



# ISOLATED M



September 2019 - Volume 46, Number 9

Wit and Wisdom Spanning More Than Forty-Six Years

## When is a Feghoot Not a Feghoot?

When it is a Hegfoot.

Feghoots are mocked by many, celebrated by some, and craved by an addicted few (we know who you are). Isolated M suffers an ongoing Existential Crisis over them: are Feghoots the abuse OF words or abuse BY words (or both)?

We ban them. They sneak in the back door. They are stamped out, then arise even stronger, like weeds thrusting through impossibly thin cracks in a sidewalk. Feghoots suffer an identity crisis because they are frequently confused with other styles of story humor:

Feghoot	A shaggy dog story with a Spoonerism punchline *
Epigram humor	A witty and often paradoxical punch line
Anecdote	Embellishment of a partly true story
Pun	A phrase or word with two meanings

In academic terms:

Feghoots are examples of the script-based semantic theory of humor (Professor Victor Raskin, 1985) which is a type of incongruity joke. To qualify, the humor must be text based, have two different scripts, and they should be opposing in a (subjectively) funny way. Due to reliance on semantics, this style of humor does not translate well to other languages or cultures and becomes dated as society and culture changes. (Caveman, Og, says, "Ugh." His brother, Og Og, responds, "Ugh, ugh." Ha, ha, ha, ha! Get it?)

Definitive! What more can be said about Feghoots? Perfectly clear. End of story.

\* *Isolated M*, Nov 1996, p. 6. I disagree with this narrow Spoonerism definition. A review of 12 of Reginald Bretnor's (the Originator of Feghoots), Ferdinand Feghoot (a story character) punchlines: 6 puns, 5 epigrams, 1 Spoonerism.

(Continued on page 2.)

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT

SIG membership on August 2 was 341. In addition, the September LGR will go to 637 Direct International Mensans. Four new members this month.

### **Welcome new and returning members!**

Antonio Andres Belarmino - Turlock CA	Sahat Simarmata - Indonesia
Colleen Criss Eagle - Prescott AZ	Kevin B. Wood - Tallahassee FL

### **September Birthdays**

Lyle Branchflower	Louise Howe
Vanessa Choo	Audrey A Lantz
Peter Fröhler	Rich Olcott
Sarah Gibson	Beth Rainbow
Graham Glover	Sovec Saša
Helaine Gregory	Kathryn Shaw Sykes
Deborah Gunther	Bob van den Bosch
Michael House	Hank A Vitan

### **When is a Feghoot Not a Feghoot? (cont.)**

Many Feghoots are hybrids, originating from crossbreeding (secretively, in the dark). These progeny become: epihoots, fegecdotes, punhoots. To join in the Isolated M story-joke party, submit one of your own creation. (This is a challenge! Give it a try.)

This month, there is no punicedote on page 12.

*Peace, Bryan Lundgren, Coordinator*

#### **Harper Fowley - Isolated M Scholarship Award 2019**

Our very own SIG scholarship fund awarded \$600 to **Emily Nichols of Port Allen, LA**. She was named West Baton Rouge Parish High School Student of the Year and is on track to excel in college and in life. Congratulations, Emily!

Isolated M SIG members can be proud of our financial participation in furthering the education of the next generations. *Thank you.*

**To contribute: go to <https://isolatedm.com> and select the SCHOLARSHIP button**

**“Entrepreneurs are great at dealing with uncertainty and also very good at minimizing risk. That’s the classic entrepreneur.”**

**~ Mohnish Pabrai**

## Mailbox

**Reducing clutter and following less news were last month's Editorial prompts that brought letters to Mailbox. Here is one on clutter. Enjoy!**

I was not aware of Kondo, but I've been trying to declutter my space for a long time. I coined a word: I usually end up just transcluttering, since all of my "stuff" has sentimental value and therefore brings joy.

I've actually gotten rid of things on two occasions:

1) a bit of metal that I didn't recognize, only to find out that it was a piece of a \$700 antique typewriter.

