



Borealis

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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

ON THE COVER: A group admires the flowers at Sunnybank Garden in Traverse City. Photo by Stan Cain.

July 2007 Calendar

BRUNCH - Saturday, July 7, 2007 - 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, July 27, 2007 - 5:30 p.m. (Note changed location)

Since our previous location (Another Cuppa Joe) now closes at 6 p.m., we will meet at **Borders Books**, 2612 Crossings Circle (Wal-Mart Plaza next to Toys R Us), Traverse City. We will meet in the cafe area. They have many beverages, pastries and cookies available.

If anyone has suggestions for a new meeting location, please contact Carol Crawford, our Program Chair.

Editor's Corner

This issue has two articles touching on life in foreign countries.

In the first, Judith Lindenau who is currently the Executive Vice President of the Traverse Area Association of Realtors (TAAR) describes her real estate related activities in Georgia, a country only recently released from the rule of Communism.

In the second, my son, Jon Cain, provides a glimpse into life in Lagos, Nigeria, where he and his wife, Conny, have been teaching for three years at the American Schools International. This story illustrates some of the differences between life in Lagos (a third world city of 15 million people where a five mile trip by car can take an hour) and life in the U.S.

Happy July Birthdays

19	Judith L. Cools	21 Cherie Marie Gabriel
20	Wendy Jane Barker S. A. Styles	28 John J. Roney

Mensa Membership Milestones (Years of continuous Membership)

26 Years	M. D. Quaine	2 Years	Kimberly Lohr
7 Years	L. W. Young		Elissa J. Laskey
3 Years	Richard J. Warden		Ryan B. Nelson L. Schrock-Taylor

Welcome Back to Northern Michigan Mensa Delbertha Ruth Windiate

Welcome to Northern Michigan Mensa Shaun E. Roark

May 2007 Statistics	AML	NMM
Total membership	47005	82
New and reinstating membership	708	2
Offers of membership	523	1
New members since April 2007	791	1
Reinstating members since April 2007	697	2

Membership directory information is based on data from American Mensa records as of 5/31/2007. If you would like to change the privacy releases on file, go to www.us.mensa.org and click on "Member Login". Then click on "Profile Update" and "PDQ Update".

Members Needed for the Nominating Committee

Northern Michigan Mensa is approaching the end of its term of officers. Therefore, it is essential that we begin the process of preparing for the new administration.

In order to facilitate this transition, we need a team willing to work as the Nominating Committee. The committee will consist of three members who are NOT currently VOTING (elected) members of the Executive Committee and who will NOT be candidates for any of the five VOTING member positions on the Executive Committee in the upcoming election. The members of the Nominating Committee MAY be candidates for NON-VOTING positions on the next Executive Committee, however. Your role, if you choose to volunteer for the Nominating Committee, will require that you determine a slate of candidates for the 2008-2009 term of the elected Executive Committee. You will be responsible for nominating candidates for each elected position of the Executive Committee and notifying the membership of these candidates.

While your work will be short-term, it will nonetheless be an important and integral component of the future of NMM. The committee must be formed by early September at the latest, however I would like to get it organized earlier than that to allow sufficient time to organize, strategize, and otherwise work towards a good slate of potential candidates. You will be working in this capacity until the end of the nominating process in November.

If you are a member who is seeking an important role, but don't have an inclination or time to be on the Executive Committee, yet you want to have some hand in the direction of Northern Michigan Mensa, please consider volunteering for this committee. If you are interested in this, please email me at kikiwon@hotmail.com, or call me at 933.9272.

Sherry McNamara
Local Secretary

Regional Vice Chair

RVC 3 Thoughts

This is an unusually quiet time in the Region, which is why this will be an unusually short column.

Mind Games, Culture Quest, and SEMM's RG are past now. Culture Quest annually amazes me with its sheer depth of obscure trivia. I look forward to participating each year and have never been disappointed. If any of you reading this have never participated, give it a whirl next year. It's well worth the ninety minutes to learn some of what you don't know.

The Annual Gathering, with its embedded AMC and Annual Business Meeting, is fast approaching in early July. Some of us AMC members are returning but many will be new. It will be interesting to meet and work with the new lineup. Maybe it will be business as usual, or maybe there will be a wind of change; depends on who is elected.

Lastly, those group officers involved in membership, testing, and recruiting, please let me know if you are having difficulties: running out of ideas, running out of steam, or not sure what to do next. Believe me when I say that others have probably encountered your problem, sometimes conquered, sometimes ignored. With the vast number of great minds available to us to problem-solve, there is no reason to let difficulties remain that way. Let me know so I can get some solid suggestions, sure-fire cures, or at least helpful hints back to you. Please remember that like on the Verizon commercials, you have a network behind you. Talk with me.

