



Borealis

NORTHERN MICHIGAN MENSA

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 1

SEPTEMBER 2004



Sunrise – a new day

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SEPTEMBER

BRUNCH - Saturday, 11 September at 11:00 a.m. at Cottage Cafe, 420 Munson Avenue, Traverse City. We will be meeting in the Papa's Den located to the right as you enter the front door.

SPECIAL EVENT - "Dark Skies and Summer Milky Way" - viewing the night sky - Saturday, 11 September from 9:00 - 11:00 p.m. at Rogers Observatory, Birmley Road, Traverse City. Free.

GAMES NIGHT is Back!! - Tuesday, 14 September at 7:00 p.m. at Borders Books and Music, 2612 Crossing Circle, Traverse City. Bring your favorite board games or card games and let's have some fun!

SPECIAL EVENT in conjunction with the Grand Traverse Hiking Club - Joan Young of the Society Les Voyageurs will be presenting "High Hopes Wearing Sweaty Socks" - Wednesday, 15 September at 7:00 p.m. Ms. Young will show a slide presentation of the North Country Trail which is the longest trail in the United States at 4000 miles long. She has hiked over 2500 miles of the trail thus far. We will meet in Room 211 of Northwestern Michigan College's Great Lakes Campus on Front Street, Traverse City (formally the Maritime Academy Building). There is no charge for this presentation.

TGIF - Friday, 24 September at 6:00 p.m. at Horizon Shine Cafe located in the lower level of Horizon Books, 243 E. Front Street, Traverse City. Wrap sandwiches, coffee, soft drinks, and desserts are available for purchase.

SPECIAL EVENT - Friday, 24 September from 9:00 to 11:00 p.m. at Rogers Observatory, Birmley Road, Traverse City. If you missed the public viewing of the night skies earlier this month, you can do it tonight following TGIF. Bring a Mensan and get in free.

THOUGHTS OF THE LocSec

Sherry McNamara

You're seeing the first effort of our two new editors. For Ralph Hillquist and Michelle Swanson, this is their maiden voyage, their first child. I know that they will continue with the fine tradition started by Tom Kachadurian. Tom, as many of you know, decided to end his editorial duties after publishing our August Borealis. For the past two years, Tom has worked hard on creating an informative and enjoyable publication for the members. At this time, I would like to take a moment to express the gratitude of Northern Michigan Mensa for Tom's wonderful job as our very first editor; thank you Tom! Ralph has been publishing the newsletter for his condo association for six years. Michelle has done freelance editing for four years. I know that we can expect to see the same fine quality newsletter that we have experienced these past two years.

I must say that I was always delightfully anxious to see the cover photo of each new issue. This started the wonderful journey of opening up my copy to read what our members were doing or had done, such as Melissa Rennie's trip to China as well as a Regional Gathering, and Margaret Scott and Ellen Monahan's book reviews, or some of the unusual quandaries (Phobophobia) of Ruth Minshull, and the mind puzzlers by Ben Stout.

I am hopeful that our members will not "feel" much of this transition. Yes, the look may be different, but you will still have quality editors waiting for your submissions. At the July brunch the ExComm officially appointed Ralph Hillquist and Michelle Swanson to work as a team in producing our newsletter. Since they are "hitting the ground running," I know they would appreciate any articles on exciting travels, book reviews, games, puzzles, or other material that you might have. Our newsletter is only as good as the contributions made to make it enjoyable. If you have put off writing about an interesting vacation, or a fabulous book, maybe a good recipe, or a mind-stumping quiz, now is a great time to do it! I know Michelle and Ralph will be a great team to work with and would really like to hear from you! Their duty is to publish Borealis; your duty, as members, is to give them the fodder to do that. Please send you submissions to them at either, or both, of their email addresses below:

Ralph - rkillquist@chartermi.net

Michelle - michelleswanson@hotmail.com

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

Ralph Hillquist and Michelle Swanson

Thanks, Sherry, for the introduction. Yes, the *Borealis* is under new management. Staff meetings have been held. Rest assured that the initial terror has subsided to mild panic. At the outset, let it be known that there are two co-editors and the rest of the membership of Northern Michigan Mensa is expected to be contributors of prose, poetry, and photos. We are the editors and publishers, not the copy writers, but may comment on occasion.

By way of introduction, I am Ralph Hillquist, senior only in that I have a Medicare card, seriously receding hairline of near-white hair, and H comes before S in the alphabet. A couple of mechanical engineering degrees well back into the last century. But practiced, and still consult in, noise control. Born and raised in a small town outside Chicago, moved to south-east Michigan for a job and education, and relocated to Benzie County for obvious reasons after retirement. Nothing there to suggest qualification for this post, but I snookered the evaluation committee.