2) an illustrated article by a phenomenal artist that I couldn't bear to throw away, so I mailed it to an artist friend so that it could clutter his house instead. The very next day, I saw a letter by said phenomenal artist in the August issue of the Isolated M: Ann James Massey.

I guess it was good timing, since I probably would have attached even more sentimental value to the article and never sent it to Steve. However, I'll probably go [www.annjamesmassey.com](http://www.annjamesmassey.com) in the near future and place an order, adding further to my clutter.

Thanks for trying to help, Bryan, but I think I'm a hopeless case!

*Markell West, Laurel MD*

**Well, Markell, if ALL brings you joy, then finding pleasure in memorabilia and in necessary items used in daily living is what Kondo encourages. She preaches keeping everything in its place (not random locations) and points out that ALL can be simply less all. P.S.: I saw that typewriter piece on Ebay for \$700.**

### Not Exactly a Kondo Fan

I do not think that Kondo is a tool user. Tools are a means to an end, and one who is a generalist and does for himself/herself can't, I think, find "joy" in each tool, but in their use to accomplish the task at hand.

*Dale M. Parish, Orange, TX*

*"For all of mankind's supposed accomplishments, our continued existence is dependent upon 20 centimeters of topsoil and the fact that it rains." ~ Unknown*

**I'm a tool user (retired engineer) too, and reject several of Kondo's ideas, like fussy techniques for folding laundry. She would probably say, "Have quality tools, that you use, in their proper place." If she had a shop, it would definitely have an Outline Pegboard. However, I think you are right about Marie Kondo not being a tool user.**

**"Creativity Is intelligence having fun." ~ Albert Einstein**

## Giving Up on Trivial News

Hello Bryan

To echo your thoughts in a recent newsletter, I too have given up on the major media. I now have more peace of mind. I mean, do I really care about J-Lo's 50th birthday? The newspapers have come a long way from the days when they reported actual hard news both here and abroad. Can the barrage of completely trivial news from electronic media really be good for us?

I noticed in the January 2019 issue of the *Mensa Bulletin* that you reside on the west coast of Michigan. I grew up in Romeo which is north of Detroit. Romeo is famous for its old stately homes, apple and peach orchards an annual Peach Festival, which draws more than 100,000 attendees, and for being one of the oldest towns in Michigan. It was a small town then and a great place to learn about people and life. The house I grew up in was built shortly after the Civil War ended and it now has a plaque issued by the State of Michigan honoring it as a historical landmark. Back then, it was just home to me. I graduated from Michigan Tech University in 1964 which now seems like another lifetime altogether and in retrospect, it was. I've been in Florida now for 37 years.

*Don Robinson, Port Richley, FL*

**Thanks for letting me shorten and combine 2 emails into one. I have a 1926 house which will be a centennial home in 7 years, and graduated from Michigan Tech in 1974. It is a small world when we find paths that cross.**

**re: Complements to Isolated M. Thanks!**

Very interesting! Thanks for sharing, Bryan. There are also interesting things in the IM and interesting people. I was particularly fond of Ruth's story about Sri Lanka. I have a friend who received a degree in metaphysics in Sri Lanka.

*Best Wishes, Tom Hally ('Pancho'), Jalisco, Mexico*

## Clean Shaven

Really great edition. The "do I really need this operation..." joke is not original, though.

You live by the east coast of Lake Michigan? (Your email address is "shaven"). Does that mean you don't wear a beard? (ha-ha)

*Allegra Louth, Sterling Heights, MI*

**I once grew a beard on a 1,200-mile bicycle trip taken just after college. The fur on my face looked so uneven and patchy that I've been clean shaven ever since. Advertising that fact in an email address is my way of expressing vanity.**

**"The hard days are what make you stronger." ~ Aly Raisman**

**Easiest Job on the ExCom** [letter shortened]

Greetings Bryan!

WOW! Three mentions in one (July) LGR!

I have heard people describe the job duties of the Vice President of the United States as: attend the funerals of foreign dictators and inquire daily as to the health of the President.

