PACIFIC JOURNAL OF MATHEMATICS
Vol. 194, No. 2, 2000

ON A SHARP MOSER-AUBIN-ONOFRI INEQUALITY FOR FUNCTIONS ON S^2 WITH SYMMETRY

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We show that for $\alpha \geq \frac{1}{2}$, the following inequality holds:

$$\frac{\alpha}{2}\int_{-1}^{1}(1-x^2)|g'(x)|^2dx + \int_{-1}^{1} g(x)dx - \log\frac{1}{2}\int_{-1}^{1} e^{2g(x)}dx \geq 0,$$

for every function g on $(-1,1)$ satisfying $\|g\|^2 = \int_{-1}^{1}(1-x^2)|g'(x)|^2dx < \infty$ and $\int_{-1}^{1} e^{2g(x)}xdx = 0$. This improves a result of Feldman et al., 1998, and answers a question of Chang and Yang in the axially symmetric case.

1. Introduction.

On S^2 let J_α denote the functional on the Sobolev space $H^{1,2}(S^2)$ defined by

$$J_\alpha(g) = \alpha\int_{S^2}|\nabla g|^2dw + 2\int_{S^2} gdw - \log\int_{S^2} e^{2g}dw.$$

Here dw denotes the Lebesgue measure on the unit sphere, normalized to make $\int_{S^2} dw = 1$. The famous Moser-Trudinger inequality says that J_1 is bounded below by a non-positive constant C_1. Later Onofri [6] showed that C_1 can be taken to be 0. (Another proof was also given by Osgood-Phillips-Sarnack [7].) On the other hand, if we restrict J_α to the class of $\mathcal{G}$ of functions g for which e^{2g} has centre of mass equal to 0, that is $\int_{S^2} e^{2g}\vec{x}dw = 0$, then Aubin in [2] showed that for $\alpha \geq \frac{1}{2}$, the functional J_α is again bounded below by a non-positive constant C_α. In [3] and [4] A. Chang and P. Yang showed that $C_\alpha = 0$ for α close enough to 1. This led them to the following

Conjecture. Let $\mathcal{G}$ denote the functions in $H^{1,2}(S^2)$ for which $\int_{S^2} e^{2g}\vec{x}dw = 0$. If $\alpha \geq \frac{1}{2}$, then $\inf_{g\in\mathcal{G}} J_\alpha(g) = 0$.

In this note, we prove this conjecture in the axially symmetric case. We note that Feldman, Froese, Ghoussoub and Gui [5] proved that the above conjecture holds for the axially symmetric case when $\alpha > \frac{16}{25} - \epsilon$ for some small ϵ. They also gave an example which says the inequality is not true if $\alpha < \frac{1}{2}$. It is also known that $J_\alpha(g) \geq 0$ if g is an even function, i.e., $g(\vec{x}) = g(-\vec{x})$ on S^2. (See [7].)

Let θ and φ denote the usual angular coordinates on the sphere, and define $x = cos(\theta)$. Axially symmetric functions depend on x only. For such functions, it is well-known (see [5]) that the functional J_α can be written as

$$I_\alpha(g) := \frac{\alpha}{2}\int_{-1}^{1}(1-x^2)|g'(x)|^2dx + \int_{-1}^{1} g(x)dx - \log\frac{1}{2}\int_{-1}^{1} e^{2g(x)}dx.$$

The set $\mathcal{G}$ is then replaced by

$$\mathcal{G}_r := \left\{ g| \int_{-1}^{1}(1-x^2)|g'(x)|^2 < \infty, \int_{-1}^{1} e^{2g(x)}xdx = 0 \right\}.$$

It is proved in [5, Proposition 3.1] that any critical point g of I_α restricted to $\mathcal{G}_r$ satisfies the following differential equation

$$\alpha((1-x^2)g')' - 1 + \frac{2}{\lambda}e^{2g} = 0, \quad \lambda = \int_{-1}^{1} e^{2g}dx. \tag{1.1}$$

The main result of this note is the following:

Theorem 1.1. *If $\alpha \geq \frac{1}{2}$, then the only critical points of the functional I_α restricted to $\mathcal{G}_r$ are constant functions.*

As a consequence, the above theorem implies that the Conjecture of Chang and Yang is true in the axially symmetric case.

Theorem 1.2. *If $\alpha \geq \frac{1}{2}$, then $I_\alpha(g) \geq 0$ for $g \in \mathcal{G}_r$.*

The rest of the paper is devoted to the study of (1.1). To this end, we need some notations and some basic facts.

