

Mblem

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *RVC says good-bye — Here*
- *New, something you can go and should go, do check out the social at Jan's — P 4*
- *Do not miss, the once a year Swimming pool party. Page 5*

It's been fun, but now it's time to pass the torch. Organizations like Mensa are living things that grow best when they are nurtured. Potential leaders need to be identified early and given a real voice in running Mensa. They bring new ideas and energy to an organization that could otherwise become stagnant.

There are three candidates running for the position of RVC5. They all bring different qualities to the table that can benefit Mensa. Each sincerely believes in making Mensa enjoyable for its members and that is the most important issue to me. Another thing I feel is necessary is the ability to work well with a group. If an officer doesn't work well with others, personal issues can substantially reduce his or her effectiveness. All three candidates are active in their local groups and have proven they can be effective.

Mensa is a social organization and the internecine fighting in the past that characterized many meetings at the local and national levels made serving as an officer a trial rather than a pleasure. Mensa is not about control, but about fellowship. (Kumbaya, kumbaya ...) Anyway, the past two years at the national level have been refreshing. AMC meetings were conducted professionally. The board members disagreed on many issues, but conducted themselves civilly and didn't resort to personal attacks. Posturing was minimized and this new attitude ultimately benefited the members. We truly are a kinder, gentler Mensa.

I met hundreds of members in person and online and learned from them all. In many cases the people I was warned about were the most helpful. Far from being troublemakers they were instead members that were concerned about the direction Mensa was taking. There were some important issues that I might have missed or misunderstood without their input. (That doesn't mean I necessarily agreed with them, but it helped me clarify the issues in my own mind.) This was so important that I want to encourage everyone to continue communicating your concerns to the new RVC. (Gently at first, there's a lot to learn in a very short time.)

Thank you for having given me the opportunity to serve you. I am very proud of the region, our local groups, and our members. You do fantastic things with very limited resources. Join me as I kick back in hospitality at the Birmingham AG and I'll buy you a (free) beer. It will be a great party celebrating Mensa in the Southeast and you won't want to miss it.

Wishing you all the best,

Mike

Editor's note: This RVC column for June came on May 17 when Mblem was finished and therefore only made it to the July issue, one month late as usual. The following is the cover letter. Mike has been a good RVC for us. I have always used his column, unedited, whenever he sent to us. We say good bye but let's stay in touch. --- Editor

Hello everyone,

This is my last column as RVC. I've attached it. (Word 2007) and pasted it below. As always feel free to use it, edit it or lose it, whichever fits your situation.

Thank you all for serving Mensa. Editor really is the hardest job in Mensa and may be the most important.

Mike

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 Numeralogist's
 field
 Day.

A Matter of Taste

David Skaar

Well, I was all set to write my brilliant exposé about the necessity to modern life of perfectly straight lines, and perfect circles, and how difficult it is make them, but, as Burns said, “best laid plans” etc. You see, what happened is that I heard an ad on the radio that just set me off. It was a Diet Pepsi ad, which proclaimed that “Studies show that 56% of people say that Diet Pepsi has ‘more cola taste’ than Diet Coke.” What an astoundingly uninformative statement.

There are problems with nearly every word in this claim. Studies. What kind of studies? Are there established criteria for rigorously conducted soft drink studies? And how many studies were there? Performed under what conditions? What were the controls? Maybe Diet Coke and Diet Pepsi taste different depending on ambient temperature, humidity, lighting (artificial or natural), or time of day. Men and women perceive tastes differently, as do younger and older people. Ethnicity may matter too. If you conduct a pre-study to determine what group(s) have the response you’re looking for, then the real study can be loaded up with them. Legitimacy of the study is a real issue, with no description of the study given. If a car company makes claims for performance or safety over a competing model, they have to reference the studies. Herbal supplements have to state that any claims they make about the benefits of the supplement have not been evaluated by the FDA. Drug companies have to put all that tiny print or fast talking about side effects into their ads. But a company that sells an addictive psychoactive product used on a daily basis by more people than take Viagra, Vioxx, and Avandia combined, can make any claim they want, with no references. (I checked the website too, they use the ‘more cola taste’ tagline, but give no background, either).

