



# Borealis

*The Monthly Journal of Northern Michigan Mensa*

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**Borealis** is published by Northern Michigan Mensa (3/496) once each month under the auspices of its Executive Committee.

After mandatory items, priority in the newsletter is given to matters appealing to members of the group which relate to their membership in Mensa. The content of the newsletter shall appeal to the general membership of Northern Michigan Mensa.

The newsletter shall not include matters which are indecent, scandalous, libelous, or invade someone's privacy, nor shall copyrighted material be used without the permission of the owner. Ethnic, racist, sexist, or religious slurs shall not be printed. Bad jokes are allowed. Northern Michigan Mensa recognizes that the newsletter is addressed to both minors and adults; material printed will be appropriate for distribution to minors.

All matters submitted to the editor shall be subject to editing for content, style, and space limitations, except that if a person submits material with a restriction that it be published "as is or not at all." That a person has written and submitted something to the newsletter is not, in itself, sufficient reason for its publication.

**Submissions** are not only welcome, the editor will buy you a coffee at the next TGIF if you help him out.

Members of Northern Michigan Mensa may send their original writing submissions to *Borealis*.

*Please do not send the work of others unless such submissions are accompanied by written permission and release of copyright from the author.*

#### **Writing:**

1. Submit writing that can be edited for length and clarity, but not content. *This will be the default editorial assumption unless the author indicates otherwise.*

2. Writing may be submitted to be published only as it is. If writing is submitted "as is or not at all" it will not be edited in any way, and if published, will appear with an editor's note indicating it is wholly the work of the author.

3. Writing that is rough and needs major editing may also be submitted. If you have written something but don't have time to polish and edit it, you can still submit it and, at your request, I will give it extra help.

ALL. Writing and letters may be submitted by email as an attachment or as the message body itself. Typed pages and letters can be mailed.

#### **Photographs:**

Photographs and other scanned artwork can be submitted via email as JPEG or GIF files. Data should be at least 3x5 inches at 200 PPI. Digital camera files may be sent right from the camera; they will be processed for publication.

Flat art or photographs can also be mailed, but please do not send originals. Please label each piece submitted with your name and address.

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## Northern Michigan Mensa

# June 2004 Calendar

## Saturday, June 12

### Brunch 11:00a.m. Cottage Cafe, Traverse City

The Cottage Cafe is at the Days Inn in Traverse City at 420 Munson (US-31 North). It's on the south side of the road between the Northwestern Michigan College entrance and 8th Street. We will meet in the Papa's Den which is located to the right as you come in the main entrance.

## Friday, June 25

### TGIF - Horizon Shine Café, Traverse City 6:00p.m.

The Horizon Shine Cafe is located in the lower level of Horizon Books, 243 E. Front Street in downtown Traverse City. There are wrap sandwiches, soft drinks, and desserts on the menu.

# The Edmund Fitzgerald Lives On

By Melissa J. Rennie

Reprinted from the *Manistee News Advocate*

WHITEFISH POINT—The last message heard from the *Edmund Fitzgerald* was received by the ship, the *Arthur Anderson*, at 7:10 p.m. on November 10, 1975. “We are holding our own,” was how Captain Ernest McSorley described the ship’s progress through the stormy night.

Shortly afterwards, the *Edmund Fitzgerald* disappeared with all 29 hands aboard. On July 4, 1995, at the request of family members, the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society together with the Canadian Navy, the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Geographic Society went to see what secrets the *Edmund Fitzgerald* would reveal when it raised its bell to honor the dead. The bell is displayed at the Shipwreck Museum, at Whitefish Point (near Paradise) to honor not just the 29 dead from the *Fitzgerald*, but the 30,000 individuals who have lost their lives on shipwrecks on the Great Lakes since 1679.

## Lake Superior—The lake that doesn’t give up its dead

“The farther you go down, the darker it gets,” described Jene Quirin, a trustee with the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society. “(At) about 300 feet, it gets dark enough (that) you really can’t see. If you set there for a while, you could start to make some things out, you could see some light, but 535 feet is dark.”

