

PUBLISHING STATEMENT

Central Indiana Mensa, a Local Group of American Mensa Ltd., publishes MIND monthly. Mensa, a not-for-profit organization open to all persons scoring in the 98th percentile on a standardized intelligence test, neither endorses nor opposes the opinions reported in MIND, which remain those of the individual contributors.

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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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MIND STAFF

Managing Editor: George Dunn, PO Box 50946, Indianapolis, IN 46250

Calendar Editor: [Marion Harcourt](#)

Proofreaders: Rhoda Israelov, Russ Washburne, Dom Jervis

Publisher: Nancy White

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MY PIECE OF MIND

GEORGE DUNN

Autumn again. Far from the solstices, the days are changing rapidly. From the first of October to the end of November the day's light will shorten by almost three hours. Even though we live with electric lighting and order our days by the clock we feel the ancient rhythms: time to eat more, sleep more, venture out less. The heats of summer have slackened but it's not yet time for the ice and snow and the often leaden skies.

Of course, it's still August as I write this. The early September election issue Just went to press and I'm cleaning up the articles on the floppies to get more disk space.

As you read this, it will be October and the Presidential Election Campaign will be at full boil. While not ordinarily a betting man, I can safely predict that our next Chief Executive will be the pampered son of a patrician political family, as much in touch with the working class as the King of England was with the American colonists.

* * *

We had a comparatively mod est response on our announced theme, "Sin." I don't know if this indicates Central Indiana Mensans aren't interested in sin, or if they simply feel they should defer their contributions to the subject until those who know it better have had the forum.

It's a little surprising, because this topic was one of the top ten selected by the regular writers in last year's survey. (Of course, the surprise is mitigated by the knowledge that the number one topic, Prison Reform, was not well supported either.)

I suspect - and this is just my theory - that the contributors tend to shy away from "serious" topics in favor of "fluffier" ones. On that basis, I can provide more of the latter as monthly themes, but this raises a question of what the readers prefer to see. If the two inclinations run parallel, we should have no problem; we can just keep it light, except for the occasional Dom Jervis essay or debate over the value of Pi.

On the other hand, what if many people would like to find thoughtful articles, but just don't wish to provide them? Then, I think, we have a problem. Well, knowing that one has a problem is the first step in solving it, so since I don't know what the readers prefer unless they tell me, how about dropping me a line?

* * *

I understand the Outdoor Gathering not only went very well in terms of enjoyment, but even turned a small profit despite some last-minute cancellations. Seems as though Nancy White, Rhoda Israelov and crew deserve a hand.

* * *

EDITOR NEEDS STORAGE

Yes, friends, this is a call for help to someone one has unused cubic feet in a garage, attic or cellar. Archival MINDs and Exchange Newsletters are crowding out the Ed's living quarters. All materials would be delivered securely packaged and clearly labeled; all you'd have to do is keep them from moth and mildew. In exchange, you'd get your name on the masthead, along with an impressive title like "Director of the Repository" or "Shomer."

LOCSECTION

Grace Falvey

Welcome to the new ExCom members, and many thanks to the Election Committee: Chairman Roland Cook, Charlie Eldridge and Shirley Washburne.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to Rhoda Israelov, who has arranged for a fascinating variety of programs at our monthly meeting and who has included presentations by members as well as outside speakers

I'd also like to thank the Wards for hosting the Corn Roast at their home in Columbus. The weather cooperated again this year and we feasted under the trees.

WINNERS

The National Scholarship Program of the Mensa Education and Research Foundation has announced winners in this year's competition. Central Indiana Mensa has two winners: Amy Glovier of Pittsboro, \$200 for the Karen Cooper Memorial Scholarship; and Samantha Schavietello of Crawfordsville, \$500 for the John S. Matthews Scholarship. (The latter is a local group award that is administered by MERF.)

END OF AN ERA

Lancelot Ware, a British barrister who was the co-founder of Mensa, died August 15 in a nursing home at Surrey, England. He was 85.

Ware became interested in unusually bright people when his father died, leaving him to care for his sister, who was ten years younger than he. His realization that both of them were highly intelligent led to an interest in intelligence testing.

In 1945, when Ware was a post-graduate student of law at Lincoln College, Oxford, he met Roland Berrill, an eccentric barrister from Australia who had become fixated with Oxford since being rejected by the school. Together the two men founded an association for people with strong intellects.

