

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

ON THE COVER: A communications satellite is launched from Cape Canaveral above the beach at Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge. Photo by Stan Cain

# Northern Michigan Mensa

## January 2007 Calendar

**MOVIE CLUB - Saturday, 6 January 2007 at 11:00 a.m. (NOTE TIME CHANGE).**

We will meet at LaSenorita located at 2455 N. US 31 S (near Sam's Club) for the discussion portion of our meeting. The movie title will be announced on 28 December via email and will also be posted on the webpage. If you don't have access to either of these, please call Sherry for the movie information at 231.933.9272. The movie will be shown at Horizon Cinemas, 3587 Market Place Circle, Traverse City. Movies change following the last showing on Thursday night, so don't wait until Friday, 5 January, as it may not be the same movie that we will be discussing.

**BRUNCH - Saturday, 13 January 2007 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, 26 January 2007 at 5:30 p.m.**

We will meet at Another Cuppa Joe at 1200 West 11th Street in old Building 50, Traverse City. We will meet in the cafe area. They have many beverages, pastries and cookies available. **PLEASE NOTE NEW TIME AND PLACE.**

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## Member News

### Happy January Birthdays

**04** Louis O. Isabell  
**18** Jill E. Daniels  
**30** Robert R. Nelson

### Mensa Membership Milestones (Years of continuous membership)

**6 Years** Jill E. Daniels  
**5 Years** Aaron Stander  
**4 Years** Melissa J. Rennie  
Margaret J. Scott  
**3 Years** M. T. Daunter  
**2 Year** Alan T. Kohler  
**1 Year** D. P. Kaschel  
Susan Lynne Pitzer  
John J. Roney  
D. L. Waldron

**Welcome back to Northern Michigan Mensa**  
Mitchell D. Quaine

November 2006 Statistics	AML	NMM
Total membership	51001	90
New and reinstating membership	907	3
Offers of membership	521	1
New members since April 2006	3448	5
Reinstating members since April 2006	2198	12

Membership directory information is based on data from American Mensa records as of 11/30/2006. If you would like to change the privacy releases on file, go to [www.us.mensa.org](http://www.us.mensa.org) and click on "Member Login". Then click on "Profile Update" and "PDQ Update".

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## Bibliomans 2007 Reading List Submitted by Sherry McNamara

<b>FEBRUARY</b>	Presenter: Carol Crawford Book: <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> Author: Ernest Hemingway
<b>APRIL</b>	Presenter: Jack Schultz Book: <i>Under the Banner of Heaven: A Story of Violent Faith</i> Author: Jon Krakauer
<b>JUNE</b>	Presenter: Sherry McNamara Book: <i>Peace Like a River</i> Author: Leif Enger
<b>AUGUST</b>	Presenter: Stan Cain Book: <i>Night</i> Author: Elie Wiesel
<b>OCTOBER</b>	Presenter: Jim McDermott Book: <i>A Coffin for Dimitrios</i> Author: Eric Ambler
<b>DECEMBER</b>	Presenter: Margaret Scott Book: <i>The Human Stain</i> Author: Philip Roth

Remember if you know ahead of time that you will not make it to the meeting on which you are a presenter, please make arrangements to swap assignments with another member or see if someone else can take over for you. As a presenter, please find some background about the author and information about the book, such as critical analyses of it, reviews, and any other information you deem to be of interest.

Note: The Book club generally meets the first Saturday of alternate months. Always check either Borealis or the NMM website for the time and place of each meeting.

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## Regional Vice Chair

Ed. Note: The following column was received too late in November for inclusion in the December issue.

### RVC Thoughts for the Holidays

As the year draws rapidly to a close, many local groups have their annual, Christmas, or Holiday party now. This is often the best attended event of the year. A great chance to reunite with old friends, meet new ones, and just catch up on all the happenings of the waning year. Please take some time to reflect what a great bunch of people you've met and befriended through Mensa and how you are a better, more complete person for it.

Things are quiet in our region now, so I'll keep this column brief. Cleveland is planning to host a Leadership Development Workshop (LDW), probably in April. All current officers and members who are planning to be officers are strongly encouraged to attend. What we can use is your feedback on what topics you'd like discussed. Some that have been suggested are: How to hold a concise meeting, Encouraging members to participate in events, Civility at events and board meetings, and Getting volunteers for committees and projects. What do you think? As finalizing the topics and then getting presenters takes some time, please get back to me pronto with any topic dear to you.

Barring another snowstorm, I'll be attending an AMC quarterly meeting in January, at Birmingham, Alabama. Much to my consternation, I think I'll have to take an airplane there - my first plane trip in over twenty years. Mercy, mercy. Not that I don't enjoy flying (well I don't), I just can't see forking over hard earned money to be inconvenienced, cramped, and now from what people tell me- starved. Life in the twentieth, oh, twenty-first century. The agenda for the meeting isn't out yet, but at present there aren't any really contentious topics being discussed.

Please accept my wish for a Merry Christmas and a safe, happy holiday season to each of you and your loved ones.

Dave Swanka

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## The Word is Not the Thing

By Ruth Minshull

My niece called me the other day to ask how I was doing. "Just fine," I told her. We chatted awhile, before she said, "Well, I just thought I'd check on you. I like to keep track of my, ah, mature people. We don't use that *other* word around here."

*That other word?*

Oh, I realized, *she must mean "old"*.

Well, she had managed to convey that she thought I was old. (It was like telling someone "Don't think about a pink walrus.") Anyway, I had begun to suspect the old thing all by myself, with the help of the calendar, the mirror and the increasing assortment of aches and pains.

