



# gene.charlotte

## "You've got mail."

*In the days and months following the announcement of Gene's illness and eventual passing, hundreds of people whose lives had been touched by the England family sent notes of encouragement, stories, and jokes, and shared fond memories with Gene and the family through their email account.*

*Here are excerpts from some.*

I would guess that people are bringing up all kinds of moral implications of Eugene's illness, or reasons for it. I could not help thinking of this as I read the Finnish version of Job. When Job answers his friends' sophistry, the King James version states: "No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you." Job later says something to the effect that "If you would at last be quiet, then you might become wise." This is the way I feel about the philosophers who might be sharing their wisdom with you. How much better off we all would be if they would at last learn to be quiet. I find no moral or philosophical implications in your illness. All I know is that my best friend has fallen on hard times, and I wish it were in my power to help him out. Since it isn't, all I can do is tell him that I love him, think about him every day, worry about him, pray for him, and to the extent possible, feel with him some of his pain. That's all I can do, Eugene and Charlotte. Would that I could do more!

William "Bert" Wilson

... I've been inspired and uplifted by your thinking, your writing, and your conduct over and over again during the twenty-some years we have known each other. My only regret is that time and circumstance have kept us from spending more time together. As I've told you, Gene, often when I read your writing I see thinking that corresponds so closely to mine that I would think I were reading my own stuff if the writing were not so superb!

Dean May

... Keep up the good work. You really don't want to end up looking like Stephen Covey hit with a tire iron!

Be well,  
Jani Fleet

My favorite memory of Gene is a tennis game on a Saturday morning at the Timpview High School courts. We were in the midst of a highly competitive match when Gene suddenly rushed off the tennis court and hurried to the assistance of a handicapped man who was passing in the street and in need of aid. It was an act of spontaneous service and charity that comes to mind whenever I think of Gene. Most of us just want to get on with the game. Not so with Gene.

Stan Warnick.

Hey, Gene. Do you know why Mormon women stop having babies at forty?

Because forty-one is just too many!

Love, Carol Lynn Pearson



All we onlookers can do is be aware of you, know you are there, maybe attempt to do something wholesome in your name. You have allotted quite a bit of time in the service of others. You and Wes Johnson and others launched *Dialogue*, a journal independent of institutional control that provided a much-needed avenue of expression on subjects of gravity for many writers and readers. You took action to stabilize another journal, *SUNSTONE*, when it needed your guidance. When people overseas needed food and help, you did not just send a check, you organized a system to provide massive assistance, and you ran it. And you taught others at St. Olaf College, BYU, and Utah Valley State College—decades of helping others to read and write effectively. So, if the England family is having a difficult year, a lot of friends, students, colleagues, acquaintances, and beneficiaries are thinking about you. We would like to help in any way that is possible. . . . Know that many of us out here are concerned about you and are anxious for your recovery. . . .

As ever, George Smith

. . . Dearest to me would have to be the conversations Gene and I had regarding forgiveness, Christ, and the role of peacemaking between the liberal and conservative factions of the Church. I know I wasn't Gene's dearest friend—just one of thousands of his students—but he took my desire to help heal the fractures I saw in Mormon culture very seriously. . . .

When he left BYU and I called from Missouri to express my outrage at the shoddy treatment he had received, Gene calmed me down, had only kind words for the people I felt had abused him, and asked me please not to write any protest letters but to practice forgiveness and understanding. Eugene England is one of the very few men I've ever met in my life who I felt fully took upon himself Christ's name, and I'm glad he ever knew my name at all. As his adoring student and mentee, I will miss him immensely. I do hope, however, that any fishing in the afterlife is strictly "catch and release," because otherwise there won't be any fish left for the rest of us when we get there, what with his head start.

Janet Gerrard Willis

Since I can't come over and give you a foot rub, or take out the trash, I wanted to let you know that you've been in my thoughts and prayers. A phone call, while it might be nice to hear voices of friends, might come when you're tired and need rest. So, I'm writing.

I have so many memories of all of you over the years. . . . Always interesting people and always enough room at the table and in the house for anyone needing food or a place to sleep. . . .