Choosing a name proved difficult. Ware and Berrill first called their organization the High IQ Club, then considered changing it to "Mens," Latin for mind, but that was the name of a racy gentlemen's magazine, so they settled on "Mensa," even though they discovered that the word, which means table in Latin, also means idiot in Mexican slang.

The original object of Mensa was to create a list of names and addresses of 600 of the most intelligent people in Britain so they could be available as consultants to scholars and government officials in case of need. This idea did not pan out.

Mensa eventually developed as its goals identifying and fostering human intelligence for the benefit of humanity, encouraging research in the field of intelligence and promoting stimulating activities for its members. The rest is history.

LETTERS

Dear Editor:

I sent in my "Cat Names" [August, 2K] too soon, because I just remembered one of my favorites. A neighbor had a big gray Persian named "Fog." Everytime he would enter the room, people would grin, remembering the Sandburg poem.

Ember Skidmore
Central Iowa Mensa

To the Editor:

I belatedly but strongly object to the "Ask Rabbi Larry" piece in the August issue. Its depiction of a rabbi who hectors and abuses people that seek advice from him has a false ring, as I can testify from conversations I have had with rabbis and also from viewing their public appearances. This slanderous "parody" is the product of some bigot's (or self-hating Jew's) anti-Semitic fantasies of how a typical rabbi acts and talks and, as such, disgraces Mensa in general and this chapter in particular. Its ignorance and malice leads one to question the author's credentials for Mensa membership. He or she (I suspect the former) would do well to research the origins and meaning of the Yiddish word *rachmones* and explain how s(he) reconciles the persona of "Rabbi Larry Slashenburn" with that important Jewish value.

I urge this "new feature" be discontinued forthwith and that MIND apologize for soiling its pages and insulting a certain faction of its members with this garbage.

Sincerely,
John A. Goldberg

[*Rachmones is "mercy" or "compassion" -Ed*]

[*Always good to hear from long-time Mensans like John, even in heat. As I approved the "Rabbi Larry" parody, I think it fair to mention that the word "parody" rather indicates that a depiction is NOT "typical." Also, and without making the hint too broad, the parody may not be of rabbis as a class, but of a person who CALLS himself "Rabbi," much as another person might call h(er)imself "Doctor." -Ed again*]

LETTERS

To the Editor of MIND:

I don't find most written attempts at humor to be funny, but I must say I roared when I read your new advice column, "Ask Rabbi Larry." Could Larry, by any circumstance, be the secret ex-spouse of a certain "Dr. L." of radio notoriety? Talk about common sense with a twist - or is that twisted?

Here's a poser for the Rabbi: I've got this real problem. I have my nails done at a salon on Massachusetts Avenue, and I am usually in a rush and forget to have quarters ready for the parking meter. My manicurist became irate at my suggestion that she keep a jar of quarters to "sell" to the clients for just such contingencies. "You're a big girl - get your own act together and prepare your own quarters!" Rabbi, since she's the one with services to sell, shouldn't she be bending over backwards to accommodate the customers? And God Forbid you're late once in a while! If you miss an appointment - you have to pay for it anyway! (But who wants to catch a new manicurist up on my life story?) Just tell me it I'm not within my rights to expect more effort. Maybe this girl would listen to a Rabbi!

Rhoda Israelov

[Well, what do YOU think, Readers? Should "Rabbi Larry" risk *leshon ha-ra* and answer Rhoda's question?]

MINDBENDING HONOR ROLL - 2000

[H = Host]	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Dave A.	♥	♥	♥	♥		♥	♥					
Alison Brown				♥H								
Rocio Carrasco			♥									
Greg Crawford		♥	♥				♥	♥				
Janette Greene Dollar	♥											
George Dunn	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥			
Marcele Everest	♥H		♥H				♥H					
Grace Falvey			♥									
Carol Gould						♥						
Marion Harcourt	♥				♥H			♥H				
Jud Horning	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥		♥	♥				
Jerry Hunter		♥										
Rhoda Israelov						♥H						
Dom Jervis		♥		♥	♥		♥	♥	♥			
Lori Levine					♥							
Larry Marcus				♥								
Treva Marks		♥H				♥						
Bob Thomas	♥											
Doris Thomas	♥											
Russ Washburne									♥H			
Nancy White	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥		♥	♥			
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

Dick Goodhart

"Sinposium"

Setting:

A foggy late afternoon in a lakeshore cabin in Downeast Maine.

