

Excerpts from the July 2000 MIND

The Newsletter of

[Central Indiana Mensa](#)

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MY PIECE OF MIND

GEORGE DUNN

Thinking about the last few issues and their themes...thought I noticed a kind of meta-theme connecting them. Take a minute and see if it comes to you as well. Let's see, we had coffee drinkers, then pagans, then Mars-Venus and now gun control.

Not obvious? Okay, it is kind of generalized; the categories aren't particularly unique in sharing this common bond so I'll give it away: each involves a group that's looking for a little more respect.

Well, big deal. Who these days isn't looking for status; for that matter, who ever wasn't?

Maybe that's the point: one of the universal characteristics of people is that they all - sincerely - feel that others don't appreciate them enough. That's true whether they're ghetto toughs on the alert for signs of "dissing" or corporate CEOs basking in "deference."

The flip side of this constant need for approval is the desire to find acceptable targets for censure.

The society into which I was born accepted as natural fact the inferiority of broad categories of people: Negroes, Jews, Mexicans, women, handicapped, Asians and several others. Some groups, such as homosexuals and pagans, were not merely demeaned but actively prosecuted.

What a change two generations have wrought: all of these ethnic, gender and faith-based populations are covered by favoring legislation and supported by strong public propaganda. No person with a hope of social prominence would willingly let it be known that he was anything less than One Hundred Percent Unprejudiced.

The unbiased outlook applies, however, only to those groups specifically identified by law or public policy. The need to find villains (a word, interestingly, that originally meant "peasant") continues in full vigor.

The new classes of targets are apparently "fairer" than the old types inasmuch as they're biased on behaviors, so the perpetrators can theoretically change their ways and return to the love of their neighbors, a transaction not possible for those with the wrong skin, birthplace or chromosomes.

This is progress, but it's not perfection, since the mutability of the offending behaviors is viewed as absolute rather than relative.

For example, the smoker / drinker / dooper can supposedly "just quit," as though the phenomenon of addiction didn't exist. The adult or child with impulse control problems should simply "take responsibility" whether or not brain chemistry is involved. The petty criminal, logger, hog farmer and poppy grower should "change his lifestyle" without regard for the economic pressures that surround him.

The challenge that social engineers never face is, "What should I sacrifice for this noble goal?" It's always so obvious that the problem lies with other people, any necessary discomforts should naturally fall on them.

Of course, officials always see themselves as "working" for the bright new future, but their work is discretionary, whereas the "cooperation" of the citizens is not. The cop who tosses your belongings for contraband is "working," but you're enduring the abuse without hope of any benefit except escaping worse treatment. Doesn't it make sense to reward good behavior as vigorously as we

punish bad?

LOCSECTION

Grace Falvey

When I joined Mensa, John S. Matthews was the backbone of the Indianapolis group. He hosted the monthly meetings at his bicycle shop and he was a one-man newsletter. After he died, a scholarship was founded in his honor.

It was a wonderful idea, but nobody ever seemed able to come up with an organized plan for choosing recipients. Some random awards were made to children of members, but there was no ongoing program.

Spurred on by the prospect of substantial donations, a JSM Scholarship Foundation was formed a few years ago. The goal was to accumulate \$10,000, which was to earn interest to provide perpetual grants. There were two major flaws: first, the 10K goal was never reached and second, there was still no plan for deciding who would receive the scholarships. The Foundation eventually was disbanded.

The point of all this is that finally this issue has been resolved. At its May meeting the ExCom voted to turn the JSM money over to the Mensa Education and Research Foundation, to be administered by that organization as part of its annual scholarship competition. Accordingly, a check for \$5,536.86, the entire amount in the fund, has been sent to MERF.

What few people realize is that MERF has been choosing a JSM Scholarship recipient each year recently. My understanding is that the funds were donated by the late John Hartman. However, that money has run out, and this year's award was in jeopardy, but with our current donation, there will be enough for ten years or more.

Applicants for the scholarship come from the students who apply for MERF grants each year. Three are chosen at the local level and sent on for judging at the regional level, where the winner is picked.

As far as I am concerned, there is another huge advantage. Before the scholarship money is paid in August, MERF checks to make sure that each winner really has enrolled in college, and is not just going off to the South Seas on a journey of self-discovery.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Summer is here; let the fun begin! Build your own ice cream sundaes at the July 14 Monthly Meeting. (That does seem late, but it is the second Friday.)

In August, there will be a repeat of last year's wonderful Corn Roast in Columbus, Indiana. Warren Ward has invited us back to his house on Sunday, August 13. He will provide hamburgers, hot dogs, buns, corn and drink and the guests will bring their favorite side dishes. Look for further details in the August MIND.

