

Borealis

The Monthly Journal of Northern Michigan Mensa



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April 2009

 Borealis
Northern Michigan Mensa

www.nmm.us.mensa.org

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Mensa:

Mensa's constitution lists three purposes: to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity; to encourage research into the nature, characteristics, and uses of intelligence; and to provide a stimulating intellectual and social environment for its members.

Mensa accepts individuals who score at or above the 98th percentile on certain standardized IQ tests, such as the Stanford-Binet.

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 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.

Deadline:

The deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month before the month of publication. Submissions received after that time may be considered if time and space permit.

Advertising:

At this time, Borealis does not accept advertising from either members or non-members.

Email submissions to:

nmmnewsletter@hotmail.com

US mail:

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Stan Cain
3584 Village Circle Dr.
Traverse City MI 49686

Northern Michigan Mensa

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

ON THE COVER: A very tough winter in Traverse City! (Or overzealous snow plow drivers?). Photos by Stan Cain.

Northern Michigan Mensa

April 2009 Calendar

BOOK CLUB - Saturday, 4 April 2009 at 11:00 a.m.

We will meet at the Cottage Café, located at 420 Munson Avenue, Traverse City, in the Papa's Den. The Bibliomensans book for February will be *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid: A Memoir* by Bill Bryson. Please plan to attend for another lively discussion! Note: See the book description on page 11.

BRUNCH - Saturday, 11 April 2009 at 11:00 a.m.

We will meet at the Cottage Café, located at 420 Munson Avenue, Traverse City, in the Papa's Den, which is on the right as you enter the front door.

TGIF - Friday, 24 April 2009 at 5:30 p.m.

This is our monthly, Friday get together to unwind and chat. We will meet in the Horizon Shine Café located in the lower level of Horizon Books, 243 Front Street, Traverse City. They have coffee, soft drinks, sandwiches, wraps and desserts available upstairs.

Next Month

Save the dates of **May 2nd** and **16th** for two special hikes described on page 5.

Member News

Happy April Birthday

7	John Douglass Whyte	16	Dorothy Vogel
10	John G Swartout	23	P F Curtiss

Mensa Membership Milestones

(Years of continuous Membership)

44 Years	Norma Hastings Feeley	7 Years	Marc Batway
25 Years	Cheri Marie Gabriel	5 Years	Carol J Crawford

19 Years	Thomas MacNeill Barnhart	3 Years	Kymberli A Wregglesworth
10 Years	John D Schultz	1 Year	Mark Alford Jr Alan T Kohler
8 Years	M Barton		M V LaSusa

February 2009 Statistics

	AML	NMM
Total membership	56 476	105
New and reinstating membership	1029	15
Offers of membership	498	0
New members since April 2008	3891	6
Reinstating members since April 2008	4344	9

Membership directory information is based on data from American Mensa records as of 2/28/2009. 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".



March Brunch

There was a good turn out for the brunch on March 14. Clockwise from left are Jack Schultz, Stan Cain, Bobbi Walker, Bernard and Mary Lee Hanchett, Ken Bryson, Margaret Scott and Judith Lindenau.

THE DOG

By Ruth Minshull

I like both cats and dogs. They're wonderful companions, adding life and fun to a household. Nowadays I own two cats (well, they own me) mostly because they are easier to train than dogs and easier for me to take along when I travel. Best of all, I don't need to walk them.

The dogs I've owned in the past were a delight – smart, devoted and faithful.

But there was one called Ebby, who belonged to some friends. A beautiful French poodle with a pedigree worthy of royalty, he was tall and elegant – coated with glossy, ebony curls. Fittingly, his full name was Ebony, but they called him Ebby for short. The only trouble was: he was such a thoroughbred that they had thoroughly bred the brains right out of him. He was dumber than a cabbage.

His owners took him to obedience school and he flunked. He wasn't particularly defiant; he was just too dense to remember a command and follow it.

When he wanted to go through a door that was ajar only a few inches, he was too obtuse to nudge it open with his nose or his paw. Instead, he'd stand there and wait until someone came by and opened it wider.

