letters to the editor

MSOR Connections is always eager to help our readers share knowledge, skill, experiences and/or seek advice from the wider readership on issues which impact on the Higher Education teaching and learning of Mathematics, Statistics and Operational Research. As well as publishing articles, we sometimes publish reader's letters, emails and requests for assistance within our '*Letters to the Editor*' section. If you have an issue to raise or need help from the wider Maths, Stats and Operational Research community, please email the editors at: **editors@mathstore.ac.uk**.

I need your childhood stories

I appeal to all fellow mathematicians for their recollections of challenges they encountered in their early learning of mathematics. Such stories provide a fascinating insight into the psychology of mathematical thinking and frequently lead to surprisingly deep mathematics. One example of what I am looking for is:

A girl aged 6 easily solved "put a number in the box" problems of the type 7 + [ ] = 12, by counting how many 1's she had to add to 7 in order to get 12 but struggled with [ ] + 6 = 11, because she did not know where to start. Worse, she felt for years that she could not communicate her difficulty to adults.

This example is one of many from my forthcoming book "**Shadows of the Truth: Metamathematics of Elementary Mathematics**", (**http://www.maths.manchester.ac.uk/~avb/MEM.pdf**).

Why do I appeal to mathematicians? Because you have language that allows you to express your childhood difficulties – for laymen, my request would be much harder.

Please send your stories at **borovik@manchester.ac.uk**. Please also give me the following details:

1. Your age when a particular episode happened.
2. Your gender.
3. What was the language of mathematical instruction? Was it different from your mother tongue?
4. What is the level of mathematical education that you have eventually got? Do you teach mathematics?

My warmest thanks!

Alexandre Borovik

http://www.maths.manchester.ac.uk/~avb/