

The

SCAM

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Happy St. Patrick's Day!





SPACE COAST AREA MENSA



Website: www.spacecoast.us.mensa.org

(All Area Codes are 321 except as noted)

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All submissions must be received by the Editor before the 10th of the month preceding publication. Please allow extra time for mailed submissions, which may be **typed** or **legibly handwritten**. Whenever possible, we prefer submissions via e-mail. They may be in **e-mail text** or any of most **word processing** formats. All submissions should be sent to the **Editor**, whose contact information appears on Page 2.

Inside the Pocket Protector

Mike Moakley, Editor

One of the tribulations of being Editor is that, at times, I run out of things to say in a monthly column such as this. I am here to inform you, however, this is not one of those occasions.

On a personal note, I have a request to make. Like the others featured on Page Two, my telephone number is listed as part of my contact info. As such, you are welcome to call if you need to contact me. Please bear in mind, though, it is a private number and should be treated accordingly (*others listed on Page Two should also be extended the same courtesy*). I do screen my calls. If you do call, please leave a message with your name, that you're from SCAM or Mensa, and (briefly) why you are calling. Thank you.

Shifting gears, let's touch on editorial policy. As Editor, I have been given considerable latitude over the content of each month's issue. The flip side is, I am also responsible for that content.

While *The SCAM* is mostly intended for an adult audience, we must be cognizant of the fact that some of our members are *children*. For this reason, I felt it necessary to turn down a recent submission. It is not one of my favorite pastimes, but it does come with the job. Moreover, drawing the line is a most difficult task. So, as a guideline, I offer this piece of advice: When submitting an item, *ask yourself if you would be comfortable allowing your young (grand) child read the piece*. Your subsequent answer should serve

(Continued on page 5)

***The SCAM* sells classified ad space.** SCAM members, non-commercial, no charge. Others: \$20 full page; \$10 half-page; \$5 quarter-page per month, we offer discounts for multiple insertions, and we can help with layout and design.

Subscriptions: SCAM members, included in dues; others, **\$10** for 12 issues.

It has been said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. I would like to submit a subset to that remark. A little French can get you in trouble.

On my first trip to Paris I had only two years of high school French, just enough to give me the rudiments of French grammar and a small vocabulary. Using this I visited an elegant restaurant. I found that on reading the menu there were many items that were similar enough to the English equivalents that I knew what they were. Of those that had no English cognates, my French vocabulary enabled me to translate many of them into English.

One dish that was offered intrigued me -- *tête de veau*. My limited knowledge of French enabled me to translate this as "calf's head". I was not familiar with this dish, either in French or English, but I knew that culinary terms are not always descriptive but are sometimes fanciful. There is a Chinese dish, called in English "lion's head". What it is is a hairy-looking meat ball. Sweetbreads are not sweet nor are they bread -- they are the pancreas of a calf. Rocky Mountain oysters are calf's testicles. So, fortified with this knowledge I ordered it.

In due time the waiter returned with a large covered platter. Placing the platter on the table he proceeded to uncover it. On the platter was, you have guessed it, a calf's head. Actually, not a whole head but a half, cut through longitudinally and placed cut side down so the eye was looking up at me.

I was surprised but not shocked. The menu said "*tête de veau*", I knew that meant "calf's head", and that is what I ordered so I could not return it. Actually, I had a good meal out of it. I've always liked organ meats. The brains, tongue, cheeks, and other meaty parts of the head sufficed for my dinner.

SCAM Treasurer's Report

As of 1/31/2009:

<u>Account</u>	<u>Balance</u>
General Fund	\$864.23
Post Office Acct.	119.21
Reserve Fund	2115.84
RG Fund	50.00

Total Funds Available:
\$3149.28

Deposits

Mensa Funding:	\$188.88
Interest Income	0.09

Withdrawals

Postage	57.64
Printing	135.79

Transfers
 RG fund to General Fund: \$46.65

—Bud Long, Treasurer

(Continued from page 3)

as your guide.

