

November 13, 1971.

Dear Helen and Dick,

So it's Christmas time again--and with it all my best wishes for the happiest of Christmases and New Years; all my love to Christy, Wendy and Ricky.

I have quite suddenly become a local celebrity! Children in passing cars call out "Hello Miss Lawrence", shopkeepers and shoppers stop to congratulate me, I receive fan mail and give press and radio interviews! It's all a bit wierd; but here's how it happened.

Sometime last September I received a phone call from a TV man who used to work on a national TV general knowledge quiz programme which I won in 1966. He said he was now Melbourne representative of a TV production firm which had a ~~new~~ quiz programme called Money Makers. This programme had started in Brisbane, and had been so popular there that now they were going to extend to Sydney and Melbourne. They hoped to achieve the maximum in publicity and audience interest by featuring a contestant who had a good chance of getting through the show undefeated and taking away the maximum prize money. (I wasn't told all this, I inferred it later.) As far as they could judge, there were four possibilities; one of them had retired, two others had appeared on a great many editions of a quiz programme that had recently concluded; I was the fourth. I was preferred because I hadn't been on nearly as many quiz shows as the other two, and so was much less well-known. (Also I got 37 out of 40 on their usual audition test.)

Money Makers is taped in Brisbane on a Friday afternoon/evening, five separate half-hour shows having to be taped. The first day I had to get up at five a.m. to catch a plane that would get me to Brisbane at the scheduled time; there were interviews and photographs and, as this was the first national show, hold-ups and re-takes. We didn't finish the fifth show until after 11 p.m.--and I'd been in all of them.

Actually I was terribly lucky to get through my first contest. This is the format of the show: the first round is a "buzzer" contest between three newcomers; the first to press his buzzer gets the chance to answer the question, and the two of the three who first reach five points go on to Round 2. In Round two they are asked the same five questions, and the loser drops out. If they get an equal number of points, the round continues until one of them goes ahead of the other. ~~the winner~~ the winner goes into Round 3 to meet the existing champion; they are each asked ~~the same~~ questions, the first to reach 10 points being the new champion and the loser dropping out. If they both reach 10 points on the same question, the contest continues until one contestant is two clear of the other.

I whizzed through the buzzer round. I'd realised all along that Round 2 was the danger round, because the fewer the questions, the more the element of luck enters into it. One silly mistake and you could be gone. I made the silly mistake. The question was: "Where did the Germans scuttle their fleet in 1918?" I panicked. Three names were going round my head--Heligoland, Scapa Flow and Kiel Canal. I felt time was slipping away and I must answer. I blurted out "Kiel Canal" which, apart from being wrong, was absolutely ludicrous; why on earth would they block a German canal? So I had four out of five. Then came my opponent's turn. He got his first four questions right. The fifth question was: "Which Lancashire city is known as Cottonopolis?" He said Macclesfield instead of Manchester--and I was relieved. Then came the tie-breaker questions. We both got the first three questions right. This was the next question: "Which explorers, father and son, reached the Newfoundland and Labrador coasts in the late 15th century?" I got it right, he got it wrong, and I was on my way.

I then had to meet the current champion; I defeated her 10 to 7, and went on to defeat the next contestants without too much difficulty, though some of them got to 8 to my 10. There was one bad moment when I got careless, answered hurriedly and gave the wrong answers to two history questions that I should have known perfectly well. From then on I took care not to answer until I was absolutely sure I was right. (Of course I made mistakes, but that didn't worry me, as my opponents were making more mistakes.) In fact I won the second set of five contests so easily that afterwards I told the producer that in the days when Barry Jones was on the Pick-a-Box quiz (this gentleman, now retired undefeated, is regarded throughout Australia as the ~~unad~~ ultimate in quiz whizzes) I always thought there were far too many questions on history and historical personages, his speciality, and that this gave him an unfair advantage; I suggested that people might think the same thing in my case, since lots of people knew that history was my best subject. From then on there were fewer history questions--normally Australian quiz shows seem to have about 20% questions on this subject and in fact the first time I met the producer, when I did his audition, he told me that this was the usual proportion. Not only that; from then on, in order to make the competition more even he--the producer--brought back previous champions--ie, those who had been champions when the show was confined to Queensland. Naturally the competition was much stiffer from then on.

