Presenting the NEW ExComm:

Karen Freiberg
George Lebovitz
Dennis Logan
Wynn Rostek
Terry Valek

Congratulations to All...

Volume 30, No. 6
June, 2012
Minutes of the May SCAM ExComm Meeting

The ExComm met at the home of Karen Freiberg at 876 Buxmont Ct., Rockledge, FL 32955 on Wednesday, May 2nd, 2012. Called to order at 6:10 pm by LocSec George Patterson.

Members Present: George Patterson, Karen Freiberg, Dennis Logan, Terry Valek, and George Lebovitz.

Guests: Wynn and Zanne Rostek (as usual, waiting for the RG Committee meeting which was to follow).

Minutes for the April, 2012 meeting were approved as published in the May 2012 SCAM.

There ensued a protracted discussion regarding George’s conversation with the mother of a prospective 10-year old member, whether our young Mensans would like to share e-mail addresses with each other, and if it would be permissible to have a non-Mensan as a gifted child coordinator.

Officer/Committee Reports:

Treasurer’s report, showing a balance of $332.94 (after which George entertained us with the tale of how he would receive a moderate interest on his savings account of which a few cents would be withheld and then reported on his W-2).

Testing coordinator, Hank Rhodes, reported (via e-mail) no new candidates and 8 second- or third-time candidates. Next test session is May 19, 2012 at the Central Brevard Library in Cocoa.

We then somehow got on the subject of the proverbial “smart meters” that the power company would like to install in all of our homes. This provided an opportunity for a substantial rant from Dennis.

Mention was made of the upcoming ExComm election, with the attendant Vote Counting Party on Saturday, May 12th (undoubtedly already history by the time you are reading this). As a dedicated Recording Secretary, I feel obligated to report that George recounted a voting story to us; however, all I can remember about it was something on the order of: “blah, blah, blah.” Sorry.

The meeting degenerated significantly at this point: Dennis’s tale of woe regarding his wife’s part-time job where she earned $18K, but from which no taxes were deducted, leaving him with $7K in taxes due at the end of the (Continued on page 13)
I am pleased to announce that, despite a sluggish economy, Region 10 is holding its own in terms of growth and member retention. Tampa Bay Mensa is the only local group in all of American Mensa to have gained members every year for the past six years; Broward County Mensa succeeded in not losing any members over the past six years (and was one of the few local groups nationally to accomplish that feat). I single out Gainesville for special praise; a year ago it was having leadership issues; thanks to the dynamic leadership of its new locsec and membership officer (with logistical support from Assistant RVC Thomas Thomas) it is now one of the fastest-growing small groups in American Mensa, with a 7.5% annual growth rate.

As much as I would like to claim credit for these numbers, I really can’t, because they are mostly due to the fantastic teams of local leaders that make the Region 10 groups warm and welcoming. As usual, Orlando and Northwest Florida Mensa put on magnificent RGs, and Space Coast and Broward do a fine job of tag-teaming fun and interesting RGs on alternating years. Sarasota continues to put out an award-winning newsletter and hold dinner events that, when I’ve attended, have felt more like old friends than anything else. Southwest Florida does creative things like team with the local biker group to raise money for scholarships; West Palm hosts dinner meetings specifically directed at new members. When I last visited Tallahassee, the group went on an outing to the local science museum and saw an interesting presentation on astronomy, followed by dinner. Jacksonville has well-attended and much-looked-forward-to monthly potlucks with the type of speakers that remind me why I joined Mensa: To meet up with interesting people for interesting conversation.

I’m expecting great things from Miami this year as well. Miami has a new ExComm in place that promises to take one of the oldest and most venerable local groups in American Mensa and make it great again. I look forward to seeing the results.

As always, it has been a true privilege and high honor to serve the people of Region 10 as RVC. By the time this appears in print I will be in the last year of my last term; I will leave office knowing that the Region is in good hands because it is in the hands of the local leaders that make it such a special place.

June is here, the beginning of yet another hurricane season, and a new ExComm is on the way. Yes, after a hard-fought campaign, the election is finally over! What makes the 2012 election so unique is that it was actually a contested election. At this writing, we do know that longtime LocSec George Patterson is scheduled to begin enjoying a well-deserved retirement (well, sort of...) at the close of our June ExComm meeting.