Cast:

Dick, a former Director of Unitarian Religious Education and the moderator;

B.J., a Humanities teacher and Rational Humanist;

Isaac, a psychologist and cynical liberal;

Juliet, a former librarian and Orthodox Rationalist;

Mary, a sometime teacher of English and religious conservative;

Robert, Chairman of a suburban school board and religious moderate.

Dick: I have a question. How do you define sin?

Isaac: Anything you like to do that I think is wrong.

Mary: Something you do that's bad or wrong or against the law.

B.J.: Anything you do that society opposes.

Robert: Some religious transgression, violating a religious prohibition...

Mary: Many people are sinners. Every religion recognizes evil and transgressions and so does every society. That's why there is so much terrible crime in the world.

Juliet: Well, everything is some kind of religious transgression.

B.J.: Some people use the concept of sin as a way to categorize any behavior they condemn.

Dick: Religious transgression is certainly the first definition of sin in any dictionary and religious writers generally define sin as any violation of God's rules or laws as defined by whoever is empowered by the particular sect to make such declarations; but how do you determine what sin is in a large multigroup society like ours, especially when there seems to be a specific constitutional prohibition against such religious association with our laws?

Isaac: It's still determined by religion. America is about the most religious society in the developed world; over 80% of Americans say they believe in God.

Robert: All religions should recognize sin; so should all societies. I think that there are real universal sins.

B.J.: One of the problems with using sin as a standard of prohibition is that religious sects disagree about what sin is, and Americans, of course, have many different religious beliefs.

Robert: Speaking of differing definitions of sin, I have a problem: my board has been asked for our policy on the Boy Scouts, now that they've won the right to discriminate against homosexuals.

Isaac: That's a sin.

B.J.: Nothing has changed in the Boy Scouts; there isn't any reason for you to change policy; they haven't changed theirs.

Robert: Yes, but we let them go into 4th or 5th grade classrooms and recruit for the Cub Scouts and they meet on the school grounds sometimes.

Isaac: Are they preaching sin?

Dick; Don't you let other groups do the same thing? If someone hassles you, tell them you're going to appoint a committee to study the problem.

Juliet: That's a politically correct solution.

Robert: Yes, but most people are agreed on sins as being these actions that are illegal or condemned by society.

Juliet: What are the Boy Scouts doing that's illegal or condemned?

Mary: There are different kinds of sins; how about Original Sin? How about mortal sin, or the Seven Deadly Sins, or the sins that cry out to God?

Robert: I think most people know a sin when they see or here of one. How about murder?

Juliet: I don't think there are any totally universal sins. Every so-called sin has a really weird definition or is praised as a virtue in some society.

Dick: For example, let's all take three generally agreed sins: murder, incest and cannibalism. All are prohibited by most religions and most societies (notice the "most"), but all are subject to shifting definitions. I suppose to many Catholics, abortion is murder, but it's not to most Americans. I think some people consider taking any life to be murder but most of us eat hamburger.

Incest is defined differently in many societies and not prohibited at all in some historic cases. The Egyptian culture lasted thousands of years but they apparently used the same word for sister and wife, and pharaohs were more or less required to marry their sisters, weren't they?

Mary: Certainly in modern times, incest is universally condemned but it is defined differently in some religions. For example, you have to marry outside of your clan, but your nephew, uncle or first cousin may be eligible.

Isaac: Orthodox Jewish widows are supposed to marry their brothers-in-law.

Juliet: If I die, will you have to marry my sister?

Isaac: NEVER!

Dick: Cannibalism is even stranger. When Cortez and the Spanish conquered Mexico, they viewed the Aztec practice of slaughtering captives by ripping their hearts out, biting them and then burning them and drinking the victims' blood...

B.J.: The hummingbird priests did this while clothed in the skins of their victims, didn't they?

Dick: Yes, and the Spaniards slaughtered those revolting priests, tore down their temple mound and replaced it with a cathedral. The newly baptized Aztecs must have been confused when they first saw the Spanish practicing ritualized symbolic cannibalism on the same site.

Isaac: What do you mean, "symbolic"; isn't the Mass supposed to be the actual transmutation [of bread and wine] into Christ's body and blood?

Mary: I think any sin depends on your religion. I think all religions and societies should recognize sin. Is there any religion that doesn't?

Isaac: I don't think Buddhists have sin as such, but they do say if you stray from the noble Eightfold Path, you will be neither happy nor enlightened.

