

Mblem

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Words From Nick

The Atlanta RG is just around the corner. Peachtreat 2008 will be held from October 3rd through the 5th at the Holiday Inn Select Perimeter. The theme for the weekend is Memories Then and Now. I like the Mensa of Georgia website, and they have, once again, not let me down on RG communication. There is even a list of the currently confirmed speakers. Now if only I can get them to define "Championship Memory." All of the details can be found at www.georgia.us.mensa.org. I'll see you there.

The other major event on my horizon is the November AMC meeting at the home city of Arlington Texas. I am aware of several motions that will be discussed, but nothing that is Earth shattering. In addition to the typical AMC meeting stuff, this annual meeting has an extra day so that we can do some strategic planning. Tecker Consultants will meet with us and hopefully will assist in building a true strategic plan as was discussed at the AG. Towards that end, John Recht, RVC-8 and chair of the Planning committee, is soliciting suggestions from you for ideas on how to guide the future of this organization. Feel free to drop him a line at rvc8@us.mensa.org.

Nick Sanford
RVC5@us.mensa.org

See Mensa on "60 Minutes"

AML News

As many of you know, Lesley Stahl of "60 Minutes" attended the Annual Gathering and filmed for an up-coming story. At this time, we do not know the exact date the story will air, but her producers have indicated that it will be this fall. Watch the AMLNews-Flash e-list for updates. To sign up for AML NewsFlash, email amlnews-flash@list.us.mensa.org with the one word subject: subscribe.

Candidates for next year's AML Officers

AMLNews

The National Nominating committee of American Mensa has received application and met members who are interested in running for national and regional offices and made a slate of recommendation. I am listing the candidates for offices that are related to our group.

- Chair: Elissa Rudolph, Dave Swanka;
- First Vice Chair: Dan Burg, Cookie Bakke;
- Second Vice Chair: John Recht, Craig Thighe;
- Secretary: Judy Vasiliauskas, Scott Rainey, Guy Conti, Heather Poirier;
- Treasure: Cyndi Kuyper, Cary Chilson;
- RVC-5: Bertie Clarke, Nick Sanford.

AG News 2009

The 2009 Annual Gathering is to be at Pittsburgh, of course, the usual time of the year, July 1 – 5. The Co-Chairmen Linda Hathaway and Mary Lee Kemper said: "Our theme is AMFM, 'About Mensans for Mensans,' and we are going to make sure that everyone has a great time."

You may register on line at www.ag.us.mensa.org or send me, the Mblem editor, a self addressed envelope with return postage provided. I will be glad to make you a copy of the registration form.

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Lots of good stuff
- Go find out

Unpleasant Topics

David Skaar

Well, after a long hiatus from writing Mblem articles (mostly due to my laziness) I have returned. I thought I'd jump write in by mentioning two subjects sure to irritate and or offend people. I speak of course of George W. Bush and sewage treatment, so if the mention of either of these subjects puts you off, go ahead and skip down a few paragraphs. If you're still here, I'll disappoint you too, as I'm not going to say anything of actual substance about either topic. I am only going to refer to a story in the news a few months ago that links the two.

In San Francisco, a ballot initiative was proposed in April to rename a sewage treatment plant in honor of George W. Bush, to honor his legacy and the messes he's made. I will reserve comment on what I think about honoring the man's legacy, I'm just commenting on the wisdom of the plan. This is yet another example of an act attempting to make some kind of point, but completely missing what they're actually accomplishing. If you wish, take a moment and try to guess where I'm going with this.

Now, I know I'm not the only person to have made this connection, and you may have heard it before, but too bad, I'm going to say it again. Sewage treatment plants don't make messes, they clean them up. Without them, modern life would get very unpleasant very quickly. Second, what do the people working there think about this? Their personal political leanings aside, what do they think about an attempt to rename their workplace as an insult? Let's say, completely hypothetically, that I worked in a building that was named for a person that I had a low opinion of. There's not much I can do about it, and as the naming is meant as an honor for the person, it means that there is at least marginal respect for the building. My negative feelings about the honoree are an added benefit, as it merely reinforces the cluelessness of the powers-that-be. On the other hand, if my building is being named as an insult, that gives me a pretty good idea of what the powers think of my work.

This example is along the lines of the law of unintended consequences. All of history seems to be based on this law, if you look for it. Since I seem to have given up on my quest to be a third party write-in candidate for the upcoming presidential election (remember that from 2 years ago?), I thought I'd look at third party and unintended consequences.