The good news for me is that George has agreed to continue as Circulation Coordinator, while Karen Freiberg will continue as Webmaster, in both cases making my job easier should the new ExComm choose to reappoint me as Editor. At this time, we do not know who will occupy which of the five positions; the Bylaws provide that, once taking office, the newly-elected officers decide among themselves their respective roles.

With this new beginning rapidly headed toward our history books, it’s still not too late for you, as a member, to help determine the direction of our local group under our new administration. Of course, here I must caution you with a word to the wise: If you have that great idea for an event or program in mind, it has a much better chance of becoming reality if you volunteer as either a host or program chair.

So much for the grandstanding on my part. That said, we cannot ignore the fact that this is 2012—the Year of the Mayan Calendar! Does this mean that our new ExComm is the last one?... stay tuned.
After spending two years in Spain (courtesy of the U.S. Navy), I was sent back to Florida to complete a second technical school. Since the Navy probably thought I had enjoyed the Hemingway life quite enough, it was payback time. So the next duty station: Iceland!

Actually, Iceland was a fascinating place. The “Land of Frost and Fire” is quite appropriate. The beautiful Aurora Borealis and crystal clear skies (at least in the summer) were breathtaking. The capital city of Reykjavik (‘smoky bay’) had some of the best dressed men and women ever seen, wearing the latest European fashions. With bookstores and coffee shops aplenty, I was in heaven. Even with some brutal winter days (that were practically dark for 20 hours) and some landscapes that allowed the astronauts to practice moonwalks, the land was still fascinating.

Literacy is extremely high in Iceland. Also, English is the second language of the country, so traveling across country and staying at various cities and towns was never a problem. They always encouraged me when I attempted their language (just like most cultures I have encountered). So, they were patient in correcting me when I tried to speak like someone other than the Swedish chef on The Muppets. A friend of mine that was a teacher showed me that young children were able to read the Elder Eddas, the collection of mythology and poetry of the Norsemen of the 12th century! I would play chess (popular in Iceland) with some Icelandic college students who were always anxious to help me learn their language. They always wondered why I would want to learn an ancient language when English seemed to be the language of the present and future. I just told them that I thought it would seem like a cool thing to accomplish. I always wanted to compare the difficulties in learning foreign languages and see how different a Scandinavian language would be to learn compared to the Romance and German languages I was most familiar in using.

I was no Daniel Tammet (the savant who wrote an interesting autobiography titled Born on a Blue Day and claimed to learn Icelandic in 7 days), but I did have fun learning some basic sentences and being able to see Icelanders eyes light up when I attempted their language. Icelandic retains the old English æ and æ (pronounced “aye”), ð and ð (pronounced like the "th" in "that"), and þ and þ (pronounced like the "th" in "thin"). I’ve been told the latter example, the thorn (Icelandic: þorn, pronounced more like "thord"), has been lost from all languages worldwide except Icelandic. Adjectives had to match case, gender, and number with their nouns and had separate superla-

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“Goodbye. "or "Vertu blessaður/blessuð." (equivalent to "Blessed-be" -- one of a number of ways to say goodbye in Icelandic. Usually they said just “Bless”.) A very appropriate farewell in any country.

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?

The Last Minute

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year; the status of George’s IRA; and the general consensus that 401K’s suck.

There was no new business and the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, June 5th (George having a scheduling conflict for the normal Wednesday date), 2012 at 6:00 pm at the home of Karen Freiberg at 876 Buxmont Ct., Rockledge, FL 32955. Guests are encouraged and welcome to attend.

The ExComm Committee was adjourned at 6:34 pm.

Afterword: An Ad Hoc ExComm meeting was held May 12th shortly before the vote counting began. Suzanne Leichting of the NomElCom was unable to attend the vote counting on that date. It was convenient for the ExComm to meet briefly prior to the vote counting and appoint Kurt Penca to the NomElCom, who was eligible for the position, and was present at the event, as a replacement. The vote was 4-0 with George Lebovitz not present.

George Patterson - LocSec
do not understand the fascination that people — seemingly, all over the world — have with celebrities.

Just because someone is well known doesn’t necessarily make them more intelligent, knowledgeable, informed, or particularly interesting than anyone else, yet there seems to be this vast intrigue into finding out just what they ate for breakfast, who they’re sleeping with, and how they feel about the llama problem in Turkmenistan.