B.J.: In a multigroup society like ours, where religion can't call the moral shots for all of us, we probably define sin as gross moral dereliction, and we change our definitions as society's consensus changes.

Robert: How about the Seven Deadly Sins: Pride, Anger, Lust...

Mary: Envy , Sloth, Greed, Gluttony.

Dick: That list, I think, was a medieval Christian product.

B.J.: Dante's inferno was built around that list. I think we've changed a lot of our definitions in the past few hundred years.

Dick: I did an Internet search on Sin and got a number of hits; there is a game called SinTM, a lot of porno sites, a Finnish professor who has written a couple of books on Medieval sin and witchcraft, and a strange site called deadlysins.com which may or may not be opposed to sin. That site did a Web search on the Seven Deadly Sins a couple of times and got interesting responses. What sin do you suppose got the frequent hits?

Isaac: Lust, of course.

Dick: Nope, Pride got over four times more hits. Here they are in order:

	webcrawler.com	infoseek.com
	12/99	9/97
Pride	19933	181589
Anger	11284	107039
Lust	4299	50458

Envy	3249	32776
Sloth	785	7259
Greed	271	2379
Gluttony	264	2200

Isaac: That kind of proves the point; some of those aren't considered sins any more...

Juliet: Yeah, Pride, for example: that's something to be proud of. Definitions of different sins keep changing. Yesterday's mortal sin may be tomorrow's virtue, even in the same culture.

Dick: Gandhi had a kind of Marxist take on sins; here's his list:

- Wealth without Work
- Pleasure without Conscience
- Science without Humanity
- Knowledge without Character
- Politics without Principle
- Commerce without Morality
- Worship without Sacrifice

B.J.: That's a kind of moral prescription. He wasn't talking about what you shouldn't do, rather how you should act

Isaac: Look where it got him.

Dick: Do you think we are all sinners, as the fundamentalist preachers claim?

Juliet: No.

Mary: Certainly. All real religions are agreed on that.

B.J. No, I don't think humanity should saddle itself with that kind of universal guilt.

Robert: That's a good point, but I think guilt is a part of human nature.

Isaac: YOU may be a sinner; I'M not.

Note: the symposium would have continued, but the wine ran out.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is it significant that even though the participants identify religion as the definer of sin, no one makes a claim on the authority of a particular religion?
2. Given that the Boy Scouts have not altered their position on a particular sin (homosexuality), but that social mores have created a new sin of "homophobia," have the Boy Scouts become sinners on

that account?

3. Do you agree with Juliet's statement that every sin is somewhere a virtue?
4. Does the argument about "shifting definitions" beg the question? Is murder always a sin, but does the sinfulness of a particular killing depend on what you mean by "murder"?
5. Does Transubstantiation make the Mass cannibalistic?
6. What of Aristotle's famous assertion that Vices are Virtues carried to excess?

Thomas Jay McAllister

Thoughts on SIN

Webster's defines sin as: 1. The willful breaking of religious or moral law. 2. Any offense or fault.

By Definition Two we are all sinners. We all have faults and we all commit offenses against others and ourselves. Indeed, all the great moral teachers and theologians make this a fundamental premise: that it is inherent in human nature to be a sinner. We all offend and are at fault, daily in my case.

Definition One, on the other hand, introduces the idea of a willful breaking of a religious or moral law. Here we humans have a great deal more latitude. Our consciences come into play, assuming the idea of a conscience is part of our belief system. We are allowed to redefine certain actions: sex, for example, based on our own notions of right and wrong.

For example I believe rape is a sin. Consensual sex may or may not be. Murder is sinful. Taking another life in self-defense is not. But what are we to think about war? What about willfully killing most of the populations of two major cities, as the United States did 55 years ago. Did President Truman sin when he decided to drop the Bomb? I don't believe so, but many in Japan would disagree. How can we judge this? None of us were there in 1945 in the Oval Office with the responsibility for risking hundreds of thousands of U.S. lives invading the Japanese home islands as the alternative. These types of moral alternatives are much tougher to decide.

Another example. As a practicing Roman Catholic, I have redefined some of the religious beliefs I was taught in 12 years of parochial school education. For one, I no longer believe artificial birth control is wrong. I changed my mind after the birth of my sixth child. I was 25 at the time, my wife was 24. I think we were better qualified to determine the relative sinfulness of artificial birth control than a group of aging celibate bachelors isolated in the Vatican. As a result of this decision, I also no longer believe in Papal infallibility in moral issues, although I think our modern Popes have been fine moral leaders. But the majority of American Catholics seem to share my own beliefs in this area and reject those of the Roman hierarchy.