A great example of this is the presidential election of 1912. William Howard Taft was elected in 1908, with the blessing of outgoing president Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was so annoyed with what Taft did in his first term that he first challenged Taft for the Republican nomination in 1912, and then ran as a third party candidate. Because he and Taft appealed to the same demographic, they split that vote without taking any votes away from the Democratic candidate, Woodrow Wilson (also the only president ever with a Ph.D., and one of the few who had never held any sort of elected office, or even a position of real responsibility). Wilson then got to deal with World War I, spending 3 years keeping the U.S. out of the war, even getting re-elected on

that platform. He then wound up reversing his position, committing the U.S. to the war, just in time for it to end. He also managed to undo most of the civil rights and racial equality progress that had been made since the civil war. And Taft, who apparently never really liked being president, was appointed to the supreme court in 1921, which was what he really wanted to do with his life anyway.

In my exhaustive five minutes of research, I found that there were significant third, fourth, and fifth-party candidates in the elections of 1824, 1832, 1836, 1856, 1860, 1892, 1924, 1948, 1968, and 1992. There were also no significant second party candidates in 1789, 1792 (George Washington) and 1820 (James Monroe). The worst split of the vote was in 1860 (not surprisingly), which featured the disintegration of the then Democratic party, resulting in 4 candidates, and Lincoln winning with 39.8% of the popular vote, the lowest ever. My extensive research has also shown that in about half of all elections, the winner received less than 50% of the popular vote. Most recently, Bill Clinton was elected in 1992 with 43% of the popular vote (Ross Perot getting 18.8%), beginning a series of three elections in which the winner got less than 50% of the vote, between GHW Bush's 53.4% in 1988, and GW Bush's 50.7% in 2004.

I have heard a number of theories about multi-party elections, and the fact that when the popular vote starts getting significantly split, that it's good for the whackos. When there are only two candidates, neither can afford to alienate anyone, so they tend to be very centrist, and spend most of their time attacking each other personally than dealing with the issues, as statement on issues will always annoy somebody. However, when the vote starts getting split 3 or 4 ways, candidates can afford to offend significant portions of the population in order to gain a lock on another segment. Strom Thurmond's Dixiecrat campaign of 1948, and George Wallace's run as an American Independent in 1968 are good examples of this, as each decisively won a number of southern states, but had no chance anywhere else. Christopher Buckley's book Boomsday takes this to even more of an extreme. In a highly fragmented election, one candidate runs on an anti-baby boomer platform in order to lock up the vote of everyone under 35, leaving the other three candidates to split the rest of the populace, hoping that no one gets a share larger than the combined voting bloc of the young.

As ridiculous as that fictional election was, in 1832, William Wirt ran for president as the candidate of the anti-Masonic party, which was created to address only one issue (no points if you guess what it was). He managed 7.8% of the popular vote, and carried Vermont (even then, Vermont was a little different). Modern America does owe quite a lot to the anti-Masonic party, however, as they held the first party nominating convention, so the twin circuses of sound and fury that we are subjected to every 4 years are entirely their fault.

Perhaps that will be my new plan to get elected in 2012. You all have the opportunity to get in at the beginning of the new anti-stupid party. I figure that I can get support from both genuinely smart people and genuinely stupid people who are trying to cover it up. See you then.

Slavery Ed Williams

Let me assure everybody, from the first sentence on, that I am not defending slavery. I simply want to bring out some facts about it that have been suppressed, censored, or swept under the rug for reasons of ideology and political correctness, and - for some - hopes for monetary reward.

The only slavery most Americans have ever heard about, going back to our high school and college textbooks, is trans-Atlantic slavery from West Africa to the British Colonies of North America - which became the USA - from the early 17th century through the late 18th century. We don't hear about the slave trade to Brazil, the Guineas, and the Caribbean Islands from the 16th century on, because that can't be blamed on the US - and that is a major point. It is the "reparations mafia" (I'll call it the "rep-mafia") that wants to focus exclusively on the slaves that were brought to the Atlantic Coast of the US. Any mention of slavery elsewhere undermines their claims for "reparations" - large financial payments to all black Americans, all of whom are assumed to be descendants of slaves. This is to be paid for, through government action, by all non-black Americans, all of whom are assumed to be descendants of slave-owners, or at best, of people who were accomplices to slavery by waiting until 1863 to abolish it. Of course, the "rep-mafia" doesn't

want to think about the millions of Americans whose ancestors came here after slavery was abolished, since - they claim - all of "white America" is still benefiting from the slave labor of 150 - 400 years ago.