Britney Spears appears as the spokesperson for Nostinkiepit deodorant and the hordes will descend upon Walgreen’s to stock up, albeit the product may well do nothing to stem the stench. Does no one realize that Ms. Spears is being paid vast sums of money to tout this product she might not even use and is certainly no more qualified to express an opinion on than Bigfoot would be? Yet it doesn’t seem to matter. It would appear that the prevailing opinion is: “If it’s good enough for Britney’s pits, it must be good for mine.”

Celebrities endorse political candidates. Charlie Sheen makes a video supporting Ralphie “Redneck” Roundemup for Sheriff of Polluta County and people flock to the polls to cast their ballots for Triple-R. Why? Certainly not because Charlie is particularly informed about Ralphie’s qualifications for the job (although he may have encountered him a few times as a customer), but simply because of Sheen’s face time, voters think: “If he’s good enough for Charlie, then he’s good enough for me.”

My lovely, intelligent wife is not immune to the syndrome. She diligently peruses the newspaper and other informed sources such as TV Guide and People Magazine in constant pursuit of “the latest.” As she reads, she will occasionally blurt out something on the order of “Oh, my God!” Hearing my cue, I will respond with “What?” “Look at this: Katy Perry is divorcing Russell Brand.” “That’s nice, dear.” “Can you believe it?” “Believe what?” “You don’t know who they are, do you?” “Ummm... no, actually.” But even if I did, why would I care? These people don’t mean anything to me. They don’t send me checks, invite me to their parties, or comp me tickets to their shows or games or whatever it is that they do. Yet my wife finds the latest antics of these celebrities endlessly fascinating. As I suppose do quite a few people, considering the success of People, Us, National Enquirer, and other tabloids.

But why should the antics of these celebrities be of such interest? Is it because they live fantasy lives or is it just because their lives are more public? Certainly they live much more flamboyantly than most of us, due largely to

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Languages ...

(Continued from page 4)

tive declensions. And the language had ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ declensions, depending on if you used a definite article to modify the noun. Learning declensions and conjugating their verbs was too overwhelming for me! They also used compound words like German, with a grammatical complexity that seemed worse to me than Latin.

Not all of Icelandic was difficult. You could use some adjectives like ‘æðislegt!’ (awesome!) without worrying about declensions.

They also had those darn idioms that are so difficult in most languages to become familiar with and use in appropriate settings. You did not say “return” but said “kom aftur” (“come again”). And they told me not to say “bring” but “koma með” (“come with”). I managed to learn simple phrases, such as,

Thank you, mother.” or "Ég þakka þér mamma mín." (“Thank you, mother.”)

"I go here." Or "Ég fer heðan." (“I go hither”)

"Should we go?" “Eigum við að fara?”

I never became very fluent in the language. Probably because I eventually thought (as my chess playing friends did) that Icelandic was probably not going to be as useful in the outside world. Of course, maybe I should have learned it well enough to become an economic advisor to the Icelandic banks and investors. Even someone with my limited experience may have been able to explain Ponzi schemes of international bankers and lawyers to their managers and the people handling their finances. At least discuss it in a language they may have felt more familiarity with and been more receptive to in listening.

Awhile back, there was discussion of Iceland dropping its currency (the krona) and adopting the Canadian dollar (called the loonie) for their exchange medium. The name itself speaks for that concept. However, I remember the Icelandics as always being an adventurous folk. So, who can say what they will think of next. I never would have imagined that having lived there in the 1970s that, by 2010, it would be a bankrupt country. How sad for such an industrious and learned population!

I guess I will end my series at this point, by using that phrase the Icelanders told us, as we departed out of their airport for the last time. We even received large sized certificates, from the U.S .Navy, emblazoned with a picture of the island and its arctic scenes. The words read:

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Yes, It’s back, but not in Brevard County. I tried the “usual suspects”, Petty’s, Winn-Dixie, Publix, Green Turtle, and the M. B. Supermarket, all of whom have extensive collections of gourmet cheeses. None of them carry that cheese or could or would order it for me. But this is the Internet age. On to the one distributor - Hefti Creek Specialties, (W6309 Heftly Road, Monticello, WI 53570, 608-237-1992, info@hefticreek.com). They supply six-ounce packages of Liederkranz cheese for $6.99. Not a bad price for a specialty cheese. The shipping, however, cost another $5.00. The cheese arrived via USPS Priority Mail in about one week in a small box, insulated, with a freezer pack. Stamped on the box were the notes “Perishable” and “Smell OK”. That alone told me there was something good inside.