Some people believe all non-marital sex is sinful. Others ask which behaviors, not technically adultery, undermine marriage and thus are sinful. Former President Jimmy Carter said that even the thought of adultery constitutes a sin. Others, even other Presidents, have a much more lenient standard.

As a single man in his late middle years, my own beliefs are somewhat lenient regarding single people having sex, but I believe that adultery is gravely wrong in that it undermines the core unit of society, marriage and family. I personally do not get involved with married women.

Perhaps it might be best if we keep our judgments on moral behaviors to ourselves, while still maintaining personal standards of right and wrong.

To Keep In MIND

Upcoming Gatherings and Events

*** 2000 ***	
Oct 12 - 15	IBD Meeting , Singapore; details www.mensa.org.sg/ifi/
Oct 27 - 29	HalloweeM 25, the Ag RG , Northbrook, IL (hotel not yet selected) ; Registration: \$50 to 8/31; \$55 to 9/30; \$60 after; Registrar Bill Slankard, 1909 Birchwood Ave. Arlington Heights, IL 60004-3501 registrar@chicago.us.mensa.org
December 1-3	The Reel Cincinnati RG [formerly <i>Millennium Madness</i>], Comfort Inn, 11440 Chester Road, Cincinnati, OH 45246; (513) 771-3400; rooms \$39.95; Registration \$55 to 10/31, %60 after, contact C. E. Reutter, _____ Cincinnati, OH 45220; (513)____-____; email: ReutterCE@aol.com [Note change from Andy Badger]

*** 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

*** 2003 ***	
July 2-6	Chicago AG?

Individual Achievement
Poetry
Basil Wentworth
"Basil"

MIND
Central Indiana Mensa
George Dunn, Editor
American Mensa, Ltd.
2000 Publications Recognition Program

B _____
A _____
S _____
I _____
L _____

by Basil Wentworth

153 - AGES OF MANKIND II

Shakespeare named, in the tales that he told,
All the ages our lives ought to hold,
 But nonage? He missed it--
 It should have been listed
As meaning that you're nine years old.

 When your daughter informs your menage
 That she'll wear a pink dress, and corsage
 To go with the dress,
 It means, I would guess,
 That her garbage is now her dressage.

My life has turned many a page;
My condition, if looks are a gauge,
 Is fit as a fiddle
 But flesh at my middle
Explains why they say "middle age".

 When your body, that lately had thrived,
 Now finds that its vigor's derived
 From nostrums, elixirs,
 And all kinds of fixers,
 Your pillage has surely arrived.

If you feel that the good life is through
And that only decay waits for you,
 And you seek, in distress,
 For a website address,
Why then, in my age should do.

* * * * *

 As the ages go hurrying through
 (Each one with its blessings for you)
 Who would care in what way
 You enjoy every day?
 Let it only suffice that you do.

Garden Astronomy

Even to modern science buffs accustomed to light-years and parsecs and galactic voids, our Solar System is still pretty well spread out for practical purposes. To get a feel for the space involved, imagine your house as the Sun (actually, imagine a sphere 432 cm - about 14 feet - in diameter, but a small house is close enough).

Now let this house be surrounded by a few pieces of fruit. For proper effect, don't clutter up the vista with streets or neighbors; let this be a cabin in the midst of a salt flat or icefield.

The first object from your door is **Mercury**, which, being 15mm on this scale, is represented by a grape. It's 178 meters away, about the length of a football stadium.

At 333 meters - over a thousand feet - is 38 mm **Venus**, a kumquat.

Earth is also a kumquat, 40 mm, at 480 meters.

Mars, last of the rocky planets is a large cherry, 21 mm, at 700 meters. .

Now remember, the "Inner" system of rocky worlds is conveniently separated from the giant planets of the "Outer" system by a few asteroids and a lot of nothing. **Jupiter**, a large pumpkin of 434 mm, is 2.4 kilometers away.

Saturn, a medium (362 mm) pumpkin, is 4.4 km.

Uranus, the first planet discovered since Classical times, is twice that, 8.8 km. At 158 mm, it could be a grapefruit.

Neptune is another grapefruit (153 mm), but it's 13.8 km (8 1/2 miles) off in the distance.

