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SCAM

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Happy New Year!



2004

*The
Newsletter*
SCAM
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Assembly/Circulation

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Events Coordinator

Volunteer Needed!

Proofreader

Thea Saurus

We will appreciate your submissions **legibly handwritten, typed, in e-mail text, or on 3.5 disk in IBM text or word-processing format.** We can receive your submissions by mail at: **808 Wisteria Dr., Melbourne FL 32901**, or submit via e-mail to: **moakleymj@bellsouth.net**

Subscription — \$10.00 for 12 issues.

Happy January Birthday

02—Rose Marie Martinez	14 – Lee McLamb
04 – Joseph Richardson	14 – Barry Signorelli
08 – Ramon Vicioso	14 – Gary Tower
12 – Arleigh Sharpe	23 – Rita Johnson-Aronna
12 – Albert Thomas	27– James Druckenmiller
14 – William Gray	28 – Joseph Carrier



Welcome to SCAM and Mensa

Bill Emmons

Welcome Back to SCAM

Debra Saltzberg



Mewsing About



Clara

**Woodall-Moran,
LocSec**

Last month's column was an aberration. I'll try not to let loose like that again, after all, this is my last year on the ExComm. This is, of course, my way of introducing the subject. We should have a NomEl-Com appointed by the time you are reading this – which should be earlier in relative time to the December volume of the newsletter. We got caught in the Holiday mailing frenzy.

Speaking only for myself, I am not running this year for any office on our local ExComm. The last two years as LocSec have been interesting and I hope I have not disappointed the membership with terms of office. The other members of the ExComm have been wonderful in their support and their enthusiasm for helping the group move into the next ten years. Our group produced its first newsletter 22 years ago in January and we are still going strong. The only way in which this local chapter can go and grow is for it to have strong leadership and that requires folks agreeing to help be a part of that leadership.

Okay, enough of that – when the NomElComm comes calling, say “yes” to running for office. Remember, we don't run for specific “seats” as that is decided by those elected. The more members we have who will agree to hold office, the better the group will thrive.

During a previous term as LocSec, I sent birthday cards to all members who did not withhold the day and month of birth. It was enlightening. Some complained when they did not receive a card and denied withholding the information even though the roster shows it withheld. I began handling a lot of the membership problems with the National office for the membership. When the area codes changed, I notified National of the members who needed the information corrected.

I could not change preferences, however. But I could get the dialog started, and you would not believe how many have problems with the way one has to signify the desire for withheld information. Most think, as well, that withholding means withholding the information from National rather than its being withheld from the local group. Ah well, that is not a possible scenario.

One member thought him/her self to be the oldest SCAMster but, of those who allow us to see the birth year, he/she is a mere baby as we have 3 who were born before 1920 and several before 1930. If I was energetic and had more time, I'd figure out the average age but I know that for this group, it is pushing 40years old, at the youngest.

We are still looking for someone competent with a calendar to take over Calendar Coordinator. The Calendar Coordinator fills in the TEXT calendar portion of the calendar pages and gives them (usually by email) to the editor. The coordinator also checks with folks and is the focal point for those wanting to schedule events. The editor puts them on the grid. I have too hectic of a personal schedule to give this as much attention as it requires. Please,

someone bail us out here.

Hope everyone had a happy and healthy Holiday season. I did. Oh, there will definitely be a venison feast this year in March – date is not yet set. The Talk-about event is doing well and will settle down to the third Friday of the month. Hope to see you there...and we can talk about it.



**We
Get
Mail!**

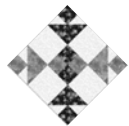
In response to your column "Of Mensa Diets, Raging Bulls, Etc." (*The SCAM*, Dec 2003, "The Horse's Mouth"): when I first put together the idea of hosting a weekly (or bi-weekly) event at the Books-A-Million store on Merritt Island, the original meaning of **CABBAGE** (note the two "b"s) was "Coffee And Bargain Books And Games, Everybody!" As we all learned by playing "Telephone" in elementary school, however, things always change as they get passed along.

Best Wishes,

Doug Paul, Local Secretary/Webmaster, Central Florida Mensa

<http://cfm.us.mensa.org>

Deb's



Corner

Now that all of the excitement of the Holidays has passed, don't forget that now is a good time to start on those handmade gifts for this year's Holidays.

If you are lacking in ideas for handmade gifts, I recommend your public library and your home computer as sources for all kinds of ideas. HINT: If you do not have much time to browse in our libraries, the Brevard County Library System is as close as your home computer. Simply go to www.brev.org.

