

Borealis

The Monthly Journal of Northern Michigan Mensa



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 Borealis
Northern Michigan Mensa

www.nmm.us.mensa.org

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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 15th 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:

nmmnewsletter@hotmail.com

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

ON THE COVER: Late Afternoon Sun in the Woodstaken in Presque Isle, Michigan, near Lake Huron's Albany Bay. Photo By John Porter.

Northern Michigan Mensa

December 2008 Calendar

BOOK CLUB - Saturday, 6 December 2008 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 December will be **Water for Elephants** by Sara Gruen, to be presented by Margaret Scott.

BRUNCH - Saturday, 13 December 2008 at 11:00 a.m.

We will meet at the Cottage Café, located at 420 Munson Avenue, Traverse City, in the Papa's Den, which is on the right as you enter the front door.

TGIF - Friday, 19 December 2008 at 5:30 p.m. - Note: 3rd Friday this month!

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

PETOSKEY AREA SUBGROUP

Jennifer Lapoint has said that she is trying to set up a meeting in the Petoskey area for the first week in December. For details, check the NMM web site or contact her at water375372000@yahoo.com.

Membership Renewal Deal!

Annual membership dues are scheduled to increase in the coming membership year to \$59. You can extend your Membership and save some money by renewing your membership at the current \$52 per year. You can have additional savings by renewing for a three or five year period or opt for a life membership and never worry about dues increases again! Check out the savings at www.us.mensa.org/renew or call 888-294-8035 during business hours.

Member News

Happy December Birthday

- 8 Stanley D Cain
- 11 Robert Hawley
J A Thorne
- 13 Roland W Schalow Jr.
- 14 Norma Hastings Feeley
- 16 L Schrock-Taylor
- 31 Brian S Kelley

Mensa Membership Milestones

(Years of continuous Membership)

- 26 Years Patricia Lynne Paternel
- 20 Years Peter J Turkus
- 14 Years Mark L Banker
- 7 Years Wendy Jane Barker
- 2 Years Vicki L Carpenter
- 1 Year MD Stevenson

Welcome to Northern Michigan Mensa

Stefan Dragicevic

2008 Statistics

	AML	NMM
Total membership	52263	99
New and reinstating membership	554	9
Offers of membership	800	0
New members since April 2008	2204	3
Reinstating members since April 2008	1936	6

Membership directory information is based on data from American Mensa records as of 10/31/2008. If you would like to change the privacy releases on file, go to www.us.mensa.org and click on "Member Login". Then click on "Profile Update" and "PDQ Update".

The LocSec's Login

By Jack Schultz
NMM LocSec

THE WINTER ABOUNDS IN OPPORTUNITIES

As I sit here trying to think of something meaningful to share with you, the white stuff is steadily coming down and beginning to pile up on the ground. It makes me think I'd better get my cross-country skis out from their hiding place in my garage. I've already cranked up my snowthrower just to make sure it will be ready when the snow gets ankle deep. We're lucky, living in northern Michigan, because we don't usually get too much of the slush and messy conditions that occur farther south. Of course, we always have thaws during the winter, but those only make us realize how good we have it when compared with our friends and family who live out of the snow belt. We already know that the pace of life up north is somewhat slower than it is south of here, and we're fortunate to have plenty of opportunities to enjoy that slower pace all during the year. The winter, however, is perhaps the best time to appreciate fully what some of those special amenities are.

Though no one showed up on November 16 for our scheduled hike along the Boardman River and Keystone Pond on the south side of Traverse City, I still enjoyed my solo hike in that area where controversy still exists about whether the dams on the Boardman will be taken out or will be restored to productive use as sources of hydro-power. While a fast-flowing river now provides chances for canoeists, kayakers, and inner tube riders to enjoy more of the Boardman, the tranquility of still water is greatly diminished and waterfowl have less open water on which to land and search for food.

Many of our communities in northern Michigan have rich opportunities for enjoyment of the fine arts, including drama, comedy, dance, music, and the visual arts. Groups of local artists, as well as soloists, can be found performing regularly, whether it be in concert halls, high school auditoriums, bookstores, or in bars; and many of these groups travel from place to place as well. Don't miss out on spending some time enjoying these sources of entertainment during the winter months. Of course, visits to your local library can always provide enjoyment.

