

Borealis

The Monthly Journal of Northern Michigan Mensa



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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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ON THE COVER: Judith Lindenau & her hurdy gurdy. By Jack Schultz

Northern Michigan Mensa

February 2006 Calendar

BOOK CLUB – Saturday, 4 February, 2006 at 12:30 p.m. We will meet at the Cottage Café, 420 Munson Avenue, Traverse City, in the Papa's Den. The book for discussion this month is *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Mark Haddon. This group is open to all members, attendance can be each meeting, or only for those meetings that present books in which you have an interest.

BRUNCH AND WINTER HIKE (YOU CAN DO ONE OR BOTH) – Saturday, 11 February, 2006, at 11:00 a.m. We will meet for brunch 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. Brunch will be followed by a winter hike in the Grand Traverse Natural Education Reserve. We'll end brunch in time so those going on the hike can drive to the starting point in the Boardman River valley south of Traverse City. We'll meet at 1 p.m. in the parking lot for the dam. You will easily see this lot, as it is where Cass Road crosses the river. (If you don't attend the brunch, just meet the group at the dam parking lot). If you come from the south or east, Cass Road dead-ends on Keystone Road and is just south of Birmley Road (where the observatory is located). If you have snowshoes, bring them along, but don't worry if you don't have any. Those with snowshoes will break trail (if necessary) so that foot travel is probably all that is necessary. We'll plan to be on the trail from one to two hours, depending on what there is to see and how much snow covers the ground. The trail is all easy-going, with only small elevation changes. Jack Schultz will lead the hike.

TGIF – Friday, 24 February 2006, 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.

2006/2007 VOTING EXCOMM MEMBERS

By Sherry McNamara

I would like to thank the membership for taking time to cast a vote for the slate of officers for the new Executive Committee. The officers met recently and they have determined positions for this term as follows:

Sherry McNamara – Local Secretary
Don Hennig – Deputy Local Secretary
Susan Styles – Treasurer
Stanley Cain – Member-at-Large
Melissa Rennie – Member-at-Large

From the Editor

Hello everyone.

I hope your new year is going well so far. This will most likely be my last newsletter as your editor. The time has come for me to concentrate on other things, and hand the reins over to someone new. Stan Cain will be taking over starting with either the March or April issue.

I have enjoyed creating and publishing the Borealis the past several months. It has been a good learning experience for me. I want to thank everyone who has contributed. Keep it up. Stan will be depending on you. I would also like to thank Stan Cain and Don Hennig for their support and assistance.

I'm sure Stan will do an excellent job. My best wishes to him and all of our fellow Mensans.

Have a happy Valentine's Day.

Goodbye everyone.

DO YOU WANT TO BE MORE ACTIVE IN NMM?

By Sherry McNamara

Do you want to be more involved and active in Northern Michigan Mensa and have fun in the process? We are seeking members to volunteer for the following positions:

Program Chair – This position is for a person who is interested in making our events more fun and/or more interesting. This position can be handled in a committee format if desired. The program chair is responsible for creating the event calendar, scheduling meeting locations, soliciting speakers, arranging pot-lucks, planning outdoor events, or games nights, etc. You would work closely with the editor to ensure that the events are printed in the newsletter each month.

Webmaster - We will eventually need to replace our Webmaster, Stephen Siciliano, when he leaves the area to attend university. This position requires computer knowledge, but not necessarily a great deal of time. Stephen has created our webpage and has made it relatively self-sufficient. Currently, the various chairpersons will update their specific portion of the webpage, and that is expected to continue. But, there may be a time that we will need to add additional information to the webpage, and that will require someone with computer knowledge.

Please contact me at 933.9272 or kikiwon@hotmail.com if you are interested in either of these positions.



THE ARTFUL CONSPIRACY

by Ruth Minshull

Although the French people aren't too popular with many Americans these days, perhaps you can agree that (like most of us) they're not all bad all of the time.

The idea of conspiracies is captivating to many folks (especially the loony ones). Some are convinced that the Kennedy assassination was the result of a conspiracy. Others, even today, still speculate about Lincoln's death. And there are those who believe that the moon landing was a hoax cooked up by NASA. A few hard-core believers are certain that our government conspires to keep us from learning about the thousands of aliens who have invaded earth in space ships and are now running loose among us (disguised as famous sports luminaries with weird hair? Or maybe all those skinny Hollywood blonds who look strangely alike?).

I'm sure there have been successful conspiracies, but for the most part I don't buy into such theories. In the first place, a conspiracy requires that two or more people agree on a course of action. If you've ever been on a committee, you know how unlikely *that* is.

Furthermore, if a thicket of thieves *did* manage to cook up and pull off a successful caper, chances are good that sooner or later someone would tattle. Most people just can't resist spilling the beans. Ben Franklin seemed to agree with this when he said, "Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead."

And, of course, a conspirator might give up his pals in a plea bargain. Contrary to proverbial wisdom, penal authorities often do not consider the bird in hand to be worth as much as the bird who is still hiding under a bush.

Perhaps the biggest reason for betrayal in this country today would be the golden opportunity to sell the story to the media for a small fortune (expecting, of course, to be portrayed on screen by Julia Roberts or Brad Pitt). That's the American way.

Strictly speaking, a conspiracy consists of a group of people plotting together secretly to do a wrongful act. Usually this means the blackhearted ones trying to do in the righteous ones. Sometimes, however, the conspirators are the good guys, plotting to outwit the miscreants.