While I was Vice LocSec on Central Indiana's Ex Com, I didn't have to attend any funerals. LOL But this office was also the group's Membership Chair, so I had to receive the monthly one page bulletin snail-mailed from National (from Cat Sterritt...LOVED her...but neither of us was single at the time). My job was to read it, take it to the Ex Com meeting, pass it around the room for all to read, answer any questions (there never were any) and do any follow-up with National if requested to do so by any of the other Ex Com members. This never happened, either. Someone said to me, "You have the easiest job on the Ex Com!"

Hoping all is well with you and yours.

*Warm handshake, Dom Jervis, Boonton, NJ*

**No Feghoots?** [a 3 email series]

Awww ... no Feghoot! Here's one from a 30+ year old issue of the LGR:

"The Maryland Dental Association recently advocated using hypnosis instead of Novocain for tooth extractions. This is the first time this procedure has been carried out in a trance sans dental medication."

*Stephen D Rosenbaum, Baltimore, MD.*

I would hate to see the next issue bereft of Feghootia.

*Best Regards, Bill Treloar*

**Bryan's reply #1: Well, page 5 was at least an effort.**

**Bill:** There was a Feghoot on page 5? I must have missed it! Unless you're referring to your account of amusing presentation names. I did enjoy those. Here is one of my observations;

Treloar's Law of Inverse, Perverse Causality

In any dichotomous situation

the more you prepare for one eventuality,

the greater the likelihood of the other.

**Bryan's Reply #2: Not a Feghoot, either... but a good laugh and quite often true. Thanks!**

**"The pessimist sees difficulty in every opportunity. The optimist sees opportunity in every difficulty." ~ Winston Churchill**

This is a paraphrase of one that was submitted 30 some-odd years ago by an Isolated M member:

A motorcyclist was riding behind a van. When the van went under a low bridge, the CB antenna was broken off; it flew through the air and pierced the hapless cyclist through the heart. He died, of course, of van aerial disease.

Rita Kautz, Attica, NY

Some Feghoots are worth saving. *Bill Treloar, East Hanover, NJ*

### **Bryan's Reply #3: Grrooaaan...**

#### **Flood Damage in Oklahoma**

*Dear Honcho,*

We're still working like sweat hogs in 100-degree heat to fix most of the damage from all the flooding. When you were kind enough to ask how we were doing, I was up to my insanity mark in multi-tasking and trying to rescue plants and carpeting, etc. Still, I wanted you to know how appreciated your question was. Some days I wonder if anybody knows I'm even alive. You sure answered that! It's Mensa friends like you who keep me paying my yearly dues.

Oklahoma has erratic weather always, so "Lord willin' and the crick don't rise" is a normal saying around here when folks start planning where and when they will meet again. Lately, what I also hear is the following: "I'll be there unless it's a-fixin' to become a toad strangler." I'd always found that amusing until we began cleaning out the debris from the backyard, and the job included shoveling up drowned toads.

What I want to hear about is the AG. I really wish I had been able to see the Navajo Code Talkers. The role of Native Americans in WWII was one of my big interests. Kansas City is close enough for us to drive it in a day, and that's the AG site for next year. We've been to two AGs in Kansas City, and both were unique in a positive way. Everything, of course, depends on money. We are scheduled for our first real vacation in many years in early May. It's our 55th wedding anniversary. Since we got married in Chicago and the judge was so drunk he forgot to sign the marriage certificate, we thought we might reconstruct our wedding but with the drinks coming afterward and to us instead of the judge.