56% What was the study size? 50 people? 100? 1000? The null hypothesis, that each person’s choice is a random event (like a coin toss), says that with a sample size of 50, the odds of 56% heads (Diet Pepsi) is 7.8%, with 100 people, the odds are 4.0%. That’s getting into the range of significance, but not quite good enough for science. I’m assuming that the Pepsi Corp would get more than 100 people though. They also don’t say how the other 44% felt. Did they think that Diet Coke had more ‘cola taste’ than Diet Pepsi? Did some think that they had the same amount of taste, or did some say some other response, like, “Why are you wasting my time with this, these both taste like battery acid plus aspartame.” And what’s the error rate? A Gallup poll, which statistically samples to extrapolate the opinions of Americans at large gives a +/- error rate. I just made an assumption there, too. I said Americans. Maybe it wasn’t Americans who were polled, maybe it was an aboriginal tribe, the members of which have never tasted sodas, and the testers didn’t even get English translators.

“Say”? They “say” it has more cola taste. They don’t

think or believe that it has more cola taste, they just say that it does. Maybe Pepsi just pulled a few hundred people in off the street, and offered each person \$5 to say, “Diet Pepsi has more cola taste than Diet Coke”. Then 56% took them up on the offer, and the statement made in the commercial is technically true, without anyone ever even tasting the drink. It is more likely that they actually did taste both drinks, but what were the options? Maybe they were asked to choose one of two statements that more accurately described their tasting experience: 1) Diet Pepsi has more cola taste, or 2) Diet Coke has more cola taste, and I kill puppies because I want the terrorists to win.

And just what is ‘cola taste’? Was it defined for the participants, was it presented to them for them to interpret, or were they just asked to say what they thought about the two drinks in comparison, and 56% just happened to say the same thing? I couldn’t describe what real cola taste is, and I probably wouldn’t be able to identify it if I were to taste it. Also, why is the magic phrase, ‘cola taste’ and not ‘tastes better’? This makes me suspicious as to why they didn’t report 56% of people saying that Diet Pepsi ‘tastes better’ than Diet Coke. If they’re not reporting the simplest result, I have to think there’s a reason. Maybe ‘cola taste’ does not equal ‘good taste’. I can imagine saying that one drink tastes more ‘cola-y’ and another actually tastes better. You could also ask which drink tastes sweeter, and to a certain extent, the sweeter tastes better (that’s how Pepsi came out ahead in the original Pepsi challenge in the 80s, it is marginally sweeter), but a point will be reached that sweeter becomes disgusting. Another example, I like spicy food, and usually, if something is hotter, I’d like it more, but there are plenty of circumstances where I could honestly describe one dish as hotter, but another as better.

Then of course, there’s the question about whether any of this even matters. I’m not even sure why Coke and Pepsi even bother advertising themselves anymore. Everyone has tried them, and already knows what they taste like. Except for one brief experiment in the 80s (New Coke), the flavor formulas for Coke and Pepsi have not substantially changed in the last 100 years. What is supposed to be accomplished by telling us that one has more ‘cola taste’ this late in the game? No one really needs TV or radio ads to find out about Coke or Pepsi, as any store you walk into has them, and the vending machines and logos are everywhere. If you want to drink Coke or Pepsi, the ads probably won’t change your mind. Whichever one is cheaper in the grocery store is probably going to sell more. The only legitimate reason I would grant Coke and Pepsi to advertise is when they have new products they need to get into the public consciousness, or for whatever summer contest promotion they’re running this time. Personally, the strongest influence on me for soda purchases is the promotional cans or bottles with university logos or cartoon characters, or the potential to win stuff.

(Conti. To P. 3, Taste)

(conti. From P. 2, Taste)

That being said, I don't like either Coke or Pepsi, and not even because of sleazy corporate practices (which they both have). Neither of them tastes very good to me. The best reason I would have for buying Coke would be to clean off the battery terminals for my car. The closest I came to drinking Coke in the last several years was when I thought I had a kidney stone, and I'd been told that drinking a warm six-pack of Coke would flush the stone right out. I wound up not drinking the Coke. The payoff – possible relief from pain, was not worth the risk – the results of drinking six warm Cokes.

