

It all started at a group dinner with friends at a Chinese restaurant that had a huge buffet. After multiple plates of delicious and filling food, I settled on a simple dessert plate of a single cream puff and 3 small cubes of jello that were colored red, yellow and green. The others thought that my choices were much too skimpy.

Being a former math teacher I pointed out that the jello shapes were perfectly formed parallelepipeds. (Imagine a cube with its top stretched a bit in a horizontal direction and I mentioned how to compute the volume of each jello piece.) I also pointed out that jello was the only dessert that my divorced mother, who worked as a poorly-paid secretary, could afford when I was a child.

The group then started making fun of the situation. They wanted me to promise not to do that again and further, that I was retired so I could afford to eat a more elegant dessert. My response to them later:

Ode to Jello

At lunch a fine fellow
Picked his favorite jello.

It might have been green
Which would have been keen,

It might have been red
To be most properly fed.

And don't forget yellow
To feel happy and mellow.

Instead he took one of each...
They were so easy to reach.