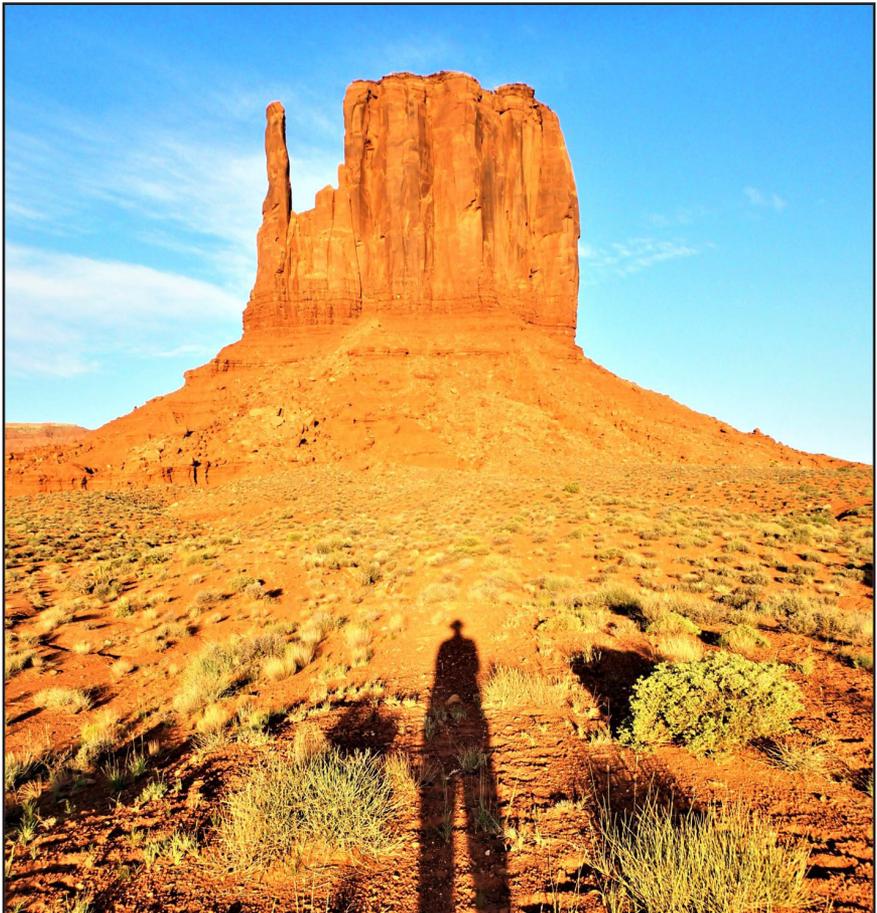
*TJ Lundeen, Warr Acres, OK*

#### **Honcho's reply**

Oh, TJ, the quote about the "crick" rising reminds me of Judy Rombold, who always used to say that. Judy was the wonderful lady who managed to get Isolated M mailed out when the editors lived in Bali. For those of you who don't know, "TJ" stands for "The Joyce." TJ and husband Jon were once editors of InterLoc, a Mensa newsletter which collected good ideas from Mensa groups around the U.S. That was when different fonts first became available and Jon used them all – sometimes several on a page!

**Bryan's reply regarding Code Talkers**

On the way to the AG, I stayed two nights on Navajo land at The View hotel in hauntingly beautiful Monument Valley, AZ. The Code Talker speaking was Peter MacDonald Sr., who was also the Navajo Nation Tribal Chairman from 1970 to 1986. The large lecture room was standing room only and Peter MacDonald was absolutely spellbinding. Afterwards, I watched Amazon Prime's *Navajo Code Talkers of World War II*, and I recommend this high-quality documentary. I'll see you at the AG in Kansas City.



**Dawn Walk in Monument Valley Arizona**

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**“Winning and losing isn’t everything. Sometimes, the journey is just as important as the outcome.” ~ Alex Morgan**

## On the Road

*Todd Bender*

Really enjoyed the AG in Phoenix. The highlight for me was Victoria Price's talks about her father Vincent and about her choosing to be intentionally homeless. I can't say that we approached our RV lifestyle as philosophically as she approached her nomadic lifestyle, but a lot of what she said resonated deeply with us. We are frequently asked how long we are going to live in our RV, and we usually answer "until we get sick of it." Victoria spoke of embracing the power of saying "I Don't Know" and being okay with uncertainty in your life. It's a very freeing perspective on life.

Another timely presentation was Alan Baltis' history of *MAD Magazine*, a childhood favorite of mine that had just recently announced its cessation of printing new material. I can also now say that I've eaten Burmese Python eggs (baked into excellent chocolate chip cookies) after attending Donna Kalil's presentation on efforts to eradicate this invasive species from the Florida Everglades.

