

Borealis

The Monthly Journal of Northern Michigan Mensa



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 Borealis
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. 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 when a person submits material with a restriction that it be published "as is or not at all". It will be assumed that the editor has permission to edit for length and clarity unless the author specifies the submission is to be printed "as is". In such cases, it will include an editor's note stating it as such.

That a person has written and submitted something to the newsletter is not, in itself, sufficient reason for its publication. It is the editor's discretion whether to publish any submission, with the exception of mandatory items.

All submissions are welcome and encouraged. They may be sent via email or snail mail. They may be sent as attachments or in the body of the email.

Submissions requiring major editing are also welcome. If requested, the author may approve the editing before the article is published.

Photographs are also welcome. Please include a brief description of the photo, and the name of the photographer. You may also include an entire article to accompany the photo.

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT www.nmm.us.mensa.org

ON THE COVER: Mensans at Jill Daniels' house in Leelanau County

Northern Michigan Mensa

September 2005 Calendar

MOVIE CLUB – Saturday, 3 September 2005 at 3:00 p.m. We will meet at Flap Jack Shack located at 3980 N. US 31 S. Attend the movie that is showing in The Art House which is located in the Horizon Cinemas, 3587 Market Place Circle, Traverse City. Attend the movie that is playing as of Friday, 2 September. Members can either attend the movie on Friday afternoon/evening, or the **first** viewing of the day on Saturday 3 September. (Movies change following the last showing on Thursday night, so don't attend before the Friday movie date as it may not be the same movie that we will be discussing.) If you are uncertain about which movie to attend, you can check the NMM Events webpage on Friday morning for the title: <http://nmm.us.mensa.org/>.

BRUNCH – Saturday, 10 September, 2005, 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.

TGIF – Friday, 23 September 2005, at 6:00 p.m. We will meet in the Horizon Shine Café, located in the lower level of Horizon Books, 243 E. Front Street, Traverse City. Coffee, soft drinks, sandwiches, wraps, and desserts are available for purchase.

From the Editor

As you will read in the Member News section, I am newly engaged. We have not set a date yet, but we are probably looking at Spring 2007. I am using my privilege as editor to share my happiness with you all in this article. I promise not to give blow-by-blow accounts of the planning and preparation.

Well, those of you with kids will be preparing for them to go back to school, if they haven't started already. Some of you may even be returning to school yourselves. Good luck to all and stay safe out there. I actually miss it myself. Not that this should surprise fellow Mensans. I suspect I'm not the only one in our group who enjoyed school.

We are fast approaching the holiday season. Start thinking about any submissions you may wish to send relating to the upcoming holidays. I would love some Halloween-themed articles for next month's newsletter. Perhaps someone out there would like to write up an article about the history of Halloween. Or maybe some ghost stories.

Send in those submissions. Let's keep this a publication worth reading.

HAPPY LABOR DAY!



Member News

Melissa J. Rennie was recently appointed to the National Membership Committee for American Mensa. The committee is charged with coordinating activities related to members, member benefits and services, retention of members, membership renewals, etc. The committee is chaired by Heather Miller, National Membership officer (who is a good friend of Melissa's).

Sue and Mark Styles recently moved from the west side of Traverse City to Elk Rapids due to a job change. Mark used to work at Crystal Downs Country Club in Frankfort and accepted a position in April as Head Golf Professional at Charlevoix Country Club. Their new home is approximately halfway between Mark's new job and Sue's job on the east side of Traverse City. They are busy getting settled in and selling their house in TC, but will be attending more activities soon.

Kelli Bingham (your friendly neighborhood editor) recently became engaged. The date has not yet been set. They are probably looking at Spring 2007.

Send in your member news. We would all like to know what's happening in your life.



American Mensa Founder dies at 88

Peter A. Sturgeon, the man considered to be the founder of American Mensa, passed away in Vienna, Austria, on Friday, July 22. He was 88. Sturgeon was a medical writer living in Brooklyn, N.Y., when he read an article about Mensa. He wrote to the Mensa Selection Agency in England in March 1960, passed the Cattell test above the 99th percentile that May and became a Mensa member later that year. He was authorized to start forming a New York City regional group in August 1960 and assumed the title of Provisional Secretary, although the "provisional" was soon dropped. This group was the first outside of Britain to be recognized and has since evolved into American Mensa, Ltd., the largest of more than 50 national Mensa organizations. Sturgeon served as American Mensa's Secretary until 1965, when he resigned after accepting employment with the World Health Organization in Switzerland. During his tenure as Secretary, many of the foundations of American Mensa were laid including the Local Group and regional structure, the Annual Gathering national convention, Regional Gatherings, Local Group newsletters, the American Mensa Committee, national recruiting efforts, the American Mensa Bylaws and the creation of the National Office. Sturgeon published the first edition of the American Mensa Activities Report in 1961 and served as its editor through July 1962; this publication soon evolved into the Mensa Bulletin, the organization's national membership magazine. He was also American Mensa's first National Representative to the Mensa International Board of Directors, serving from 1962 to 1965.

