



Borealis

The Monthly Journal of Northern Michigan Mensa



Volume 3 Number 9

June 2005

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". It will be assumed that the editor has permission to edit for length and clarity unless the author specifies the submission is to be printed "as is". 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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Northern Michigan Mensa

June 2005 Calendar

BOOK CLUB – Saturday, 4 June, 2005 at 12:30 p.m. We will meet at the Omelette Shoppe, 1209 E. Front Street. The book for discussion this month is *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, by Carson McCullers. This group is open to all members and attendance can be at each meeting, or only those meetings that present books in which you have an interest.

SCHOLARSHIP PRESENTATION AND BRUNCH – Saturday, 11 June 2005 at 11:00 a.m. This will be an important and rewarding moment for Northern Michigan Mensa as we award our very first educational scholarship. Please plan to attend this brunch so the recipient will feel special and recognized for his/her exemplary effort in this scholarship competition, and to show that this award was well supported by the NMM membership. There will be a short presentation of the award followed by brunch. 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.

GAMES NIGHT – Tuesday, 14 June 2005, at 7:00 p.m. We will meet at Borders Books and Music, located at 2612 Crossing Circle, Traverse City. Bring your favorite game and a willingness to have fun! Coffee, soft drinks, sandwiches, wraps, soups, and desserts are available for purchase.

TGIF – Friday, 24 June 2005, at 6:00 p.m. We will meet in the Horizon Shine Café, located in the lower level of Horizon Books, 243 E. Front Street, Traverse City. Coffee, soft drinks, sandwiches, wraps, and desserts are available for purchase.

CANOE/KAYAK TRIP ON THE CEDAR RIVER – Saturday, 25 June, 2005. Meet at 10 a.m. at the bridge/launch site on the north side of the Village of Cedar in Leelanau County. Bring a lunch and beverage as well as clothing to protect you from sunburn. Lotion would also be advised. Wear footgear that can get wet, as we will get out of our canoes to walk on the floating mat of vegetation so we can see the unique pitcher plants, sundews (both of which are insectivorous plants), and other plants found exclusively in bogs and fens. The trip will take from three to four hours, including time out for lunch along the way. The current is very slow in the Cedar River, so the paddle back upstream is relatively easy. Our guide will be Jack Schultz who has conducted many trips on this river which leads directly into the south end of Lake Leelanau.

From the Editor

Greetings fellow Mensans! I am pleased and excited to be your new newsletter editor. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to my predecessors for all their hard work. I admit I have “borrowed” some wording and graphics from previous issues. As it has been said, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

I will do my best to make this a good newsletter, but a lot of it depends on all of you. Please send me your submissions. Email, snail mail, pony express or carrier pigeon, send those submissions! I also welcome any suggestions you may have for ways to improve this publication.

My assistant editors, Stan Cain and Don Hennig, can also take your suggestions, ideas or submissions. I would like to thank these gentlemen for being there to help me in this endeavor. It’s good to know I have a support system.

Let’s keep this a publication to be proud of. Send me articles, letters to the editor, games, puzzles, poems, pictures, anything you think may be of interest to your fellow members.

And don’t forget, if you choose to receive Borealis via email, you will receive it sooner and in color. You will also save the group money on postage and copying fees. To let me know you would like to change from snail mail to email for receiving the Borealis, send an email to nmmnewsletter@charter.net with “change delivery method” in the subject line.

I am very glad to have been given this opportunity. I hope to prove myself worthy.

Kelleen Bingham



MANISTEE BRUNCH

The first-ever Manistee brunch was held Saturday, April 30th. The attendees were from left to right: Gary and Judy Cools (Ludington), Joanne Schultz (Lake Ann), Mary Shaw (Cadillac), Don Curtiss (Onokama), Frank Svetkovich (Free Soil) and behind the camera Jack Schultz (Lake Ann). Jack and Joanne also brought their new puppy, Bonnie, with them. She is pictured below.



A Serious Subject

By Melissa Rennie

In a rape culture, very few stand up and tell it like it is. With only a note in many news agencies, and barely a whisper to most of America, Andrea Dworkin, age 58, passed away on April 9 after years of ill health.

Many may ask, "Who was Andrea Dworkin"? She was a radical who spoke what many feared to speak about as she took both pornography and rape by the horns, dragged them into the open, and demanded that everyone see them for what they are.

Feminist Julie Bindel described Dworkin as, "the most maligned feminist on the planet, (yet) she never hated men." Beginning with her 1974 book, "Women Hating," Dworkin would begin a very public and vocal battle against pornography.

"Pornography is a celebration of rape and injury to women," she wrote in her book, *Pornography* (1981). "It's a kind of union for rapist, a way of legitimizing rape and formalizing male supremacy in our society."