Let g be a solution of (1.1). Following [5], we set

$$G = (1-x^2)g'.$$

Then G satisfies (see [5])

$$\alpha G' - 1 + \frac{2}{\lambda}e^{2g} = 0, \tag{1.2}$$

and

$$\begin{cases} (1-x^2)G'' + \frac{2}{\alpha}G - 2GG' = 0 \\ G(-1) = G(1) = 0. \end{cases} \tag{1.3}$$

We also need some facts about the Legendre's polynomials.

Let $P_n(x)$ be the $n-$th Legendre polynomial, i.e., P_n satisfies

$$((1-x^2)P_n')' + \lambda_n P_n = 0, \lambda_n = n(n+1), n = 0, 1, \dots .$$

Note that

$$P_0 = 1, P_1 = x, P_2 = \frac{1}{2}(3x^2 - 1), \dots$$

Moreover (see [1])

$$|P_n'(x)| \le \frac{1}{2}\lambda_n, \int_{-1}^{1} P_n^2 = \frac{2}{2n+1}. \tag{1.4}$$

Acknowledgements. The research of the first author is supported by a NSERC grant of Canada, while the second author is supported by an Earmarked Grant from RGC of Hong Kong. This work was done when the first author visited the Chinese University of Hong Kong, to which the first author is very grateful for its hospitality. Both authors would like to thank the anonymous referee for carefully reading the first draft of the paper and giving valuable comments.

2. Proof of Theorem 1.1.

In this section, we shall prove Theorem 1.1.

Let

$$G(x) = \beta x + a_2 \frac{1}{2}(3x^2 - 1) + \sum_{k=3}^{\infty} a_k P_k(x),$$

$$G_2 = \sum_{k=3}^{\infty} a_k P_k(x)$$

and

$$b_k^2 = a_k^2 \int_{-1}^{1} P_k^2, k \ge 2.$$

We first derive some equalities:

$$\int_{-1}^{1} (1-x^2)(G')^2 = \left(\frac{2}{\alpha} - 1\right) \int_{-1}^{1} G^2, \tag{2.1}$$

$$\int_{-1}^{1} P_1 G = \frac{2}{3}\beta, \tag{2.2}$$

$$\int_{-1}^{1} (1-x^2)\frac{e^{2g}}{\lambda} = \frac{2}{3}(1-\alpha\beta), \tag{2.3}$$

$$\int_{-1}^{1} P_k G = -\frac{2}{\alpha\lambda_k} \int_{-1}^{1} (1-x^2) P_k' \frac{e^{2g}}{\lambda}, k \ge 2, \tag{2.4}$$

$$\int_{-1}^{1} G^2 = \left(6 - \frac{2}{\alpha}\right) \frac{2}{3}\beta, \tag{2.5}$$

$$\frac{2}{3}\beta \left(4\beta + \left(7 - \frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\left(\frac{2}{\alpha} - 6\right)\right) = \int_{-1}^{1} (1-x^2)(G_2')^2 - 6\int_{-1}^{1} G_2^2, \tag{2.6}$$

$$\int_{-1}^{1}(1-x^2)(G_2')^2 - 6\int_{-1}^{1} G_2^2 = \sum_{k=3}^{\infty}(\lambda_k - 6)b_k^2. \tag{2.7}$$

Proofs of (2.1)-(2.7). Multiplying (1.3) by G and integrating over $[-1,1]$, we obtain (2.1). The relation (2.2) follows by definition. Multiplying (1.2) by $\int_{-1}^{x} P_k(s)ds, k \geq 1$ and integrating over $[-1,1]$ we obtain (2.3) and (2.4). Multiplying (1.3) by x and integrating from -1 to 1 we obtain (2.5). To show (2.6), we just need to use (2.1), (2.5) and the definition of G_2. The equality (2.7) follows from definition. □

We will show $\beta = 0$, which implies $G = 0$ by (2.5). Our basic strategy is to show that if $\beta \neq 0$, then

$$\beta = \frac{1}{\alpha},$$

which will lead to a contradiction.

Below we assume that $\beta \neq 0$.

Next we obtain some inequalities.

