Dear Professor Struik,

With regret I learned recently of the death of your father, and I offer you my condolences.

I am Irish, and spent my last years at high school in Oxford, England. While there my love of Mathematics flowered, and one of the books I read was your father's History. Euler was my hero, and I wrote to your father about him (I think I wrote to his address at the MIT). To my very great joy I received a fulsome and generous reply. Within the following months I received another letter, and a card, from your father. The last line of his card read: "*Your letters are very welcome - do write me. Sincerely. DJ Struik*"

To my great regret I never wrote again…

The following year I went to the Royal Holloway College of London University, where I took a degree in Mathematics, and then did my Ph.D. (in Number Theory). I've had a very happy, but quiet life in Mathematics.

In January '94 I went to the USA to attend the centennial meeting of the AMS, and attended the special dinner. To my very great joy I heard Ron Graham call upon your father to say a few words (and I also heard him call upon you - and others who had been members for at least 50 years - to stand up and take a bow). When the dinner was over I saw your father sitting alone, and I approached him. I introduced myself along the lines of "hello Professor Struik; you won't know me, but when I was a boy at school in Oxford we exchanged some letters and…" To my great delight (and amazement!, for I now knew that he was in his 100th year) he did remember, and asked after an Irish mathematician (Father J. J. McMahon) whom your father had mentioned in his second letter to me…

I kept your father's two letters and card all these years, and just this morning (nearing the end of a very busy term) I tried to make enlarged colour photocopies of them to see how they would turn out. They have reproduced wonderfully well, and I am writing to ask if you would like me to send copies to you.

My college closes tomorrow for the two week Christmas and New Year break, and you may not see this email for some time. I also have email at home (johnbcos@iol.ie), and should you wish to write to me there then please do so.

Yours sincerely,

John Cosgrave
(Head of Mathematics, St. Patrick's College)

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http://www.spd.dcu.ie/johnbcos

F[382447], the largest known composite *Fermat number*, was
discovered by Yves Gallot (who wrote the *Proth program*) and
I (who had the *luck*) in July 1999. The decimal notation value of
F[382447] is *so large*, that *it could not be written out in the entire
universe*. Details at http://www.spd.dcu.ie/johnbcos/fermat.htm