

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Event Calendar	in- sert
Games and Wine Tasting	Here 1
Greensboro Coordina- tor's column	Here 1
MEditor's Column	Here 1
A Labor of Apathy	2
Celebrate Confucius Birthday — LG news	3
Chinese Classes	3
Cordoba	4
Some names of Wines	4
Executive Committee Information	5
Contact Information	5
Back cover and Sub- mission information	6

Mblem

Games and Wine Tasting
Special RDU Games Night Notice
by David Skaar

We are going to do something slightly different with the September Games Night. Wine is already a popular topic of conversations, so in the slow period before the games really begin we will have an informal wine tasting. We will have a variety of wines to start with, and everyone who is interested is requested to bring a bottle of wine for public scrutiny. Notable or notorious vintages are a plus. We will be attempting to demystify the arcane process of wine tasting. Hopefully we can figure out the characteristics to look for in wine tasting, to distinguish the good from the not-so-good. Ever wondered what the differences are between Syrah and Cabernet, or Chardonnay and Riesling? Does price or a big name winery really matter? Is there anything really magical about France and California, and how does Australia rate? What are the real differences between wine in a box and wine in a bottle? Are reds with "R"s in the name better, and are animals on the label particularly indicative of quality? Cheese, crackers, and other appetizers will present, as well as non-alcoholic mixer options for those who just want to watch the show. We'll push the start time up a little bit to 6:30 or so, the location is 8649 Valley Brook Drive, Raleigh (detailed directions will be sent in the games night email, as usual). Any questions, direction clarifications, or attendance confirmations, please call or email: 919 846-4858, das3@acpub.duke.edu (David), or da-groen@aol.com (Dawn).

—Also see Some Wine Names on P.4 —
— Editor —

Greensboro Coordinator's
Corner
With Special Games Night Notice
by Ellen Muratori

This month's message announces that our Greensboro Games Night will be held on the FIFTH, or LAST Friday of the month, namely September 29.

July's Games Night was well attended, including two persons who were "trying us out". (I think we qualified.) Four of us started out with Spades (a card game). Then, as others came, we boarded the Mexican Train Dominoes. Laughter joined us in a noisy game of liar's dice, Perudo; and as more players joined us, we ended with two tables of two versions of Carcassone.

Tweaky Tuesday remains the mid-month connection to catch up on the latest news of interest to lively minds. Yes, that means ANY subject of conversation!

Saturday Supper, for you new members, is the ideal introduction to the diversity you'll find in a Mensa get-together. From Minor League Baseball tidbits, to Tee Shirt graphics, to the serious topic of reparations...whether for the victims of New World Slavery, of Native American replacement, of Japanese-American World War II Internment; or for victims of Nazi Holocaust, internecine conflicts of Eastern Europe, of Alexander's conquest from Greece to India. Where do reparations begin? Where do they end?

At a Mensa meeting many subjects prevail.

MEditor's Column The Editor

There are some special notices this Issue. First of all, please note that I will be out of town and ***Nina Ward is to edit the October issue***. So please send all entries to her. It is the chance for those who do

not like me and refuse to send your treasured article to me. Well, you have no excuse not to send your entry now. See inside back cover for contact info.

Last month, Let's Discuss took a summer recess. Well, it is back, thanks to Evie who hopped up to the helm.

Right above this column, well, maybe rows, please note that the RDU Games Night and Greensboro Games Night each is making a slight alteration in September. Exciting!! If you have not tried Games night yet, it is time to try one, or two. It is fun, not cut throat GAMES as you might think.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Really nothing interesting in this issue*
- *Well, been Apathetic?, — Page 2*
- *LG News? Page 3*
- *Cordoba Page 4*

Important NOTICE

Nina Ward is to be the editor for the ***October*** Issue of Mblem.

Please send all submissions for October Mblem to: Nina Ward <cn1533@coastalnet.com>, 5305 River Rd., Vanceboro 28586 or see the contact information on page 5.

A Labor of Apathy by David Skaar

I am actually trying to think ahead for my latest rambling article, as I'm usually writing for the current month, not the actual month of publication. Unfortunately, I may be thinking ahead, but I'm working several days behind, so this may miss the publication deadline. Business as usual.

Since this piece is theoretically for the September Mblem, I have been pondering on the subject of Labor Day. Labor Day is a pretty notable holiday – the end of summer and the barbeque season, the start of school, the change on the rule about white (whichever way it is, I don't remember), the Jerry Lewis Telethon, and the only real work holiday between July 4th and Thanksgiving. It's also an appropriate day to be born (happy birthday, Dawn).

