

The

SCAM

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SPACE COAST AREA MENSA

Website: www.spacecoast.us.mensa.org

(All Area Codes are 321 except as noted)



Executive Committee

Local Secretary

GEORGE PATTERSON

301 Sand Pine Rd., Indialantic, FL 32903
777-3721 george3141@cfl.rr.com

Assistant Local Secretary

JOSEPH SMITH

4317 Sherwood Blvd., Melbourne, FL 32935
259-4966 jsmith@arachnaweb.com

Treasurer

BUD LONG

660 Alaska Rd., Merritt Island, FL 32953
422-5011 budlong@bellsouth.net

Recording Secretary

KAREN FREIBERG

876 Buxmont Ct., Rockledge, FL 32955
633-1636 Karen@freiberg.com

Member-at-Large

TERRY VALEK

626-8523
wb4zuz@amsat.org

SCAM Appointees

Proctor Coordinator

HANK RHODES

MensaTest@cfl.rr.com

Membership

KAREN FREIBERG

Membership@scam.us.mensa.org

S.I.G.H.T.

KAREN FREIBERG

Sight@scam.us.mensa.org

RG Committee Chair

BUD LONG

SCAM Bylaws Committee

MICHAEL MOAKLEY

editor@scam.us.mensa.org

Publicity Committee Chair

GEORGE PATTERSON

Mediator

MICHAEL MOAKLEY

editor@scam.us.mensa.org

The SCAM Editorial Staff

Editor

MICHAEL MOAKLEY

808 Wisteria Dr., Melbourne, FL
32901

editor@scam.us.mensa.org

Webmaster

KAREN FREIBERG

633-1636

Karen@Freiberg.com

Assembly/Circulation

GEORGE PATTERSON

777-3721

Calendar

DOUG STARKE

633-1636

Doug@Starke.com

American Mensa Ltd.

MEL DAHL, RVC10

RVC10@cfl.rr.com

AMERICAN MENSA, LTD.

1229 Corporate Drive West
Arlington, TX 76006-6103

(817) 607-0060

AmericanMensa@mensa.org



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

Welcome to the beginning of the official 2011 Hurricane Season. This will suffice, I suppose, for my attempt at being witty this month. It seems to me that recently there has been some interest in how our monthly newsletter is edited. In last month's issue, a member wrote in expressing his concerns of some of *The SCAM's* content and offering a few suggestions.

In this month's issue, Art Belefant has an excellent article on usage of the English language. Both articles have piqued my interest as, somehow, I have been designated as the "authority" on the written content for *The SCAM*.

As I understand the term, "authority" can have two meanings here. It can refer to someone who is relied upon as an expert or it can refer to someone who has the power to make decisions or set policy.

Taking the latter meaning, I suppose it's true that I have been conferred quite a bit of authority as the Editor. In theory, aside from some items required by our Bylaws, I do have the discretion as to what content appears in each month's issue. As a practical matter, chances are really good that if you submit a contribution to *The SCAM*, it will be published. I have *that* on good authority.

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***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.

Every week I write something about the stock market - how to, when to and where to put your money and how to protect it from loss if you do. This week I want to say something very important to the young folks about success. And you parents take note if your kids are still young.

One of these days you are going to graduate from high school and, hopefully, college. Either one fits the bill here - even if you don't graduate you can apply this idea. A small percentage of your peers are going to become very successful. Success in the U.S. is mostly defined as someone who makes a lot of money.

From your graduating class there will be 2 or 3 who make it big time and 6 or 8 who will do very well. Most of them will end up owning their own businesses. Upon graduation you will have no idea who will be the next Bill Gates, Jack Welch or Warren Buffett, but he is right there in your old class picture. Just when you need him you have lost contact for so many years that he probably won't remember you or want to help you.

People are assets. You can't run any business without their input whether it is muscle, brains or money. You use them and they use you - and there is nothing wrong with that. This interaction is what makes the business world go around.

