

# Borealis

The Monthly Journal of Northern Michigan Mensa



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 Borealis  
Northern Michigan Mensa

[www.nmm.us.mensa.org](http://www.nmm.us.mensa.org)

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American Mensa LTD.  
1229 Corporate Drive West  
Arlington, TX 76006-6103

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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 15<sup>th</sup> 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:**

Stan Cain  
[nmmmborealis@yahoo.com](mailto:nmmmborealis@yahoo.com)

# Northern Michigan Mensa

## Executive Committee

### VOTING MEMBERS

Local Secretary	Richard R. Hopfner	231-946-7204	<a href="mailto:locsecnmm@gmail.com">locsecnmm@gmail.com</a>
Deputy Loc Sec	Erik A. Snyder	989-370-0993	<a href="mailto:easynder@yahoo.com">easynder@yahoo.com</a>
Treasurer	Bernard Hanchett	231-946-5177	<a href="mailto:barneydulittle@hotmail.com">barneydulittle@hotmail.com</a>
At Large	Judith W. Lindenau	231-947-2050	<a href="mailto:judith@judithlindenau.com">judith@judithlindenau.com</a>
At Large	Dwayne A. Bean		<a href="mailto:dwaynebean@gmail.com">dwaynebean@gmail.com</a>

### APPOINTED MEMBERS

Membership	Jim McDermott	231-943-7792	
Ombudsman	Peter J. Turkus	231-941-8321	<a href="mailto:petencheri@chartermi.net">petencheri@chartermi.net</a>
Editor	Stan Cain	231-938-1506	<a href="mailto:nmmmborealis@yahoo.com">nmmmborealis@yahoo.com</a>
Proctor			
Coordinator	John D. Schultz	231-275-6735	<a href="mailto:nwoodpc@chartermi.net">nwoodpc@chartermi.net</a>
Program	Peter J. Turkus &	231-941-8321	<a href="mailto:petencheri@chartermi.net">petencheri@chartermi.net</a>
Co-Chairs	Bobbi Walker		<a href="mailto:bobbiraw@att.net">bobbiraw@att.net</a>
Publicity	Bobbi Walker		<a href="mailto:bobbiraw@att.net">bobbiraw@att.net</a>
Web Contact	Priscilla Walmsley		<a href="mailto:pwalmsley@datypic.com">pwalmsley@datypic.com</a>
Scholarship Chair	Margaret Scott	231-879-3140	<a href="mailto:mjscott@localnet.com">mjscott@localnet.com</a>
SIGHT Coordinator	Melissa J. Rennie	231-889-0892	<a href="mailto:renmeij@yahoo.com">renmeij@yahoo.com</a>
Financial Overseer	Thomas Barnhart	231-946-3242	<a href="mailto:tom_barnhart@sbcglobal.net">tom_barnhart@sbcglobal.net</a>
Petoskey Area Subgroup			
Coordinator	- vacant -		

### OTHER MEMBERS

Proctors	John D. Schultz	231-275-6735	<a href="mailto:nwoodpc@chartermi.net">nwoodpc@chartermi.net</a>
	Susan A. Styles	231-264-6193	<a href="mailto:seas@umich.edu">seas@umich.edu</a>
	Melissa J. Rennie	231-889-0892	<a href="mailto:renmeij@yahoo.com">renmeij@yahoo.com</a>
Regional			
Vice-Chairman	Betsy Y. Mark	734-434-5757	<a href="mailto:RVC3@us.mensa.org">RVC3@us.mensa.org</a>

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

ON THE COVER: Author Fleda Brown prepares to autograph copies of her new book, *Driving with Dvorak*, at the September brunch. Photo by Stan Cain

# October Calendar

## BOOK CLUB - Saturday, 2 October 2010 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 October will be *Deer Season* by Aaron Stander. The presenter will be Pete Turkus. All are welcome to join us even if you have not read the book.

## STREAM TESTING AND POTLUCK, 3 October 2010 at 1:00 p.m.

All members are welcome to come out and see how we do the testing and join us for a potluck later. Meet at McDonald's in Acme to car pool to the testing locations to observe the sample collection. We will return to Stan Cain's house at approximately 3:15 p.m. to categorize and classify the macroinvertebrates. If you are not up for being outside that long, you can catch up with us at Stan's house. Bring a dish to pass. Call Sherry to RSVP at 313.2769.