Over the last couple of years I have made some great computer pals in my search for patterns and ideas. For example, Yahoo has a free site, www.yahooogroups.com. All you have to do is type in the topic you are interested in and just go from there.

In the next few issues, I plan to share a few links and ideas with those who are interested. MY first recommendation would be to try out one of the groups available at the Yahoo site.

Thank you for visiting my corner,

deb



From the Horse's Mouth...



“I Have a Question...”

***by
Mike Moakley,
SCAM Editor***

When someone, perhaps your boss, maybe your parent, spouse or other authority figure begins a conversation by stating, “I have a question...”, doesn’t that just send chills down your spine? I know that on many occasions, it has caused me to react in such a fashion. Now, I do not come to you as a boss, parent or even spouse, or for that matter, anyone in authority, so I should not evoke such a reaction. Yet...I do have a question.

The following is part of Mensa’s mission statement as published in the *Mensa Bulletin*:

“Mensa’s purposes are to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity.”

My question to you, then, is: How can we best do this? Does Mensa accomplish its purpose in this regard? If so, are there any better ways? If not, why not? What can we do to remedy this? Should anyone reading this message have any constructive ideas to share, please feel free to commit those ideas to writing, and submit them for publication in The SCAM. Depending on the level of response, I may include these letters in several upcoming issues. There is no deadline for these responses, however, anything received after the 10th of any month will be considered for publication in a future issue. Please see Page Three for details regarding SCAM submissions. If (better yet) you wish to volunteer for some activity, please contact an ExComm member (info on Page Two); I’m sure they will be ecstatic to hear from you.

As always, I will be happy to accept and publish written work on just about any subject matter. It may be a work of fiction, poetry or prose. It is totally up to you.

Whoops!... I’m sure most of you remember when you first learned to drive, whether it be recently or a long time ago. It appears everyone goes through a “moment of truth” at some point in the learning process. In my case, it was when I had intended to stop the car and pressed the gas pedal instead (fortunately, my instructor had a brake on his side of the car)! Well, I’m sure most of you noticed, last month’s SCAM came a few days late. Well, as the new editor, once again I had that “moment of truth” when I went to the printer and ordered too few copies to be printed. The error was caught and corrected almost immediately (thank you, J.T.), but I lost a couple of days at the print shop as a result of my mistake. To compound the error, the SCAM got caught with the Holiday mail. So, fellow SCAMsters, it is my fault, and I do apologize. While I cannot say I’ll never make another mistake, I’ll certainly never make THAT one again!



***A View... From
Somewhere Else***

***To Measure the
World - Part II***

by

Hank Rhodes

©2004

Author's note: In the mid-summer of 1792, the astronomers Mechain and Delambre set out from Paris to measure the circumference of the world.

Mechain was from working class origins. His scientific talents had manifested themselves early in his life. As a result, he had received an appointment as a civil servant, developing charts for the French Navy. The father of three, he lived with his family in the academic lodgings on the grounds of the Paris Ob-

servatory.

Delambre was a brilliant student from a humble background. Still a bachelor, he had subsisted primarily as a tutor to the children of the aristocracy, before his achievements as an astronomer gained him entry into the circle of leading scientists. The two men had shared mentors and acquaintances, and had known one another before embarking on their mission.

With the enthusiastic support of the Spanish Navy and Army, Mechain made exceptional progress in the summer and fall, completing nearly half his assigned portion of the survey. When winter arrived, preventing further measurements in the mountains, Mechain and his team spent several months conducting the astronomical observations necessary to determine the latitude of Barcelona.

Mechain dutifully mailed summaries of his observations to the Academy of Sciences in Paris. In contrast to Mechain's steady progress, Delambre moved in circles, both literally and figuratively. Delambre initially conducted his survey on the periphery of Paris. He was detained several times in the suburbs of the capital under suspicion of being a royalist sympathizer. Since Prussia and Austria had recently declared war, and their armies had advanced across the northeastern border into France, Delambre and his team were also accused of spying for the enemies of the French Republic, a suspicion that their elaborate instruments did nothing to dissuade.

At one point, Delambre was forced to deliver a lecture on the surveying technique to a hostile crowd of soldiers and peasants, before a sympathetic local official stepped in and made a show of arresting Delambre, for the astronomer's own safety.