I haven't mentioned the prize money; during the first week it increased by \$200 per night, then it went up by greater amounts each week. At the end of the fourth week I had

beaten
the next nine contestants without too much difficulty, although one of ~~xxx~~ them got to eight to my ten. There was one bad moment, when I must have got over-confident--always a danger--and twice running gave the wrong answer to historical questions that I knew perfectly well; but this was good in the long run, because after that I didn't give an answer without mentally checking it. Of course I made mistakes, some of them silly ones, but that didn't worry me, as my opponents kept on making more mistakes than I was doing. Actually I won the second set of five contests so easily that afterwards I told the producer that in the days when Barry Jones was ^{on} the Pick-a-Box (this gentleman, now retired from the quiz game, is regarded throughout as the ultimate in quiz whizzes) I always thought there were far too many questions on ~~xxx~~ history and historical characters, his speciality, and that this was the reason he had beaten all comers; I suggested that people might think the same thing in my case, since plenty of viewers realised that history was my best subject. (By this time I regarded myself as being in some way part of the team, not just a competitor.) From then on there were far fewer history questions--normally Australian quiz shows seem to have about 25% questions on this subject and in fact the first time I met the producer, when I did his audition, he told me that this was the usual proportion. Not only that; from then onwards, in order to make the competition more even, he brought back ¹ previous champions--ie, those who had been champions when the show was confined to Queensland; some of them had retired undefeated, taking their prize-money. Naturally the competition was much stiffer from then on.

I haven't mentioned the prize money. During the first week it increased by \$200 per night; then each successive week it went up by larger jumps. At the end of the fourth week I had \$10,000 to my credit. If I kept on winning, the prize money would rise to \$12,000 on Monday, \$14,000 on Tuesday, \$16,000 on Wednesday, \$18,000 on Thursday and \$20,000 on Friday. But if I were defeated on any night, I'd get only \$2,000.

So we came to the Friday when the five final shows were to be taped. The Monday show went off all right. On the Tuesday show, my competitor was an exceptionally well-informed man; I could tell that by the way he got through the early rounds. And for some incomprehensible reason the questions in round 3 seemed to be definitely masculine-oriented; no less than six out of 12 questions came under when I'd describe as the general heading of science and scientific history; here they are:

What do the initials RADAR stand for, exactly	radio detection & ranging
Name the Austrian physicist after whom the system of numbers expressing the speed of an object in relation to the speed of sound was named	Ernest Mach
What weapon, used at sea, was invented by Whitehead in 1866	torpedo
Who was the Greek astronomer, 3rd c. B C, who estimated the circumference of the earth to within 50 miles	Eratosthenes
What xxx ^{is} the common source of the red pigment carmine	cochineal insect
Which Englishman, who died in 1887, secured the standardization of screwthreads; xx	Sir Joseph Whitcross

What really appalled me was the screw-thread question, which came up quite ~~rx~~ early. I didn't even know what a screw-thread was--I'm not sure that I understand it even now! Now previously I'd made plenty of mistakes, but ~~that~~ didn't matter because my opponents had always missed the really hard ones too--I could be reasonably sure that they would do so. ^{But my competitor got this one right!} I knew then that I was in real danger. If the questions continued on the same trend, I could be lost. I got the Eratosthenes question right, and ~~his~~ ^{he} missed it, so that made us level. The question that won it for me was, of all things, a sporting question: "What was the name of the Australian yacht that challenged for the America's Cup in 1962?" Answer, Gretel 1. Why I say "of all things" is that everyone thinks I'm weak on sport; it's not my best subject, of course, but I think I'm as well-informed as the average good general knowledge competitor, who's not likely to be a sporting expert; so I won that round, 10 to 9.