Labor Day as an American holiday was established in the 1880s, based on the date of a parade held by the Knights of Labor. Given the growing strength of the socialist movement at the time, the workers needed to be acknowledged. Because the Haymarket riots happened in early May 1886, Grover Cleveland did not want Labor Day to be on May 1st, the day that had become standard in other countries, as the holiday might act as a reminder, and lead to reenactments. As a result, the American holiday is a day to rest, goof off, and not think about work, unlike May-day celebrations elsewhere, which center on political demonstrations, and parades involving tanks and missiles.

I am no student of economics, but I am a little familiar with the concept of "productive labor", which Adam Smith and Karl Marx certainly had a lot to say in dancing around the subject. What it seems to come down to, is that productive labor is the keystone of any economic system, and without it, everything will collapse. They spend a lot of time trying to determine what counts as productive labor and what doesn't, and there's a bit of gray area as to what counts. Theory says that if a company cuts costs by slashing its labor force, it may improve its balance sheet, and

keep its assets and value on paper, but without productive labor, it cannot increase its capital and it will get burned in the long run. Practice seems to support this. Managers, accountants, and lawyers may be essential for keeping a business operating, but as Dilbert points out (constantly), without the people doing the work, there is nothing to operate. McDonald's and Walmart may be humongous world-spanning empires, run by executives with the power to shake the earth to its foundations, but if they lose the minimum wage employees to flip burgers, stock shelves, and be the subject of jokes, there will be nothing left. The only power and influence remaining to the once mighty executives is whatever they can buy with the cash they had stashed away.

Referring to Dilbert again, in one of the business theory books Scott Adams wrote, he points out the need to pay attention to what the point of the business is, that is, the product. The product could be trash cans, vacuumed carpets, heart transplants, or Xerox copies. Whenever there is a meeting, or a decision to be made, it is important to reflect on the relation of your actions are to the product. If the meeting is about a dress code that will prevent employees on an assembly line from being blinded or crippled, and thus unable to work (or even worse, stop production while the accident is cleaned up) that would be directly related to the product. If the meeting is about a dress code to prevent a grouchy person in a filing room from being annoyed at how much shoulder someone else is showing, that would be less directly related to the product.

I'm not saying that a decision not directly related to the product is not important, it very well could be. For example, deciding to build a parking lot so that all the employees can park within five minutes of the front door should have nothing to do with how many Frisbees they can make. Everyone will still come in, work their regular shift, and Frisbees will be in the stores. But. If it doesn't take people half an hour to get from their car to their job (or back to their car to go home), they won't walk in the door already grouchy. They'll have one less

thing to complain about, they may be more attentive on the factory floor, and if they hear about another job that has a closer parking lot, they're less likely to leave. It's the little things that can make all the difference. (Remember the little things? If you've been reading my ramblings, you may recognize this theme.)

There are all sorts of petty little things that can screw up the productivity of productive labor. Casual comments can set off conversations and arguments that can continue for the rest of the day (or over many days, sometimes). I fear I was responsible for one such incident that was potentially disruptive to the productive labor of at least 10 people for several days. Since the subjects of the incident are relevant to both a Mensa publication and the overall theme of my columns (if they deserve to be called columns) I will offer them up for public pondering. I just happened, while waiting on a piece of equipment to finish its routine, to bring up a couple classic logic problems/brain teasers, that tend to be quite controversial and can take a long time to resolve to people's satisfactions.

1. If you have 30 random people in a room, and someone bets you that at least two people in that room have the same birthday, should you take the bet?
2. The classic Monty Hall puzzle. You are going to play a game that others have played before you, and others will play after you; the game is always played the same way. You will be shown three doors, and must choose one. One door has a prize behind it, the other two, nothing. Before revealing if your choice was correct, one of the two doors you didn't pick will be opened, and shown to be a loser. You will have the option of keeping your original choice, or switching to the other closed door. Are your odds better if you stay with your first choice, switch doors, or does it matter?

Both of these problems have a commonly given intuitive answer, which is, (Conti. to P. 3, Apathy)

(Conti. From P. 2, Apathy) of course wrong (there would be no point in posing them if the easy answer were correct). In the case of the Monty Hall problem, the intuitive answer is wrong from a strict probability viewpoint, because the game is structured with artificial constraints that Monty Hall would never use. I am not going to give the answers here. First, that would be too easy, you should think about them. Second, the explanations can be rather elaborate, I'm running out of time to write this, and a bad explanation is much worse than none at all. Third, many of you have probably heard these puzzles before, so you probably don't care about anything else I have to say. Fourth, if I don't give the answers now, I have a topic for next month's article.