The cover photo contains all sorts of allegories and symbolism (only if you want to make it such). Daybreak, of course, as is this issue. Canada on the very left, suggestive of the international nature of Mensa; the Ambassador Bridge implying a tie between all Mensans. The haze in the background, and the waters of the Detroit River, are serving to remind us of environmental responsibility. The obvious building density, so necessary in one sense, will remind some of us why we are "up north." Photo taken in early March from the 41st floor of a Detroit hotel by a half-awake yours truly.

Enuf (I was a reader of Col. McCormick's *Chicago Tribune*) of my ramblings, so I'll "pass the microphone" to Michelle.

"Change is good." We hear it so much it's quickly passing out of the realm of expression on its way to the land of cliché. Just *why* is change supposed to be so good? Is it because *what was* is inherently inferior to *what is*--because why else would change occur, right? No, no, no. That's far too simplis-tic, not to mention a fine example of flawed, either/or thinking as it presumes the *what was* was supplanted by force. Sometimes, as in this case, the *what was* initiates the change.

If you've read even one edition of *Borealis* you'll recognize the name Tom Kachadurian as our erstwhile and dedicated editor. After having served our chapter wonderfully for these past few years, Tom has decided to relinquish his post. He was so skilled in his role as editor, it's going to take *two* of us to replace him. I've been a member of NMM for a year and a half now, but have been unable to attend, for a mind-boggling array of reasons, most of our get-togethers. When Sherry sent out the S.O.S. for a new *Borealis* editor, I realized it was the perfect opportunity for me to get more involved with all you amazing and clever folks.

Ralph and I will be co-editors, or whatever our official titles turn out to be, and will do our best to live up to the high standards of Tom's most impressive tenure. I do not expect the transition to go smoothly, but change--even if it is good--is rarely a neat and tidy affair.

So, dear NMMensans, please ignore any and all missteps to come, indulge us as Ralph and I experiment with new ideas (both ours *and* yours), and embrace with us this opportunity for a new *Borealis*. It will be neither better nor worse than what Tom so faithfully published every month--it will only be different . . . and that kind of change *is* good.

MEMBERSHIP

Melissa Rennie

Quite a few of our lapsed members forgot to renew and have renewed their membership since last I wrote. We've also gained three new members: Carrie Beemon of Charlevoix, Timothy Madion of Traverse City, and Richard Warden of Gaylord. One person qualified at the last testing and is planning to join, and Eric Laitala has attended an event or two and we expect to be hearing more from him soon.

Not counting Eric, our total membership for the end of July is 93. Hopefully, we will once again reach 100 after the upcoming testing sessions on August 21st and National Testing Day on October 16th. Besides adding new members, our goal is to retain our members from year to year. If there's something missing that you would like to see, contact one of the ExComm (Executive Committee) members or Sherry, who is both our LocSec (Local Secretary) and our Program Chair.

Mensa has something for everyone--you just have to find what it has for you. One element of Mensa I glean a lot of enjoyment from is the SIGs (Special Interest Groups) I participate in. It might take a couple of tries before finding a SIG that's the perfect fit for you. The first SIG I joined (FelineSIG) dissolved soon after I joined. Not to be discouraged, I have regular contact with the next two SIGs I became chose. The annual membership guide will be coming out in October, and that's a great time for you to look through SIG descriptions and decide if you'd like to try one.

For many members of Mensa, the only involvement they have is attending RGs (Regional Gatherings). We have several coming up in the Midwest. Creative Mayhem takes place September 3-6, and is sponsored by Western PA Mensa. For the more adventurous types, Club Med SIG is having a Cancun Splash on September 4-11. Presidential Follies takes place October 1-3 and is presented by East Central Ohio Mensa (Akron). The Liberty Bell XIV gathering will take place October 15-17 and is sponsored by Delaware Valley

Mensa (Valley Forge, PA). Also, Central Indiana Mensa is sponsoring the 2004 Outdoor Gathering in Versailles State Park that same weekend. A few of us have met Russell Grunden, and if he's involved, it should be a pleasant experience. And the largest gathering, outside the AG (Annual Gathering), HalloweeM Dreams, will be held October 29-31 and is

sponsored by Chicago Area Mensa. For more information on any of these gatherings, pick up the *Mensa Bulletin* or check it out online at www.us.mensa.org.

And finally an important reminder: at the end of the year the password on the inside of the Bulletin will no longer work for access to the website. You'll need your membership number and password. The password was sent when you renewed, but if you've misplaced it, you can contact WebServices@americanmensa.org for a reminder. Hope to see you all at an event!

OUR NEW SCHOLARSHIP CHAIR

Sherry McNamara

Northern Michigan Mensa has undergone several changes this past month. Along with our two new Editors, we also have a new Scholarship Chair (and relatively new member), Dorothy Vogel.

