Mr. Don Anderson, Cal Sathre, et al.
Display Masters, Incorporated
1417 Washington Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Gentlemen (and Scholars):

At 2:47 P.M. this afternoon I received your bill for the cannon. At 4:54 P.M. I regained consciousness. During this period of troubled delirium I had many dreams—a barrage of dreams, a cannonade of hallucinations.

I dreamed that we were in the frantic throes of a screaming inflation. Toothpicks were a dollar a piece, Kazoots were $19.95, and popguns were going for $45.60. (This dream I dismissed as palpable Democratic propaganda and hastily passed on to another.)

I dreamed that your vice president in charge of decimal points, working with his secretary (a comely wench) on his knee, had let his hand wander a bit, and before anyone could say, "Don't, Egbert," had thrust his pencil in between the wrong digits, transforming a figure of $4.56 into $45.60.

I dreamed that you had incorrectly recalled the cynical Napoleon's famous statement: "God is on the side that charges with the most cannon," and had, through a Freddian slip, recalled it as "God is on the side that charges most for cannon."

I dreamed that you had cast this cannon out of pure gold melted down from English crowns stolen from Lord Nelson's own locker by a peg-leg seaman named John.

I dreamed that this cannon had been fashioned from a refurbished brass two-pounder that once graced the audacious Daffite's pirate frigate. That it had been rebored, rifled, fitted with Radr, and engraved with the Farm Service emblem.

I dreamed that you had created this costly cannon from a famous museum piece designed by Leonardo da Vinci, and cast in model form by Benvenuto Cellini in one of his short periods between amours.

I dreamed it was a 155 mm. anti-tank gun, a 16-inch coastal artillery rifle, Big Bertha. I dreamed I was again in the Battle of the Bulge. The whole German army was converging on my foxhole. There I sat, calmly covering the whole bunch of them with my daughter's gilt cannon. "Such a fine cannon as this," I thought, "must be capable of blasting the whole German army."

At this point my unconscious decided that for sanity's sake I had better wake up.

I awoke! and there, leering down at me from the bookcase,
was the real cannon, an inordinately ordinary toy cannon! The Barrel, an asymmetrical elliptical downspout. The plunger disc, cut out free hand by a strabismic tinsmith apprentice with a pair of cuticle scissors and soldered with a lukewarm curling iron by a palsied boiler maker with St. Vitus dance, leaving in all such a gaping aperture between disc and barrel that a paratetic preacher could drop-kick a six-legged cat through it and never touch a hair. A trigger mechanism, designed and executed by a seventh grade manual arts student. The base cut out with a serrated bread knife from a discarded fruit box. The whole sprayed with Woolworth's gilt paint from a Flit gun by a one-armed myopic painter with the itch. And the final Gestalt, the objet d'art at last achieved its esthetic integration in being assembled by a polydactyly paralytic with delirium tremens.

The price of this gilded gutter spout on an orange crate, $45.60.

"Maybe I'd just better go back to sleep," I thought. "Come, come, old man," my common sense said, "you must face reality. There must be some sense to such a bill."

Well, let's see: a few cents for gutter pipe, a few cents for wood, a spring, screws, paint.... Hmm. A little mental arithmetic and your pricing formula clearly revealed itself. Very simple: Total cost divided by the reciprocal of the customer's liquid assets, multiplied by the base of natural logarithms (2.7183...).

According to this pricing formula, I estimate that the pig props now in progress will cost in the neighborhood of $456,000.60 (vice president in charge of decimal points please audit). This will obviously bust Farm Service flatter than a Pillsbury pancake, and I shall make haste to fasten my clutches on another prospect before this grand old organization becomes defunct. In this case, I won't be needing the cannon and so am returning it to you by parcel post (insured for $5.00).

But enough of this needling! Actually, except for the points which I mentioned this morning, the cannon is quite satisfactory. However, I was, as you may have gathered, somewhat surprised at the cost. But then, I'm always surprised at the cost of displays, so I merely act as the middle man and pass this statement along to a mutual acquaintance, a General, who doubtless is better acquainted with the procurement cost of this type of ordnance.

Will see you Saturday morning when you deliver the pig props.

Sincerely,

P.S. Kindly come unarmed.