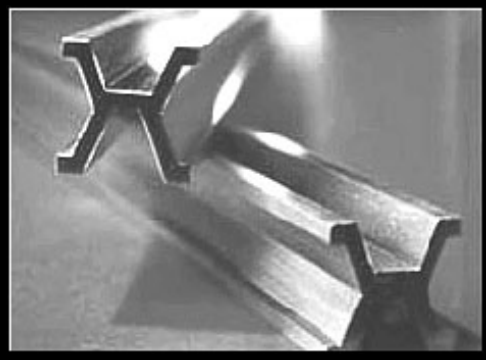
Even those who fully understood Delambre's mission had reason to be hostile. As a holdover from the feudal era, there was a wide variety of local measurements used in France. Naturally, these local measurements were subject to manipulation by middlemen and other profiteers, who saw the threat to their own well-being posed by one universal set of standards.

Finally, even in an era of enlightenment, there were plenty of

people not far removed from the middle ages. Some suspected the astronomers of practicing witchcraft, and every crop failure, stillbirth, or other unexpected misfortune in the district was blamed on the strangers in their midst.

While Delambre and his team were surveying the area around Paris, a mob stormed the King's palace and massacred the guard. The rioters forced the royal couple to trade their gilded cage for a prison. Within a few months, King Louis XVI was tried for treason, judged guilty, and sent to the guillotine.

Then, the Spring of 1793 brought an abrupt shift in the fortunes of the two astronomers.



Starting at Dunkirk, Delambre's team moved southward, connecting with their survey of Paris from the previous year. Continuing onward, they reached the vicinity of Chateauneuf by the end of the year. The northern expedition had covered a distance of 230 miles, slightly better than half their assigned sector.

Meanwhile, in Barcelona,

Mechain was experiencing divided loyalties. Spain and France had gone to war, straining Mechain's relations with the Spanish academics who had been so hospitable up to this point. The sailors and soldiers who had contributed so much to the mission were now called to active service. Mechain had previously measured the latitude of Barcelona from a fort overlooking the harbor, a place where he was now forbidden to go as an enemy civilian. The war disrupted communications across the border, cutting Mechain off from his family and acquaintances. Nonetheless, holding to a somewhat naïve belief that scientific progress transcends nationalism, Mechain was determined to continue the mission.

Then, Mechain had an accident that left him bedridden for months. Remarkably, before the end of the year, Mechain and his team were back in the mountains. They accomplished their survey from the peaks while the ground beneath them changed hands from the Spanish to the French and then back to the Spanish. Even though his accident limited the use of his right arm, Mechain played an active role in the survey.

As the war turned against the Spanish, Mechain and his party were detained and forced to spend another winter in Barcelona. During this period, Mechain attempted a redundant measurement of the Barcelona latitude, from the seaside terrace near his hotel. Unable to make progress, or

even return directly to France, Mechain and his assistants sailed to the independent city-state of Genoa, leaving the survey behind them, uncompleted.

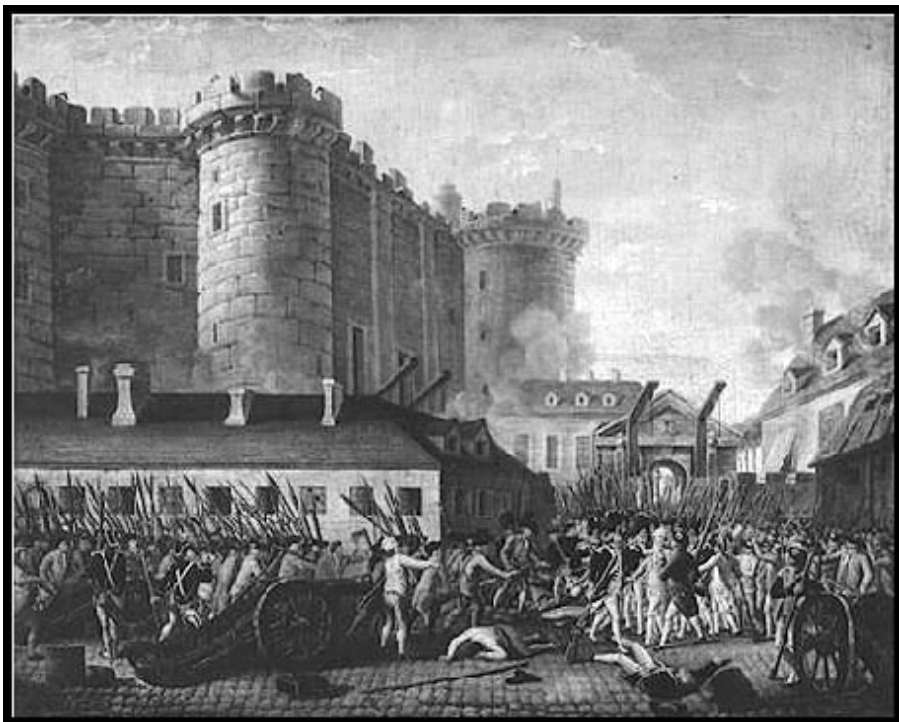
At the same time, Mechain's colleague fared no better. While Delambre was rapidly advancing down the meridian, a radical faction had taken control of the government. Delambre's loyalty to the new regime was suspect, and he was dismissed from the expedition. Thus, for political reasons, the measurement of the world was suspended.