Pamela Donahoo, CAE
executive director

What I Did On My Summer Vacation

By Alan Baltis, Region 3 RVC, RVC3@us.mensa.org

Hello, everyone!

My wife and I “did” the Annual Gathering in New Orleans this year, and it was an incredible amount of smartfun. Please allow me to elaborate.

Colleen and I had decided we were going to drive there and back, because (a) we wanted to take a little longer vacation to celebrate my being well again (I just survived melanoma, which I’ll probably talk about in a future column), (b) to give us an excuse to travel. We’re seeing as many state capitals as we can, and this was a great opportunity to capture 10 or so, and (c) flying nowadays and especially the TSA makes me feel that I no longer live in the Land of the Free and Home of the Brave. Colleen and I really enjoy each other’s company, and what others have called “how could you stand being trapped with each other for 2 weeks?” was something to which we were actually looking forward.

In preparation for the trip, I had loaded up on state maps of our route, both from the various tourist bureaus and from AAA (which is some of the best money I spend each year). We also had many guidebooks like “Road Trip America” and “Road Food America” and “Road Kill America” to help us find the cool, quirky “biggest ball of twine”-type places that we love to visit. I *hate* getting home and finding out that we were within 5 miles of the best mini-golf course in Tennessee, and missed it!

I had also used www.priceline.com to make sure that we had a decent place to stay each night, while keeping costs down to an average of \$40/night. Priceline is a godsend if you don’t know an area well enough to care where you stay, but you *do* care about a good bed, a good shower, and a good lock on the door.

We started off out of Cleveland on the Friday morning before “AG week,” and zoomed down through Ohio into West Virginia. Along the way we stopped at a place called Tamarack that a helpful clerk at the OH/WV border had recommended; a place where hundreds of Appalachian craftspeople and artisans ply their trades and sell their wares, and it was much nicer and less tourist-trappy than we expected.

I picked up a few handcrafted wood puzzles, Colleen got a colorful sun-catcher for our kitchen, and I got a few gifts for my brothers for Christmas: candies that look just like lumps of coal for their stockings.

We stayed in Charleston, WV, spending the first 20 minutes or so in town searching for our hotel; and, frustrated by the confluence of rivers and bridges and highway overpasses and one-way streets, finally having to call them to guide us in. It turns out that the Capital Ramada is actually quite a bit *away* from the Capital...

The next morning we went back and saw the capital building by daylight, which to our chagrin was actually undergoing renovation and whose gold dome was all wrapped in plastic! However, the inside of the building was beautiful and loaded with historical info, so a great first stop.

We then headed east to connect with the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia, which I had been on before and wanted to share with Colleen (and see again). Of course we stopped at every roadside historical marker, and slowed to take all kinds of pictures of wildlife and scenic vistas, exercising our new digital camera and determined to take as many of the 1000 or so pictures for which I had room on three Compact Flash cards, each the size of one of those chocolate after-dinner mints. Technology is Good.

What *wasn’t* good was seeing the sign for “Asheville, 280 miles” when it was already 7:00 PM. Asheville, NC held our next hotel, and even if we stopped stopping at every little sign, if we continued to average the 50 MPH max speed on the Parkway, we wouldn’t get in until 1 AM or so. So we hopped off the Parkway and onto the interstate that parallels it along that stretch, and worked on making some time. This took us west into Tennessee and then down into North Carolina, and because we stopped for dinner along the way before everything shut down at 10 PM, we still didn’t get in until after midnight. And this was the Renaissance hotel, one of the nicer ones in which we’d be staying. Aaargh.

By getting in so late on a Saturday night we got the second-to-last room available in the hotel, and the only non-smoking one left. It was a huge conference room with a Murphy bed hidden up in one wall, which (though I feared the worst) was actually quite comfortable.

The next morning had a great breakfast (Colleen was by now hopelessly addicted to grits), and headed over to the Biltmore House. Built and maintained by the Vanderbilt family, this is the place that the US President should live if he *really* wanted to impress foreign dignitaries. Hundreds of rooms, all uniquely appointed with international artifacts as well as local crafts. Beautiful gardens, an extensive winery, and working farm park added to the delights. I actually saw, for the first time in my 45 years, an egg pop out of a chicken!