And in September, during the last weekend of summer, the revived Outdoor Gathering will be held at Versailles State Park. That's September 15-17, 2000.

Registration information may be found elsewhere in this issue.

RVC.Comm by Will Steinke

Here's an idea for recruiting. Minnesota Mensa has had a booth at its state fair each of the last six years. Even if your group isn't in the area of your state's capital, there is still your county fair. It was surprising to me to find out in Illinois that even counties in the metro area had fairs. Seems that county fairs aren't just for farmers anymore. So if you want to have a good time, meet some interesting people, have a change of diet and help Mensa, contact your county or state fairgrounds and see what it takes to get a booth.

In the last year I have been asked, "What does a Regional Vice Chair do?" So here's a thumbnail sketch from the AMC and RVC Handbook (yes, we have one, too). The RVCs are the chief operating officers for their regions and the AMC members to whom Local Secretaries report [Bylaws X (2) (a)]. The RVCs also act as a liaison between the local groups in their regions and the AMC, and are responsible for carrying out Mensa's policies and programs in their regions [Bylaws IV (6)].

Moving on to who's who and what's what at the National Office, Tamela Herczeg is the Membership Director. She insures that the prospective and current members receive timely and accurate information. Tamela works to develop and maintain member services and benefit programs that encourage members to renew. She also works with such programs as CultureQuest and GotYA (Group of the Year Awards).

Prior to coming to Mensa, Tamela was at the University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) for eight years. There she worked for Student Affairs, Alumni Relations, Development, Capital Campaign and Fundraising. She has extensive experience working with chapters, boards and volunteers.

Tamela has a Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in Management from UTA. She is a member of both the Dallas/Fort Worth and American Societies of Association Executives (DFWSE & ASAE). She was recently selected by ASAE for its Future Leaders Program.

Julia Lilly is the National Groups Coordinator. She is the link between the local group officers and the National Office. She handles group requests, maintains the monthly report distribution for each group, coordinates each group's files, and is the regular contact with the groups. Julia works with the Mensa Bulletin editor twice a year to print the directory of local group information which is sent to the membership. Julia is the voice of Mensa that you hear on the national office's automated phone system.

Julia joined the staff a little over two years ago. Prior to joining, she worked for eight years in the customer service department of a larger manufacturer where she worked her way up to Customer Service Manager. She has attended numerous educational programs on Customer Service and Association Management issues.

Next month I will be writing this column before I go to the Annual Gathering. I hope you will be there to experience it rather [than] waiting to read about it.

Until next time, have fun and be safe.

Will

LETTERS

To the Editor:

Two brief important addenda to an excellent brief intro to Wicca (Witchcraft). I think both are universal; they are in my extensive research and experience with many people in Wicca.

1) The Witches Rune (Commandment, Rule) - AND IT HARM NONE, do what thou wilt. This is part of many ceremonies.

2) The belief that any evil one does in this life will be repaid threefold IN THIS LIFE.

Also important is the fact that witches do not believe in Satan.

Bob Thomas

[It's so nice to have a letter to print - particularly an approving one - that I almost scruple to pick on small details, but... I think by "Rune" in item 1, Bob means "Rede," a Middle English word meaning "advice" or "counsel." The injunction itself should probably read, "AN it harm none...", "an" being another antique word translated as "if" or "as long as," which I think makes more sense in this context that the associative conjunction.

In principle, it is not only evil but good that returns by the Rule of Three. I'm not sure that all wicces would insist on "rapid response karma."

The issue of Satanism is complex; certainly, the medieval church officials called lots of non-Catholics Satanists" pretty much the way '50s Republicans called everybody else "Commies" or "pinkos." Wicca, per se, does not invest all malevolence in a named spirit. There are, however, groups that call themselves "Satanic witches." We might with modest effort distinguish these from "true" Wiccans as we distinguish the Branch Davidians or the KKK from "Christians."

However, it bears repeating that there is no one Orthodox Wicca which is privileged to denounce variations as heresies. To adapt a Buddhist saying, "If you meet the King Wiccan on the road, kill him." -Ed]

Name Withheld

**Private Gun Ownership -
An Idea Past Its Time**

Two Centuries now separate the writing of the Bill of Rights from the present day. The causes and pressures of that day have now passed away. The "merciless Indian savages" cited in the Declaration of Independence have become the "Native Americans", British redcoats no longer lurk in wild lands beyond the Alleghenies; Napoleon will not send warships up the Mississippi. There is still danger of war in the world, of course, but the idealized citizen-soldier is no credible defense against it.

