

Excerpts from the September 1999 MIND

The Newsletter of
[Central Indiana Mensa](#)

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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.

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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MIND Archives

MY PIECE OF MIND

GEORGE DUNN

It may be that the most interesting aspect of this job ("interesting" as in, "May you live in interesting times") is that I never know what is going to set someone off. Actually, I fancy myself quite the provocateur and I've tried from time to time to introduce issues calculated to draw some heat. In the last few years we've asked readers to comment on Obnoxious Mensans, Crimes Against Humanity and Genetic Engineering, among other "spicy" topics. And what do the readers - bless 'em - charge their verbal muskets to shoot? Whether or not the Bible says Pi Equals Three and how dare the Editor chop long but brilliant articles.

Last month I mentioned the "Hyatt-Regency Curse," which, for those who weren't attentive, and at the risk of stirring the pot, was that AGs held at H-R hotels seemed to have trouble with Hospitality. Well, you'd have thought I claimed there were rodent droppings in Roselyn Bakeries'... (Oh, yeah -- well, that's another story). Anyway, some folks let me know there is no Hyatt-Regency Curse - in the most unambiguous terms.

Chill out, guys and gals: said "curse" is part of Mensa folklore, not an article of scientific determinism. You might liken it to the so-called "Kennedy Curse," which, unhappily, caught the spotlight again just before last month's MIND came out. A number of events seem to form a pattern; somebody announces it, and thereafter people look to see the pattern confirmed. A string of

misfortunes, either grim, as with the Kennedys, or merely exasperating, gets called a "curse" if it goes on awhile.

Neither was it my intention to slam the Orange County AG; in most other areas it received positive reports and I mentioned them.

Skinner, founder of "Hell's M's" and editor of its newsletter, "Party Smart," wisely declines to grade RGs lest the less well-praised Groups engage in what is genteelly called a "whizzing contest." I also think stacking and racking volunteer-run conventions is counter-productive. However, AGs, which the host Groups will nto repeat at least within the tenure of their current ExComs, are considerably less vulnerable to criticism and what happens there is, to a degree, news.

Local Group newsletters, of course, are not Mother Jones, nor even George; we don't have some mandate to call public attention to every skid mark on the organizastional underwear. At the same time, even The Daily Worker has some obligation to acknowledge what the readership already knows, if it wishes to keep its credibility.

Those who attend Gatherings, which are in many ways the best part of Mensa, know from experience and rumor the perils of the adventure; they recall the time the heating plant couldn't keep up with the blizzard; the constantly out-of-service elevators, the falling ceiling tiles, the freight pilots who wouldn't vacate their rooms, the brown shower water (this wasn't all the same RG, you realize). And yet, they continue to send in their registrations because the balance is still far on the plus side.

I hope everyone who reads MIND can trust it to tell the truth; a truth of opinion, to be sure, but in a forum open to all opinions.

Whew! I guess I took too much time standing up for truth and justice again. Well, last month the LocSec got two pages, so this month I'll use them.

This is the time of year for Full Mailings, wherein Local Groups send one issue of their newsletters to all the other Local Groups in hopes of enticing the Editors to select their efforts for the Corporate Subscription list. This is part of the fun of being Editor, getting to read the 100+ little magazines in August and September.

One of the prime considerations for one editor subscribing to another's newsletter is the volume of clever stuff he/she can lift for his/her own newsletter. Editors know this, so we try to lay on some of our choicest stuff. Or, as Johnny Carson characterized the TV programming during the "sweeps"; "Sex and Nazis."

Of course, our professional standards would never permit us to use "ringer" material uncharacteristic of our usual quality, but a little showmanship is expected. The best example so far has been East Texas Mensa SpectruM's venerable editor Charles Dixon's use of his Mail Merge to create personalized covers for his targets. Mine reads "Special Edition for George L. Dunn," just like those "The Dunn Family May Already Be A Winner" doodads. However, I could almost believe this one, because he reprinted my favoritissimo Dixon article, "Paleozoic Calendars," which has delighted me for over ten years and which I have reprinted for your enjoyment in this issue.

You might think it's a little disingenuous of me to take this opportunity to snag what I know is a blockbuster for my Full Mailing, but I assure you this is a serendipitous prod for a long-standing intention. Besides, we Eds shuffle the good stuff around without blushing at possible supersaturation. Thus I can

read a clever astronomy quiz by Donna Myhrer in Minnesota's M.E.N.S.A.G.E.N.D.A and get the answers to it from the St. Louis' MSLaneous.

By the way, I produced a little mailing of my own to the MIND's most valuable contributing writers (if you got one, you know you are; if you didn't but want to be, you can ask me for same): a list of proposed monthly themes, for their feedback.

Interesting results: four folks (all male) shot back immediately, then one of the fair sex, then another fella. Out of a pretty long list they cited five themes they really liked and the runaway winner was -- ready? -- the American penal system, so expect this one after the new year. Other highly regarded topics were Addictive Behavior, Ticket Scalpers, The Loss of Civility and The Worst Job I Ever Had. Am I allowing myself to be influenced by the gender mix, or is this kind of a "macho" set of interests? Well, I don't intend to go strictly by what the writers indicate, but let's face it, those at the oars have a big influence on which way the boat points.

Nearly two dozen folks made the trek to Columbus for the Ward's hosting of the John Matthews Memorial Corn Roast. Thanks to the good neighbors, there were seats for all, but especially for me - I got the hammock.

A last minute report carries news of the death of former Mensan John Hartman on 15 August. John hosted many MINDBendings and was active at the OGs.

LOCSECTION

Grace Falvey

Freebies

Happy Birthday! To whom? To all of you, maybe.

Beginning in September, there will be a three-month trial period during which members will be admitted free to the monthly meeting in the month in which their birthdays occur. If we don't go broke, the idea will probably become policy.

In addition to the free ride, there may be cake and candles, but no, you will not be asked to tell anybody how many candles would be appropriate for your cake. We will check your driver's license, but we won't notice the year of birth.

Regional Gathering

In what I consider to be a less-than-ideal situation, the ExCom has become an ad hoc planning committee for next year's Indianapolis RG. This does NOT mean everything is taken care of. We can't pull off an RG without lots of helping hands in the Hospitality room and at the Registration table, and it's pretty embarrassing to have to draft visitors from other states to get the

work done.

