

PRESIDENTS, PAIRS AND PRIMES

MONTE J. ZERGER

Alamosa, Colorado

Which of the two major presidential candidates will be elected on the first "2's Day" in November of the year 2000, and take office on the 20th day of the following year? Linguistically and numerically, Bush seems to have a definite edge. His last name begins with B, the second letter of the alphabet, and if elected he would be the second George Bush to serve. The name Barbara also comes in duplicate form. His mother and one of his two daughters share this name, which in addition to beginning with a B, also contains a B in its center. The daughters are twins, adding to this strange doubling phenomenon. The Republican convention will be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the second state admitted to the Union. It appears certain Bush will be nominated on the 2nd of August, the second-to-last day of the convention.

Yes, Gore can also claim to be a copy since his name matches his father's, the late Albert Gore Sr., a former senator. However, I think Gore makes a real mistake by disguising that part of his name that *does* contain a B: Albert Arnold Gore, Jr. I suppose he could boast that he disposed of Bill Bradley (dual B's), a former professional basketball player. Let's give him two points for that. Still, I don't think he's winning the game.

Moving to the world of numbers, we will elect our 43rd president. This is a prime number, and in fact a twin prime with 41 (twin primes are primes whose difference is two). In a year of twoness, this seems appropriate. We have not had twin-prime presidents since Harding and Hoover (29, 31). One more plus for Bush--if elected he would be a presidential twin with his father, the 41st president.

There's more to this prime thing. Mark Thompson in "Numerology for the New Millennium" in the November 1999 Games Magazine made the surprising discovery that presidents 19, 23, 29, 31, 37 and 41 who were Hayes, Harrison, Harding, Hoover, Nixon and Bush, were all Republicans. The Republican party wasn't founded until 1854--have all prime presidents since then been Republican? It depends upon your interpretation. The only other prime president was the 17th, Andrew Johnson, who took office after Lincoln's death. Johnson was a Democrat but was nominated for vice-president by Republicans. Since Johnson was never elected president, we can in fact say that all *elected* prime-numbered presidents have been Republicans.

If we set A=1, B=2, etc., BARBARA and MCCAIN are both 43, and GEORGE BUSH is 107. As the 43rd president takes office, the 107th Congress will convene. The values of REPUBLICAN and PHILADELPHIA are both 101. The Republican convention will be, as already noted, in Philadelphia, and the 101st Congress convened as the elder Bush was taking office. 43, 101 and 107 are all prime numbers. Is this a done deal?