Neither does Daniel Boone feed his family with the abundant deer, woods buffalo and wild swine of the trackless wilderness. No more does the 50 caliber Hawken stand between a man's family and a rampaging grizzly, no longer do travelers to California have to fight their way out of Mormon ambushes or drive off raiding Villalistas.

About all private guns are good for today is crime. Need money? Why work for it when you can take it by threat of deadly force? People disrespecting you? Don't waste your precious time and look weak by trying to talk it out with them, just get out your piece and waste the fools!

But surely not everyone who owns a gun is a robber or a lunatic? No, many gun owners never shoot anybody, just as many uninsured drivers never have an accident and many people who have unsafe sex fall to contract HIV. How many people DON'T cause trouble is not the point; the point is that many do.

The "well-regulated militia" of the Second Amendment is the Army and the police. Private gun-gangs are just night riders and lynch mobs.

If we lived a civilized life, where citizens did not routinely slay each other for slight provocation, those police could be more civil themselves, more like British Bobbies than the NYPD unit that gunned down an innocent man because he reached for his wallet.

All the conspiracy theorists and "X-Files" fans think that gun confiscation is the prelude to the grand takeover of the US by the New World Order and their black helicopters. Honestly, when did you hear anything so ridiculous? Even if that bizarre scenario, just a little more probable than an invasion from Mars, were to come true, what good do you suppose Charlton Heston and his musket, or even LeRoi Jackson and his MAC-10. would really do?

As for the few remanding subsistence hunters and the "Olympic shooters," don't you imagine that special exceptions could be made? Their livelihoods and athletic dreams need not be hostages to some Billy Bob's desire to sleep with a Desert Eagle in case he might have to get up in the night to shoot a neighbor's dog.

Mensans, you should be leading the way into a future where people use their minds instead of their artificial claws and fangs to settle their differences.

[I will note that the author seems to be better versed on the various species of firearms than one expects from the anti-gun side, most of who continue to mix up automatic and semiautomatic. -Ed]

Robert Allen Harper

The Harper Gun Safety Initiative

Back in the 1950's a woman in Shaker Heights, Ohio shot and killed a neighbor's child. She hid the body in the woods across from Woodbury Junior High School and the gun in a package of ground beef in her freezer.

When the crime was uncovered, she claimed that the killing had been done by her son. The police, however, ruled that her son could not have fired the gun because the gun had an 8-pound trigger pull. At her son's young age he simply did not have the requisite hand strength to pull the trigger.

THE PLAN

It occurred to me that it might be possible for the United States to enact a manufacturing standard for handguns that would mandate a trigger pull, after testing, sufficient to prevent young children from firing the weapon even if the gun were unlocked, unattended and loaded.

THE MANUFACTURER

After a certain date, all guns manufactured or sold in the United States would be required to conform to the standard, by law.

For the manufacturer, this would only entail replacing the existing trigger spring with a stiffer spring of the same dimensions and enclosing a certificate of compliance with each gun. The cost should be minimal.

GUNSMITHS

Upon the receipt of a gun for modification, the gunsmith would issue one-half of a two-part numbered claim check to the owner. No name, address or any other identifying information would be solicited. Upon completion of the modification, the gunsmith would issue a certificate of compliance to the gun, **not** the gun owner.

THE CERTIFICATE

The certificate of compliance would identify the make, model, caliber, capacity, type (revolver or automatic) and serial number. This certificate would be kept in a safe place by the owner along with other important papers.

THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION

Because under this plan the certificate would be issued to the gun instead not the owner, there is no registration of the gun to the owner involved. This would encourage people to voluntarily have their guns modified.

THE POLITICIANS

Since all costs of modification and certification are directly borne by the gun owner, no monies need be appropriated.

THE POLICE

In any situation in which the police encounter a gun, the first thing the police

will request is to see the certificate of compliance. Failure to produce a valid certificate will result in immediate forfeiture of the gun and a mandatory fine of \$1,000 per gun. This is in addition to any other fines and penalties.

Adoption of this initiative will reduce deaths, help get guns off the streets and generate revenue without raising the issues of registration or gun locks.

David Vaprin

Regulating Firearms

I am wondering if it is possible to contribute light, rather than heat, to the chorus on the Gun issue. Most people who have opinions are intense about them. I'd love it if I could say something you hadn't heard a thousand times before.

It seems quite apparent that if there were dramatically fewer guns, there wouldn't be so many shootings. An early version of that observation comes from the Book of Tao ("Where there are many weapons, there is much killing") about 3,000 years ago. That truism, which most countries rely on in setting their own firearms laws, isn't much help to us in the USA. It is not obvious how we could move from our current situation with tens of thousands of firearms in private hands to a policy like that of Japan or Great Britain.