The scene is Paris, over 60 years ago. Several months before the start of World War II, European leaders were convinced that their

negotiations would prevent war and lead to a lasting peace.

A number of realistic French people, however, were not so confident. On the small chance that there *would* be a war, they worried about the fate of all the priceless artwork in their beloved Louvre.

Looting has always been a common practice during wars. And the Nazis, of course, were no exception. Although it would be bad enough to get caught up in a war, the idea of losing the treasures of the Louvre was unthinkable to Frenchmen.

After fretting about it for a time, someone came up with the answer: They would take no chances; the art would be removed, and hidden until the war was over.

It was an exhaustive undertaking. Thousands of special crates had to be built. The Louvre had only one truck, so additional transport was borrowed from the Samaritaine, a nearby department store. Some 300,000 pieces had to be carefully packed, crated and moved. In what was surely the most massive art evacuation of all time, the industrious French patriots succeeded in emptying the huge museum.

Two days before war was declared, all the art in the Louvre had left Paris. The pieces were hidden all over France--in chateaux, in private homes, in caves, in cellars and in abandoned mines. In some cases, the conspirators were only a step ahead of the advancing German army.

Thus, when the inevitable day arrived and the Nazis came goose-stepping down the Champs-Élysées and into the Louvre, they found--to their great astonishment--nothing at all.

So successfully had everything been secreted away that all during the war and the occupation--while Herman Goering and his band of merciless pillagers were tracking down everything of artistic merit in Europe--not one piece from this enormous collection was found by the enemy.

When the war was over, the precious treasures of the Louvre were brought back home. Every single one of them.

Although the German occupation had been costly to the French people--thousands were executed, hundreds of thousands sent to Germany as slave laborers--no one gave away France's great secret. Not one person sold out.

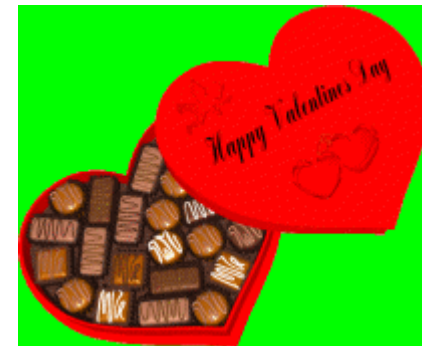
Thanks to the bravery and foresight of the French people, thanks to the triumph of the human spirit over oppression, and thanks to the success of one vast and glorious conspiracy, the world's greatest

collection of art treasures was preserved.

* * *

References:

1. *The Louvre* (video tape) "The Jarvis Collection," 1978. NBC, Inc.
2. Bonfante-Warren, Alexander *The Louvre/the Musee D'Orsay*. 2000. Hugh Lauter Levin Associates



Pledge Drive

The IPR pledge drive begins Saturday night February 11 with a special two hour shift during "A Prairie Home Companion". We covered that shift the last time and did well for the drive. I'm volunteering for that shift. My wife Cheryl will help out if I can't find three other Mensans.

There is also a Sunday morning slot on February 12 from 10 A.M - 1 P.M.

Please e-mail me if you would like to volunteer.

Pete Turkus

petencheri@chartermi.net

Unlocking the Gates to the Future

By Marion Gaskins

The Kids Trek at the Mensa World Gathering to be held in Orlando this summer would like to hear from those of you who will share your time and talents with our children. This would be a wonderful opportunity to provide the skills of our diverse cultures to others who can then take them home and share them with their friends and classmates. It could also unlock a gate that could open to a path that these children will follow for life.

When I was in school a long, long time ago, teachers had the time to add to the basic curriculum and greatly enhance our education. We received the art, dancing, physical education, and theatrical training that is now being cut from so many schools here in the U. S. Many of my classmates went on to careers in art, in television, on Broadway, and in the movie business, as well as becoming scientists and basketball stars. I wonder if this would have been so if we had not had all those extras?

If you can share your time and talents on any of the three days of Kids Trek, either as presenters, assistants, or escorts, please contact Kay Klasen kay@bellsouth.net and Martha Feld marthafeld@earthlink.net, please note WG06 in the subject line. If you do not have a computer and would like to send a note, mail to Kay Klasen - WG06 Volunteer Coordinator, 8823 NW 20 Manor, Coral Springs, FL 33071.

It'll be a lot like being a grandparent. You can have fun with the kids, and then you can give them back to their parents!



Reprinted per the LocSec's request

Culture Quest XVII Is Almost Upon Us!

By Sherry McNamara

Culture Quest (CQ) is a game played by members of the American Mensa as well as Canada Mensa simultaneously on Sunday, 30 April. It is like playing a long trivia game of cultural knowledge. Questions can be about current events, science, politics, entertainment, etc. The game lasts for 90 minutes and the start time is dependant on the time zone in which the participant resides; we begin play at 4:00 p.m.

CQ is played by teams comprised of up to five players, with one member being the captain. Each team can also have up to two alternates. The alternate would not play unless one of the regular players was unable to play. We can enter multiple teams in the contest. Normally we meet in separate locations to play followed by dinner at a local restaurant. Answer sheets are submitted to American Mensa to tally the scores with the top 20 teams winning cash awards. These awards are generally designated for the local scholarship fund.

If you are interested in playing, please let me know by 1 March 2006. The cost is \$40 per team, so the cost per person will be dependant on the number of players per team. Also, if you are interested in being the captain and/or allowing the team to play at your home, let me know that too!

Contact me via email at kikiwon@hotmail.com; please put CQ2006 in the subject line. Or you can call me at 933-9272.

