



Mathematical Encounters of the Second Kind

Philip J. Davis

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A number of years ago, Harriet Sheridan, then Dean of Brown University, organized a series of lectures in which individual faculty members described how it came about that they entered their various fields. I was invited to participate in this series and found in the invitation an opportunity to recall events going back to my early teens. The lecture was well received and its reception encouraged me to work up an expanded version. My manuscript lay dormant all these years. In the meanwhile, sufficiently many other mathematical experiences and encounters accumulated to make this little book. My 1981 lecture is the basis of the first piece: "Napoleon's Theorem." Although there is a connection between the first piece and the second, the four pieces here are essentially independent. The second piece, "Carpenter and the Napoleon Ascription," has as its object a full description of a certain type of scholar-storyteller (of whom I have known and admired several). It is a pastiche, containing a salad bar selection blended together by my own imagination. This piece purports, as a secondary goal, to present a solution to a certain unsolved historical problem raised in the first piece. The third piece, "The Man Who Began His Lectures with 'Namely'," is a short reminiscence of Stefan Bergman, one of my teachers of graduate mathematics. Bergman, a remarkable personality, was born in Poland and came to the United States in 1939.

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