



# Borealis

**NORTHERN MICHIGAN MENSA**

**VOLUME 3 NUMBER 4**

**DECEMBER 2004**



**Wishing you Happy Holidays**

**and a challenging New Year**

## WHAT'S HAPPENING IN DECEMBER

**BOOK CLUB** - Saturday, 4 December, 2004 at 12:30 p.m. We will meet at Omelette Shoppe, 1209 E. Front Street. The book discussion this month will be on *Snow in August* by Pete Hamill. We will also be determining the books to read for upcoming months.

**BRUNCH** - Saturday, 11 December, 2004, at 11:00 a.m. We will meet at Cottage Café, located at 420 Munson Avenue, Traverse City. We will hold our gathering in the Papa's Den which is on the right as you enter the front door.

**GAMES NIGHT** - Tuesday, 14 December, 2004, at 7:00 p.m. We will meet at Borders Books and Music, located at 2612 Crossing Circle, Traverse City. Bring your favorite game and a willingness to have fun! Coffee, soft drinks, sandwiches, wraps, soups, and desserts are available for purchase.

**TGIF** - Due to Christmas Eve falling on the 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month and New Year's Eve on the 5<sup>th</sup> Friday, we will not be meeting for TGIF this month.

# LIFE AT AN RG – WILD, EXHAUSTING

*Melissa J. Rennie*

I have my second RG (Regional Gathering) under my belt and the one thing that I haven't figured out yet is how to leave an RG and not be completely exhausted when I get home. I attended Chicago area's HalloWeeM over Halloween and had a wonderful time. Chicago area Mensa knows how to throw a party; I am already looking forward to next year. The action was nonstop from the moment I arrived 'til the moment I left.

When you are at a RG, you have to prioritize everything that you do, and unfortunately, I have found that sleep often ends up at the bottom of the list. Another thing that ends up at the bottom, at least at the bottom of my list, is the games room. I still haven't stepped into a games room at a RG, although I have heard that they're great. All I know is that on Sunday, I usually see a group of individuals that I haven't seen all weekend - they have been in the games room.

This RG I hardly spent any time taking in my favorite activity - the lectures that many attend. Weem had plenty of lectures - I just didn't have the time to attend.

I did find the time to volunteer in hospitality. For those that have never been to a RG, the hospitality room is the center of activity. It is also the place to find food, drink, and any conversation that you can imagine. One of the keys to hospitality room is the volunteers that keep the goodies coming.

I was able to meet up with some individuals that I have been communicating online with for the last two years. It was wonderful to be able to put a face to many of the people whose conversations I have been enjoying for a long time. I was so busy having fun, that I am almost ashamed to say that I just spent a mere two minutes at the book sale. Two minutes is an unheard of time for a Mensan to spend at a book sale. Yet it was all the time I was able to spare.

For anybody who is wondering what a RG is like, it is hard to describe. Being around hundreds of Mensans in a short amount of time is invigorating and draining at the same time. Conversations can range from the mediocre to the politically charged, and everything in between. The best way to truly find out how much fun a RG can be is to

attend one - pull a chair up in hospitality and start a conversation. Or take part in a tournament in the game's room. Or volunteer in hospitality. Or just pull out a new deck of cards. But you have to attend to be able to enjoy the full experience.

I am working on my endurance, after all, I have already sent in my money to attend the AG (annual gathering) in New Orleans this July. I have heard that the line up of games, lectures, and events rivals any AG. But I still have to work up the endurance. Right now it is hard to survive a weekend, a week at this point sounds almost impossible. So as you read this, I am off to Cincinnati area Mensa's "It's the Prime Time of Your Life" RG, to work on my endurance.

## ExComm MINUTES

*Sue Styles, Deputy LocSec*

The ExComm conducted its minimum required quarterly meeting via email the 2nd week of November due to several ExComm members' inability to attend the meeting time on November 13. Notice of the change in this meeting was sent via email and available on the NMM website.

### **Overview of ExComm Meeting Minutes, 11/13/2004**

ExComm Elected Officers present: Sherry McNamara, Sue Styles, Ellen Monahan, Melissa Rennie, Jack Schultz. Other members present: Ralph Hillquist, Michelle Swanson, Dorothy Vogel, Pete Turkus, Stephen Siciliano.