Come to that, it's pretty embarrassing that more of our local members do not attend the RG. It's not just the same old crowd: there will be people from several other states. And where else, at the end of January, could you spend a weekend in the Midwest lounging under green trees in the sunlight, cavorting in a swimming pool, being entertained in a variety of ways, and noshing endlessly at no extra charge?

You like games? The RG has games. Books? A dollar book sale to die for. Would you like to look good on the dance floor? Come and learn swing dancing. I keep urging you not to miss any more of Mensa's great parties, and our RG should be at the top of your must-do list.

LETTERS

Hello, MIND People:

I'm not a member but I've come across your June newsletter and am responding to the topic "They Should Pass a Law."

[Kerra's article appears in this issue - Ed]

Was Dom Jervis serious about his views on animal rights (or the lack thereof) or was he trying to push buttons? For the record, he made me wince and then frown and finally I cried.

All hail Kugels!

[Kugels was Julie's ballsy kitten whose story appeared in the June issue]

Kerra Fowler
RR1 Box 33204
Mitchell, IN 47446

Dear George,

As I've told you before, I appreciate your hard work as editor of MIND, and I enjoy your critiques, comments and capable cropping, clipping and collation of contributions from conscientious contributors and contentious combatants.

It goes without saying that I don't always agree with your opinions, but it seems obvious to me that your expressed feelings about certain entries and essays come from the heart and are sincere -- not based on egotism or a wish to appear "above all of this."

You may use this and print this as a "Letter to the Editor" if you wish, since that's what it is. Whether you do or not, keep up the good work!

Sincerely, Dave Huey (Justin's dad)

[*Dave, such delightfully deliberate declarations of devotion definitely deserve denouncement* - De Ed*] * archaic sense: Proclamation or announcement

To the Editor:

What a wonderful piece of fiction was Robert O. Adair's "Mr. Mazurkian" (July). Though the ending was somewhat telegraphed, there were some quite unexpected wrinkles, including one sentence that wrote of the "magician's beautiful assistants" followed by the next which described "smaller chests and boxes." Why, Bob, I didn't know you had it in you!

Carter Druze

Kerra Fowler

They Should Pass A Law?

First, I will share my ideal (fantasy) of law and order. That would be, quite simply, fewer regulations, harsher punishments, allowing the people to settle many of their own disputes (i.e., someone rapes a family member and the head of the household deals with the perpetrator as he/she sees fit) and much fewer but better situated law enforcement (Texas Rangers come to mind, as does Marty Robbins' "Ranger with the big iron on his hip"). These ideas worked well in situations such as the old west, in ancient and modern tribal communities, at the gathering of the Rainbow Family of the Living Light and other smaller groups of people.

Today there are just too many people to run things this way. "They" keep passing new laws to compensate. I believe it's plain that these laws aren't doing much good. Crime may drop in certain areas or statistically across the board, but people are not becoming a higher class of folks. Additionally, there are always more of them being born and raised to fit into a world that promotes lawless behavior. (I am assuming I don't need to elaborate on that particular idea.)

So, I say that no, more laws are not effective. What would be? I can see only one solution to this madness we live in and that would be a thorough, heavy culling. There are too many people of such low quality who will never behave in a civilized, intelligent, respectful manner. These legions of humans are ever procreating to make even more basically useless, dangerous individuals. The population of the planet must be drastically cut for there to be any true law and order. In the meantime there will be more laws making more people angry as the soft, downy pillow of government is pushed tighter to our lives. When the majority is on the verge of suffocation and realizes the profoundness of "Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose" the culling process will begin.

Who will carry it out? God? World Powers? Space aliens? Perhaps a funny little microbe? I haven't an opinion on that one. Lack of information, I'll call it.

All I can see in store for the future of law and order is more talk, piddle and pussylooting around. That is, until the little guy's camel just can't take any more straw.

[Brrrr. Well, to paraphrase an old MTM quote, the subtext missed all the whimsy: vigilante justice is a tempting alternative to bloated and bumbling bureaucracies, but no solution is more likely to illustrate the law of Unintended Consequences. The catch to "culling" as a Final Solution is that it is always implicit that the group conducting it is automatically exempt from it themselves. That's the absolute power Lord Acton cited for its pernicious effect. Initial noble intentions are no match for the seductive realization that one can Get Away With Murder.

I don't know how well things ran at the RF of the LL, but tribal customs and the "Code of the West" don't survive close inspection as models of justice. Texas Rangers enjoy good press today, but guys with "iron on their hips" out to deal with "low quality" people have traditionally identified those as blacks, Hispanics, Jews, Catholics, Slavs, homosexuals, epileptics, retarded people, nearsighted people... Somehow, "we" never expect to be "them," but we often are. -Ed]

"Carter Druze"

What laws would I pass if I were dictator or king?

The first would be the simplest. I would require that all floors on all elevators be labeled "1" for the floor nearest the ground, "2" for the one immediately above, "3" for the next and so on. Floors below ground would be designated "a," "b," "c," etc. This would eliminate all the confusion which attends those pesky "mezzanine," "lobby" and "ground" designations. I would also require all entry doors to open outward.

The next law would provide new flags for the asking. Seeing the Stars and Stripes in tatters or faded just doesn't cut it. Along those lines, I would ban Honda's sponsorship of the Little League.

Near the top of my list would be a reorganization of our government, discontinuing the several states and their entangled and oftentimes conflicting local laws. This would have the side benefit of eliminating that anachronism, the Electoral College. Instead, a centralized national government, with subsidiary regional authorities, would be in place. Our national elections would be by direct Popular vote. It would be about time!

Since money makes the world go around, there are several statutes which I would push hard and heavy - First, all restaurants would be required to fairly price their entrees and fairly pay their waitstaff: No more tips. Second, inheritance would be forbidden. All of us would start out on a level (leveler?) playing field and none of us would get that free ride.

Another dollars and cents law would take schools off property tax rolls. For too long, poor tax districts have had poor schools, while affluent neighborhoods have gotten planetariums, low student/teacher ratios and PhDs. Equality in education is past due. Poverty and/or wealth should not be perpetuated. A student's fate should be determined by merit, not by luck of his birthplace.

