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March 26, 1984

Dr. Neil J.A. Sloane
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Dear Neil:

In your Handbook of Integer Sequences, the reference you give to #235 is to
LeVeque's book on Number Theory, published in 1956. (The problem is the set of
positive integers n not of the form $6ab\pm a+b$, and its relationship to the set of
twin primes.) An earlier reference, and the earliest one I have been able to
locate after years of searching to see if there is any earlier, is to the American
Mathematical Monthly, vol. 58, no. 5, May, 1951, p. 338, Elementary Problem No. E 969,
proposed by Solomon W. Golomb. This was my first mathematical "publication", based
on a "discovery" I made in 1949 around the time of my seventeenth birthday, and
submitted in 1950 at the suggestion of one of my instructors at Johns Hopkins
(Albert B.J. Novikoff), who first told me of the existence of the Monthly. The
Solution was published in January, 1952, p. 44. The published solution (the same
as mine or anyone else's) is attributed to Azriel Rosenfeld, and at the end it says
"Also solved by the proposer". No other solutions were submitted, and no one claimed
it was a known result or had ever appeared anywhere else.

There are many subsequent appearances, the earliest being around 1954 in
Riveon Le Mathematika; then in LeVeque's 1956 book; and in a collection of Number
Theory problems compiled by Sierpinski (A Selection of Problems in the Theory of
Numbers, Pergamon Press and Polish Scientific Publishers, 1964, problem P_{96}^2 on page 120).

When I wrote to LeVeque around 1960 about giving proper credit for this problem,
I got a very curt answer in reply that he couldn't spend the time tracking down
the earliest appearance of each problem in his book. Even supplied with a reference,
he was not willing to use it in subsequent editions. The net effect is the same as
plagiarism, since he is credited with origination in such books as your Handbook.

For the past seven years, I have been offering a prize of $100 to anyone who can
produce an earlier published reference to the $n \neq 6ab+a+b$ formulation of the twin
prime problem. There have been no takers. It's not a proof of the Riemann Hypothesis,
but it is my earliest mathematical publication, and I believe I should get credit
until or unless an earlier reference can be found.

Sincerely yours,

Solomon W. Golomb

SWG/ay

N. J. A. Sloane
Room 2C-376

April 27, 1984

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Dear Sol:

Thanks for your letter of March 26. Your comment
about Sequence 235 has been duly noted!

With best wishes,

NJAS:jb   N. J. A. Sloane