The Wednesday show I won by 10 to 7 or 8; then on Thursday the contestant was again a very well-informed man. The questions were, it seemed to me, much easier. I didn't like this, because what happens is that both contestants get all the questions right, and it's a matter of luck which competitor will be suited by the first hard question. In fact that's exactly when what happened. Each of us missed the same question, on Australian geography, and got nine right, so we were level on nine points with one question to go. This was it: "what eight-letter word

\$10,000 to my credit. If I kept on winning, the prize money would rise to \$12,000 on Monday, \$14,000 on Tuesday, \$16,000 on Wednesday, \$18,000 on Thursday, and \$20,000 on Friday. But if I were defeated on any night, I'd only get \$2,000.

I got through the Monday night show all right (actually all five were to be taped on the one night, of course.) ~~Early in the day I'd given a long press interview, then~~ On the Tuesday night, my competitor was an exceptionally well-informed man; I could tell that by the way he got through the early rounds. And for some incomprehensible reason the questions in round 3 seemed to be what I call masculine-oriented--hard questions about science, scientific definitions, scientific history and personalities. Six out of 12 questions came under these rough headings. What really scared me was this question: "Which Englishman, who died in 1887, was responsible for standardizing the screw-thread?" I didn't even know what a screw-thread was--I'm not sure that I understand it even now! Now previously I'd made plenty of mistakes, but I'd kept on winning because my opponents had made more mistakes than I did. I'd never minded missing on a hard question, because I could be reasonably sure that my opponent would miss it too. But my competitor got this one right! I knew then that I was in real danger. Another question of that kind and I'd be gone. I got one hard question that he missed--"Who was the third century B C geographer who estimated the circumference of the earth to within 200 miles?" Answer, Eratosthenes. That made us level. The question that won it for me was, of all things, a sporting question: "What was the name of the Australian yacht that challenged for the America's Cup in 1962?" Answer Gretel 1. Why I say "of all things" is that everyone ~~thinks~~ I'm weak on sport; it's not my best subject, of course, but I think I'm as good as the average general knowledge competitor, who's not likely to be a sporting expert.) I got it right, he missed it; so I won that round, 10 to 9.

Wednesday I won by 10 to 7 or 8; then on Thursday the contestant was again a very-well-informed man. The questions were, it seemed to me, easier; I didn't like this, because what happens is that both contestants get all the questions right, then it all depends on the first hard question, and it's a matter of luck which of them it will suit. In fact that is what happened. Each of us missed one question (the same one, on Australian geography) and got eight right, so we were equal on nine points with one question to go. This was it: "What eight-letter word means the essence or worst part of an accusation?" I concentrated very hard, counted on my fingers, and at last whispered, without much conviction: "Gravamen?" I was right! Then we had a nerve-racking break for a commercial. Somehow I wasn't really too worried. This question was so much harder than the others in this round had been that I somehow felt he wouldn't know it. And he didn't. I had won, 10 to 9.

You remember that all this was happening on the one night of a day that had started for me at 5.30 a.m. I suppose it was about 10 o'clock when we came to the last round. You can imagine how the tension had built up by this time. The compere had warned me beforehand that my opponent, a woman, was very good, in case I wanted to take the \$18,000 and withdraw, but somehow I never even considered doing so. I'd gathered from dressing-room conversation that she was strong on history, and I wasn't afraid of anyone beating me there. Also I thought that a man was much more likely than a woman to answer correctly if the worse happened and there were more questions on machinery and tools--a subject that I'd never contemplated as a possibility until now.

Of course there was a lot of build-up and bally-ho, the questions were repeated, and when the half-hour was up we hadn't finished the round, the score being six to four in my favour. So we had to hold it over--ostensibly for an agonizing week-end, actually for about half an hour, during which they poured yet another cup of black coffee into me. It took six questions more before I finally won--10 to 7 or 8 (my competitor wasn't asked the last question, as she couldn't beat me.) The final question was: "What was the best-known occupation of Samuel Morse, inventor of the Morse code?" Now that was a thing I would never have considered learning; I wouldn't have expected it to stick in my mind. But when I heard the question I concentrated with all my powers, and somehow dredged up the answer from my subconscious--"I think he was an artist."

