

# MSCS



# Mess

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## Next week's Colloquium

(There will be no colloquium on Nov 20<sup>th</sup> Have a great Thanksgiving Break!)

Title:	SeVenn, EleVenn, and Beyond
Speaker:	Barry Cipra
Time:	1:30 pm
	<b>Tuesday, November 27th</b>
Place:	SC 182

**Abstract:** Barry Cipra will report on recent results on the existence of rotationally symmetric Venn diagrams – a problem first posed, by an undergraduate, in the 1960s, and finally fully solved, by another undergraduate, almost 40 years later. Many related open problems remain, perhaps for yet another undergraduate to solve.

**Bio:** Barry Cipra is a freelance mathematics writer based in Northfield, Minnesota. He is a Contributing Correspondent for Science magazine and writes regularly for SIAM News, the newsletter of the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics. He is the author of "Mistakes, and how to find them before the teacher does," published by AK Peters.

## Mathematics and War

In recent articles we have described how military research led to developments in computing and mathematics during World War II. Following the war, the military continued to fund research by civilians. In the 1950's the Army established the Army Mathematics Research Center (AMRC) at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. AMRC mathematicians were required to spend at least half of their time on army problems. During the Vietnam War much of their attention was devoted to problems arising in guerrilla warfare, for example, "seeing" the enemy at night or destroying subterranean tunnels. While allowed to publish the mathematics they developed, AMRC researchers were instructed not to reveal why the Army was interested in the research. As opposition to the Vietnam War grew, some faculty and students at the university questioned the activities of the AMRC. A reporter for the student newspaper wrote several articles exposing the center's activities. The center became a target for protests, and on August 24, 1970 four anti-war activists parked a van containing a bomb outside the building where the AMRC was located. The bomb exploded at 3:42 AM, killing a physics researcher who had no connection to the AMRC, injuring four others, and damaging 26 buildings. The AMRC was "phased out" later that year.

References:

*Rads: The 1970 Bombing of the Army Math Research Center at the University of Wisconsin and Its Aftermath* by Tom Bates

“Sterling Hall Bombing” at  
<http://www.madison.com/library/LEE/sterlinghall.html>

## Congratulations!

Congratulations to

Dan Endean '09

Kristin Henry '07

Erin Manlove '07

for the publication of their paper

### *Zero-Divisor Graphs of $Z_n$ and Polynomial Quotient Rings over $Z_n$*

in the latest issue of the Rose-Hulman Undergraduate Math Journal. They researched and wrote the paper in Fall '06 when they took Prof. Dietz's *Research Seminar*. You too can try to publish a mathematics paper if you enroll in Prof. Garrett's version of *Research Seminar* next spring or do summer research!

You can find the Endean et al paper at <http://www.rose-hulman.edu/mathjournal/> (Vol. 8, Issue 2, 2007).

## Putnam exam

The 2007 Putnam exam will be held Saturday Dec. 1. Mark your calendar!

For more information, contact Prof. Weimerskirch [weimer@stolaf.edu](mailto:weimer@stolaf.edu)

## Problem of the Week (POW)

(The problem originally appeared in the 2002 William Lowell Putnam Exam)

Shanille O'Keal shoots free throws. She makes the first, misses the second, and thereafter the probability that she makes the next shot is equal to the proportion of shots she has hit so far. What is the probability that she hits exactly 50 of her first 100 shots?

## Joke of the Week

*Q:* What do you get if you divide the circumference of a jack-o-lantern by its diameter?

*A:* Pumpkin pi.



## Happy Thanksgiving!

Editor-in-Chief:	Kate Tummers
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MM Czar:	Donna Brakke
Problems Editor:	Mike Weimerskirch

If you would like to submit an article or math event to be published in the Math Mess, e-mail [tummers@stolaf.edu](mailto:tummers@stolaf.edu).