Pluto is still pretty close to Neptune's orbit, but at the extreme of its orbit, it should be a bit over 18 km (11 miles). At only 7 mm, it's the size of a blueberry.

In recapitulation:

Mercury	a grape	178 m	(580 feet)
Venus	a kumquat	333 m	(1100 feet)
Earth	a kumquat	460 m	(1500 feet)
Mars	a cherry	700 m	(2300 feet)
Jupiter	a pumpkin	2,400 m	(1 1/2 miles)
Saturn	a pumpkin	4,400 m	(2 3/4 miles)
Uranus	a grapefruit	8,800 m	(5 1/2 miles)
Neptune	a grapefruit	13,800 m	(8 1/2 miles)
Pluto	a blueberry	18,000m+	(11 miles)

MINDing the Money

July 6, 2000

To the Executive Committee of Central Indiana Mensa

I have examined the financial statements of Central Indiana Mensa for the twelve months ended March 31, 2000.

No irregularities or material errors were noted during my examination.

Important supplemental schedules, depicting the results of operations on a pro forma basis, are attached to my report.

As a result of my examination, it is my opinion that the financial statements of Central Indiana Mensa fairly represent, within the parameters and constraints of cash-basis accounting, its financial position for the twelve months ended March 31, 2000, in all material respects.

(signed)

Domenick Jervis
Central Indiana Mensa Audit Committee

This report was presented to the Executive Committee of Central Indiana Mensa at its meeting held August 20, 2000.

Copies of all supplemental schedules are available upon request.

Dom Jervis

The Power Lies Within You

Central Indiana Mensa (CIM) enters a new two-year term of leadership at a crossroads. Our group becoming dormant, or worse, is, unfortunately, a genuine possibility. The future will be determined less by the new Executive Committee (ExCom) than by you.

The attrition of too many volunteers, with too few successors, threatens our survival. Lately, it seems that CIM has not competed very well with the myriad of other diversions for the leisure time of its members. Ultimately, this situation will be resolved, one way or another. Remember, doing nothing is making a decision. If enough additional workers abdicate, monthly gatherings, MIND, and other activities could suffer. However, all is not lost.

Despite the common trait of having passed a test, we have a diverse montage of strengths. Herein lies the solution. Each individual possesses abilities which could benefit our group, often with minimal effort and relative ease. To spark your brainstorming synapses into action, I offer some of my own attributes and resulting activities.

- Proximity of my workplace to Riley Towers, and some physical strength left in my forty-two-year-old body => Setup for the Monthly Meetings.
- Thirteen years of experience as an auditor => Audit committee (Did you know we even had one?)
- Extensive work experience as a proofreader => Doing so for MIND.
- Writing as an avocation => Contributing to MIND.
- Most weekday evening tree, friendships with this event's regular participants, enjoyment of routine and a telling of accomplishment => working at MINDBending.
- A passion for trivia => Member of our Culture Quest team.
- Proximity of my workplace to the Canary Cafe => Attendance at Lunch Bunch, work schedule permitting.
- The ability to make practical, sometimes tough, decisions => Member of your ExCom.

The common trait of these tasks is that I find them to be easy. Certainly, there are roles incompatible with my skills, but others have abilities that would serve those needs well. The idea, my friends, is to share what you enjoy and/or do more easily than others can.

A burdensome time commitment is not necessary. Much value can be added with relatively little time. Two or three hours (the time spent at a Monthly Meeting), twice per year, would make a significant contribution. Multiplied times the number of members we could entice into becoming active, or more active, this could create a potential tidal wave of benefit.

One might wonder, "What could I easily contribute?" Do you have a home suitable to host a MINDBending, games night, or discussion group? These are among our most pressing needs. You will be reimbursed for food and other expenses, or attendees can bring food to share. Participants will also help you dean up afterward. Are you a member of a SIG? Finding others in our local group who share your interest is as easy as posting a message on MIND's Bulletin Board, and it's free. Are you single and searching? Coordinate a singles night. Do you live too far from Indianapolis, Kokomo, or Bloomington to attend their events, but near other Mensans? Start a sub-group. This would be a great way to get more for you annual dues! Do you disapprove of CIM's leadership, and think you could do better? The ExCom will have a vacancy during the next two years. Reading these ideas and gleanings several times will give you an idea suitable to your particular skills, if you give them a chance.

Exacerbating our situation is the fact that some members have indicated that they have "paid their dues" with regard to contributing to the labor pool. This attitude creates two concerns.