It also seems dear that when it comes to firearms there is an American "exceptionalism," symbolized by the Second Amendment. Whether that clause means what the NRA claims, it represents this country's love affair with firearms. Millions of people believe that unrestricted gun ownership is a right, even a "civil liberty" like free speech. That point of view is not widely held in any other country, but it does no good to wish it away here.

Sumptuary Laws

That brings us to "sumptuary laws." These are laws that forbid the consumption of harmful products, often products that citizens deeply desire and are pretty determined to get - alcohol, mood-altering drugs, cigarettes, firearms.

We have experimented with alcohol prohibition, we are disastrously entangled in a war on drugs, we may undertake the crazy step of turning cigarette smoking into a crime -- and now we have to try to deal rationally with our torrent of immensely powerful firearms intended to shoot people (as opposed to deer or squirrels). It doesn't seem likely that we can successfully confiscate millions of highly desired firearms from thousands of people determined to keep them -- and as long as people want them badly, we will not achieve the reduction required to drastically cut the level of firearms deaths and injuries.

The Outlaws Police Themselves

I use the word "confiscate" very purposefully. In other countries, law-abiding people do not have guns, except registered hunting rifles often not allowed within the household. As the catch phrase goes, "Only outlaws have guns" in Japan and Great Britain. This has two interesting results. First the number of gun-related deaths is extremely low compared to the US. Secondly, while criminal organization in these countries do in fact have weapons, the criminal syndicates strictly control these -- they are too precious. Low level people or

freelance amateurs cannot be allowed to have them. This is why it is still possible to have a police force that does not routinely carry firearms. When only career outlaws and the police have guns, the people are much safer. That could change if the flood of US weapons becomes a widely desired contraband in Britain or Japan or other countries. For that to happen, millions of otherwise law-abiding people would have to want guns, the way they do in the US.

Change the American Attitude

Until we produce a sea change in the American outlook -- and that is possible; it happened with cigarette smoking -- gun control laws that actually eliminate large numbers of guns can't work, if we cannot curtail the heroin supply, we won't much reduce the firearms supply -- sumptuary laws corrupt the legal system and hardly even work.

This leaves two strategies for people like myself who would like to see a safer America with less gun violence.

Confiscation Is Not an Option

First, we need to stop advocating gun control or elimination. These are not options. What is an option -- what will sound reasonable to most Americans including many gun owners -- is for guns to be regulated the way cars are. Automobile drivers need licenses because unregistered drivers (and gun owners) are dangerous. Autos have registration slips so that titles can be traced and we can restrain the traffic in stolen vehicles. (Safer firearms? Perhaps one day we can end the manufacture of rapid-fire pistols and rifles of all kinds.)

Treat Guns like Cars

Hundreds of millions of auto owners have the freedom of the open road without even noticing the "burden" of such regulations, except when the DMV performs one of its monumental screw-ups -- which the Legislature could easily fix, but don't get me started on that one. "It's no big deal for cars -- it's no big deal for guns." I think that's a slogan that a majority of Americans can eventually support. Such laws would restrain the flood of gun sales openly pouring into theoretically illegal channels. ("Enforcing the laws already on the books" is really not possible without a regulatory structure -- not for cars, nor for guns.)

Second, folks who want to see an America without millions of guns are going to have to persuade a huge majority of Americans that they do not want guns - - and that they don't want anyone else to have them either. When guns are no longer deeply desired by huge numbers of people, it will be possible to rid society of them the way the Japanese have. Until that distant day, widespread gun possession will be part of our culture, and lots of people will get shot.

By the way, no one should tell that story about Hitler confiscating all the guns so he could take over Germany. It isn't true.

[An insightful proposal of the sort that rarely appeals to hasty American social engineers: change first the attitudes, then the market.]

Because someone will surely access the official NRA response to the guns/cars comparison, I'll just get it out now: driving is a privilege; keeping

and bearing arms is a right, enshrined in the Bill of Rights.

I'll address one item myself: sumptuary laws. Historically, these were not so much to protect the citizens from harm, a la the FDA, as to restrict them from "extravagance." In practice, they were used to maintain the class system in the face of economic prosperity. A typical "sumpt" would punish a wealthy tradesman for wearing lace, that being a privilege of the nobility, or at least the gentry. In a democratic society where wealth is the basis of class, sumptuary laws simply have no place. - Ed]

July Meeting Speaker: Lt. Tony Gregory on

"You'd Better Be the Fighting Kind"

Lt. Tony Gregory is a Certified Personal Safety Instructor, as well as Director of Training and Rangemaster for the Cumberland Police Department. Tony is a veteran of over 2600 hours of training in every aspect of police and personal defense. Lt. Gregory will help Mensans take a closer look at the risks and consequences of being a victim. Learn about the psychology of the predators and about the mind-sets we should adopt to avoid becoming their victims.