Wouldn't it have been great if you had kept in contact with Bill Gates from the time you graduated? As he made strides with his company you might have become one of his key people, but he forgot you existed - and it wasn't his fault. You let him go.

Don't squander your assets, your people. Here is a method that will work. No, not right away, but over the years it could easily change your life.

When you graduate take your yearbook and have everyone sign it. Even those you hardly know at all. Get their addresses, phone numbers and emails. Every year on that graduation date send out a yearly up date on what you have done during that year - got married, changed jobs, had a promotion, where you went on vacation, added a new kid to the family or what happened to your dog and your dreams and aspirations if you want to. Personal stuff. Ask them how they are doing? Every one is important. Do this every year and do your best to keep the list current. You may want to add

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Quite often, I have opened my column by commenting on the dangers of being awakened from a much-needed nap. Well, it has happened again! This time, it was a news item where our newly-elected Governor Rick Scott signed an insurance reform bill that, among other things, allows insurers of homes to raise their premiums by up to 15% annually without requiring prior approval from the state.

Governor Scott said this provision was needed to attract more insurance companies to Florida which, in turn, should foster more competition. In this way, we will surely benefit from the free market. Sounds good but, the trouble is, I've heard it all before. For the past twenty years, we Floridians have allowed these insurers to have their way with us – and it has always been due to the same “free market” argument. It would stand to reason that, over the years, we would have benefitted from these policies. Question is, have we?

For a case study, I offer myself. In 1986, I bought my present home for \$42,000. Like most, I took out a mortgage. As most lenders require the home to be insured, I took out a policy – the annual premium was \$200. Last year, I renewed my policy yet again. The coverage is not quite as good as it used to be and the deductibles are certainly higher – and the insurance now costs me about \$3050 for the year. In the meantime, my \$42,000 home is now worth maybe \$75,000.

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BEST INVESTMENT*Continued*

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others to your list.

Not much will be going on during the first 10 years, but as certain of your old classmates start to move up the ladder they will be looking for people to help them and you will float up to the top of the list. Mr. Rising Star needs help and he knows where you are and all about what you have been doing. You might be just the one he needs to help launch his ship of state.

People are assets. This kind of investment can really pay off.

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With regard to the former meaning, I would be uncomfortable with the idea that I am some sort of “authority” on how our language should be properly used. For starters, I have no formal training that would distinguish me from most people who use English on a common everyday basis. Moreover, other than in publications such as *The SCAM*, I am not a published writer.

On the other hand, Art Belefant is a published writer. As such, I believe his views on the use of language are of far more value than anything I can offer. I consider myself, *The SCAM*, and the members we serve to be very fortunate to have Art as one of our regular contributors.

So, for those among us who are aspiring writers, I would first recommend reading Art’s article in this month’s issue. As Editor of *The SCAM*, I am committed to providing a forum for our members who wish to pursue writing, whether as a hobby or professionally (although, regrettably, I am not qualified to provide much guidance).

Finally, if any of our readers do write professionally, I would encourage you to write for *The SCAM* on the topic of your choice. It may not be as rewarding as a best-seller, but it might offer encouragement to a future author from within our group.

Before closing this column, I do have one final item. By the time you read this, the election of our officers will be history. At this writing, however, the vote count, scheduled for a few days before was postponed for a week. So, as I write this, I do not yet know the outcome of the election, but I would be extremely shocked if our new ExComm was not a copy of the outgoing ExComm. I have agreed to serve as Editor for the next year (assuming the new ExComm chooses to reappoint me), and I will presumably (again, if the new ExComm so chooses) stay on as Mediator for SCAM.

So, for the time being, SCAM will continue on its current path. This means we have yet another year to give some serious thought as to what kind of future we would like for SCAM. It truly is up to you.

During one of our monthly meetings of SNORT, when we were discussing one of my recent SCAM articles, *Genitive*, I was asked a question, if all those grammar guides that I mention in my article differ in certain details, what is the final authority that we can use? The answer is, there isn't any!