Program Chair (Sherry): We have added a new "regular" event, a book club. The first meeting will be held on Saturday, December 4, to discuss *Snow in August* by Pete Hamill. Further details will be decided at that meeting. Horizon Books will allow book club members to purchase books on our discussion list at a 10% discount. Watch the newsletter and website for information in the future.

Newsletter Editors (Ralph and Michelle): The editors are trying to get a feel for what they want to produce and what readers expect. They need material submitted as early as possible to avoid a last minute time

crunch. An archive of photos also helps to have relevant covers for each month's issue.

SIGHT Coordinator (Ralph): There have been one or two inquiries about foreign accommodations from NMM members, and he has been receiving more information on this from the national office.

Scholarship Chair (Dorothy): Dorothy sent letters to local high school guidance counselors about the local and national scholarships available. Some publicity has already appeared in local papers and more details will be sent. One judge has confirmed in writing and several other people have informally agreed to judge the scholarship essays.

Publicity Chair (Sue): Multiple notices were sent to the media this fall concerning National Testing Day (NTD). We heard from people outside Traverse City who saw these notices, so they are getting printed. The October press release included some information about scholarships; a scholarship press release will be sent out this month.

Proctor Coordinator (Jack): Only two people were tested on NTD in October. Lately, fewer people have been inquiring about Mensa and being tested. We will probably test only 3-4 times per year if this continues. One-on-one testing is also available by request. NMC is likely to begin charging us for their rooms in the near future, so if any NMM member or his/her employer has a suitable "free" location which we might use, let Jack know. Other ideas are also welcome; rooms need to be quiet and free from interruptions or distractions. The Traverse Area District Library's only free room is suitable for testing just one person at a time.

Treasurer (Ellen): We started out the year with \$2,375.36. To date, we have had income of \$1,251.33 and expenses of \$591.15. This gives us an ending bank balance of \$3,035.54, including a Friend Fund balance of \$130.

Ombudsman (Pete): Nothing to report.

Membership Officer (Melissa): The last membership list she received (9/30) had to do with under age members - we have 4.

Webmaster (Stephen): The webpage appears to be relatively self-sustaining at this point, but the Scholarship page needs updating. Sherry sent instructions to Dorothy on how to edit the page.

# **SERVICE OF INFORMATION, GUIDANCE & HOSPITALITY TO TRAVELERS (SIGHT)**

*Ralph Hillquist, NMM SIGHT Coordinator*

(The bulk of the following material was written by Marsh Norris, San Francisco Regional SIGHT Coordinator, for the SFRM newsletter. It is a sample article in the SIGHT Handbook and has been "tweaked" slightly for my purposes.)

Most of us joined Mensa to meet and mix with other Mensans. Being a SIGHT host provides an additional, wonderful opportunity to do more of just that, and it's a chance to meet interesting people from all over the world.

SIGHT is set up to assist travelers on short visits to our area. Our area is very popular, and Mensans visiting here need information about places to stay, points of interest, and local Mensa events. You've traveled and you know what it's like to visit an unfamiliar area and would appreciate some guidance.

If you can answer an email, talk on the phone, or respond to a letter, you can be a SIGHT host. It's a real help if you're also the kind of person who can pick the traveler up at the airport, if you can provide accommodations, or if you can take them sightseeing.

All of this is purely voluntary. Hosts can specify the kinds of guests they're willing to accept and can reject smokers, pets, children, or whatever their house rules call for. SIGHT hosts are not obliged to take a guest or to put up with bad behavior, and they can ask for a stipend to help defray guests' costs.

How can you use SIGHT? Just contact [sight@us.mensa.org](mailto:sight@us.mensa.org) when you're ready to travel, and you will receive information on the SIGHT coordinator at your destination. Fill out the Guest Form online and your SIGHT coordinator can find you the best match.

Because of the expanse of our geographical area, I will admit to not knowing the subtleties of Cheboygan or the mysteries of Mackinaw (or is it Mackinac). And Reed City is a riddle. If you would like to be on a short list as a contact for your area, please drop me a note at [rhillquist@chartermi.net](mailto:rhillquist@chartermi.net).