(To be continued)

Sources and notes:

Primary source for this set of articles is Ken Alder's excellent work, *The Measure of All Things*, published by the Free Press in 2002.

Note that the term "scientist" is used here in its modern meaning.



ValenTime RG on the Gulf

February 13-15, 2004 (3 p.m Friday - noon Sunday)

Holiday Inn, 1020 Hwy 98 E.

Destin, Florida

Tentative programs include some of last year's favorites and some new stuff you're gonna love, including The Chocolate Orgy, Air Pollution: Facts and Fables, Raising Koi, Nutrition, History of the Panhandle, Greenland, Genealogy, Lipstick and Khakis (woman helicopter pilot), Improvisation.

Registration:

\$35 per person if paid in advance, \$37.50 after February 1, \$40 per person at the door, or \$15 per person for a single day. Please make checks payable to Northwest Florida Mensa.

Name(s) _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Address _____

Please mail this form to:

Registrar - ValenTime

616 Overbrook Drive

Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547

Questions?

Contact John Mochan, 850-863-3599, or jmochan@cox.net. Visit us at nwflorida.us.mensa.org

Room rates range from \$73 to \$105 per night depending upon the view; please contact the Holiday Inn at 850-837-6181 and tell them you're with the Mensa Group.

It's never too soon to think of ValenTime!

(Editor's Note: You may mail a copy of this ad if you wish to keep this SCAM newsletter intact.)



January 2004 Calendar of SCAM Events

Membership in American Mensa, Ltd. makes you eligible to attend SCAM social functions. Escorted and invited guests of a member or host are welcome. Adult family members of Mensans are encouraged to participate in SCAM activities, as are well behaved children. However, attendance at any social function in a **private home** is subject to the hospitality of the host. Compliance with published house rules is required, and "Kitty" payment is **not optional**. As a courtesy, notify the host if you plan to attend. Announced hosts should attend their events or arrange for a stand-in if unable. When reservations are required, you may not be able to participate if you fail to call.

S-Smoking; *NS*- No Smoking; *SS*-Separate Smoking Area; *P*-Pets in the home; *NP*-No Pets present; *BYO*-Bring Your Own: *_*Snacks, *_*Drinks, *_*Everything.

Regular Events

C.A.B.A.G.E. (North) at Barnes and Noble: Monday, the 5th & 19th
6:00PM, Merritt Island, across from Merritt Square Mall

C.A.B.A.G.E. (North) at Books-A-Million: Wednesday, the 14th & 28th
Merritt Square Mall

Spend the evening with friends playing games, drinking gourmet coffee, and devouring sweet treats, and perhaps even reading a bit. It's free (except for any purchases), no pets, and outside smoking.

C.A.B.A.G.E. North Host: Karen Freiberg

Karen@Freiberg.com

C.A.B.A.G.E. South Host: *Position Vacant*

4th	4:00 p.m.	ExComm Meeting
Sunday	Free	NS/P

The Executive Committee of the group meets to conduct its monthly business. All members are welcome to attend, to volunteer, and to see how things are done. This month's meeting will be held at the *home of Rita Johnson-Aronna*.

Rita Johnson-Aronna

patrita@worldnet.att.net

9th	6:00PM	Firearms-Fried Rice
Friday	Shooting/Meal/Beverage	NS

The GunSight in Merritt Island (Sykes Creek Rd) for the Shooting and New Century Buffet on Courtney Parkway on Merritt Island, FL at 7PM for Fried Rice and more.

JT Moran

morwood@cfl.rr.com

10th	12:30 p.m.	Testing Session
Saturday	\$30.00	NS

If you are interested in joining Mensa, this is your lucky day. The session is held at the Cape Canaveral Hospital Resource Center. Find out just how smart you really are.

Helen Lee Moore

Moorehelenlee@cs.com

10th

NL and Calendar deadlines

All newsletter submissions must be to Mike no later than today. Ditto for calendar events being to the calendar coordinator.

moakleymj@bellsouth.net

16th **6:00PM** **Talk-about**
Friday **\$3.00** **SS/P**

We all like to sit around talking with each other about all manner of things. Join us to just talk. No TV or videos — just great conversation and some good food for thought.