During a business trip, an associate supposedly asked chewing gum magnate William Wrigley, "Why do you continue to spend so much on advertising? Your products enjoy wide name recognition. You maintain a dominant market share, and your company is very profitable." Mr. Wrigley allegedly replied, "Why don't they just disconnect the locomotive from the train? It seems to be running just fine." True or not, the point is that if our chapter is to survive, no one should feel that they have earned the right to retire from active participation. It for no other reason, your experience is sorely needed. This leads to my second point.

If you have successfully coordinated an event, you possess invaluable knowledge. Mentoring a new (or even a not-so-new) member would help continue or revitalize it, and help the successor avoid pitfalls. What better mark could one leave than to help perpetuate a once-successful gathering? An enduring friendship might even transpire from such a collaborative effort.

Our short-term future may lie in low-maintenance initiatives. This is not necessarily bad. Examples would be the Kokomo Breakfast and Carmel; Ham n' Eggs. A date, time and place is noted in MIND. There is no registration. Each participant pays his/her own way. From such events, friendships can form. Common interests can be determined. Projects commensurate with these interests can be initiated, which could grow into one which more members could embrace. If it doesn't work, something else will take its place. The point is, we must start somewhere. We need to start convening, and the more who do so, the better. The current malaise did not transpire overnight, and it will not be corrected overnight, but the first step must be taken.

If the extent of our chapter's activities is limited to the Monthly Meetings, the publishing of MIND, and a few other sporadic, peripheral events, than this would be a shame, for we have so much more to offer each other.

Are you willing to be part of the solution?

[Passing over my umbrage at the association of MIND with other "sporadic, peripheral" activities as possibly parochial on my part, I think Dom makes a good point in that contributions need not become burdensome commitments. Whenever there's much talk of "Situation Desperate - Hero Needed," a!! we non-heroes become reluctant to step forward lest we find ourselves in the situation of Hercules after Atlas asked him to hold something for a minute. Unfortunately, some duties are, if not burdens, at least responsibilities and the great majority of Mensans didn't join so they could have more responsibility. The challenge for the leadership is to find things for the members to do that are first fun and second useful. - Ed]

THE CANTERING CURMUDGEON

A Grumpy Look at Modern Life

Which would you call the lamer choice for the "hold" sounds of your local "too busy to serve the customer" business: crappy music or a recorded voice telling you how good the company is? Wait! The envelope, please. And the winner is...the periodic announcement, "Your call is very important to us. Please continue to hold."

While we're on the subject of business calls, how would you rank-order these popular responses: 1) "I'm new here" 2) "He's not answering his phone" 3) "Would you like to hold?" My personal favorite: "You should call (giving the number from which you were just referred)."

And for those occasions when nobody but the robot answers the phone, what could beat a message informing you to call back during regular business hours **when that's when you're calling?**

Well, enough of the phone for awhile; whaddaya think of the people who park outside the convenience store not-quite-at-the-gas-pumps (`cause they're not getting gas) but close enough to them that the people who are getting gas can't pull away until these jerks get their smokes, Powerballs® and Twinkies™?

True Story: I asked a local business to take me off their mailing list. Of course I continued to get solicitations for several months because they had my name on several lists. I had to get a little forceful. With nothing for two months, it was beginning to look like they'd gotten the message when I received another begging letter. Staring in disbelief at the envelope they'd had the chutzpah to send me, I noticed the pre-printed mailing label: there, between the street address and the city, was the line, "Do Not Solicit!!!"

Speaking of strange labels, I get one of these "New Age" catalogs that sells all manner of esoteric self-improvement gear (some of it actually useful) which has been hawking "Tachion" products for years. [I assume all Mensans know that tachyons are theorized faster-than-light particles which (if they exist) *do not interact* with our Einsteinian universe.] This little difficulty hasn't inhibited hucksters from claiming to have put them into bottles, probably ones that formerly held Chief Wahoo's Electric Tonic.

Well, the news is that they've changed the spelling from "tachion" to "tachyon." Either a copywriter actually looked up the word or else the legal department decided they couldn't be sued for false advertising since no one could prove there *weren't* real tachyons in the product.

Closing thought - If returning your pushcart to the store instead of leaving it in the parking lot "saves you money," would you save even more if you returned two or three?

Later, the Tuscarora George Dunn

Forgiving / Enabling

The best virtue, Paul says, is Charity, or compassion for the trials of others. From this flows the desire to do something to relieve such suffering, or at least not to add to it.