France has its *Académie française* that acts as the official authority on the French language in France (French Canada has its own) and similarly there are official language regulators in 83 other countries and languages; from Afrikaans to Yoruba, plus four artificial languages, including Esperanto and Klingon. The United States has no official group that determines proper spelling, grammar, pronunciation, or meaning. It doesn't even have an official language. It is pure democracy out there.

It can truly be said that there isn't an English grammar. For every so-called grammatical rule, there are exceptions and "authorities" that make those exceptions. Take the first sentence of the second paragraph above. "Its" is in the possessive or genitive case. However, that usage is an exception to the general rule that possessives are designated by an apostrophe *s*. Why is the apostrophe omitted? Presumably, to avoid confusion with the contraction "it's".

What can be said about English is that there is no grammar, only accepted usages, and these usages are not universal. What you and I were taught in "grammar" school about the rules of grammar was what the school board or your teacher took as an authority. They did not tell you that their choice was arbitrary and that there were many other books of rules and authorities that could be followed. The only authority is the one used by the person or organization for whom you are writing. You wrote according to the rules given to you by your teacher because she or he was going to grade your paper.

I was given a minus 50 on my first paper in my freshman English class in high school. The teacher explained that he took off 50 points for a run-on sentence and I had three run-on sentences in my paper. Wow! What would he have done about almost any paragraph in any of Charles Dickens's works? He probably would have said that Dickens took "literary license", and he would have been right. When writing a literary work -- a novel,

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short story, or poem -- there are no grammatical rules. The author is writing for himself. The purpose of a literary work is to convey the author's concepts and emotions. If he or she needs to "break" a grammatical rule to do so, so be it.

When writing for someone else, such as a reporter for a newspaper, or when I write an Air Force manual, the rule is to follow the rules, the rules selected by the organization for which you are writing. Just follow the style manual and forget about "grammar". If writing for a publication that has no style manual, such as SCAM, you are on your own, except that Mike, as editor, has the authority to "correct" your copy.

There are those who say that in speaking and writing we should emulate our "betters". In the U. S., there are no "betters". There are richer and there are poorer, there are more educated and less educated, but there are no "betters".

In post WWI England, there were betters. There were distinct classes; royalty, nobility, merchants, tradesmen, workers, farmers, and so forth. Each spoke and wrote in its distinctive manner, but each recognized the speech and writing of its betters. Dorothy Sayers, in her Peter Whimsy stories, wrote in the quoted dialogs of her characters as closely as she could to show their dialects. Lord Peter and his brother, the Duke of Denver, both use the word "ain't", leave off the *g* at the end of gerunds (nothin'), and omit the beginning of many words, *i.e.* *'em* for *them*. If these are the betters that Englishmen were supposed to follow, they were a sorry lot. In contrast, Bunter, Lord Peter's manservant, and Parker, the official detective, never say "ain't" and speak impeccable English, as does the Dowager Duchess of Denver, Lord Peter's mother and even Lord Peter himself when writing.

Just look at the objection by grammar obsessed teachers to beginning a sentence with "or", "and", or "but". The King James Version of the Bible, one of the greatest works of English writing begins many sentences with "and", or of the use of the word "ain't", which historically (see above) and grammatically is superior in some cases to "aren't" or "isn't" (*Ain't She Sweet*), or the ending of a sentence with a preposition (-50 points). Winston Churchill, when criticized for doing that, said, "That is the sort of arrant pedantry up with which I will not put.", or even where to put the quotation mark at the end of the previous sentence, before or af-

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The event dominating the news recently (*after the Royal Wedding*) is the death of the most hated man on the face of the earth: Osama bin Laden. Headlines, photo ops, articles, and video clips with pundits and politicians praising our noble efforts and high-fiving everyone involved for the fine job they did.

