



# Borealis

*The Monthly Journal of Northern Michigan Mensa*



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**Borealis**

Northern Michigan Mensa

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Borealis, the newsletter of Northern Michigan Mensa (Region 3, Group 496), is published under the auspices of its Executive Committee.

The newsletter contains mandatory items; the rest of the content 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. Bad jokes are allowed. 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 that if a person submits material with a restriction that it be published "as is or not at all." That a person has written and submitted something to the newsletter is not, in itself, sufficient reason for its publication.

Submissions are welcome! Members of Northern Michigan Mensa may send their original writing submissions to Borealis.

Please do not send the work of others unless such submissions include permission and release of copyright from the author.

#### **Writing:**

1. Writing you submit may be edited for length and clarity, but not content. This is the default editorial assumption.
2. If you don't want your work to be edited at all, you may submit it for publication "as is or not at all." It will not be edited in any way. If published, a note will indicate that it is wholly the work of the author.
3. You may also submit work that is rough and needs major editing. If you have written something but don't have time to polish and edit it, you can still submit it and, at your request, we will give it extra help.

All writing and letters may be submitted by email as an attachment or as the message body itself. Typed pages and letters can be mailed.

#### **Photographs:**

Photographs and other artwork can be submitted via email in JPEG, PNG, GIF, WEBP, or other standard formats. Flat art or photographs can also be physically mailed, but please do not send originals. Please label each piece submitted with your name and address.

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## Announcements

### Meet RVC Lora Mitchell; Fall Meetup

Saturday, September 9, 2023, 1:00pm - 3:00pm

Come one, come all - NMMs, "plus ones," other Mensans, potential candidate Mensans. Have some fun and socialize; maybe even scheme up some ideas. Meet our Regional Vice Chair, Lora Mitchell, who will be driving all the way north just to meet us!

We'll colocate our event, piggybacking on the ice cream social at the East Bay Branch Library (of Traverse City Area District Libraries). "Free ice cream, live music with Jesse Jefferson, face painting by The Painted Lady, a used book sale, & more."

If you don't know NMMs by sight, just look for the Mensa flag.

East Bay Branch Library  
1989 Three Mile Rd.  
Traverse City, MI 49686  
(231) 922-2085

Besides the ice cream social, if members wish, we can head north a bit to the Traverse City State Park which offers day use. There will be other things going on in Traverse City that day also. Once we meet up we can decide.

Some web sites with more information:

<https://www.tadl.org/event/annual-ice-cream-social-0>

<https://www.traverseticker.com/calendar/2023/09/09/ice-cream-social/>

This is a chance for some of us to meet in person for the first time!

### Nominating Committee

Tuesday, September 19, 2023 (First meeting)

Tuesday, October 10, 2023 (Set candidate slate)

It's that time of the 2-year cycle; new officers need to be nominated. The current board can't serve on the nominating committee. Please contact Leo or another board member if you can help.

## Tidbits of History

On Sept. 5, 1698, Tsar Peter I of Russia instituted a tax on beards. In 1697, Peter began a trip across Europe known as the Great Embassy hoping to win western countries as allies against the Ottoman Empire. Politically, the Embassy was a failure, as Peter failed to convince any of the countries. However, Peter saw the social and cultural advancements western Europe had made since the Middle Ages and vowed to westernize Russia. One of his changes was the Beard Tax. Peter saw that most Europeans went clean-shaven or sported a mustache. He hoped to convince his countrymen to follow the same style. Any man who wanted to retain his beard would pay a tax and receive a copper token as proof of payment. The tax was progressive. A peasant would pay two kopecks and the rate steadily rose to a hundred rubles for a high noble. Needless to say the tax was unpopular with many nobles and the orthodox clergy fighting it. Despite their protests, Peter's power was so extensive that the tax remained on the books until 1772.