Because of the depth of the wreck, most of the diving was done with a ROV (Remote Operated Vehicle) or in a submersible. “You got lights on the submarine, and you are kind of straining, just looking to see, because you know the wreck is out there and you know we are getting close and you know if you bang into it you are going to die,” continued Quirin.

“All of a sudden, there it is. It is just this great big, huge thing and it is almost difficult to put it into perspective when you first see it, because you don’t have anything to relate it to. You just know how big it is”.

When the *Fitzgerald* sank, it was 17 years old, 729 feet long and was carrying 26,116 tons of taconite pellets (marbles). “One of the things that makes the *Fitzgerald* wreck so unique is that it was only 17 years old when it sank. It was all welded, it wasn’t a riveted ship,” marveled Quirin.

“It was a very large ship, and today, we look at the 1000 footers and we think

that there is no way that a 1000 footer would ever sink, well, it could happen,” said Quirin. “I can tell you, water always wins and Mother Nature wins. If it wants to take a ship down, its going to take a ship down.”

“The new ships today have a lot of devices on them,” said Quirin. “They have depth finders, there are stress gauges all over on the ship, and the captain knows what is going on with the structure itself all the time. In fact, in the *Fitzgerald* and ships at that time, you had no idea that there was water in the holds, until the water got above cargo.”

“There is no way to know why the ship sank,” he went on to say, “except we know that it filled up with water. No one will ever know for sure why it filled up with water, but we have some theories.”

## Theories abound

The theories about why the *Fitzgerald* sank are as numerous as shipwrecks that dot the Great Lakes. The majority of the theories are based on the conversations between Captain McSorley and Captain Jessie B. Cooper of the *Anderson*. The *Anderson* trailed the *Fitzgerald* by 10 miles for most of the day.

The Quirin theories are similar to the Shipwreck Society's.

“The *Fitzgerald* said he had lost both his radar,” said Quirin. “When we finally dove on the *Fitzgerald* and looked at it, both antennas were gone. Wave action probably went right over the top of the pilothouse and ripped them off with the 90-mph winds.”

“Ships back then did not have GPS,” explained Quirin. “Back when the *Edmund Fitzgerald* sank, freighters did not even have depth finders, they all traveled by charts, and many of those charts were over 100 years old, and not very accurate.”

“If you got lost, like the *Fitzgerald* might of, and lost its radar and not know exactly where he was, it was very important to know how deep the water was. We think that was a big cause in the *Fitzgerald* sinking,” explained Quirin.

The Society believes that the ship came very close to Caribou Island and Caribou Shoals which is 37 feet underwater. The draft of the *Fitzgerald* was 27 feet. “We know that captains have told us on the Great Lakes that they knew they were in 500 feet of water and felt like they hit the bottom because of wave action,” said Quirin. “If you reverse that, it is very possible that McSorley, hoping and knowing that he may have been close to Caribou Island, actually hit bottom and convinced himself it was wave action.”

“We think that is what happened,” said Quirin. “We think that they actually did hit bottom at Caribou Shoals and he broke open the side of the hull.” The ship was loaded. We think he hit bottom mainly because he told (Cooper) that

he had a list. The only way he would have a list is if the ballast tank on one side was full of water, and he couldn't get it pumped out. He said his pumps were running and he wasn't making much headway."

"We also know that he had a vent broken," said Quirin. "We also know that he had a (5/8 cable) fence rail out. That fence rail, in order for it to break, something massive would have had to hit it or the ship could have hit the bottom, and it would have humped the back up, and broke the cable. We think that is probably what happened."

"As he sailed along, he got lower and lower in the water," he continued. "It got to the point he was zero buoyant. Obviously that means your floating and your not floating, you're just kind of hanging there."