An interesting historical note about Coke and Pepsi. In the good old days of communism, Pepsi was very popular in eastern block countries, as Coke was viewed as the epitome of evil western capitalism. A Soviet general who worked with Eisenhower in the closing days of WWII was introduced to Coke, and got hooked. Eisenhower called some friends, and the Coca-Cola company bottled Coca-Cola in an unlabeled, communist friendly bottle with red stars on it. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the

backlash against the old order, Pepsi was irrevocably linked to the hated regimes, and Coke became more popular than Pepsi ever was, as the new symbol of the happy new order. And now, the trivia questions:

- 1 What infamous ingredient used to be in Coca-Cola, and was the source of its name?
- 2 What ingredient used to be in 7-UP, and was the reason for the 'UP' in the name?
- 3 Why did the French government ban Coca-Cola, for a time?
- 4 When public outcry convinced Coca-Cola to change back to "Classic Coke" from "New Coke", they didn't completely revert. What change stayed?
- 5 Which state is famous (among label reading geeks) for its high rebate on cans and bottles, and what is the rebate?
- 6 Who deliberately misinterpreted my comments on games from Mind Games (last month's Mblem), in public, to discredit me, and generally cause trouble?

(See answers on P. 6, "Taste")

People I Have Known — Richard Aldrich Ed Williams

Dick Aldrich had an unusual career, or maybe careers (plural). He was from one of those aristocratic Boston families - you know, "Here's to dear old Boston, home of the bean and the cod, where the Winthrops speak only to Cabots, and the Cabots speak only to God." Well, everybody speaks to the Aldriches. He graduated from Harvard (of course!) in 1925, and spent a couple of years in the banking world, but he was always drawn to the world of the theatre because of his experience in the Harvard Dramatic Club. So he became a Broadway theatre producer. He had little success at first, but finally found success with "Petticoat Fever". In 1940, he married Gertrude Lawrence, who was by then a real super-star in the musical theatre, performing in shows by Cole Porter, Noel Coward, Rodgers & Hammerstein, and - guess what? - eventually (after the War) by her then husband, Aldrich. He did a revival production of "Pygmalion" for her, and produced others, including "Caesar and Cleopatra". Sadly, she died of cancer in 1952.

Dick served as a US Navy officer during World War II (1941-45), serving overseas as a Commander. After the War, he returned to the stage, where he

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did productions both in New York at the National Theatre in Washington DC. In the Navy, he became friends with a fellow officer, another Boston aristocrat, John Davis Lodge, who had moved to Connecticut because Massachusetts was not big enough for his ambitions as well as those of his older brother, Henry Cabot Lodge. John Lodge was elected to Congress in 1946, and was later Governor of Connecticut. After he completed that term, he was named Ambassador to Spain by Pres. Eisenhower. Lodge took Aldrich with him to the Embassy in Madrid as Minister for Economic Affairs and Director of the US AID Mission, which was folded in with the Embassy's Economic and Commercial Section. And that is how I came to know him, beginning at the end of 1956, when I was transferred from the Embassy in London to Madrid.

Dick was my boss - not my immediate boss, because there were a couple of other layers between us - but still my boss. He had no experience in economic matters, nor in formal diplomacy. But he was a good administrator and a good diplomat. He took lessons in Spanish every day, and eventually came to speak it fairly well. He was a rather imposing figure, and Spanish officials thought of him as "one of them". A Spanish friend

of mine - a fairly senior official - told me that there was competition among his colleagues to sit near Dick at official luncheons and dinners. He lived up to his role as a senior advisor to Ambassador Lodge, which was valuable in serving US interests, because I don't believe any senior Spanish official (including Cabinet Ministers) ever turned down an invitation to attend a luncheon, dinner or reception at his home. This was at a time when the Embassy was working hard to get Spanish officials to persuade Franco to open Spain up, socially and economically, so as to be able to join Europe, from which they had become outcasts. Personally, I enjoyed his company, especially when he would privately tell a few of us little stories involving Amb. Lodge when they were in the Navy.