On Sept. 18, 1873, Philadelphia bank Jay Cooke & Company declared bankruptcy, sparking the Panic of 1873 and a depression that lasted until 1877. The panic resulted from a financial bubble that burst, similar to the "Great Recession" of 2008. While the 2008 recession was largely due to investments in real estate, 1873's panic followed a collapse in railroad investments. After the American Civil War, the country experienced a boom in railroad building including the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869. However, by the early 1870s, railroad lines had reached a saturation point. There were simply not enough goods and passengers to fill all the railroad cars. Other factors in the economic decline included the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 and Boston Fire of 1872, the European Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, and the demonetization of silver in 1873. The investments necessary to fuel the railroad boom, the war, the fires, and the drop in silver demand all added pressure to overextended banks. Much like the collapse of Lehman Brothers symbolized the 2008 recession, the Cooke Bank collapse was a symptom, not the cause, of the 1873 collapse.

By John Devoti, a member of Delaware Valley Mensa. Reprinted with the writer's permission.

## Oppenheimer - The Movie

Christopher Nolan's film *Oppenheimer* is a major opus in his catalog.

J. Robert Oppenheimer, a New York native born to German immigrant parents and a graduate of Harvard University, shepherded the development of the atomic bomb for its deployments in New Mexico, and Japan.

We meet Oppenheimer in his college days; one of those geniuses who wander through life puzzled by any passion that cannot be expressed as an equation. He immerses himself in quantum physics & atomic fission.

During his work Oppenheimer talks with Einstein, who suggests to Oppenheimer the possibility that once the atom is split, the explosive chain reaction might not stop until the world is destroyed. And yet Oppenheimer pursues the Manhattan project to its end.

Oppenheimer is played by Cillian Murphy, whose piercing eyes and angled cheekbones give him a resemblance to Oppenheimer. Murphy syncs well with Nolan, as they worked together previously in *Dunkirk* (2017), *Inception* (2010), and in Nolan's *Dark Knight* trilogy (2005-2012).

Robert Downey Jr. looks a decade older and plays Lewis Strauss of the Atomic Energy Commission; Matt Damon gives us Gen. Leslie Groves, head of the Manhattan Project; Emily Blunt portrays Kitty, Oppenheimer's wife. Florence Pugh plays communist Jean Tatlock, a lover from his younger years, a remnant that will haunt him later.

Oppenheimer fears that the Nazis will build a bomb, and plans to deploy it in a metropolitan area because he truly believes that if people see what the bomb can do, they will forbid its future use. Nolan takes us back and forth in time, from Oppenheimer's education and his stint teaching at Berkeley, where he meets Tatlock, to his time spent in the Los Alamos desert preparing for the biggest dry run the world has ever known.

The witch hunt in the early 1950s ends his leadership role. From a combination born out of jealousy from his former colleagues and his honesty about communist friends, his security clearance is stripped, effectively ending his career in the government's nuclear development program. The movie does not tell us that in December 2022 the U.S. Department of Energy vacated that long-ago decision, thus posthumously restoring Oppenheimer's reputation.

By Linda Cocuzzi Richter, lindawriting1@gmail.com. Reprinted with the writer's permission from Braegen, the newsletter of East Central Ohio Mensa.

## Are Mensans Mean?

I've been your local secretary for going on two years. In that time, pretty much all my in-person interactions with NMMs and other Mensans, has been positive. I really can't remember a time when anyone I've interacted with, has offended me; nor can I recall ticking anyone off myself. (Tell me if you know of such an incident!)

But the famous problem that has been with us since at least the widespread adoption of email - that is, people say, write, and do bad things online - applies to Mensans as much to anyone else.

Due to my volunteer interests and my officer duties, I'm a member of a couple of communities on Mensa Connect. From time to time the level of discourse falls below standards I have come to accept, and try to practice myself. This fits, in a way, something that surprised me about Mensa's "Actions Still In Effect", which as you may know, is basically a list of all Mensa policies, rules, etc. To my surprise it lists, by name (!) some 10 people by name who have been expelled from Mensa. Ouch. Then of course we at NMM have an ombudsman, as does every local group. Why the need?

