

The

SCAM

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Volume 31, No. 11

November, 2013



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(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

November is here and all seems to be well here at *The SCAM*. In fact, it is nearing that time that we will be celebrating Turkey Day. Speaking of turkeys, as I write these few words, in the news I had just found out that the latest iteration of the National Temper Tantrum is now over. At least, it is over until this coming January.

While this is not my political column (I took this month off), it is instructive to note that, despite the prevalence of conservative “small government” ideology in this community, the inescapable fact is that we really do depend on government. Most of the larger employers on the Space Coast, while ostensibly in the “private sector”, owe their very existence to — guess who — government. I find it rather difficult, for example, to understand how a defense contractor would survive without the Department of Defense as its customer. We may not wish to bite the hand..

I have found the words of the late Walt Kelly in his Pogo comic strip to best describe this state of affairs: “We have found the enemy and he is us.”

Later this month, we will celebrate Thanksgiving, immediately followed by Black Friday. For those who are not familiar with Black Friday (yes, both of you), T. C. Shaw has, in this issue, shared his description of this (now) time-honored event. You will be both well informed and entertained.

To all, have a happy Thanksgiving.

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.

Black Tuesday vs. Black Friday; a blood splatter on a Wall Street sidewalk or a blood splatter on a Wal-Mart floor. My radar was malfunctioning. The brain is made to suppress trauma but bits and pieces remain.

Somewhere in my foggy memory a blue light is flashing overhead and something unintelligible is coming over the loud-speaker. Suddenly and without warning, at least to me, I was being crushed by a throng of cellulite laden, menopause hormonal raging, get the hell out of my way you wimp, bargain hunting females. It took a wing slap to the side of my face before I realized that I was being compacted like so much garbage. I tried to breathe the faux lilac body odor but my chest would not expand. I tried to move my feet (did she just call me wimp?) but it felt like I was in quick-sand up to my knees.

I was in the fighting octagon with not only two combatants but all the bad guys in the world. I was being pummeled and mauled unmercifully. I knew I didn't have long. I was going down for the third time.

Then, as suddenly as it had started, another blue light flashing, the thunder of hooves and I was left whimpering in a crumpled heap.

I was starting to breathe the semi-noxious air in hopes that my lop-sided brain could make sense of what had just transpired. I didn't but I vowed never again to put myself in that kind of jeopardy. Oh! Stupid Me!

5:30 a.m. and 30 miles from home looking for a parking place where none existed--tents pitched and sleeping bags laid out to accommodate those who came really-really early and queues three and four abreast that went around the buildings and completely out of sight. Did I expect to have a store to myself? No! How did I fit into this scenario? Was I suffering from oxygen deprivation? Well? Was my brain infested with Blue-light fever? Maybe! But, did I want to stand in line from now until Christmas and beyond to re-coop the twenty I had put in the gas tank?

No! But, something had a hold on me. I wanted to save money if only a buck or two. A giddy feeling overwhelmed me just thinking about all the savings. But, I knew that if I waited for the line to dissipate it would be like the aftermath of a tornado. Nothing would be left except maybe a few crumpled pieces of lilac and sweat scented clothing, nothing to buy at a fantastically reduced price and nothing to save. Maybe a smoke bomb and a wide-eyed streak near the crowd yelling "fire" would allow me to get closer to the door. Maybe!

Then! A car crash just in front of me that involved two, overly avid, shoppers leaving a tangled mass of steel finally brought me back to my twisted senses. It was obvious they had game. They didn't want to wait for a silly traffic

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Linear, volumetric, and area dimensions are intimately related. The basic dimensions in almost all traditional system of such measurements are the **foot** and the **inch**. The words **ounce** and **inch** are both ultimately derived from the Latin *uncia*.

The foot derives from the length of the human foot, sometimes shod and sometimes unshod. Each community would measure the foot differently. Often the average of the first twenty men (not women) leaving the church on Sunday. This led to variations of the length of the foot among cities, towns, and counties. In medieval times, where commerce was on a local scale, this didn't matter much. As trade increased among towns and cities, standards had to be established, often by deferring to the next higher authority, ultimately to the ruler of the country. The king's foot became the standard for the country. Some measurements were standardized in different trades. The **U. S. Survey Foot** differs slightly from the **U. S. Customary Foot**. The difference is insignificant in distances less than a mile, but becomes more important in greater distances.

The inch was the width or length of the thumb. Although it also differed as did the foot, it was early established in western society, as one-twelfth of a foot. In Japan, an inch is one-tenth of a foot

Shorter dimensions are measured in fractions of an inch, except that surveyors divide the inch into tenths. Longer lengths are multiples of a foot. A **yard** is three feet, a **fathom** is six feet. Mark Twain meant that Mississippi river boat was two fathoms or 12 feet over the bottom and could traverse a typical sand bar. Horses are measured in **hands** - four inches of height at the shoulder. Type is measured in **picas**, one-sixth of an inch and is subdivided into **points** at 12 points to a pica. However, a typewriter's pica setting denotes a type size of ten characters per inch. In type setting, an **em** is the width of lowercase letter "m" and an **n** is the width of a lower case "n" in proportional spaced type. A **furlong**, used mainly in horse racing, is 220 yards. For longer distances, a **mile** is 5,280 feet. This has an interesting history. Originally, a mile (*from the Latin for one thousand*) was 1,000 paces of Roman soldier. A **pace** is two steps, left foot to left foot, of about five feet. Thus the Roman soldier, and we, can approximate distances easily by "*spacing it off*".