When he ate, he would lie down on the floor in front of the dish and eat from that position. My friend, Rick, once observed: "That dog is too stupid to stand up and eat at the same time."

Ebby couldn't be trained to sit, walk, stay, bark or shut up. A burglar, rapist, serial killer or a telemarketer could amble through the front door and be greeted with wagging enthusiasm. But when another canine innocently trotted by the house, Ebby barked incessantly until the dog was well out of sight.

I used to wonder what value a dog could be that wouldn't behave and couldn't be taught. He was little more than a shaggy floor mop that needed to be washed, groomed, fed and walked regularly.

To me, Ebby was a perfect illustration of the fact that beauty, in any creature, will not trump stupidity.

On one visit to my house, Ebby was lying on the floor. My Siamese cat, Taffy, came up and walked all around the dog, sniffing. When she completed her investigation, she tried to bury him.

I couldn't have said it better, Taff.

See my blog at: www.ruthminshull.com

The LocSec's Login

By Jack Schultz, Local Secretary

WELCOME BACK, STAN

It's a delight to have our editor back in the traces and feeling much better after his two surgeries during February. Even though I assisted him in getting out the March issue of Borealis, he still did most of the work while not quite yet up to par. Stan has made a sincere plea for someone to serve as an editor-in-training, with the idea of eventually taking over the editor's position, so I hope some of you will give this serious consideration. An editor's role is very important to the continuing success of any organization that publishes a newsletter or journal. It also offers wonderful opportunities to work with budding or established writers and to place your own "stamp" on our publication. In most instances, an editor has the chance to make of any publication whatever he or she wants it to be. Anyone interesting in rising to this challenge should contact Stan directly (or me if you'd rather).

REPORTING ON MARCH EVENTS

We were happy to see Judith Lindenau's smiling and very brown face at our March brunch in Traverse City. She had spent more than two months at her island getaway cottage in the Bahamas (the island of Eleuthra). After such a prolonged winter in the North Country, we were a bit envious of her ability to kick back and read, write, and do some creative watercolor painting. Ken Bryson, Bernard and Mary Lee Hanchett, Bobbi Walker, Margaret Scott, Stan Cain, Judith, and I enjoyed a couple of hours of chitchat.

The Tuesday before that, the Petoskey Area group held an evening get-together in Petoskey. Since my wife and I were on vacation near Harbor Springs that week, I joined the small group at downtown Petoskey's Roast 'n Toast eatery. Dwayne and Sandy Bean brought their two children, Peter and Karla; and Jennifer LaPoint (group leader), John Swartout, Erik Snyder, and I filled up a little alcove for nearly two hours and had some good discussions.

The usual small group showed up in downtown Traverse City for our monthly TGIF at Horizon Books on the 27th of the month.

BIBLIOMENSANS

Don't forget to come to the April session of our local book club. We'll meet at 11 a.m. on Saturday, April 4, at the Cottage Café to discuss Bill Bryson's *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid: A Memoir*. The main presenter will be Richard Hopfner. Members (and guests) are invited to join in the discussion or simply sit and listen. We'll eat brunch before the discussion.

CULTURE QUEST XX

The deadline has passed for signing up for participation in this year's Culture Quest competition that will be held on Sunday afternoon, April 19. But don't forget that all of us are invited to join in for supper and a post mortem of this giant trivia game among Mensa's local group teams throughout the country. Each of the times I have participated, I have come away feeling pretty dumb and out of it, but the camaraderie among team members is great and people seem to have a lot of fun wondering just how the organizers of this event come up with such challenging questions each year. Because the post-Quest meeting place hadn't yet been determined when this issue of Borealis was produced, please check out our Web site to find out just where and when the dinner will be held (in Traverse City). We thank Margaret Scott for coordinating our participation this year.