Dave Swanka

Georgia on my mind...

By Judith Lindenau - June, 2007

Well, that's the wrong Georgia, actually. The Georgia that's on my mind these days is the Republic of Georgia, a Eurasian country in the Caucasus at the east coast of the Black Sea. It is bordered on the north by Russia, on the south by Turkey and Armenia, and on the east by Azerbaijan.



Figure 1 Map of Georgia (Lonely Planet Map)

The territory of modern-day Georgia has been continuously inhabited since the early Stone Age. Georgia was Christianized in the early 3rd century and unified into a single monarchy in 1008 and then experienced periods of revival and decline until being fragmentized into several smaller political entities in the 16th century. Imperial Russia acquired Georgian lands in a piecemeal fashion from 1801 to 1866. Independent again in 1991, after a period of chaos of civil war and severe economic crisis, Georgia stabilized by the late 1990s. The bloodless Rose Revolution of 2003 installed a new, pro-Western reformist government, whose aspirations to join NATO and attempts at bringing the secessionist territories back under Georgia's control has resulted in a deterioration of the relations with Russia. Currently, the government is also working toward joining the European Union.

There's the background. I recently returned from a ten-day trip to Tbilisi, the Georgian capital – my second visit in two years. My reason for going is my work with a non-profit organization, the International Real Property Foundation, which has as its mission to help emerging economies build their real estate infrastructure through formation of organizations which can lobby for reform and educate the practitioner members.

As in most of the Eastern European nations, the Georgian people had no idea how to manage their real estate economy. When property became privatized, there were no mechanisms to assess value, hold title, transfer title, or borrow money for purchases. The entire system had to be built from 'scratch', and it is still a work in progress. One of my most interesting real estate moments in Tbilisi was visiting the open air market and park: on certain days, properties which are for sale are posted on the trees in the park. Purchasers wander through the forest, looking at descriptions and photos, and make arrangements to view the dwelling. I might add that not all properties are actively for sale: the person standing by the tree may have heard a cousin or other relative observe that MAYBE they'd like a larger place, and so the enterprising salesman simply posted the property description and figured negotiations could take place whenever an interested buyer surfaced.

Of course, there are no licensing or competency requirements to sell property, or to appraise it. The government in Georgia (and most of the other countries I've mentioned) does not see itself in the licensing business for occupations – that's not a 'democratic' function in their view.

All the more reason to form a professional association, of course. Educational and practical requirements can be enforced, and the public will have some tool for evaluating the competence of the practitioners, be they appraisers or brokers and salespeople. But forming organizations is not a skill that comes easily to people who remember life under Socialism. Americans belong to clubs as a way of life, but Georgians don't understand concepts like bylaws and elections and dues. That's where my experience as an association manager comes into play, and is a large part of what my activities were in Tbilisi this May.



Figure 2 Tbilisi

This second visit was limited to working within the city limits of the capital of the country, an urban setting of close to two million people. Snow capped mountains border the city, yet the weather along the river plain that is the city center is almost subtropical. The population is quite diverse: Russians, Armenians, Turks, Jews, Germans all live together in relative harmony, it seems—according to the newspapers I read, living harmoniously with diversity is a very strong imperative. Education and the arts are also a very real part of every Georgian's life, and the literacy rate in the country is an enviable 100%.

ყველა ადამიანი იბადება თავისუფალი და თანასწორი თავისი ღირსებითა და უფლებებით. მათ მინიჭებული აქვთ გონიერება და სინდისი და ერთმანეთის მიმართ უნდა იქცეოდნენ მმობის სულისკვეთებით.

Figure 3 (*Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*). “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” This is a sample of the Georgian language using the Mkhedruli alphabet, which is based on an earlier alphabet from the 11th century.

The snapshots that remain in my mind are of a hot, humid city teeming with a diversity of people. Most are casually dressed in jeans (never shorts) or Western style business clothes. Most interesting is the traffic as I watch it from my hotel

window or try to survive it in the back seat of a car or taxi. As my driver explained, there’s really only one rule of driving in Georgia: if there’s no car there, you can go there. This means that two-way traffic is not limited to one side of the street, and large paved intersections are a free-for-all. There are relatively few traffic lights or stop signs, and those that are in evidence are meant to be a way for Georgian drivers to challenge authority. Parking seems to fall under the same rule: park where there’s a space—and if that includes the sidewalk, well—too bad for the pedestrians.



Figure 4 Not my photo, but this is Tbilisi traffic!

