

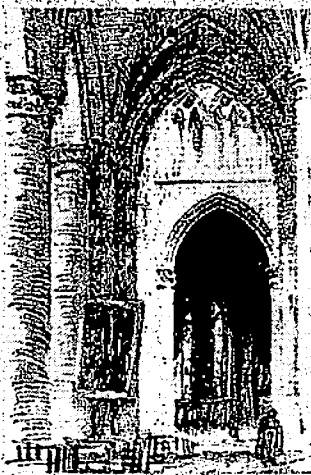
MIT

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1990



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COVER

An exhibition celebrating the distinguished career of Lawrence B. Anderson, '30, former dean of the MIT School of Architecture, is on display in the Compton Gallery through December 14. Compiled by the MIT Museum, "Lawrence B. Anderson: Artist, Educator, Architect" includes building plans, Beaux Arts renderings, and watercolor landscapes. Anderson received the Boston Society of Architects Award of Honor in 1984. Photo: L. Barry Hetherington

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 additional 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 puzzlers) 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 entirely 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—posthaste, or as soon as Allan can regear. He has kindly consented to continue putting together the column and has graciously agreed to the modifications deemed necessary to fit Puzzle in with the other demands for space on our pages.

Beginning in January 1991, Puzzle Corner will appear in Technology Review in a slightly altered format. It will occupy one full page and consist of 2 to 3 puzzles, a speed problem, and the answers 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 answers 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 Review. I feel this is a mistake in the long run. Not only have I enjoyed the diversion 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 technology-oriented education. Using the same logic, if MIT were shut down, students could just go elsewhere. The fallacy 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 distinctive editorial imprint makes this a column the popularity of which I feel you are grossly underestimating. . . .

STEVEN A. FELDMAN, '79
Framingham, Mass.

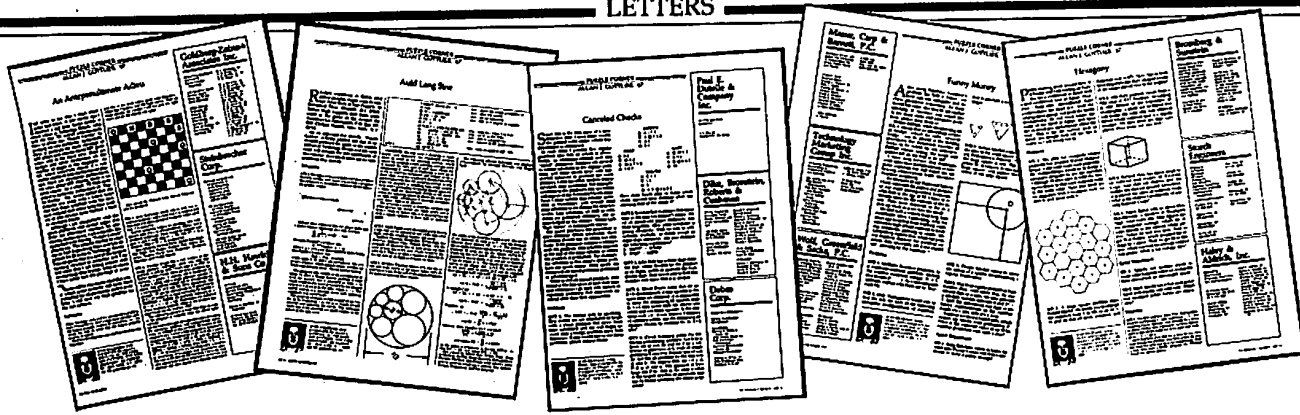
I know I can buy books of puzzles (and I do sometimes), but looking at puzzles in my alumni/ae magazine takes me back to my undergraduate days in ways that a book does not. I know that makes little sense, but then emotions seldom do (and after all, emotions are at the bottom of why we donate to MIT and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

section of *TR* to other alumni magazines. We are different. We are proud of being different, and this difference is reaffirmed by the existence of the Puzzle Corner. . . . THOMAS R. LEWIS, '63
Middletown, N.J.

... I understand that you plan to cancel Puzzle Corner. I'll get right to the point. Please don't do it. This column adds much more to my enjoyment of *TR* than an additional 10 percent more alumni news or Institute news could possibly add. . . . RICHARD M. KING, '72
Sunnyvale, Calif.

... I don't go out of my way to buy

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.

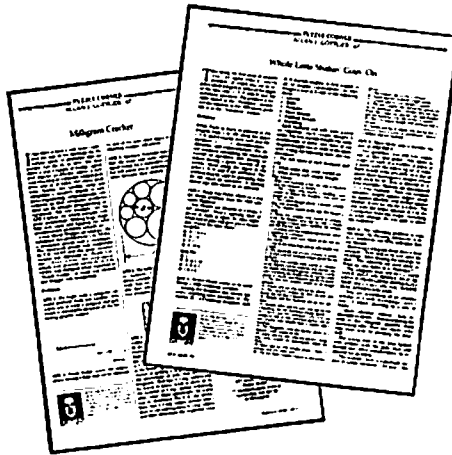


could formulate this situation into a real logical problem. However, I abandoned serious mathematics after 18.04, long ago. . . . Please excuse the hand-written note, done during a few reflective, otherwise puzzle-solving moments of air travel.

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

. . . There is something nice about doing something active, albeit only attempting 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 corresponding participants may seem small to you in proportion to the column inches the section occupies, but my impression is that there is quite a large number of alumni/ae who enjoy the column 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.

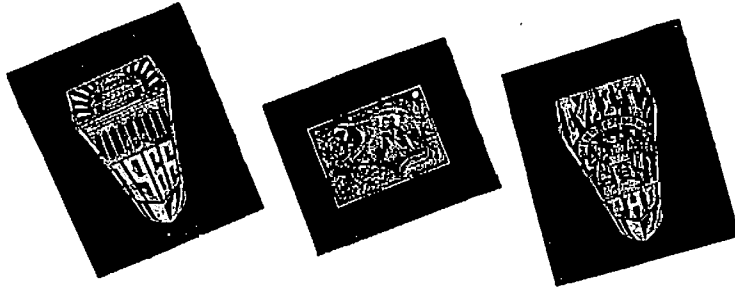
. . . I do not believe I could find [elsewhere] such unusual puzzles (and their solutions), the product of the fertile minds of our very own alumni/ae. Some of the puzzles have not been solved, even by their own proposers, until other alumni/ae work on them. It is a joy to

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 publications. It is a tradition. The problems you find there are unique. They span a wide range of subjects—number theory, theoretical physics, chess, bridge, computer programming, tongue-in-cheek, and many more; nowhere can you find such a combination of captivating problems. And they sometimes require the knowledge you acquired at MIT, and other times they test your wit and instinct. I strongly urge you to reconsider your decision, and reinstate the Puzzle Corner to its honored position for the benefit of loyal, dedicated, and enthusiastic alumni/ae!

KEN HARUTA, PhD '63
Allentown, Pa.



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