In the early 80's, she worked with feminist attorney Catharine MacKinnon to define pornography as a form of sex discrimination and allow individuals to sue pornographers if "harmed" by their product. The U.S. Supreme Court would later affirm a decision overturning a city ordinance based on their work.

"Women, for centuries not having access to pornography and now unable to bear looking at the muck on the supermarket shelves, are astonished," said Dworkin. "Women do not believe that men believe what pornography says about women. But they do. From the worst to the best of them, they do."

I cannot help but think what Dworkin thought in her final years to the influx of pornography in our daily lives. It is available everywhere, to the point of overflowing: from the internet, to our inboxes, and even on our network television shows. Much of nighttime television can be classified as soft porn - porn with story lines (and no nudity, but only in the case of the networks).

But Dworkin's real passion was working to end violence against women and children, of which she claimed pornography was both a cause of and an expression of male violence and dominance.

Unfortunately, her statements against rape, which some interpreted to mean that any and all sexual relations are rape, is what she will most be remembered for. She would later clarify it for a reporter:

"If you believe that what people call normal sex is an act of dominance, where a man desires a woman so much that he will use force against her to express his desire; if you believe that's romantic, that's the truth about sexual desire, then if someone denounces force in sex, it sounds like they're denouncing sex.

"If conquest is your mode of understanding sexuality, and the man is supposed to be a predator, and then feminists come along and say, 'no, sorry, that's using force,' that's rape - a lot of male writers have drawn the conclusion that I'm saying all sex is rape."

Her views and uncompromising appearance - man-hating, overweight, no make-up, hairy (and some claim ugly) - would coin a new word just to describe her and others like her: feminazi. The irony in this is that Dworkin was a child of the Holocaust, born in 1946 to a Jewish family in New Jersey. For her lifetime, Dworkin would remain obsessed with reading and trying to understand the Holocaust. She would also survive her own personal hell - molested as a young child, assaulted in a prison after being arrested in a war protest, a violent marriage, work as a sex worker and rape counselor.

"If the Holocaust can be denied even today," she said, "how can a woman who has been raped be believed?" Even fellow feminists would draw the ire from Dworkin. "I do think liberal feminists bear responsibility for a lot of what's gone wrong," said Dworkin in an interview. "To me, what's so horrible is that they make alliances for the benefit of middle-class women." Dworkin's concern was always for those who didn't have a voice - sex workers, rape victims, domestic violence victims, poor women and children. These were the individuals who Dworkin strove to help. Dworkin was not shy in pronouncing her solution for violence against women and children - "a semi-automatic gun is one answer."

In her book, *Scapegoat: The Jews, Israel and Women's Liberation*, she felt that women who were abused should fight back and form their own country - just like Israel. But her real challenge was to men - keeping them engaged in the dialogue.

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"I don't believe rape is inevitable or natural. If I did, I would have no reason to be here," she said at a men's conference. "If I did, my political practice would be different than it is. Have you ever wondered why we [women] are not just in armed combat against you? It's not because there's a shortage of kitchen knives in this country. It is because we believe in your humanity, against all the evidence.

"(Women) do not want to do the work of helping you to believe in your humanity. We cannot do it anymore. We always tried. We have been repaid with systematic exploitation and systematic abuse. You are going to have to do this yourselves from now on, and you know it."

Without Dworkin here as a constant watchdog, it will be interesting to see if all of us - men and women alike, can rise to the challenge.

* * *

Clinch Park Zoo

Need a neat adventure for yourself or for children or friends and visitors? Have you been to the Clinch Park Zoo in downtown Traverse City lately? Opening Day was officially May 28, 2005 and then daily 10 to 4. The next big event is Sunday, June 5, Family Fun Day. There will be a clown doing animal balloons and teasing the children, treats and stuff for sale, face paintings, excellent weather of course, and the zoo residents will be excited to have company.

All the residents at the Clinch Park Zoo are rescued animals. They were either abandoned as babies, were confiscated from poor conditions, or were discovered injured and unable to survive on their own. None can ever be released.

Each animal has a story. For instance, the 2 otters were both found as babies and were cared for by Tracy Mikoski until weaned. She took them home every night and fed them every 2 hours. The other zoo keepers also have done so with many of the animals that have been brought in. The love and care at the CPZ are incredible. The people there don't just work an 8 hour day.

Another tale of woe with a happy ending concerns the 2 cougars. They were purchased as pets for 2- and a 4-year-old boys. Obviously when the cougars far outweighed their owner's boys something had to be done! Having been raised by humans, they then could not have survived in the wilds. They hadn't been taught by their mother how to hunt and fish so now they have to live in a cage. People can be so dumb!