Speaking of merit, I sure as hell would ax Affirmative Action.

I would also ax the Indianapolis Police Department. Those bullies with a badge are a disgrace. Have you noticed that the State Police and the County Sheriff are almost never involved in Michael Taylor and Fred Sanders sorts of actions? Nor were those respectable officers involved in the Downtown Brawl. It's always IPD. They should go. The County Sheriff can take over.

I would also pass a law that any Liberal who utters the word "Rights" must also utter the word "Responsibilities" just as often. I would enact laws that would define unsolicited "Witnessing" as Religious Harassment, much the same as unsolicited gender badgering is deemed Sexual Harassment.

Not radical enough for you? Well, here's some more. I would enact laws to the effect that parents who choose to have kids they cannot feed are just as guilty of child neglect as parents who have children they *will* not feed. In both cases, the irresponsible actions of adults result in hungry and needy children. End of story.

Another law would create programs to determine which species are truly endangered and then exterminate them! This would be a little like eating the last cookie and then throwing away the empty package. Fat-assed, army boot-wearing feminists would be the first endangered species on my list.

Finally I would enact a law which would crucify editors who create topics like this one.

David Vaprin

Of course They Should Pass A Law -- sometimes. That's the "common sense" position. It is as mindless to condemn legislation because it involves the Government as it is to believe we can solve every problem in the House of Representatives.

I call it the common sense view because most Americans would endorse some version. This may be less true in other cultures, such as Japan, where lawsuits are not how social conflicts are solved. But there is a price for being a country with few lawyers. The Japanese face terrific social pressure to conform and do not rebel even against politicians who give them endless recession. In spite of tiresome litigiousness and annoying paperwork, the USA will continue to use laws to solve problems.

Both anarchists and libertarians claim to be "against all those laws." Anarchists are serious thinkers, but no genuinely anarchist organization has ever survived serious conflict. From feminist bookstores to the Spanish Republic, when trouble came, either a power structure emerged or the organization dissolved. (Could fascism have been stopped in Spain if someone other than the Communist Party had been that power structure?)

Libertarians reason acutely about everything except the monstrous greed of private powers, which always use government as a tool to keep themselves on top. In a more democratic society, the majority of "losers" -- everybody but the rich and powerful -- demand that government protect them from the rapacity of the winners. Libertarians say that this conflict between private power and powerless majority should not involve government and politics. But that is merely a pious and utopian wish.

It is very easy to demand laws that are good for us and condemn laws that serve other people. Rich people hate taxes and love curbing unions. Correct thinkers want to make life miserable for smokers but condemn laws that make life miser-able for homosexual couples. The NRA fights laws that restrict real guns but endorses laws that restrict pictures of guns in the movies. Is there no way to decide what kinds of laws are "good" for reasons other than selfish interests?

The way requires developing standards of freedom and justice first, then testing laws by those standards, even laws in our personal interest. To judge

our standards, we ask ourselves what society would look like if our views prevailed. For instance, those who look exclusively to religious texts as the source of good laws have given us examples of what their governments would look like -- like the Spanish Inquisition, or Protestant Geneva, or Iran under the Ayatollahs. Those who believe in strong, Constitutional government -- where the majority makes laws but its power is limited -- can point to the United States or Great Britain.

I believe that laws should protect the weak from the strong, the dissenter from the majority, the environment from ruin. Tax laws should limit the wealth of the rich, but I also believe that, whatever their goals, many laws are ineffective, counterproductive or plain stupid.

I feel safe in assuming I have not completed the list of laws that might be "good," or properly elaborated the sense of caution I have for fear that many laws will turn out bad. But I do know better than to waste time condemning the government or the laws indiscriminately.

BULLETIN BOARD

Petra Ritchie:

Glee and Sympathy

Sharing with those Mensans who are having memorable experiences of one sort or another.

If you know of a Mensan who has suffered a setback **or** who has something to celebrate, (*especially* something 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

Herman Hagemier: Extracts from my forthcoming book on Physics which have been published in MIND over the last several months must be discontinued to preserve the copyright for the new publisher. Please be aware that all Hagemier articles in MIND are protected by copyright and no one may republish them individually or as a collection without

Russ Washburne:

Proctored Mensa
Admissions Test

Saturday, September 11
Saturday, November 13
2:00 p.m.

(317) 839-9282 for details

(You want your friends to be members, too, don't you?)

Nancy White: Please contribute books in good condition to the Monthly Book Sale.

Marie Beltrame: I miss my friends in Central Indiana Mensa! Even though I am now far away in real distance, won't you keep in touch with me in cyberspace? Either MarieBeltrame@juno.com or Beltrame@fls.infi.net

Shirley Washburne: The date and location for the Inaugural Episode of the Cheap Movie SIG will occur at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 9th, at Encore Moviez, 3 miles West of I-465 on Rockville Road. This should give us time to decide what to see! The freight is \$2 +

express permission from the author.

popcorn or whatever. Check the movies page in the paper for new titles. Call Shirley Washburne at 839-9282 for further information or to discuss options!

To Keep In MIND

Upcoming Gatherings and Events

*** 1999 ***	
September 3-6	Rivers III ; RG Chair: Bob Heasley, Sewickley, PA; bheasley@usaor.net Registration \$40 (checks to Western Pennsylvania Mensa)
October 1-3	Mensa Rocks Aurora Woodlands Hotel, 800 N. Aurora Road, Aurora, OH 44202-9516; (800) 877-7849 or (33)[sic] 995-3172; Rooms \$59; Registration \$55 to 9/15; \$60 after; checks: CAM-RG 1999. Registrar Dave Michel, POB 1236, Willoughby OH 44096-1236; email: ikillgore_dmichel@compuserve.com NOTE NEW LOCALE.
October 15-17	Hollywood, FL. Contact Jay Bertolet.
October 29-31	HalloweeM 24 Arlington Park Hilton, 3400 W. Euclid, Arlington Heights, IL 60005-1099 (847) 394-2000; fax (847) 394-2095; rooms \$79 (reserve by 10/08 and mention Mensa); Registration \$45 thru 7/31, \$50 thru 9/15, \$55 thru 10/15; \$60 after; Bill Slankard, Registrar, Arlington Heights, IL. email: weem-registrar@chicago.us.mensa.org . Website: www.chicago.us.mensa.org/
December 3-5	AMC Meeting , Minneapolis MN. Contact: Judith C. Hogan.
December 10-12	Cincinnati Area mensa , Countdown.