One Mensan suggested that possibly, along with high IQ goes a higher incidence of being "on the spectrum", so that we might have more people who are somewhat autistic. That doesn't really fit with my own experience. The rude Mensans seem otherwise normal.

Before I joined Mensa I was a Rotarian and I've toyed with forming a "Mensa/Rotary SIG". For now, I envision participating in self-selecting groups that follow the Rotary 4-Way Test:

"Of the things we say and do:

1. Is it the truth?
2. Is it fair to all concerned?
3. Will it build goodwill and better friendships?
4. Will it be beneficial to all concerned?"

Fortunately, the groups I belong to, like Bibliomansans, more or less follow these "best practices." Now if we could just clean up those snarky emails...

## August Book Report

Our August meeting was a good one. Our book was *When Evil Came to Good Hart* by Mardi Link. The presenter was Jim McDermott (who also serves as NMMs intrepid Membership Officer). Jim gave us a nice introduction and rundown of the book.

Everyone present had read the book (no, this doesn't always happen) and the discussion was rich and interesting. The book itself is not easy to read for a couple of reasons: for one, the subject matter, which has to do with a gruesome murder of a family; and for another, the events described occurred decades ago. As the book itself states, if this had happened recently, the various forensic tools now available, would probably have identified the killer. As it was, no one has ever been charged with the crime. Though Bibliomansans figured we "knew who it had to be." You don't need to be a Mensan to come to this conclusion; Mardi Link lays it right out there in black and white.

Mardi Link specializes in writing true stories about northern Michigan, and she does a good job of:

- laying out the details/sticking to the facts,
- "inhabiting" the minds of the various characters, and
- producing a work that's enjoyable to read.

This is the second of Mardi Link's books that the Bibliomansans have read and discussed in the past couple of years. We've enjoyed it and hope you can join us. You don't need to be from northern Michigan - "any Mensan is a Bibliomansan".

Our next meeting will be on September 6 when we'll have another "in-between" meeting, in which we discuss various relevant topics of interest to Bibliomansans. If you would like to participate, you are welcome. See the NMM website or contact Sherry McNamara for more information.

## Building a Proctor Crew - The Ongoing Saga

Yes, the saga is “ongoing” but progress is being made. Your erstwhile correspondent, that is I, Leo Hesting, is still at this moment a (mere) proctor-in-training. However, we are one step closer to having proctors within NMM; as I write this, the final paperwork has gone in to the Mensa National Office. I finally was able to proctor a Mensa Admission Test under the supervision of another Mensa Proctor, fulfilling the final requirement.

At present, any person interested in joining Mensa and searching for Mensa Admissions Tests given in the state of Michigan, will find that they are offered only in the Ann Arbor area. (That is where I had to go.) That’s kind of discouraging; also it makes our NMM look lame.

The process of actually proctoring, was both interesting, and also routine, involving long minutes of deadly dullness. The dullness comes from the fact that for some 3, 5, 7, 10, or 12 minutes, you’re walking around a small room, silently, keeping an eye on test-takers. It was interesting ‘cause it was nice seeing 6 eager candidate Mensans of all races, genders, types, etc. (OK, maybe not “all”, strictly speaking, but with a sample size of just 6 you gotta grant some slack.)

Far more intriguing to me was that I caught one candidate cheating! The details of this, and how it got resolved, are not to be put in writing, for various reasons. If you’d like to hear all about it, come join us at our get-together on Saturday, September 9 from 1:00 to 3:00. See the announcements on page 1 of this issue.

## Report from the ISIR Annual Conference

Some of you’ve told me you don’t want to be part of a Mensa that’s “just a social club for smart people.” Others have told me just the opposite - that this is why you belong to Mensa. Good news: we can do both. Mensa’s first stated purpose begins “to identify and foster human intelligence”; the third purpose mentions a “stimulating intellectual and social environment for (us Mensans).