Clara and JT Moran *morwood@cfl.rr.com*

17th **Various Show Times** **Roxy Cheep Flix**
Saturday **\$1.00 + popcorn** **NS**

Please Call Rita for movie selections and times. You can have movies and afford the popcorn, too. Good event for families. Several shows from which to choose.

Rita Johnson-Aronna *patrita@worldnet.att.net*

18th **11:00 a.m.** **Brunch with Jim**
Sunday **Meal cost** **NS/NP**

We'll join Jim for his monthly Sunday brunch at the *Colossus Restaurant* at *380 N. Wickham Rd., Melbourne*. You must be seated no later than 11:00 a.m. or you may not be seated with us: we can't save any seats for latecomers.

Jim Trammell

24th **5 p.m./7 p.m.** **Dan&Tara Video Night**
Saturday **\$3.00** **NS/P**

Meet for dinner at Haru's in Melbourne at the MetroWest Shopping Center and then retire to Dan&Tara's for movies. Bring something you like or watch one of theirs

Dan Lange *dlange@klx.net*

31st **6:30 p.m.** **S.N.O.R.T.**
Saturday **Meal Cost** **SS/NP**

Wasabi! Join us at our best-attended monthly event and sample some great Japanese fare; take a break from the mundane for some sushi, teriyaki, and tempura. *Miyako's* is located at *1511 S. Harbor City Blvd. (US1) in Melbourne*.

Mike Moakley *moakleymj@bellsouth.net*

THIS PAGE IS RESERVED ...JUST FOR YOU!

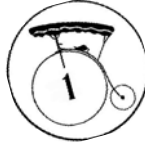
*A View
from the Right:
Amend This!
Part I*

by

*A View... From
Somewhere Else*

*A View
From
The
Car-
riage*

*The Poetry
Corner*



*My Point
of View
Education*

"Opportunities"



Is The SCAM too POLITICAL...?

...Too liberal?

Too Conservative...?

Needs more fiction?

More poetry?

...Maybe you'd like to see something else?

Why not write for The SCAM??

The SCAM welcomes written submissions on just about any subject matter. It must be your own work. Remember, deadline is the 10th of every month for the upcoming issue. Please see Page 3 of every issue for details.

***The Gourmet's
Guide:***

You Don't

Know Beans

About...

by

Art Belefant

©2004

Beans, strictly speaking, are the seeds of leguminous plants. Other plant seeds, such as coffee, are called beans, but they are not legumes, and therefore are not true beans and thus are not considered in this discussion.

Beans are the second most important vegetable part of part of the human diet after grains. Beans are found all over the world and have been cultivated in the New and Old Worlds since about 3000 BC. Most of the bean varieties with which we are familiar were developed in the New World. The principal exceptions are the fava bean and the soy bean. Most of the edible beans are varieties of Phaseolus, which were developed by the Indians in pre-Columbian America.

Although a major source of protein, beans alone cannot supply the complete package of amino acids that the human diet requires. Combined with grains, the protein package is as complete as provided by meats, thus human life can exist without animal protein and often does.

Our ancestors discovered this requirement and created several dishes in various parts of the world to accomplish this. The American Indian succotash is a combination of corn (a grain) and kidney or common beans. The Italians eat *risi e pisi*, rice and peas and *pasta fazool* (pasta e fagioli), pasta (made from wheat, a grain) and beans. Central America and the Caribbean have black bean soup that is usually served over rice.

Hummus, from the Middle East, a paste of garbanzo beans is eaten with pita, a bread made of wheat. In China and Japan, rice, their staple grain, is eaten with soy sauce made from the soy bean. Spanish *paella* combines chick peas with rice. North African couscous, made from wheat, has a sauce that contains chick peas.

Beans can be eaten fresh, (limas, butter beans, green peas); fresh in the pod, (string beans, snow peas, wax beans, snap beans); roasted, (peanuts, soy beans); preserved, (soy sauce, bean paste); or most commonly, dried and cooked. That beans can be dried to preserve them, even for many years, is one major factor in their history and importance as a food item.

Beans come in many varieties and sub varieties, the common names of which often varies from culture to culture and from region to region. In addition to human consumption, beans are an important forage crop, the whole plant being fed to the animals. Soy beans and peanuts also are used industrially.

These are the most common beans that you might encounter.

Black or Turtle beans. Several varieties. Oval in shape with a black skin and a white or pale interior. Usually dried. Used in Latin American cooking. Black bean soup is well known.

Black-eyed peas. Fresh and dried. Cooked with fat-back they are essential for good luck on New Year's Day in the South. Also used in Hopping John.

Butter bean. Fresh. A smaller version of the lima bean.

