Wow. It’s dangerous to mess
with a time-honored and
much-loved institution. And
by all accounts, Puzzle Corner is just
that. Our proposal to eliminate Allan
Gottlieb’s column to make room for ad-
tentional Institute news and information
that we’ve been asked to provide met
with fierce and loyal opposition.

We confess that we were not fully
aware how strongly readers (and puz-
izers) felt about the entertainment and
challenge Puzzle Corner provides—not
to mention the pride in MIT’s difference
that it represents. But we are not en-
tirely lacking in either heart or brains,
as some of the more irate letter writers
seem to have thought. We hear you, and
we do understand (now) why Puzzle
Corner is important.

So it shall return—post haste, or as
soon as Allan can regain. He has kindly
consented to continue putting together
the column and has graciously agreed to
the modifications deemed necessary to fit
Puzzle Corner in with the other demands
for space on our pages.

Beginning in January 1991, Puzzle
Corner will appear in Technology Re-
view in a slightly altered format. It will
occupy one full page and consist of 2 to
3 puzzles, a speed problem, and the an-
swers from the third issue previous. The
emphasis will be on original or MIT-
oriented problems, but the mix will be
similar to what it has been in the past.
To conserve space, lengthy solutions
(e.g., ones involving extensive computer
programs) will have only their short an-
swers printed; in such cases, the full
solution will be available from the editors
at Technology Review.

We thank everyone who took the time
to express their feelings about Puzzle
Corner. Below are excerpts from a few
of the many letters we received.

I read with dismay that Puzzle Corner
is being dropped from Technology Re-
view. I feel this is a mistake in the long
run. Not only have I enjoyed the diver-
sion of the puzzles that Allan Gottlieb
has presented, but it has also prompted
me to let TR hang around a little longer
on my desk. While cogitating on the
problems, I read a few more articles.
Please reconsider your decision to drop
one of the best parts of the magazine to
save a little space. . . .

MARLON K. WEISS, ’80
Wichita, Kansas

[The reasoning] that there are other
publications offering mathematical
problems is like saying there are other
institutions besides MIT that offer tech-
nology-oriented education. Using the
same logic, if MIT were shut down, stu-
dents could just go elsewhere. The fal-
lacy is that MIT is a one-of-a-kind
institution; so is the Puzzle Corner. Its
personal touch, devoted reader base,
and unique mix of problems can not be
found elsewhere. Allan Gottlieb’s dis-
tinctive editorial imprint makes this a
column the popularity of which I feel
you are grossly underestimated. . . .

STEVEN A. FELDMAN, ’79
Framingham, Mass.

I know I can buy books of puzzles
(and I do sometimes), but looking at
puzzles in my alumni/ae magazine takes
me back to my undergraduate days in
ways that a book does not. I know that
makes little sense, but then emotions
seldom do (and after all, emotions are
at the bottom of why we donate to MIT
and read TR!).

But don’t get me wrong. If you indeed
cancel Puzzle Corner, I’ll still donate to
MIT (the same amounts I would have
anyway) and I’ll still read TR. I’ll just
grieve a little bit about the way rational
decisions always seem to pick away at
the little things that we irrational hu-
mans find link us to our pasts . . . .

MICHAEL KRASHINSKY, ’68
Scarborough, Ontario

Bad mistake to axe Puzzle Corner.
The success of alumni magazines is not
due to the obvious (more coverage of
MIT affairs and alumni/ae) but to the
awareness of who the alumni/ae are.
They are, by and large, people who en-
joy a thoughtful puzzle corner. They
would not necessarily wish to subscribe
to a publication solely for that purpose.
You can take only so rich a diet of
“MIT” . . . .

ROGER L. BURNLEY, ’60
(not a puzzle addict)
Edinburgh, Scotland
... I am a mathematical klutz. It took me until my senior year at MIT to pass 8.02, the second semester of freshman math. Nevertheless, Puzzle Corner has been, for the last 20 years, consistently one of the first things (often the first) I turn to in TR. I ignore the problems that require calculus and concentrate on those that can be "puzzled" out. In all this time I have only once sent in a solution and gotten my name in print.