You can easily find all sorts of answers and explanations to these puzzles online and in a variety of books, or if you wish to discuss them with me in

person, if you can find me, you can try. We could even turn this into a bit of a reader participation exercise. If people tell me they are interested in my explanations to these problems, I will write them up as best I can for next time. If people are sick of hearing about the Monty Hall problem, and tell me so, I'll come up with another odd topic for next month.

One more logic puzzle that ate up an afternoon's productive labor for a group of people, as a parting shot. I heard this one on Car Talk, and it's a good one. Again, some readers may know it already

Twenty people are being put in a prison run by a deranged warden. The warden gathers the twenty prisoners together on their first day and explains the rules. After today, all prisoners will be kept in isolated cells, will be allowed no contact with each other, and have no way to send any messages to each other.

Each day, one prisoner will be selected and taken to a certain room. The prisoners know nothing about the selection process, and might as well assume that it is random. In this room, there are two switches that don't do anything but go up or down. The prisoner must flip one switch once, and then leave. No one else will touch the switches but the prisoner of the day (so the deranged warden promises). Any day, the prisoner of the day can declare to the escorting guard that every prisoner has now visited the room with the switches. If he is right, all prisoners will be freed, if he is wrong, all prisoners will be executed (the warden is deranged, after all). The prisoners have only this opportunity to meet and determine a winning strategy. Assuming the game will be played by the rules, what strategy will definitely tell them that everyone has visited the room?

Celebrate Confucius Birth Day

LG News
by Shiangtai Tuan

Once some time ago when I used to live behind East Campus, in the region where intellectuals and pseudo-intellectuals congregate, I was invited to a birthday party for a famous philosopher. I thought it was a great idea. It is not only a good excuse for a party, but also a way to start some sort of conversation.

It will be a potluck. Bring your favorite dish to share. I will provide ice, some boxed wines, and limited amount of soft drink. BYOB, BYOF(riends), BYOM(usic) ... if you wish. RSVP preferred but not absolutely necessary.

Of course you have heard of Confucius. He was born September 28, 551 BCE and was named Kong Chiu, or in the Pin Yin system of pronunciation aid, Kong Qiu. People called him Kong Fu Zi meaning the Respected Gentleman Kong. The Western Sinologists gave him the pretentious, Latin like name for transliteration. I wonder how much objection he, a very humble person, would have given if he had known.

There were many writings attributed to him. However, scholars have summarized his philosophy in two words: "Ren" (kindness) and "Shu" (forgiveness.) A quotation from him, "Do not do to others what you do not want others do to you" (close translation), has often been compared to what Jesus said: "Do to others what you want others do to you" (paraphrasing). On the surface they sound similar but there is a strong difference. Confucius' quote is practical. It is possible and easier to refrain oneself to do thing which might hurt others. On the other hand, I would like people to do this and that for me, to give me this and that. It is not only hard, it might not be possible to do all, or even any, what you want

others do to you.

Date and time: 2006.9.16, the usual third Saturday but 6:30 PM, ***NOT*** the usual 7:30 for LG.

RSVP information, Place, and Directions: See back of calendar page.

Forecast of LGs this year: Halloween Down East in October, Cherie Ernest will lead a speaking/discussion session on stress reduction in November, Christmas in the Village in December.

Chinese Classes

by Shiangtai Tuan

This fall, I will be teaching two courses through the Continuing Learning Department of Duke University (684-6259). In the past, I have taught Chinese language, Chinese calligraphy and Chinese philosophy through the same department. Now that I am retired, it is time to pick it up again.

The language course will be a course with about 13 contact hours. It is not enough time to learn any language to read or even to speak much. However, it will give enough an introduction of what that language is

about, how it is different from English and how to approach it in case one is serious. (Starting Sept. 11)

When people grow up they pick up the thought of the environment knowingly or unknowingly. Tom Sawyer did not get a serious religious education but he went to Sunday school enough to know it is not only important but also prestigious to win a Bible which he did. He probably knew too, the saying "Do to your neighbors what you wish your neighbors do to you" from the Bible.

(Conti. To P.4, Classes)

Córdoba

by Ed Williams

Córdoba, an ancient city in Andalucía, southern Spain, is one of the most beautiful and remarkable cities I have ever visited. I went there several times during my posting of almost 4 years at the Embassy in Madrid. It is on the banks of the Guadalquivir, and the old Roman bridge over the river is still in use. The city, like most of Spain, fell to the Moorish invasion of 711, and quickly became a real metropolis. From the 8th to the early 11th centuries, Córdoba was one of two great cultural and religious centers of the Muslim world - the other being Baghdad. In the 900's, the Caliph - Al-Mansur - spread his power over almost all of Spain.

