



Handwritten stories and lecture notes with heavy cross-outs tossed into the wastebasket of Philip Emeagwali. Some crumpled notes were retrieved on second thought. Some were lost to the past. They provide clues on how his vision took shape through the years. At the time of writing, his ideas were not fully formed, hence the endless drawing of arrows and crossing of awkward sentences.



Emeagwali, age 20 [Oregon State University, Corvallis. July 1975]

In Oregon, I reinvented myself. I was guided, not by my original mission of solving Fermat's Last Theorem. At various stages, I was an ~~astronomer~~, or ~~physicist~~, a computer scientist or an astronomer or physicist or civil engineer. But officially, I was a janitor and a mathematician.

When I left Oregon Corvallis, Oregon on June 5, 1977 to ~~the~~ Washington, DC. my ^{mission} ~~vision~~ had change. I had ^{quickly} forgotten about Fermat's Last Theorem. I was

Thinking about how to solve the most difficult problems in mathematics ~~physics~~ on a motherboard, instead of on a blackboard. For a decade, my problem didn't have a distinct name, & unlike Fermat's Last Theorem. It was in about 1987 that the U.S. government acknowledged that is important and computer-internet and named it one of the twenty Grand Challenges in Computing. That name finally validated what I was doing for a decade, namely, to find a the supercomputer inside an internet computing with 65,536 computers and communicating across 1,048,576 channels.

~~It may seem out of place for~~
~~unrealistic~~

It seems unrealistic that a teenager that emerged from a refugee camp in Biafra (Nigeria) in 1970 to hold the lofty dream of emigrating to the United States ~~and solving~~ to solve an unsolved problem in mathematics.

The explanation is that I had self-confidence that was rooted in my status as a local celebrity.



Emeagwali chatting with the information technology staff at the Grand Lido Negril resorts. (L-R: Emeagwali, Barrington McIntosh, coworker) April 5, 2001



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