Canellini beans. Dried. White, kidney shaped. Nutty flavor. Used in Italian dishes, especially pasta fazool.

Chick peas, Garbanzo beans, Ceci. Dried. Used in Spanish and Mediterranean cooking. Hummus is ground chick peas. An essential component of minestrone soup.

Cranberry beans, Shellouts (Ohio, Indiana). Dried. Similar to pinto beans but with pink markings.

Fava. Fresh and dried. A large broad bean with a bitter taste. Common in Egypt. Sometimes used to make hummus. Some people are reported to be allergic to it.

Great Northern beans. Dried. A large white bean often used to make bean dishes.

Green beans. Fresh. Eaten with the pod.

Green peas. Fresh. The pea part of peas and carrots.

Lentils. Dried. The two main varieties are the gray and the red. The gray is more common, but the Bible mentions the red (Gen 25:34).

Lima beans. Fresh or dried. Flat, pale green, kidney shaped beans are found in many varieties from large to baby. When mottled with purple they are called Calicos.

Marrow beans. Dried. A large white bean.

Mung beans. Fresh. One of the favorites in the form of bean sprouts.

Navy beans. Dried. Smaller than Great Northern beans, they are used principally in canned pork and beans. The classical bean for Senate Bean Soup.

Pea beans. Dried. The smallest of the white beans.

Peanuts. Fresh, roasted or boiled (in the South). An unusual bean in that the bean matures underground. Originally from South America, it is one of the most common beans worldwide. It has multiple uses in addition to being eaten, many of which were developed by George Washington Carver. Peanut oil is common in Chinese cooking.

Pinto beans. Dried. Named after the horse with similar coloring, brown splotches on a pink background. Commonly used in Mexican cookery.

Pinquito beans. A pink bean that goes well with barbeque.

Pink beans. Dried. Used in South American cookery.

Red beans. Dried. One of the favorite beans for making chili. Also used in Creole cookery especially in red beans and rice.

Red kidney beans. Dried. The second most commonly used bean around the

world. Although usually associated with chili, they are favorites in Scandinavia, France, and England. In the U. S. they are found in soups and salads.

Soy beans. Dried, fresh, and preserved. The most valuable bean in the world. They are used for cattle and pig fodder, in manufacture, to make soy sauce and tofu, to extend meat and make fake meat, and eaten cooked in Oriental dishes. In China they are roasted and eaten like peanuts. Soy beans come in a variety of colors, yellow, green, brown, black or multi-colored.

Snap beans. Fresh. A variety of string bean that snaps apart when bent.

Snow peas. Fresh. Eaten when immature for the pod, not the pea. Common in Oriental cooking.

Split peas. Dried. Both green and yellow.

String beans. Fresh. Eaten for the pod. There is a stringless variety.

Wax beans. Fresh. A yellow and sweeter version of the green bean. Eaten with the pod.

Yellow eye beans. Similar to Black-eyed peas with many of the same uses, but they don't confer good luck.



Arachnae's Threads
by
Clara Woodall-Moran,
Webmaster



Which are true statements of Web work?

- Web work is never done
- Someone always says: "great, but can you do this..."
- Everyone is a critic
- It will make your hair fall out to try to keep up with it
- All of the above



Well, you guessed it: All of the above. Please bear with us while we try to get caught up with our uploads.

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Yet Another View

Our Representatives on Drugs?

by

Mike Moakley

As I write this column, the latest news item is the now infamous 54-44 vote in the U.S. Senate in favor of the new “Medicare Reform” legislation that had passed in the House not long before. One of the most important provisions of this measure is the introduction of a voluntary prescription drug benefit, which is supposed to address the ever-increasing expense of obtaining needed medications.

President Bush, who is counting on this turn of events to garner needed votes to give him a second term, praises the measure as an enhanced benefit to America’s senior citizens.

But is this new reform, particularly the prescription drug provision, what it’s cracked up to be? Of course, no one will be able to relate their experiences until 2006, when the new law goes into effect. But what do senior citizens, ostensibly the beneficiaries of this legislation, have to say? According to one Florida senior:

"We've been waiting, waiting for this prescription drug bill to provide some relief to seniors, but it won't do much for them, not much at all," said Lorraine M. Angelotti, 72, of Fort Lauderdale. "You would have to be a major, major user of very expensive medications to get any kind of halfway decent benefit."(1)

How will the new plan work? Federal officials say premiums would average \$35 a month. Under "standard prescription drug coverage," defined in the Medicare bill, you would pay the first \$250 in drug costs each year. Of the next \$2,000, Medicare would cover 75 percent and you would pay 25 percent, or \$500. You then pay all of the next \$2,850 in drug costs. Thus, you would pay \$3,600 for the first \$5,100 worth of medicine in a year, and that does not include the premiums, estimated at \$420 a year. Beyond that, Medicare would cover 95 percent of the cost of each prescription, after you have already spent \$3,600. Put another way, you pay \$4020 of the first \$5100 per year of drug costs, or 78.8% of the drug costs.