We then...whoops, I see I'm already over my 800-word limit for most newsletters, so I'll stop short here. Next month- more on the trip, the AG, the hurricanes we almost got to experience, etc.

Okay, an injection of Mensa business for those hungry for such things. My first AMC meeting as your RVC was wonderfully smooth and cooperative compared to some of the Tales of Terror I had heard from past AMC members and meeting attendees. Many appointees for the 2005-6 or 7 terms were approved, a number of housekeeping-type motions were ratified, and everyone got to know one another (there are 7 out of 10 new RVCs, so many new faces, voices and minds). Minutes for the meeting are available at the www.us.mensa.org website.

One item of significance was the rescinding of a motion at April's meeting to restrict the use of Mensa resources for ride-sharing, roommate matching, etc. at Mensa events, with the rescindation (like *that's* a word!) coming from the count that passed it not agreeing with AMC member's memories of how they voted. If you have thoughts or feelings you'd like to share on this (or other) Risk Management-based topics, or heck, anything Mensa-related, please email me at RVC3@us.mensa.org.

Thanks!

Northern Michigan Mensa Celebrates Three Years of Growth

by Jack Schultz

Nineteen Mensans and their guests gathered on the shores of West Grand Traverse Bay on Saturday, August 20 to celebrate the completion of three years as one of American Mensa's newest local groups. Hostess Jill Daniels graciously opened up her architecturally very interesting home to the participants, and it served as the venue for a wide variety of delicious dishes which were consumed with gusto. Threatening weather quieted the plans to eat outdoors, but sunshine flooded the 500-plus feet of Lake Michigan shoreline on Jill's property later in the afternoon, and the shining waters lured many to the lakeshore off-and-on during the several hours people were together. The property lies immediately adjacent to the trust land of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, on the south side of Peshawbestown in Leelanau County.

Some of our newest members joined us--Jim McDermott and his wife Sharon came from Interlochen, and brothers Ryan and Travis Nelson (both members) came all the way from Grayling. It was the first NMM gathering for the Nelsons, and we hope they'll make it a habit to attend functions in the future. Among our longest-tenured members present were Pete Turkus and wife Cheri, Jack Schultz and wife Joanne, and our LocSec, Sherry McNamara and husband Ed.

Special guests on this occasion were Bob and Kathy Beatty who were visiting Kathy's parents north of Elk Rapids. Both are Mensans from Columbus, Ohio, and Bob served a term as Chairman of American Mensa several years ago. He remains on the American Mensa Committee as Past Past Chairman. It was very nice to have them with us and to get some "inside info" about our parent organization. Bob was especially helpful several years ago in encouraging the formation of Northern Michigan Mensa.

Rounding out the list of member attendees were Melissa Rennie, our hostess Jill Daniels, Martha Barton, Stan Cain, and Stephen Siciliano. Dorothy Cain accompanied Stan, and Fred Desmarais, who provides Jill with transportation and companionship, completed the group of 19.

As is always the situation when Mensans get together, so many different conversations went on that it was difficult to keep track of them. People sometimes think we always talk about sophisticated things and that the topics are momentous in importance. Nothing could be further from the truth most of the time, though, because one could learn about growing vegetables from Melissa (when we weren't hearing about plans for a Regional Gathering to be sponsored by NMM!!) or look at photos taken in the 1960s when Jill was growing up.

We all come from different backgrounds and have such varied experience that it truly can be said, "If you come away from a gathering of Mensa members without having learned something new, it is your own darn fault!" Nothing earth-shaking came out of this celebration of Northern Michigan Mensa's completion of three full years of being a local group, but friendships continue to deepen among longer-term members, and newcomers begin to feel more like they "belong" to something that had been missing in their lives. We look forward to Year Number Four with even greater relish than we entered this past year.



Visiting in Jill's kitchen

Betsie River Canoe/Kayak Trip

Here are a couple photos from the canoe trip in August.



Melissa Rennie



Stan and Dorothy Cain

Stabenow Discusses Economy

By Melissa J. Rennie

MANISTEE — U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow stopped to speak to the Women's netWork of Manistee County on Thursday afternoon at Topo's in Manistee. The Women's netWork is a group of Manistee businesswomen that formed this May in an effort to network with other women in the county and around the country.

Much of Stabenow's talk centered on business, the economy, and how it affected everyone in America, especially families.

