

# The Martin Gardner Centennial Initiative

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## The shortest mathematics presentation ever?

At *Gathering 4 Gardner 9* in 2010, Gary Foshee said the following 20 words and then sat down.

“I have two children. One is a boy born on a Tuesday. What is the probability I have two boys?”

Source of problem: Mike & Tom Starbird (2006).

## Martin Gardner Centennial Committee and its Advisory Board

The Martin Gardner Centennial Committee and its Advisory Board has been working hard to have the name Martin Gardner once more as well-known and respected worldwide as it was decades ago. Our goals include building a vibrant, inclusive and connected community of Gardner Advocates: amateurs and professionals, teachers and learners, G4G/CoM participants and otherwise, young and old, in and outside North America.

With a new website, social media outreach and numerous specific Gardner honoring initiatives unfolding in the lead-up to Martin’s birthday in October, we aim to put plans in place for perpetuating the momentum gained this year.

The Martin Gardner Centennial Committee consists of Bill Ritchie, Chris Morgan, Colm Mulcahy (chair), Dana Richards, DJ Grothe, Jim Gardner, and Vickie Kearn.

The Advisory Board to the Martin Gardner Centennial Committee consists of Art Benjamin, Daina Taimina, David Singmaster, Don Albers, Elwyn Berlekamp, George Hart, James Randi, James Tanton, John Miller, John Allen Paulos, Keith Devlin, Mark Mitton, Matt Parker, Max Maven, Nancy Blachman, Peter Renz, Simon Singh, and Tanya Thompson.

Thirteen of these people are here at G4G11.

## Rationale:

21 October 2014 marks the centenary of Martin Gardner's birth. Over a period of many decades, he revolutionized how mathematics and rationality were perceived by a sizable chunk of educated people, much as Steve Jobs later did for computers.

However, Martin's stature and visibility needs to be rescued, polished and celebrated anew, so that for generations to come, young people, in particular, will be inspired to think creatively and work to perpetuate the kind of non-nonsense thinking that Martin promoted.

The centennial provides an opportunity to complement the annual Celebrations of Mind, by pushing to restore Martin's extensive written legacy to its rightful place center-stage in the minds of all educators and students, rational people and lovers of recreational mathematics and whimsy.

The focus will be on the mathematical and scientific sides of his broad interests, with acknowledgement of his contributions to puzzles, rationality and skepticism, magic, and *Oz* and *Alice in Wonderland* scholarship.

## Major Goals:

1. By the end of 2014, have the name Martin Gardner once more as well-known and respected worldwide as the names of fondly remembered scientific popularizers such as Carl Sagan and Richard Feynman, and math legend R.L. Moore.
2. Build a vibrant, inclusive and connected community of Gardner Advocates: amateurs and professionals, teachers and learners, G4G/CoM participants and otherwise, young and old, in and outside North America.
3. Have a comprehensive and evolving MG website.
4. Have Google celebrate 21 Oct 2014 with a highly innovative and interactive Doodle (based on Scott Kim's design), thus alerting a much wider audience to Martin's writings. Hopefully many would then find the new website.
5. Put in place viable plans for perpetuating the momentum gained above, so that Martin's thought-provoking writings—as opposed to fading memories of the man himself—continue to be cherished for decades (if not centuries) to come.

## Objectives and Action Items (so far)

1. Extend the Twitter following of @WWMGT (What Would Martin Gardner Tweet?), launched here 1 Apr 2012 at G4G10. Currently has 1580+ followers. The 8am EST tweets are about math, puzzles, etc, on weekdays, and about Alice, skeptics, illusions, etc, on weekends. The 3pm EST tweets are excerpts from Martin's memoirs *Undiluted Hocus-Pocus* (Princeton University Press).
2. Promote and keep alive @MGardner100th on Twitter. Launched Dec 2013, tweets at 10am & 6pm EST; has 555+ followers.

3. Set up webpage to harvest Martin testimonials. Launched mid Jan. So far 40+ have been received and posted, reflecting a 60+ year age span. See <http://martin-gardner.org/Testimonials.html>.
4. Grow Martin Gardner Centennial on Google+: Launched in Jan, it's at <http://plus.google.com/104800362491077405046> (the only number which equals  $2 \times 29 \times 8941 \times 33181 \times 60589 \times 100523$ ).
5. Have Mathematics Awareness Month (April 2014) celebrate Martin's legacy in the USA, via "Mathematics, Magic, and Mystery" theme. Lead by Eve Torrence & Bruce Torrence. <http://www.mathaware.org> is up, more info at <http://www.maa.org/news/mam-2014-mathematics-magic-and-mystery>.  
It's on Twitter at @MathAware (800+ followers) and also on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Mathematics-Awareness-Month>.
6. Have NPR cover Mathematics Awareness Month and Martin's centennial via Keith Devlin (NPR's "The Math Guy") spot.
7. Math Awareness Month kick-off on 1 Apr at Mathematical Association of American HQ in DC, "Mathematics, Magic & Mystery—and the Man Who Brought Them Together."
8. Martin Gardner special display in the River of Bricks "Math Walk of Fame" at MAA HQ in DC with formal unveiling on 1 Apr.
9. A Martin Gardner Public Lecture at MAA MathFest, 9 Aug, in Portland, OR. Persi Diaconis will speak on "The Magic of Martin Gardner."
10. A *Scientific American* Martin print feature in Oct issue.
11. A special Centennial Celebration of Mind (an afternoon family event followed by an evening lecture) at MoMath, 25 Oct, in NY, NY.

## The Return of Dr. I. J. Matrix?

"Dr. Matrix talks to Owen O'Shea" (see 4-page green handout) tells of a meeting with 106-year old Irving Joshua Matrix here in Atlanta last Wednesday, 19 May. Among the questions posed there are: 1. What is the largest power in which all of its digits are prime? 2. What is the smallest number that is the sum of three squares in six different ways? and, 3. What is the only number  $N$  such that between them  $N$  and  $N^6$  contain every digit from 1 to 9 twice?

## Surprising answer to the shortest talk question

Martin Gardner had two children. One was a boy, Jim. He was born on a Tuesday. Martin's other child was also a son, Tom. Hence the answer to the question is "1."

## The New Website

The new website is at: <http://www.martin-gardner.org>