From (2.3) we have

$$\frac{1}{\alpha} - \beta > 0. \tag{2.8}$$

By definition we have

$$\begin{aligned} b_k^2 = a_k^2 \int_{-1}^{1} P_k^2 &= \frac{(\int_{-1}^{1} GP_k)^2}{\int_{-1}^{1} P_k^2} \\ &\leq \frac{2k+1}{2}\left(\frac{2}{\alpha\lambda_k}\int_{-1}^{1}(1-x^2)|P_k'|\frac{e^{2g}}{\lambda}\right)^2 \\ &\leq \frac{2k+1}{2}\left(\frac{2}{\alpha\lambda_k}\frac{\lambda_k}{2}\frac{2}{3}(1-\alpha\beta)\right)^2. \end{aligned}$$

Hence we obtain

$$b_k^2 \leq \frac{2(2k+1)}{9}\left(\frac{1}{\alpha} - \beta\right)^2, k \geq 2. \tag{2.9}$$

Similarly we obtain

$$\frac{3}{5}|a_2| \leq \frac{1}{\alpha} - \beta. \tag{2.10}$$

From (2.6) (since $\beta > 0$),

$$4\beta + \left(7 - \frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\left(\frac{2}{\alpha} - 6\right) \geq 0.$$

Since $\alpha \geq 0.5$, we have

$$\beta \geq \frac{1}{4}\left(7-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\left(6-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right) \geq 1.5. \tag{2.11}$$

From (2.6) and (2.8), we have

$$\frac{4}{\alpha}+\left(7-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-6\right) \geq 0$$

which implies that

$$\alpha \leq 0.537.$$

From (2.6) we have

$$\begin{aligned}
&\frac{2}{3}\beta\left(4\beta+\left(7-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-6\right)\right)\\
&=\int_{-1}^{1}(1-x^2)(G_2')^2-6\int_{-1}^{1}G_2^2\\
&\geq \frac{1}{2}\int_{-1}^{1}(1-x^2)(G_2')^2\\
&\geq \frac{1}{2}\left[\int_{-1}^{1}(1-x^2)(G')^2-\frac{4}{3}\beta^2-\frac{12}{5}a_2^2\right]\\
&\geq \frac{1}{2}\left[\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-1\right)\left(6-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\frac{2}{3}\beta-\frac{4}{3}\beta^2-\frac{12}{5}a_2^2\right].
\end{aligned}$$

Hence we obtain

$$\begin{aligned}
&\frac{2}{3}\beta\left[\frac{5}{\alpha}+\left(7-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-6\right)-\frac{1}{2}\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-1\right)\left(6-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\right]\\
&\geq \frac{10}{3}\beta\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)-\frac{6}{5}a_2^2\\
&\geq \frac{10}{3}\beta\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)-\frac{6}{5}\times\frac{25}{9}\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)^2\\
&\geq \frac{10}{3}\left(2\beta-\frac{1}{\alpha}\right)\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right).
\end{aligned} \tag{2.12}$$

Since $(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta) \geq 0, \alpha \geq 0.5$ and $2\beta-\frac{1}{\alpha} \geq 0$, we conclude that (since $\beta > 0$)

$$0 \leq \frac{5}{\alpha}+\left(7-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-6\right)-\frac{1}{2}\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-1\right)\left(6-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right) \leq 1 \tag{2.13}$$

which implies, by a simple computation, that

$$\alpha \leq 0.52. \tag{2.14}$$

Moreover since $\alpha \geq 0.5$ and $\beta \geq 1.5$, we obtain from (2.12) and (2.13) that

$$\frac{1}{\alpha} - \beta \leq \frac{\beta}{5(2\beta - \frac{1}{\alpha})} \leq \frac{\beta}{5}. \tag{2.15}$$

To obtain better estimates, we fix an integer $n \geq 3$. We have by (2.6) and (2.7)

$$\begin{aligned}
&\frac{2}{3}\beta\left(4\beta + \left(7 - \frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\left(\frac{2}{\alpha} - 6\right)\right) \\
&= \sum_{k=3}^{\infty}(\lambda_k - 6)b_k^2 \\
&= \sum_{k=3}^{n}(\lambda_k - 6)b_k^2 + \sum_{k=n+1}^{\infty}(\lambda_k - 6)b_k^2 \\
&\geq \sum_{k=3}^{n}(\lambda_k - 6)b_k^2 + \frac{\lambda_{n+1} - 6}{\lambda_{n+1}}\sum_{k=n+1}^{\infty}\lambda_k b_k^2 \\
&= \sum_{k=3}^{n}(\lambda_k - 6)b_k^2 \\
&\quad + \frac{\lambda_{n+1} - 6}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left(\frac{2}{3}\beta\left(\frac{2}{\alpha} - 1\right)\left(6 - \frac{2}{\alpha}\right) - \frac{4}{3}\beta^2 - \frac{12}{5}a_2^2 - \sum_{k=3}^{n}\lambda_k b_k^2\right) \\
&= \sum_{k=3}^{n}\left(\lambda_k - 6 - \frac{\lambda_{n+1} - 6}{\lambda_{n+1}}\lambda_k\right)b_k^2 \\
&\quad + \frac{\lambda_{n+1} - 6}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left(\frac{2}{3}\beta\left(\frac{2}{\alpha} - 1\right)\left(6 - \frac{2}{\alpha}\right) - \frac{4}{3}\beta^2 - \frac{12}{5}a_2^2\right) \\
&= \sum_{k=3}^{n} 6\frac{\lambda_k - \lambda_{n+1}}{\lambda_{n+1}}b_k^2 - \frac{12}{5}a_2^2\frac{\lambda_{n+1} - 6}{\lambda_{n+1}} \\
&\quad + \frac{\lambda_{n+1} - 6}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left(\frac{2}{3}\beta\left(\frac{2}{\alpha} - 1\right)\left(6 - \frac{2}{\alpha}\right) - \frac{4}{3}\beta^2\right).
\end{aligned}$$