Back on the road we visited the pictured Gropius House in MA, the residence of Walter Gropius, leader of the Bauhaus design school. Designed for efficiency and simplicity, the rooms were laid out to fit furniture previously designed and built by fellow Bauhaus-er Marcel Breuer, showcasing the hallmark collaborative design philosophy.

For those interested in a little more interactivity beyond the monthly LGR, check out the Isolated M Facebook page now under new management. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/isolatedm/>



**Gropius House**

## I Went to IKEA the Other Day

*Nikki Lardes*

I went to IKEA the other day. Putting aside the fact that the 150-mile round trip took over six hours. (The Pacific Northwest is growing faster than its interstate system can currently handle.) The trip became a little bit shopping, a little bit time travel.

I should explain. In Kuwait, going to IKEA is a big deal for expats. We know IKEA, we decorate our homes and our classrooms with IKEA or, as the kids say “ik-ea.” The people furnishing our homes buy our couches and chairs from IKEA. Every year, for eight straight years I went there. Then I returned to the states, and I stopped. I missed it, so I made my son drive those crazy six plus hours, to shop for 50 minutes, and come home.



As I approached the big blue letters I time traveled. I looked for the bus stop in the distance, where we got off and walked a long, long while through the heat of the desert and the tarmac parking lot.

I looked for the cab drivers, waiting to ask us if we needed a ride. I looked for the bathroom, where I would eventually end up after I ate too much at the Cheesecake Factory having not cared I was lactose intolerant. It was all in front of me, and yet it was not.

I thought of what I used to buy and had to tell myself, I do not need those things anymore. No more slipcovers to personalize the IKEA furniture the school had bought for us. I spent a lot of time on those IKEA couches. They are small, but so am I. No more bedspreads or rugs to brighten our small spaces. No more lamps or pillows to differentiate one teacher's quarters from another. No more dishes or cookware – those all now come from Amazon. I was sad. IKEA was the sign you were starting a new chapter, in your life or in the school year. It was all so exciting, even in year eight. (Continued on page 10.)

**“What you lack in talent can be made up with desire, hustle and giving 110% all the time.” ~ Don Zimmer**



Yet even though I knew all of this, I still expected to see well-dressed Muslim families, moms in abayas and dads in dishdashas (the traditional clothing of the Arab world), trying to both shop and keep track of their little ones, clearly as excited to be in IKEA as I was. No such Arab attire was in sight.

You could tell the new teachers. They traveled in packs, they struggled at the checkout to understand the new money, or how to use their shiny new debit cards. They bought everything—and in multiple amounts. We veteran teachers shopped in small groups, and for replacement dishes, or pans or lamps for our classrooms.

We all stopped for those little IKEA ice cream cones, or at restaurants nearby. We all struggled to get cabs, and to explain the streets we now lived on. We saw people we knew, be they friends or students or parents. Things were different, yet comfortably familiar. There were different languages and cultures and religions, all shopping for the same things, at the same time.

As I looked around this U.S. IKEA, I remembered my old life. I remembered how very much I missed it. I also realized how lucky am I to have lived it.



### Call for Submissions

**We have a need for flash fiction, artwork and articles (adventures, exotic places, humor, isolation woes, photo essays, travel woes), etc. for upcoming issues. Please send your submission to [Lida Quillen publisher@twilighttimes.com](mailto:Lida.Quillen@twilighttimes.com) with subject line Isolated M or IM. Ideally, articles should be entertaining, informative, humorous, educational or some combination thereof.**

## History and Insight

### In the “Spirit of Ms. Criss”

#### Colleen Criss Eagle

Darlene Criss, the editor-in-chief and self-billed “Head Cluck” of the *Isolated M* from 1984-1994, was my mother. She was savvy, sharp-witted, and brilliant, but she didn’t fully realize just how intelligent she was until later in life.