Originally, we thought he was hiding in the labyrinthine caves of Tora Bora. How ridiculous. Do you have any idea how impractical it would have been to haul around a humongous battery pack to power the dialysis machine that OBL needed? Plus, they require clean water and a sterile setting -- infection is a huge risk. Tora Bora was never a realistic asylum for this terrorist hoodlum. Yet we spent a great deal of time pursuing him there.

I just can't comprehend how a six-foot tall Saudi schlepping a dialysis machine could evade the best efforts of the world's cracker-jack intelligence agencies for ten years. I mean... CIA, FBI, DHS, NSA, DIA, ONI, NSC, NCIS, MI6, IDF, French Foreign Legion, Interpol, and Boy Scout Troop 173 of Omaha, Nebraska all on the lookout for this bastard... spy satellites, informers, infiltrators, security drones, wiretaps and intercepts, reward incentives... still nothing!

Let me pose a challenge. I will give you one million dollars and a one-week head start. Hide anywhere in the world. Then we turn all these intelligence boys loose on finding you. I'm willing to bet that within twenty-four hours, your butt will be right back here without having raised a sweat. The world we live in is no longer private. There is no such thing as a safe sanctuary any more. If the traffic cams or the security cams didn't get a glimpse of you, good chance some twenty-something with an iPhone shot a video of you buying llama pellets and posted it on YouTube.

I don't get it.

Seems to me we ought to be ashamed that with the resources and technology we have available it took almost *ten years* to find the bastard that masterminded nine-eleven. If I'd had anything to do with it, I would have kept it a secret to my grave. That way, bin Laden would eventually have been forgotten and people wouldn't think about how inept we were in getting him right away. Ten years. Unconscionable!

The George

SCAM Calendar of Events for June 2011

3rd - Friday 5:30 PM

"HOOT LIKE AN OWL"

Come join us for drinks, open discussion and food (latter two optional) at the Melbourne Hooter's, 877 S. Babcock Street.

Hosted by: *Dennis Logan, 501-7547.*

8th - Wednesday 5:30 PM

EXCOMM MEETING

This is our monthly business meeting. See back page for location.

18th - Saturday 6:30 PM

DINNER AT DAVID'S

Join us at David's Restaurant, 2480 S Washington Ave (US1) in Titusville for just about any kind of dinner, ranging from steak to sushi.

Contact: *Mike Zielinski, 747-0097.*

25th - Saturday 5:45 PM

S.N.O.R.T.

Join us for some sushi and tempura at The SCAM's best attended event at Miyako's, 1511 S. Harbor City Blvd. (US#1) in Melbourne.

Contact: *George, 777-3721 for details.*

Of CABAGEs and Coffee:

(Our Regular Events)

C.A.B.A.G.E.: **Every Monday at Books-A-Million,** Merritt Square Mall
6 p.m. Host: *Karen Freiberg, 633-1636*

GO!: **Every Sunday at Books-A-Million,** Post Commons, Melbourne.
Host: *George Lebovitz, 259-3070, rokkitsci@cfl.rr.com*

Membership Notes for June 2011

WELCOME TO SCAM

Jonathan Kettering
Gregg Wiggins

WELCOME BACK!

Kenneth Kline

JUNE BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

<i>2nd</i>	Bill Emmons	<i>24th</i>	Sam Kirschten
<i>14th</i>	Jakob Unger Jr	<i>24th</i>	Christopher Moss
<i>17th</i>	Arthur Belefant	<i>26th</i>	Judith Wiksten
<i>17th</i>	Jane Williams		

MENSA TESTING

June 18 at Central Brevard Library, 308 Forrest Ave., Cocoa.
Please arrive by 9:45 am, as testing begins at 10 am. \$40 fee and photo ID required. Reservations encouraged but not required. Candidates must be age 14 or older. Testing next month July 16.

Contact: Hank Rhodes, mensatest@cfl.rr.com, for details.

The "Fine Print" for Calendar 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**.

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ter the period. Or should it be both?

