

## A Mathematician's Travel Memories

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## **Cover Page Footnote**

I would like to thank Gizem Karaali, Lawrence Lesser, and Douglas Norton for their work in advertising and organizing the event "An Evening of Poetry & Art" at the 2017 Joint Mathematics Meetings in Atlanta, Georgia.

# A Mathematician's Travel Memories

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I opened up my photo album late last week.  
Page one it did feature Australia's Tennant Creek.  
Next page I saw two mines, one silver, one copper.  
How much of these metals would fit in one hopper?  
Atomic number of copper, oh did I seek,  
And silver and gold in Australia's Tennant Creek.  
Copper is twenty-nine, gold is seventy-nine,  
Silver is forty-seven; all primes, that's so fine.  
Page three had Puerto Rico memories in store.  
The Arecibo Telescope, hard to ignore:  
One thousand feet across with cross sections that are  
Parab'las that bounce radio waves from afar.  
In sinusoidal waves, how far from trough to peak?  
I pondered then where was Australia's Tennant Creek,  
Nearly antipodal to Puerto Rico's land.  
Vectors from Earth's center to each I have in hand;  
Measure between vectors near one eighty degrees.  
Later I saw pictures of lands where I did freeze:  
Fond memories of the Faeroes away from crowds.  
There were few gaps I saw where sunshine peeked through clouds.  
And random like a sparse matrix; put ones for sun,  
And put zeroes for clouds; that sparse matrix was fun.  
Ah, one last memory at Kennedy Airport  
That has no photo 'cause on film I was so short  
When this rock star and entourage passed by so near.  
Oh, dear!  
But in hindsight I respected their privacy.  
And then I guess they did respect mine; now I see  
The entourage was a closed set; I was a point.  
Privacy's like an open set; two sets disjoint  
That are open containing these two sets; this place  
Is like a regular topological space.  
So then I closed my photo album late last week  
Glancing one last time at Australia's Tennant Creek.

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Postscript: This poem is written in iambic hexameter except for one line that is a single iamb. Although the author has not visited any of the places in this poem, the author sees mathematical connections, sometimes seemingly out of nowhere, in nature and man-made structures in many different travels.

**Acknowledgments.** I would like to thank Gizem Karaali, Lawrence Lesser, and Douglas Norton for their work in advertising and organizing the event “An Evening of Poetry & Art” at the 2017 Joint Mathematics Meetings in Atlanta, Georgia.