



# 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". 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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ON THE COVER: The season's first snow, taken by Dr. David Wilcox

# Northern Michigan Mensa

## January 2006 Calendar

**MOVIE CLUB** – Saturday, 7 January 2006 at 2:00 p.m. We will meet at Flap Jack Shack located at 3980 N. US 31 S for the discussion portion of our meeting. On Friday, 30 December, I will post the movie title on the web page and will send out an email notification of the movie we will be viewing at Horizon Cinemas, 3587 Market Place Circle, Traverse City. You will have to attend the movie anytime beginning Friday, 30 December and running through Thursday 5 January (Movies change following the last showing on Thursday night, so don't wait until Friday the 6<sup>th</sup> as it may not be the same movie that we will be discussing.) Remember to check the NMM Events web page on Friday, 30 December for the title at <http://nmm.us.mensa.org/>. For those members who do not have a computer, you can call me (Sherry) on the 30<sup>th</sup> and I will be happy to provide you the movie title. My phone number is 933-9272.

**HURDY-GURDY PRESENTATION AND BRUNCH** – Saturday, 14 January 2006, at 11:00 a.m. We will meet at Cottage Café, located at 420 Munson Avenue, Traverse City. Our own Judith Lindenau will provide us with some historical information about her instrument, the hurdy-gurdy, as well as a demonstration. This will certainly spur some excitement for our Celtic Music night on the 23<sup>rd</sup>! We will hold our gathering in the Papa's Den which is on the right as you enter the front door. The menu includes both breakfast and lunch items.

**DINNER AND CELTIC MUSIC NIGHT FEATURING OUR OWN JUDITH LINDENAU**– Monday, 23 January 2006 at 6:00 p.m. at the Loading Dock, 205 Lake Street near Cass, Traverse City. We will meet in time to get a table and order dinner. There is NO cover charge. They serve burgers, sandwiches, wraps, and salads. Music begins at 7:00 p.m. Judith is a well-known musician who plays the hammered dulcimer, hurdy-gurdy, and pennywhistle. For those of you who missed out on this event in November – we had a great time, don't miss it this month!

**TGIF** – Friday, 27 January 2006, 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.

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## From the Editor

I hope everyone had a good holiday season. I wish everyone the best in 2006. I also congratulate the newly elected ExComm members (see below).

Some people are still occasionally sending email to the old account. Please make sure all newsletter related email is sent to [nmmnewsletter@hotmail.com](mailto:nmmnewsletter@hotmail.com).

Kelleen Bingham

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## Election Results

After a very close vote count in the election for the 2006-2007 Northern Michigan Mensa Executive Committee, the five candidates receiving the greatest number of votes are:

Stan Cain  
Don Hennig  
Sherry McNamara  
Melissa Rennie  
Susan A. Styles

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NMM Wants You!  
By Sherry McNamara

If you are reading Borealis this month, you will see the new slate of voting members of the ExComm. We will be seeking additional members for non-voting (appointed) positions. Please contact me by 10 January if you have an interest in serving in some capacity. We can chat about the options that are available. My phone number is 231.933.9272 and my email is [kikiwon@hotmail.com](mailto:kikiwon@hotmail.com).

## AI-literations

By Alan Baltis, your Great Lakes/Ohio Valley Region 3 Vice-Chairunit

The New Year is traditionally a time of review and resolution, a time to see what's working, what's not, and what new things we can try. I always get a charge out of laying out the calendar for the New Year and writing in the various events I already know I'll be doing. I love looking forward to things, getting a sense of where I'll be spending my time, and noting the must-dos (taxes), the should-dos (birthdays), and the choose-to-dos (vacations). Especially, I ask myself if I'm finding the right balance among those things, so that my life is not just one of obligation, but of joy as well.

I imagine that a similar process would help many of us, thinking as perhaps too many smart people do that, ahem, the world would be a better place "if only everyone behaved as I do." Let me just step down off that Arrogant Ass pedestal and throw a few ideas out that may prove useful to you, your local groups, and Mensa. As always, please take what you may need and leave the rest.

