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# A MATHEMATICS CONTEST FOR HIGH SCHOOLS

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The Mathematics Department of Austin Peay State College has conducted for the past two years a contest in mathematics for high school students. The results so far have been of such a nature, in the opinions of the members of the department, as to justify the continuance of the competition, and plans are underway for the third contest to be held in April, 1953.

Collaborating in the planning and preparation for the contest is the Galois Club, the student mathematics organization on the campus. These students have charge of administering the tests, and entertaining contestants. The grading of the tests is a duty of a committee from the club under the supervision of a faculty member. The grading in previous meets was done by the visiting high school teachers and college students, but because of the large numbers of contestants and the relatively few teachers, it has been decided that college students, members of the Galois Club, should check, grade, and record results. The students also have a part in the construction of the tests.

Regulations governing somewhat similar contests were studied when the Galois Club contest was organized. The New York City contest conducted by the Mathematical Association, the Indiana state contest sponsored by Purdue University, and the William Putman competition in California were taken as examples of unobjectionable, well regulated contests.

It was decided that the outcome most desired from the contest was the arousing of interest in the study of mathematics in the high schools of the area reached by the Austin Peay State College. Convincing evidence of the success of the venture came last year (the scond contest) when fifty high school students presented themselves for the examination. Fortunately, fifty copies of the examination had been prepared, but so large an attendance had not been expected.

The examination given has been of a comprehensive nature, covering the algebra and geometry taught in the high schools, and lasting less than two hours. Future contests will be conducted in two sections: one for those who have had no high school geometry, and a separate section for those who have had geometry in high school. We found that many high school students had had no opportunity to study geometry and trigonometry, since these subjects were not offered in

schools where less than fifteen pupils desired a subject be taught. While the test is being given, the visiting teachers and members of the mathematics department meet for informal discussion of the examinations and problems relating to the teaching of high school mathematics. The college teachers have obtained new insight into the difficulties facing the high school teacher and into the kind of preparation to expect from the incoming freshmen.

A school is allowed a team of three pupils, but a limited number of individual entries are welcomed. A small loving cup is presented to the team with the highest gross score, and individual medals are awarded to the four highest ranking contestants. The four medals are identical.

The contest for pupils and the conference for their mathematics teachers have been a means of calling attention to the importance of mathematics, interest in its study has been aroused in at least some of the schools around us, and our college mathematics majors have had an opportunity to become acquainted with high school pupils and teachers in the area where they may expect to be employed. The Austin Peay mathematics department and the Galois Club would like to see similar contests held in other areas of the state.

# CELLS FOR MOUNTING THICK SPECIMENS[1]

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A number of methods have been suggested for making whole mounts of insects, small embryos, etc. The thickness of this type of specimen makes the use of a support of some kind necessary to keep the coverglass level and to prevent crushing of the material. Glass rings manufactured for this purpose are available from biological supply houses but they are prohibitively expensive. Curtain rings of bone and celluloid, as well as rings of gum rubber, have been used as inexpensive substitutes (Beaton, 1936; Cordts, 1938; Stapp and Cumley, 1936). Specimens of Drosophila have been mounted in depression slides (Patterson, 1932) but these too are expensive, particularly if slides with flat-bottomed depressions are used. Slides with concave depressions, although less costly, permit viewing from one side only and, since top and bottom viewing of thick specimens is often necessary or desirable, these are not completely satisfactory. Perhaps the coverglass props most often employed are broken pieces of glass. Unfortunately, the mounting medium usually oozes around the edges of the supporting pieces and results in a messy-looking preparation. The time-honored method of building up balsam rings to serve as coverglass supports is a tedious one.