

Excerpts from the March 2000 MIND

The Newsletter of

[Central Indiana Mensa](#)

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PUBLISHING STATEMENT

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CONTRIBUTION GUIDELINES

MIND accepts contributions from all interested parties, with preference for publication going to members of Central Indiana Mensa. Contributions should reach the Editor's postal box **50946, Indianapolis, IN 46250** at least twenty days before the 1st day of the publication month. Materials must take the form of **legible written copy and/or camera-ready art. Please do not submit items on magnetic media.** Contributions may undergo editing for length and to eliminate patently offensive remarks, including personal attacks. The Editor must know the name of any contributor before publication; however, he will withhold that name from the public on request.

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This is Volume 35, Issue Number 3, March 2000

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March, 2000

(Some items have not been transcribed yet. -Webmaster)

This month we begin as usual with the [Editor's Page](#), which is surprisingly less grumpy than usual.

The [LocSec](#) is with us again, with a reprot on the RG.

Former Editrix **Bibi Sandstrom** gave us something for our [Letters Page](#).

On the theme of **The Power of Symbols:**

[Dom Jervis](#).

["Later, the Tuscarora"](#)

March's **Calendar**, by **Marion Harcourt** starts on page 9.

And while his well may not be *quite* inexhaustible, [Basil](#) has one more set of limericks of us on page 13.

[In the coming months, Basil will set aside his limericks for some selections in verse from his forthcoming musical comedy, RATS.]

[MINDBenders'](#) Honor Roll.

Our [RVC, Will Steinke](#), says "Renew!" on page 15.

Note also the instructions fo rregistration at the LDW.

CI Mensa's combination Hercules and Jeremiah, [Greg Crawford](#), addresses "an unqualified disaster" on page 16.

For the [Bulletin Board](#), turn to Page 17.

MY PIECE OF MIND

GEORGE DUNN

Disappointment and Hope

March begins Mensa's new year, this late start incidentally allowing us to take the auspices of both the new Solar year (2000) and the new Lunar year (Dragon). Dragon is traditionally lucky, especially so this time since it began coincident with "Rise of Spring" on the 24-month Chinese agricultural calendar; 2000 is, well, round.

Locally, we could have had better omens: in particular, the RG did not do very well, although we did turn a small profit. At least one valued member of the ExCom is lapsing in protest to the AMC's unwillingness to cut its own benefits while taking "austerity" to the dues-payers, and I personally suffered an aborted romance (OK, so that last one probably doesn't count).

I hope all subscribers will read both Grace's LocSec column and Greg Crawford's article, since they both describe the RG from somewhat displaced but parallel positions.

In a matter of note on Greg's article: as some have already observed, I occasionally add an editorial comment to an article. It pleases me to say that of the feedback I've gotten on this practice, almost all has been favorable, even from the authors. Greg, however, specifically requested that his article be published without comment. Inasmuch as he's my good friend, his expressed concern that an extra comment might blunt the impact of his message was plausible, and since I asked him to write in the first place, I've acceded to his wishes. Having done this for him, I think it only fair to make it available for others, but be cautioned, the flip side of "print without comment" is not getting printed at all, or suffering some other indignity. I'll tell you a little trade secret: part of the function of editorial comment is to make the text fill the page. When this option is forestalled, and the text does not hew closely to that 500-words-per-page guidance, sometimes it's necessary to expand or compress the font more than usual.

I'd also like to reaffirm the policy that MIND does not publish only those opinions I find congenial; except for personal abuse and endless rambling, anybody's contribution is welcome. Readers are invited to take exception or offer support to Greg's article with letters or articles of their own.

And since I've just invited you to have at him, let me note that Greg is not just grouching, but is willing to put his energy where his umbrage lies. He has offered to organize next year's RG to correct the very flaws he so enthusiastically criticizes in the one just past. Such "backing up" of one's opinion is not required in order to see it aired on these pages, but it's always nice. * * *

On the happy side, I see a slight uptick in the quantity and variety of MIND submissions. I look forward to giving you fiction, poetry, personal ads, photographs and original art in the months to come.