I remember countless talks with Gene in the living room and sometimes in his study. He always treated me with respect, even though I wasn't always respectful. He always listened even when I said things that were hard to hear. Most of all, I felt loved in your home. . . .

Jenny Rees

. . . You've always struck me as a remarkable example of life well-lived. You always set that example for me—of how a person meets life and lives it with talent, grace, sensitivity, and power. It is difficult to see anyone suffer like this. But I imagine that this is just one more time when you'll show the rest of us how to live.

I don't understand why it happened to you, but I love you and send my best possible healing thoughts and prayers.

Much love,  
Maxine Hanks

I just wanted to thank you for the influence you've had on my life and the way I view the world—whether it was eating borscht (the only time I've ever enjoyed this delicacy) and discussing issues at the England Sunday dinner table, or sitting in your nineteenth-century American literature class, or reading one of your many articles/books relating to Mormon issues, I've always come away edified, educated, and with the feeling that I'm a member of your collective family. Your life and teachings, though not always the easiest or most popular, make me want to be a better and more idealistic person (sounds a lot like another master teacher). I don't want to eulogize (you're not through yet!), simply to say thanks for who you and your family are.

Tim Pingree

I heard Gene England lecture many times while I was at BYU and found his books inspiring, but the most vivid memory I have is of a conversation I had with him in February 2000.

I collect books—what I refer to as scholarly Mormon books, with an emphasis on history, biography, literature. I like to have authors sign my books, whenever possible. A book represents a connection between an author and reader. Meeting authors and having them sign their book makes that connection more personal.

I read in the paper that Gene England was speaking at UVSC, a lecture open to the public. I went and brought several of Gene's books with me. When I approached him after the lecture, some of his family members were waiting to leave with him. He asked them to wait for just a few minutes while he signed and inscribed my books:

*Brother Brigham*—"May you learn to love Brother Brigham as I do."

*Making Peace*—"Best wishes as you try to make peace in the world. Shalom."

*Harvest: Contemporary Mormon Poems*—"Enjoy this fine poetry. It is food for the soul."

*Bright Angels and Familiars: Contemporary Mormon Stories*—"May you learn to love all these writers."

*An Open World: Essays on Leslie Norris*—"With great pleasure at the prospect of your getting to know Leslie Gene's speech that day had been on the poetry of Leslie Norris, and Leslie had read some of Gene's poetry."

*Tending the Garden: Essays on Mormon Literature*—"May this help you know Mormon literary criticism and cultural study better." I pointed out where my name appeared in a footnote in the book. Gene circled my name and wrote, "Way to go, Morgan!"

Gene asked some questions about my book collection. I told him that I was building a library of scholarly books on Mormonism and that someday I plan to donate them to a university that is trying to establish a Mormon studies program. He asked me to consider UVSC when that day comes.

I don't know if UVSC will carry out what Gene had planned, but I know that the generation of students that Gene taught will help make it happen somewhere. As I continue to build my book collection, Gene England's books will have an honored place, and I'll think of him often.

Morgan B. Adair

... In addition to his wisdom, it's his face we'll remember the most—those beautiful smile wrinkles that couldn't help but make you smile back.

May God comfort and sustain you, Charlotte and family. You have all blessed our lives.

Gladys and Jim Farmer

I HAVE REREAD GENE'S MAKING PEACE AND WHY THE CHURCH IS AS TRUE AS THE GOSPEL AND HAVE VOWED IN MY SMALL CORNER OF THE GLOBE TO CONTINUE TO PLAGIARIZE HIS THOUGHT IN CHURCH TALKS AND LESSONS AND (WITH MUCH MORE DIFFICULTY) TRY TO EMULATE TO A SMALL DEGREE HIS EXAMPLE.

