

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

ON THE COVER: Woodpecker holes in a white pine - seen on the April wildflower hike. Photo by Melissa Rennie

Northern Michigan Mensa

June 2006 Calendar

BOOK CLUB - Saturday, June 3 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 *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt. 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 - Saturday, June 10 2006 at 11:00 a.m. For a change of pace this month, we will be having brunch at Gary and Judy Cools' home in Ludington. They have graciously offered to host the monthly brunch in an effort to bring together more members from our southern reaches. This will be a potluck, so please bring something to share and possibly a favorite party game. Our hosts will provide their dish to pass, and also beverages, plates, etc. Their address is 7411 M-116, Ludington, Michigan. Carol Crawford will attach directions and a map to the e-mail reminder about a week before the brunch. If you need directions mailed, please call Carol at 231-938-3330. This will be a great opportunity to meet some of our members who often cannot make the trip to Traverse City events. Please join us!

TGIF - Friday, June 23 2006 at 6:00 p.m. TGIF returns to the traditional fourth Friday! 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.

E-Mail Address Update - Please e-mail Carol Crawford <carolcrawford@charter.net> with your name and most current e-mail address as soon as possible. Many of the e-mailed events reminders get returned stating the e-mail address is no longer valid. This periodic update will assist Carol in making sure everyone is informed of the many events our group has to offer.

Welcome

Welcome to new member **Kimberli A. Wregglesworth** of Onaway and a welcome back to member **Robert R. Nelson** of Honor. We're glad to have you with us.



April Wildflower Hike By Melissa Rennie

A number of Northern Michigan Mensans and friends gathered at the Treat Farm for the annual wildflower hike led by Jack Schultz on April 29. The Treat Farm is part of the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore.

We followed a trail on the farm that provided opportunities to view a wide variety of local wildflowers including trillium, squirrel corn, bloodroot, jack-in-the-pulpit and a variety of violets. Jack provided an interesting commentary on the many plants and trees.

Upon arriving at the farm house area, Jack gave us a quick tour that included a description of the unique trees that were found at the homestead. Then, most of the group hiked a half mile out to the dunes on Lake Michigan where the view was exquisite.

Those that made it out to the hike included Stan and Dorothy Cain, Pete Turkus, Meg Gustafson, James and Sharon McDermott, Carol Crawford and her sister, Jayne Beem and her sister, Melissa Rennie and KC Mowrey.

Afterwards, many headed back to Empire and enjoyed a great lunch at the Friendly Tavern where we were joined by Judith Lindenau.

Regional Vice Chair

Hello Folks!

Please permit me to introduce myself. I'm Dave Swanka, your new RVC. There certainly was a bit of change over, but the dust has settled and here I am. I'm from the Western New York Mensa Group (Buffalo area), where I'm a two term Loc Sec and still the testing coordinator. A little background about myself: I'm a retired roofing contractor just about to launch a home inspection business and a hobby business (Designing with Roses). Gardening is my great love; I write a monthly gardening column for my local newsletter (which perhaps some of you editors have read). As for Mensa, I like being a doer, rather than a spectator.

How do I see my position in relation to you? Not as a team captain - I don't have a competitive nature. As your advocate. Let me know what your concerns and troubles are and we'll problem solve. I'm not so presumptuous as to think I know all the issues because I've been a loc sec. While I'm an avid reader of other group's newsletters, and long ago came to the conclusion that most groups are very similar, you may have a unique situation which needs to be addressed. Not being a mind reader, I need your input to know what's going on in your area. If you have a concern or idea that needs to be addressed by national, I'll advocate it wholeheartedly. There are a couple of conditions, though. I never subscribed to the misguided notion that there are no bad ideas. I've heard hundreds of them in my life. Think things through before pulling any alarms. The other is that while you might have a real winning thought that benefits your group and the region in general, if it is detrimental to Mensa as a whole, I cannot support it. This being said, although I know it is a lot easier to shovel manure down from a truck rather than up into it, I'm all for shoveling it up to National if the need arises. This is a learning experience for me, so bear with and support me and I'll support you in return.