It reminded me of when I traveled to France occasionally. On each trip to Paris I would buy a package of Camembert cheese that was made from unpasturized milk, illegal in the U. S., but commonly available in France. On one trip home I apparently did not wrap the cheese sufficiently well and I had it in my hand baggage. I could see the passengers who were sitting under the overhead bin that contained my hand baggage sniffing and looking around.

Liederkranz smells stronger than a good ripe Camembert but less so than a Limburger. That just about describes Liederkranz, stronger than Camembert and less strong than Limburger. As for assertiveness in taste, it also falls between Camembert and Limburger. Liederkranz is softer than even a ripe Camembert, which makes it ideal for spreading on rye bread. Although it has a slight bite, its taste is not as strong as its aroma.

Limburger is a very assertive cheese, probably the most assertive commonly found in American cheese stores. It doesn’t go well with anything other than black bread and beer or a strong wine like port. For an after dinner cheese course, a milder, but not mild, cheese such as a good camembert, brie, well-aged cheddar, or Swiss fits in. This is where Liederkranz shines, but not for all meals. I would not choose Liederkranz after a fish or seafood dinner or after Italian, Chinese, or Mexican. Limburger would overpower or conflict with the preceding meal. Save the Liederkranz for after steak, pot roast, or boeuf burgundian. For cocktails, or other light refreshments, mild cheeses are best on crackers or toast points. Mild versions of camembert, brie, cheddar, or edam, gouda, port du salute, and Munster work well here.

(Continued from page 10)
Recently, I have had the dubious pleasure of watching John Stossel as a guest on a TV daytime talk show. To be totally honest, I had only seen a small part of his presentation, as I had to return to work after my lunch break. From what I did see, Stossel was complaining on how the Obama and Bush Administrations have begun to bankrupt the federal government by the huge increase in “government spending”.

Stossel was also emphasizing how we need to have a “limited government” whose only legitimate function is to protect the country. With that in mind, presumably, he would drastically cut federal spending in all areas except for defense spending. When asked about the slate of candidates running for President, Stossel stated he would support Ron Paul as his views most closely match Paul’s.

To support his position, at one point Stossel came out with a line graph describing the significant increase in federal spending “per person”. According to Stossel, this significant spending increase began approximately with the Johnson Administration and continues to increase exponentially through the present. It was at this point that I had to return to work.

As I left the house, I started thinking about what I had just heard. What caused the acceleration of “government spending” described by Stossel? Why did it start in the Johnson Administration? One reason was the passage of Medicare during that time. Another was that, some 30 years after Social Security became law, we began to have a full generation of senior citizens become eligible for benefits. Still another was that, by the end of the Johnson Administration, most of the baby boomers were in school. Finally, the birth rate began to drop as the Baby Boom era had just come to an end.

Therefore, it seems that much of the “entitlement” spending that many blame for what is seen as out-of-control government spending is used for our senior citizens. As the Baby Boomers now range in age from 48 to 66 years, benefits paid to seniors are predicted to rise to still higher levels. On the other side of the equation, with a lower ratio of workers to retirees and with a global economy and the decline of organized labor – meaning lower real wages, thus fewer tax dollars – there are proportionately fewer dollars coming in to help support the increasing number of seniors.

The question then becomes, how do we resolve these problems and yet, as Stossel asserts as his ideal, attain a “limited government”? In so doing, we need to apply the Divine Conservative Principle, “WWBBBD?” (What Would Big Business Do?). Should we focus on our senior population, as the seniors seem

Liederkranz is washed-rind cheese as is Limburger, Munster, and Port du Salut. Some washed-rind cheeses are also smear-ripened with solution of bacteria or fungi, which usually gives them a stronger flavor as the cheese matures. In some cases, older cheeses are smeared on young cheeses to transfer the microorganisms. The mold used in making Liederkranz is specific to this cheese and was the critical item in transferring the production of Liederkranz from New York to Wisconsin. It was this mold that was reportedly scraped from the factory walls in New York that allowed Liederkranz to be made in Wisconsin.

