

BY THE NUMBERS

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He was a man of letters, an imp of numbers, an explicator of signs, an interpreter of symbols, and a magician's magician. And, as the *Economist* magazine so beautifully put it, Martin Gardner "made mathematicians out of children and children out of mathematicians." While still actively among us, most fans, friends, and colleagues sensed the scope of Martin's influence. Without him present to write, synthesize, inspire, educate, amuse, mystify, *and* demystify, only his legacy can eventually assuage our loss. Max Maven's synoptically heartfelt tribute (*Genii*-July-2010) was a capturing, aerial snapshot of Martin's prolificacy—a full-swoop overview. Meanwhile paeans and appreciations poured in from every corner of the world. In fact, the aforementioned *Economist* (June 5th-11th: 2010) gave a full-page appreciation. Their opening sentence was spot on: "Where literacy meets numeracy, enthusiasm meets skepticism and philosophy meets fun, you will find Martin Gardner." Colm Mulcahy's website also has many photos and personal reminiscences to supplement what has already been written. Over the years I was privileged to receive many letters from Martin. Most were typewritten; however, he invariably scribbled handwritten emendations, sidebars, and postscripts throughout them. He seldom meandered off topic; however, he had a unique way of infusing his words with cozy confidentiality. This made them exclusive, if not precious. Although he often closed by writing "No reply is necessary," he was being curt. No reply was necessary because Martin rarely asked for anything except clarifications and permission to publish anything he thought might be private and personal. Martin always gave more than he received. I loved that he monastically approached a "life of the mind"; that he preferred to read a book, word for word, page by page; that he was a hands-on intellectual. I admired that he turned away from praise and kept moving on. He rode Time's Arrow" like a hobby horse, rocking forward, seldom looking back, always anticipating the next thing, the next book, the next project. He was also a man who wrote dedications (to a book) like this: "Why do I dedicate this to Charlotte [his wife]? (Pregnant pause) She knows." He was someone who never took the world for granted...*and he said so*. Likewise he accepted the universe as being the only one we can know. Despite such

cheerful acceptance he still tried to find out what may be possible to know. Then he shared his speculations and findings with us. In *The Whys of a Philosophical Scrivener*, he wrote: "Science reminds us of the reason behind things. Magic and fantasy remind us of the unreason behind things." Yes, Martin gleefully gave us science and magic, reason and fantasy, and he, to his end, agreed with Edna St. Vincent Millay's poetic "Dirge Without Music." "Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave/ Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind; / Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave. / I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned." Martin was also not resigned. In this regard I happily agree with Ron Graham's comment on Martin's passing: "*We all know (intellectually) that no one is immortal, but I think that Martin will come the closest to being so among all the people that I know.*" This may not be the "afterlife" Martin imagined, but I find it an easy one to adopt, if not embrace. Godspeed, Martin!

Onward...

ACCIDENT

SIR JEREMY MORSE
London, England

Abchurch Lane was
definitely dangerous. He
got knocked down there by a
hijacked mail-van,
klaxon blaring.

Memory yields
no pleasures now to him:
quick as he thinks, he
remembers only
stupid phrases that
vex his head,
which is filled with a noise of
xylophones tinkling and
zithers twanging.