"This big wave came up behind the *Anderson*, and the *Anderson* saw that and lived through it," described Quirin. "About the time that wave got to the *Fitzgerald*, we think that it picked up the stern of the *Fitzgerald* and it (the ship) took a nose-dive to the bottom. It happened that fast."

There were five radios on that ship, three of those were battery operated. Nobody ever picked up a radio and said 'mayday'. They didn't have time to. One second they were in the pilothouse nice and dry, the next second they all underwater. So the ship starts on its way down, heads for the bottom," Quirin described. "When it hits bottom, it digs a trench in the bottom 250 feet long."

Quirin went on to outline the end of the disaster, "when it finally hit bedrock and wanted to stop, and some engineers have told us, that it could have gotten up 30 mph by the time it hit bottom and stopped. Those marbles want to go in every direction. It blew the hatch covers off. Taconite flies up into the water. The ship is disintegrating, the center of it is breaking up, the propeller is still turning. And as the propeller turns, the stern slowly turns over and falls upside down on the bottom, and the bow falls into this trench that it dug 250 feet deep."

Other theories do exist, according to Quirin, but many of them have problems. "One is that there would be a huge pile of tacenate somewhere in one pile on the bottom. There isn't no pile of tacenate down there, it's just spread all over the place. Besides that when you get down there and you measure the two halves of the ship, there is 200 feet of it missing. The center of the ship is gone. It disintegrated."

The legend lives on at the Shipwreck Museum at Whitefish Bay. The museum is open May 1 to October 31. For more information and for *Fitzgerald* memorabilia, the museum's website is [www.shipwreckmuseum.org](http://www.shipwreckmuseum.org).

## Try an RG

By Melissa J. Rennie

THE END OF THE ANNUAL renewal period saw us go from our high of 104 members back down to 86. Twenty-two members have let their membership lapse. Hopefully, we will see them join again in the next few months. To offset the loss of 22 members, we are welcoming four new members. Jane Greiner, from Empire, Robert Nelson from Honor, Jonathon Nelson of Interlochen and Carol Crawford from Williamsburg have all joined our ranks.

I attended my first RG (Regional Gathering) a few weeks ago. SEMMantics was a lot of fun. I think the best description I heard to describe an RG is "main-lining Mensa" and it's a very accurate description. I am wondering if I might become what is referred to a "RG junkie" because of how much fun it was.

I spent most of my time talking with other members about ever subject under the sun. It is unbelievable the range of ideas one is able to encounter in a few short days.

I wish I could tell you about the game's room, but games are not that exciting for me. But for those that enjoy games, I have it on good authority that the games and tournaments were wonderful. My roommate and I only saw each other in our room, she spent almost all her time in the game's room. In case anyone is interested, Region 3 is famous for spontaneous games of Double-deck, go-fish, cancellation hearts.

The next couple of months will see a couple RGs and Ags (Annual Gatherings). The Queen's Croquet is in Dayton, OH, June 4-6. The AG is in Las Vegas over the Fourth of July. Dayton Mensa is also having a small event (the FOJ) during the same time in Dayton. Mensa Canada is holding their AG in Toronto from July 16-18. Columbus Mensa is holding Col-M-Pics from July 30-Aug. 1.

Be sure to read the Bulletin or online descriptions to make sure that the events match your interests (some events feature more games than lectures). I am planning on attending a couple RG's later in the year that matches my interests. Whatever event you plan to attend, expect to have a great time.

## Trivial Matters

from Margaret Scott

- What company owns the world's second largest truck fleet?
- What sport did John Wayne play at the University of Southern California?
- What actor is Mary Martin's son?
- What killed Chuckles the Clown?
- How many time zones are there in Canada?
- What veteran of TV commercials died at the tender age of 17?
- What is the most traveled sports team?
- What form of horse racing sports the Little Brown Jug Races?
- What is the occupation of Oscar Madison in Neil Simon's *The Odd Couple*?
- Who taught Eliza Doolittle to be a lady?
- What was the name of the Volkswagen in Disney's *The Love Bug*?
- What is known as the "Most Exciting Two Minutes in Sports"?
- Who played the blacksmith on *Gunsmoke* from 1962-1966?
- Who played the original Charlie's Angels?