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report, the cars could wait. They were ready for any obstacles. Bring it on! Neither rain nor snow nor dark of night....nor rampaging crowds....those guys were players. If not for the legal ramifications, they would have left the vehicles where they were and eagerly jumped into the melee. They needed to be congratulated. I was in awe of anyone so dedicated and wanted to see what their next moves would be but I had had enough. I was heading for home with nothing to show for my early morning madness except a three cup caffeine hangover, a twenty dollar hole in my pocket and a faint echo running through the cobwebs of my memory.....get out the way you wimp!

-TC



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*.

This Page is RESERVED:

JUST
FOR
YOU

We want to hear from YOU...!

See Page Three of every issue for
SCAM submittal guidelines.

SCAM Calendar of Events for November 2013

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.*

MENSA TESTING

Nov. 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. NO testing next month.

Contact: Hank Rhodes, mensatest@cfl.rr.com, for details. **See ExComm minutes for Special promotion.**

6th - 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 Japanese cuisine at The SCAM's best attended event at our new venue, **Hioki's**, 3200 NE Dixie Hwy. (US 1) in Palm Bay. It is about 2 miles south of US 192.

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

Of CABAGEs and Coffee: (Our Regular Events)

C.A.B.A.G.E.: Every Monday in the Food Court, Merritt Square Mall
Host: Karen Freiberg, 633-1636
6 p.m.

GO!: Every Saturday at Books-A-Million, The Avenue, Viera. Hosted by
1 p.m. the **Space Coast Area GO Association.**
Host: George Lebovitz,
the.rokkitsci@rocketmail.com

Membership Notes for November 2013

WELCOME TO SCAM AND MENSA

Bailee Nace

WELCOME TO SCAM

Mary Morello

WELCOME BACK!

Daniel Land

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

6th William McClure

6th Joann Webster

11th Allan Torsney

18th Joseph Mueck

19th Harold Long

21st John England

26th Thomas Magee

30th Thomas Gachet

30th Lisa Willnow



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.

At the time I wrote this, the Federal Government was in more of a ‘fractured’ state than normal in terms of passing legislation. The Washington D.C. pols were even more fractious than usual. With that in mind, I thought it appropriate for the birthday month to deal with the Father of Fractals.

Benoit B. Mandelbrot (pronounced ***MAN-dal-brot*** in English: .When speaking in French, Mandelbrot pronounced his name [bənwa mɑ̃dɛlbʁot]) was born November 20, 1924 in Poland and fled with his parents to France to avoid Nazi persecution of the Jews. After World War II ended, he studied mathematics in France. He attended the ‘Ecole Polytechnique and at the same time obtained dual citizenship as an American living in the USA, during which he received a master’s degree in aeronautics at Cal Tech. He later returned to France and obtained a PhD in mathematical sciences at the University of Paris. From 1951 throughout his career (spent mostly at IBM), he published papers in mathematics, information theory, economics, and fluid mechanics. During our era, he probably would have been hired as a ‘quant’ to develop obscure mathematical models of risk for hedge funds on Wall Street (another ‘fractured’ area).

As a visiting professor at Harvard, he began to study an abstract area of geometry of what were called ‘Julia sets’ (named after Gaston Julia). In 1982, Mandelbrot expanded and updated his research findings in his publication, *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*. This work brought what was to become known as ‘fractals’ into mainstream professional and popular mathematics. Mandelbrot coined the term *fractal* to describe these structures and first published his ideas in 1975. According to Steve Wolfram (mathematician and entrepreneur), Mandelbrot created a new area of science and identified a fundamental idea concerning geometric shapes. Mandelbrot’s fractals were rough at all scales. No matter how close you look, they never get simpler; such as the rocky coastlines you see at your feet look just as jagged as a stretch appears from higher up in space. Mandelbrot used the term ‘fractal’ as derived from the Latin word “fractus” for a broken or shattered glass.

In a documentary with physicist and science writer Arthur C. Clarke, Clarke saw the Mandelbrot set as an astonishing discovery. A simple equation that could have images generated infinitely of the same pattern, to create rough or smooth geometric configurations throughout nature. Mandelbrot created the ‘theory of roughness’, in terms of shapes like mountains, coastlines, and river basins; structures of plants, blood vessels and lung alveoli; clustering of galaxies. Fractals were also found in human pursuits of music, painting, architecture, and stock market prices. He thought they may be shapes that are more natural than the apparent smooth objects of traditional Euclidean geometry.

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Mandelbrot's informal and passionate style of writing emphasized visual and geometric intuition (there are numerous illustrations in his *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*) which made his ideas accessible to non-specialists (Mensa member and non-Mensa member alike). The book sparked widespread popular interest in fractals and contributed to the study of chaos theory and other fields of science and mathematics.