Moreover, seniors who participate in this new plan are specifically barred from purchasing outside prescription drug coverage (known as “Medigap”) to try to make up the difference.

*Congress cited two reasons for banning the sale of Medigap drug policies. Lawmakers wanted to prevent duplication of the new Medicare benefit. **They also wanted to be sure that beneficiaries would bear some of the cost.** (2)*

Furthermore, a Medicare drug plan under the new legislation could further limit drug coverage by establishing a list of drugs they will cover, known in the insurance industry as a “formulary”. Any medications not on a formulary not only would not be covered, but the out-of-pocket expense would not be counted toward the patient’s \$3600 annual out-of-pocket limit.

Do America’s seniors really benefit from the new legislation? I’ll let you draw your own conclusions. However, at least one group of constituents does stand to handsomely benefit – the pharmaceutical industry. Something you may not be aware of is that the new Medicare bill also covers a bit of foreign policy, especially toward Australia.

*“The legislation passed by Congress this week to establish a prescription drug benefit in the Medicare program **specifically forbids the government to use its influence to negotiate lower drug prices.** That provision was a top goal of the drug industry in its lobbying on the measure. The Medicare bill also requires the Bush administration to apprise Congress on progress toward opening Australia's drug pricing system. Drug industry executives said that provision was a sign of how badly their backers on Capitol Hill want to see trade agreements used to challenge foreign government's price-control systems, especially when Americans are flocking to Canada to buy inexpensive medicine.” (3)*

Of course, for the pharmaceutical industry, the stakes are high. Not only do they wish to ensure that we do not impose any price limits on prescription drugs here in the U.S., but they expect us to use our international influence to dismantle any price controls that exist abroad (“War on Drug Terrorism?”)! The following illustrates the industry’s concerns:

“... A month's supply of Lipitor, a cholesterol-lowering drug, that costs about \$120 in the United States costs about half as much at drugstores in Canada and Italy — two nations that, like Australia, have government price controls. The price difference is even bigger for Prevacid, a heartburn drug, and Paxil, an antidepressant, according to a recent informal survey of drugstores in the three countries. ...”(3)

Why did the pharmaceutical industry’s concerns to take priority over other constituencies (like us ordinary Americans)? Could it be money? In the House of Representatives alone, where the vote was 220-215, on average, each representative who voted in favor of the Medicare bill got \$27,616 in campaign contributions from the industry since 1999, while those voting against the measure averaged \$11,308 each (4). That would make the total pharmaceutical industry campaign contributions to the House alone roughly \$8.43 million since 1999. These numbers do not include any contributions to any Senator’s campaigns. Who says money doesn’t talk? In the meantime, our seniors once again have a bitter pill to swallow.

Sources:

1. “Florida Elderly Feel Let Down by Drug Benefit,” Robert Pear, *New York Times*, November 30, 2003.
2. “New Medicare Bill Bars Extra Insurance for Drugs”, Robert Pear, *New York Times*, December 7, 2003.
3. “Drug Industry Seeks to Sway Prices Overseas,” Elizabeth Becker, *New York Times*, November 27, 2003.
4. Federal Elections Commission, Nov. 3, 2003 report.



The Alchemist:

Tell Me What To Do



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Because almost everyone has been baffled by Wall Street baloney they have accepted the conventional wisdom that every investor needs a stockbroker or financial planner if they are going to invest in the stock market. That would be true if brokers and planners were trained to not only pick stocks, but also protect the investors' money. Neither is true. That seems like a pretty horrific statement. I know because I used to own a brokerage firm and have hired 300 brokers. Only 1% or 2% of them knew what they were doing and consequently lost money for their clients. That probably applies to so-called financial planners because they all went to the same non-school.

Yes, I said they received no training which is true in almost 99% of the individuals. What little 'advice' they received was based on false and untrue premises. The Buy and Hold philosophy is the biggest lie of Wall Street. No

broker is taught an exit strategy – how and when to sell. Protection of customers' money should be number one on their list; however, brokerage companies do not want you to sell. They would rather have you go broke. (Of course, they don't say that.) The investor is quoted the Ibbotson study. Unfortunately, the quote only shares one half of the study and the part about why Buy and Hold does not work is never given.