So what else does the "rep-mafia" not want us to know? Well, slavery has been an aspect of human civilization since pre-historic times, in all major world civilizations. It is frequently mentioned in the Bible as being just a part of life at that time. For over a thousand years, slavers from North Africa and Turkey cruised the Mediterranean (and even farther), raiding villages along the coasts of Italy, Spain and Portugal, and selling the people they captured in African slave markets. But the really huge slave trafficking was from East Africa to the Muslim world, from the 7th to the 19th centuries. This trade was much more massive and went on for much longer than the trans-Atlantic trade. (It's ironic that many black Americans have adopted the religion of their earlier slavers to defy the descendants of their later slavers.)

So, how did the Trans-Atlantic slave trade get started? The Portuguese were exploring the western coast of Africa from the 1400's, and finally, at the turn of the next century, Vasco da Gama became the first to round the tip of Africa and begin trading in the Indian Ocean. By then, the Portuguese knew West Africa well. In the 1500's, Portuguese and Spanish traders began taking African slaves to Portuguese colonies

in Brazil and to the Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, since the indigenous people didn't make "good slaves". And later, when British colonies were established along the Atlantic coast, British slave traders got into the act. How did the slave traders acquire their slaves? At the major ports, the African chiefs always had large numbers of slaves waiting to be sold - either their own people or people they had taken from neighboring tribes. The "rep-mafia" never says a word about getting reparations from descendants of those African chiefs. That would shift some of the blame off of white Americans, and that just isn't allowed.

One more thing - slavery is still going on today. Slaves are being bought and sold in the Sudan, Mali, Niger, Mauretania, and other countries. If the UN with its many Commissions, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, the NAACP, the European Union etc., are trying to put a stop to slavery, I haven't heard about it. Some organization, whether UN-related or a Non-Governmental Organization, needs to bring more world attention to this scourge in order to end slavery in the world SOON. But, of course, this would divert attention from the reparations movement in the US, which hopes to get stronger after the November elections.

MENC Scholarships Awarded

As previously reported, the MENC ExComm decided to award two annual scholarships of \$300 each to go along with the National Mensa scholarship program. Our two scholarships for this academic year have been awarded to the following candidates:-

Elizabeth Rosemond, of Hillsborough, who is a 2nd year graduate student at UNC-Chapel Hill. She is in the Division of Speech and Hearing, within the School of Medicine, preparing for a career in Audiology.

Jeremy M. Hahn, of Chapel Hill, who graduated from the Michaux Academy in Chapel Hill, and is going to MIT to study mathematics.

The picture shows Ed Williams presenting a check to Elizabeth, at the Old Well on the UNC campus. Unfortunately, by the time the checks were available, Jeremy had already gone off to MIT. Ed presented the check since our Scholarship Chairman, Jim Crowley, was away on a trip.



Guns Cause Homicide - Right? Ed Williams

Since the Heller decision, in which 5 justices of the Supreme Court made the bold and daring decision to uphold the Constitution rather than go along with the other 4 justices and their ideological sheep-herders, the far-leftists have stepped up their efforts to convince the public of their lie - "more guns, more homicide". Remember, the right of citizens to keep and bear arms is in the SECOND Amendment, not the 7th or 8th; put in that spot by our Founding Fathers. (Of course, the far-leftists say they really didn't know what they were doing.) Over the years, leftists have greatly expanded the written provisions of the First Amendment, and sharply limited the scope of the Second

by deliberately misinterpreting and distorting its wording. And one of their mantras is "more guns equals more homicides."

I recently came across a report on a study published over 40 years ago by Dr. James B. Given, then at the Univ. of Michigan, entitled "Society and Homicide in 13th Century England". He studied old court records in England and found that their homicide rate was higher than the (1970's) rate in the U.S. Since guns were not in use at that time (in England), the murder weapon was most often a knife, but cudgels and axes were often used. Less often used were scythes, stones, pitch-forks, spades and mattocks - in other words, whatever was most convenient or available. Many well-meaning but naive people have been convinced by the disguised far-left that banning private ownership of guns, or at the very least, passing more gun-control laws (after all, we only have about 21,000 such laws in the U.S.)

would diminish the homicide rate. The English study shows that, sadly, humans are too often disposed to commit homicide, and that they will use whatever weapon or tool is available.

While I sympathize with Jim Brady, who was shot by a nut-case trying to kill Pres. Reagan, he and his wife Sarah are not excused for the dishonesty of the campaign they have been running for the last 25 years, to limit severely, or even abolish, private ownership of guns. An example is their constant harping on "AK-47s" and "assault weapons", giving the impression (without actually telling the lie) that these are full-automatic guns, because they have cosmetic features which give them the appearance of military weapons, though all that are legally sold in the U.S. are just semi-automatic, same as a kid's .22.