It's worth looking a little deeper at that calendar. Many local groups have long-standing meetings and dinners and games nights- in Chicago I proudly wore my "100 Nights with Bill and Gary" button when their Saturday Night Special movie night reached that milestone, and Dining with De in Cleveland has been going on monthly for almost 6 years. If you're a lurker, maybe you'd like to check one of those perpetual events out? My guess is that they've been around a long time for good reason, that the activity/the location/the attendees are high-quality, and that going to one will give you a taste of Good Mensa.

Maybe you could also look at that calendar and see what's missing. If everything in your local group seems to be food-related, maybe something more active could work out- biking, hiking, a rigorous round of mini-golf? Maybe a games afternoon or evening, since we smarties know that our big brains also need regular exercise? Maybe a salon or book/movie discussion group? Maybe supplying a big table and a hub, having everyone bring their laptops, and spending a few hours blasting each other in Doom/Quake/Myth/Halo? Maybe a regular poker night? (Ask brilliant Mensa wordsmith Richard Lederer about how two of his brainy children make their living).

If we expand our focus outwards from monthly into yearlong, other

opportunities arise. Is there a particular yearly event in your area that might be fun to enjoy in the company of Mensans? A Taste of Toledo, or the Rochester Rutabaga festival? The Akron Arts Assembly, or the Franklin Fresco Fest? Invite your Mensa friends to join you! Think of the holidays and seasons- does your city have a Cherry Blossom festival? Great fireworks around Independence Day (especially since the AG is in August this year, and doesn't conflict)? Do local farmers have corn mazes that Mensans (especially families) could thread their way through together, and raise a hearty glass of cider in victory? A little foresight, a couple notices in your group's calendar, and you just may start a new tradition.

I've talked mostly about fun, which while essential can also be a bit...light. How about something more constructive; is there a talent you have that you've always wanted to share, some thing that you know a lot about that you've often thought of imparting to others? Maybe you could organize an "Internet Made Easy" session, and have a few of your mightiest geeks describe how to get onto the 'Net, set up a Wi-Fi network, and troubleshoot problems that your fellow members have. Maybe a cooking session on your specialty (the perfect cobbler?), or a session on wise investing (index funds?) or tax handling (Roth IRAs?). If you time these things appropriately (April, end-of-year?), they'll be even bigger hits. It'll be important to state that hosting something like this is a one-shot, and NOT an obligation to take questions into perpetuity, else an act of generosity can turn into a time-sucking drag.

Maybe this is the year for stretching outside of your local group, and hitting a Regional Gathering or two, or \*gasp\* even the World Gathering down in Orlando in August. As I've mentioned in a previous column, I am quite the RG addict, and don't see that ending any time soon. I love having a weekend of great company, good food, big laughs, a few surprises. These Gatherings of ours have always struck me as a modern equivalent of a medieval Faire, where people would travel from all around an area to feast, dance, game, and love. There aren't that many things in the world that push so many of my having-a-good-time buttons as an RG, and happily Region 3 is rich in them, with different groups hosting no fewer than 6 a year- that's one every 2 months, just a few hours drive away! Maybe this is even the year for a few new groups to think about hosting one, or a few dormant groups to burst forth once again into RG life?

As always, write me at [RVC3@us.mensa.org](mailto:RVC3@us.mensa.org) with your comments and Big Ideas. Thanks!

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## Culture Quest XVII Is Almost Upon Us!

By Sherry McNamara

Culture Quest (CQ) is a game played by members of the American Mensa as well as Canada Mensa simultaneously on Sunday, 30 April. It is like playing a long trivia game of cultural knowledge. Questions can be about current events, science, politics, entertainment, etc. The game lasts for 90 minutes and the start time is dependent on the time zone in which the participant resides; we begin play at 4:00 p.m.