The Mom I knew growing up used to find fault with herself on a regular basis. More than once I heard her say, “I wish I was either smart, or dumb enough that I didn’t care so much that I wasn’t!” She only took the Mensa admission test as a lark to accompany and support a nervous friend. I think Mom was the only one who was surprised by her test results. She thought she was dumb because she had gotten married right out of high school at age 17 and had never gone to college. She was also a stay-at-home Mom for most of the years of my youth, which didn’t mean that she was ever one to stay home. No, she was a consummate volunteer who quickly found herself running every organization she joined. But she was only aware of all that she didn’t know, totally discounting the numerous awards and accolades she had racked up.

She was delighted that Mensa was willing to include her as a member, and within a very short time she raised her hand and said she’d be happy to help with the local newsletter. Almost instantly, she was appointed editor, and that was the beginning of 34 years of countless hours devoted to Mensa at all levels, most of them wearing the proverbial editor’s visor.

For Mom, joining Mensa was a pivotal moment. It gave her the courage to go back to school. I was a senior in college at the University of Kansas when she called to ask my opinion of her daring idea. I gave her my enthusiastic approval, and then was myself amazed at how she excelled. Ours was a family of eight, and money was always tight. When she learned that the per-hour cost of tuition was capped at 14 hours, she began taking as many classes as she could. No kidding, one semester she took 28 hours and still made the dean’s honor roll!

Mom graduated *magna cum laude* with a degree that authorized her to teach English. She won many awards in her lifetime, but one of her proudest professional achievements was being named Kansas’ Young Teacher of the Year at age 50! With emphasis, of course, on the “young.”

When Mom was appointed editor of the *Mensa Bulletin* in the summer of 1981, with October to be her first issue, she was both nervous and thrilled. Soon both feelings were justified. She found it exciting to be front and center at this highly visible and prestigious publication, but the onslaught of criticism, petty arguments, and demands on her time were frustrating. It’s not that she didn’t anticipate this.

(Continued on page 12.)

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**“Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does.” ~ William James**

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In her first column in the *Bulletin* as its editor, she wrote:

“It seems like supreme arrogance or incredible naivete to agree to be the editor of a magazine going to 40,000+ people, two-thirds of whom could spot a misplaced comma, and one-third willing and able to point it out: nevertheless, here I am.”

Never afraid to own up to her mistakes or laugh at herself, she began conducting a contest in the *Bull*, as she affectionately began to call it, to see who could find the most errors. That is how she approached life—finding creative ways to counter objections and accomplish her goals.

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## **Ancient History**

*Lyan Brundgren*

Because of security issues with the scoffing public, Noah placed a strong lock on the stout barn doors leading to the animal pens in the Ark.

When he and his wife were out gathering pairs of beasts, Noah would lock the heavy oak doors. A large iron key hung from a string on his rope belt.

The time of departure was near and two of each species had been loaded. The last pair in were (alas) male unicorns. Heavy rains began falling upon the face of the earth.

Noah looked at his wife with rising panic. Running his hands around and around his rope belt, Noah wailed, “Oh, no! I can’t find the key. The string broke. What can we do?”

His smart wife said, “Dear, run to the village and bring the ark-key-ologist.”



**Canada Ark**



**Caption the August Mystery Photo**

**“Planets in disarray” or “The Universe is stumped by the Isolated M!”**  
**both submitted by Ronald Allan Charles.**

**Our Slip is Showing**

We are changing the current volume number of the *Isolated M* newsletter by 2 whole years. Wow, why would that be? Sometime in the past, *Isolated M* editors made a mistake with volume numbering of the Little Green Rag (LGR). Volume 44 is printed on the top of every page in 2019, yet Volume 1, Issue 1 was produced in 1974. If you do the math, assuming each year of publication indexes this number by one, then 2019 should be Volume 46.

The October 2016 issue hinted at this discrepancy by stating it was Volume 41, number 8, but the tagline said “Wit and Wisdom Spanning More than Forty-Three Years.”