Dorothy is currently working as an adjunct faculty member in the Music department at Northwestern Michigan College. She holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Oberlin and a Masters of Music degree from Western Michigan University. She is also active in the Michigan Music Teachers Association.

She will be facilitating not only our local scholarship, but the Mensa Education and Research Foundation scholarship. If you know of any students who may be interested in either of these, watch for upcoming information in future issues of *Borealis*.

MERF SCHOLARSHIP

Dorothy Vogel

Every year the American Mensa Education and Research Foundation, known as MERF or The Foundation, makes over \$50,000 available in scholarship funds. Prizes are awarded based on written essays submitted by the applicants regarding academic and career goals. Along with writing the essay, the applicant must be a citizen or resident of the United States, and must be enrolled in a degree program in an accredited institution of higher learning during the academic year following the date of the application. There are no other requirements such as membership in Mensa or demonstration of financial need. In addition to the MERF scholarship, our local chapter of Mensa also has a \$500 scholarship available.

As your new local scholarship chair, I am getting familiar with the phases of the program. This fall, I will be working to get the word out to high school counselors and college financial aid offices so that students are aware of the program. The entry forms themselves will soon be available at <http://merf.us.mensa.org/scholarships/zipfinder.php>.

Students can submit entries from September 1st through the January 15th deadline.

The next phase of the contest is one in which I need your help. I am looking for three judges who would be available between January 15th and February 15th to read and judge the entries. I will not be serving in this capacity so that I can keep my attention focused on the administrative details. Each judge reads each entry and scores independently. Depending on the number of essays, judges could all meet at one time and simply pass essays around or copies can be made and mailed back and forth to me. If you enjoy writing and would be interested in reading about the ambitions of some of our area's students, contact me at 947-1700 or vogeld@chartermi.net.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ellen Monahan

Following is a summary report of the financial status and activities of Northern Michigan Mensa for the first six months of fiscal, and calendar, year 2004.

Account Balances - 1 January 2004

Checking	2274.87	
Savings	100.49	
Total		2375.36

Income (in aggregate)

National Office Allotment		
Regular Members	385.67	
Reinstated Members	2.00	
New Members	11.00	
Second Family Members	1.00	
Corporate Subscriptions	53.95	
RVC Funding	23.76	
Testing Fees	250.00	
Interest	13.03	
Friendship Fund	40.00	
Total		780.41

Expense (in aggregate)

<i>Borealis</i>		
Preparation	221.78	
Postage	148.00	
Testing	3.85	
Office	4.18	
Total		377.81

Account Balances - 30 June 2004

Checking	2677.29	
Savings	100.67	
Total		2777.96

RANDOM THOUGHTS AND MEWLINGS

Ruth Minshull

Setting a goal is vital. We all need to know that there's something important we *should* be doing while we're messing around with other stuff.

Life should be as tidy as a television show. Something interesting is always happening; the people are unfailingly witty or engagingly eccentric. Best of all, every problem is solved in less than 60 minutes. The bad guys get killed, arrested or "see the light." Neighbors, friends and passing strangers turn up to help in a crisis. Amazing life-changing realizations occur--just in time to resolve everything. Further, if this perfect life were recorded on a VCR, we could fast-forward through the painful or dull parts, leaving only the good times. Of course, we'd be taking the risk that our real-time lives could end up being only ten days long.

If you phone a business now, you seldom reach a real person. Instead, you get a series of recorded choices: "If you wish to order, press one. If you wish to open a new account, press two. If you are closing an existing account, press three. If you're ready to give up, press disconnect." Of course, when you need technical support, you can get a live human being, but he'll be in Thoothukkudi, India and will know only eight words of English that can be understood by Americans.

Sometimes I'm amazed that I can still be amazed. After all the years I have lived and all the unbelievable things I've seen, I'm still astounded by certain people and happenings. I'm amazed that cops actually like their jobs. They're in physical danger daily; they're human garbage collectors; they're lied to constantly; they're seldom thanked. Yet they like the action, the variety, the sense of accomplishment--and most of them wouldn't change jobs for anything.

I'm amazed that people are making a profit off of the misspellings on e-Bay. (A seller advertises "rare old lanterns for sale" and no one finds the lot except the shrewd lantern collector who looks for such deviations, then bids with no competition.)

I'm amazed when movie characters return home to find their front door ajar and they still walk right in. You know they're going to find a dead body or a serial killer hiding behind the drapes. If the open door isn't

warning enough, the ominous music should tell them something.