The Gun Debate Lexicon

As in any emotionally-charged issue, terms are chosen for their psychological impact as much, if not more than, for their descriptive value. Former Indiana Senator Birch Bayh may have coined, or at least popularized, the phrase "Saturday Night Special" for a pistol or revolver. At first, the SNS was supposed to fall outside an imaginary quality line that distinguished the "good" firearms that a responsible citizen might own from the cheap, foreign weapons that would appeal only to thugs. Of course, this dissimilarity quickly lost all meaning, and today police and reporters unabashedly characterize any handgun seized as a "Saturday Night Special." Throughout this issue, there are little boxes with definitions of terms to help readers evaluate the issues.

The Gun Debate Lexicon: **Pre-Ban**

Periodically, some feature of a firearm excites legislators enough that they ban further import or production of it, but not enough that they make it a crime to own if one already has it. These are usually things associated with military lookalikes, such as folding stocks, big magazines or bayonet lugs. A firearm grandfathered in is "pre-ban."

The Gun Debate Lexicon: **De-milled gun**

"De-militarized." A weapon that has been mutilated to the extent that it cannot fire or be repaired to fire. It is in effect a metal model of a firearm.

To Keep In MIND

Upcoming Gatherings and Events

*** 2000 ***	
June 30 - July 2	Canadian AG Torono, Ontario; dharris@eco-on.net
July 5-9	Philly Phrolics Delaware Valley Mensa AG (Philadelphia) (Joint AG with Mensa Canada) http://www.libertynet.org/dvmensa/ag2k/ . Register with American Mensa Ltd., 1229 Corporate Dr. W., Arlington TX, 76006-6103.
July 28-30	Mensalympics Down Under , Columbus, OH, Days Inn, 1212 E. Dublin-Granville Rd, Columbus, OH 43229; (614) 885-9696; rooms \$39; RG registration: \$50 to 5/31. \$55 after; Steve Herrick, Steve_Herrick@compuserve.com .
August 25-27	Gemutlichkeit , Westwood Hotel and Conference Center, 201 N. Mayfair Rd. Milwaukee, WI 53226; (414) 771-4400; rooms \$67 (reserve by 8/1); Registration \$40 to 7/10, \$45 to 8/10, \$55 after; Elisa Weeks, Mensa of Wisconsin RG, _____, Caledonia WI 53108; (262)-____-____ email: registrar@wi.us.mensa.org
Sept 15 - 17	Outdoor Gathering , Versailles State Park; Registrar Nancy White, 624 North Dearborn, Indianapolis, IN 46201; \$40 until 1 August, then \$45. 317-632-4747.
December 1-3	Millennium Madness , Comfort Inn, 11440 Chester Road, Cincinnati, OH 45246; (513) 771-3400; rooms \$39.95; Registration Not Available at Press Time, contact Andy Badger, _____ Cincinnati, OH 45231; (513)____-____; email: andybadger@aol.com

*** 2001 ***	
February 2-4	Richmond UG , Holiday Inn, 5501 National Road East, Richmond, IN 47374; (765) 966-7511; early registration \$25; Greg Crawford, 8262 Sobax Dr, Indianapolis, IN 46268-1728;

	(317) 872-3749 or POB 50946, Indianapolis, IN 46250
Mar 30 - Apr 1	Grand Illusions , Ramada Inn Six Flags, I-44 and Allentown Rd, Box 999, Eureka MO 63025, (636) 938-6661; Registrar Ann Seward, _____, St. Louis, MO 63108; (314) ____ - ____; email: AJ1120@canoemail.com
July 4-8	North Texas Mensa AG (Dallas)

*** 2002 ***	
July 3-7	Phoenix AG

B _____
A _____
S _____
I _____
L _____

by Basil Wentworth

156 - MISCHANCE ENCOUNTERS

A voice from the crowd shouted "Yeo!
 Mark Antony, I'll have you know
 That I'll meet you half way."
 "And who are you, pray?"
 "My name is Vincent van Gogh."

"A regular shape," Euclid cried,
 "Four sides, five-tenths B on a side.
 Now, what have you found
 Is the distance around?"
 And Hamlet could never decide.

The voice shouted, "Sleep no more!
 Mac Beth murders sleep." And the roar
 Of the echoing sound
 Made the mountains resound,
 But Van Winkle's response was a snore.

"Once more, friends!" exhorted Hank Cinq.,
 "We'll fill the breach, rank after rank."