He put his ideas to work in cosmology by demonstrating the consequences of fractal theory as a remedy of the Olbers' paradox. This paradox of astrophysics was named for Heinrich Olbers and is called the dark night sky paradox. The argument is that the darkness of the night sky conflicts with the assumption of an infinite and eternal static universe. The darkness of the night sky is one of the pieces of evidence for a non-static universe such as the Big Bang model. If the universe was static and populated by an infinite number of stars ('infinite number' being another assumption), any sight line from earth must end at the (very bright) surface of a star, so the night sky should be completely bright. If the stars in the universe were fractally distributed, it would not be necessary to rely on the Big Bang theory to explain the paradox. His model did not rule out the Big Bang (*Bazinga!*), but would allow for a dark sky even if the Big Bang had not occurred. For his contributions to astrophysical mathematics, Mandelbrot has an asteroid named for him called '27500 Mandelbrot'.

During his lifetime, Mandelbrot received several honors for his contributions to mathematics and physics. Among them was the Wolf Prize for Physics in 1993, the Lewis Richardson Prize of the European Geophysical Society in 2000, the Japan Prize in 2003, the Einstein Lectureship of the American Mathematical Society in 2006, a Knight in the French Legion of Honour in 2006, and an honorary degree from Johns Hopkins University. He died in a hospice in Cambridge, Massachusetts on October 14, 2010 from pancreatic cancer at the age of 85.

Mandelbrot's fractal geometry is still finding uses in the fields of mathematics, physics, engineering, art, sculpture, geology, medicine, the social sciences, and information theory even today. His ability to explain complex mathematical concepts to the lay person as well as his graduate students and fellow scientists has helped to spread their understanding to a diverse audience. It has created 'fractures' that have disseminated this type of mathematics and its applications to new fields of scientific research.

Note: ^ Mandelbrot used no accent (circumflex i) for his first name in biographies. He chose his own middle initial, but it doesn't stand for anything. It is,

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however, widely rumored in popular culture that his middle initial 'B.' stood for Benoit B. Mandelbrot, an allusion to recursion and fractals.

References:

1. Wolfram, Stephen. "The Father of Fractals", *Wall Street Journal*, November 22, 2012.
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3. Clarke, Arthur C., *Fractals- The Colors of Infinity*. Video interview.
4. Tenner, Edward. "Benoit Mandelbrot the Maverick, 1924-2010", *The Atlantic*, October 16, 2010.
5. Ivry, Benjamin. "Benoit Mandelbrot Influenced Art and Mathematics", *Forward*, November 17, 2012.
6. Galaxy Map Hints at Fractal Universe, by Amanda Gefter; *New Scientist*, June 25, 2008.
7. Mandelbrot, Benoit. *The Fractalist: Memoir of a Scientific Maverick*, Pantheon Books (2012).

<i>The Tenth Story</i>

Continued

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ons into official American Mensa events, and that position is *No*.

The next meeting of the American Mensa Board of Directors will be on December 7 in West Palm Beach, FL.

Thomas George Thomas
RVC10@us.mensa.org

At the American Mensa Board of Directors meeting on October 5, we voted on a motion which has gotten a lot of attention. From the minutes of the meeting:

"All functional weapons shall be prohibited from American Mensa Ltd. National events, such as Annual Gatherings, Annual Business Meetings, Colloquium, Mind Games®, and AML Board meetings. Sworn law enforcement officers are exempt from this policy. For purposes of this motion, a weapon is any instrument, device or thing that is both

- a) *Capable of causing death or serious injury; and*
- b) *Either*
 - i) *Designed or specifically adapted for use as a weapon; or*
 - ii) *Possessed, carried, or used as a weapon."*

The motion passed 10-9-1.

The motion had been submitted by LaRae Bakerink and Roger Durham on behalf of the Risk Management Committee, of which I am a member. This was a controversial motion, resulting in substantial and respectful discussion during the meeting, with pros and cons on many aspects. (*If there were only one correct answer, of course there would be no controversy.*) I did not know going into the meeting how I was going to vote on the motion, since there were strong points to be made on all positions, though I did raise my concern about reputational risk to Mensa if law enforcement had to be summoned due to an incident at one of our national events, at which the press is present every year. But the argument that finally swayed me related to an earlier discussion on litigation, when Interpretive Counsel Mark Silverstein presented on the topic of disclosure and evidence.

The question raised in this situation centered on our liability. In the event of a civil lawsuit brought about as a result of a weapons incident at one of our national events, this question would certainly have come up if we had not passed this motion: "You considered this possibility, and had the opportunity to take preventative action, **but you did nothing.**" If this motion had not been brought, this would not have been a point in court, but having been raised, I felt there was no option but to vote in favor of the motion.

One thing that most of the board agreed upon was that this was NOT a political position, despite the characterization by many members before and after the meeting. American Mensa takes no position on whether weapons can or should be carried, nor does it hold an opinion on any Federal, State or Local weapons laws, pro or con. We do, however, hold positions on **internal** policy matters. For the time being, that includes whether members may bring weap-

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The SCAM ExComm Meeting did NOT meet in October.



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?