She really did insult me, however, with her clumsy avoidance of the O word. Did she think I was so fragile that hearing the word would make me crumble and blow away like some desiccated leaf? Or was she herself so fragile that she couldn't bear to hear or use the word? (She's only six years younger than I am.)

I wanted to shout at her, "The word is not the thing!"

Saying the word does not make me suddenly age--to think old, act old, or even *resist* feeling old. It's just a word.

I grew up with kids chanting, "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names can never hurt me." This was the standard response to the insults we freely exchanged.

What has happened to people?

Of course, there have always been mean-spirited folks who like to put others down with cruel comments and invalidations. But nowadays they have to be much more subtle about it, because the word police are ever vigilant.

We could once say deaf, dumb, blind or crippled--and the sky never fell in. And, as far as I could see, people afflicted with these problems were not offended by the descriptive words. Oddly, at the same time, we never *ever* heard the vulgar four-letter words that today are loosely flung about in comedy shows, Eddie Murphy movies, and Joan River specials. (They're not fooling anybody with those bleeps. It's just the pink walrus again.)

These days, if a person utters a politically incorrect word (or even a word that sounds similar) someone, somewhere, is bound to be offended. The offender may be publicly chastised, have a career destroyed, lose a nomination, or get fired--even when there were no bad intentions.

People often say, "It is what it is." Well, this may seem like a pretty useful statement unless you're a government bureaucrat. In that case it's more likely to be "It is what we renamed it to be." I've read that the pentagon prefers the words "resource constrained environment" when they mean that there isn't enough money to go around.

And just the other day I heard that government authorities, in their infinite love of obfuscation, have declared that the word "hunger" is no longer allowable. In its stead is "very low food security." (Can't you just see the indoctrinated four-year-old of tomorrow saying, "Mommy I have very low food security. Can I have a cookie?")

When I was a child, we often had men come to the back door offering to work in exchange for food. We called them "tramps" or "hobos" and my mother always fed them. Now, of course, such vagrants are called "homeless" and--even if they haven't eaten for three days--I'm sure they are greatly comforted by knowing that they are no longer hungry, but simply, enduring very low food security in a resource constrained environment.

You have to stay current on the latest euphemism or one slip of the word and you could suffer the contemporary version of getting tarred, feathered, and dragged out of town.

All this tiptoeing around is because too many people are offended by language. Too many people think the word is the thing. And their censoring is choking our freedom of speech. I'm fed up with not thinking about all those pink walruses; I'm bored with all the offendees and their tiresome mewling.

In fact, I'm offended by them.  
Where can I go to complain?

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## December TGIF



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## Editor's Corner

I have just returned from a brief vacation in Florida and thus was able to miss some of the region's big snowfalls in November and early December. Most of you were probably not aware of my absence, since Borealis went out as usual due to the efforts of our assistant editor, Don Hennig. My thanks to Don for filling in during my absence.

My overall impression of Florida is one of amazement at the continuing growth of that area. I was there last in 2002 and am wondering how long can this type of growth continue? There have been boom times in Florida growth before, but many people are now predicting that serious environmental effects are being felt. Perhaps the most critical is that of natural water supply. Many aquifers near the heavily populated coasts are being depleted and are running the risk of being contaminated by salt water incursion. There are also the potential costs of hurricanes – some of the costs of which may be borne by other American taxpayers living far from the coasts.

There may be some limiting factors coming into play now. Florida has enacted property tax laws which will limit increases for Florida residents by putting more of the burden on out-of-state property owners. In addition, many insurance companies are bailing out of Florida entirely or steeply raising rates for coastal properties. This will probably further skew the type of non-resident owners toward the wealthy. Naples, FL is said to have more millionaires per square mile than any other part of the country. I noticed lots of million and multi-million dollar properties for sale there - and more being built. Most of these developments are not within walking distance of any kind of local shopping and require auto or bus transport to get anywhere.

Florida is not alone in this population increase. Similar scenarios are playing out in other regions of the United States and the World. However in many areas, it is not millionaires crowding the beaches but poor people trying to make a living from the seas.

A lot has been written about global warming lately with much of the emphasis being on how we should all try to use less energy derived from fossil fuels. Alternative energy sources are proposed as a part of the solution.

Rarely mentioned is the possibility of somehow limiting the human population of the planet. The assumption seems to be that a continued increase is inevitable and we need to find ways to deal with it.

Professor Chris Rapley, Director of the British Antarctic Survey, based in Cambridge, UK has written on the BBC News website entitled "The Green Room" that:

"The global population is higher than the Earth can sustain" and that "Solving environmental problems such as climate change is going to be impossible without tackling the issue".

He further writes:

"Let us assume (reasonably) that an optimum human population level exists, which would provide the physical and intellectual capacity to ensure a rich and fulfilling life for all, but would represent a call upon the services of the planet which would be benign and hence sustainable over the long term.

A scientific analysis can tell us what that optimum number is (perhaps 2-3 billion?).

With that number and a timescale as targets, a path to reach 'Utopia' from where we are now is, in principle, a straightforward matter of identifying options, choosing the approach and then planning and navigating the route from source to destination.

In practice, of course, it is a bombshell of a topic, with profound and emotive issues of ethics, morality, equity and practicability.

So controversial is the subject that it has become the "Cinderella" of the great sustainability debate - rarely visible in public, or even in private."

He further notes that:

"Rare indeed are the opportunities for religious leaders, philosophers, moralists, policymakers, politicians and indeed the "global public" to debate the trajectory of the world's human population in the context of its stress on the Earth system, and to decide what might be done.

Unless and until this changes, summits such as that in Montreal [on the control of carbon emissions "beyond Kyoto] which address only part of the problem will be limited to at best very modest success, with the welfare and quality of life of future generations the ineluctable casualty."

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