

17 November

Dear Topper:

I am beginning now to penetrate the twisted logic behind your dubious tale of needing a biography of yourself for Genii, leading to our current exchange of correspondence characterized on your part by the unlikeliest stream of alleged slips of the typewriter, incomplete data, obscure references to deceased American war heroes and every and any other imaginable ploy to keep the letters flowing at a furious pace.

Ingalill has finally put her foot down. "Out with the trash!" she has said in no uncertain terms, and has left you no choice short of decamping yourself but to find a new home for all those ancient bubble gum wrappers, bits of book marks, and tons of other printed ephemera - or to use ~~the~~ more apt anglo-saxon word, throwaways.

Congenitally unable yourself to consign so much as last year's laundry list to its obvious destination, you clearly wracked your brain for an agonizing five seconds or so, cried "What Ho!" much as Newton must have done when the apple fell, and set about to develop your nefarious scheme.

"Keep old Zavis coming back for more," you said to yourself, and into each envelope you could slip yet another ream or two of your carefully preserved processed pulp. "Let poor old Bill face his maker on judgement day with the chucking out of a mutilated Jimmy Findlay bookmark writ ~~back~~ against his name in that Great Ledger in the Sky. Let him explain the absence of a random advertising sheet from that Great Accounting on the Day."

Admittedly, each time you have provided a page or two more of fascinating information about your relatives - in fact, an article about them would clearly be far more interesting than one about you and is probably what I shall end up writing, with perhaps a line or two at the end about the present generation.

So let us continue to clear up the remaining mists, and in so doing I trust you will append such other notes as come to mind, and in payment for which I will accept another load scrap, if only because I love your wife and would like to see her smile again paper waves recede to the south.

Decima may or may not be a common name in Australia, but I doubt if, even in the antipodes, it is the custom to baptise babies with initials only. I presume the V in V.C. is for Victor, after your father (correct if wrong, please) but what about the C? While you're at it, you might as well let me have Ingalill's maiden name and Jessica's date of birth.