"I feel right now, in our country, we are at a real crossroads on a whole range of things. We are an international marketplace now," said Stabenow. "We have to figure out how to be smart about being in that marketplace, so we don't lose our standard of living. Other people's standard of living needs to go up, not for ours to go down. We need to export products, not jobs. We have some real work to do on that area. I also think that our families are being squeezed on all sides," added Stabenow. "Will there be a job? Will you be able to care for your family with that job? Will it have health care? What about a pension?"

"Who would have ever thought that we would be in a position to worry about whether or not the pension they paid into their whole life would be there? I never thought I would see the day that would happen in America, and yet, we are seeing that potential right now," Stabenow told the almost 50 assembled women. "I focus on all those things, because fundamentally what we need to do is make sure we have the quality of life we want for our children; that we can work hard and know that they will have a good life, if not a better life than we had and we keep our quality of life we have in this country and who we are as Americans," continued Stabenow. "I don't think it fair to say it's an American 'dream', because I think we need to make sure it is still here for our kids."

Importance of fair trade practices

One of the questions that the Senator spent time answering is how can the United States be competitive globally, when our international competition is willing to provide goods at a lower cost.

"Let me share with you at least my opinion, the multiple things (about trade)," answered Stabenow. "I think that we have to decide, and

governmental leaders have to decide that we are going to do everything possible to make sure that there are incentives out there. We need to change the way we fund healthcare in this country, so it's not a cost of business. In the short run, we can change how we finance health care, which is a huge issue for our businesses.

"We need to be deciding if we want to create incentives for jobs here, and not just say that in a global economy, whatever is best for a multinational company is just 'ok', which is the current policy," explained Stabenow. "If you try to do anything to make trade fair, you are a protectionist, which in my mind is crazy. You couldn't stop trade if you wanted to. The question is are we going to be smart in a global economy."

"How do we create ways and incentives for that lower common denominator to go up? I think of several things," said Stabenow. "We have to have trade agreements that require environmental standards in other countries, instead of putting pressures on ours to go down. We are competing with a place that you can't drink the water. Worker protection - it is counterintuitive — that businesses in America, I believe, have a stake in unions being organized in other countries. And that is because workers in other countries have no voice to be able to increase their standard of living — Mexico, Dominican Republic or China," said Stabenow. "We have a stake in their being able to bring up their standard of living."

"Under NAFTA, in the last 10 years, even though there are some real positive things under NAFTA, overall, we have lost a million workers and the Mexican standard of living has gone down, not up," added Stabenow. "Somehow workers' wages, etc., are not addressed in trade treaty. Under trade treaties, we say you can't take intellectual property rights, you can't do other things, but we don't have anything in there about what happens to the worker. So we need a different kind of trade. In my opinion, NAFTA was more of the same. I didn't vote for it because you can do a whole lot better."

"The other piece of it is doing everything we can to keep jobs here," continued Stabenow. "There was a corporate tax bill passed last year and an amendment of mine that passed which gives lower tax rates to a company if a job is created in the United States rather than overseas."

"An amendment of mine passed that said if you get a federal contract, that the work has to be done in the United States, with United States workers," said Stabenow. "As taxpayers, we are paying for a

service, and we ought not say that you can subcontract that with somebody overseas. If it is American tax dollars, those things should be done by Americans."

Special prosecutor to protect America's ideas

Stabenow told a story about how a friend of hers in a business in Grand Rapids invented something that cost \$70 to produce. China came in and stole the idea for making it, and now sells it for \$10. The individual took the Chinese company to international court, and the Chinese government accompanied the company to court. The businessman was by himself and asked her why he ended up being alone in an international court. Stabenow agreed with him.

"Another piece of it is making sure China, in particular, doesn't get away with cheating, like they're doing," said Stabenow. "They were allowed in the World Trade Organization a number of years ago. Part of that was you follow certain rules. They are not supposed to be able to steal our patents, our intellectual property rights. They do it all the time.

"There is a U.S./China commission that I have now introduced as a bill with a Republican colleague of mine, Lindsey Graham (South Carolina)," explained Stabenow. "This would create an international trade prosecutor for our country. What does that mean? That means if you as a business owner found someone stealing your patent or something else that was unfair, you would have a place to go. They would take action on your behalf or watch what is going on around the world.

"In addition to everything that is happening with China, they have unfair trade advantages because they steal intellectual property rights and they do things like currency manipulation; which basically means that when they sell something to us, it is discounted up to 40 percent because of the way they value their money. If we sell to them, it can cost up to 40 percent more because of the artificial trade barrier they have set up," continued Stabenow. "That is illegal, absolutely illegal.