As for the taste, I cannot say that this revived Liederkranz is the same as the original. It has been thirty years since I, or anyone else, has tasted it. Although I remember it fondly, I cannot recall the taste exactly. This Liederkranz is reminiscent of the original, odiferous, assertive, soft, and spreadable. It doesn’t sneak up on you. It’s there when you open the package and it is there at your first bite. But, back to the taste. I cannot describe a taste, though this cheese reminds me of the cheese that I had so many years ago. It is lovely. If this is not exactly like the original, it will more than suffice as a replacement.

Sidebar

If any of my readers are inclined to order and taste this revived Liederkranz, I would appreciate hearing from you; your expectations, your opinion, and any other thoughts.

My Summer Vacation

(Continued from page 5)

the fact that their celebrity status usually results from having money. A great deal of money. We pay our celebrity actors and athletes disproportionate sums to entertain us. Far more than we pay those who repair us, protect us, or educate us or who do menial services such as take away our trash, repair our roads, or cut our hair. Yet who provides us the most benefit? On the basis of compensation, apparently it is The Stars, rather than our doctors, cops, or teachers.

Kinda tragic when you think about it.

The George
SCAM Calendar of Events for June 2012

1st - Friday  5:30 PM  FIRST FRIDAY AT HOOTERS SIG
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.

5th - Wednesday  6:00 PM  EXCOMM MEETING
This is our monthly business meeting. See back page for location.

30th - Saturday  5:45 PM  S.N.O.R.T.
Join us for some sushi and tempura at The SCAM’s best attended event at the Miyako Restaurant, 1511 S. Harbor City Blvd., Melbourne.
Contact: George, 777-3721 for details.

Calendar Updates
ATTENTION SCAM MEMBERS!
Every effort is made to bring you an accurate up-to-date Calendar of Events. However, last minute changes can and do occur past newsletter deadline. For up-to-date info, visit spacecoast.us.mensa.org and click on “Calendar”. Also, we are putting together a current e-mail notification list of all members who wish to be kept up-to-date on our activities. If you wish to be included, please contact George Patterson at 777-3721 or George3141@cfl.rr.com.

Membership Notes for June 2012

WELCOME TO SCAM AND MENSA
Joshua Justice

WELCOME BACK!
Jennifer Duggan Chris Muir
Nicholas Hope Richard Ward

JUNE BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
2nd   Bill Emmons  20th   Thomas Moor
3rd   Stacy Strickland  24th   Christopher Moss
8th   Robert Ruhge  24th   Sam Kirschten
17th  Jane Williams  25th   Andy Barclay
17th  Art Belefant  26th   Judith Wiksten

IN MEMORIAM
Dana Stetser

MENSA TESTING
June 16 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 will be on July 21.
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.

Of Cabbage and Coffee:
(Cour Regular Events)
C.A.B.A.G.E.: Every Monday in the Food Court, Merritt Square Mall
6 p.m.  Host: Karen Freiberg, 633-1636

1 p.m.  Host: George Lebovitz; the.rockitsci@rocketmail.com
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Petty’s, Winn-Dixie, Publix, Green Turtle, and the M. B. Supermarket, all
of whom have extensive collections of gourmet cheeses. None of them carry
that cheese or could or would order it for me. But this is the Internet age. On
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WI 53570, 608-237-1992, info@hefticreek.com). They supply six-ounce
packages of Liederkranz cheese for $6.99.
Not a bad price for a specialty cheese. The
shipping, however, cost another $5.00. The
cheese arrived via USPS Priority Mail in
about one week in a small box, insulated,
with a freezer pack. Stamped on the box
were the notes “Perishable” and “Smell OK”.
That alone told me there was something
good inside.

It reminded me of when I traveled to
France occasionally. On each trip to Paris I
would buy a package of Camembert cheese that was made from unpastur-
ized milk, illegal in the U. S., but commonly available in France. On one trip
home I apparently did not wrap the cheese sufficiently well and I had it in my
hand baggage. I could see the passengers who were sitting under the over-
head bin that contained my hand baggage sniffing and looking around.