There is some possibility of a cozier Meeting place, which is not too far off I-465 and in a nice upscale part of town. Nothing certain yet, but stay tuned.

End of the month there's that Leadership Development Course right across the state line in Champaign. It's free, and you don't have to be a local group officer to go.

LOCSECTION

Grace Falvey

Punxutawney Phil, that annoying little rodent from Pennsylvania, scuttled back into his burrow last month, thereby forecasting an extended period of winter weather. Big surprise.

January already had brought us enough winter to disrupt Mensa activities. First a snowstorm snuffed out our desire to dine at Kabul. (Only one person called about the event, and I was able to get word to him that we would not be there. I hope nobody else was inconvenienced.)

Then, at the end of the month, some serious snow took its toll on our Regional Gathering. Attendance, including some cameo appearances, was only ninety, compared with our usual total of six score or more.

Usually there are many people who decide to attend the January RG at the last minute. Undoubtedly the weather has a lot to do with the decision, and for many years we have been very fortunate in that respect. (Last year we enjoyed sixty-degree weather!) This year, however, the last weekend in January looked like a good time to stay home in front of the fireplace.

We missed seeing the stay-at-homes, of course, but we must admit we also miss the money. The RG is CIM's chief fund-raiser, but we'll be doing well to break even on this one. I suppose this had to happen sooner or later, but it's disappointing just the same.

As usual, the members of the ExCom knocked themselves out putting the RG together. These are many of the same people who did most of the work last year, and the year before that, and so on. I predict some serious burnout, especially if the ExCom shrinks any more. Currently there are eight members instead of nine, because nobody has stepped up to fill the vacant slot. A new ExCom will be elected this summer, and I hope to see some new faces in the group.

As for me, I am not burning out. It's more a process of fading away, like the Cheshire Cat. Eventually there will be nothing left but the grin.

But on to more cheerful thoughts. Spring will come; the snow will melt. We will resume the non-franchise dining excursions, and we can start planning picnics and other fair-weather events. Perhaps we'll even be fortunate enough to attract some new members who will take an interest in keeping CIM going.

One function that has kept going is the Bridge SIG, which has been in existence for a full twenty years. We meet once a month on a Sunday afternoon with either two or three tables. I believe the secret of our success is our motto: "It's only a game!" New players are always welcome. See the calendar for details.

Monthly meetings continue on the second Friday of every month at Riley Towers. Please don't let the downtown location spook you. We can provide escorts to your car at the end of the evening if you wish. I hope to see you there!

Dom Jervis

The Power of Symbols

Symbols only have as much power as the observer chooses to give them. Sadly, they have been bestowed much more clout than they deserve, for the following reasons, all of which I have explained in previous articles.

- * Political correctness has brainwashed the masses into basing their speech on how others might judge them, rather than using common sense and (dare I say it) backbone;

- * People are afraid to expose their true feelings, lest they offend one of the ever-proliferating lunatic fringe factions which are making honest communication nearly impossible and , worse yet, making our nation a house divided against itself (we all know where that will lead us);

- * The fallacious belief that the perception is the reality has reached the point of pandemic idiocy.

- * More than ever, people are trying to foist their demons onto others, resorting to inflicting feelings of guilt if one resists, or even questions, their universally self-serving statements.

As an example of this last point, there is an initiative to remove the Confederate Stars and Bars from the South Carolina state capitol. The inane cretins who founded this movement are trying to justify it with an anti-slavery message. Don't believe it! This bilge is merely the spin this group is trying to sell to the gullible public.