THINK S*P*R*I*N*G

We're going to have two (2) spring wildflower hikes this year. One will be held in the Traverse City area and the other will be for anyone but especially those in the area south and west of Traverse City. The first hike will be held at Arcadia Dunes: The C.S. Mott Preserve in a magnificent hardwood forest. This natural area is located along highway M-22 in Benzie County, just south of the Herring Lakes. If you haven't been to Arcadia Dunes, this will be a real treat. Directions will be provided in the May issue of Borealis and on our Northern Michigan Mensa Web site (www.nmm.us.mensa.org, under Events). This hike will be held on **Saturday, May 2**, beginning at 10 a.m. and a brunch may or may not be included. With all the snow we've had this winter, the ground should give rise to spectacular spring wildflowers. The second hike will be on **Saturday, May 16** at Traverse City's Hickory Hills Ski/Recreation area at the end of Randolph Street on the west side of town. That hike will start at 10 a.m. and we'll go for brunch afterward.

NATURAL HISTORY HIKES

Many of you know that I have led hikes for the Leelanau Conservancy for many years. Well, this year I'm doing even more than usual. The organization now has one of the largest groups of docents (teachers/leaders) of any land trust group in the country. At last count, 18 docents were on board, and they lead hikes throughout the year. These are all open to the general public; all one needs to do is sign up ahead of time by phoning the Conservancy at its Leland office (231-256-9665). Just during April, May, June, and July, a total of 29 hikes and canoe/kayak trips are already scheduled. I'll be handling four of them as the lead docent. (We always try to have at least two docents on each outing.) To find out more about these wonderful opportunities to enjoy the

outdoor environment – for FREE – go to the Leelanau Conservancy Web site (www.theconservancy.com), phone the number given above, read about the hikes in the Traverse City Record-Eagle or The Leelanau Enterprise, or listen to Interlochen Public Radio. Most hikes last about two hours, although canoe/kayak trips on the Cedar River can take three to four hours. No matter what you do this spring and summer, I hope you'll take time to enjoy some of the great opportunities for outdoor experiences in the beauty of northern Michigan.

March Trivia Quiz Answers Submitted by Margaret Scott

- 1 All meals
- 2 The Art Institute of Chicago
- 3 Virginia's; the female figure is actually an Amazon warrior woman, trampling on a tyrant. The state motto is *sic semper tyrannis* – "Thus always to tyrants".
- 4 Fort McHenry, whose bombardment led Francis Scott Key to write, "*The Star Spangled Banner*."
- 5 A weather satellite
- 6 Ohio (It's from the Bible, by the way: Matthew 19:26)
- 7 Frank Lloyd Wright
- 8 Walk in space
- 9 Elvis Presley
- 10 It was the first gold (million-selling) single.
- 11 Ypsilanti, named for Gen. Demetrios Ypsilanti
- 12 Sault Ste Marie, Michigan
- 13 French, English, Spanish and United States
- 14 The mile-long Detroit Windsor tunnel under the Detroit River
- 15 Michigan
- 16 Grand Rapids, Michigan is home to the 24-foot Leonardo da Vinci Horse, called Il Galvallo.

Reference: *The Big Book of American Trivia*

Letters

AML Bylaws Amendments. Submitted by Jared Levine

This year's election cycle is important, especially because of the large number of bylaw amendment proposals placed before the membership. While most of the pro and con statements I wrote for the March issue of the Mensa Bulletin should suffice to fully inform your vote on those particular proposed amendments, Amendments #9 and 8 require a bit more.

Proposed Amendment 9 revamps American Mensa's "justice system." The American Mensa Committee (AMC), which creates the rules, is tied to the people who judge members on them. Amendment 9 seeks to remove the AMC from the latter part of the equation. Wholly independent individuals (local group Ombudsmen) will sit on the NHC.

Generally, Ombudsmen are chosen because they are seen as fair, well-reasoned, with good judgment, knowledgeable of the rules (or where to find them), and able to apply those same rules. Clearly, these attributes are essential in bringing about compromise. However, this compromise, which a few seem wary of, is actually only in the context of "what do we, the local group, do next about this situation?" rather than determining the facts of the case. The "offending party" either committed a specified act or didn't; it's against the rules or not. Determining the facts of a local dispute are essential for all Ombudsmen; similarly, determining facts is needed within a national hearing.