In the "Week in Review" section of *The New York Times*, the newspaper refers to itself as "The Times" in Roman letters. According to most school grammarians, the name of a newspaper should be in italics. *The Wall Street Journal* follows the same practice in referring to itself. *Florida Today*, in articles and news reports refers to *The New York Times* in italics. The writing of *The Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* without italics conforms to the *GPO Style Manual*. Who are right, the grammarians' ukase and *Florida Today's* stylebook or the *The New York Times's*, the *Wall Street Journal's*, and the *GPO's* Style Manuals? If you want to have some fun, compare my use of italics, apostrophes, genitives, capitalizations, and the location of periods and quotation marks in this article against what you think is proper grammar.

The ultimate authority for the writer is his editor and his stylebook. So, for aspiring writers I suggest using a stylebook. The grammar and spell checker in your computer is a good start, but do not accept its recommendations without question. When writing a letter, novel, or treatise, consider your audience and the purpose of your document. Of most importance, consider yourself and how you want to appear to your audience.

A Mensan in the Workplace?

Are you the Mensan at work? Do you work with other Mensans...or...are you the only one? If the latter is true, do your coworkers know you're in Mensa? What about your boss? What are your impressions and experiences at work? Do you have a leadership position? Do you serve in any kind of "support" (formal or informal) role? Does your status as a Mensan have a positive or negative impact on your work relationships? Finally, if preparing a resume, would you include your Mensa membership as an item (or would you state that you qualified to join Mensa)? Why or why not? Let's hear from *you*.

A Mensan in the family?

Are you the Mensan in your family? Or, is your spouse, child, parent or sibling the Mensan in your household? Are two or more (maybe all) in your household Mensans? If any of these apply, The SCAM is soliciting an article from you. All members of SCAM or family members are invited to respond. What are your impressions and experiences?

THANKS, RICK!

Continued.

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When I bought my home, I was working on my present job. Back then, I was paid \$7.47 per hour. If my pay had increased at the same rate as my insurance premium, my current pay would be \$113.92 per hour, a figure several times my actual pay! Before we go on, I cannot in good conscience hold the current governor responsible for current conditions as he was not yet in office.

What Rick *is* responsible for is perpetuating the current “free market” ideology that brought us to this point. Moreover, by the end of Rick’s first term, I can look forward to my annual homeowners’ insurance premium to increase to \$5335 – possibly for even less coverage than I have now, and certainly less coverage than I had with my \$200 policy. Perhaps by then, I will earn \$199.26 per hour so my pay would keep up with my insurance bill. Think that will happen?

On this issue, I believe I speak for all Florida homeowners when I say, “*Thanks Rick!*”

Recently, I heard a news item on TV about a bill passed by the Florida Senate whereupon poor Florida residents would now be required to undergo drug testing to obtain welfare benefits. A positive drug test would render the person ineligible for benefits. Further, the person required to undergo the drug test is also required to pay for the test, estimated to be about \$80. Knowing how the reliability of our sensationalist news media is often, at best, questionable, I decided to investigate.

In checking the Florida Senate website, I found CS/CS/SB 556 (read, "Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 556"), a five-page affair setting forth a new drug testing requirement, effective July 1, 2011, for new applicants for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Some of the provisions are outlined below:

1. The cost of the drug testing shall be the responsibility of the individual applicant. There is no indication as to how the payment would be made. Would it be up-front? Will he or she be billed for the test? Will the cost of the drug test be deducted from the initial payment of benefits? We do not know.
2. Those subject to drug testing would be the parent or primary caretaker for the child(ren) on whose behalf the benefits are to be paid. Children under 18 are exempt from drug testing unless the child is a teen parent living as an adult caring for her child.

A positive test renders the individual ineligible for TANF for one year following the test results.

What is the rationale behind this bill? Is it really to address what is perceived as a drug problem particularly within that portion of our population living in poverty? If that is, indeed, the case, a few questions need to be raised.