My words of encouragement wouldn't be complete if I didn't emphasize, as is my wont, the wonderful places we can explore in the winter on foot, on snowshoes, or on skis. Many groomed trails can be found in the Michigan state parks and forests as well as in the national forests and recreation areas. If you're like me, however, you may simply like to get out in the woods where there aren't any trails. I like breaking trail through untrammelled snow. For those

living in the western half of our territory, perhaps one of the finest places to spend winter outdoors is Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore. Not only are there many fine trails, some used heavily and others barely known, but the scenery can hardly be beat. The National Park Service even makes snowshoes available at no cost.

REMINDERS ABOUT UPCOMING EVENTS

Some of you have noticed that Bobbi Walker, our new Publicity Coordinator, has been sending out email messages to remind you of events and activities that are coming up. Anyone who doesn't currently use email is missing out on this "service" we're trying to provide. It's all too easy to set aside Borealis and forget about what events are on the calendar, so we hope you appreciate Bobbi's efforts. I know I do.

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU'D LIKE TO DO

Trying to provide programs and activities that are of interest to many of our members is a challenge faced by all Mensa local groups, and ours is certainly no exception. I'm on a list of Local Secretaries where we share the good and the bad about how it is to try to "manage" a local group, so occasionally a good idea gets passed around. Over the years, we've tried many different things and a few of them, at least for a while, have worked out well. One of these was games nights and potluck suppers held in the homes of members. We'd like to try some of these again because it has been a few years since this was done on a regular basis. All it takes is someone to volunteer his or her home (or a meeting room if you live in a "community" that has one). So, please consider this an invitation for you to come forward and let us know of your interest in playing host. It really isn't a big deal, and you don't have to live in a mansion to be able to accommodate 10, 15, 20, or a few more people.

OUR NOVEMBER GUEST SPEAKER

Those who attended the brunch in Traverse City in November had the opportunity to enjoy a rather unique presentation by a teacher and author (one and the same). Jeff Vande Zande, who teaches courses in the English Department at Delta College (near Midland, Bay City, and Saginaw), gave us some good ideas about how to write short fiction. The points he made, distilled into one fairly brief presentation, should have stimulated those who have a hankering to set pen to paper. Jeff also read some poems and offered some interpretations of them. He has written a novel (*Into the Desperate Country*) which will be read by members of our book club (Bibliomansans) during 2009. The book sells for \$15.00 through Jeff's publisher, but he will sell autographed copies directly to our members for \$10.00. The books cost him \$9.00 each from the publisher, so he doesn't make much on each book sold. He has also

published a collection of short stories as well as another book containing his poems. You can contact Jeff directly at: jcvandez@delta.edu