Locally, a good negotiator is ideal to keep all parties to the dispute happy enough to not alienate anyone from the group. This is arguably more difficult than stating guilt regarding each "charge," giving a rationale for each determination, and figuring out any punishment for someone found guilty. If an Ombudsman can work with multiple parties to a dispute, he clearly can come to a judgment involving other local groups' disputes.

While an earlier version was voted down at the 2008 Annual Business Meeting (ABM), all of the concerns raised were heard and incorporated into this proposal, Amendment 9, currently up for your vote - it is NOT the same proposal from the ABM; don't be misled. Also, this version was approved at the grass-roots petition level for final balloting. No such concern, courtesy or solicitation of pre-balloting input was given to the membership with regard to Amendment 8. While the Hearings Process Review Committee and the AMC

would have you believe Amendment 8's procedures are independent of the AMC, that is disingenuous at best. Amendment 8 retains strong AMC influence over the hearings process: the AMC appoints the individuals on the review panel and the variable number of people eligible to serve on the NHC; they can all change at any time.

To cleanly break from AMC influence over the hearings process, vote YES on 9 and NO on 8. For more information on Amendment 9 not addressed here, go to <http://www.amyx.org/mensa/hearings/petitions> and look at the FAQ for the second petition. E-mail me with any questions about the amendments.

Jared Levine, Life Member
Metropolitan Washington Mensa
boxmaster@alumni.williams.edu

Campaign Statement for the Office of Mensa Chairman Submitted by Dave Swanka

The sum of all the well meaning and well thought out bylaws and ASIEs is considerably less functional than the individual components. It's as if a team of skilled auto engineers took a quantity of high quality auto parts and assembled them into a Checker cab, a venerable vehicle but not state of the art nor what the average person really wants or needs today.

With your help, as Mensa's chairman, I intend to launch a comprehensive reworking of our governance and committee structure and rewriting of our bylaws and ASIEs. Capitalizing on the recommendations of our retained consulting firm, studying the recommendations of our current committees, and with input from you, the membership, I believe the necessary changes and reforms can be drafted, discussed, finalized, and presented to you for vote in the 2011 election. This is a radically different approach from the minor tweaking of policy which infrequently occurs now.

The end result will produce a more efficient, less expensive Mensa governance; a smaller, trimmer AMC more responsive to the membership; the most efficient National Office possible; and an organization capable of serving you better for another fifty years. Together, we can get the job done and done right.

The Downfall of the Handmade Toy in America--A Sad Story

Submitted by Margaret Scott

I am forwarding a letter I received from my niece in Buckley, Michigan. She and her husband were impacted by this new CPSIA (the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act) law and you can see from her letter what it does. She and her husband earn their living from home selling homemade dolls and items, and wooden toys on the internet at the Etsy site (about \$1,000 per month).

Also impacted by this law is my niece (on the other side of the family) from Ithaca, Michigan, who is a single, elderly person who supplements her income the same way, making things for children.

Then, can you believe it--another niece and her husband, from Merrill, Michigan just called me to say they are about to be put out of business by the SCHIP law signed by the President last week. She and her husband own a Mom-and-Pop business in a downstate town, many miles from where they live. They hire several people. The SCHIP (State Child Health Insurance Program) law will provide free health care for adult children up to age 30, supported by a certain group of people. These people are persons who sell tobacco products. My niece's store is a little tobacco shop and they sell cigars, cigarettes, pipes, pipe tobacco and roll your own supplies, as well as repairing pipes and selling little miscellaneous junk related to smokers. They do not sell anything illegal. They must come up with \$32,000 to pay the government by April 1 or be put out of business.

You would think that when a new law was passed that prices would go up on everything, \$1 plus on packs of cigarettes, 40 cents on cigars, etc. and you would pay it monthly as they currently do with sales taxes, etc. No, the government needs one better - they don't trust the people. They have to pay cash up front based on past sales and a figure determined by whom? The government. Then they must continue to pay in the required taxes when sales are made.