The other policy issue is one I have personally instituted. I refer to it as the “no photo” policy. Yes, it’s true. I do not publish photographs of the author of any work submitted to The SCAM, even if asked to do so. Why? Here’s an illustration: A few years ago, a film producer, Michael Moore, was promoting an upcoming release. As his works are a bit controversial, Moore has his supporters and detractors.

A detractor’s website I visited proclaimed, “*Michael Moore is a big fat idiot!*” and went on to describe Moore’s weight of 310-plus pounds in rather unflattering terms in his apparent effort to convince his audience this was reason enough to discredit the content of Moore’s films and other works. No doubt, some of his readers did just that.

In The SCAM, I always encourage you to write on just about any topic, including controversial ones. I also encourage you to pass judgment and criticize works that appear between these covers. By not including photos, I attempt to focus the reader’s attention to the content of the work rather than other, more superficial factors.

One final topic: We have a real election! Two candidates are actively vying for the RVC post currently held by Maggie Truelove who will be stepping down. Both candidates have submitted written statements, published on Pages 6 and 7 in this issue. Please take the time to read them. *Essentially, the RVC is our representative in American Mensa.*

I have an idea. Since AMC sets policy that affects all of us, I’m sure you have concerns in this regard. So, for the next couple of issues, if you have a question or concern you’d like answered by the candidates, please submit your question to me. I will then present it to both candidates and publish those answers in an upcoming SCAM. I have presented the first question, in that proverbial effort to get the ball rolling. My question (and the candidates’ answers) appear on pages 14 and 15. Now it’s *your* turn. Let’s hear from you.

An RVC has three important duties: To shepherd the local groups, to act as regional administrator, and to resolve disputes.

As of this writing, I have visited 10 of the 12 local groups in this region, and will visit the remaining two before the end of March. If elected I will visit every local group at least once a year, not to talk, but to ask questions and find out what each local group needs. I plan to cross-pollinate the local groups, taking good ideas from one and recommending them to others, mindful that what works for one group may not work for another. I will invite all LocSecs to participate in a monthly conference call so the LocSecs can pick each other's brains and talk to one another about what is happening with their groups.

I have experience running departments with million dollar budgets. I have served on the board of directors of two international charities. I'm a former project manager for a Fortune 100 company. So I have a background in administration as well. And I'm gifted at enabling difficult personalities to work together.

In the past four years I have served on my local ExCom, edited *The Flame* (Central Florida Mensa's newsletter), chaired the by-laws committee that re-wrote CFM's by-laws, and proctored. I look forward to continuing to serve the people of Region 10. Any questions or comments, email me.

Editor's Note: Mel Dahl's e-mail is mel.dahl@mindspring.com.

All Bylaws Committee volunteers: Please form an orderly line.

Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their by-laws....

Wait a second. Bylaws? Yep. SCAM ordinarily keeps a bylaws committee on standby in case changes are needed.

Years often pass before a bylaws committee is needed to actually **do** something. This won't be the case in 2009; we will be bringing the bylaws up to minimum standards soon and would like three brave volunteers vet them and send them on to National. I can't imagine that this will take a huge amount of time. Several hours should do it

(Continued on page 7)

I am Thomas George Thomas, currently serving as Local Secretary of Tampa Bay Mensa. I joined Mensa in 1989 and was an occasional Mensan until I moved to Florida and joined for good in 2001. I was elected to the Tampa Bay Mensa Executive Committee in 2004, becoming Editor of the *Tampa Bay Sounding* in January 2005. While I was Editor, the *Sounding* won the award for Outstanding Large Group Newsletter, plus a special award for our directory (the “Crewe List”). I gave up the Editor position when I was elected LocSec in 2007. Other positions I have held include Proctor, Proctor Coordinator, Circulation Officer, and Scholarship Judge, as well as hosting monthly events in the Tampa Bay area and chairing the 2007 Regional Gathering. I also served as moderator for the national Editors e-list for two years from 2006-2008. I became a Life Member in 2008.