By the way, I wonder how many laws exist in the U.S. limiting the kinds, sizes, etc. of knives that can be legally carried.

News Release

for immediate release
September 1, 2008

NEW TRANSCRIPTION BY MENSA COMPOSER!

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more information at 512/280-2807
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Remember to tell all of your band-directing friends about the new band transcription from MMB Music (www.mmbmusic.com) by Mensa composer Aaron Rabushka, a publication that brings the subject of a centuries-old musical whodunit to life in the colors of the modern wind ensemble! Unico Willem Graf

van Wasenaer's Concertino #2 is a feast of tonal and melodic beauty that comes from a series of richly scored string-orchestra works whose authorship was in doubt for over 200 years and which were often attributed to Handel or Pergolesi. This publication joins another Rabushka entry in the MMB catalog, his transcription of the overture to Joseph Haydn's opera L'Incontro Improvviso. For more information contact MMB Music (Concert Music Division) at 800-543-3771 or through their website.

In addition to these publications from MMB, Rabushka's music shows up on seven CD's from Vienna Modern Masters (<http://www.xs4all.nl/~gdv/vmm/>), and he is the subject of several chapters of the recent book Cathy Berberian and Music's Muses, written by the British aesthetician Jennifer Paull and available from Amoris Imprints (www.amoris.com). He is currently a member of central Texas's LoneStar Mensa group and has previously been affiliated with Mensa activities in Raleigh and Kansas City.

ExComm News and Announcement

The ExComm has been on a bimonthly meeting schedule. For the moment, it is on the odd numbered month at the Durham Brunch. When it is not possible for some members to meet sometimes, e-mail will be and has been used for discussion as well as voting.

Recently, because of the increase in gasoline prices, the ExComm members noticed that it has added financial strain for those who choose to do volunteer works for MENC. Therefore, the ExComm just passed a "bill," to reimburse "gas money" to members who have to drive for official MENC business. "Official Business" now includes giving tests and delivering Mblem to the Post Office. ExComm will consider other occasions on a case-by-case basis. So, keep track of where you go, when you go, how far you drove, and the reason for the volunteered MENC official work. Application for reimbursement of trips will be honored as far back as the beginning of this fiscal year, April 1, 2008. For future trips the volunteer needs to state exact date, mileage, and moderately detailed justification, in writing, signed. This is to provide an adequate audit trail. For past trips since April 1, please state at least approximate date, estimated mileage, and of course, the reason. The Treasurer will decide the method of reimbursement: at least quarterly or perhaps as the applications come in.

Welcome new members MEditor Column Shiangtai Tuan

For the month of August, we have six new members, two reinstating members (who came back after having their membership lapsed over a year), and two renewing members (whose membership lapsed less than a year). There were also 4 members who moved in from elsewhere. Welcome and welcome back.

Even though the number is small in comparison to the total membership of 496, I cannot emphasize more the importance of new members in this group or in any group and I cannot emphasize more how this editor has neglected to stress this point in the past. As far as I can remember, we never have had any special feature or issue directly aimed at orientation of new members. In the past, I have joined many different groups. It could be the start of a new job; it could be for a new hobby, it could be a new location. And of course, when I joined Mensa. Every time that happened, I felt the excitement and the anxiety. I always looked forward to the new horizon but also wished someone would help me to give me a hint of how and where to start. Now, we old goats seem to have forgotten all that but simply let you new people feel your way around for yourselves. Well, I can at least say hello and welcome. Please look at the calendar. See if there are any activities you like. Feel free

to go join one. The easiest is probably going for a dinner or brunch listed in the calendar. All you need to do is to show up. Last time I went to the RTP lunch, a member sat by me and I found out that we both sing in opera chorus, though at different places. What delight. Places and times of some of the activities are announced on our announcement e-mail list. Don't hesitate to participate either. If there are things you like but you don't see them on the calendar, create your own. Send a notice to this editor and we can look for those who may have the same interest: book club, writing club, garden club ... anything you like.