Since they don't have \$32,000 to keep operating (and can't borrow any) they won't be able to sell their products and provide that money for health insurance for the adults and illegals as the government planned. Their net income to live on from their business is about \$45,000 per year for their

family. So, what do you do--go out of business and leave yourself and your employees jobless?

The above is why I lean towards conservative and Libertarian views. Government should not be involved in destroying the lives and income of the people. I thought bad would come, but I can't believe it is happening to three different hardworking and self-supporting members of my family so soon.

Phyllis' letter is below:

Here is some information on the new CPSIA law that will go into effect on February 10. This is a far-reaching poorly thought out law that will impact everyone in one way or another. For Ron and me, it means that we can no longer make children's toys, clothing or wall decor to sell on Etsy. Not only can we not sell it, but we can't give it away either...sorry charities, but I won't be knitting any more hats or mittens for the needy! Sorry Grandkids, the same goes for you! Illegal to make you wooden toys or stuffed critters or a new outfit. Can't afford the testing and you know I'm going to coat everything in lead paint, if I can find someplace in America that sells it. The neighbor was just over and tells me that home schooling will be impacted too, since they trade books and supplies around (buy and sell) and those items too, will need to be tested. I guess our government would rather give us a "stimulus package", welfare and food stamps than let us make a little money making wooden toys in the pole barn and sewing up stuffed critters in the spare room. And here I thought we WERE a little stimulus package since our sales (and Etsy's) have been increasing a bit each month!

Outlaw Grannies (and Grandies) unite! Write your Gov. and tell them you want to make play toys for your grandkids...legally!

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE THUNDERBOLT KID: A MEMOIR

April Book Club Selection

By Bill Bryson - 288 pages

Bill Bryson was born in 1951 – in the middle of the United States – Des Moines, Iowa. As one of the best and funniest writers alive, he is perfectly positioned to mine his memories of a totally all-American childhood for 24-carat memoir gold. Bill Bryson grew up with a rich fantasy life as a superhero. In his case, he ran around his house and neighborhood with an old football jersey with a thunderbolt on it and a towel about his neck that served as his cape, leaping tall buildings in a single bound and vanquishing awful evildoers (and morons) – in his head – as "The Thunderbolt Kid."

Warm and laugh-out-loud funny, and full of his inimitable, pitch-perfect observations, *The Life and Times of the Thunderbolt Kid* is as wondrous a book as Bill Bryson has ever written. It will enchant anyone who has ever been young.



Petoskey area sub-group meets

Shown left to right: John Porter, Jennifer LaPoint and John Swartout.

Three members of the Petoskey MENSAs group from met at Roast 'n Toast in Petoskey's gaslight district on January 27, 2009. Friendly conversation ranged from introductions to careers to the weather to common life threads.

SEMMantics

SEMMantics is the annual Regional Gathering of Southeast Michigan Mensa. Planned events include Mensa Bowl and our always-popular fashion show. As usual we will have great speakers, tournaments, a games room, food and drink (and food and drink and food and drink) and the absolutely greatest attendees.

When

May 1 through May 3, 2009.

Where

Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites
37529 Grand River Avenue
Farmington Hills, MI 48335

Again this year, our hotel is the Holiday Inn Hotel and Suites. Call (248) 477-7800 for reservations. Be sure to use the Mensa reservation code "Mensa" or "Southeast Michigan Mensa" to get the special room rate of \$85 (plus tax) for single, double, triple or quad rooms. The rate is guaranteed until April 17.

Registration

Registration fees are currently \$70 until April 15. \$80 afterwards or at the door for the weekend; \$40 for Friday only; \$45 for Saturday only. Children under 18 are half price. Registration includes dinner Friday and Saturday and lunch Saturday.

By Mail

Write your name, address (including city, state and ZIP), phone number and email address on a piece of paper.

Write a check payable to **SEMMantics**.

Send materials to:

Betsy Mark
SEMMantics Registrar
3675 Oak Drive
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

By Internet

Complete the online registration form at www.semm.us.mensa.org

Pay online through PayPal (information on the registration form).

Your registration will be complete when the registrar receives both your registration information and your payment.