"Some force, you'll recall,
Doesn't fancy a wall",
Said Frost, "to be brutally frank."

Juliet said, "It's a whim of mine.

Call it broccoli, tar, or pine--

You can tell by your nose

That a rose is a rose."

"One more time!" ventured Gertrude Stein.

* * * * *

Old Polonius said, staunch and true,
"Neither borrow nor lend --not a sou."

Alan Greenspan had nerve,

And he said (in Reserve)

"That's what my business tries to do."

NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

The Nominating Committee has put forward the names of the following eight Mensans for positions on the Executive Committee for the next two years.

(In alphabetical order)

Janette Dollar

George Dunn

Carol Eubanks

Dom Jervis

Jim Thurston

Peggy Sargent

Dave Tess

Adren Yates

There are nine positions on the ExCom; any current Mensan may run for the remaining office under the petition process; petitions may also be used to compete for slated positions. If there are no petition candidates, the eight nominees may, pending approval of the Regional Vice Chairman, be declared elected.

The Gun Debate Lexicon: **Arsenal**

Properly, an arsenal is a secure structure which holds many weapons, mostly of the same model, for a military unit. The term is widely employed to mean "more weapons (of any sort) than I think necessary"; thus a collection of six firearms, a .410 shotgun, a 20 gauge, a 10-22, a 30-30, a .22 pistol and an antique Colt Navy, together with a crossbow and a saber, becomes an "arsenal" when discovered in a raid on a suspected dope dealer.

The Gun Debate Lexicon: **Cache** (see also Arsenal)

Anything stored in an out-of-the-way place for possible future use is a cache. You might say one has a cache of AA batteries. In the debate, however, the term is used as though it carried the additional meaning, "for some nefarious purpose." Anything, but especially guns, found in a garage or a closet that smacks of survivalists or revolutionaries tends to be called a cache.

The Gun Debate Lexicon: **Registration**

Technically, to register something merely means to tell some official that you have it and where you live. Some people interpret this to mean the registrant has to secure the official's *permission* to keep the item. Which sense one is using makes all the difference.

Rhoda Israelov,
Your Program Chair

**HELLO OUT THERE!
REAL MENSANS DON'T STAY HOME!**

Won't you join us every month? Mensa has many aspects, and different SIGs and activities meet the needs of different members. But in this FM's view, the Monthly Meeting is the core activity of Central Indiana Mensa. This is our forum to catch up on each others' lives, make new friends, and share ideas with like-minded (play on words intended) folks.

Our meeting have included a terrific line-up of speakers, with more to come. We've heard from a municipal judge who buys lunch for offenders who stay sober and out of trouble for a year, from master clowns, Civil War re-enactors, a pollution specialist, a Holocaust survivor, the auditor of the Hoosier Lottery, and many, many more. To come yet this year: experts on personal safety, a TV weatherman, a female airline pilot. A surprise "Who Wants To Be a Mensan Millionaire?" quiz show is in the works.

We've added a "short subject" to each meeting, in which a member shares a few minutes about his or her field of expertise, hobby, or special interest or experience (Dave A. on Braille, Alison and Sigmund reading love poems in German and English were two of these short presentations), and a Rhoda's Riddle, with prizes for the correct answer.

Please, please make a point of joining us for these meetings. You have been missed (in fact, we need you. On several occasions, In order to entice a speaker expecting a fee to come gratis, I have made a personal donation to the charity of the speaker's choice. But in order for me to be able to continue attracting speakers of the caliber we have so enjoyed lately, I need to rely on

having 40-50 people in attendance.)

When I'm not busy being Mensa Program Chair, I'm a sales-person by profession. I know that the question on every prospects' mind is STATION WIIFM (What's In It For Me?). When it comes to the Mensa Monthly Meetings, I can answer that question with a big smile and lots of confidence. What's in it for you? Fun, friendship, sharing, knowledge, awareness, challenge, great food (thanks to Peggy Sargent and her committee - if you haven't been around for awhile, you're in for a very tasty surprise!), and...well, why don't you just come on down and find out for yourself what you've been missing?!

Why? Because Real Mensans Don't Stay Home!

The Gun Debate Lexicon: **Assault Rifle**

An assault rifle is a military weapon which fires rifle ammunition (much more powerful than pistol ammunition) in full automatic mode (i.e., shoots faster than anyone could pull the trigger successively). How a particular firearm looks (e.g., has forearm grips, or open stocks, or ventilated ramps) has no effect on whether or not its an assault rifle.