Liederkranz smells stronger than a good ripe Camembert but less so than
a Limburger. That just about describes Liederkranz, stronger than Camembert
and less strong than Limburger. As for assertiveness in taste, it also falls be-
tween Camembert and Limburger. Liederkranz is softer than even a ripe Cam-
embert, which makes it ideal for spreading on rye bread. Although it has a
slight bite, its taste is not as strong as its aroma.

Limburger is a very assertive cheese, probably the most assertive com-
monly found in American cheese stores. It doesn’t go well with anything oth-
er than black bread and beer or a strong wine like port. For an after dinner
cheese course, a milder, but not mild, cheese such as a good camembert,
brie, well-aged cheddar, or Swiss fits in. This is where Liederkranz shines, but
not for all meals. I would not choose Liederkranz after a fish or seafood din-
ner or after Italian, Chinese, or Mexican. Limburger would overpower or con-
lict with the preceding meal. Save the Liederkranz for after steak, pot roast,
or beouf burgundian. For cocktails, or other light refreshments, mild cheeses
are best on crackers or toast points. Mild versions of camembert, brie, ched-
ard, or edam, gouda, port du salute, and Munster work well here.

To get the lion’s share of entitlement spending? While it might be tempting to
cut Social Security benefits, there is only one problem – seniors vote.

Let us take another look at the Baby Boomer demographic. If you define
a senior citizen as one who has attained the minimum age for Social Security
benefits, we find that more than half are in the soon-to-be senior group. So
this group should be our focus. Yet I believe it would still be political suicide
to cut back benefits for “future retirees” as this group is politically active as
well. Raising the retirement age any further may also bring about undesirable
consequences. So, what is a businessman – I mean – politician to do?

I have often heard “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”
That’s it – prevention. We need to prevent people from becoming eligible for
their old age entitlements. There are many possibilities.

One area to explore is our penchant for “getting tough on crime”. Al-
ready, in our state, if you’re convicted of a felony, you lose your civil rights.
Make it a federal law. Then target the over-45 age group to trump up felony
charges, and then offer these criminals the deal no one can refuse – a plea
bargain. Once that happens, no more civil rights; that is, no Social Security.

Next, further deregulate the food we eat. As most in our generation are
heart attacks waiting to happen, all we need is a little nudge to be deceased
before 60. While we’re at it, push further for those “natural remedies”, you
know, the unregulated kind. Keep telling the public these remedies are part
of the secret the government does not want us to get our hands on. We
should begin dropping like flies by now.

For good measure, repeal “ObamaCare” as soon as possible. The last
thing we need is for us to get affordable medical care that might save our
lives. Finally, let’s abolish labor laws. Let’s bring our workplaces back to the
good old days when incidents such as the Triangle Fire of 1911 were largely
the result of legal actions on the part of business. All of the above should
make for a good start.

The best part is, a good many of our largest voting bloc – today’s seniors
– will not even notice: After all, “We got ours...”
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tive declensions. And the language had ‘strong’ and ‘weak’ declensions, depending on if you used a definite article to modify the noun. Learning declensions and conjugating their verbs was too overwhelming for me! They also used compound words like German, with a grammatical complexity that seemed worse to me than Latin.

Not all of Icelandic was difficult. You could use some adjectives like ‘æðisleg’ (awesome) without worrying about declensions.

They also had those darn idioms that are so difficult in most languages to become familiar with and use in appropriate settings. You did not say “return” but said “kom aftur” (“come again”). And they told me not to say “bring” but “koma með” (“come with”). I managed to learn simple phrases, such as,

Thank you, mother.” or “Ég þakka þer mamma mín.” (“Thank you, mother-meine”) ”I go here.” Or ”Ég fer heðan.” (”I go hither”)

”Should we go?” ”Eigum við að fara?”

I never became very fluent in the language. Probably because I eventually thought (as my chess playing friends did) that Icelandic was probably not going to be as useful in the outside world. Of course, maybe I should have learned it well enough to become an economic advisor to the Icelandic banks and investors. Even someone with my limited experience may have been able to explain Ponzi schemes of international bankers and lawyers to their managers and the people handling their finances. At least discuss it in a language they may have felt more familiarity with and been more receptive to in listening.

Awhile back, there was discussion of Iceland dropping its currency (the krona) and adopting the Canadian dollar (called the loonie) for their exchange medium. The name itself speaks for that concept. However, I remember the Icelandics as always being an adventurous folk. So, who can say what they will think of next? I never would have imagined that having lived there in the 1970s that, by 2010, it would be a bankrupt country. How sad for such an industrious and learned population!