The Regional Vice Chairman should be prepared to support each of the local groups with any issues they may have, and to do that, must have as much Mensa experience as possible. The RVC should also have business experience to bring to the AMC Board of Directors: I am a 17-year officer with J.P.Morgan, responsible for financial analysis and pricing strategies in our multi-million dollar corporate treasuries division.

Editor’s Note: Thomas George Thomas’s e-mail is
fardlebear@aol.com

(Continued from page 6)

for the near term. If we’re successful on the first attempt, you might have nothing more to do for the next few years. Imagine it: Your name up in lights and *no* responsibilities.

So if you could serve on the Bylaws Committee, please give George Patterson a call at 321-777-3721. Or call whomever you like best on the ExComm. Our names are inside the cover of your **SCAM**.

Do it for yourself. Do it for SCAM. Do it for the glory.

—Val Valek

In mid-twentieth century Thomas Kuhn developed a thesis that major scientific advances sort of move us into different worlds (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press). For example, the ancients saw daybreak as the sight of our sun rising majestically above the horizon—as do we today. But that's not really what we see! Today we know the sun stands still—it's the earth rotating on its axis that gives the appearance of a rising sun. Today, from a knowledge of inertial mass, gravitational attraction, centripetal and centrifugal forces, there's no doubt a rotating earth is the correct view; nonetheless, our most natural perception is of a rising sun. If, however, you go to the beach at daybreak, you can (with a little effort) force yourself to see the sun standing still and the earth rolling forward. If you're completely successful you may find this experience strange. Kuhn says looking in the same direction from the same place we see something completely different. He says it happened when, for example, Galileo made his discoveries of relative motion or swinging pendulums (and in every other discovery of this sort throughout history). In every important sense we move into a new world.

Is this true? This theme ties *Discovery of Motion* into a unified book, but each part along the way deals with interesting aspects of our understanding as it evolved down through history. It's riddled with interesting riddles concerning our understanding of motion, from Zeno's ancient *Dichotomy* to Bernoulli's theorem (pressure decreases as fluid velocity increases) to Einstein's malleable time and space. The book is unique in that it parallels these scientific riddles with the evolving philosophical concepts (relating primarily to Kuhn's thesis). Written for young folks it can be enjoyed by almost everyone (of Mensa caliber).

DISCOVERY OF MOTION

An Introduction to Natural Philosophy—Part I

ISBN 978-1-934242-98-8 534pp. Hard cover Illustrated Bibliography&Index
\$39.95 (Available through Amazon.com *et al.*)

Although written by a Mensan, in truth it was not written specifically for Mensans. It *was* written for people with the interests and intellect of Mensans, and for this reason we offer a 25% discount to Mensans (on direct orders) and free shipping (\$29.95 out of pocket). Call (321) 264-2200 or email citpress@citpress.com with contact information—we will call you.

An independent review is posted at:

www.midwestbookreview.com/sbw/may_07.htm (on the science shelf)

Citrus Press
P.O.Box 10062
Titusville, Florida 32783



Space Coast Area Mensa
presents



The Second Bi-Annual Spring Picnic

Sometime in April

10 a.m. to dusk

Paradise Park, Indialantic

(A1A, 1 mi. south of Eau Gallie)



This event will be manned by your ExComm. We will reserve a covered pavilion with picnic tables and benches, grills, water fountain, facilities. Watch this space for final date.

Hot dogs, hamburgers, chips, and sodas will be provided, as well as plates, cups, utensils, napkins, etc.. There will be no kitty. If you feel like bringing a potluck item to share such as a salad, side, or dessert, that would be nice. With luck, dogs and burgers will start rolling off the grill around noon.

Guests and children are certainly welcome. The location features, of course, the beach, as well as a very nice children's playground and an available volleyball court. There will be cards, dominoes, board games and other such things as people might be induced to bring.

This event went nicely in 2007. How did it get to be 2009 so soon?

