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A Brief Tribute to π

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the price we pay for creative achievements", but it entails that "the 'average' productive mathematician sometimes knows little about mathematical ideas outside his speciality and even less about their evolution and role." He once contrasted this narrowness of vision among mathematicians with the situation in a discipline such as English literature. "The term 'English major,'" he wrote, "implies some historical, philosophical and evaluative training and competence. It is sad but true that the term 'mathematician' does not imply corresponding training and competence."

These concerns underlie Abe's approach to the column, called "The Evolution of ...," which he has edited for the *American Mathematical Monthly* since January 1994. The column's articles are chosen for their ability to expand readers' mathematical horizons by paying special attention to (as Abe puts it) "ideas and issues that overlap different domains of mathematics, or overlap mathematics and other disciplines, such as physics, philosophy and so on." The articles have solid mathematical substance, with an emphasis on developments since 1700; but always the goal is to

shed light on larger themes. This policy should make the column especially valuable to teachers, whose effectiveness can be much increased by awareness of their curriculum's wider mathematical and cultural context.

It is difficult for me to write dispassionately about Abe Shenitzer—so I hope that it is not necessary. For more than a quarter of a century he has figured in my life as colleague, collaborator, guru, travelling companion and much more; ours is a friendship with many dimensions. I can echo the several people at the conference in his honor who said, privately or publicly, that they count Abe among their greatest teachers though they never sat in one of his classrooms. I owe him debts that are not easy to express, let alone to repay—and I know that many others would say the same. It is a joy to report that at 75 he enjoys a mental and physical robustness scarcely if at all diminished by time. That is a lucky state of affairs for the cause of humanistic mathematics, which Abe has served so devotedly and so well.

A Brief Tribute to π

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So close,

yet so far away

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