This is a power trip, pure and simple. If this request is granted, they will demand something else, as soon as they can find a palatable facade for it. One question would stop them cold, i.e., "If we give you this, what will you give us in return?" Their mindset does not consider giving something to get something else, a basic tenet of negotiation. This alone should quash their credibility. Better yet, ask them, "If we give you this, what will you ask for next?" This will expose their shell game. To really tie their tongues, give them one chance to produce a list of all of their demands. Tell them they will be held to it, forever. They will not do it. They will not want to be accountable for it. Nor will they want to be subject to public scrutiny.

Some presidential candidates are expressing opinions on this issue. This is how far this insanity has gone. Enough already! This matter should be resolved by South Carolina, through legislation or a referendum. Hopefully, its lawmakers will have the courage to tell these scam artists to get a life.

As another example of the power of symbols, please try to guess which one I am describing:

- * Originally from the Orient, it has been found on Byzantine buildings, Buddhist inscriptions, Celtic monuments and Greek coins;

- * It was adopted by the Indians in North and South America long before there was a country known as Germany;

- * Before 1920, it was not considered offensive by any mainstream culture;

* It offends individuals even when it is drawn incorrectly, which is often the case.

The answer is: the Swastika.

If you think that I am anything but an ardent hater of the Nazis, simply because I have proffered the most innocuous history of this symbol, not only are you flagrantly wrong about me, but your demons are showing.

Unfortunately, one who uses offensive symbols to provoke his target succeeds all too often. Interestingly, he tends to avoid direct confrontation. Why shouldn't he? Hysterical reactions give him exactly what he wants. He reaps enormous satisfaction for minimal effort, an excellent return on his investment in time and materials. And, it occurs solely because people let him win. Anyone can spray paint an offensive symbol on a building. It is another matter entirely to confront the object of one's ire. This proves two things about the perpetrator:

* He revels in being part of the problem, and has no interest in being part of any solution. Thus, he deserves no credibility.

* Since he seldom follows up his symbolic act with physical engagement, this affirms that he is a craven pantywaist. Scratch the surface of a bully and underneath you will find a coward.

The answer is simple, yet practiced too little. Our society could make these vitriolic symbols disappear forever by simply refusing, en masse, to give these pusillanimous wimps the visceral reactions they seek. Refuse to give a rabble-rouser an advantage by allowing him to drag you down to his level. Treat him as you would a child throwing a tantrum. He wants to incite an emotional reaction. Don't give in to him. When he realizes he will not get what he desires, he will be forced to see that his efforts are in vain; he will be compelled to acknowledge defeat (at least to himself), and he will stop his tirade.

It is easier to feel than to think. Thus more people do the former. Unfortunately, too often, all emotions do get in the way. This fact, augmented by the rehearsed diatribes of the professional protester, accounts for the omnipresence of symbols in our society. This is why a mud-brained malefactor can turn normally sensible people into wailing, sniveling lemmings, all too willing to dive into the sea of emotional turmoil.

Shining the light of calm, rational, objective thought exposes symbols as intrinsically harmless scribbles. When the collective diatribes of these demagoguery pimps are explicated as the lies that they are, these prevaricators will be out of business, and will be forced to find honest employment. The sooner this happens, the better off our nation will be.

I have written previously that Mensans possess a special gift. What better way to share it than to prove to others that substance is the only truly important aspect of any issue? What could be more constructive, informative and valuable than to show that perceptions and symbols are nothing more than wastes of mental energy?

If we don't do it, then who will?

[I was struck by the aptness of Dom's First Question, "What will you give in return?" We resist a lot of ideas because they're lose-lose for us. How would people feel about random traffic stops if every motorist who wasn't drunk got

B _____

A _____

S _____

I _____

L _____

by Basil Wentworth

152 - BARDINAGE

" 'Twas a psychological wound",
Old Marcus Antonius crooned.

 "When I asked of my peers
 That they lend me their ears,
I didn't expect to be mooned."

 The waiter apologized, "I'm
 Afraid our chef's not at his prime:
 He is not up to date
 With his larder of late,
 And we find that our joint's out of thyme."

