanations for the name of the puzzle. Some people think that it comes from the word "tang," meaning Chinese. Others say that it comes from "tanka," the river dwellers with whom Western sailors had dealings in the days when the Chinese government strictly limited all contact with foreigners. There are several other interpretations, none of them proven.

In the nineteenth century the tangram burst upon the West and became a craze. John Quincy Adams, Edgar Allan Poe and Lewis Carroll all racked their brains over the "puzzle of seven clever pieces."

There are two great "tangrammatists," Henry E. Dudeney and Sam Loyd. In 1903 Loyd published The Eighth Book of Tan (a Dover reprint 22011-7), a collection of tangrams with running commentary supposedly taken from a very ancient Chinese text. Although it is nothing of the kind and the whole book is written with tongue in cheek, several scholars fell into Loyd's trap and thought it was based on real works.

This Month's Challenge

The Challenge for this issue is to create a Bear out of the 7 pieces to the left. Make sure you number the pieces according to the pattern pieces on the left. Send your finished shape by taking a picture or making a drawing of that shape - making sure you number the pieces. Send the drawing or picture along with your name and SAW member number to the SAW Dust Editor at:

E-mail: sawdust@saw-online.com

Address: Sandy Heitman
3546 W. Villa Rita
Glendale, AZ 85308-2822