*** 2000 ***	
January 28-30	Circle City RG: Y2K Survivors' Party. Waterfront Plaza Hotel, 2930 Waterfront Parkway West, Indianapolis, IN 46214; (317) 299-8400; rooms \$62, mention Mensa; registrar Karen Wilczewski . rates \$40 until K-122 (9/1); \$45 to K-92 (10/1); \$50 to K-31 (12/1); \$55 to 1/1/00; \$60 thereafter.
July 5-9	Delaware Valley Mensa AG (Philadelphia) (Joint AG with Mensa Canada)

*** 2001 ***	
July 4-8	North Texas Mensa AG (Dallas)

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

Dom Jervis

There Ought to Be a Law?

One of the worst problems in our nation is that there are already too many laws! I would support a candidate who promised to delete two superfluous laws for each new statute enacted during his/her administration.

Personally, I wouldn't mind seeing the following offenses punished by public caning:

- * Playing loud music (especially Rap) at a stoplight;
- * Asking a question with "Why" (especially "Why did/didn't you ... ?");
- * Starting a sentence with, "You should/shouldn't have ... ";
- * Promoting someone to a managerial position who has the sensitivity of Saddam Hussein and the mental acumen of Beavis and Butthead;
- * Telemarketing (triple the number of lashes for doing so during the dinner hour)

Unfortunately, new laws against these crimes could not be realistically enforced. For the first three, your iciest possible glare might be the best feasible sanction. Just be careful with the first. Getting another job (as I did) solves the fourth. A steep nuisance tax levied on the fifth might help.

As you will see, it would not be difficult to find ten laws to abolish, in order to make room for these five. An entertaining book on this topic is Looney Laws and Silly Statutes, by Sheryl Lindsell-Roberts. From its ninety-six pages, I offer the following as the...

Top Ten Looney Laws

10. Nebraska tavern owners may not sell beer unless soup is cooking at the same time. [Does the soup have to be fresh?]
9. In Minnesota, you risk going to jail if you are found standing in front of a moving train. [If you survive, you get to deal with Governor Jesse.]
8. In Indiana, a parent cannot drink beer if a child is in the room. [How much fun would it be to catch a legislator doing this?]
7. In Whitesville, Delaware, a woman may not propose marriage to a man. [Freedom of Speech, void where prohibited by law.]
6. In Miami, it's against the law to molest an alligator. [Talk about going before the judge without a leg to stand on!]
5. It is illegal to shoot open a can of food in Indiana. [Note to self: Bring three can openers to the RG, and no guns!]
4. If you are sending a box of candy to your sweetest in Idaho, it must weigh a

minimum of 50 pounds.

3. Kids in Fort Wayne, Indiana, can't sell their parents' jewelry. [Not even to raise bail money for violating #8?]

2. Taking a bath during the winter months is illegal in Indiana. [Memo to RG Chair: change the date.]

And the number one looney law is:

1. In New York, blind men are forbidden to drive automobiles. [I presume that buses are provided for NFL referees.]

RVC.Comm by Will Steinke

When I was Assistant Regional Vice Chairman (RVC), I called my column "Communications," so a natural extension and to stay in the vernacular of our current time I have opted to entitle my future columns "RVC.Comm."

I just got back from Long Beach CA's Annual Gathering (AG) a.k.a. the Big One where the weather was clearer and cooler than Chicago, and I didn't even pack a jacket. There were many other surprises too.

Editor's note: Column edited for space here. Will recounted the winners and losers in the various publication awards categories at the AG. The complete text is available on our Website: www.a1.com/indymensa/

After the newsletter awards, Gordon Anderson presented a National Service Award to Russ Washburne of Central Indiana Mensa for his many years of regional and national service, including four years as RVC, consulting on the national office's computer system, and assisting in the move from Brooklyn to Dallas. Dave Remine presented a National Chairman's Service Award to Dave Angulo for his work on the national website.

Group of the Year Award (GOTYA):

Cat Sterrett (National Membership Officer) presented the first annual GOTYAs. There were five award categories Class I through Class V. "The competition would identify and reward those local groups that accomplish a myriad of tasks relating to membership: Increasing membership numbers, participation in various Mensa gatherings and activities, and submitting timely administrative reports to the National Office." Local groups were required to send in an entry application; participation was not automatic. Our region had one winner, in Class I Chicago Area Mensa won with 193 points.

Dan Burg announced the CultureQuest X Awards (over 18) and CultureQuest: The Next Generation (18 and under). In the CultureQuest X category, Arch Rivals of St. Louis Area Mensa came in fourth, while in The next Generation category, The Hegemons of Chicago Area Mensa came in first and The Duckbilled Platypi of St. Louis Area Mensa came in second.

Two of our other regional groups deserve recognition for success in the area of retention and recruitment. Sangamon Valley had a retention rate of 90% and Ft. Wayne increased their membership by 110%. Congratulations to Sangamon Valley and Ft. Wayne on a job well done (can we clone it--hope so.)

The best award presentation came after dinner. Dave Remine, now the

Chairman of the International Board of Directors, presented the International Distinguished Service Award to Chicago's Helen Kupper for her many years of service to International Mensa. Helen is presently a MERF trustee and her current project is encouraging applicants to apply for the Copper Black scholarship. You'll see more about Copper Black in an upcoming column.

On another front, Joanna and Paul Soper have volunteered to host another Leadership Development Workshop (LDW) in the spring of 2000; dates are still to be determined.