His rather diminutive size
Caused Napoleon's gorge to rise,
 But his bellicose stance
 (Though inspiring in France)
With Wellesley was not too wise.

 The Huntmaster's sounding his horn;
 The fanfare, sedate and forlorn,
 Undeniably hints
 Of a wound to our prince,
 Who must be to the manor borne.

I confess that at times I have fears
That my readers (by then bored to tears)
 May gather en masse
 And say, "Stop it, you fool!
Enough of this! End me your Lears!"

* * * * *

 Edward Lear's not the potentate who
 Had the daughters whose love was untrue,
 But he dealt (what was worse)
 With this genre of verse --
 Which I only surmised you knew.

MINDBENDING HONOR ROLL - 2000

[H = Host]	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dave A.	♥	♥										
Alison Brown												
Greg Crawford		♥										
Janette Greene Dollar	♥											
George Dunn	♥	♥										
Marcele Everest	♥H											
Marion Harcourt	♥											
Jud Horning	♥	♥										
Jerry Hunter		♥										
Dom Jervis		♥										
Treva Marks		♥H										
Bob Thomas	♥											
Doris Thomas	♥											
Nancy White	♥	♥										
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

RVC.Comm by Will Steinke

Please Renew. Last month I wrote that I expected National Testing Day (NTD) to be a rousing success. Well, the returns are in and it was! 1,503 people took the test, 1,003 passed and so far, 562 have joined with an additional 300 expected to sign up. In the process, we added 42 new test proctors to our testing corps. Also, I am happy to say that all 11 of our region's groups participated, and we tested a total of 187, although I don't get have passed and joined statistics for the region. Another interesting statistic was that 58% of all those tested last year were tested during NTD. Considering all the work put into NTD by each local group -- setting up test sites, publicizing the event and contacting prospective test takers -- we now have an infrastructure in place to build on and to extend these efforts throughout the

year. Thus, we should now be able to offer at least quarterly tests at the local level and publicize those dates through the media contacts we have developed, thus keeping up the momentum created by NTD.

Please Renew. You might ask why you should renew. Let's review the last year. You received the Mensa Bulletin and your local newsletter, you attended your monthly meetings, you attended some local activities, you might have attended a Regional Gathering (RG), AMC meeting or maybe even traveled to the Annual Gathering (AG). During at least one of these outings, you met some interesting people, engaged in riveting conversation and had such a good time that you went back for more and that time volunteered to help out. What's not to like? It's time to renew.

This year, after you renew, why not join a Special Interest Group (SIG)? This is another benefit of membership, where you can share common interest(s) through correspondence with like-minded Ms. Each of these groups publishes a newsletter and, to make your life simpler, the Mensa Bulletin conveniently provides a listing of the National SIGs every March and September. Of course, if there is not a group you want to join, you can share one (the directions to starting a SIG are provided in the listing area), and this gives you another reason to renew.

If you did not attend a monthly meeting, RG, AG or AMC meeting, then there is something else to add to your "to do" list and that makes another reason to renew. Just think of all the people you have not met and talked with, argued with, laughed with or dined with. So much to do, so little time! Make your life a little easier. Mensa is packed with people looking to meet other people, so renew and enjoy another year of fellowship and friendship.

Don't forget to attend the Leadership Development Workshop to be held in Champaign/Urbana March 31 through April 2, for details contact Joanna Soper at (phone number) or by e-mail OSoSpoild@aol.com.

Until next time, have fun and be safe.

Greg Crawford

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

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 Scholarship Fund.

Shirley Washburne: Cheap **Movie SIG** will probably meet

francesp@iglou.com

Petra Ritchie:

Glee and Sympathy

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

Thursday, March 16, at the Hollywood Bar & Film Works, 247 South Meridian St. (park in Union Station garage next door for \$1), but **call Shirley Washburne at 839-9282 to make sure**. Movie titles and showtimes change weekly, so check movies page of the Star.

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.