CQ is played by teams comprised of up to five players, with one member being the captain. Each team can also have up to two alternates. The alternate would not play unless one of the regular players was unable to play. We can enter multiple teams in the contest. Normally we meet in separate locations to play followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

Answer sheets are submitted to American Mensa to tally the scores with the top 20 teams winning cash awards. These awards are generally designated for the local scholarship fund.

If you are interested in playing, please let me know by 1 March 2006. The cost is \$40 per team, so the cost per person will be dependent on the number of players per team. Also, if you are interested in being the captain and/or allowing the team to play at your home, let me know that too!

Contact me via email at [kikiwon@hotmail.com](mailto:kikiwon@hotmail.com); please put CQ2006 in the subject line. Or you can call me at 933-9272.

## Top Ten Reasons to Volunteer at the World Gathering 2006

10. You will meet new people from all over the world, many of whom may become new business/social friends.
9. There is nothing quite as satisfying as the warm feeling you experience when you help someone.
8. Volunteers do it "for free"!
7. You will be "in the know" regarding current events at our World Gathering.
6. Appreciation. Volunteers are appreciated for what they do, for what they know, and for the time they spend helping.
5. You can meet your future mate. I can name 6 couples that met and got married through Mensa, including me!
4. Knowing without the collective you, it just wouldn't happen. That's how important volunteers are.
3. You will be a member of a very special group, respected and appreciated for your skills and experience.
2. You will help make this event one of the best ever, one that ran smoothly with plenty of helping hands.

And the number one reason for volunteering at the World Gathering:

1. Uniting Mensans - Volunteers are the lifeblood that binds our worldwide organization together. Come join us for an infusion!

Contact me, Kay Klasen, WG06 Volunteer Coordinator (<http://WG06.us.mensa.org>), to explore the volunteer opportunities. The possibilities are endless! Here is a partial list:

Registration	Games Host(ess)
Speaker	Teacher
Food Service	Ticket Taker
Hospitality	Tour Guide
Security	Speaker Greeter
Ambassador	Goodie Bag Stuffer (in Orlando)

## Volunteers Needed For The American Mensa Committee Nomination Process

By Sherry McNamara, Local Secretary

The National Nominating Committee (NomComm) is currently looking for volunteers to take part in the nomination selection process for American Mensa. Their goal is to seek out candidates for the American Mensa Committee (AMC). This committee is the governing body of American Mensa. The candidates can be nominated from incumbents, past officers, or any other member of Mensa.

The NomComm serves from the spring AMC meeting (usually in March) until October 1 in even years. Communication is conducted either via the Internet or through regular mail. The NomComm conducts two meetings at the Annual Gathering (AG) in even years. The first meeting is procedural, where the procedures and policies are reviewed, discussed, and updated as necessary. This also helps to ensure that everyone is aware how the committee functions. The second meeting at the AG is a "Meet the Candidates" session. This allows the candidates to address the assembled NomComm with their goals, and is followed by a brief question and answer period.

Northern Michigan Mensa can have more than one person working as part of the NomComm. If that is the case, we can have a group effort, but only one member will act as the spokesperson/ liaison to the NomComm. The deadline to volunteer is 1 March 2006. If you are interested in shaping the direction of Mensa, please consider volunteering. You will need to let me know (if before the end of the year) at [kikiwon@hotmail.com](mailto:kikiwon@hotmail.com) or 933-9272) or the current LocSec (if after 1 January).

## Early Bird On The Move

By Ruth Minshull

My friend, Horace, in Washington, D. C., calls occasionally for a chat. He's getting quite old now and has developed certain peculiarities. He repeats himself a lot, but he also asserts that his phone is tapped, his apartment is bugged and he is followed on the street. When I queried him about who might be doing this spying, he hinted darkly that it was probably the CIA.

His phone conversations often contain cryptic comments followed by, "You get my drift?" He obviously doesn't want spying ears to know exactly what he's alluding to. (Quite often I don't know either.) We're usually talking about something in the news, my kids, or a mutual acquaintance (hardly the stuff of international intrigue).

Now, you might presume from this that I'm talking about a person whose past is full of shady, nefarious activities, but this is not the case. He has lived a bland, uneventful life.

