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Editorial

When, back in 1995, Steve Abbott took over as Editor of the *Gazette* from Nick MacKinnon, he wrote* of the mixture of pleasure and blind panic which had overcome him when he was offered the post by the Association. His decision to accept it was facilitated by reading the advice of several previous editors, and, in his first editorial, he regaled us with excerpts from editorials past.

I cannot claim to have been as systematic. When Steve rang me to talk about the possibility of the job, I was, like him, both honoured to have been even considered for it and apprehensive about the amount of work it would entail. I had been an 'assistant editor' for a couple of years, which meant that I went through proof-readers' comments on copy and made an assessment of how many of these to accept and which to overrule, so I thought I had some idea of what the actual editor had to do. Because of this, I felt reasonably optimistic that I could cope – what had initially taken me a week to do was now only taking a weekend, and I felt that my judgement was becoming a little more intuitive and I was developing the ability to take the odd ruthless decision. I examined my other commitments and estimated that I could probably fit them around what would undoubtedly become the dominant one, and I reckoned that, if the worst happened, I could always drop one or two of them.

When Steve actually rang to offer me the post, I accepted readily – after all, it was something which I really wanted to do and I would never have forgiven myself if I had declined it. When, a couple of weekends later, I drove up to Felixstowe to be 'induced', I began to realise what I had taken on. I spent several hours in a daze of ledgers, standard letters, differently coloured marker pens, red, blue, green and yellow sticky dots, not to speak of authors' submissions – all part of an elaborate but incredibly efficient system which Steve had put together in order to make the job possible. The next day, having loaded up the back of my car with box-files, card indices, record books, a fax machine and countless mathematical papers in different stages of processing, we went on a shopaholic bender in an Ipswich stationary superstore in order to fill any space which remained; I was glad it

* Steve Abbott, Editorial thoughts, *Math. Gaz.*, **79** (484) March 1995.

was an estate car. The next few days were spent transforming my attic living room into an office. Then more articles started arriving

Now, three months later, I am sincerely grateful for the order and the structure I have inherited. It really is possible, when e-mailed about some article from May 1999 which the aggrieved author thinks has been forgotten, to trace its convoluted history and explain that it is now in the hands of referee C in its N th revision. But it isn't just about organisation. Looking back through the records, I can appreciate how perceptive and sensitive Steve was, particularly at recognising the germ of value in what might have seemed at first sight as unpromising, illiterate, maybe even faintly loony, and how, after much patient discussion and coaxing, careful editing and rewriting, the work of many a writer who might well have remained unrecognised saw the light of day. The correspondence file reveals how much effort went into developing some of these mathematical relationships. Steve could be firm as well, especially when dealing with people who were making unreasonable demands. Above all his vision for the journal – straddling school and university mathematics, not an 'education' journal though concerned with mathematics teaching, striking a balance between original research and insights which re-illuminate standard material – informed his editorship over seven years. Back in 1995 he thanked his predecessor for giving him a head start, in that Nick had already accepted some of the articles for publication in the March issue. It is a measure of the stature of the journal and of Steve's own industry that the situation I inherit is that not only this issue, but also the next two, were already 'in the bank' before I took over (apart, that is, from some specially commissioned pieces, of which more later).

Steve Abbott built up a wonderful team. Bill Richardson, as production editor, is a tower of strength, and I have already come to expect several telephone calls a week just to see how I am getting along. I am astonished by his technical finesse, not least at transforming incompetent geometrical diagrams into works of art. Both the reviews editor, Bud Winteridge, and the coordinator of Problem Corner, Graham Hoare, wished me well as I took over the reins, only to explain that, for different reasons, they wanted to 'retire' in due course. I was assured that this had nothing to do with my appointment. We shall see if we can replace them. I am also grateful for the contributions made by Rosalie McCrossan, Tim Cross, Tom Roper, Keith Barnett, Colin Davis and Michael Fox, whose roles can be found inside the front cover. Susie Jameson is a wise and supportive Editor-in-Chief and Marcia Murray at the MA Office does not complain when I ask for expenses. On top of all this, there is an unsung army of referees, book reviewers and, for that matter, authors, many of whom have sent me encouraging messages, hoping, no doubt, that I will manage to keep up the high standards which Steve set. I will do my best.

Seventh Annual Mathematical Gazette Writing Awards

I wish to thank all who those who voted and also all those who wrote for the Gazette. The winners and runners-up were as follows:-

2001 Article of the Year

Winner

P. N. Ruane

The curious rectangles of Rollett and Rees

Runners-up

Tony Crilly

Desert Island theorems: my magnificent seven

Joe Kingston &

Dissecting squares

Des MacHale

Hans Liebeck

A curious string of nines

Fukozo Suzuki

Tumugu Sakuma's problem

H. M. Cundy

The ichthyoids

2001 Note of the Year

Winner

J. A. Scott

Even more series for π

Runners-up

Jun Ji & Charles Kicey

The four number game and Pascal's triangle

Thomas Koshy

Weighted Fibonacci and Lucas sums

J. A. Scott & H. M. Cundy

Similar triangles associated with the Lemoine point

I congratulate all the authors listed above, especially the two winners, to whom I have sent prizes and certificates. The prize draw winner was Robert J. Clarke, of Stourbridge, who receives a copy of *Mathematics Unlimited – 2001 and Beyond*, by Bjorn Engquist and Wilfried Schmid.

GERRY LEVERSHA