If you have some constructive ideas, feel free to contact George Patterson at GEORGE3141@CFL.RR.COM or 321-777-3721

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Welcome to SCAM and Mensa:

Gregory Ashburn
Anthony Roma
Mark Wright

Welcome to SCAM:

Jeffrey Lineweaver
Jean O'Brien

Welcome Back:

Bradley Carlson
Janice Pringle

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

1st	Kathryn Juarez	16th	Robert Roth
2nd	Joseph Smith	18th	Mark Tietig
5th	Lennis Bearden	19th	Gisela Bahr
5th	Stephen Schneider	20th	William Daffron III
5th	David Terry Sr.	22nd	Jack Harris
15th	Joseph Cona.	23rd	Donald Dalton Jr.
16th	Melinda Meers	16th	Jenifer Mina

Note: If your birthday is not listed, and you want it to be, please let us know.

ANNOUNCING A NEW SIG!

C# Java C#

Join the Computer Science SIG. Any Computer Science topics from work or school are welcome. To join email Michael Zielinski at mikez23@aol.com or compscisig@yahoogroups.com.



SCAM Calendar of Events for February 2009

1st - Sunday 11:00 AM

"MARCH FOOL'S" BRUNCH

Come join us for brunch followed by your favorite games at Terry's home in Rockledge.

Kitty is \$3.

Contact: Terry, 626-8523, for more details.

4th - Wednesday 5:30 PM

EXCOMM MEETING

This is our monthly business meeting. All members are always welcome to attend. This month, it will be held at the home of George Patterson in Indialantic. ***All members are welcome to attend.***

Contact: George, 777-3721, for details.

6th - Friday 7:00 PM

GAMES NIGHT

Come join us for your favorite games at Terry's home in Rockledge.

Kitty is \$3.

Contact: Terry, 626-8523, for more details.

21st - Saturday 7:00 PM

LASAGNA & GAMES AT GEORGE'S

George and Barbara will be hosting a party at their home in Indialantic featuring lasagna, soup, salad, and the usual accompaniments, with games most likely to follow. ***Kitty \$3.***

Contact: George, 777-3721, for details.

28th - Saturday 6:00 PM

S.N.O.R.T.

Join us for some sushi and tempura at The SCAM's best attended event at Miyako's, 1411 S. Harbor City Blvd. (US#1) in Melbourne.

Contact: George Patterson, 777-3721.

Your Event Here!

ATTENTION SCAM MEMBERS!

Do you have a great idea for that perfect event? Do you have the urge, even the *desire* to socialize with other Mensans, but simply do not want to use the extra gasoline? *Why not host that event in your own home?* If this sounds good to you, contact our Calendar Coordinator today. You'll be glad you did. *Info on Page Two.*

Question #1: *“Over the past year or so, our current Chairman has written in the Bulletin that he believes (American) Mensa needs to change its image in order to attract members. Do you agree with his assessment? Why or why not? If you do agree with our Chairman, what aspects of Mensa’s image would you have changed? Please be specific.”*

Mel Dahl’s Response: 99% of people who are Mensa-eligible choose not to join Mensa, which means that we fill a niche market. There is something we do for the 1% that they aren’t getting elsewhere, that many or most of the 99% are.

I believe that before we can have a conversation about changing our image, we first have to figure out which niche it is that we’re filling, because I don’t think we know. As best as I can tell, Mensans as a group have little in common except the ability to do well on a standardized test. Yet somehow the organization works. It works well for those who choose to play an active role. It works well for those who dabble occasionally. It even works for so-called phantom members who never do anything except pay dues, but who know that we’re here if they ever need us. Why does Mensa work for such a diverse group of people who wholly different and have such different reasons for joining?

I suspect, without actually knowing, that Mensa works as well as it does because most of us have never had a group of people who shared what for many of us is a defining characteristic. Many of us felt socially isolated as children and never quite grew out of it. Those who weren’t socially isolated probably tend to be the ones who don’t join in the first place, or take an active role, because they’ve found their niche elsewhere.