The essence of charity is not monetary largesse, which is about the only way we use the word nowadays, but a mindfulness of the advice uttered by someone far less eloquent than Paul: "Be kind; anyone you meet could be having a bad day."

It's no great trick, after all, to act pleasantly towards likable people or to put ourselves out for our children, lovers, bosses and others in whom we have an interest. The test of charity comes when we forgive the booby who dropped our Grandmother's vase after we warned him not to pick it up or when we decline to prosecute the "good" kid whose shoplifting conviction could ruin his chances at West Point.

When we're hurt, we experience a natural hunger for vengeance which is precisely what makes charity such a noble sentiment.

Aware of this, men in suits periodically launch appeals to our better natures to forgive miscreants of their party and station, even while quietly dropping the hammer on less celebrated rascals.

Which brings us to the downside of forgiving: "enabling." For every Jean Valjean who becomes a saint because he meets one,¹ there are numbers of people for whom an act of charity causes their gleeful inner voices to shout, "Sucker!"

The Church that Paul founded took a very sensible view of forgiving people: they got their forgiveness after they repented.

Of course, the devil's in the details, and a lot of folks are very skilled at shows of repentance, swearing oaths "solemn and astonishing"² and dropping tears big enough to impress a Nile crocodile. Also, some forgivers can be pretty severe about the repentance, so much so that it's hard to tell it from punishment. Unfortunately, these types aren't reliably paired off against each other.

Like so much else, it comes down to balance: we can be excessive in either passing out pardon or in putting the truly remorseful through the wringer. To my mind, the best measure of the proper liberality of forgiveness is how much effort the penitent is willing to put into cleaning up the mess he made. No amount of groveling, no arguments of how much a malefactor has already suffered (usually meaning the embarrassment of being caught) and no assurances of future rectitude weigh as much as a straightforward, "I'll pay the damages." Beware especially of the arguments that the calamity is too colossal to be set right ("I can't bring them back to life") or that the evils are too ancient and intricate ever to be completely straightened out ("Let bygones be bygones"). The claim that an offense is not totally repairable is not an excuse for continuing to enjoy the benefits of committing it.³

¹Victor Hugo, Les Miserables

²J.R.R. Tolkien, Farmer Giles of Ham

³Shakespeare, Hamlet, III, 3

Sin and the Bridge Puzzle

This is a little story that asks the reader to rank-order sins. It's appeared here before, but this is just too appropriate an issue to omit it.

In some primitive country, a young woman is married to an older man she doesn't love who treats her poorly, though not brutally. While he is at his work, she visits a young lover who lives on the other side of a great river, which is spanned by a single bridge.

One day, the woman is trysting and she loses track of the time. (She always goes back home before her husband returns). Now it is growing dark and the usual bridge traffic has left, leaving just one suspicious-looking character loitering around. Afraid, the woman goes to her lover and asks him to escort her across, but he refuses. Growing desperate, she finds a boatman and asks him to take her across. He agrees, but asks for money first. She returns to her lover and asks him for the fare, but again he refuses her. Now greatly agitated and fearful of what will happen if her husband discovers her not at home, she tries the bridge alone where the loiterer, a robber as she suspected, kills her.

What are the sins of 1) the woman; 2) the husband; 3) the lover; 4) the boatman and 5) the robber, and which is the worst?

Foot-in-Mouth Achievements

(largely lifted from The December 99 **4M** of Manasota Mensa, Edgar Coudal, Ed.)

George W. Bush, on the common touch: "I know how hard it is to put food on your family."

Hilliary Rodham Clinton, on the fourth estate: "I'm not going to have some reporters pawing through our paper. We are the President."

New York Mayor **David Dinkins**: "I haven't committed a crime. What I did was fail to comply with the law."

DC Mayor **Marion Barry**: "Outside of the killings, Washington has one of the lowest crime rates in the country."

Boston Mayor **Menino**, on the shortage of parking spaces: "It's like an Alcatraz around my neck."

Actress **Brooke Shields**, on the dangers of smoking: "If you're killed, you've lost a very important part of your life."

Basketball player **Jason Kidd**: "We're going to turn this team around 360 degrees."

Australian cabinet minister **Keppel Enderbery**: "Traditionally, most of

Australia's imports come from overseas."

Basketball player **Winston Bennett**: "I've never had major knee surgery on any other part of my body."