Hence we have

$$\begin{aligned}
&\frac{2}{3}\beta\left(4\beta + \left(7 - \frac{2}{\alpha}\right)\left(\frac{2}{\alpha} - 6\right)\right) \\
&\quad - \frac{\lambda_{n+1} - 6}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left(\frac{2}{3}\beta\left(\frac{2}{\alpha} - 1\right)\left(6 - \frac{2}{\alpha}\right) - \frac{4}{3}\beta^2\right) \\
&\geq \sum_{k=3}^{n} 6\frac{\lambda_k - \lambda_{n+1}}{\lambda_{n+1}}b_k^2 - \frac{12}{5}a_2^2\frac{\lambda_{n+1} - 6}{\lambda_{n+1}}.
\end{aligned} \tag{2.16}$$

After some simple computations, the left hand of (2.16) equals to

$$12\beta\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-2\right)+\frac{4\beta}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left[\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-1\right)\left(6-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right] - 4\beta\left(1-\frac{2}{\lambda_{n+1}}\right)\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right).$$

Thus we have by (2.9), (2.10) and (2.16)

$$\begin{aligned}
&12\beta\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-2\right)+\frac{4\beta}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left[\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-1\right)\left(6-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right]\\
&\geq 4\beta\left(1-\frac{2}{\lambda_{n+1}}\right)\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)-\frac{12}{5}a_2^2\frac{\lambda_{n+1}-6}{\lambda_{n+1}}\\
&\quad+6\sum_{k=3}^{n}\frac{\lambda_k-\lambda_{n+1}}{\lambda_{n+1}}\frac{2(2k+1)}{9}\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)^2\\
&\geq 4\beta\left(1-\frac{2}{\lambda_{n+1}}\right)\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)-\frac{20}{3}\frac{\lambda_{n+1}-6}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)^2\\
&\quad-\frac{4}{3}\sum_{k=3}^{n}\frac{\lambda_{n+1}-\lambda_k}{\lambda_{n+1}}(2k+1)\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)^2\\
&\geq \Bigg[4\beta\left(1-\frac{2}{\lambda_{n+1}}\right)\\
&\qquad-\frac{20}{3}\frac{\lambda_{n+1}-6}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)-\frac{4}{3}c_n\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\Bigg]\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)
\end{aligned}\tag{2.17}$$

where

$$c_n=\sum_{k=3}^{n}\frac{\lambda_{n+1}-\lambda_k}{\lambda_{n+1}}(2k+1).$$

Since $1/2<\alpha\leq 1$ and $\lambda_n>2$ for $n\geq 1$, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
&12\beta\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-2\right)+\frac{4\beta}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left[\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-1\right)\left(6-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right]-\frac{8\beta}{\lambda_{n+1}}\\
&=4\beta\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-2\right)\left[3-\frac{4}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-1\right)\right]\\
&\leq 0.
\end{aligned}$$

Thus the left hand side of (2.17) satisfies

$$\text{LHS of (2.17)}\leq\frac{8\beta}{\lambda_{n+1}}.\tag{2.18}$$

We now claim

$$\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\leq\frac{4}{\lambda_n},\quad\forall n\geq 4.\tag{2.19}$$

By (2.18), we just need to show that the right hand side of (2.17) satisfies

$$\text{RHS of (2.17)} \geq 2\beta\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right). \tag{2.20}$$

We prove it by induction.