One way of doing both: an effort to support high-IQ youth - meaning people in their teens, 20s, and 30s - in northern Michigan. To support them you first have to identify them, which means testing.

We can’t get every young person in Michigan to sign up for a Mensa Admission Test (MAT), but there are hundreds of other tests. None of them quite fit the bill. I want a testing instrument to be:

- cheap, or ideally, free;
- decently correlative with other assessment measures e.g. WAIS;
- cheat-proof;
- “good enough” to spot high-IQ folks for further testing, and
- fun.

The idea is to screen young folks with a “quick but good” test, identify the ones likely to qualify as Mensans, and then bring them in using the usual, formal, official Mensa procedures and instrument. With no intent to avoid or compete with existing procedures.

Intelligence testing is a complex field complete with booby traps. It wouldn’t do, to go out there uninformed; you need knowledge.

To acquire some, and to make contacts, I attended this year’s convention of the International Society for Intelligence Research or ISIR. It’s a meeting of the top intelligence researchers from all over the world. 4 days of listening to presentations, reading papers, catching up on the very latest information about intelligence.

The result was a great success. I found an excellent, free (as in open-source) IQ test. I connected with people eager to help. And I met people from the other high-IQ societies; folks (a lot) smarter than us mere Mensans.

## Happy September Birthday!

Susan Pitzer	01-Sept
James McDermott	02-Sept
Thomas Irish	04-Sept
Stephen Quick	12-Sept
Richard Warden	18-Sept
Howard Konetchy	18-Sept
John Schultz	22-Sept
Carola Novarro	22-Sept
Abby Hayes	23-Sept

## Mensa Membership Milestones (Years of continuous Membership)

John Phelps	1
Suzanne Priddle-Luck	15
Harold Kranick	20
Aaron Stander	25
Michael Lancashire	36

## Call for Service

Elections are coming up, membership turns over, needs arise, new initiatives get proposed. All these things create a need for volunteers. Ours is a small group compared to big-city groups and that makes for a higher percentage of NMM officers, co-ordinators, etc.

Contact Jim McDermott for more information, or to help.

## Elected Members

Local Secretary	Leo Hesting	231-465-5111	leo@us10.org
Deputy LocSec	Heather Hollick	919-360-1532	heather@heatherhollick.com
Treasurer	John Porter	231-499-9662	porterjm17@gmail.com
At-Large	Jaeger Griswold	313-690-4867	jaegergriz@peoplepc.com
At-Large	Seeking volunteer		

## Appointed Members

Membership	Jim McDermott	231-943-7792	jhmcdermott@yahoo.com
Ombudsman	Josh Ockert	231-288-0125	lee.ockert@gmail.com
Scholarship	Seeking volunteer		
SIGHT	Melissa Rennie	231-889-4198	renmeij@yahoo.com
Financial Overseer	Sherry McNamara	231-313-2769	sherrymcnamara@hotmail.com
Bibliomensans	Sherry McNamara	231-313-2769	sherrymcnamara@hotmail.com
Newsletter Editor	H. Gruenberg-Seger	231-932-9501	britajax@gmail.com
Graphics Editor	- Seeking volunteers		
Program Coordinator	- Seeking volunteers		
Publications Officer Pro Tempore	- Leo Hesting		
Website & Communications Coordinator	- Seeking volunteers		
Testing Coordinator, Proctor, Proctor Coordinator	- Seeking volunteers		
Regional Vice Chair	Lora Mitchell	614-450-0170	rvc3@us.mensa.org

Check out our website: [www.nmm.us.mensa.org](http://www.nmm.us.mensa.org)

NMM general message #: (231) 480-1488

On the cover: Amino acid crystals  
by John Hart, [hart3d.com](http://hart3d.com)