If you missed the AG here is a list of regional gatherings (RG) and other big events:

- Milwaukee -- August 27-29
- Chicago -- October 29-31
- Minneapolis -- December 3-5, AMC quarterly meeting
- Indianapolis -- tentatively scheduled for the end of January [January 28-30 -Ed]
- St. Louis -- February 3-5
- Y2K MGA -- Year 200 Mind Games Atlanta May 5-7, see Bulletin for details
- AG2K -- Philadelphia July 5-9 (Year 200 Annual Gathering)

A topic of interest to all of our members was a motion to raise the annual dues to \$49, a \$4 or 9% increase. This would be the first increase in seven years. Action on this motion was delayed pending the appointment of a Financial Task Force to study the issue and the funding requirements of local groups. Part of the reason for the increase was to increase the funding for local groups. Currently, the funding received by some local groups doesn't even cover the costs of printing and mailing local newsletters.

By the way, Mark Witter, our national marketing director, was able to get a very favorable article about the recent Mind Games held in Seattle published in American Airlines' in-flight magazine American Way. We expect this will attract more new members and continue the new trend of rising membership. If you haven't heard, we had an increase of 800 members from March 1998 to March 1999. Currently we have 40,400 members as of June 30, a level not reached last year until about September.

On that note, I'll sign off. Until next month, have fun and be safe.

Will.

B _____
A _____
S _____
I _____
L _____

by Basil Wentworth

144 - Letters of Mark III (Doubles)

Said a lama in old Katmandu,
"The Lama in Lhasa's one who
Can teach you to pray,
Which I just can not say
Of a llama in Lima, Peru."

The teacher said, "Well, that depends--
There's a subtle distinction, my friends:
A cannon is ordnance,
Whereas for an ordinance
Canon has two single N's."

With desserts, you have noticed, I trust:
For a verb, single S is a must,
But with nouns, Double S
Is the fashion, unless
They are arid, or possibly just.

On the subject of low-voltage sinning,
Remember, right from the beginning:
The gourmet's designing
Is wining and dining;
The hoodlum's is winning and dinning.

Remember, if you are a whiner,
Or perhaps a compulsive repiner:
There's no time for whining
Whilst wining and dining,
If dinner is served in a diner.

* * * * *

I have run, as we great pets do,
The gamut, from one up to two,
And skiing, I've found
Is the one word around
That presents double I's for you.

MINDSTUFFING

[Being remotely useful data which you may use to amaze your friends if you can somehow steer the conversation in a direction where it might come up]

This month: Ferro-magnetism

In school, they told us that in iron (also nickel and cobalt) atoms line up so their little atomic magnetic poles are all pointing in the same direction, hence, magnetism. This always seemed a little too glib; after all, don't all atoms have magnetic poles?

So now you're old enough for the truth. There is microstructure in iron and other magnetic elements. Little packets of roughly a billion billion atoms, called domains, share a common polarity. Normally, the random polarities of other domains cancel out, but an external magnetic force can engage the domains which happen to be pointing in the right direction, empower them, and help them convert their neighbors.

Incidentally, the fact that the Earth's core is largely iron is not the reason for Earth's magnetic fields; the core is too hot for the domains to stay polarized.

A MIND Classic

from June 1989

(Originally in "honor" of Iran-Contra, the Bakker-Swaggert Preachgates and the Jim Wright scandal, somehow it still seems to work for Whitewater, Los Alamos, L'Affaire Lewinsky, etc.)

"Excuse ME"

Imagine how much news time we could save if we just numbered the basic public apologies:

1. Our foe is ruthless, so we must be, too.
2. We must play ball with undesirable to defeat worse undesireables.
3. If our people knew what we were doing, our enemies would, too.
4. If our leaders knew what we were doing, our enemies would, too.
5. We had to do it this way because you didn't let us do it the other way.
6. I admit I lied before; since I've just told you that, you know I'm telling the truth now.
7. I was going to reveal that to you myself; it's just that you found out before I had a chance.
8. My role was to take the blame and protect my superiors, which is why I'm not to blame.
9. My actions aren't the issue. Some vague concept is.
10. I have many traditional values.
11. I was only following orders.
12. I can't tell you the truth because you'll take it the wrong way.
13. I thought it was the right thing to do - sincerely!
14. There are people so much worse than I am; let's talk about them instead.
15. How could what I did have been wrong? All the people I worked with said I was doing great.
16. I love this country too much to ever hurt it.
17. I face all kinds of danger so you can accuse me in safety.
18. I tell other people to do the right things all the time; how could I do that if I wasn't a right guy myself?
19. If you punish me, you'll be helping our mutual enemies.

20. Those would have been bad things if I'd clone them for selfish reasons, but, as I did them for unselfish reasons, they were actually good things.
21. I took nothing for myself. I took only bare necessities for myself. I took less than many others. I didn't realize where it was coming from.
22. My children love their little dog.
23. History will vindicate me, so you may as well let me off now.
24. Christ was persecuted. I'm being persecuted. How can you do this to somebody so much like Christ?
25. I wasn't indicted/convicted. That means I'm innocent.
26. I said I was sorry - surely you don't expect to to give the money back, too.
27. This is a common practice in my business.
28. Your motives are political, so your charges don't count.
29. The Devil make me do it.
30. God just forgave me, so you can get off my back.

ERIC'S NUMBER CHALLENGE

Mensan Eric Ellis set himself the task of finding a meaningful application for each number 0-100. He readily acknowledges someone might think up better ones, but he's not afraid to show his list; how about you?