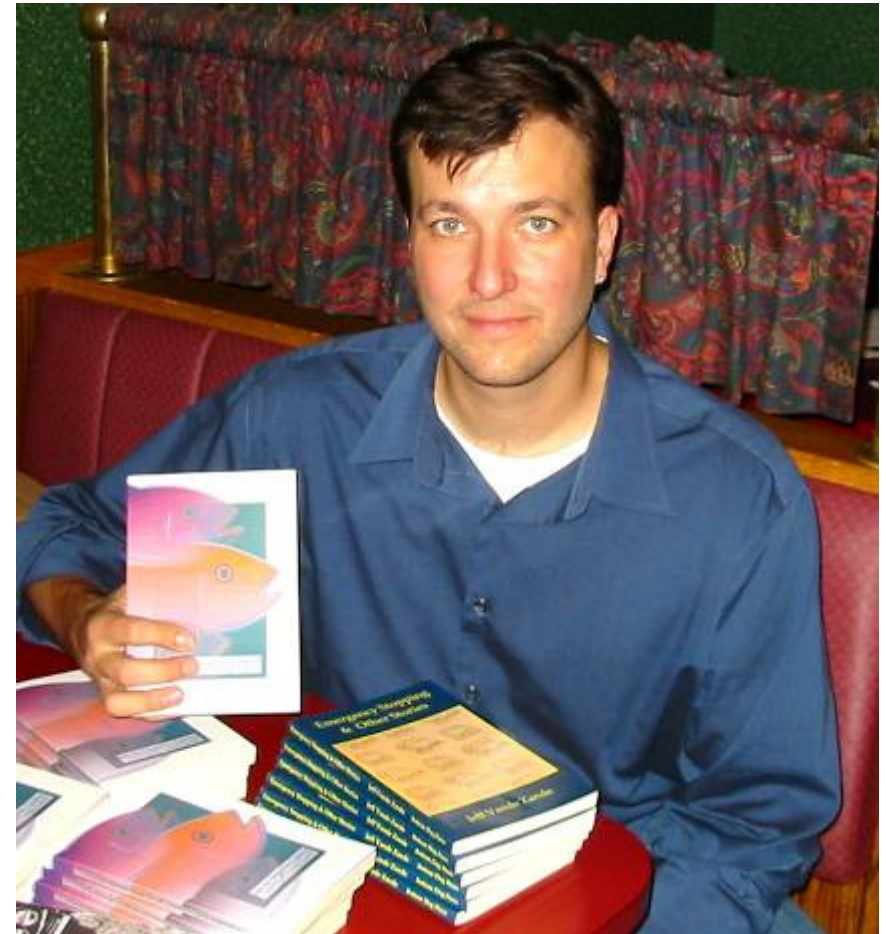
REGULAR WINTER EVENTS

In Traverse City, we will have brunches on the 2nd Saturday of each month all during the winter, and the 4th Friday our usual TGIF will be held in the lower level of Horizon Books in downtown, beginning at 5:30 p.m.* The Petoskey Area group will also hold events through the winter. Please contact Jennifer LaPoint for information about those if you aren't already on her mailing list. Her email address is: water375372000@yahoo.com

* In December 2008 , TGIF will be held on the 19th because of Christmas.



The Boardman river near Keystone Pond. Photo by Jack Schultz.



Jeff Vande Zande from Delta College displays his book; *Into the Desperate Country* at the November brunch. Photo by Stan Cain.

THE MOUNTAIN

By Ruth Minshull

It was the second day of my trip from Michigan to Virginia. I left the turnpike, to take a blacktop road that wove through rural Pennsylvania. There was no traffic, no houses, no sign of life in this crisp early morning. A fine mist dusted the windshield and spread a soft veil over the beautiful countryside. I hummed to myself as I began the climb up a gigantic mountain. *Not long now. I should be there for lunch.*

Without warning, the car skidded sideways. I carefully moved the wheel to correct it. Nothing happened. I had no control of my car! *What's wrong?* Then I realized that the temperature had dropped at this higher elevation, and the road was coated with treacherous, black ice.

I was young, not an experienced driver, but I recited the litany of cautions I'd learned: no brakes; no acceleration; no sharp turns. I couldn't decelerate either, or I'd slide backwards down the twisting road.

Clinging to the wheel, I kept the gas pedal pressure constant and gently tried to straighten the car. Although I could turn somewhat, I slid sideways helplessly.

On the right a low guardrail stood between me and a sheer drop to a forest of 40-foot pine trees.

I veered between the blur of the tree tops and the unyielding sheet of rock on my left. I knew I must gain control before I went plunging down the precipice or smashing into the mountainside.

I gently eased the wheel over. After several agonizing minutes, still slipping and sliding--half of the time crosswise of the road--I managed to get both left tires onto the narrow band of gravel between the blacktop and the sheer rock wall. The rough surface gave me a little traction, just enough to stop the treacherous sliding and enable me to inch slowly upward. Hugging the wrong side of the road, I maneuvered around a series of switchback curves, praying that no other vehicle would be coming down.

An eternity passed before I reached the top. An ancient gas station stood on the right, a shabby restaurant across the way. I pulled off and, on wobbly legs, shuffled across the icy road. Two cars and four eighteen-wheelers stood in front of the restaurant.

As I sat down, the waitress approached. "Some coffee, hon?" I nodded, unable to speak. My hand was shaking too much to hold the cup. *Calm down. It's over.* Using both hands, I slowly raised the cup and sipped.

The only other customers--four truck drivers--sat at a long table, quietly discussing their own difficulties getting up the mountain. Apparently they had all arrived just minutes earlier, coming from the other side. One of them asked, "Anyone see Jake? He was just getting into his rig when I left the motel."

"Yeah, I did," another replied. "He was right behind me. And he was in a lot of trouble. Sliding all over the road."

