MSCS Mess

This Week's Colloquium

Title:	A Taste of Recreational Mathematics
Speaker:	Dave Wolfe, Professor of Mathematics at Gustavus Adolphus College
Time:	1:30 pm (Treats at 1:15) Tuesday, February 27
Place:	SC 170

Abstract: The field of recreational mathematics includes games, logic, puzzles, magic squares and fractals. Much of the area is approachable to the non-specialist, as is evidenced by Martin Gardner's column in Scientific American spanning 3 decades. Once every few years, a group of mathematicians, magicians and puzzle designers assemble in honor of Martin Gardner, many of whom were strongly influenced by Martin's writings in all these areas. All participants bring contributions to share with the group. At this talk, Dave will tell some stories from the event, and will present his past contributions which include logic applied to Scrabble puzzles, curious properties of pandigital numbers (numbers made up of the digits 0-9 anagrammed), and some paradoxes about money. This talk will be approachable to a very broad audience, and only high school algebra is required.

About the Presenter: David Wolfe is on the faculty at Gustavus Adolphus College. He has co-authored three books: "Mathematical Go: Chilling Gets the Last Point," which also appears in Japanese; "Puzzlers' Tribute: Feast for the Mind," a tribute volume to Martin Gardner; and, most recently, the textbook "Lessons in Play: an Introduction to Combinatorial Game Theory."

Joke for Geeks

Q: How do you tell one bathroom full of statisticians from another?
A: Check the p-value.

Q: Did you hear about the statistician who was thrown in jail?
A: He now has zero degrees of freedom.

Q: What did one math book say to the other math book?
A: Don't bother me, I've got my own problems.

Remember…

The MSCS Math Recital is approaching… do you have your talent ready? The recital is scheduled to be held at 7:00pm on Wednesday, April 18th in Ytterboe Lounge.

Problem of the Week (POW)

Checkering into a Corner. Abner and Beatrice play a game on a regular 8x8 chessboard. First Abner plays a checker on a corner square, then Beatrice plays on an adjacent square (vertically or horizontally, not diagonally). They continue playing adjacent to the previous checker. The first person who is unable to play loses. Find a winning strategy for one of the players.

Submit all solutions before the appearance of the next problem to Josh Laison in person, by e-mail (laison@stolaf.edu), or by walkie-talkie. The first correct solution gets a prize; all correct solutions get fame and glory. Preference for the prize goes to problem-solvers who haven't won one yet.

Solution to Quantity Time. Congratulations to Thomas McConville, who submitted a correct solution and won a pocket backgammon set.

The boy walks 50 minutes. Call the point on the road at which the dad and boy meet the meeting point. Since they arrive home 20 minutes early, they meet each other at the meeting point 20 minutes early, since it takes them the same time to get home from there as it usually would. Therefore the dad arrives at the meeting point 20 minutes earlier than he usually does, and so it would normally take him exactly 20 minutes to drive from there to the school and back. Therefore it would normally take him exactly 10 minutes to drive to the school, and since he is planning to get there exactly when school lets out, he arrives at the meeting point 10 minutes before school lets out. Therefore the boy has been walking for 50 minutes.

Thomas notes that in reality, the boy didn't "walk" for the whole 50 minutes. He stopped to play some hopscotch and terrorized the neighborhood dog for half an hour.

If you would like to submit an article or math event to be published in the Math Mess, e-mail meyerm@stolaf.edu or dolank@stolaf.edu.