I said I suspect without actually knowing, because so far as I know, nobody’s asked the question and actually gotten data. (Data, of course, is not the plural of anecdote.) But I think we do need to find the answer to that question, figure out which niche we’re filling, and then do any image changing accordingly.

Thomas George Thomas' Response: When someone expresses concern about the image of American Mensa, my first question is what they perceive that image to be. Some people imagine us as an elitist organization whose egghead members either sit around arguing string theory and the tenth dimension or other abstract thoughts, while others imagine us as geeks and social outcasts who play and design interactive video games for each other. Some even imagine a sinister cabal planning to take over the world (think *"Pinky and the Brain"*). In most of these cases, Mensans are frequently objects of derision. So why would anyone want to join such a club?

Such perception was not helped by the recent misguided promotional campaign run from our National office. The *"Stimulation For The Uncommon Mind"* program used actual pictures of Mensans at Gatherings as innocuous smiling faces of diversity, but the ones that stood out were the little girl with the goofy looking safety goggles, the middle-aged man wearing a jester's outfit, and casually-dressed revellers wearing stovepipe hats. If you've been to an Annual Gathering, these have context and even make sense, but what does it say to a prospective member with no experience of Mensa? Then there was the *"Embrace Your Inner Geek"* campaign that showed an immaculate pair of stylish sunglasses with stereotypical white tape on the bridge, or the bowlegged guy obscured by an armload of massive books with very old and ragged bindings dressed in loud plaid slacks. There is the *"We Get Your Jokes"* campaign that shows grinning people telling outrageous puns. This is who we have been telling people we are in the past couple of years. These are the campaigns the National Office has been using to get new members. These appeal to a limited number of people, but who knows how many others looked at them and thought, "Wow, these people are weird. Do I really want to join this club?"

Even within Mensa, members who don't participate have the perception of the elite, the ivory tower, or the odd, when they say they're afraid or unwilling to go to events because they think the conversation will be far above their heads, or that they don't want to just sit around playing games and comparing IQ scores, accomplishing nothing. Many of these members we never see, and they

(Continued on page 18)

I have few specific memories from my early youth; however, one that sticks vividly in my mind is the time my parents took three-year old me to visit a distant relative we referred to as “uncle.” Uncle Blier was, at the time, 103 years old. Remarkably, he was still quite an active man, kept his own apartment, cooking and cleaning for himself. Remarkable though he may have been, to a three-year old he was still, nonetheless, a very, very old man and I have a clear memory of being insufferably bored. When “uncle” Blier mentioned that his son would be coming over, my spirits lifted immediately, with visions of finally having someone I could play with. Needless to describe my disappointment when “uncle” Blier answered the knock at the door, only to greet this decrepit, old codger introduced as his son. Of course, had I been able to do the math, I would have realized that a 100-year old man is not going to have a son suitably aged for playing with a three-year old. But lacking sufficient logic, all that remained was disillusionment. It was not all for naught; however, since “uncle” Blier’s son had brought me a present: a horseshoe magnet! I was quickly enthralled, soon learning the mysterious, almost magical, abilities of the magnet with metallic objects of all sorts. It was then, I believe, that I began what has become my lifelong fascination with science and technology.

At age thirteen, I discovered science fiction. If memory serves, it was Robert Heinlein’s *The Rolling Stones* (not to be confused with Mick Jagger’s band), a tale about twin teenage boys, Castor and Pollux, who buy used bicycles to sell on Mars. At about the same time, the technology revolution was jumping on the solar cell bandwagon while science fiction was touting the notion of solar power satellites beaming clean, free energy down to Earth from geosynchronous orbit. All in all, the combination set my mind awirl with the prospect of soon living in a world where everyone had access to all the energy they wanted and we would all be happily flitting about in our personal air cars. Didn’t exactly work out that way. Forgot to factor in the greed quotient. Here it is almost 50 years later and I’m *still* waiting for the widespread use of solar energy.