You are in for a treat if you go to the Clinch Park Zoo. See every animal and read its story. Have a good time! It will be a day well spent.

Ellen Monahan

Roaming the Region

by Charlie Bruce a.k.a. Gloater
RVC Region 3 (RVC3@us.mensa.org)

Time sure flies when you're having fun. It seems like I just finished an AMC meeting and wrote my column on the room/ride sharing issue and I now find myself at the keyboard again. It has been an extremely interesting month; cruising across the Pacific and visiting places I've wanted to see my whole life. I got to wander around among the Moai, the large statues buried all over Rapa Nui (better known as Easter Island). Talk about isolation. It took us five sea days to reach South America from there.

Once we reached Peru, we flew to Ica where we transferred to a 12-passenger plane and flew over the Nazca Lines - geoglyphs and geometric line clearings in the Peruvian desert made by the Nazca people sometime between 200 BC and 600 AD. After returning to Lima for a few days, we took off again for Cusco and a visit to the Lost City of the Incas, Machu Picchu. The biggest problem with this excursion was altitude. Although Machu Picchu is at about 7700 feet, you have to get there from Cusco, which is slightly over 11,000 feet. Needless to say we had to rest a lot while climbing around the ruins. We took a heck of a lot of pictures and will probably be carrying them around when we visit various groups and RGs in upcoming months.

We should be back for a while now; after all we have an RG to put on next month. Hope to see a lot of you there.



EASTER ISLAND



MACHU PICCHU

Membership News

By Melissa Rennie

Once again with the annual renewal we have dropped from our high of 104 down to 75. It was less of a drop than last year. Last year, the majority were due to late renewals (some members just forgot). Hopefully, that is the case this year, and the number will once more bounce back into the 100 range.

I enjoyed my trip down to SEMMantics (South Eastern Michigan Mensa Regional Gathering) to see my friends in Mensa from across the country. We had a great time. I even convinced one of our local members to journey down to see what the "RG" experience was all about, and he assured me he had a great time.

The next major RG is one of the largest in the country: Chicago Area's HalloWeeM. It will be their 30th anniversary and will be held over Halloween weekend in Arlington Heights. I went last year and really enjoyed myself. They assured everyone that this year's will be better than ever.

Of course, there are other RGs in Region 3 over the summer, just check out Region 3's website: region3.us.mensa.org and check the calendar section. RGs are a great way to meet Mensans, both from our region and from across the country.

I am also planning on attending the AG (Annual Gathering) which is being held in New Orleans this year. I am planning to meet up with a bunch of Mensan friends I have made online over the very short time I have been in Mensa, and we are planning on having a great time.

Other AGs to keep in mind: In May of 2006, Canada Mensa is having their AG in St. John's Newfoundland; The U.S. AG in 2006 will be a world gathering to celebrate Mensa's 60th anniversary and will be held in Disney World in Orlando, Florida in August; and for those planning long term, the 2007 AG will be in Birmingham, Alabama.

There are so many choices of interesting places to travel to meet Mensans, it is hard to decide sometimes which is the best choice. Of course, my favorite choice is meeting the Mensans right here in our own backyard.

A friend I have made from Cleveland is so jealous of some of the activities that our local group offers. She is also amazed at the turnout we have at some of our events. Some of the larger groups around the country feel they are lucky to have 10 people attend an event. We almost always have at least 10 people turn out for an event, and every event brings out different people. She is just amazed that a group with roughly 100 members has that many members who are active.

If you have never been to an event, find one that interests you and give it a try. You may be pleasantly surprised.

And for those of you who forgot to renew, the easiest way to renew is online at www.us.mensa.org. We would hate missing some of the friends that many of us have made.

* * *

Testing in Northern Michigan Mensa

One individual, an 18-year-old student at Northwestern Michigan College, was tested on May 19. Our next testing session will be held on Saturday, June 4, in Room 104 of Scholars Hall on the campus of the college in Traverse City, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

If any members know of potential candidates, please have them contact Jack Schultz by phone or email--231-275-6735 or nwoodpc@chartermi.net.

The Wits and the Wannabees

by Ruth Minshull

"You can pretend to be serious, but you can't pretend to be witty."

--Sacha Guitry

I loved this quote as soon as I read it. Who was this author? I wondered. What else has he written?

An Internet search yielded a number of entries, most of which were in French, so I didn't learn much about Guitry except that he was an actor, writer and director. Apparently he had been largely underappreciated in his time. I found no other profound words by the man (all trashed by some witless editor?).

My Google findings, however, turned up some unintentional humor provided by a courageous French admirer who attempted to translate information about the man: "Sacha Guitry," he wrote, "has died for more than forty years, time passed, 'it does not have more enemies, since one reproached him above all for being alive' wrote of him François Truffaut."