"Oh, oh. What's he carrying? Anybody know?"

"Nothing. He's empty."

"Oh, God, no!"

A third man spoke. "The only thing worse than that would be driving a car on this stuff."

My hands began to shake again.

It was nearly an hour before I could ask the waitress to bring me oatmeal and toast. Every few minutes one of the men went outside to check for any sign of Jake. The restaurant was quiet. I had a book in my purse, but I didn't consider reading. Everyone, including me, was preoccupied by thoughts of the missing driver.

Another hour dragged by. Again, one of the men stepped outside. He quickly returned shouting, "I hear him! He's coming!" A loud cheer went up from the truckers, the waitress and the cook. I sighed with relief.

Soon I could hear the groan of a laboring engine. From the window, one of the men said, "He's coming up on the inside." Finally the truck moved slowly into the parking area and the driver emerged. I waited eagerly for his entrance, anticipating cheers, handshakes, backslapping--perhaps a few hugs. I myself wanted to cry, laugh and hug him too.

The door opened and Jake entered--a nice-looking fellow in his mid-forties. Dark hair plastered to his damp head, his jacket was soaked, his eyes haunted.

No one moved. No one spoke. Finally one of the truckers drawled, "What are you? A fair-weather driver?" The others laughed, and Jake managed a thin smile as he dropped into a chair.

One of the men asked, "Anyone catch the game last night?"

"Yah, I did," another answered. A lively discussion ensued. Everyone ignored Jake except the waitress, who brought him coffee. He stared at it for a minute, then slowly picked it up. With both hands.

Regional Vice Chair

RVC 3 Thoughts Autumn '08 By Dave Swanka

Hello all! I'm freshly returned from the AMC meeting held in Arlington, Texas. Driving through Kentucky and Tennessee this time in the fall really was memorable with the hillsides ablaze with color. My trip took me to Monroe and Shreveport, Louisiana, then to the Dallas-Ft. Worth area, with a return layover in Carbondale, Illinois. I love the variety of sites one experiences driving across our nation. It is so easy today to make time the priority and jump on a plane so the pleasure of driving is often overlooked. That's a shame because life is made up of all the cumulative experiences we have, and being in a hurry really limits those.

The AMC meeting was a joint planning session/board meeting. The AMC (I really have to work on eliminating Mensa jargon like this; we are a board of directors plain and simple) is working on establishing a strategic vision to carry us into the near and mid-future in an orderly fashion. Traditionally, too much time and energy has been spent on putting out brush fires and refining Mensa jargon. A shift in focus to long-term goals should bring about some meaningful accomplishments. Some of these will be noticeable such as improving Mensa's governance structure and methods, emphasizing Mensa's successful programs, increasing community projects, and being more responsive to the membership's expectations. Some will be intangible like increasing public awareness and respect for Mensa and Mensans, becoming more accepted in society as a solidly mainstream organization, instead of being perceived as a bunch of inept nerds and geeks, and ultimately making a positive contribution to society as a whole. These are all obtainable goals provided that your board vigorously moves forward with focus and well-directed energy to accomplish them.

The board meeting itself was low key, where straightforward routine topics were at hand. I'll give a brief recapitulation of what occurred, but please keep in mind that this is an unofficial version. The official one is not yet released. I will comment where I think it will be useful, but again these are my opinions.

In the consent agenda, motion 01.04 concerning expelled or suspended members attending events was passed. When the National Hearings Committee has a hearing, and their recommendation is considered and approved by the board of directors (AMC), and a member is suspended or expelled, we wanted it known

that at that point we are playing for keeps. Mensa does not spend hundreds of man hours and thousands of dollars in hearings and deliberations just to have that offender prance into a Mensa event as a guest. Not wanted is not wanted. This may sound like a harsh decision, but allowing one to go on as though nothing happened mocks and belittles us all. Of course, what one does in their private home as a host is up to them, and that is the exception in this motion.

Under new business, the motion (06) renewals and joining dates was withdrawn in large part to the uproar and indignation of present life members. Your input as a member really does count.