In short, I represent the unlikeliest candidate for a Puzzle Corner devotee you are likely to find.

My guess is that since the same short list of people show up repeatedly as solvers of problems, you have concluded that only a handful of people read the column. However, if Puzzle Corner is of interest to me, a prototypical mathematical ignoramus, I would venture to suggest that it is of interest to virtually every TR reader.

If you do decide to keep Gottlieb, make him send you a new picture. The one you've been running for the last 23 years looks like it was taken when he was a senior in Baker House. ...

 MARTIN C. LANGEVELD, '70
 Lanesboro, Mass.

We did order a new photo, in late 1984—it seemed about time. He hadn't changed and still hasn't. Maybe there's a lesson here. —

Ed.

... I have great admiration for the quality and interest of the scientific articles and columns that you publish, but the Puzzle Corner has always been TR's number one attraction for me. ... For alumni like me, and I suspect there are many of us, the Puzzle Corner helps us to keep our math and logical faculties in good working order. ...

 THOMAS B. JABINE, '48
 Washington, D.C.

... The Puzzle Corner reflects a lot of what MIT is about. It shows the attainment and respect for technical knowledge and reasoning over and above what our jobs will ever be about. Don't make the mistake of cloning our alumni puzzle magazines, nor am I very interested in mind teasers. However, during the few times a year that I seriously attempt one of the problems in Gottlieb's column, I vicariously recall the all-night sessions in the Student Center coffee shop, the pages of false starts in a tough problem set, and graffiti that uses calculus. Also an incredible group of wide-eyed youngsters who tried to understand everything they could. ...

 FREDERICK M. RUST, '77
 New York, N.Y.

... Your decision to terminate Puzzle Corner is itself a puzzle to me! I am sure if I were a more adept mathematician, I

**Opportunities Must Be Seen To Be Seized.**
could formulate this situation into a real logical problem. However, I abandoned serious mathematics after 18.04, long ago. . . . Please excuse the hand-written note, done during a few reflective, other-
wise puzzle-solving moments of air travel.

JERROLD L. ABRAHAM, '66
Fayetteville, N.Y.

There is something nice about doing something active, albeit only attempt-
ing to work a puzzle, rather than just passively reading about others.

I am afraid that you will lose some goodwill among alumni/ae by dropping Puzzle Corner. The number of corre-
sponding participants may seem small to you in proportion to the column inches the section occupies, but my im-
pression is that there is quite a large number of alumni/ae who enjoy the col-
umn by trying to work the puzzles and by reading the published solutions with-
out ever mailing in a solution to Gottlieb. Incidentally, Allan has done an outstanding job as editor over the years, which is obviously a labor of love. . . .

JOHN E. PRUSSING, "62
Urbana, Ill.

I do not believe I could find elsewhere such unusual puzzles (and their solutions), the product of the fertile minds of our very own alumni/ae. Some of the puzzles have not been solved, even by their own proposers, until other alumni/ae work on them. It is a joy to

be able to match wits at home with these people. . . .

EDWIN L. FIELDS, '50
Lexington, Mass.

Puzzle Corner is not just another set of puzzles you can find in other publica-
tions. It is a tradition. The problems you find there are unique. They span a wide range of subjects—number theory, theoretical physics, chess, bridge, com-
puter programming, tongue-in-cheek, and many more; nowhere can you find such a combination of captivating prob-
lems. And they sometimes require the knowledge you acquired at MIT, and other times they test your wit and in-
\ninst. I strongly urge you to reconsider your decision, and reinstate the Puzzle Corner to its honored position for the benefit of loyal, dedicated, and enthusias-

Ken Haruta, PhD '63
Allentown, Pa.

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