Later, the Tuscarora George Dunn

The Armed Citizen

Is it realistic to suppose that the arms of citizen-militias, to say nothing of all the shotguns, pistols and revolvers in private homes, would present serious opposition to a modern army? Probably not. However, the principle of an armed citizenry is a psychological deterrent to tyranny.

Let's face it: politicians are bullies. They routinely oppress the powerless and defer to those with means of defense. Ordinarily, these means are voting blocs and money, but these things are demographically volatile; people can be impoverished and disenfranchised rather suddenly.

This is not to say that every resident of the country should be "packing heat" so that the least stable among them have ready means of canceling elections. The *abuse* of firearms is and should be a matter of grave concern.

There is, however, a qualitative distinction between measures to control or punish the misuse of something and attempts to make it unavailable to particular classes of people.

For make no mistake: no one advocating general disarmament means that ALL parties will surrender their weapons, only those the advocate doesn't trust. The advocate always trusts himself and those agents that seem to be under his control.

The government has lately taken extraordinary steps to protect itself from its

citizens - its potentially violent citizens, to be sure - but there seems to be no natural limit to the level of protection appropriate to the "threat."

From the sensible precaution of "check your guns at the door," citizens interacting with their governments are now subjected to magnetic fields, x-rays and body searches followed by seizure of penknives, nail dippers, cell phones, cassette players, flashlights and anything else the guard force deems to have aggressive potential. The effect of all this security is to heighten the paranoia of the officials who inexorably come to regard the public as criminals.

When one group seeks to disarm another group, it's always with the assurance that the disarmed group "doesn't need" their weapons because the seizing group will protect them. Anyone curious about the government's record on this promise should consult an Indian.

But aren't there real problems of criminal violence and accidental shootings in this country? Doesn't the death toll mean that we have to sacrifice some freedom in order to be safe?

The argument that because something is bad therefore anything purporting to address it must be good is not sound. When sweeping penalties are used to address specific problems the result is always that the parts of the population most affected are the ones least contributory to the problem while the elements that actually caused the trouble remain resistant to the "solution." Disarmed populations become the prey of armed criminals.

The remedy for misuse of anything is not general forfeiture but the enforcement of proper use. This principle applies not only to guns but to cars, GPSs, laser pointers, medical marijuana, condoms and pit bulls. A defenseless society is no substitute for a disciplined one.

BULLETIN BOARD

**Frances (Hartman)
Pinczewski:**

House for Rent

Available July 1: Nice 2 BR house w/basement, front porch, fenced yard, on bus line. \$500 month, no utilities paid. 3328 Wilcox Street, Haughville area near Tibbs and Michigan Streets. Call (800) 949-8773 or (606) 278-7776, or email francesp@iglou.com

Petra Ritchie:

Glee and Sympathy

Nancy White: *Good Homes For Your Used Books!* I still need used books in good condition for the Monthly Book Sale. Proceeds go to the Special Projects Fund.

Shirley Washburne:
National Trivia Network

Rookie's Sports Pub, 10th and Country Club Road

Call 839-9282 for details.

If you know of a Mensan who has suffered a setback **or** who has something to celebrate, (*especially* to celebrate) please contact Petra with the information; she will send a card on behalf of the Local Group.

(address and phone # deleted for web page)

pritchie@ibj.com

Joseph Zanca: After seven years, the Mensa Membership Directory is being revised! The 1999 edition will be available in late September from the Mensa Boutique. Order by credit card at 1-800-MENSA4U. \$30.

Dom Jervis

On Gun Control, and Then Some

The myopic simpletons who clamor for more gun control laws conveniently ignore two irrefutable truths:

* The plethora of unregistered guns already in the hands of the public (including criminals) makes the idea of compulsory registration laughable to those of us who consider reality to be more than just a concept.

* The answer to the problem of violent crimes involving guns is not, and will never be, to inhibit their possession by law-abiding citizens, who comprise the vast majority of gun owners.

If a pro-gun-control dullard were to note that the Columbine tragedy involved weapons legally owned by the families of the perpetrators, he would unwittingly invite rebuttal containing a notion that the liberal school of thought considers to be somewhere between profanity and blasphemy. I am referring to the concept of personal responsibility.

Parents who choose to keep weapons in the home have an obligation to teach their children their proper use and life-changing power, and to staunchly prevent unfettered access. Furthermore, parental duty mandates the vigilant monitoring of their children's activities. Had the parents of the Columbine malefactors exercised proper parental control, this tragedy would never have occurred. No new gun laws would have had any effect whatsoever.

