

Hi everyone,

On October the 6th afternoon, Shimon Peres gave a talk in The Grand Ballroom of UCLA and received from the chancellor the UCLA medal - the highest honor granted by the university. He was described by the chancellor (while standing beside him smiling from one ear to another) as one of the most prominent leaders of the world in our time. "In this festive 75th year of UCLA, Mr. Peres is the second important leader, after President Clinton, who honors us with his presence and acceptance of the medal". More than 1000 students, faculty and other guests (of whom many were not Jewish) received him with long applause and a standing ovation. Shimon Peres opened his address by thanking "this great school from which many of Israel's best men and women have graduated". Then he recalled some of the things he said in his 1987 visit to UCLA and continued by describing the changes in the world in the last decade and the relation to the peace process. He also gave his vision of the future middle east. He described Israel as "the land of milk, honey and electronic-chips" that, on the other hand, "can not remain for long an island of prosperity in an ocean of poverty". Overall, except for some inevitable "bla bla bla"-bull shit, his address was very good.

Less than a week later, this festive event looked like a sweet dream. The kidnapping of Nachshon Waxman and his murder moved the American public deeply. I guess that his American citizenship and the video tape that was shown here as well, did their thing. The shock that followed the tragic end was not limited only to the Israeli or Jewish community. Emad, an Iranian colleague here, felt the urge to express to me his condolences. And then came the second tragedy which dwarfed the first one. If there are times when it's really hard being away, this was one of those times. I was walking in campus and people around were behaving normally, as though nothing happened (which, I admit, is quite natural). When I returned home I found my flat-mate, in a similar mood, searching the TV channels for news, but she could find mostly more and more damn reports about the O.J. Simpson trial. There were some reports on the explosion and there was a sense of shock, but less than after Waxman's murder or Baruch Goldstein's horror show. On top of that, the closure of the territories was considered here an inhuman action against hundreds of thousands of innocent Palestinians.

I will finish with the following amusing correspondence that took place this morning in the Email-network of the math department.

- Date: Fri, 28 Oct 94 09:28:03 PDT.

From the department manager, Mike Olsson, to all faculty members and graduate students:

A taxpayer called the department with the following geometry problem.

A large rectangular sheet of metal will be folded in the middle to form a roof with an angle of 106 degrees. A hole must be cut in the sheet before it is folded so that, after folding, a 15 1/8" diameter circular pipe will exactly fit through the hole in the roof, with the center of the pipe on the fold (so the cut is symmetric about the folding line). Determine the shape and size of the hole to be cut in the flat sheet.

If you can figure out the answer before noon today, please call Pat Cronin at 818-889-2118.

- Date: Fri, 28 Oct 94 09:49:58 PDT.

One professor announces a solution:

Prof. Grossman solved the problem instantly and will call Pat Cronin. Thanks to all.

- Date: Fri, 28 Oct 94 09:50:32 PDT.

Another professor gives the solution and his low opinion of the caller :

It is an ellipse with axes  $A$  and  $A/\sin(53 \text{ deg})$ , where  $A = 15 \frac{1}{8}$ ". The first axis is along the folding line. If your taxpayer had Calc I, he/she must be able to write down the equation of this "hole". - Samuel

By the way, I believe that high-school students in Israel would have been very happy to see such a question in a "3-unit" final exam.

Tamir