(Refer to the article in the September Borealis for details on stream testing)

## BRUNCH - Saturday, 9 October 2010 at 11:00 a.m.

We will meet at the Cottage Café, located at 420 Munson Avenue, Traverse City, in the Papa's Den.

## T.G.I.F. - Friday, 22 October 2010 at 5:30 p.m.

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

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# Member News

## Happy October Birthday

9	Ruth Minshull	17	Thomas MacNeil Barnhart
15	Jessica Mary Sullivan	27	Karen Kennedy

## Mensa Membership Milestones

(Years of continuous membership)

**12 Years** Gary L McWhirter

## Welcome to Northern Michigan Mensa

Brook E Anton

### August 2010 Statistics

	AML	NMM
Total membership	51945	99
New and reinstating membership	460	1
Offers of membership	206	0
New members since April 2010	1212	4
Reinstating members since April 2010	1427	7

Membership directory information is based on data from American Mensa records as of 8/31/2010. 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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## Poet Laureate Shares Her Views on Writing at September Brunch

Fleda Brown now lives in northern Michigan permanently, but prior to settling in, she and her husband lived in Delaware where both were professors at the University of Delaware. She was also poet laureate of Delaware. Those who have read any of her many books or heard her speak or read from her writings, appreciate how Delaware's loss has been northern Michigan's gain. Ms. Brown read selections from her new 2010 book, *Driving with Dvorak*, at our brunch on September 11 and gave us a taste of how easily words come to her. This book is a collection of personal essays about growing up and, particularly, about times she spent at the family cottage near Central Lake (on Intermediate Lake) as a young girl.

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# The LocSec's Login

By Richard Hopfner, Local Secretary

Hello. Glad to meet you. My name is Richard Hopfner. I'm the LocSec for Northern Michigan Mensa, and I'm a duck billed platypus.

Eh? Has he finally flipped?

If I told you this in person, would you nod vigorously while backing away slowly? "Don't alarm the crazy person...just move calmly in a different direction..."

Or, did you look at that and consider blipping over the LocSec's login, because, well... maybe weird writing just doesn't do it for you?

Perhaps, perhaps, you might even be wondering what the heck I'm getting at here. Good. Glad you are curious. It's a defining quality of Mensans and intelligence in general, so I read. And curiosity delayed is maybe more frustrating than enhancing. Depends on the person, I guess, so without further ado, I'll get to the point.

Occasionally, when I'm talking to people that know me well enough for me to be comfortable talking in a way that's more abstract, more non-standard to "typical" conversations, more "honest," I'll make a good impression.

You see, normally I really don't want to alienate people I don't know well by being too much. So I tone down the weirder ideas, and try not to be too scattered in thoughts. I consider it polite. I suspect I don't do it well enough sometimes, because I will still get odd looks, and am asked to explain what I'm actually getting at, or how I'm leaping from one subject to another with little, apparently, to connect them. I'm used to it, and really don't mind.

But I did say "good impression," didn't I?

On other occasions, I can tell that I've "impressed" someone with the sheer overwhelming awesomeness of my intellectual capacity. (If you think I'm being serious right now, write me privately. I would like to sell the Mackinaw Bridge to you, very cheap.) They look on me with

admiring eyes. It really makes me nervous. Stage fright? Performance Anxiety? Fear of saying something really jaw droppingly dumb?

Maybe... but when I then say that if indeed I am "smarter" or more intellectually oriented, that it does me no good in my life whatsoever because it functionally isolates me from most of the society that I find myself in... well... then they have said before, "You are a swan."

Ah... yes... the story of the "Ugly Duckling." Such a nice tale to believe in when you are young and hopeful. I know what they are getting at right away, and I reject it. Swans are to ducks what nobility is to common blood in literature. That isn't me, no way, no how. If I want to confuse them more, I'll say, "No. I'm a duck billed platypus." And then not explain myself.

If I'm different, in kind, there is no implied better in it in my eyes. There is difference only. If you have a flock of ducks, how do you think they are going to see the platypus? Embrace it for the quality of its difference? Or swim slowly away from the crazy duck?

What about our platypus? Can it be a stealth duck successfully or even healthily for a long time?