# FOR DECEMBER – PARTY FOOD!

*Sue Styles*

No matter what the holiday gathering or sports viewing event, new and interesting party foods are always welcome. Try one of these on your friends and loved ones - they have gotten rave reviews from mine!

## **Portobello Mushroom Cheesecake**

- 3 pkgs. cream cheese, softened
- ½ c heavy whipping cream
- 1 jar American Spoon Foods Portobello Mushroom relish
- ½ tsp. minced garlic
- ½ tsp. minced onion
- salt and pepper to taste
- ½ c grated parmesan cheese
- 3 eggs
- bread crumbs
- butter

Preheat oven to 325. Butter a 9” springform pan or pie plate and dust with bread crumbs. Chill. In a mixing bowl, beat the cream cheese and heavy cream until smooth. Add the mushroom relish, garlic, onion, salt, pepper, and half the parmesan cheese. Beat until mixed. Add the eggs one at a time. Pour into pan and mix the top with the remaining parmesan cheese. Bake in the center of the oven for 75 minutes. The cheesecake may appear moist in the center, but it will set. Allow to cool to room temperature. (Carefully remove from pan if a springform pan was used.) Serve at room temperature with crackers and refrigerate leftovers.

## **Creamy Crab & Shrimp Wontons**

- 1 pkg. cream cheese (softened)
- ¼ c. seasoned bread crumbs
- 1 pkg. imitation crab meat, roughly chopped
- 24 lg. cooked shrimp, peeled and cut up (or salad shrimp)
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 pkg square wonton wrappers
- shredded mozzarella cheese

Preheat oven to 350°. Mix the cream cheese, bread crumbs, crab, and shrimp together. Add salt and pepper to taste. Spray mini muffin pan with cooking spray, and push in 1 wonton wrapper to form a cup (edges will stick out). Put a small teaspoonful of cream cheese mixture into cup and top with a small pinch of cheese. Bake 10 or so minutes until cheese has melted and wonton wrapper is slightly browned. Makes 48.

## **Pumpkin Bread**

- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 ½ c sugar
- ¼ tsp. baking powder
- ½ c oil
- ¾ tsp. salt
- ½ c cold water
- ¾ tsp. each cloves, cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg
- 1 2/3 c flour
- nuts or raisins if desired
- 1 c pumpkin

Combine eggs, sugar, oil, and water. Mix thoroughly. Add remaining ingredients and mix. Bake in loaf pan at 325 for 90 minutes.

What does your family LOVE for you to cook? Have you tried anything good out of a magazine or cookbook lately? Share with us next month!

(Apologies for breaking a recipe between the ingredients and the cooking instructions - but any half fast Mensan chef should be able to figure it out. Be sure to credit Sue if you pass any of these receipts (long time since you heard that, I'll bet) along to any of your friends. - Ed.)

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Early to bed and early to rise makes a man expert in cooking his own breakfast. -- Joe Eberhart



# BIRDS OF A FEATHER – PART 2

Jus' itchin' for the answers from the first set, right? Here they are:

1-d; 2-f; 3-e; 4-h; 5-a; 6-j; 7-a; 8-i; 9-c; and, 10-g.

How'd you do? Here's the final set; answers next month.

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1) doves        | a) badelyng     |
| 2) nightingales | b) exultation   |
| 3) finches      | c) watch        |
| 4) ducks        | d) murmuration  |
| 5) larks        | e) congregation |
| 6) herons       | f) flight       |
| 7) plovers      | g) herd         |
| 8) swans        | h) charm        |
| 9) crows        | i) siege        |
| 10) starlings   | j) murder       |

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*To plant a pine one need be neither god nor poet; one need only own a shovel.*

— Aldo Leopold

*Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing about.*

— Benjamin Franklin

# MISUSED PHRASES

*Will Cavanaugh (Reprinted from Mind Bets, newsletter of Southern Nevada Mensa, March 2001; Alana Sullivan, Editor)*

There are a number of phrases (and words) which are currently being badly misused. Fortunately, when you read this you will be able to avoid the pitfalls of Wrong Interpretation.

