Margaret Farrar retired as the New York Times's puzzle editor in 1969 and was succeeded by Will Weng, who held the job until 1977. Of the four puzzle editors in the Times's history, Weng's tenure was perhaps the least remarkable—he wasn't a pioneer of the form like Farrar was, and he didn't refine and popularize it to the extent of the current editor, Will Shortz. Certainly he didn't have the chilling effect of his immediate successor, Eugene Maleska, a fearsome former Latin teacher. Maleska was a bane. His tenure was characterized by an overreliance on what cruciverbalists call “crossworsede,” needlessly abstruse clues and answers that hinder solution of the puzzle more than they help. In Cruciverbalism, Stanley Newman supplies an example. Maleska would've looked favorably, he thinks, on “Fibre of the gomuti palm,” the trickiest clue in Arthur Wynne's first crossword puzzle, published in the New York World in 1924.

Ben Tausig's editorial pen.

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