

MSCS Mess

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Department of Mathematics, Statistics, and Computer Science
St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057

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This Week's Colloquium

Title:	Top Secret Rosies: The Female Computers of World War II
Date:	Monday, March 2
Time:	3:30 - 4:30 pm
Location:	RNS 310

About the talk: Before calculators and laptops existed, the term "computer" referred to the people who did scientific calculations by hand. In 1942 a secret U.S. military program was launched to recruit female mathematicians to work as computers for the U.S. Army. Women worked around-the-clock six days a week creating ballistics tables that proved crucial to Allied success. When the first electronic computer (ENIAC) was developed to aid the Army's calculation efforts, six of these women were tapped to become its first programmers.

At this week's colloquium, in celebration of Women's History Month, we will show a documentary about four women who worked as human computers at the University of Pennsylvania from 1942-46. "Capturing the opportunities and exhilaration of the times and exploring the moral dilemmas inherent in their work, Top Secret Rosies follows their efforts as they labored night and day to create the mathematical computations that made every Allied bomb and bullet more deadly."

MSCS Recital

Just a reminder that this year's MSCS Recital will be held at 7:00pm on Wednesday, March 18th, in Ytterboe Lounge. If you would like to perform, please contact Prof. Steve McKelvey (mckelvey@stolaf.edu). Performances of all types of skills are welcome, assuming at least a minimal level of tastefulness.

The event is a relaxed evening of food, fun and amusement. The point is for everyone in the MSCS department, students, staff, faculty, to enjoy each other's company for the evening. Nothing that happens will be on the test, we promise.

We hope all of you MSCS enthusiasts will join us! Again, if you'd like to perform, please let Steve McKelvey know.

and for Your Reading Pleasure...

a Math Joke

A mathematician and a Wall Street broker went to races. The broker suggested they bet \$10,000 on a horse. The mathematician was skeptical, saying that he wanted to understand the rules first, to look at the horses, etc. The broker whispered that he knew a secret algorithm for success, but the mathematician would not believe him.

"You are too theoretical!" the broker said and bet on a horse. Sure enough, that horse came in first, bringing the broker a lot of money. "I told you, I know the secret!" he exclaimed.

The mathematician was astounded. "What is it?" he asked.

"Oh, it's quite simple. I have two kids, three and five years old. I sum up their ages and then I bet on number nine!"

"But, three and five is eight," the mathematician protested.

"I told you, you are too theoretical!" the broker replied, "Haven't I just shown experimentally that my calculation is correct? $3+5=9!$ "

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If you would like to submit an article or event to be published in the MSCS Mess, e-mail greimann@stolaf.edu