Volume number slippage happened in 2013 when there were only 3 issues published and again in 2015 when there were only 5 issues published. These were years when the future of *Isolated M* was doubtful, with high Editor/Coordinator turnover. The Crew is grateful that short term Editors stepped in and saved *Isolated M* and the LGR from oblivion and we thank them for that service.

The *Isolated M* SIG is stronger and on better footing than ever, but this is only because of reliable volunteers and readers who engage with Mailbox letters or articles. So, thank you for your love of *Isolated M*. We love you back!

Trivia Correction

re: The Great Wave off Kanagawa

Editor's note: I was a little hasty in formatting the August Trivia article. Instead of this header – Great Trivia – it should have appeared as



Annotated Isolated M History

Ruth Danielle



The first issue of *Isolated M* came out in June, 1974.

Sorry about the quality of this reproduction. The green didn't xerox well, and then it was printed on the cover of the June 2007 issue.

"We [Harper Fowley] suggested to the AMC that something was needed to keep our isolated members interested in Mensa, for in those days we had few gatherings, virtually no SIGs, and the *Bulletin*, frankly, was rather dull. We were given a generous grant and told to go ahead. Vol. 1 Number 1 was mailed out to about 1200 members."

In an issue later in the year, Harper said, "Several of you have asked if the portrait above is a reasonably good likeness of your Editor. Well, not exactly. It is more like a composite of the profiles of Charlie Fallon of Chicago, Norm Pos of San Diego, and Mensa's Old Bastard, Perry Oliver of St. Joe, Missouri."



Dumb of the Monht

Newbie golfer: "Well Caddy, what do you think of my game?"

Caddy: "It's all right sir, but I still prefer golf."

## Thanks, Dad

*Dom Jervis*

Christmas 2000. The dawn of a new millennium approaches. But I will be left behind, my dream of having a career I seem born to do, gone.

I'd considered research in advanced differential equations, actuarial science, maybe even trying a couple of Claymath's Millennium Problems. But the day I realized I could calculate bond prices in my head, the die was cast.

Along with several classmates, I'd been offered a position with one of the world's top traders. But unlike them, they wanted to hand me a 5-year guaranteed contract and a six-figure signing bonus, unheard of in the business for a newbie. None of them can even work a slide rule, but they are bound for Utopia, while I'm heading for the lowest terrace of Purgatory.

The only condition to this Offer that Dreams are made of is that I can't take any time off my first year, no big deal.

But, I should have known it all along. Dad is getting up in years. He can't put in the long hours anymore, and his mind is going, a recipe for disaster for a small accounting firm. He'd built it himself, and it had become his obsession, that and arm-twisting me in, to hand me the keys. I wanted to peg trends of derivatives and arbitrage, not do bookkeeping and taxes for farmers teetering on the brink of paying for services with chickens or cranberries.

I had always spent the Holiday Season reflecting on the year: new friends and contacts; others to whom I'd had to say good-bye; good deeds done; lessons learned from mistakes made; major accomplishments toward long-term goals; setting the course for overcoming setbacks, and being thankful for each New Day, for I knew too many who didn't make it to my age. Yet the future, once so filled with Promise and Hope, now holds FAR less than I'd envisioned. This is a watershed Christmas, one in which I will remember having come to a fork in the road, and not being allowed to decide my Path for myself. The effect of this, only time will tell. But it looks like no way but down.

Feeling sorry for myself isn't doing any good. But it's still tough to not do so. All I ever wanted was a genuine opportunity to pursue my dream. But evidently, that was too much to ask. It is over...ALL Over.

Enough already. Write the letter. Decline the offer. Forget about ever having the world at my feet, literally. There will be no office from which I can look for miles in all directions, with the belief that it can all be mine. Accept your Fate. Put the letter in the mail and turn the page.

Pick up the pen, though it carries the weight of all those born with a one-in-million Gift, but were shackled for Life due to no fault of his/her own, just for having been born into the wrong nook of the Realm.

Here we go. Start writing, and don't stop until you have finished.

"Dear Cantor Fitzgerald..."

*Author's Note:* Everyone who reported for work at Cantor Fitzgerald's Office in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 died.