I was transferred from Madrid to Washington, DC in 1960, and Dick stayed on in Madrid until 1962, and then served as US AID Director in Morocco until 1965. After I left Madrid, I saw Dick only once more - when he came back to the US and resumed - to some degree - his theatre career. I saw him at a National Theatre production of one of his works in the late '60s. At the time, he was working on a movie production of his biography of Gertrude Lawrence, called "Star!". I think of Dick as a different kind of "star". He died in 1986, at the age of 83.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

Ellen Muratori

Just finished reading last month's issue of Mblem about how frustrating it is to be editor and not have any submissions from the members to fill the Mblem with. Well, I thought, YOURS TRULY puts in her two cents with the information concerning activities here in the Triad area.

So, wouldn't you know? I am sitting here at the keyboard, with nary a word to say! Maybe I've caught a bug - the writer's-block bug? Or maybe, the anti-contribution bug? I'll keep keying, and maybe something will strike. Here goes...

Attendance at events in the Triad are holding steady. Of course, the most avidly attended is Games Night. So many games and only the hours of one night in which to play them! Last month's meeting at Mandy McGehee (Thank you, Mandy!) brought out some of the Durham folks. Even Robert Jones, from Charlotte, came, rather late; but he had attended an astronomy club meeting and, knowing that we played till the wee hours of the night, he decided to come. Yep, he wasn't disappointed. It was 4:30am when we left our obliging, yet willing, hostess. (Honest, I thought it was only 2am!) A group of eight had played Mexican Train dominoes, while three played Scrabble. Then, at another table, Trivial Pursuit pursuers held forth loud enough so that the Dominoes players answered the questions - in whispers, of course.

Then came that loud Perudo. Lying and bluffing our way through the guessing of numbers...surely the shaking of the dice in the cups kept the neighbors awake! Three of us settled for a quiet game of Upwords out on the porch - these balmy Carolina nights allow for that.

While most were getting ready to leave, four of us joined in a game of Aw, Hell! Somehow my imagination conjured up scenes of the Wild West, with John Wayne and James Garner drawling, "Aw, hell" across some bar room floor.

Honestly, games night has become an arsenal of education for me. Can't imagine why more members don't request SEVERAL games nights a month. (The calendar editor will tape my mouth shut!)

So, you see, members, I started typing and the words just keep piling up. I haven't even touched upon the conversation at Wednesday lunches. You'll have to come to find out what goes on there.

Which brings me to McAlister's Deli (Saturday Supper). We seem to broach the subject of Triad Mensa's Future. Right now we're treading water. We're in the 90-day-Bylaws-approval time period. It's the rule. But, that doesn't keep us from making plans. Plans that will include participation of as many as volunteer their time. Just ask! Among the plans discussed were a Kick-Off celebration, a New Members welcome social, a Casino-night, pot-luck suppers, MahJong instruction evenings, a Swigger's SIG getting together at

An immersive study in the architectural, culinary, sociological, and psychological implications for state guest accommodations.

or

How Jan spent her fall vacation

or

8 days in jail

Jan Lewis

-- Saturday July 28th social at Jan's house --

Jail sucked, but it doesn't suck remotely as badly as I expected. In many ways, it was disturbingly cushy. That said, it was absolutely fascinating and full of very unexpected observations of human behavior. I have a lot to share.

— 8pm till 11-ish Jan's house —

Border collie, coffee, fruit juice provided. I even bought a couple of lawn chairs! Bring everything else you might want. Leave the angry and argumentative types at home. I'm in ... (personal data withheld on line)

Hooter's in Burlington, Greensboro, or Winston-Salem, and let's not forget, entries for the newsletter! We await the results of the national election to meet our new RVC and convince him that we need Grouphood at the AMC meeting in September. Keep your fingers crossed!

Well, I guess I've filled up a page, or so, for Mblem. For someone as creative, devoted and hard-working as our editor, there's got to be a solution. Let's see, we could hear from the diners at the "Let's Discuss" group what happens at their meeting. Could someone do a write-up for the brunches? We Mensans come to our meetings, then go about our ways, and tend not to share. How about it? Time to submit!

ADDENDUM:

It took two words for the wheels of change to go into motion. One of our new members joined us for Wednesday Lunch, jokingly referred to the location as "Cholesterol Alley", and the rest of us couldn't agree with him more! So it was decided that change was in order. Upon conferring with the contacts of the other locations, it was determined to place Greensboro lunches at the Cafeteria every Wednesday. The choice of food could be healthier (depending on one's choice). It would be less noisy. Tables could be more easily pushed together. For July, thus, we would begin meeting consistently at Friendly Center K & W Cafeteria.