Then, believe it or not, I had to do a short publicity radio tape and give an interview to the girl who wrote of me as the "Last of the Big Time Gamblers." And back to the producer's hotel for a champagne party and another sleepless night--I was always so
(my second for the day)

the ~~next~~ next nine contestants without too much difficulty, although one of them got to eight to my ten. (Of course I made mistakes, some of them silly ones, but that didn't worry me, as my opponents were making more mistakes.) In fact I won the second set of five contests so easily that afterwards I told the producer that in the days when Barry Jones was on the Pick-a-Box quiz (this gentleman, now retired, is regarded throughout Australia as the ultimate in quiz whizzes) I always thought there were far too many questions on history and historical characters, his speciality, and that this gave him an unfair advantage; I suggested that people might think the same thing in my case, since plenty of viewers realised that history was my best subject. (In some way I regarded myself as part of the team, not just a competitor). From ~~then onwards~~ then on there were far fewer history questions--normally Australian quiz shows seem to have about 25% questions on this subject and in fact the first time I met the producer, when I did his audition, he told me that this was the usual proportion. Not only that; from then onwards, in order to make the competition more even, he brought back previous champions--i.e., those who had been champions when the show was confined to Queensland; some of them had retired undefeated taking their prize money. Naturally the competition was much stiffer from then on.

I haven't mentioned the prize money. During the first week it increased by \$200 per night; then each successive week it went up by larger jumps. At the end of the fourth week I had \$10,000 to my credit. If I kept on winning, the prize money would rise to \$12,000 on Monday, \$14,000 on Tuesday, \$16,000 on Wednesday, \$18,000 on Thursday and \$20,000 on Friday. But if I were defeated on any night, I'd get only \$2,000.

So we came to the Friday when the final five shows were to be taped. The Monday night show went off all right. On the Tuesday night show, my competitor was an exceptionally well-informed man; I could tell that by the way he got through the early rounds. And for some incomprehensible reason the questions in round 3 seemed to be definitely masculine-oriented; no less than six out of 12 questions came under what I'd describe as the rough heading of science and scientific history; here they are:

What do the initials RADAR stand for, exactly?	(Radio detection and ranging)
Who was the German of 19th c. mathematician whose name has been given to a conception of speed?	Ernest Mach
What naval warfare device was inventor Robert Whitehead connected with?	Torpedo.
Who was the geographer, 3rd c. BC, who estimated the circumference of the earth to within 200 miles?	Eratosthenes.
Which Englishman, who died in 1857, was responsible for standardization of the screw thread?	Sir J. Whitcross ???

What really appalled me was the screw-thread question, which came up quite early. I didn't even know what a screw-thread was--I'm not sure that I understand it even now! Now previously I'd made plenty of mistakes, but that didn't matter because my opponents had ~~usually~~ ^{always} missed the ~~hard~~ ^{really} ones too--~~but~~ ^I could be reasonably sure that they would do so. ~~I knew then~~ ^{But my competitor got this one right!} that I was in real danger. If the questions continued on the same trend, I could be lost. I got the Eratosthenes question right, and he missed it, so that made us level. The question that won it for me was, of all things, a sporting question: "What was the name of the Australian yacht that challenged for the America's Cup in 1962?" Answer, Gretel 1. Why I say "of all things" is that everyone thinks I'm weak on sport; it's not my best subject, of course, but I think I'm as well-informed as the average good general knowledge competitor who's not likely to be a sporting expert. Anyway, I got it right, he got it wrong; so I won that round, 10 to 9.

The Wednesday show I won by 10 to 7 or 8; then on Thursday the contestant was again a very well-informed man. The questions were, it seemed to me, much easier; I didn't like this, because what happens is that both contestants get all the questions right, then it all depends on the first hard question, and it's a matter of luck ~~which~~ of them it will suit. In fact that is exactly what happened. Each of us missed one question (the same one, on Australian geography--a rather ~~bad~~ bad miss) and got nine right, so we were level on nine points with one question to go. This was it: "What eight-letter word means the essence or worst part of an accusation?" I concentrated with all my powers, counted on my fingers, thought again, and at last whispered, without much conviction, "Gravamen?" I was right! Then we had a nerve-racking break for a commercial. Somehow I wasn't really too worried. This question was so much harder than