Fast forward to college, where my idea of becoming a math major was quickly dispelled shortly after taking a required fresh-

(Continued on page 17)

(Continued from page 16)

man class in computer programming. Instant karma. There was a compelling appeal in being able to direct the computer to do precisely what you commanded it. Right or wrong, it nonetheless followed your instructions flawlessly. After that initial programming class (in ALGOL, on the university's brand, spanking new Univac 1107 high-speed, thin film memory computer with its massive 256 KB of core [which had recently replaced the school's Univac II, vacuum tubes and all]), I was hooked. I programmed in assembler, in machine language using 0's and 1's, and even by hard-wiring programs on boards.

The end of my indoctrination into geekdom came when I was drafted. This was at the height of the Vietnam travesty and the Army needed more cannon fodder. Through a series of fortuitous circumstances, I avoided being sent to 'Nam and, instead, ended up doing dangerous duty in the Pentagon. In the Army, I learned policing areas (euphemism for picking up cigarette butts), push-ups ("Drop and give me twenty!"), and field expediency (which meant that you either had to make do with what you had or "find" what you needed elsewhere).

Combined, these influences turned me into the prototypical geek.

I love things techy or science-y. I dote on finding out how things work by taking them apart. (Not all that great on the put back together part, though; sometimes there are leftover pieces.) Computers don't intimidate me. In fact, I still remember my excitement, around 1975, at discovering the MITS Altair, the world's first true PC.

This 1024 word (that's 256 bytes, not KB or MB) computer-in-a-box didn't have a display or use a mouse. Input was via the 16 toggle switches on the front panel, while output was the 16 red LEDs above the switches. One mistake and you had to go back to square one. Also, even if you managed to get all your bits in order, once entered, it was gone. There was no storage on the Altair. Later sophistications finally provided an interface so that you could use an audio cassette tape for storing programs and an interface for a teletype ASR 33 keyboard (which cost 3 times the price of the computer!).

I lusted after an Altair. Notwithstanding the fact that I lacked even the 500-or-so bucks for the kit (pricier, if assembled),

(Continued on page 22)

(Continued from page 15)

never discover firsthand how wrong these perceptions (usually) are.

I think Russ's point goes to the oft-forgotten purposes outlined in the Mensa Constitution: To identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity; to encourage research into the nature, characteristics, and uses of intelligence; and to provide a stimulating intellectual and social environment for its members. Most of the promotion, local group activity and discussion centers around the second half of the third pillar: a social environment. But we aren't generally recognized or perceived as pursuing the first two aspects. We identify human intelligence, but by scoring tests for prospects, and we do it not for the benefit of humanity but so we'll have more members to talk with. The Mensa Foundation is the arm by which we address the second pillar, but the Mensa Research Journal primarily reprints research done outside of Mensa, and the actual work of the Foundation is unknown to most people. And while local groups sometimes attempt to provide stimulating intellectual environments through speaker nights, these tend to be less well attended than games nights or dining events.

The social aspect is very important, and should not be discounted. I would not change this, because it is what keeps Mensa viable among its current membership. But to attract and maintain members who are less social, or already have an active social life and are looking to Mensa for something else, we need to find ways to balance that aspect with the intellectual claims of the organization. Otherwise it is hard to make a case for the sole qualifying requirement for joining Mensa. We are smart people, and we want to make it clear that it is GOOD to be smart, and that intelligence offers benefits to others. If we do that, we may be able to reduce the perception promulgated through the popular media that intelligent people are insular and out of touch with the rest of society.

As I write this column, the big news is the debate on what should (and should not) be included in the \$800+ billion economic stimulus package intended to bail us out of our current economic woes. Of course, by the time you read this, we will most likely have some sort of a stimulus package in place.

Nonetheless, I am weighing in on this issue, as I am sure we are not anywhere near finished stimulating the economy. What follows is my view on what should (and what should NOT) be included in an economic stimulus package. I would like to begin by stating that, while getting the economy back on track should be Priority One, it is by no means the only issue of extreme importance weighing on this country.