Comments pro and con would be considered. Email me

...

Pool Party LG News Shiangtai Tuan

Quite a few years ago, our member Fran Greenstein opened her pool to us so we had a pool party and even a general membership meeting where we introduced newly elected officers, discussed items brought up by members, and even recruited a calendar editor and some other volunteers. Since then, Fran has been inviting us MENC members along with other of her friends to her pool once a year in July. Since it is a party for her friends who may or may not be Mensa members, please do not go around and ask people if they are Mensans or Mensa officers. Some non-M guests might not appreciate that.

In the mean while, enjoy a day's relaxation in the water. The pool will be open at 3 PM. Grill and dinner can be about 5 or 6, depending on what the guests prefer. You

are welcome to bring pool toys such as beach balls, floats ... She has a pool-net and we can play water valley ball if people are interested. Or, feel free to lounge around in the sun or in the shade. Family members and friends are welcome. There is a gas grill.

Please bring something to grill for yourself and please bring a side dish to share. BYOB. Since the hostess still has to provide set-up, kitty is as usual (\$3).

RSVP preferred. There are two puppies. So, be prepared if you are allergic (and be careful not to step on them).

RSVP: or MblemEd@menc.us.

Date: 2007.7.21, the third Saturday.

Time: Pool opens at 3:00 PM. Grill Dinner: 5 or 6.

Directions: See back of calendar page (of printed Mblem).

Recruit MEditor Column Shiangtai Tuan

Like the United States, there is no draft in MENC, only a volunteered army of 20. (See the list of names, ranks but no serial numbers at the back inside cover. In fact, there are more than 20 when we add the test proctors who work harder than some of the others.) Recruiting is also all year round, all times in the year. When I was in graduate school, some of us would go camping at the beach or in the mountains a few times a year. In a camping trip, all of us participated in setting up the tent, starting a fire, cooking some food. Nobody sat there just watching and waiting for meal time. It was not to split the labor but to share the fun. (You may quote me!) Isn't it the same with MENC? Through Mensa, we got to meet friends, post message on e-mail list, go to games nights, have dinners and brunches ... etc. We also need a few hands to set the tent and start the fire. Once I arrived early at the Maryland RG. I joined the hosts to cut veggies, unloading beer to the bathtub ... fun, fun, fun.

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An obvious thing to do in volunteering is to organize an event. It sounds hard to "organize" some thing but it is only a fancy word. Say, you want to go to dinner at a certain restaurant at a certain time and you would like to have some company. So, send a message to our announcement e-mail list to see if any one would meet you there. That was, in fact, how many of our monthly dinners and brunches started.

I used to like to have a few people having a pot-luck near Chinese New Years Day. Posting it in Mblem, it has become one of the "yearly events" on the calendar.

If you like games put a note in the Mblem or send a message to our e-mail list and you can host a games night. Since MENC covers such a large area, we can add a games night in Wilmington, one in New Bern, one in Fayetteville and we still cannot cover it all. If you like movies, you can set a day to go to the movie you want to see, either once a month or just one time only.

The volunteer I would like to see most is someone who would want to try a hand at editing this newsletter, Mblem. You can use any editing

software. Presently we are using MSPublisher. If you don't have it, MENC can buy a copy for you. (It is about \$150 worth which you get by volunteering!) I have made templates so you don't have to start from scratch. The calendar, detail of events, title page, contact sheet, mailing page are ready. You only have to move members' contributions to the blank pages. After my fussing about lately, we have seen an increase in contributions. So, even that is resolved. The best part is that you can develop your own creativity. As you can see, this is not my forte. You probably see a lot that can be improved. It is your chance to make a difference if you try your hand at editing. Who knows? You might win a prize for it. Besides, if you find out later that is not what you want to do, you can always pass it back. We have several people who can step in to take over. That was what happened to Gwen. After she volunteered for a few months she found out it was not her thing and that other duties were calling. So she passed it down to me. If you, someone who wants to test the water for a few months, decide not to continue, you can always pass it back to me.