See answers next time.

## Your Name Here

THE FIRST ISSUE of *Borealis* made its appearance at your mailbox in September of 2002. Most of the writing in it came from Jack Schultz and me. Inspired by that first issue, the submissions started to flow.

Over the past few years we have enjoyed submissions from many of the great writers in Northern Michigan Mensa. Some people get fired up and submit every month for a while. I know some of you, and I include myself, looked forward to Ruth Minshul off-center view of the world each month. We've enjoyed games, puzzles, personal stories, essays and book reviews.

But there is a pattern. The flurry of excitement slowly gets replaced by either writer's block or other commitments or sheer boredom, and the submissions stop. I can't explain why, only that most writers last from 6 to 9 months until their wells seem to go dry. This is not criticism, just an observation. It could well be they tire of my work editing their stories.

My point is, I am way past the 9 month mark. I am writing this on June 2, and yes, this is the June issue that you should have had a week ago. I still would not have realized it was June if Melissa hadn't sent me an email assuming something was wrong because she hadn't gotten *Borealis*. I literally forgot I had a newsletter to get out.

It's a sign. It's clear that it is time for someone else to take the reins. I will remain editor of *Borealis* until the September 2004 issue is published, which is to say I will complete *Volume II*, 24 issues. The October 2004 *Borealis* will need a new editor and producer.

Will it be you? You get the honor of reading everything everyone submits. It's serious business; writing is personal, and making decisions about other people's work is a little like telling your friends that have bad breath. It's dirty business, but somebody has to do it. You get to manage the list of email address for sending out the monthly broadcast of the PDF. (Which also means you get to be the defacto first source for trouble shooting everyone's email problems. You'll enjoy a boat load of mail for the national office of Mensa. Your mailman will think you are someone special.

Mostly, you will enjoy knowing that your work is the communication link between each and all of the members of Northern Michigan Mensa.

We need you. I need you. Help.

## Roaming the Region

by Charlie Bruce (aka Gloater)

Today (or at least the day I'm writing this) is Memorial Day. Many homes in my neighborhood and throughout the city are decorated with the American Flag and most cemeteries are colored with an abundance of flowers. This weekend in Washington D.C., our Nation finally got around to dedicating a World War II memorial recognizing our fallen veterans. Too bad it couldn't have been a few years earlier, then my Dad and countless others who served during that infamous time could have seen it before they died. We should be thankful every day for the commitment these past and present military men and women have made to ensure the freedom that we appear to take for granted. Bless them one and all.

All in all May has been a pretty hectic month for me. On the Friday the 14th I gave my wife a surprise birthday party, which was a mini-RG in itself. There were about 45 Mensans from Ohio and surrounding states that socialized and played games, the last die-hards leaving late Sunday afternoon. For the first time since I've known her, she was truly at a loss for words. Revenge is sweet – she surprised me several years ago so it was my turn to get even.

Two days later, I was given a separation package from Qwest. They will pay me full pay and benefits for two months and then a severance benefit that should last until the end of the year. So I guess now would be a good time to officially retire. Terry says it's the best birthday present she could have hoped for though I think I still have to get used to it. At least now I can start making some of the mid-week functions throughout the region.

I have scheduled a newcomer's party in Toledo for June and plan on attending the 1st Thirstday gathering in Rochester, NY next week. Those were the last two groups that I hadn't visited so far in Region 3. Now I guess it's time to start over again for my second year. Let me know if there is some function your group is having that you'd like me to attend.

Happy 4th of July (and you can display those beautiful stars and stripes again).

## Northern Michigan Mensa Executive Committee

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**check out our website at: [www.nmm.us.mensa.org](http://www.nmm.us.mensa.org)**



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