Zero Mostel/a hole in **one**/#2 washtub/The **Three** Stooges/The **Four** Horsemen/**five**-finger discount/**six**-pack/**7**-up/figure **8**/the whole **nine** yards/**ten**-gallon hat/Apollo **11**/Adam-**12/13**colonies/**14** Points/**0-15** in tennis/**16** Tons/**17**-year locust/"I Wish I Was **18** Again"/Product **19/20** Questions/**21**-gun salute/Catch-**22/23**-Skidoo/**24** hours/Buck Rogers in the **25**th Century/**26** letters in the alphabet/NP-**27/28** Flavors (Howard Johnsons)/Protein **29**/the **30** Years War/**31** Flavors (Baskin-Robbins)/**32** degrees below zero/**33** rpm records/Miracle on **34**th Street/**35**-mm camera/**36** Red/ST **37**/**38** Special/**39** Articles of Anglican Church/**40** winks/**41** magnum/Level **42/43** cars in a NASCAR race/Vick's Formula **44**/Colt **45/46** human chromosomes/**47** Ronin/lower **48** states/miner **49**er/Slick **50/51**% controlling interest/**52** cards in a deck/B-**53**-1/Car **54**/"I Can't Drive **55**"/T-**56** engine/Heinz **57**/Mission STS-**58**/L-**59** Albatross/**60** Minutes/Roger Maris' **61** home runs/W-**62** Minuteman/GAM-**63**/Commodore **64**/retire at **65**/Phillips **66**/Expo **67**/Showcase **68**/Summer of '**69/70**-Mile House, BC/SR-**71** "Blackbird"/Rule of **72** (money doubles)/PT-**73**/Mission STS-**74/75** numbers in Bingo/**76** years between sightings of Halley's comet/**77** Sunset Strip/**78** rpm records/W-**79**/Around the World in **80** Days/Hotel **81/82**nd Airborne/TI-**83/84** Lumber/Fender-**85**/"**86**" (throw out) something/**87** = fourscore and seven/**88** piano keys/Oklahoma City **89**ers/Playhouse **90**/Mission STS-**91**/Oertel's **92** Beer/"**93**" (a novel by Victor Hugo)/**94**th Pursuit Squadron/**95** Theses/Ninety-Six, SC/C-**97**/Olds **98/99** Bottles of Beer on the Wall/the Hot **100**

spurious advertisement

MENSANS! EMBARRASSED BY YOUR IQ? ACT NOW!

Remember those great days when people thought being in the top 2% meant you were a Genius? Have you had it with smart asses claiming to be in Intertel, Mega or ISPE? Are you weary of snotty socialites who used to go big-eyed when you flashed your pin now sneering, "Just Mensa?" Are you suffering low self-esteem because you can't crack the fifth standard deviation? Well, your troubles are over! You can now be an applicant for TANTALUS!

TANTALUS is the most exclusive IQ Society possible. Our standards are very high and completely subjective. Frankly, we don't think you'll make the cut --

but, all those swollen cerebrum types in ISPE, Mega, Triple Nine and Four Sigma -- they won't either! By just applying for TANTALUS you instantly elevate yourself above those snobs who don't dare put their brains to the real test. And who knows, even though no one has ever made it in, and we don't expect anyone to, you might be the one! You won't know unless you try, so don't delay! Send seventy-five dollars, cash or postal money order made out to "boxholder" to POB 50946 and copies of the five or six toughest questions you've ever answered and we'll process your application the next business day. Don't worry if you don't make it; we won't embarrass you by sending you a rejection, so you can go right on telling your friends, "I applied for TANTALUS!"

MINDBENDING HONOR ROLL

[H = Host]	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Dale Amlee					♥	♥		♥	♥	♥
Dave A.		♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥		♥	♥
Alison Brown			♥H	♥H	♥H					
Greg Crawford	♥	♥H	♥							
Bob Dill										♥
George Dunn	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥
Mack Earnhardt								♥		
Eric Ellis									♥	
Marcele Everest									♥H	
Grace Falvey					♥		♥		♥	♥
Carol Gould										♥
Jay Hayes										♥
Jud Horning	♥		♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥		♥
Jerry Hunter	♥	♥	♥	♥		♥				♥
Rhoda Israelov										♥H
Dom Jervis										♥
Jeff Lake				♥						
Larry Marcus				♥						
Treva Marks	♥H	♥	♥	♥			♥H	♥H		
Jean Miller				♥	♥					
Anna Marie Rutallie						♥H				
Russ Washburne									♥	
Shirley Washburne									♥	
Nancy White	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥			♥

LATER, THE TUSCARORA

George Dunn

Another Day, Another Law

A legend about Cnut, when he was king of Britain, has him ordering the tide not to come in, which of course it did, just like always. Cnut was not a megalomaniac; he was doing a little educational theater for his fawning courtiers. They had been urging him to solve the kingdom's problems with some royal commands.

I don't know if they got the lesson, but as kings in general, and kings like Cnut in particular, have declined in influence, courtiers have become legislators and now they pass their own *ukases*, some of them about as ambitious as holding back the sea.

There was some effort recently to get the Ten Commandments posted where impressionable eyes might take in their instructions. If Moses had attempted to replicate the volumes of commands on the books today, there wouldn't have

been enough granite in Mt. Sinai to carve the tablets.

The Decalogue, once you get past the parts on monotheism that so upset the ACLU, is a masterpiece of brevity. Even in its most exegetical translations ("Thou shalt not kill" / "Thou shalt do no murder"), it offers little waffle room for the Clintonsque.

Modern laws, by contrast, are apparently not laws at all until they've been "challenged" and learned judges have told us what they mean. This hardly concerns the legislators, since in addition to exempting themselves from most of the laws they pass, they regard a vote on a successful bill as complete discharge of their duty to solve the problem. Unlike Cnut, they do not have their thrones set out on the beach to test the effectiveness of their labor.

Laws have two purposes: one is to transfer wealth (usually to the government) and the other is to suppress misbehavior. Laws of the first sort tend to be hotly contested but those of the second sort are usually blandly approved by everybody, at least until an appreciable number have been bitten by them.

Because Type Two laws are so trouble-free (from the legislators' point of view), they provide a cheap way to "take action." They can thus be very reactive. Policeman hit by a car? New law: motorists must clear a lane around a stopped policeman. Somebody burning churches? Church burning is now illegal (Of course, church burning was already illegal, but now it's really illegal, because we specified "church.") Kids with guns? All guns must have locks. See how easy it is? The best thing about it is that the law doesn't even have to work because if the problem continues, the lawmakers can just make another law. This can go on indefinitely.

In Cnut's demonstration, any fool could tell that the tide continued to come in, but most laws can have their failures concealed for years, even decades. If we fought World War II the way we're fighting the "war on drugs," we'd all be speaking German, yet we get weekly bulletins on the spectacular victories, usually about how some goofball's seized van contained a hundred billion dollars' worth of "street value" drugs.

Did you know that the Indiana legislature once actually debated legally changing the value of pi? It's too bad we don't have a tide problem in Indiana we could ask them to address. Of course, the U.S. Congress is near the coast...