Now, some people think the CIA is a bunch of bumbling nincompoops--and perhaps that's true. I have no data and no opinion on the subject. But I do know that no matter how inept they might be, they could hardly have an interest in this man. They certainly could never justify monitoring all of his activities. I've concluded that he has probably been kidding me. Anyway, I hope so.

One night I was getting ready to retire and, on my way to the bedroom, I closed the blinds in the second-floor hallway window. As I did so, I thought, *This is probably a wasted effort. No one could see into this window unless they were sitting up in the sand dunes with binoculars. Of course, I mused, (thinking of Horace) the CIA might be doing just that...*

My mind drifted to my friend and his frequent jokes about being watched and monitored. Living as he does in the heart of a big city, it would be easy to conduct a surveillance of his apartment from a vehicle or a nearby room.

It would be much more difficult to keep a watch on me, however. I live on Lake Michigan, so that probably rules out surveillance from the west (The water is too shallow close in, too turbulent farther out). The road is a private one, so a person in a parked car would be quickly noticed and reported to the sheriff by one of the neighbors.

That leaves the huge sand dunes on the east side. To conduct a

stakeout there, the agent would need to hike in from the opposite side to avoid drawing attention from other residents. He/she would need to be dropped off, since there is no place to park a car inconspicuously. He would then have to tramp through thick forest, foothills, and then up the final steep slope to the top of the dune. From this roost, the agent would have an unobstructed view of all my easterly windows, backyard, garage and driveway. People would appear about the size of ants from this lofty perch, so the agent would need binoculars.

Certain other gear would also be necessary. Having no convenient McDonalds nearby, food, drink, and any other required conveniences would have to be lugged in along with warm clothes, a flashlight, a cell phone (which probably wouldn't work in the dunes), a walkie-talkie or two-way radio, a camera and perhaps other gadgetry.

Once the hapless soul is installed on his sandy post, what would he see?

*"Agent 45 reporting. It is 10:00 p.m. Subject appears to be retiring. Lights are going out."*

*"Agent 45. Now 2:00 a.m. All is quiet, except for a rustling in the nearby bushes. It could be a deer, coyote or maybe a bobcat."*

*"Agent 45 at 2:05 a.m. Do they have bears up here?"*

In the morning, it would get more exciting.

*"Forty-five reporting at 5:00 a.m.. Lights are going on. Subject ("Early Bird?") is apparently rising.*

*"Signing off now. My replacement is coming up."*

*"Agent 52 here. It is 11:00 a.m. Subject is on the move. She just drove out. Should be on the main road in two minutes. Repeat. Main road, in two minutes. Agent 52, over and out."*

Surveillance would now have to be picked up by another agent in a vehicle somewhere on the main road

*"Agent 74 reporting in. I took over surveillance of subject as she stopped, apparently to get the morning paper. It could be a drop, of course, so I have checked it for messages. None found."*

*"Agent 74. 12:30 p.m. Subject followed to town where she picked up unidentified male and went to post office. She, apparently, obtained a packet of mail. They then proceeded to local restaurant where they ate a lunch of tomato soup and salad. Conversation seemed mundane--although it could have been coded. Will turn in recording for analysis..."*

*"Central, this subject's file must be getting pretty thick by now—with*

*all the surveillance reports, the photos and the tape transcriptions."*

*"That's affirmative 74, but we still don't know what she's up to."*

*"Agent 45 checking in again at 2:00 a.m. All is dark and quiet. I hear a loud rustling nearby. Oh, my God! It's a BEAR!..."*

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### **\*Political content alert\***

The following article contains political content and opinion. Please do not read it if you are offended by such subjects.