New members bring in fresh air and help us grow. The membership count of American Mensa was 50,928 last month and 557 of them were new or reinstated. How does Mensa get new members? By giving tests to those who are interested to join us. The more tests we give locally the better chance we have new members in our group. **This brings up another topic.** Those who are interested to take the test depend on our test coordinator to find our test proctors. We have a wonderful test coordinator. However, he does not have e-mail, prefers not to use telephone because of hearing problems, but use U.S. postal mail extensively. One of our test proctors reported that some of his notices were lost in the mail. So he could use some help. I have an urgent request to all of you. "Uncle Sam needs you!" If you would want to help, please e-mail me or contact any of the ExComm members. (See contact info in the back of this publication.)

Young Mensans LocSec Column Shiangtai Tuan

Do you know we have eighteen young members, that is, members below 17 years of age, in our group of 496? That is almost 4%. Let me break down for you according to age groups. There is one under 6.

There are four between 7 and 10, seven between 11 and 14, six between 15 and 17.

I am sure there are many members who have gifted children, young relatives or friends who have not yet joined Mensa. We used to have a few enthusiastic parents who started some gifted children programs. It was informal and there seems none

now. If you are interested, please step forward. Before we have any programs going, if any of you young members, parents of young members, parents who have gifted children, please let me know if you want to be connected so I can help you contact each other.

Weather or Not

— MERF News —

“Hurricanes, tornados, droughts, higher temperatures --- do recent extremes make you wonder about the future of weather?” This is the open line of the MERF announcement of its colloquium 2009. Of course, you know MERF, the Mensa Education and Research Foundation. MERF’s chair, Cyndi Kuyper, wrote in the announcement of the colloquium: “As I write, there are three hurricanes lined up in the Atlantic Ocean bearing down on the United State. It has only been a few days since Gustav hit the Louisiana Coast. In fact, the effects of that hurricane are being felt way up here in the Chicago area right now. Four hurricanes in less than two weeks? What are the odds?”

Then she proceeded to announce that Dr. Greg Holland of the National Center for Atmospheric Research would be speaking at the colloquium scheduled for February 27 to March 1, 2009 at Atlanta Marriott in Atlanta, GA. They are also to present Dr. James Hansen of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies, Dr. Joshua Wurman from the Center for Severe Weather Research, and Dr. Noah Diffenbaugh representing Purdue University’s Climate Change Research Center. For information and/or registration, go to www.colloq09.us.mensa.org, send e-mail inquiry to info@colloquium.us.mensa.org, or write to colloquium2009 American Mensa, Ltd., 1229 Corporate Dr. West, Arlington, TX 76006-6103.

Carmencita

Shiangtai Tuan

The Capital Opera Company of Raleigh is to perform Georges Bizet’s Carmen in the Fletcher Opera Theater, opening October 17.

As you probably know, Carmen is listed the fourth on Opera America’s list of the 20 most-performed operas in North America. Like many other great works, it was written on a story retold multiple times. In fact, Bizet was commissioned by Camille du Locle, the artistic director of the Opéra-Comique, to write this opera according to a novel by Mérimée. The novel itself was in turn, influenced by Pushkin’s narrative poem ‘The Gypsies’. It is about the love affairs of the free spirited Gypsy woman, Carmen. A young officer, Don José, fell in love with her. He left all, including his fiancée, his career, etc for her. They went through various adventures but eventually she “fell out of

love” with him and went for another man, the toreador Escamillo. In a rage, he killed her at the end.

It opened in the theater, “Opera- Comique,” and was classified as a “French opera comique”. Although it did have light-hearted music but it was a violent story and a tragedy at the end – did not fit the stereotype of the genre. For reason I do not understand, back then, only a tragedy could be considered a noble work, or a serious work. Comedies were supposed to be light-hearted slapstick with a funny ending. Carmen did not fit either description. It was also very close to real life, not like some other great works that deal with Royalty, noble families, gods or fairies. As a result, it not only softened the barrier between the noble theater of tragedy and comedy, it also contributed to the realist movement of Verismo. Talk about Verismo operas, the Opera Company North Carolina just produced Leoncavallo’s I

Pagliacci in September (yours truly was in the opera chorus) and Capital Opera Company is to produce Mascagni’s Cavalleria Rusticana on March 13 and 15, 2009.

The Capital Opera Company of Raleigh was founded by some opera lovers most of them faculty members of Meredith College, Raleigh. Meredith college has a very strong music program. Capital Opera is fortunate to tap into these resources and Meredith definitely benefits to have an opera company around. You can see this relationship from the opening of Capital’s mission statement: “Capital Opera Raleigh, in collaboration with Meredith College: ...” From their website, www.capitaloperaraleigh.org, you may also find the list of grand operas it produced over the past years. (Yours truly will be singing in the opera chorus in this performance.)