We first prove $n=4$. To this end, we iterate the inequality (2.17). Note that the right hand side of (2.17) with $n=3$ equals

$$\begin{aligned}
&\left[4\beta\left(1-\frac{2}{20}\right)-\frac{20}{3}\frac{20-6}{20}\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\right.\\
&\qquad\left.-\frac{4}{3}\frac{20-12}{20}\times 7\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\right]\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\\
&\geq\left[4\beta\frac{9}{10}-\frac{14}{3}\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)-\frac{56}{15}\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\right]\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\\
&\geq\left[3.6\beta-\frac{126}{15}\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\right]\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\\
&\geq\left[3.6\beta-\frac{126}{15}\frac{\beta}{5}\right]\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\qquad(\text{by}\quad(2.15))\\
&\geq 1.92\beta\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right).
\end{aligned} \tag{2.21}$$

By using (2.18) and (2.17) again, we obtain

$$\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\leq\frac{8}{20}\frac{1}{1.92}<0.25. \tag{2.22}$$

Similarly, by using (2.22), we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{RHS of (2.17)}&\geq\left[3.6\beta-\frac{126}{15}\times 0.25\right]\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\qquad(\text{by (2.22)})\\
&\geq 2\beta\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\qquad(\text{since }\ \beta\geq 1.5\ \text{ by (2.11)}).
\end{aligned}$$

Thus (2.20) holds for $n=4$ and hence (2.19) holds for $n=4$.

Let us now assume that

$$\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\leq\frac{4}{\lambda_k},\quad k=n\geq 4.$$

We observe that for $n\geq 4$

$$\begin{aligned}
c_n&=\sum_{k=3}^{n}(2k+1)-\frac{1}{\lambda_{n+1}}\sum_{k=3}^{n}\lambda_k(2k+1)\\
&=\sum_{k=3}^{n}(2k+1)-\frac{1}{\lambda_{n+1}}\sum_{k=3}^{n}k(k+1)(2k+1)
\end{aligned}$$

$$= \frac{1}{2}\lambda_{n+1} - 9 + \frac{36}{\lambda_{n+1}}.$$

Hence we have by (2.17)

(2.23)

$$\begin{aligned} &12\beta\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-2\right)+\frac{4\beta}{\lambda_{n+1}}\left[\left(\frac{2}{\alpha}-1\right)\left(6-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right)-\frac{2}{\alpha}\right] \\ &\geq \left[4\beta\left(1-\frac{2}{\lambda_{n+1}}\right)\right. \\ &\quad \left. -\left(\frac{20}{3}\frac{\lambda_{n+1}-6}{\lambda_{n+1}}+\frac{4}{3}\left(\frac{1}{2}\lambda_{n+1}-9+\frac{36}{\lambda_{n+1}}\right)\right)\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right)\right]\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right). \end{aligned}$$

The right hand of (2.23) satisfies

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{RHS of (2.23)} \\ &\geq \left[4\beta\left(1-\frac{2}{\lambda_{n+1}}\right)+\frac{64}{3}\frac{1}{\lambda_n}-\frac{32}{\lambda_n\lambda_{n+1}}-\frac{8}{3}\frac{\lambda_{n+1}}{\lambda_n}\right]\left(\frac{1}{\alpha}-\beta\right). \end{aligned}$$

To show (2.20), we only need to show

$$\beta\left(1-\frac{4}{\lambda_{n+1}}\right) \geq -\frac{32}{3}\frac{1}{\lambda_n}+\frac{16}{\lambda_n\lambda_{n+1}}+\frac{4}{3}\frac{\lambda_{n+1}}{\lambda_n},$$

or

$$\beta \geq \frac{4}{3}\cdot\frac{\lambda_{n+1}^2-8\lambda_{n+1}+12}{\lambda_n(\lambda_{n+1}-4)}.$$

In view of the inductive assumption, it suffices to show

$$\frac{1}{\alpha} \geq \frac{4}{3}\cdot\frac{\lambda_{n+1}}{\lambda_n}\cdot\frac{\lambda_{n+1}-5}{\lambda_{n+1}-4}.$$

Because of (2.14), it is easy to verify that the above inequality holds for $n \geq 4$.

In conclusion, we have obtained (2.19).

Finally we can finish the proof of Theorem 1.1. In fact, if we let $n \to +\infty$ in (2.19), we obtain

$$\frac{1}{\alpha} - \beta = 0$$

which is a contradiction to (2.8).

This implies that $\beta = 0$ and therfore $G \equiv 0$. Hence $g' \equiv 0$, and $g \equiv$ Constant. □

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Received September 10, 1998.

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