Motion 07 1 and 2 Hearings Process Review... was passed. While certainly not a perfect product (none ever will be), this is a measurable improvement over the existing process in terms of fairness and objectivity. I personally lean towards establishing a single national hearings officer whose findings and recommendations are reviewed by the board. The incredible cost of holding national hearings under the current system (which is not perceived as being especially fair or unbiased) screams for a radical overhaul. Who knows what the future will hold.

08 Executive Session - can't talk about this one. I will attempt to clarify and dispel erroneous perceptions of what happens during these. There are no cloak and dagger episodes where the villainous AMC and their evil Chairempereor work on new ways to enslave and impoverish the membership. Seriously, what is discussed are legal matters whose attorney-client privileges must be maintained. That is difficult enough to do with twenty-one members let alone depending on the discretion of 50,000 plus members. It's a matter of practicality and reality. Personnel matters are sometimes discussed as well - AMC members, appointees, and national staff. While I personally favor opening up some of these personnel discussions to open session, there are those current, and undoubtedly future, board members who are a bit timid and find discussing such matters face-to-face intimidating and unpleasant. Keeping in mind that we (the directors) are unpaid volunteers, making the job less daunting by a little give-and-take is not unreasonable. For now, these matters are discussed in closed session. That's all there is to it.

Motion 10 Descriptive text for AMC Motions was tabled until the March '09 meeting. It enjoys support but needs more refinement.

Motion 11 Definition of Calumny was defeated. I don't consider myself or my colleagues up to Mr. Daniel Webster when it comes to definitions. The degree on how calumny affects Mensa or the person(s) calumniated was felt to be best

left up to the hearings committee in the course of their deliberations. Reasonable enough.

Motion 12 Disbarment of members by local groups was tabled to the membership committee for further evaluation. The concept of this motion enjoys enormous (but not unanimous) support. For any of us who have been local officers, or those of you who have ever felt victimized by inappropriate behavior from another member, you should appreciate this effort. This motion addresses two main points. The first is that most groups have a disruptive or seriously unpleasant member(s) who feel they can behave any way they choose anytime they choose. Lodging formal complaints with the RVC, National Ombudsman, or National Hearings Committee is often overkill. The second is that local groups are clamoring for more autonomy and empowerment in governing their groups as they think best. This gives them a tool to use at the local level with built-in safeguards so that it isn't abused. It doesn't have to be used, it's just a tool to be used. I strongly urge all of you to support this one.

Motion 13 Election of the AMC Chairman passed. This simply leveled the playing field between nomination committee-endorsed candidates and petition candidates. This probably should have been done several years ago.

Well, that wraps it up. As you see, nothing earth-shattering, but important nonetheless. Please remember that you sharing your ideas and expectations really makes a difference. Let me, or any of your national board members, know your concerns and suggestions to make Mensa a better organization for us all. Thanks for your continued support and have a wonderful holiday season.

Always yours in Mensa,

Dave Swanka

Get a Job!

American Mensa's CareerLink

From: Paige Faulkner, PaigeF@americanmensa.org

American Mensa announces its newest member benefit - a Web-based career center that connects job seekers with prospective employers. Don't get lost on the commercial job boards; American Mensa's CareerLink is tailored just for you. Just visit <http://www.careerlink.us.mensa.org> and get started on your job search!

As a job seeker, you can:

- * Manage your job search
- * Access hundreds of corporate job postings
- * Post an anonymous résumé
- * Be notified by email of new opportunities that match your search criteria
- * Take advantage of career coaching in areas including résumé development, salary negotiation and more
- * Use the free "Ask the Expert" service
- * Access the free library of content offering career advice with topics ranging from interviewing tips to finding the job that best fits you

As an employer, you can:

- * Quickly post job openings
- * Manage your online recruiting efforts
- * Take advantage of advanced searching capabilities
- * Reach targeted and qualified candidates
- * Browse résumés for free

Powered by career services leader JobTarget, American Mensa's CareerLink distinguishes itself from generalist job boards in ways including:

- * a highly targeted focus on employment opportunities in certain sectors, locations and demographics;
- * anonymous résumé posting and job application enables seekers to stay connected to the employment market while maintaining full control over their confidential information;
- * access to industry-specific jobs - and top-quality candidates - often not seen on the commercial employment sites.

CareerLink is available to Mensa members and nonmembers alike. However, current members can post résumés and apply for jobs at no charge; they can also post job opportunities at discounted rates.