For a family to be eligible for TANF in the first place, that family must be financially incapable of taking care of itself. As such an applicant must take the drug test at his or her own expense, from where does the state expect the necessary funds to come? The state is now creating a condition where many of its citizens will be too poor to even be on welfare. Moreover, since the testing requirement applies to all applicants (drug user and non-user alike), we will have no

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way of knowing, much less addressing the drug problem among the poor. So, how will this help?

According to the bill, dependent children are excluded from the new drug testing requirements. Since most addicts began using drugs as children, how does this bill remedy the drug problem? Would it not be better for all concerned to address such a serious problem early on when the chances are significantly increased for recovery from the addiction?

Finally, if an applicant tests positive for drug use, he or she cannot reapply for TANF for at least one year. Assuming the applicant is otherwise eligible for benefits, the reality is that needy families are denied the help. This, of course, does nothing to alleviate the poverty the program is designed to address. Since the ineligible applicant is still poor, how does this address the drug problem among the poor?

I believe it is fair to assume at this point that CS/CS/SB 556 is NOT, and has never been, designed to address any drug problem among Florida's poor. The question then becomes, what is the true rationale behind this bill? One clue may rest with the most recent bill analysis, which comes from the Senate Budget Committee.

Given the political climate of the 2010 elections and the increasing dominance of the Tea Party movement as it demands "smaller government", it would become apparent that this bill is actually a budget measure. The Budget Committee estimates in its report that currently about 9.6% of the population on welfare are drug users. Imposing drug testing, then, would help reduce the state's budget in at least two ways.

First, and most obvious, the state would realize savings by denying assistance to the applicants whose drug test results are positive. Statistically, this amounts to a 9.6% savings. Second, the requirement in CS/CS/SB 556 that each applicant pay for the drug test would effectively bar assistance to those who cannot afford to pay for the test. While it is difficult to place a number on who would be affected, by the very nature of the need for TANF, I suspect that number would be quite significant. Thus, I would conclude that CS/CS/SB 556 is, in reality, a budget measure.

Now for my final question: Would the State of Florida truly benefit from this bill or similar budget measures? For reasons already discussed, the bill would do nothing to address the drug problem. It

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does seem, however, the state does stand to save taxpayer money. That's only if you look at the short term. What about the long term results?

Those denied assistance solely due to the provisions of this bill would still be in need of assistance. Without the needed help, what then? Will these people simply die off or disappear? I, for one, don't believe so. Humans, like other animals, do possess a "survival instinct."

Some may be able to get by with the help of a private charity (perhaps if only to come up with the cost of the drug test). While this sounds good, in these difficult times, charities are swamped with people needing help as it is. Private charity may not wind up being the panacea hoped for by the "small government" crowd. What about the rest, are they simply out of luck? I don't think so – that is where survival instinct comes in.

Expect crime to go up. This can happen in two ways. The first is where crimes are committed to obtain the needs for the person or family. Thefts and robberies are definite possibilities. Drug dealing and prostitution are probable as well. In particular, there may be increasing pressure for girls just beyond the age of puberty to offer up their bodies in exchange for the resources they need to survive. Not a pretty picture, but this is just one scenario.

I would interject here to point out that the resultant criminal activity would tend to erode at least some of the savings that the legislature anticipates by passing this bill. This is in part due to the property loss at the hands of the thieves. The larger part, however, would be the increased need for law enforcement, the justice system, and prisons. Otherwise, who would catch these additional criminals and bring them to justice? Who would guard them to ensure they are serving their sentences?

The other way, perhaps not as immediate but just as possible, is an outright rebellion. The population of the poor is rapidly growing as the middle class continues to shrink. Moreover, the need for help continues to grow as the resources continue to shrink. If we do not begin to be more realistic in addressing our social problems, the results will surely be volatile.

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done locally. Seeing a hospitality room filled with a thousand Mensans, many of whom are friends I wouldn't have met any other way, makes my membership worth it all by itself (And I do hope to see many of you in Portland in July).