Perhaps the grandest sight in Córdoba is the Mezquita (the old mosque) which covers at least one large city block. As the Christian armies went about re-conquering Spain from the Muslims (and Córdoba was taken permanently in 1236), they would tear down the mosques and build, or rebuild, churches on the same site. (many of the mosques had been built on the sites of demolished Christian churches or cathedrals.) The Mezquita was too big to tear down, so they built a cathedral right in the middle of it! Where else does a Christian worshiper have to go through a mosque to get to his cathedral? Another great site is the Alcazar (fortress) of the Christian Kings, where Columbus went to see King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella and got permission to sail to the Indies.

Wandering around the city, I met some interesting people. In the old Jewish Quarter, I got into a conversation with a man who knew his way around very well. He showed me the Calle del Panuelo (Street of the Handkerchief) which, at one point, becomes so narrow that a handkerchief (actually a bandanna) can be stretched across from one side to the other, as he demonstrated. That evening, we went to a little restaurant which did not cater to tourists. In the back room, various entertainers would sing, dance or play music for tips. One of them was a guitarist whose name I can't remember, but I spoke to him (he was an American studying with a

Spanish master) and years later I heard of him as a well known player. My Spanish friend was an itinerant waiter, who, rather than working in the same place all year 'round, traveled around the country, working at restaurants where he was known. In the summer, he worked in the north, usually at San Sebastian. He would then move over to the coast at Valencia or Alicante. Then he would come to Córdoba, and finally all the way south to Malaga. Interesting guy. When I left a couple of days later, I gave him a ride down to Malaga.

Another Interesting fellow was one who, as I stood in wonderment at the entrance to the Mezquita, took me for an American and offered to explain to me about the mosque and the cathedral. He told me he lived on a hacienda, to the north of Córdoba, almost halfway to Ciudad Real. He said he was a Count, and his family had been living on this estate since Roman times. I forget his title as a Count, but I dimly recall that his family name was Aureliano. He told me that his family had had a connection to Emperor Hadrian (who was Spanish by birth), and that the Emperor had granted his ancestor the title of "Comes" (Count) plus a lot of land, on some of which his family still lived. He said the estate was not on a major road, nor a major river, nor was it near a town. So there was nothing to draw the attention of the Vandals, nor the Moors, nor the Spanish re-conquering armies. The family lived quietly and had no serious problems with anyone, through all the wars. He said there was still a building on the estate (part of his family home) which had been there (though partially restored) since Roman times and had a Roman mosaic floor. I asked whether there were others like himself, direct descendants of Romans, still living on their ancient estates. He said he knew of only two or three others. He invited me to come and visit. I wish I had been able to do so, but I had to meet the Ambassador in Malaga in a couple of days; so I took a rain check, which, I'm sorry to say, I never followed up on.

If you visit Spain, be sure to visit Córdoba, Granada, Sevilla and Toledo. You'll never forget these beautiful and historic places.

Some Names of wines

by Shiangtai Tuan

This is not to reveal the secret but to compliment David Skaar's article on wine tasting. Hope it helps.

In general, the German wine names are very systematic. First, they are classified by region and vintage year. Usually the Mosel wines are in green bottles and Rhine wines in brown bottles. The Franken wines are in flask like bottles. On the label, in addition to the region name, it gives first the town name and then the vineyard name. If no vineyard is mentioned it is a blend, the left over of different vineyards to be mixed together for markets. (Liebfraumilch, Schwarzkatzchen ... are in this category.) Since the grape is usually Riesling, it may not be mentioned. Next come the category. This is very important. The lowest class is the no name class. One level up is "kabinett". When the grow-

ers wait to harvest in the later part of the season the product is "spätlese." If the ripened bundle is picked separately it is "auslese." If individual ripened grape is picked separately, it is labeled "beerenauslese." In a good year, when the growers may risk and wait till the grapes over-ripen and dry up by a kind of fungus. The individually picked in this case will be "trockenbeerenauslese", the most expensive of them all, often costing three digits in price per bottle. Since it is rather sweet, some people actually prefer the less expensive "spätlese" or "auslese." The monks in Liebfraukirch (My Lady's church) by the Rhine used to plant the best grape and made the best wine. That is why the blend wine in Rhine is often called Liebfraumilch, what the monks named their wine. Many other blend wines have their origins too.

As for French wines, you have to go by region, grape type and vintage.

Conti. From P. 3, classes) Well, what would a person encounter or learn from the environment if he/she grew up in China. OK, I am not sure now, maybe what Chairman Mao said about doing anything you can to glorify the Communist party and nothing else. However, I can tell you what a kid would learn in a traditional family. And that is a mixture of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. This will be the main discussion of the course at the Continuing Learning. (Starting Sept. 19)