Stanford researchers have found that humor triggers a part of the brain that rewards you by making you feel better. Dr. Allan Reiss who led the research says, "Humor has significant ramifications for our psychological and physical health." Well, I noticed at quite an early age that I felt better while having a big laugh than I did while taking out the garbage. Anyway, I'm happy to learn that someone is taking humor seriously.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Co-Editors Michelle and Ralph

It has been suggested, perhaps not subtly, throughout this initial effort on our part that we will rely on your contributions to be able to publish the *Borealis*. During our staff meetings, we have decided to establish a format of regular (or semi-regular or even a-periodic) areas of focus. These are:

- Book reviews
- Creative fiction
- Creative non-fiction
- Editorial/op-ed/letters
- ExComm reports
- Poetry
- Puzzlers
- References/commentary on outside articles
- Topics that may be of interest

As editors, we reserve the right to tweak or even slash your submission; but nothing gets printed under your name unless you agree. And we hope that you realize there are physical limits for any given issue. Submissions will hopefully be a Word document, no doubt an attachment to an e-mail. Please mind the font size - if you can't read it or it doesn't fit on your screen, we have the same problem. Deadlines for printed material is the 15th of the month preceding anticipated publication, but no assurance is being given that you will make next month's issue.

Photos for consideration for the cover should be sent in jpeg format. And we do welcome these. Basically, a portrait format is best, as a landscape will have to be cropped.

SOMETHING TO PONDER

Following is Steven Lagerfeld's editorial introduction to the Summer 2004 issue of *The Wilson Quarterly*, the cover of which asks the question "Do Smarts Rule? -- Intelligence in America." Because of recent discussion in our periodicals and within our group, the item is reprinted here for another viewpoint of the gifted amongst our younger members (and potential members).

Inspiration for the articles in the WQ often arrives from unexpected sources, but never before has it come from a high-school class reunion. The idea for our "cluster" on intelligence in America was born last summer in the ballroom of a Hilton hotel, where I stood, name tag on my chest, surveying the class of 1973 and marveling at how time had turned the world upside down.

The world of our high school wasn't something I'd been eager to revisit. "Accelerated" kids (the smart ones) were pariahs near the bottom of a social order that rose above us in elaborately orchestrated ranks and culminated in the distant grandeur of a few golden athletes. What was striking even then about this order of things was how enthusiastically educators supported it, beginning with a principal who, in the great American tradition, was a former coach. It wasn't just a taste for sports that inspired them, I always thought, but a deep unease about distinctions that separated individuals too much from the school "team" --and, not incidentally, also drew the community's attention to the academic performance of the rest of that team. Still, this was one of the better public high schools in New York State, a steady producer of National Merit Semifinalists. After the names were announced over the public-address system one morning in my junior year, a sympathetic teacher pulled a friend of mine aside to tell him what a rare honor it was to receive such public recognition for his academic triumph.

At the Hilton, recognizing anybody was a challenge, but it was striking how time had rewarded the pariahs of '73. With their impressive careers and big salaries, they were now stars. But I doubt the world we left behind has changed much. As I argue elsewhere in this issue, American society as a whole now tends to mistake smarts for a moral virtue, but its schools, paradoxically, still often treat them as an embarrassment to be swept under the rug.

Roaming the Region

Charlie Bruce (aka Gloater)

RVC Region 3 (RVC3@us.mensa.org)

Well we just wrapped up another Region 3 RG—the Col-M-Pics in my home group, Columbus Area Mensa. We had gold, silver, and bronze medals for presentation to the winners of all the games and tournaments and also to the groups with the best Col-M-Pic t-shirt and flag. After tallying all of the medal counts, the overall bronze medal (17 points) went to Region 4 with RVC 4 Cyndi Kuyper accepting (just about all “outsiders” were grouped there); the silver (21.83 points) to Cincinnati with LocSec Misty Richmond accepting; and the gold (22.16 points) to the host city, Columbus with President and RG Chair Jeff Wolfe accepting. All registrants received small stuffed bears that Red Bellamy dressed in togas and wreaths. My personal gold winner favorite has got to be Barry Austern for his “Name the Bear” entry of “Shut Up Bear-y”. My thanks to all of you who were able to make it to the RG; next up is Pittsburgh over Labor Day weekend, a four-day funfest.

National Testing Day is coming up before we know it. Last year, 1,593 people tested on NTD—the most ever. This year, NTD is scheduled for Saturday, October 16th; so far eleven of our sixteen Region 3 groups have registered to participate. Hopefully the other five will submit forms soon. We had 4,660 members in Region 3 in the June 30th listing; let’s see if we can top 5,000 by the end of the year. If you are a Proctor, and haven’t done so already, please get with your Coordinator and request to host a session.

I am in the process of doing my Roaming the Region tour again with visits planned for Mid-Michigan, Traverse City, and ECOM during the last three weekends in August. Give me some advance notice of special events in your group and I’ll try to schedule it in.

NORTHERN MICHIGAN MENSA

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