I guess I will end my series at this point, by using that phrase the Icelanders told us, as we departed out of their airport for the last time. We even received large sized certificates, from the U.S. Navy, emblazoned with a picture of the island and its arctic scenes. The words read:

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My Summer Vacation:  CELEBRITY FASCINATION  © 2012 The George

I do not understand the fascination that people – seemingly, all over the world – have with celebrities.

Just because someone is well known doesn’t necessarily make them more intelligent, knowledgeable, informed, or particularly interesting than anyone else, yet there seems to be this vast intrigue into finding out just what they ate for breakfast, who they’re sleeping with, and how they feel about the llama problem in Turkmenistan.

Britney Spears appears as the spokesperson for Nostinkiepit deodorant and the hordes will descend upon Walgreen’s to stock up, albeit the product may well do nothing to stem the stench. Does no one realize that Ms. Spears is being paid vast sums of money to tout this product she might not even use and is certainly no more qualified to express an opinion on than Bigfoot would be? Yet it doesn’t seem to matter. It would appear that the prevailing opinion is: “If it’s good enough for Britney’s pits, it must be good for mine.”

Celebrities endorse political candidates. Charlie Sheen makes a video supporting Ralphie “Redneck” Roundemup for Sheriff of Pollutia County and people flock to the polls to cast their ballots for Triple-R. Why? Certainly not because Charlie is particularly informed about Ralphie’s qualifications for the job (although he may have encountered him a few times as a customer), but simply because of Sheen’s face time, voters think: “If he’s good enough for Charlie, then he’s good enough for me.”

My lovely, intelligent wife is not immune to the syndrome. She diligently peruses the newspaper and other informed sources such as TV Guide and People Magazine in constant pursuit of “the latest.” As she reads, she will occasionally blurt out something on the order of “Oh, my God!” Hearing my cue, I will respond with “What?” “Look at this: Katy Perry is divorcing Russell Brand.” “That’s nice, dear.” “Can you believe it?” “Believe what?” “You don’t know who they are, do you?” “Ummm… no, actually.” But even if I did, why would I care? These people don’t mean anything to me. They don’t send me checks, invite me to their parties, or comp me tickets to their shows or games or whatever it is that they do. Yet my wife finds the latest antics of these celebrities endlessly fascinating. As I suppose do quite a few people, considering the success of People, Us, National Enquirer, and other tabloids.

But why should the antics of these celebrities be of such interest? Is it because they live fantasy lives or is it just because their lives are more public? Certainly they live much more flamboyantly than most of us, due largely to
After spending two years in Spain (courtesy of the U.S. Navy), I was sent back to Florida to complete a second technical school. Since the Navy probably thought I had enjoyed the Hemingway life quite enough, it was payback time. So the next duty station: Iceland!

Actually, Iceland was a fascinating place. The “Land of Frost and Fire” is quite appropriate. The beautiful Aurora Borealis and crystal clear skies (at least in the summer) were breathtaking. The capital city of Reykjavik (‘smokey bay’) had some of the best dressed men and women ever seen, wearing the latest European fashions. With bookstores and coffee shops aplenty, I was in heaven. Even with some brutal winter days (that were practically dark for 20 hours) and some landscapes that allowed the astronauts to practice moonwalks, the land was still fascinating.

Literacy is extremely high in Iceland. Also, English is the second language of the country, so traveling across country and staying at various cities and towns was never a problem. They always encouraged me when I attempted their language (just like most cultures I have encountered). So, they were patient in correcting me when I tried to speak like someone other than the Swedish chef on The Muppets. A friend of mine that was a teacher showed me that young children were able to read the Elder Eddas, the collection of mythology and poetry of the Norsemen of the 12th century! I would play chess (popular in Iceland) with some Icelandic college students who were always anxious to help me learn their language. They always wondered why I would want to learn an ancient language when English seemed to be the language of the present and future. I just told them that I thought it would seem like a cool thing to accomplish. I always wanted to compare the difficulties in learning foreign languages and see how different a Scandinavian language would be to learn compared to the Romance and German languages I was most familiar in using.