Yes, even with the economy in the shape it is in, there are other pressing issues. Defense is one. The environment is another. Our dependence on foreign oil is yet another. Health care is still uppermost in people's minds, especially with the aging of the Baby Boomers. Education should not be on the back burner, for our children are our future. Workers' issues should also be in the forefront, not just to create more jobs, but to allow full-time workers enough income and benefits to support a family. Let us also not forget that our infrastructure has been crumbling for years and likewise needs urgent attention. Am I stating that these matters should take priority over economic stimulus? Absolutely not!

I strongly believe that, with a crisis of this nature and magnitude, it is also a perfect moment to take advantage of some opportunities. Here, there are a great many opportunities at our disposal. For space considerations, I will give only a few examples.

First, there are things a stimulus bill should not do. At the top of my list: *no tax cuts*. Why? For one thing, they are not needed. For another, we are needlessly starving government at all levels. Two examples are the federal deficit from the Bush era, and the fiscal strait-jacket Florida currently finds itself in. Not a day goes by when we are not hearing of possible school closing and other such cutbacks. Finally, and most importantly, it does not work. Were tax cuts truly the solution, we should be in an unprecedented period of prosperity.

A stimulus bill should not allow "business as usual" as we've seen in the last administration, for this is precisely why we're in this mess. I've often heard it said that business must answer to its inves-

(Continued on page 20)

(Continued from page 19)

tors. Now, thanks to the economic stimulus package(s), we are the investors; business should be accountable to us. Conversely, we need to restore proper oversight over business, as one cannot effectively play without strict adherence to reasonable rules.

What should a stimulus bill do? Let's talk about energy. It is an economic issue. It is an environmental issue. It is also a defense issue, as we literally feed our enemies at the gas pump. We must first recognize that we are indeed an urban culture, as most of our population lives in or around cities. Here, mass transit deserves our attention. Ridership is up, but most mass transit budgets result in cutbacks to stay afloat. Yet, it is in the national interest to invest in mass transit on a large scale. We can employ thousands (or more) construction workers building the necessary infrastructure. Alternative energy can be harnessed for vehicles, especially on commuter rail systems. Automakers, now in deep trouble themselves, can profit from building the necessary vehicles. To the extent this happens, there is no debt service to worry about, since the money involved would be buying needed products instead of being loaned out (and running the risk of default).

We should invest in our education. The federal government needs to be much more involved in our schools; students in the Southeast deserve and desperately need the same opportunities and quality of education as is taken for granted elsewhere in our country. We should recruit the "best of the best" to educate our children; they deserve no less. Vouchers, a drain on school systems, should finally be outlawed. Those who insist on private education can pursue it at their own expense.

The focus on any stimulus bill should be on the American worker, including those currently out of work. The worker is the basis of the entire economy, whether on the job or off (as the worker is the primary consumer). We need to understand the current situation was brought about by the neglect and abuse of the American worker. While the immediate cause has been the preceding "credit crunch", that in itself is a byproduct of the lack of adequate earnings of the average worker who often cannot purchase the goods needed to support our economy. Here, credit was improperly used to delay the inevitable result of our anti-worker policy. This state of affairs needs to be corrected if we are to have a sustainable economy now and in the years to come.

January 19, 2009. Barack Hussein Obama is to become President in less than 24 hours. Around 7:30 p.m., I awoke from having dozed off, only to encounter an episode of *Dr. Phil*. That evening, his theme was the stresses in life presidents undergo while in office.

As I was regaining consciousness, the conversation had turned to multigenerational families, as it was noted that one of the White House's new occupants would be the mother of the new First Lady. In that vein, Dr. Phil also offered the comment that, due to current economic times, there would be more multigenerational families in order to survive current financial hardships. Moreover, with this trend, there would be no need to seek out child care, since at home, "Grandma will take care of the kids."

At first, this seemed to be a fine idea, but the more I think about it, the more it scares me. Let me start by saying that if the Obamas find this to be workable for their family, it is truly a great idea; likewise for other families who favor such an arrangement. My fear is that some "child experts" would look upon the First Family not as a unique family, but as an ideal for all others to follow.

