



# Tampa Bay SoUnding

*A Publication of Tampa Bay (Florida) Mensa*

Vol. 27, No. 11

December 2002



**Happy  
Holidays!**

## About Us

Mensa is an international society whose sole qualification for membership is a score at or above the 98th percentile on a standard IQ test. Mensa is a not-for-profit organization whose main purpose is to serve as a means of communication and assembly for its members. All opinions expressed herein are those of the individual authors, and not necessarily those of the editors or officers of Mensa. Mensa as an organization has no opinions. Visit AML at <http://www.us.mensa.org>.



*Tampa Bay Sounding* is the official newsletter of Tampa Bay Mensa. See the inside back cover for copyright information. Tampa Bay Mensa, which split off from Central Florida Mensa in 1975, serves Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Hernando, and Sumter counties.

**Visit TBM at <http://www.tampa.us.mensa.org>**, which provides full instructions on how to join *tbm-gm* and *tbm-discussion*, our two Yahoo Groups.

## Submission Guidelines

*Tampa Bay Sounding* encourages submissions from all members. Submissions must be signed, but names may be withheld or pseudonyms used if requested. All letters to the editor will be subject to publication unless the author specifically requests otherwise. All material submitted will be considered for publication, but nothing can be guaranteed. *Everything* is subject to editing. Please keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Articles, casual essays, opinion pieces, poems, short stories, puzzles, and artwork are all encouraged.

- Personal attacks and bigoted, sexist, hateful, or otherwise offensive material will not be published.

- E-mail submissions are preferred, either embedded or in Word-readable attachments. Computer printouts and typewritten pages are fine. If you submit hard copy, please make sure your printer has enough toner or your typewriter has a fresh-enough ribbon. *Legible* handwritten submissions will be considered (but not given preference).

You may send your submissions by either of the following means:

- (1) E-mail — [MotherMary@extremelysmart.com](mailto:MotherMary@extremelysmart.com) (Please indicate "TBM" in the subject area.)

- (2) U.S. Mail — Mary W. Matthews, 1000 Granville Court N., St. Petersburg, FL 33701-1529 (Telephone 727-502-9301)

**Unless otherwise specified in the calendar, the deadline for unsolicited contributions is the tenth day of the month.**

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## Kushner's Korner

### All the News...

Maxine Kushner, LocSec

Hello, Tampa Bay Mensans!

⚓ Our first **Fall Barbecue and Campout** was a success. A fun and interesting group of Mensans assembled out in the hinterlands and a good time was had by all. (See the article on page 14 for more details.) I'm looking forward to the next one.

⚓ If you have not been to **Movie Night** at Dana and John Groulx's home, make it a point to go this month. On Saturday, December 7, Dana and John will be airing the newly released, extended version of *The Lord of the Rings*. Of course, I will already have my own copy by then, but I can't wait to experience the movie on the Groulx's fabulous TV and stereo system. What a treat for LOTR fans!

⚓ On the following Saturday, December 14, Tampa Bay Mensa and Mensan Dottie Gondola will host a combination **New and Prospective Members Open House/Holiday Party** in Palm Harbor. The party will be immediately preceded by an Ex-Comm meeting, and all members are, of course, welcome to attend that as well. More information can be found in the calendar. I hope to

see many of you there. Come on out and party with your fellow Mensans!

⚓ There is still time to apply for Tampa Bay Mensa's part of the **MERF scholarship** program. (See page 22.) Information and a downloadable application are available at <http://merf.us.mensa.org/>. Locally, Roger Preslar is our scholarship chair. He can be reached at [preslarrr@aol.com](mailto:preslarrr@aol.com), 813-651-1150.

⚓ Planning continues for our annual **RG**. If you would like to volunteer, in any capacity, please contact Jack Brawner or any of the other honchos: [trojanowl@aol.com](mailto:trojanowl@aol.com), 727-546-6061. (See page 16.)

⚓ Testing Coordinator Teri Elston is **looking for** members willing to become **proctors**, especially in the northern reaches of our membership area. It does not require a large time commitment. If you would like more information, please contact Teri at [teriprofsr@aol.com](mailto:teriprofsr@aol.com) or 727-799-1151.

⚓ Our online **discussion group** is a great place for talking with other Tampa Bay Mensans, (or at least reading what they have to say). In-

formation on joining our email lists is on TBM's website: <http://www.tampa.us.mensa.org/>.