Wall Street has told you that you are too dumb to pick your own investments and that you need a broker to help you decipher the intricate maze that leads to financial freedom. Too bad most brokers haven't learned or the 7 trillion dollars in losses that occurred from 2000 would not have happened. Not only have liars and thieves been uncovered in Enron and World Com, but now we find that the fund managers of great bastions of 'safe' investing in mutual funds have also been stealing from their shareholders. Yes, late trading is theft and has been misnamed market timing. This also leads me to realize that the SEC has not been doing their job of protecting the small investor.

With all this corruption you, the investors, are more confused than ever. What do I do now? Where should I put my money? You need "expert" advice and I must say to you that you will not get it from a broker. Advice from a broker is a eulogy for your money. No, now is the time for you to take charge of your own investment portfolio. Could you have done any worse in the past 3 years than letting a "professional" handle your money. There are many places you can seek advice, but none of them are on Wall Street. The library and the Internet are both great sources of information. Find someone who does not fit the Wall Street pattern. Several someones. And start your financial education.

Go look in the mirror and say, "Tell me what to do".

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My Dinner With Gandhi

by Frank Bruni

[Reprinted from *Redwood Mpire News*, newsletter of Redwood Empire Mensa, June, 2002; Nancy Flack, Editor]

Recently, America Online ran a survey about which historical figure you would like to have dinner with. They offered the following choices: Jesus Christ, George Washington, Anne Frank or William Shakespeare. Or course, you could name your own historical celebrity—Jimmy Hoffa, Don Juan, etc, as many people did.

I was perplexed and challenged with this proposition. My first response ran along the following lines: who's picking up the tab? I mean, this could run into a lot of money. Can I bring a guest? Will they be serving vegetarian? Will George Washington even know what sushi is? If we order Chinese, will we share dishes? Can Jesus handle chopsticks? Will there be valet parking? Do I need to bring an interpreter, or will my guest be fluent in English? Are there any lactose intolerance issues that I need to be aware of? After all, this could be a long evening. These are not trivial problems. Though, judging from some of the responses I got from AOL members, they were thought to be.

My first thought was Mahatma Gandhi would be an interesting choice. I mean, after all, he sure looks like he could use a good meal. But then I began to worry. What if I didn't eat everything on my plate? Would he pull that old line, eat! there are children in India who are starving! It never worked for my mother. But if she were cooking for those children no one would have been surprised that they were so thin.

And what about Jesus? Like suppose I'm looking over the wine list and Jesus says, "Forget it, watch this!" And the next thing I know, he changes my water into wine, and now I'm sitting there drinking red wine with ice cubes out of a water glass and everybody in the restaurant is staring at us, and then, instead of letting me order, he does that thing with the loaves and fishes. Now, I'm not driving all the way into the city for a cold fish sandwich, I don't care who he is.

Or suppose, I order for George Washington and get him a nice big rib eye and then, Ohmygod, George, I forgot about the wooden teeth! So, I tell him to just eat the garlic mashed potatoes, but he doesn't want to because he thinks the waiter is gay. So I say to him, "Look, George, you're the one sitting here in knee-high tights, buckles on his shoes and a powdered wig. Cut the wait staff some slack, OK bud?" And then he asks me how many slaves I own, and I tell him we made it illegal, and I realize that he hasn't kept up with current events. Now, the evening is going downhill big time.

Or what if everyone is hanging around our table trying to get Shakespeare's autograph and I can't get a word in so I mumble, "I knew I should asked for Francis Bacon." And Shakespeare hears this and explodes, "Francis Bacon couldn't hold my jock strap!" Now, the maitre 'd is coming over with that look on his face like we're history...which is where this evening began in the first place!!





**FROM THE TREASURER:
THE FINANCIAL STATUS OF SPACE COAST
AREA MENSA**

Scholarship Savings Account

Beginning Balance	1265.61
Income 4.70	
Expenses 517.00	
Ending Balance	753.31

General Fund Certificate of Deposit

Beginning Balance	3057.83
Income 14.52	
Expenses 0.00	
Ending Balance	3072.35

USPS Drawing Account

Beginning Balance	162.77
Deposits 500.00	
Withdrawals 393.04	
Ending Balance	269.73

General Fund Checking Account

Beginning Balance	1722.73
Income 1029.71	
Expenses 1035.17	
Ending Balance	1717.27

RG Checking Account

Beginning Balance	90.71
Income 0	
Expenses 0	
Ending Balance	90.71

The Savings Account and Certificate of Deposit are interest bearing accounts. Physical property is accounted for.



Notice!

The ExComm did not meet during the month of December, 2003. Please see the calendar for details of this month's ExComm meeting.