This clumsy text lurched along for about half a page, when it finally collapsed back into its original French (with a sigh of exhaustion, no doubt). The last entry was a plea: "Certain pages are still in construction. Do not want me too much, please! Return quickly to note the improvements!"

Well, I haven't returned--quickly or otherwise--but I silently promised that I would not want him too much.

Although Webster defines witty as "very clever and humorous," you still couldn't explain the concept to a person who had never experienced it. That would be like trying to describe the color magenta to someone who had been sightless since birth.

But where does one go to get this commodity? I wondered. If you can't fake it, can you learn it? develop it? or maybe get a pill for it?

I scanned over many of the people I had known in my lifetime. I observed that those who were not witty to start with, never did become witty. Oh sure, with a few drinks in them, many people think they are funnier than Robin Williams on a roll, but you would have to be comparably looped to agree with them.

We can change many of our physical features--with hair dye, implants, plastic surgery, Botox. With a bit of effort, we can improve our mental attitude and general outlook. We can learn and improve our skills. But, unfortunately, we can't say, "Doctor. I want to get a wit implant."

So, reluctantly, I have concluded that people are born with this ability, or they're not. It's pre-ordained--a DNA of the soul.

While it seems to be true that you can't pretend to be witty, some people try anyway. They tell a joke and forget the punch line. Or (I knew one like this.) they give you the punch line, without telling the joke--and then wait for you to laugh. Some of them tell blatant falsehoods, then say, "Just kidding." They seem to think "kidding" means "funny"; they're trying to be clever, but they don't know how.

I observed that if a person is often saying, "Just kidding," or "That was a joke," he's never really funny.

Some people punish us with puns. (Note how the word "puns" fits into the word "punish". Hmm. That can't be an accident.)

The unfunniest pretender is the practical joker. This half-wit has no capability for clever conversation or humor; he ridicules and humiliates others by making them the butt of pranks. Then he expects everyone--including the victim--to laugh. (*What's the matter? Can't you take a joke?*) When you meet a practical joker, notice that he or she is never a clever raconteur, never a fun and entertaining person. You'll generally find that the underhanded tricks are all he has in his wit bag.

So what's an unwitting person supposed to do? Probably the best thing is to practice being an attentive listener. Ask questions, respond appropriately--especially to humor. The cleverest quipster needs to know that he can produce a good laugh in others now and then. And, of course, he'll think you're brilliant because you "get it."

Being a good audience might be just as good as being witty.

* * *

Ideas, Please?

Recently, the AMC came up with a new program to assure the safety and enjoyment of members attending AGs, RGs, LDWs and Colloquiums with regard to preparation and serving of food and beverage. If there is any one thing, other than non-stop conversation and conviviality at these functions, it is the 24 hour hospitality. This being the norm, an ASIE rule (#2004-111) states: "Effective July 1, 2005, at least one member of the hospitality committee for AGs, RGs, LDWs and Colloquiums must complete a food safety course prior to the gathering or workshop. Applications for these activities must include a copy of a certificate establishing that at least one member of the hospitality committee for that event has completed a federal, state, county or Mensa food safety course."

Well, I for one, am happy to have this codified even though there haven't been notable incidents of food borne illnesses to date. It just makes good sense. A good idea.

At one time Annual Gatherings were someone's good idea, as were Regional Gatherings and Leadership Development Workshops. Colloquiums (my old Webster's unabridged says "colloquia") are an old and respected forum which Mensa has adopted, and rightly so.

We've had a number of good ideas since we established Northern Michigan Mensa. Tom Kachadurian saw a need for a games night and even hosted it until the popularity outgrew his living room, dining room and office. A regular games night is now held at Borders Books. So normal for Mensans to be near books. The T.G.I.F. is also held at a bookstore; in this case Horizon Books, downtown T.C. Jack Schultz shares his knowledge of the local flora by hosting wildflower walks and canoe excursions. Recently, we've had a book club and a movie discussion group which were ideas of our LocSec, Sherry McNamara.

When I became LoCo (Local Co-ordinator) before we were our own Local Group, I continued the monthly brunch and came up with a road rally followed by (what else) food and beverage!

Ok, so what's your idea? What sort of event would you like to attend, or even plan and host. You can be involved a lot or a little. You can just come up with the idea and let someone else run with it. It may be something that none of us thought of before, but would be receptive to. Just let someone know about your idea. Call, e-mail write a note or show up at a function and tell one of your ExComm members.

As for me, I've had hospitality experience. I might as well get some documentation in food safety; just in case we want to hold a Mini-RG in the future....

Pete Turkus
Ombudsman



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Northern Michigan Mensa

www.nmm.us.mensa.org

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