A couple of last thoughts. Not being a whirling social dervish, most of you will not meet me anytime soon. I will try to attend any event going on if I'm in your area. Being on the western fringe of the region will limit how much I physically travel throughout the region, however. There is a small discretionary fund available to us; I haven't been given the specifics yet. It is a budgeted and

funded item so if your group has a need for special financing for a project or activity, let me know pronto. Lastly, communication will be the key to us having a memorable working relationship. Please feel free to contact me at my e-mail address: summit95@usadatanet.net, by telephone at (716) 833-5549, by post at 1700 Kensington Ave. Buffalo, NY 14215 or by alternative means. For urgent messages I will diligently watch the western horizon at night for a spot light with an owl silhouette in it, or of course you can relay by setting the hilltop bonfires ablaze and pealing the steeple bells. In any event, I am very accessible. Have a great summer and hope to hear from everyone.

Best Regards,

Dave Swanka

American Mensa

By Howard Prince <HowardP@americanmensa.org>

We know how it is -- you're going through CultureQuest(r) withdrawals. Or you're feeling remorse because you didn't participate in this annual, international test of cultural erudition. Or perhaps you're chagrined at your performance in April and have vowed to practice for next year.

We understand. That's why we've created the CultureQuest(r)-ion of the Day! Just sign up through the link at www.us.mensa.org/culturequestion, and we'll send you actual CultureQuest(r)-ions created by your fellow Mensans for previous competitions. And since we'll email you a new one every day, you'll have at least one chance every day to stretch your cerebrum.

So, if you know -- or want to know -- the full computer term usually designated by DOS, or what musical art form originated in Italy about A.D. 1600, visit www.us.mensa.org/culturequestion today.

(Oh, and this is a GREAT opportunity to share Mensa with others outside of the organization. Feel free to forward information about our CultureQuest(r)-ions to others!)

Mensa Select Winners

By Catherine Barney

One hundred ninety-eight Mensans gathered in Portland the weekend of 22-23 April for Mind Games 2006. During the three-day event, members played and rated 62 board and card games. The top five games have earned Mensa Select distinction and may use the Mensa Select seal on their games.

The winners are:

Deflexion by Deflexion (www.deflexion.biz)

Hive by Smart Zone (www.smartzonegames.com)

Keesdrow by Pywacket (www.pywacketgames.com)

Pentago by Pentago (www.pentago.com)

Wits & Wagers by North Star Games (www.northstargames.com)

Mind Games 2007 will be held April 20-22 in Pittsburgh, PA. To register, visit www.mindgames.us.mensa.org.

Mensa Testing: Bring A Friend!

By Catherine Barney

Taking the Mensa test can be a little scary for prospective members. During the month of June, we're going to make things easier by encouraging test takers to bring a friend with them when they test. And, we'll let their friend test for free! For any test given between June 1 and June 30, we'll administer another test (given at the same session) at no charge. Please let your friends and colleagues know about this great opportunity to join Mensa...with a friend!

The Greek Coin

By Ruth Minshull

I look at the ancient Greek coin my son gave me for my birthday some years ago, and I wonder where it's been. How many hands has it passed through in the 1600 years since its creation?

The coin is unusual, my son says, because of the owl on its reverse side. The obverse carries the more traditional head usually seen on the early Greek and Roman coins. The crown of laurel leaves suggests that it depicts a leader.

Perhaps it is the head of Alaric, king of the Visigoths, who invaded Greece in A.D. 396. Or, if the coin was already in existence, it may have been part of the plunder appropriated by Alaric's men. He himself may have carried it. Perhaps he used it to buy a fine piece of jewelry for his mistress.

Possibly the coin traveled to Rome where it paid the wages of a workman building the Basilica of St. Maria Maggiore.

Undoubtedly it has seen many turbulent times, since most of what people seemed to do in those days was build cathedrals and invade countries--grabbing territories which they passed back and forth among themselves.

Except for the religious structures, not much art survives from those early centuries. I suppose with all that saber rattling and rock hauling there was little time left for creative niceties.