Not all grandparents are suitable to be surrogate parents. Many feel that, upon completion of the job of rearing their own brood, they have "paid their dues," thus are not inclined to experience yet more joy of parenting. Some, for health reasons, cannot care for children. Some, frankly, *should* not. My question is, will they have a choice?

There's the rub. In "family law" cases, legal precedent is virtually nonexistent. The judge can exercise a great deal of discretion on a case-by-case basis by asserting the phrase, "*in the best interests of the child*". Conceivably, if a child's young parents suddenly decide that parenthood has become an inconvenience, the ruling may well be: "*Hey, that's OK. Grandma is ordered to take over all parental responsibility,*" even if Grandma is unwilling.

As we approach our twilight years, do we really want to be legally obligated to care for our kids' kids, especially when we had absolutely no say about their entry into this world (*and, as a practical matter, will have even less say in their upbringing*)? I, for one, think not.

Iwould like to encourage you all to vote in the upcoming Mensa election. In May you will be asked to vote for officers for the next two years for American Mensa, as well as those for the International Board, and your next RVC, who is your representative to the AMC (American Mensa Committee, or Board of Directors).

In the past, many grassroots members have not cared enough about national level politics to vote. But right now, while the AMC is working on restructuring Mensa, I think we all need to vote with care to pick the best representatives we can.

Our very own Elissa Rudolph, from Palm Beach Mensa, has served as RVC, 2nd Vice Chair, 1st Vice Chair, and is now running for National Chair. She is eminently qualified to take Mensa to the new and restructured level as Chair.

We also have two very qualified candidates running for RVC (Regional Vice Chair for Region 10), Mel Dahl and Thomas Thomas. I am attaching candidate statements for both of them. Take the time to read their statements and then consider them carefully. (There will be more in an upcoming Bulletin.) As of July 1, one of them will be your RVC.

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(Continued from page 17)

there was the greater mystery of what I would have done with the damn thing if I had bought one. After all, it didn't actually *do* anything. If you programmed it successfully, you were rewarded by an array of blinking lights. That was it. No World Wide Web, no email, no FreeCell, not even Pong. But that didn't matter to me. Given a choice between the Altair and Brigitte Bardot, without hesitation, I would have picked...

Awww, c'mon, now! No one is *that* geeky!

Minutes of the ExComm Meeting:

The ExComm met at the home of George Patterson, February 4, 2009. Called to order at 5:51 p.m. by LocSec George Patterson. **Members present:** George Patterson, Terry Valek, Bud Long, Joe Smith and Karen Freiberg.

Welcome Guests: None

Minutes for the January 7, 2009 meeting were approved as published in the February 2009 SCAM.

Reports:

LocSec: George reported that Helen Lee Moore has resigned as Proctor Coordinator. Hank Rhodes is qualified and ready to take over. We are reminded of Helen's constant reproaches regarding our lack of publicity and agree that something must be done to improve the situation. We are still in need of a Bylaws committee, but can wait another month or so to appoint one while we rework the Bylaws. We have three volunteers for the NomElCom (see below). It was noted that the members of the current ExComm were willing to run for re-election but hoped that there would be additional volunteers. We would like to see more interest in how our group is managed.

Treasurer: Bud submitted the December Treasurers Report which showed total funds of \$3,149.28.

There was no old business.

New Business: Terry moved that we appoint Wynn Rostek, Suzanne Leichtling, and Barbara Crawford as the NomElCom. Seconded by Karen, passed unanimously. George moved that we appoint Henry V. (Hank) Rhodes as Proctor Coordinator. Seconded by Karen, passed unanimously.

It was agreed by all, without a motion, that the ExComm should sponsor a spring picnic similar to the one held in April of 2007. Members expressed shock that it was held two years ago, when it seemed like only yesterday. Oh dear. See elsewhere in this issue for details.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 p.m. Next meeting will be at George Patterson's house at 301 Sand Pine Rd., Indialantic (321-777-3721) on Wednesday, **March 4, 2009 at 5:30 p.m.**