Of course, just having ridiculed those who pass our multitudinous laws, I hanker to suggest a few of my own. The difference, besides the obvious fact that mine have no enforcement, is that I can make them a bit tongue-in-cheek, altho' frankly, I think some of my proposed "laws" could actually serve some social good.

Let's start with some restrictions on freedom of expression: a series of fines imposed on people in the public eye (that's politician mainly, but also industry "spokespeople") who declaim, "The American people want...", use the full expression "the President of the United States of America" when there is little chance of confusion with any other president, or describe this as the "greatest country on the face of the earth" in any context other than a previous assertion in favor of some other country.

Then I'd assess some penalty points for drivers who pass, pull in front, and then immediately slow down; truckers who take more than one minute to pass another truck and people who speed down merge lines hoping to "squeeze in" just before the bottleneck.

And how about detention for those yahoos who stop at the ends of escalators and who exit elevators, then stand six inches from the closing doors.

Confiscation of all audio equipment from the goofs who blast their car stereos so loudly that your windows rattle when they're still a car-length away.

A light flogging for those non-handicapped drivers who occupy handicapped spaces but leave their engines running so as not to be "parked."

As for more serious offenses, let's raise the bar for "mission mocking," crimes committed by those supposed to maintain justice: the crooked cop, the biased judge, the embezzling accountant. On that tack, let's clear up this issue of Perjury: everybody gets one free denial when asked "didja do it?" but thereafter any utterance calculated to deceive in legal proceedings means jail time.

Out with these multimillion awards for defective products. Instead, when it's shown that the company weighed "acceptable customer injuries" against profit, let a successful plaintiff inflict the same injury on one of the company's board of directors.

As for "victimless crimes," dope using, prostitution, driving without a seat belt, etc.) on the first offense, the perp has to register for a year that he's accepting the risks of his activity and he doesn't expect the state to pay for any problems arising therefrom.

The prison cells vacated by the pot-smokers to be filled with con-men who swindle retirees. Life sentences without parole for these, except the ones who manage to flee the country; for those, summary assassination.

In the arena of civil suits, all those seeking injunctions to suppress religious expression must demonstrate how they have been harmed (as opposed to 'offended') by same.

All divorces will be handled *pro bono* and pre-nuptial contracts are mandatory.

Lawyers who win acquittals in criminal trials must take public polygraph exams as to whether or not they knew their client did the crime.

No serving or past President, Congressperson or federal judge may have a net worth exceeding one million dollars.

PALEOZOIC CALENDARS

by Charles Dixon

["Paleozoic Calendars" describes a number of possible prehistoric and future calendars based on evidence that tidal friction against the continents is gradually slowing the rotation rate of the Earth (and causing the Moon to recede). Also fossil stromatolite coral reefs show the number of days per year in their microscopic growth rings. The oldest reefs show 424 rings per year around 600 million years ago, with a gradually decreasing number of days to the present.]

Six hundred million years ago, the Moon was closer to the Earth, the tides were higher, and the days were shorter. Paleozoic years were just as long as ours, but there were more days in a year. Stromatolite coral reefs had (then and now) a microscopic growth ring for each day of the year. The dominant animals were Trilobites, the earliest known members of Arthropoda, the group which now includes

lobsters and insects.

A fossil Trilobite calendar from the late Precambrian Period would show 424 days in a year, which could use 16 months alternating between 26 and 27 days in length. According to analyses of gas bubbles trapped in amber, the atmospheric oxygen content was only about 2% instead of the present 21%, so Trilobites probably had a little trouble remembering what the date was.

Another Trilobite calendar from about 500 million years ago in the late Cambrian Period would show 412 days in the year. A calendar from this period might divide the year into two 27-day months and fourteen 26-day months.

The first good calendar with thirty-day months would be a 390-day Amphibian Calendar from late Carboniferous times about 280 million years ago. The amphibians would have a six-day week, giving them either short weekends or working only four days a week. With my luck I would have to work five and a half days each week.

A Dinosaur Calendar from the Jurassic Period about 170 million years ago might show 380 days per year. The biggest problem with a dinosaur calendar would be pronouncing the names of those five-syllable monsters!

By late Marsupial times 65 million years ago, early in the Paleocene Epoch, there were 371 days in the year. The Moon's pull and tidal friction were slowing the spinning Earth. Where we might have used 53 seven-day weeks, Marsupials could also follow the Trilobite practice of alternating 26 and 27-day months: 14 of them.

The 366-day year could have ushered in the Age of Man, but we weren't ready yet. There were 366 days in the year ten million years ago when primates were entering the expanding grasslands of Africa. Old Julius Cro-Magnon could have invented the Julian calendar, because there were 365 1/4 days in the year 10,000 years ago. Julius Caesar was late even for the Gregorian correction. They should have started dropping three leap year days every 400 years back in 1900 B.C. In 28,000 years our descendants or successors will have to delete leap year every century year. Leap year will disappear completely in about three million years, when there will be exactly 365 days per year.

Our basic 12-month x 30-day calendar can be used far into the future by just adding or subtracting a few days a year. By 110 million years from now, the Penguins will be ready for something different.

SUMMARY OF POSSIBLE CALENDARS				
millions of years	"AGE"	days/year	Calendar in use	Formula
-4500	Lunar collision	10,000	Asteroid	100 x 100
-600	Precambrian	424	Trilobite I	8 x 27; 8 x 26
-500	Cambrian	412	Trilobite II	2 x 27; 14 x 26
-280	Carboniferous	390	Amphibian	13 x 30
-170	Jurassic	380	Dinosaur	19 x 20
-65	Paleocene	371	Marsupial	7 x 26; 7 x 27
-10	Miocene	366	Primates	6 x 30; 6 x 31

+3	Saharan	365	(excess CO2 creates vast deserts)	
55	Antarctic	360	(Antarctica moves north)	5 x 6 x 12
110	P's spread	355	Penguin I	5 x 71
165	P's dominate 350	Penguin II	14 x 25	
230	Alien Contact	345	Penguin III	5 x 3x 23
1000		310	Billennium	10 x 31
2000	Silicon Life	280	Billennium II	10 x 28
10**14	Stars die			
10**40	Protons decay			
10**100	Black holes evaporate			

A 355-day year could have five seasons with 71 days in each. The seasons could be grouped in five 12-day weeks and one 11-day week. The more sophisticated civilizations in the Penguin II Age will probably have several calendars. 350 days could be divided into 14 months of 25 days or 10 months of 35 days. Some penguins will probably demand a compromise of 12 months with 30 days (which is 360 days!) Others will romantically cling to lunar calendars.