Gun Rights Compared to Reproductive Rights

Interestingly, similarities can often be found between two seemingly disparate issues. For example, the disputes over gun control and women's control over their own bodies (abortion is what it's called, but that's not the issue at all)

have obvious common traits, as follow:

- * The doctrines germane to these issues (Roe v. Wade and the Second Amendment to the US Constitution) are grossly misinterpreted by both their most frenzied supporters and detractors;

- * Neither of them will be overturned in our children's lifetimes, much less in ours;

- * Those who favor gun control and/or oppose choice unjustifiably impose their own values on others in order to effuse their holier-than-thou attitudes. Those who favor choice for women and gun ownership by law-abiding citizens commit no such imposition;

- * If a woman were to ask, "What right do you have to tell me what I can or cannot do to my own body?" or if anyone were to ask, "What right do you have to tell me I cannot own a gun if it will only be used in a lawful manner?" no philosophically viable or logically sound answer exists, other than "None."

- * The polarization of these issues has evolved to the point where both sides' positions are nothing less than illogical extremes, where no compromise can even be considered. This is due to the professional advocates who inundate people with shameless demagoguery. These authors of the contrived irreconcilable bipolarity of these issues are laughing all the way to the bank at the many gullible people who stuff their coffers. Each side requires the existence of the other in order to perpetuate the lucrative racket that long ago replaced the altruistic philosophical principles;

- * Complete victory would not satisfy the anti-choice or pro-gun-control crusaders. They could next turn their vitriol toward birth control and hunting/combat knives, respectively. As long as the cash registers of these *ad misericordia* pimps kept ringing, they would never stop. Otherwise, they would have to start working for a living;

- * Each of the major political parties has taken the logical high ground on one issue, and given it up on the other without a fight. Thus, voters who believe in genuine freedom must either decide which issue is more important, or vote Libertarian;

- * Both of these issues could be adequately settled if common sense and personal responsibility were allowed to prevail, rather than the ubiquitous and ever-escalating hysteria. We could then quit wasting our precious resources on these pseudo-issues and start solving our nation's real problems. Barring this ideal solution, it would be reasonable, given their disparate "community standards," to let states decide these issues for themselves;

oatmeal-brained nincompoops

All but the most oatmeal brained anti-choice nincompoops would acquiesce to the abortion of a fetus conceived from an act of rape, or where the gestation threatens the mother's life. Thus, they evidently don't have a problem with the act itself. They disapprove of the reason, thus inflicting their moral judgment unto others where it is not their business. This is precisely where any reasonableness of their argument vanishes. Self-righteous anti-choice protesters should take their exercises in sublimation elsewhere. However, certain measures, such as notification (but not necessarily approval) of one parent of a minor might be appropriate. If the same young woman were in a

hospital receiving treatment for a broken bone, would notification of a parent be a point of contention?

Similarly, law-abiding citizens should not need to fear that their own government would ever preclude or inhibit their efforts to protect themselves. But why does a citizen need armor-piercing bullets, grenades launchers or other such unnecessary and pernicious toys?

The Wisdom of the Regulators

A regulatory official once told me, "I know I've made the right decision when all of the players are mad at me!" Unfortunately, the entrenched positions taken by advocates of these emotionally charged issues make his words ring painfully true. The saddest part is, we have no one but ourselves to blame for this situation.

Emotions are the enemy of reason. Perceptions are misguided mental shortcuts that usually cause more harm than good. Ask yourself: "If a woman who I will never know has an abortion, or if a person with whom I will never cross paths uses guns solely in a lawful manner, what business is it of mine?"

Interference and Nosiness v. Personal Responsibility

Interference into others' private matters is a major cause of the deterioration of inter-personal relations in our society. Sadly, nosiness has become far too omnipresent. Freedom and personal responsibility comprise the bedrock upon which our nation was founded. This includes the duty to respect the freedom of others. Would you appreciate a stranger's meddling into your affairs? If not, please consider leaving a woman who wants an abortion, or a law-abiding gun owner, alone. It won't cost one cent and it's as easy as keeping one's mouth shut. If you stay out of their business, they will stay out of yours.

Wouldn't that be wonderful?

[Few people have much success yoking a horse and an ox together, but Dom has certainly given it the old college try. While advocates of these two issues could raise many disassociating arguments (An aborted fetus is no threat to me, while a gun in circulation is), a strong thread ties them together each involves a largely unaffected group demanding sacrifices from another group.]

*In fact, that's pretty much the problem with most issues: I always find it reasonable and necessary to the general welfare that you should be restrained, but it's quite nonsensical to ask **me** to give up anything in pursuit of the same objective.*

A truer test of my concern is not how much I think you should give up, but what sacrifices I'm willing to make.

For instance, how much would those who insist that a woman carry a child to

Doris Thomas	♥											
Nancy White	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥						
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

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