This is not to say that mistakes don't occasionally happen; they do. But as one who regularly deals with the national office over one issue or another, I am mightily impressed with the staff that we have and the work that they do. Find a minute to drop them a note and say thank you.

Mel Dahl

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The June ExComm meeting will be at Karen Freiberg's house at 876 Buxmont Ct., Rockledge, FL, 32955, on Wednesday, June 8, 2011 at 6:00 pm. Note that this is a new location, a new time, and the second Wednesday of the month. I hope we can handle all these changes at one time.

George Patterson - LocSec

Every now and then I think it's a good idea to ask the question, Why do we have a national office and what has it done for us lately?

For most members, the national office is largely invisible since most activities happen at the local level. If this weekend you're attending a First Friday dinner or a games night or even a regional gathering, that is mostly if not completely the work of local volunteers who planned it and made it happen. Most of the really good things about Mensa happen because of local groups. So, what exactly are you getting for your dues money?

Last year, the national office responded to 26,283 calls from members, scored 4,369 tests, processed 5,107 offers of membership and 4,930 new memberships (The calls included providing forgotten passwords to approximately 50 members each month). They sorted and stuffed materials for 500 local group officers every month, which works out to about 6,000 packets last year. They processed credit-card payments and all of the daily cash receipts from dues, new members, testing and prior evidence. That included following up on declined or invalid cards and sending letters to members regarding NSF checks. They processed 150 pieces of undeliverable mail each week, which meant contacting members for their new information and updating the database (Thanks to Robin Crawford for the data).

OK, that's administrative stuff that the local groups would otherwise have to find volunteers to handle on their own. Then there is the matter of the national Web site that allows members to stay in touch with each other and have conversations about current events. And the national publications that allow members to keep track of what is happening within Mensa, read interesting feature articles, learn about important research, and find out about upcoming events outside their geographic area. There is the negotiation of member discounts with various businesses and the cross-pollination with other high-IQ societies, such as the Texas Association for Gifted Children, which graciously invited the AMC to attend part of their convention last year.

And there are the two major annual events, the Annual Gathering and the Annual Colloquium, neither of which would be possible without a national office. The amount of work that goes into putting on such an event is staggering, and there is no way they could be

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There was no May ExComm Meeting.

The ExComm, recognizing the current workload to be virtually non-existent, neglected to schedule a meeting for May. As soon as the April meeting was over, I realized we had overlooked one piece of business: we need an audit committee and an audit. Not really a problem, since we've had the same audit committee for the last three or four years, and have always managed to work an audit in some-time around election time.

I checked the Bylaws to see if they are more specific about timing, and, lo and behold, they are and they aren't. The Bylaws state the audit shall be conducted "at the close of the fiscal year" which is May 31. We can't do it "before the close", we certainly can't do it at midnight of May 31, which is "at the close", so we probably have to do it "after the close". We have always taken this to mean in the month or two following the election of a "new" ExComm, and so we shall again, but it is odd that what seems so specific is not. An example of a more specific specification - how about "before the end of July of the following fiscal year." Good - now that we've solved the fiscal crisis, how about the non-contested election problem.

Now for something completely different. An actual advance has been made in the area of communication with the membership. Our efforts at Facebook usage have been of minor impact, but the use of email reminders for events does appear to be of value. We now have a usable email list for about half of our membership. Why only half?

Because the other half of the membership, for an assortment of reasons, has chosen to withhold that information from National, so we, the distributors of information, can't distribute it. I can understand the reluctance of people to guard their email addresses a few years ago, but now, if you have email, the whole world knows it. "I don't want to get on a mailing list" is so nineties it's bordering on paranoia.

How to deal with this? Perhaps we can just call people on the telephone and see if we can persuade them to part with their email addresses. Unfortunately, we don't have their phone numbers. Same problem. And if someone gets enlightened and wants to update their member information via Mensa's online presence . . . I don't know what to say about that. Enough grumbling for a day, let me get this item off to our editor.

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