Maybe they get what I mean by my statement. I don't know, because no one has ever said, but I know this: the idea pleases me. I'm different, no doubt. I've known that all my life, but I hope not to be insecure enough to portray that as better, more evolved, noble or anything like that. I'm me. No need to self inflate it.

This is an aspect of what being a Mensan means to me.

As I think of more, I will write them here, and here is my hope. That you, yes, you reading this, will be inspired to write what it means to you to be what you are. How you see yourself and the world as well as your relationship to it.

Why? Because I'm a platypus, remember? We are a very strange and curious clan, and I wish to understand as much as possible about this world pond we find ourselves in. Your story could resonate with me in ways I can't know until I hear it. If we get interest in this, I'd like to see it in the Borealis to share with us all.

Until next time, I am your unlikely LocSec, and take care, all.

# Touring Northern Michigan - by Rail

By Stan Cain

Have you ever heard of NARCOA? Well, I hadn't either until I was invited to ride along on one of their weekend excursions in northern Michigan. The acronym stands for the North American Railcar Operators Association, which is a group of enthusiasts who restore and ride railcars. A number of trips are scheduled throughout the year in the U.S., Canada and other countries. The original railcars were the lever cars used for transporting track inspectors and maintenance workers over the rails. Later versions were motorized with small gasoline engines and were generally called motorcars.

I had previously gotten to know the owner of one of the cars and he invited my wife, Dorothy, and I to ride along on an excursion with him. The trip was from Cadillac to Petoskey to Traverse City and back to Cadillac staying overnight in Petoskey and Traverse City. This was on tracks of the Great Lakes Central Railroad.

Safe operation is a major concern of the group and each morning began with a safety meeting to update the group on concerns for the day's trip such as stopping points, major road crossings, etc.

The trip was a lot of fun, but pointed up how poorly these tracks have been maintained - a lot like some of our roads! But the tracks apparently don't get a lot of use - maybe one or two freight trains a week but not usually on weekends. Our car's top speed was about 60mph but we rarely went over 30 and that was on the best rails. Unlike a typical passenger or freight train, each of these cars is independently powered. While on the trip, the line of thirty cars typically stretched out from one to five miles.

As you can see from the pictures, most of the cars have two or four seats. Ours (a restored Fairmont A-6F gang car) had seating for six in air ride truck seats. We also had Bose active noise canceling headsets so we could talk comfortably to each other and also hear the radio traffic between some of the cars to update us on breakdown (often) status, crossings, etc. When one car stops, all stop until a tow bar can be hooked up. There were a couple of railroad employees at the front and back of the line to handle switches, etc.

During the trip, it was interesting to imagine yourself back in time to a hundred or more years ago when this (in addition to boats) was the only practical way to travel throughout northern Michigan. I suspect the rails were in much better condition at that time.

You can learn much more about railcars by doing a web search on NARCOA and checking out their web site.



From Top: Our Ride for the weekend near the station in Traverse City, Motorcars during a rest stop at Manton.

# Puzzle Page

## CRYPTOGRAM Submitted by Ruth Minshull

The cryptogram consists of a simple substitution code. Each letter has been replaced by another. No letter represents itself, and substitutions remain consistent throughout the puzzle. For example:

ORAB AB ZK WLZSXHW GU Z YGIW.  
THIS IS AN EXAMPLE OF A CODE.

GNM NIJBV EKBZV ZT B HXVSMKLIU XKRBV. ZG

TGBKGT GX HXKD BT TXXV BT OXI BKM EXKV BVS

SXMTV'G TGXY IVGZU OXI RMG IY GX SMUZQMK B

TYMMAN.—RMXKRM CMTTMU

The answer will be in next month's issue.

### Answer to last month's Cryptogram:

When people complain of life, it is almost always because they have asked impossible things of it.—Ernest Renan

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### Editor's Note:

Due to space limitations this month, please read Betsy's column, **reMark**, online at the Region 3 web site - <http://www.region3.us.mensa.org/> Yahoo gp. - <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AMR3/> Facebook gp. - <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=71515809887>



From top: Safety briefing at the Traverse City station, Rest stop in Boyne Falls showing the hi-rail pickup leading the group, Topping off fuel in Boyne Falls and setting off the cars back in Cadillac. Photos by Stan Cain.