Historical Notes 9

This year we featured a truly international set of problems. Problem 9.4 was contributed by the legendary Paul Erdős of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Problem 9.3 was inspired by a problem my friend and the leading Abelian group theorist Laszlo Fuchs of Tulane University mentioned in passing as we strolled down his street in New Orleans (Laszlo was born in Hungary). Problem 9.5 was created by Dr. Pak-Hong Cheung of Hong Kong (who created the first inequality in Problem 9.5(A)) and me (the second inequality and Problem 9.5(B)). The two easy Problems 9.1 and 9.2 were suggested by me.

On the day of the Olympiad, Robin Rivers of The Gazette Telegraph interviewed Matt Kahle, a former participant and a new judge of the Olympiad, whose name is already familiar to the readers of this book (Gazette Telegraph, April 25, 1992 pp. B1 and B3):

It took logic, skill and plenty of imagination to crack the problems.

“It’s hard, but it’s fun,” said Kylan Marsh, a Coronado High School junior.

Matt Kahle, a Pikes Peak Community College student who won the competition in 1990 and 1991 was among the judges. He had competed for five years, watching the contest grow from a few hundred participants to more than 1,000 this year.

“It gives somebody academically talented a chance to shine when there is so much emphasis on athletics in High School,” he said.
The Olympiad reflects an increased emphasis on math and science in US classrooms. President Bush and Gov. Roy Romer have endorsed the goal of America being first in the world in those subjects by 2000.

[Today, in 2010, I can add that President Bush and Governor Romer endorsed ambitious goals, but did nothing to really achieve them. In 2000 – or for that matter in 2010 – the USA has not become first in secondary mathematics education in the world.]

In all previous years, the Olympiad had been proctored almost exclusively by mathematics teachers. This year a new large group, the Palmer High School Alumni Association, headed by Frank and Roberta Wilson, joined this critically important area of the event. They have provided this valuable service to the Olympiad ever since.

Seven hundred students participated in the Ninth Olympiad. First prize was awarded to Dan Hedges, a senior from a class of George Daniels at Mitchell High School. Dan received the gold medal, a $1,000 scholarship, a Hewlett-Packard graphing calculator, an autographed set of my three books, and University and City memorabilia. He also won the special prize for creativity. Upon graduation, Dan entered Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.

Chip Summer, a senior from Cheyenne Mountain High School, won second prize. Chip received the silver medal, a $500 scholarship, an autographed set of my three books, a Hewlett-Packard calculator, and memorabilia from the City and the University.

Third prizes were awarded to four young mathematicians: Scott Mayer, a freshman from Fort Collins High School; Angel Kocovski, a senior from Doherty High School; Lawrence Smith, a sophomore, and Taylor Mohoney, a senior, both from Palmer High School. Each of them received the bronze medal, a $100 scholarship, a Casio or Texas Instruments scientific calculator, Geometric Etudes in Combinatorial Mathematics by V. Boltyanski and A. Soifer, a book gift certificate and memorabilia from the City and the University. Scott Mayer also received the United States Space Foundation creativity award, which included a space pen and a one year membership in the Foundation.

We also awarded 4 fourth prizes, 58 first honorable mentions, and 85 second honorable mentions.