Muckrakers: This word is now often being used to describe sleazeballs like Jerry Springer; but the Muckrakers were honorable and heroic social reformers (Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, Upton Sinclair, et al, who raked the muck at the turn of the last century to expose the sleaze within, in government and commerce. The word was coined in this context by Teddy Roosevelt in 1906, an allusion to a character in Pillgrim's Progress.

The Ugly American: This is used constantly on television to describe an American who has acted badly somewhere in the world; but the phrase is the title of a book by Eugene Burdick about a good American who helped develop water resources in Asia. He just happened to be physically ugly, and thus got the nickname from the locals he helped.

Familiarity Breeds Contempt: More and more, this is being used to imply that becoming familiar with something makes you contemptuous of it. This is absurd; I am very familiar with chocolate, and Scotch, and several other items of interest, and in no way am I contemptuous of them. It derives from upper-class British life, mostly in the 19th Century, and it simply meant that if you allowed your servants to become familiar (call you by your first name, etc.) they became contemptuous of you for letting down your class.

Memento: At least a hundred Yuppie newscasters have clearly pronounced the word that way, apparently thinking it means "of the moment." Of course it means "of memory," and is, of course, memento.

Mano a Mano: Anyone who watches sports has heard the announcer use this phrase in a context which clearly shows that he thinks it means "man to man." It means "hand to hand," and would only be correct in boxing, perhaps wrestling, and war when you've run out of ammunition.

Decimated: This has come to mean "annihilated," but it simply means 10 percent losses, or to kill every tenth prisoner.

Mayhem: Usually used to describe riotous conditions, but really means to maim. For example, the old practice, when someone won a fight in seafaring days, of putting a knife into one nostril and cutting outward; the resulting scar told one that all that the bearer had lost a fight (Used in Chinatown, when it was done to Jack Nicholson by a couple of buddies.)

Quantum leap: Now used to describe a great leap in distance or in logic, it actually means only a discrete, quantifiable difference of any size.

## AP TEST QUESTIONS

This is taken from an article in the 23 November 2004 issue of the *Wall Street Journal*. (High school) students taking AP (advanced placement) courses in calculus and world history see questions like this on the exams.

1. The area of the region in the first quadrant between the graph of  $y = x\sqrt{4-x^2}$  and the x-axis is:

a)  $\frac{2}{3}\sqrt{2}$ ; b)  $\frac{8}{3}$ ; c)  $2\sqrt{2}$ ; d)  $2\sqrt{3}$ ; e)  $\frac{16}{3}$

2. Which of the following most clearly differentiates the sixteenth century from the previous period in world history?

a) Establishment of nation-states in the Americas

b) Extension of sugar production to the Americas

c) Use of steamships

d) Interest in the Asian spice trade

e) Existence of slave trade

Answers on a following page. If you aced these, consider applying to an Ivy League school.

# CSI: New York, 1890s Style

*Sue Styles*

Whether you like historical novels, thrillers, or various kinds of non-fiction, I have two books that fit the bill. They have been on my “to read” list for quite a while, and I finally decided they had been on the list long enough. As with many things postponed, I ended up wondering why I had waited so long! Caleb Carr’s *The Alienist* and *The Angel of Darkness* are fascinating novels of crime and psychology in 1890s New York City.

Reading these books feels like watching the TV series CSI (Crime Scene Investigation) in yet another setting. Both books revolve around a specific set of crimes that the investigators feel are related. As they identify and move in on a suspect, they use new-fangled techniques such as fingerprinting, ballistics, autopsies, and psychological profiling without official sanction from the police department and solve crimes that seem otherwise unsolvable.

The first book involves a suspect who kills young boys in similar settings and mutilates the bodies in a distinctive way. The second takes up the question of infanticide and motherhood as the team investigates a baby’s kidnapping. As he follows these cases, Carr not only describes interesting investigation techniques, but includes significant historical and geographical detail. He also deals with topics that we consider to be more “modern”: homosexuality, poverty, racial and religious discrimination, and the roles of women in society. The combination of all these makes a very rich and fulfilling story.