MUCH LOVE, STEVE BRADFORD

He was an example as a writer, a teacher, a BYU colleague, and a human being. In all these roles, he showed me directly and indirectly what it's possible to do and be, in enthusiastic and graceful contrast to the thoughtless rule-following or conformity so many have settled for. I'm so grateful to have been in his circle, albeit peripherally, during his life. Thanks to you, his family, for giving us the opportunity to express our love and appreciation for him. With deep respect and gratitude, and profound sympathy for your loss and ours,  
Julie Nichols

... He was my D&C teacher and traveled to Salt Lake City to teach the nursing students there. We were his last class of the day, and although it was an exhausting trip, he was always kind and considerate of us. Often he would apply the scriptures to our individual struggles with questions regarding the patients for whom we were caring. I particularly remember one evening in which we were to be discussing something he had planned, but I had just had a hard time with a neurologically impaired missionary who had been hurt while on his mission. Your father closed his scriptures, and speaking from his heart, quoted many scriptures and evidences that this life was but a small portion of our probationary period and assured us that our Heavenly Father was watching over and helping all of us. The spirit was incredible, and we knew that he knew that what he was telling us was true. I shall never forget this testimony shared by him in a quiet, spontaneous manner.  
Joyce Westphal





Gene was one of my best teachers at BYU. I loved his class. I loved what he brought out of me. I loved his testimony and his passion. He showed up to class every day with a great attitude, a humble heart, a listening ear, and a happy smile. He asked me to search my own heart and to expand my understanding. He left a huge impression on me. He even called me during my rookie year in Philadelphia to see how I was doing and if I was striving to strengthen my testimony. I loved it. I will always love GE! I am so grateful that I got to know him and be touched by his great influence. May God be with your family.

Love, Chad Lewis, Philadelphia Eagles

Gene was my American literature professor at BYU in 1992. More than that, however, he was a kind and trusted friend and a leader. I'm sure I was only one of thousands of students he met with his openness, caring, and gentle heart, but he was much more to me. When I was editing the *Student Review* with Bryan Waterman, we would often go to him with our concerns. He always supported the principles of intellectual questioning and free thought and fought for those rights for students. He always provided a balanced and truthful perspective when we needed it most. . . .

It couldn't have been easy for him to live as both a man and a symbol, but he did it. To me, he represented the struggle to trust one's conscience and still be a faithful Mormon, which is something I grappled with in college and have ever since. . . . More than anyone else I've ever met, he lived that delicate balance with dignity.

Many things happened while I was at BYU that made me angry at the Church and even at God. People close to me were silenced, harassed, fired, expelled, and excommunicated, and I found it difficult to negotiate my faith. When I couldn't think of reasons to go on, Gene provided them. He does still. I will always be grateful to have known him.

Sincerely,  
Rachel Poulsen

I never met Gene, though I should have taken a class from him while I studied at BYU (1989—1995). I first began to recognize his name as I read the letters he so often wrote to the local papers. At the time, I was a conservative returned missionary, and I remember thinking that he was just another "liberal" who liked to be heard. Eventually, a copy of *Making Peace* fell into my hands, and the essays and ideas profoundly affected my perspective. I thought about how Jesus was able to relate to such divergent groups of people, even when their ideas or morals did not mesh with his own. It seems that Gene exemplified this Christlike ability to hear opinions without prejudice and to speak his opinions thoughtfully and intelligently. He was a vital part of our religious community, and I feel that loss. I take comfort in the fact that others like me have been influenced for good by his teachings and will help people in Utah to deal more civilly with each other.

Sincerely, Ryan McCune

I propose Gene be known hereafter as "Saint Genome" (pronounced like St. Jerome).

(Admittedly, there's a problem with the usual biological definition of "genome"—a complete set of chromosomes. We may need to work on this.)

In any case: the title would blend two positive associations:

1. Gene and
2. Jerome, the saint, priest, and doctor:
  - who "was given an excellent education by his parents"
  - who "was acquainted with many of the leading Christians of his day"
  - who "threw himself at the feet of Jesus, watering his feet with tears of prayers"
  - who proclaimed, "Not to know the scriptures is not to know Christ"
  - whose "learned commentaries on the scriptures and his conferences and letters won him a devoted following"
  - who "had his share of critics who resented his comments on Roman society. . . ."
  - Lastly, Jerome is believed to have said, "We must translate the words of scripture into deeds, and instead of speaking holy words, we must do them."

Please know of my gratitude for what he taught me: literature, certainly, but also professionalism, trust, and basic humanity.

With great affection,  
William Brugger

You took the night train out of here. Wait up at the next station. The rest of us will catch up shortly.

Robert Kirby