INTRODUCTION

I was pleased to receive a kind letter from an old time reader that serves as another reminder that it is very hard, if not impossible, to predict when and where some knowledge will pay off. The end of the note reads as follows.

''... you may find it amusing that the solution to M/A5 of 1973 (which was a Pell equation in disguise) has just solved a small but important and very very frustrating piece of a research problem on matroids and arrangements of hyperplanes. (I found the solution via Sloane-Plouffe 'Encyclopedia of Integer Sequences.') Talk about late responses! Sincerely grateful, Tom Zaslavsky''.

PROBLEMS

F/M 1. The following bridge problem is from Tom Harriman who wants to know how you make the contract against best defense after an opening lead of the Diamond Jack.

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                North
            S   Q 3
            H   A K Q 2
            D   8 6
            C   A Q 10 4 2

    West                          East
S   10 9 8                    S   A 6
H   9 7 6 5                   H   J 10 8 4
D   J 10 2                    D   A K 7 4 3
C   9 8 5                     C   J 7

                South
            S   K J 7 5 4 2
            H   3
            D   Q 9 5
            C   K 6 3
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W	N	E	S
pass	1 Club	1 Diamond	1 Spade
pass	2 Hearts	pass	2 Spades
pass	3 Spades	pass	4 Spades
pass	pass	pass	

F/M 2. Joe Shipman knows two tennis players who are evenly matched. That is, whoever is serving has a probability p (0<p<1) of winning the point. Find a value of p and a ''game situation'' where the player who is ''ahead'' under standard tennis scoring is a underdog to win the set. To clarify, an example game situation would be ''server ahead 5 games to 2 and up 40 love in the present game'' (however, in this example I do not believe there is a p satisfying the desired conditions).

F/M 3. Nob Yoshigahara wants you to arrange the nine cards below into a 3x3 square so that all twelve pentominoes appear in the interior of the square.

Faith, you did the artwork when you originally laid out nov/dec

SPEED DEPARTMENT

Speedy Jim Landau communicates the following from William Barker who alleges it to have been popular at the National Bureau of Standards in the 1960's. Given a string of four letters, you are challenged to find a common English word containing that string. For example if the challenge is ''tege'', a possible answer is 'integer'. Here are three favorites from the NBS: ''hkak'', ''houe'', and ''eonh''. Editor's note: The April issue will find ''Puzzle Corner'' back to normal with new puzzles as well as answers to the November/December problems.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER

OTHER RESPONDERS

Responses have also been received from

PROPOSER'S SOLUTION TO SPEED PROBLEM

Khaki, silhouette, pigeonhole.