PROCTORS' PODIUM

submitted by Ellen Muratori

Encourage a friend, or a member of your family, to take the Mensa Admission Test. (We expect to schedule a session in Apex and Greensboro in July.) During the month of July, AML is offering a TWO-for-the-price-of-ONE test processing fee (\$40). The following announcement has been sent to proctors, but applies to members also.

From Catherine Barney:

Taking the Mensa test can be a little scary for prospective members. Pre-test jitters - plus walking into the session alone - often equals no-shows.

During the month of July, we're going to make things easier for test takers by encouraging them to bring a friend with them when they test. And, we'll let their friend test for free! For any test given between July 1 and July 31, we'll administer another test (given at the same session) at no charge. Local groups will receive regular funding for both tests.

We'll be announcing the promotion to the public beginning July 1.

Please note, some people may have "\$5 off" coupons from the Spring Doubleheader promotion. Only 1 discount may be used at a time, so they may not bring a friend for free and use their \$5 off coupon together. The "Bring-A-Friend" discount applies to those prospects who bring another test-taker to the test session with them.

Best,
Catherine Barney
Marketing Director
American Mensa, Ltd.
MarketingDirector@AmericanMensa.org
www.us.mensa.org

Answers to Trivial Questions in "Taste", P. 3

- 1 Coca leaf extract, also the source of cocaine.
- 2 Lithium, used to treat manic-depression (now called bipolar disorder)
- 3 The popularity of Coke was hurting the sales of French wine.
- 4 Using high-fructose corn syrup as sweetener instead of cane sugar.
- 5 Michigan, 10 cents.
- 6 Ken

Breath

At Large Column
Shiangtai Tuan

In April, I tried to discuss health and exercise. The point was that most of the time when we hear exercise mentioned it is usually either nagging or someone tries to sell you some "new" machine or program. So, I suggested to you something you can do any time without having to spend a single cent. To refresh your memory, this was how my suggestion started, quote: "For the next two week after you read this article, do this. Hold your left hand in front of your chest palm towards you. Place your right hand inside of the left hand and push it out. Try to keep your left hand in place, i.e., exert strong resistance to the push by the right hand. ..." and went on to suggest what you do for the next four weeks. I did intend to continue next month but unfortunately, or, rather, fortunately, there were many contributions from the members. My way to edit is to honor members' contribution first. If there are still places to fill, I will do it. So, I had to let you wait for the last two months. Hope you have fun doing the four-part isometric, aerobic exercise, stretch and relaxation. I could add a little to each of the four parts every month and start an exercise column but I am not going to do that. Instead, as all intelligent readers would expect, I will simply state the principle and you do the extension, if you have not done that already.

In the forties and fifties, there was the new thing called "do-it-yourself". After years of hiring others to do things people discovered they could actually fix broken chairs or tables and, for the advanced "doers-it-selves", could do some plumbing or carpentry. People might be driven to places by a chauffeur but would fix a leak in the kitchen sink. We less spoiled people in poor places (that was before the term "third world" was invented) thought that was what we did anyway and had to laugh. Well, people in Taiwan were somewhat influenced. Exercise equipment was the in thing and it was expensive. One man became rather famous by running a radio program, teaching people how to build muscle without equipment (I would call it pumping iron without iron). The isometric part I told you about was taken from that. The principle is to work one muscle against another or against gravity and work

on as many muscles as you can think of. People with high IQ like you do not need anyone to tell you what the next exercise is. You would enjoy figuring it out yourself.

I also took the spirit of what the "Canadian Air Force" designed for those office bound service people. One starts on an easy program and advances to harder levels. The interesting point is that it takes only ten minutes every day and that it centers on only a few exercises such as sit-up, push up, etc. but making them harder (say, from half push up to pushing up so fast you can hit your chest in midair). So make what you do harder and more challenging with the advance of time.

Buddhists, Taoists, Martial Artists, Qi-Kong practitioners ... all start from breathing exercise. Some people say, "That is like meditation. It is some foreign religion and we hot blooded Christian Americans don't do that kind of thing." Well, Buddhists go to the bathroom. Do we not do it? Hindis breathe. Do we not do it? Breathe smoothly while clearing the mind; relaxing the muscles; helps the whole body cleanse itself. It benefits no matter if it is for a Buddhist, a Christian, a Martial artist or a swimmer and it is the best for a thinker like you.

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