The coin bears no date, and its shape is somewhat irregular because it was handmade. Still, it's appealing in the way of an imperfect work of art. This makes my coin even more meaningful to me. It is one creation that remains from that ancient culture.

I consider it a lucky piece. It has certainly remained relatively unharmed itself through the many centuries of conflict and strife. The only mar on its surface is a small round spot on the reverse where a plug was removed about 1500 years ago, to test for the coin's authenticity as silver. (Obviously counterfeiting perps were at work even then.)

Anyway, here is my coin, having outlived its makers and all the thousands of people who have traded it, stolen it, worked for it, cherished it, wasted it, killed for it, disdained it, hidden it, found it, lost it, bequeathed it, inherited it, slaved for it, cheated over it, donated it, won it or gambled it away.

And now, by the caprice of fate, it has found its way to me, and I wear it on a gold chain around my neck.

I am certain it is a talisman, whose magical charm will ward off harmful influences and bring me good fortune.

Cynics, I presume, would insist that good luck exists only in the mind of the believer.

Well, OK. I believe.

A Bit of Computer History

By Stan Cain

Computers have come a long way from what some say was the first true digital computer designed by Charles Babbage in the mid 1800s. Prior to that time "computers" referred to people who performed the laborious and error prone manual calculations required for engineering and navigational tables etc.

My involvement in computers and programming began when someone was needed to maintain an instrument control program for a solar telescope at the University of Hawaii on Maui in 1969. The recently acquired computer was a DEC (Digital Equipment Corp.) PDP-8 with 4k (4000 12 bit words) of core memory, a paper tape reader for input and a 10 character/second Teletype printer.

This was one of the first mini-computers. There was no operating system; just the dedicated control program, written in assembly language. The small amount of memory meant that the programmer had to be intimately involved with where each instruction and piece of data was stored in memory. This program had to be loaded into the computer from paper tape whenever it was turned on. First, however, a program to read paper tape had to be loaded into the computer by means of a series of toggle switches on the front panel!

This computer was initially used to control the sequencing of a flare patrol camera. During quiet times on the sun, a program would take photos at a rate of one every five minutes. When a significant event such as a solar flare occurred, the observer would type a request to up the rate.

Later, the program was modified to additionally control the operation of two coronagraphs on the same mounting. These instruments took photographs of the sun's corona and events such as prominences which are observed by covering the bright sun with an occulting disk and using filters to observe in a narrow spectral region.

Other instruments were subsequently added which required that data acquisition and analysis programs be squeezed into the system. Memory was upgraded to 8k and a 2.5 megabyte hard disk was installed in an effort to keep up with the increased demands. When I left this position, the old PDP-8 was being replaced with a DEC VAX -11/45 system which was faster and had much more memory - a preview of the future of computing.

Puns from A to Z

From Shel Horowitz

FOR THOSE WHO ENJOY LANGUAGE (or Severe Distortions, thereof)

- A A man's home is his castle, in a manor of speaking.
- B Dijon vu - the same mustard as before.
- C A well behaved pet snake is a civil serpent.
- D Shotgun wedding: A case of wife or death.
- E Those who jump off a bridge in Paris must be in Seine
- F A man needs a mistress just to break the monogamy.
- G A hangover is the wrath of grapes!
- H Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?
- I Reading while sunbathing makes you well red.
- J When two egotists meet, it's an I for an I.
- K A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two tired.
- L Definition of a will: A dead give away.
- M Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.
- N She was engaged to a boyfriend with a wooden leg but broke it off.
- O A chicken crossing the road is poultry in motion.
- P If you don't pay your exorcist, you'll get repossessed.
- Q With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.
- R When a clock is hungry, it goes back four seconds.
- S You feel stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.
- T Local Area Network in Australia: the LAN down under.
- U Every calendar's days are numbered.
- V A lot of money is tainted - It taint yours and it taint mine.
- W Once you've seen one shopping center, you've seen a mall.
- X Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead-to-know basis.
- Y Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.
- Z Acupuncture is a jab well done.