By Penguin III times, citizens should be ready for the old Dinosaur Calendar's five-day week... If they use a three-week month, they will need 23 months a year. They could name them after all their predecessors on the planet, but they will probably name them after generals, popes and numbers like 7,8,9, etc. Will the Aliens (230 million years from now) laugh at a 23-day/month calendar? I doubt it -- they will probably have seen all these and more!

By the time of the Billennium, a billion years from now, the Earth will have slowed to 310 revolutions per year. There will be only 11 lunar months per solar year. Muslim years (12 lunar months) will be longer than solar years, rather than shorter as they are now. By our second billennium, we may be ready for silicon-based life. The Moon will be 290,000 miles away and show only 10 cycles of phase changes per year. By the Googolennium, ten to the one hundred power years from now, matter itself will fall apart and black holes evaporate until there are only electrons, positrons, neutrinos and photons skittering across space.

Random Sample

© by Julie A. Yates Harkey, Ph.D.

Welding the Spider

It was a hot August night at the Parke County fair. Ted and I arrived about 7:00 p.m., and were lucky enough to find a good parking spot. The air was full of dust, exhaust fumes, and even less pleasant smells coming from the animal barns. All the good food scents were there too, pork and beef, elephant ears, and cotton candy. We stayed away from the food though, aside from Ted's chocolate shake. However, we didn't go there for the food. We were there to watch the demolition derby.

I found a seat on the top row of the bleachers, and settled in. The arena, or pit,

was a wide expanse of dirt. Soon the water truck came through, turning the dusty soil into slick mud. Seventeen or eighteen garishly painted old cars rumbled in. Most of them were at least 20 years old, from a time when cars were big and heavy. Many carried evidence of prior events, wearing dents, mangled grills and strangely shaped rear ends. None had mufflers or window glass, and all had a four-foot stick duct-taped to the driver's side post. (By post I mean the upright piece of metal between where the driver's window and the windshield used to be.) Though the cars may have been 20 years old, few of the men and women driving seemed over 18.

We watched the drivers slip and slide their beasts into two rows facing the sides of the pit. The cars were decorated with garish paint, cuss words, girlfriends' names, and an occasional flashing red or yellow light. The announcer said, "Let them go!" and men around the sides of the pit raised green flags. The noise (think Thunderdome) was phenomenal as the cars accelerated, in reverse, toward their foes. Their purpose was to disable the other cars, while keeping moving and hitting. If a car stalled or became stuck on the side rails, the driver would break off the stick to indicate he or she was out of the running.

There were rules in this melee. Don't hit the other driver in the doors. Don't hit a car whose driver has broken the stick. The last three moving and hitting got to drive in the final heat. Don't drive into the stands. Yes, I know that seems obvious, but one car did almost back into the set of stands where Ted and I were sitting.

When the heat was over and the dust began to settle, young men on tractors began to drag away the disabled warriors. A few triumphant drivers were able to drive out of the arena. The tractor drivers sometimes needed to stop and fix the rails because someone hit too hard. The water truck made yet another round, keeping the ground slippery. There's wisdom in that -- if you can't get traction, you can't get going fast enough to really hurt anyone (or jump the rails and fly into the stands.)

Heavy, a fellow we know from the area, had a purple and yellow station wagon with a flashing red light on top entered in the derby. His car did well, making it to the final heat. Ted commented that Heavy hadn't remembered one of the tricks: he hadn't welded the spider. That means welding the gears on the ends of the spider gear to other gears in the rear end, so that when one rear wheel spins the other one will turn too. (See drawing at bottom of page.) Then, when a tire blows or something breaks and the wheel is cocked at an odd angle, the driver will still have traction, and can keep moving and hitting. Gotta have that traction.

We watched radiators bleed and clouds of radiator steam, smoke, dust, and flying mud fill the air. Cars sometimes caught on fire, prompting the flag men to wave red flags, and the announcer to yell "Stop! Stop! Stop! Shut 'em down!!" This sometimes took a while. It was hard to hear out there, and even harder to see. Drivers took advantage of the lull to escape the arena, get out of their stalled heaps to run for the sidelines.

Are some of you wondering why on earth I would want to go to a deino derby? There is something so primitive, so satisfying about watching cars smash into each other. The noise is good too. I always come away from the derby tired, but oh so relaxed.

Fiction by Judson M. Horning

The Fall

All day long I had been climbing one of the tallest mountains in central Indiana. I was tired and the air was getting thinner and thinner. I was probably within a hundred and fifty feet of the top when I felt a sharp pain in my left side. The muscles in my legs tightened up, and I felt my weight shifting to my arms.

This was not good. My shoulders are somewhat weak anyway, and a sudden pull after a full day's climbing was going to hurt.

"Oh my God," I thought, "I'm going to peel."

As I slipped off, I instinctively spread my arms and legs to try to gain some control of my fall, not that it would help all that much. I was still accelerating.

I felt my shirt and shorts flutter faster and faster, and then get stiff. My feet were getting warmer and warmer. From my belly-button out, my clothes first glowed, then burst into flames, then drifted away in small pieces.

I was surfing on my own shock wave. I had a sick feeling that I was probably violating ordinances in several counties.

The corn crop has not been too good this year, because it has been so dry, so it was easy to pick out a relatively safe place to land.

I was now traveling so fast that the air trapped beneath me had no place to go, so the good topsoil was simply vaporized by my descending shock wave. The rock below became a glowing puddle and splashed in a circle of little red droplets.

The hair on my body had scorched to white dust, and my skin was glowing red and more painful than any sunburn I had ever had.

As I brought my naked body out of the impact crater, I saw the tall, erect figure of a man dressed in the distinctive uniform of the Indiana State Police. "Uh-oh," I thought, "I'm going to have some explaining to do."

Primer for the **November** Topic:

Lost Stuff

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