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Memorandum

To: Trialists

Fr: Curtis Meinert

Re: Alumni verification

I graduated from Sleepy Eye High School in 1952. I had no plan to go to college. My Mother thought I should stay on the farm and my Father did not care what I did so long as it was honest.

I noted a lot of my classmates were going off to college. Eventually I figured I should do the same, so I made application to the School of Engineering at the University of Minnesota. A month later I got an acceptance with terms I did not understand.

Come fall, off I go for orientation and registration.

The first day we were led around by somebody telling us how wonderful the University was and pointing to buildings and walking through some.

Around mid afternoon we broke into groups to start the registration process. So I go with the engineering group. It was then I realized what those words in the letter I did not understand meant.

In order to be admitted to the School of Engineering I would have to take a remedial course in English first.

Go figure. A person who has spent much of his life writing has trouble writing.

The next day I registered in the College of Science, Literatures, and Arts.

By the time I finished the remedial course, I was no longer interested in Engineering. Students looked beleaguered and preoccupied with their slide rules dangling from their waists like swords.

During my senior year I took courses in biostatistics and was offered a fellowship in biostatistics. That next year we never felt richer with my wife working at Northern States Power and me on stipend. A party was a 6 pack of beer and hamburgers on the grill.

Now fast forward to 2020.

I start getting postcards from the University of Minnesota Alumni Association requesting "alumni verification". I toss them because surely the University knows my graduation record.

Recently I saw one of the cards on my table. Feeling bored I called the number listed. After the usual stuff about the call being recorded and staying on the line for the next available representative, a person picked up. He explained what he wanted and then proceeded to ask questions about my University experience.

The agent tells me I can be part of the history of the University for north of \$400. For that I would get an electronic and print copy of the oral history, a Minnesota Gopher's sweat shirt, a tote bag emblazoned with the U of M emblem and an alumni membership. All the agent needed was my credit card number.

My suspicions aroused (because principally the person did not have a Minnesota accent).

Where are you calling from?

Texas.

Who do you work for?

A private firm under contract to the University.

The package offered included a \$50 charge for membership in the Alumni Association.

I am like Groucho Marks when it comes to joining anything, so you can guess what I had to say about that offer. The exchange remained me of a scene in *Fargo* where Jerry Lundergaard is trying to talk an older couple into Truecoat for the car they just purchased. (If you want to see it, Google "Fargo truecoat".)

I hung up when the agent wanted my credit card number for the aforementioned package.

I am ashamed of my alma mater for its shabby practice in *Alumni Verification*.