Georgian food is wonderful. I especially like Georgian cheese, salty and flavorful, and the Georgian answer to pizza, Katchapuri or cheese bread. Katchapuri comes in many shapes and sizes: my favorite is the boat shape with egg. Unfortunately, the Marriott hotel where I stayed thought it should serve Italian food, of all things, and so finding good Georgian food on this trip was difficult.



Figure 5 Katchapuri

Tbilisi has been undergoing a rampage of uncontrolled building during the last few years—skyscrapers, large office buildings, and apartment complexes. The economy is rapidly growing, due to the strategic location of Georgia on major trade and oil routes, as well as a growing awareness of its attractiveness for tourism. Of course as more and more growth and construction occurs, so to grows the need for better tools for transfer of property and for protection of the landowner's investments. One trip won't be enough for me to accomplish my job of enabling a viable professional community: I am eagerly anticipating my return.

A Day at the Beach

Story and Photos by Jon Cain

We took a little break from work yesterday and headed to a beach about 1 hour and 20 min away. It turned out to be a long and interesting travel day.

There were 20 people in 4 cars caravanning to the beach including the 4 drivers. It started off in typical Nigerian fashion when one of the drivers decided to leave to get something to eat before we left and we ended up leaving 30 min late. As soon as we started to leave the compound it started to rain, 30 min into the trip we pulled into a gas station - one of the cars behind us was missing. Flat tire, pouring rain, lug nut stripped. Thirty minutes later we were all together again moving towards the beach. One hour later we pulled over to the side of the road for a driver's conference. It was decided that we were going in the wrong direction. We had missed the turn and had to turn around. The next part of the trip was uneventful got to the beach about 2 hours after leaving the school compound.

We had a picnic and went swimming. The waves were not that big and it was nice, overcast and warm, but no rain. Conny left around 4 to try to get back in time for her book club that evening. She made it. No problems except for a little traffic jam. At about 6:15 we finally get all of the cars loaded and begin heading back. The drivers had decided not to get gas during the 6 hours they were waiting around for us at the beach, so after 15 min of travel we pulled into a gas station. (There was a strike that day, and a holiday Tuesday which made Sunday evening the last time to get gas for 3 days.) There was a long line of people trying to get gas and 3 cars full of white people always adds a little more chaos to the atmosphere. The cars in front of us were pulling out 50 liter containers to fill and sell over the next two days from the side of the road. We eventually got gas and began the return trip.

After about an hour, we hit the same traffic jam Conny was in and our car began to stall (not our old reliable Peugeot but a newer Honda). I suggested turning off the AC until we got going. That worked but only temporarily. Then I saw steam coming from under the hood and looked at the temperature gauge and saw that it was pegged over the H. We pulled over in the traffic jam and turned off the car. We called the remaining two cars which had made it through the traffic jam and had pulled over. We then spent an interesting few minutes walking on the side of the road passing cars moving towards the two remaining cars. We piled in one car with 8 and one with 7 people for the last 30 min of the trip to the compound. Bryan, the owner of the Honda, called his driver upon return to the compound to find out the status of the car. Since we had left it, the car had been

sideswiped by another car and was missing a mirror. (I don't know the end of this part yet).

This was a day at the beach in Lagos.



Back in the Future!

The dawn of Quackery and attempts to stamp it out precede recorded history. Legitimate medical practices of one era, labeled as bogus by the next, return as bona fide procedures in the next.

Our world has seen countless remedies for our ills, most dismissed as pure balderdash, with many of the same hockey-puck treatments returning after a short absence in a new disguise.

The term "quack" originated in obscurity, referring to the noises made by the hawker of potions describing the merits of their cures with excessive zeal. You may recall the 1977 movie *Pete's Dragon*, with con man Doc Terminus and his sidekick Hoagie. Doc "quacks" product during the day, replenishes inventory at night with swamp water and various additions, like dragon's eye.

Want some of the "energy of the Universe," the imaginary, yet powerful Orgone gas? Psychiatrist William Reich told patients to sit in an Orgone Energy Accumulator with a cone on their head attached to an empty box with a vacuum cleaner hose to cure their life-threatening diseases and psychological problems. Reich sold the Energy Accumulators or rented time in them from 1940 until his contempt of court conviction in 1954.

Unbelievable? See some amazing "Questionable Medical Devices" at ***Back in the Future!***, Minnesota's Regional Gathering the 28th through the 30th of September. Check out MnMensa.org/RG2007.html for details and register before the 31st of July to avoid a price increase! Mention Mensa for your special rate at the Holiday Inn East in Saint Paul, holiday-inn.com/msp-i94east.

Richard lee
RG Planning Chair
Minnesota Mensa
