

From: "David Grosf <[REDACTED]> on behalf of David Grosf <[REDACTED]>"
To: "jeevacation@gmail.com" <jeevacation@gmail.com>
Subject: Martin Gardner has died
Date: Tue, 25 May 2010 16:39:25 +0000

I'm sorry for your loss, and everybody's.
David

NY Times obituary:

Martin Gardner, who teased brains with math puzzles in Scientific American for a quarter-century and who indulged his own restless curiosity by writing more than 70 books on topics as diverse as magic, philosophy and the nuances of Alice in Wonderland, died Saturday in Norman, Okla. He was 95.

He had resided in an assisted-living facility in Norman, his son James said in confirming the death.

Mr. Gardner also wrote fiction, poetry, literary and film criticism, as well as puzzle books. He was a leading voice in refuting pseudoscientific theories, from ESP to flying saucers. He was so prolific and wide-ranging in his interests that critics speculated that there just had to be more than one of him.

His mathematical writings intrigued a generation of mathematicians, but he never took a college math course. If it seemed the only thing this polymath could not do was play music on a saw, rest assured that he could, and quite well.

"Martin Gardner is one of the great intellects produced in this country in the 20th century," said Dr. Douglas Hofstadter, the cognitive scientist.

W.H. Auden, Arthur C. Clarke, Jacob Bronowski, Stephen Jay Gould and Carl Sagan were admirers of Mr. Gardner. Vladimir Nabokov mentioned him in his novel "Invitation of a Beheading" as "an invented philosopher." An asteroid is named for him.

Mr. Gardner responded that his life was not all that interesting, really. "It's lived mainly inside my brain," he told the Charlotte Observer in 1993.

Martin Gardner was born Oct. 21, 1914, in Tulsa, Okla., where his father, a petroleum geologist, started an oil company. As a boy, he liked magic tricks, chess, science and collecting mechanical puzzles.

Unbeknown to his mother at the time, he learned to read by looking at the words on the page as she read him L. Frank Baum's Oz books. As an adult, he wrote a sequel to Baum's "Wonderful Wizard of Oz" called "Visitors From Oz," in which Dorothy encounters characters from the "Alice" books and Geraldo Rivera.

Mr. Gardner majored in philosophy at the University of Chicago, from which he graduated in 1936. In 1937 he returned to Oklahoma to be assistant oil editor of the Tulsa Tribune at \$15 a week. Quickly bored, he returned to the University of Chicago, where he worked in press relations and moonlighted selling magic kits.

He joined the Navy and served on a destroyer. While doing night watch duty, he thought up crazy plots for stories, including "The Horse on the Escalator," which he sold to Esquire magazine.

After a stint as editor of Humpty Dumpty, a children's magazine, Mr. Gardner began a long relationship with Scientific American with an article in 1956 on hexaflexagons, strips of paper that can be folded in certain ways

to reveal faces besides the two that were originally on the front and back. When the publisher suggested that he write a column about mathematical games, he jumped at the chance.

Mr. Gardner, who lived in Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y., for most of the years he wrote for Scientific American, resigned from the magazine in 1981. Two years later he began a column in Skeptical Inquirer, "Notes of a Fringe Watcher," which he continued to write until 2002. He had already begun beating this drum, debunking pseudoscience, in his book "Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science." He helped found the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal.

For all Mr. Gardner's success in refuting those who take advantage of people's gullibility, he sometimes could not help having fun with it himself. In one Scientific American column, he wrote that dwelling in pyramids could increase everything from intelligence to sexual prowess. In another he asked readers to remember the holiday that begins the month of April.

"I just play all the time," he said in an interview with Skeptical Inquirer in 1998, "and am fortunate enough to get paid for it."

This article appeared on page C - 4 of the San Francisco Chronicle

Read more: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/05/25/BAO41DJHRE.DTL#ixzz0oxZw0zBP>

David Grosof



*

"Hope your life is filled with wonderful music, too. See you soon."
-Ajay Sreekanth (1968-2010)