-The Editor

## **Nickels & Dimes**

By Margaret J. Scott

Did you ever wonder about mysterious charges that appear on various things you receive? In the 1990s I tried very hard to keep my phone bill low—I wrote down every call I made so that I knew the number of calls each month and if they were long distance, so that I could verify my phone bill every month. I made my husband write down any long distance calls he made and verified them. By purchasing the minimum calling plan I kept my phone bill at about \$10 a month. Then a mysterious \$3.50 started showing up each month as tax. I knew how much was federal and how much was state tax, so I questioned this charge. I called the phone company several months in a row complaining. They always said they had no choice but to put it on my bill, but didn't explain why. After considerable diligence and inquiry over several months, I finally found out—it was a federal assessment never voted on by Congress, but imposed at the direction of Al Gore when he was in the Administration and was supposed to fund internet hookup to all schools, and further that it could not be rescinded!

Thus, started my fanaticism about overcharging by the government, state, county and local. Since our phone bills grow larger daily, my daughter, my son-in-law and I have pooled our cell phone resources and are all on one cheaper calling plan. She has cancelled her land line and took that number for her cell phone. The difference is a monthly savings

for all of us with unlimited long distance calling and it is cheaper than having my separate cell phone. I am sure many people are going this route for phone service.

The things I object to are the subtle, sneaky charges inserted in our daily life. People who sell their homes now are subjected to an outrageous charge they don't even know about until they get to a closing. For years owners of property were taxed when they sold the property (sounds unfair to me) but at the rate of \$1.10 per thousand dollars of sale price. It suddenly jumped to \$8.60 per thousand dollars. If you sell a \$150,000 home, instead of the old way when you owe \$165.00 tax for selling your home, you now owe \$1,290.00 tax for selling. Seems like a bad deal for the homeowner to me—they don't get anything more from the state for this money. That is just one item.

Additionally, every recording fee, filing fee and charge at the county and state level has increased anywhere from doubling the amount to 1,500 times the old amount. Can you imagine how much money that sucks away from the citizens of the state? How about hunting licenses, fishing licenses (not being free to senior citizens), copies of documents and other necessary items, and so much more. I say that these outrageous charges hurt the ordinary people, for example, it now costs so much to file a lawsuit that lots of people with worthy claims just can't afford the "out-of-pocket costs" they would incur to attempt to achieve justice for a wrong. Also, in this day of information management, the cost of handling these items is reduced rather than increased.

I started noting these overcharges and increases following Jennifer Granholm's election as our Governor. She imposed changes and increases in every area. She is a very smart woman and I had hoped she would be good for our state—instead she has hurt the people of the state in their pocket book so that the inordinate spending can go on. At the same time she is hurting the schools and people such as those with mental and other needs.

I volunteer and help certain needy people by serving as their representative payee or guardian or conservator through the courts, and as such I must negotiate their expenses and pay their bills from meager resources. It is a challenge and I am dealing with problems they encounter and can't handle every week. So I speak from experience.

What I urge everyone to do is to begin watching your nickels and dimes. If you are as offended by what is going on as I have become, you

will be sure to exercise your right to discuss and insert your opinion in every town, township or county meeting that will directly affect us all. Our future and retirement years are at stake, and citizens should stand their ground.

As for Jennifer, she revamped the Michigan Unemployment Agency by getting rid of all the "in person" locations. She cut back services for those employees who are laid off and fired so that they have to wait as long as 9 weeks to receive their benefits due after a 2-week waiting period. I say nine weeks is too long and unreasonable. How do you expect anyone to live when that surprise happens to them? But it is a direct result of her cutback in employees and computerizing the unemployment system. I have been helping several people who have had difficulties with this administrative nightmare just to receive what they are entitled to, and what their employer is taxed for while they work there – their purported protection should there be a layoff or job decline. You would think that the money belonged to Jennifer personally and people shouldn't be entitled to their rightful unemployment. It is a crime against the people to treat them that way.

Jennifer also outsourced to a foreign country, state jobs that used to pay \$16 to \$18 an hour to Michigan residents. When I called on a Michigan retirement plan I learned that I was speaking to someone in a foreign country about my people's problems. This change which denied many people their jobs has been kept very quiet.

Please pay attention when Jennifer comes to our area and campaigns—she needs the votes but she hasn't done a very good job. Please make every effort to keep informed and use it for future consideration.