"We have to start standing up with Americans in this process," said Stabenow. "Chinese have been watching us on this. We have a vote of 67 members in this bi-partisan vote on this bill that I am co-sponsoring that requires the president to get tough with China. After this vote, China actually changed a little bit of what they were doing, which said to me

that they are watching us, and don't believe we will get tough with them.

"We have to have framework — we are going to compete in a global economy, we are going to deal with the costs that we have to, but we are also going to have rules that allow us to keep our standard of living and for other countries to increase theirs," said Stabenow. "If we don't do that, the pressure will be on us to lower and lower our standard of living."

Higher education

Another question posed to Stabenow was how to lower the costs of higher education so that Americans, especially in Michigan could be more competitive.

"What is happening is really the wrong type of trickle down economics," explained Stabenow. "The federal government is responsible for a lot of federal aid — pell grants, direct student loans. That has been cut and cut and cut. It goes on to the state, the state doesn't have money, so they cut and cut and cut.

"This is all a matter of values and priority," said Stabenow. "What could be more important than to globally compete in the international marketplace than to make sure our kids have an education? Education and innovation are going to put us ahead — new thinking, new products, new kinds of services," continued Stabenow. "Unfortunately, nationally, it is not the priority that it ought to be."

Stabenow used her tenure on the budget commission to explain some of the problems currently faced with funding higher education.

"In 2001, we had the largest budget surplus in the history of the country ever — \$5.7 trillion," said Stabenow. "There were two proposals, and this was a difference in view between Democrats and Republicans. I supported a plan to take that surplus and divide it into thirds," explained Stabenow. "A third for strategic tax cuts, a third of it to pay down the gap in Social Security -- if we had done that there would be no gap in Social Security right now -- and a third of it for investments in our people, community, education, higher education, health care, health research and quality of life issues.

"If we had done that, we would be in a different place now," said Stabenow. "Instead, what was done was a proposal to put it all into tax cuts, to give it to companies and very wealthy people and see if it trickled down. I am still waiting to see if it will trickle down," added Stabenow. "But all of it was put into one strategy.

"Then we had 9/11 and we went to war and we had all these other costs, and there's no money to pay for any of it, so we started racking up deficit," continued Stabenow. "We started putting it on a credit card. Every single penny of the war has gone on a credit card." "We have never had a time in our history where we didn't raise the revenue to pay for the war," said Stabenow. "Instead we have lowered taxes and gone to war and created this big deficit.

"Now the strategy is to look for other areas to cut, so they turn to higher education, health care. I think that is the wrong way to go," Stabenow explained. "The easiest political vote is to vote for a tax cut. The hardest vote is to pay the bills," said Stabenow. "Sometimes just doing tax cuts mean we end up paying more, because what happens is local millages go up, because there is no state revenue sharing. School millages go up because of the state cuts. You may end up paying more because it becomes trickle down costs."

Economy in Michigan

The question then turned to the specific question of the economy in Michigan.

"We have been blessed for a long time of being a hub of manufacturing," answered Stabenow. "Now, particularly with the international marketplace issues, when you look at what is happening in a global economy, healthcare costs, pension costs, our manufacturers are just getting killed. Because we have been the place of excellence in manufacturing, we are hurt more by it.

"We are in a very tough time, but there is also high-tech manufacturing, there are new opportunities in bio-tech research and other kinds of medical research," said Stabenow. "The new Energy bill has a lot in it that relates to using agricultural products for energy. There is a whole industry on bio-based fuel; not just ethanol, but soybeans.

"We have to use our ingenuity, which gets back to education. If we

are going to use this ingenuity and new ideas, we are going to need people that are educated. There are lots of jobs we can create here," added Stabenow. "One way is to do just what we did before we left Congress, which is pass the Transportation bill that puts money into roads, bridges, mass transit, and so on.

"In Michigan, over 61,000 construction jobs and engineering jobs will be created," added Stabenow. "I was really pleased, we got a bigger share for Michigan. It was a better bill than we ever had for Michigan and it will create over 61,000 in the next four years." Other topics touched upon were the U.S. Supreme Court and the role of women in politics.

Watch for more from Debbie Stabenow in next month's issue.



On July 19th four of our NMM group participated in the semiannual phonathon at Interlochen Public Radio, answering the phones when people called in their financial pledges for the radio station. The four right-most individuals are, from the left: Tom Barnhart, Jill Daniels, friend Fred Desmarais, and Jack Schultz