

Baton Rouge, Louisiana  
March 18, 1981

Dear Mrs. Toole:

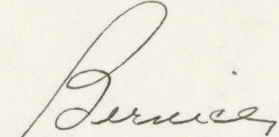
In the mail yesterday I received clippings of a feature article done by Angus Lind and on it a small note attached that said, "Sis, I knew you would be interested in this. This has to be our 'Mrs. Toole.'" And, of course, it was -- it is. TALK ABOUT VICARIOUS PLEASURE -- AND PAIN!

Although I have lived away from New Orleans for more than 30 years, I had learned from Mother that you had a son, of his superb intellect and of his tragic death. But I never connected this in my mind with the extraordinary young genius who wrote A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES. When I read Ken's masterpiece last summer I knew only that here was an exceptional novel, and I went about making sure that no one I knew would miss the pleasure -- the EXPERIENCE really -- of reading it.

Now knowing that A CONFEDERACY OF DUNCES was written by your son makes me want to express to you a profusion of thoughts--gratitude for having persevered so that this marvelous novel can rest on my bookshelf for my children and grandchildren to enjoy; sadness that Ken's triumph came after his death; the ache I feel to imagine the devastation that his death brought you. These emotions and more engulf me even as I write this.

For, you see, even though I know that you may not remember the little girl whose life you touched many years ago at St. Peter and Paul's School, the impact of what I learned from you there is with me to this day. It is to your teaching and to your example that I trace my love for words, for expression, for the beauty of the language well spoken. And so I have never forgotten you and have never underestimated the importance of what I learned from you, for you enriched the quality of my life.

And so I send you my congratulations on your son's splendid achievement, my gratitude to you for being the person you are, and my love.

  
Bernice Gaudet Lennox