The main character, if there is one, is the “alienist,” Dr. Kreizler. We would recognize Kreizler now as a psychologist, and he has spent his career working with maladjusted children and prison inmates, helping the children overcome their difficulties and testifying on behalf of accused persons on trial. His specialty in court is the question of sanity or insanity. He brings all this knowledge to bear on these new crimes as he constructs what type of childhood a person would have had to make them commit the crimes as they have. He then uses this profile to determine when and how to catch the killer before he or she strikes again. In spite of his abilities, the public is generally skeptical about the alienist’s innovative opinions - another interesting issue, as Americans now cannot get enough pop psychology.

The rest of the investigative team is a motley crew - a woman who wants to be a cop when the force is not ready for her, two Jewish brothers who both happen to be detectives, a New York Times reporter, a former pickpocket and street urchin, and a tough but cultured black man who works for Dr. Kreizler. Each brings a different perspective to the group. Occasionally, though, they need outside help and therefore real persons such as Theodore Roosevelt and Elizabeth Cady Stanton are brought into the story as acquaintances of the characters. For the most part, the interaction between the characters is realistic and interesting, and the story moves along quickly as they split into teams and constantly discover new clues and develop new theories.

While I enjoyed the plot of both novels, I recommend the first one, *The Alienist*, much more than the second. For one thing, a different character narrates each book, but the writing style changes only slightly. The style in the first one is much more believable and easier to read. Also, the encounters with famous people make more sense in the first book. The appearance of Clarence Darrow in the second novel reminded me of some of Forrest Gump's chance meetings. Finally, the courtroom scenes in the second book seem too much like what we are used to hearing about and seeing today on TV; the effect was to make the story seem contrived, as though the author had run out of original ideas.

Overall, though, I would recommend both books. They have been reviewed as being quite factually accurate, always a plus for me when it comes to historical fiction. The plot details of the crimes and pursuits are surprisingly complex, scientific even, making Carr's works more than the average mystery thrillers. Curl up with a blanket, hot cocoa, or a cat and enjoy these books as the weather gets blustery!

(Book details: Caleb Carr, *The Alienist*, 1994, 496 pgs, hardcover. *The Angel of Darkness*, 1997, 600 pgs. hardcover; both published by Random House) (Check at Amazon.com for trade paperback - ed.)

# *Roaming the Region*

*Charlie Bruce (aka, Gloater)*

*RVC Region 3 (rvc3@us.mensa.org)*

One of the questions that I was asked in a recent "Meet the AMC" session at an RG concerned contacting members. It seems there are mixed emotions about trying to get our non-participating members to attend a function of their choice.

On the one side there are those that attempt to contact members of their groups and invite them to various activities. They (myself included) have attempted to determine what events or meetings would draw out these people. We call them on the phone, run questionnaires, and try different themed meetings to try to pique their interest, usually to no avail. We wonder why these people pay their dues year after year and yet never attend a meeting or gathering. What are they getting for the annual dues they spend? Why don't they participate? Invite them and they will come? It doesn't happen. Usually some even get upset that you called.

Then there are those that say, "Leave them alone." After all, it is with the help of their dues that the rest of us can enjoy the benefits that we have. If all they want is to get their Mensa card or read the National Bulletin and local newsletters, so be it. If they want to come to an event that interests them, they will.

There are currently almost 5000 Mensans in Region 3. I doubt even 10% of them attend one or more meetings a year; most have never attended anything since joining. So, I'm taking the poll to the streets. If you are one of these "closeted Mensans", please email me and let me know your thoughts on this. Should we just take your money and leave you be, or do you mind the occasional call inviting you to take part?

Either way, active or not, Terry and I would like to at least wish you a Happy Holiday season. May the rest of your year be filled with blessings, and may the New Year bring you even more.

## **AP TEST ANSWERS: 1 b); 2 b).**

Please note that the WSJ reprinted with permission from the "College Board" these two questions. Such permission was not requested by the Borealis.

# NORTHERN MICHIGAN MENSA

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [www.nmm.us.mensa.org](http://www.nmm.us.mensa.org)

**HAPPY HOLLONDAISE AND TO ALL A GOOD NIGHT!**