To Keep In MIND

Upcoming Gatherings and Events

*** 2000 ***	
March 24-25	AMC Meeting. Norfolk, VA. LocSec Dave Gunderlach, davjoy@pilot.infi.net
March 24-25	Mid-Michigan Millennial Merriment. Lansing, MI; Midway Best Western Hotel, West side of Lansing, 7711 W. Saginaw Hwy, Exit 93B off I-96; Rooms: \$64; reservations (517) 627-8471; Registrar: Sharon Plavnick, sharonslp@aol.com ; rates: \$45 until 1 March, then \$50.
May 5-7	SEMMantics 22 , Ann Arbor MI. Registrar: Betsy Y. Mark
June 9-11	DAMNations Lucky 13 , Dayton, OH; Howard Johnson Lodge, 7575 Poe Ave, Dayton OH, 45414 (937) 454-0550; rooms \$45; RG Registration \$60 to 5/31, \$69 walk-in; contact Nita Fields, Needtoread@aol.com .
July 5-9	Philly Phroics 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 registratio: \$50 to 5/31. \$55 after; Steve Herrick, Steve_Herrick@compuserve.com .

***** 2001 *****

July 4-8	North Texas Mensa AG (Dallas)
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***** 2002 *****

July 3-7	Phoenix AG
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Later, the Tuscarora George Dunn

Symbols, Power of

An African-American glares at the "Stars 'n Bars" fluttering over a southern state legislature. A vandal spray-paints swastikas on the doors of a synagogue. An auto dealer dresses up his lot with Old Glory. Packaged groceries display images of smiling children and perfect, unblemished produce. Street corners are bracketed with red octagons. Generals wear stars; junior executives wear "power ties." Church rooms are decorated with crosses, doves, hearts, chalices and Chi-Rhos. Head shops sell T'ai Chis and colored bears. Medical waste is marked wth circles and horns. Bloods wear red; Crips prefer blue.

Every one of these is an example of the power of symbols. There's no getting away from them; man is a symbol-using animal. Even leaving aside words, which are symbols as well, we could not do without symbolic representations of thoughts and ideas, allegiances and authorities.

The only question appropriate for any symbol is "What does it mean?" and on that simple wonder nations have risen and died.

Precisely because they are concentrated messages, symbols are vulnerable to a certain misunderstanding, or more accurately, a forgetting: we forget that their meanings are completely arbitrary.

Functional objects, such as a raised sword or a pitcher of lemonade, carry the potential of harm or relief innately, but an Islamic crescent and star or picture of Santa Claus are only threatening or comforting because someone chooses to make them so. The question after that is, "Who gets to choose?"

It's not as easy as it is short, because each person affected by a symbol has some experience to support his reasoning. To name a couple of hot-button specifics, the swastika has enough negative associations with the Third Reich's "Final Solution" that it's disingenuous to cite its former happy application as a Sanskrit health sign. Likewise, the authors of the Hammer and Sickle might have envisioned cheerful harvesters and happy mechanics, but to most of Europe it means Smash and Stab.

Most symbols are more ambivalent. The old rebel battle flag: is it a symbol of pure gumption and unconquered spirit or a fetish of slavery and lynching? You can get an argument either way. Are pentagrams Wiccan or Satanic?

It seems to me that what a symbol "means" is less important than its constructive effect on its viewers. Those who display a symbol have a limited obligation to consider what the neighbors will think of it and those who see a symbol have a limited obligation to consider the Official Interpretation.

That rule holds when everybody is being reasonably honest. There are cases of people using symbols to send one message and denying that's the one they meant. Mere numerical superiority must not be a determining factor (I'd hate to have the whole country vote on what the Mensa symbol "meant" - most would probably say a little man with a big head.) The soundest judgment of a symbol's meaning is the history its advocates built up for it. On the ground, the swastika and the Soviet sign deserve their opprobrium, and, on the whole, so does the Confederate Flag.