I was no Daniel Tammet (the savant who wrote an interesting autobiography titled Born on a Blue Day and claimed to learn Icelandic in 7 days), but I did have fun learning some basic sentences and being able to see Icelanders eyes light up when I attempted their language. Icelandic retains the old English æ and æ (pronounced "aye"), ð and ð (pronounced like the "th" in "that"), and ð and þ (pronounced like the "th" in "thin"). I’ve been told the latter example, the thorn (Icelandic: þorn, pronounced more like "thord"), has been lost from all languages worldwide except Icelandic. Adjectives had to match case, gender, and number with their nouns and had separate superla-

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I am pleased to announce that, despite a sluggish economy, Region 10 is holding its own in terms of growth and member retention. Tampa Bay Mensa is the only local group in all of American Mensa to have gained members every year for the past six years; Broward County Mensa succeeded in not losing any members over the past six years (and was one of the few local groups nationally to accomplish that feat). I single out Gainesville for special praise; a year ago it was having leadership issues; thanks to the dynamic leadership of its new locsec and membership officer (with logistical support from Assistant RVC Thomas Thomas) it is now one of the fastest-growing small groups in American Mensa, with a 7.5% annual growth rate.

As much as I would like to claim credit for these numbers, I really can’t, because they are mostly due to the fantastic teams of local leaders that make the Region 10 groups warm and welcoming. As usual, Orlando and Northwest Florida Mensa put on magnificent RGs, and Space Coast and Broward do a fine job of tag-teaming fun and interesting RGs on alternating years. Sarasota continues to put out an award-winning newsletter and hold dinner events that, when I’ve attended, have felt more like old friends than anything else. Southwest Florida does creative things like team with the local biker group to raise money for scholarships; West Palm hosts dinner meetings specifically directed at new members. When I last visited Tallahassee, the group went on an outing to the local science museum and saw an interesting presentation on astronomy, followed by dinner. Jacksonville has well-attended and much-looked-forward-to monthly potlucks with the type of speakers that remind me why I joined Mensa: To meet up with interesting people for interesting conversation.

I’m expecting great things from Miami this year as well. Miami has a new ExComm in place that promises to take one of the oldest and most venerable local groups in American Mensa and make it great again. I look forward to seeing the results.

As always, it has been a true privilege and high honor to serve the people of Region 10 as RVC. By the time this appears in print I will be in the last year of my last term; I will leave office knowing that the Region is in good hands because it is in the hands of the local leaders that make it such a special place.
Minutes of the May SCAM ExComm Meeting

The ExComm met at the home of Karen Freiberg at 876 Buxmont Ct., Rockledge, FL 32955 on Wednesday, May 2nd, 2012. Called to order at 6:10 pm by LocSec George Patterson.

Members Present: George Patterson, Karen Freiberg, Dennis Logan, Terry Valek, and George Lebovitz.

Guests: Wynn and Zanne Rostek (as usual, waiting for the RG Committee meeting which was to follow).

Minutes for the April, 2012 meeting were approved as published in the May 2012 SCAM.

There ensued a protracted discussion regarding George’s conversation with the mother of a prospective 10-year old member, whether our young Mensans would like to share e-mail addresses with each other, and if it would be permissible to have a non-Mensan as a gifted child coordinator.

Officer/Committee Reports:

Treasurer’s report, showing a balance of $332.94 (after which George entertained us with the tale of how he would receive a moderate interest on his savings account of which a few cents would be withheld and then reported on his W-2).

Testing coordinator, Hank Rhodes, reported (via e-mail) no new candidates and 8 second- or third-time candidates. Next test session is May 19, 2012 at the Central Brevard Library in Cocoa.

We then somehow got on the subject of the proverbial “smart meters” that the power company would like to install in all of our homes. This provided an opportunity for a substantial rant from Dennis.

Mention was made of the upcoming ExComm election, with the attendant Vote Counting Party on Saturday, May 12th (undoubtedly already history by the time you are reading this). As a dedicated Recording Secretary, I feel obligated to report that George recounted a voting story to us; however, all I can remember about it was something on the order of: "blah, blah, blah.” Sorry.

The meeting degenerated significantly at this point: Dennis’s tale of woe regarding his wife’s part-time job where she earned $18K, but from which no taxes were deducted, leaving him with $7K in taxes due at the end of the

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