⚓ Speaking of the website — have you been to our revamped site lately? Mary Matthews has done a wonderful job with it. You can read the *Sounding*, learn about Mensa's

history, and even play some games. Calendar editor Ronan Heffernan has updated and added features to the **calendar** that I think you will find very useful.

Until next month —  
Maxine  
[maxine.kushner@verizon.net](mailto:maxine.kushner@verizon.net)

***Students: Do You Have a Potential Teacher of the Year?***

Each year, the Mensa Education and Research Foundation presents a Distinguished Teacher Award for the best 500-word essay from a student on "A Teacher Who Changed My Life."

The teacher (who had previously agreed to be the subject of the essay) receives a personalized plaque and an invitation to MERF's Presi-

dent's Event at the Annual Gathering. The teacher's school receives a duplicate of the plaque and a donation of \$500.

For more information, please visit [http://merf.us.mensa.org/awards/distinguished\\_teacher/index.php](http://merf.us.mensa.org/awards/distinguished_teacher/index.php).

The deadline is February 1, 2003.

M Z L B O A O L , O M E N S A S O U L V E P E  
X L J Q L T N S S R , O B G R F S L L X , S O U L  
G R P K J B A T J V Z L K A O A . B E V  
F Q K L J G O B P J B A R L S S O B P , S O U L  
V Z L X J F F L B P L K F O B Z O F Q J K .  
— W J Q U Z J B A L R

**Answer:**

When I die, I would like to go peacefully, in my sleep, like my Grandfather did. Not screaming and yelling, like the passengers in his car. — Jack Handey

## The Tenth Story

### *Hug a Grinch Today*

*Elissa Rudolph, R. V.C.*

It's that month that has the shortest days and the longest lines to wait in, and yet it's the month that holds the warmest holidays. That is, if you're not a Grinch. And even if you are, that's a lovely green you're wearing.

The rumors are true — American Mensa will host the International Board of Directors meeting in August 2006, combined with a 60th anniversary celebration of Mensa's founding. The event has been dubbed "World Gathering (WG)" because it is far and away grander than an AG. The location will not be far for any of you in Region 10, because the site is Orlando. Details on exact dates and hotel will be forthcoming; three of Orlando's most accommodating facilities want to work with us, including the Disney Coronado. Stay tuned for progress reports as they emerge — we hope to have a Web site where those reports will be posted. Committees are forming and at last count, nine volunteers pledged their assistance, not knowing exactly what to expect. Brave souls.



National Testing Day was again a success with more than 1,200 potential Ms tested. A final report has yet to be written. Some interesting minutiae gathered by the National Office as they totaled up media contacts: "The clear plurality of individuals taking the Mensa test on National Testing Day indicate they learned about Mensa and the test sites on the Internet. Other strong indications were family and friends, other

Mensans, and word of mouth. Surprisingly, an appreciable number of test takers said they learned about us from Geena Davis on David Letterman. Also mentioned were the Far Side comic strip and the movie *Me, Myself & Irene*. The majority of those who indicated a date of birth on the evaluation sheet said they were born in the '70s or '80s. If this bears out on the testing sheets, it represents a significant shift to younger potential members." New blood! (Quoted material from Executive Director Pam Donahoo's initial report of NTD.)

Have a warm and safe holiday season. And if you're a Grinch, you be

careful too — someone just might give you a hug when you least expect it!



### Coming RGs

January 31-February 2, **Smarti Gras 2003**, <http://www.centralflorida.us.mensa.org/>.

*Laissez les bons mots rouler!* Plan now to attend this RG organized by Central Florida Mensa!

February 14-16, 2003, **ValenTime RG**, <http://www.nwflorida.us.mensa.org/>, for details for Northwest Florida's first ever RG!



## Stumped for a Holiday Gift?

Your great-aunt Tillie up North. Your best friend from elementary school. A former coworker you still keep in touch with. Anyone you want to give an inexpensive holiday gift to and impress at the same time.

All these December problems and more can be solved in one swell foop with a gift subscription to the *Tampa Bay Sounding*. At only \$12 for one year, this is the gift that will keep on

impressing the whole year!

Send the addresses and payments for your gift subscriptions to Kathy Crum, TBM treasurer, 7164 Quail Hollow Blvd., Wesley Chapel, FL 33544-2525. Gift subscriptions whose payments are received by December 15 will begin with the *January Sounding*. All gift subscriptions will begin with a nice letter notifying the recipient of your gift.

## Recovering Yankee

### *Tampa Bay Mensa's Early Years*

*Mary W. Matthews*

The first member of Mensa who lived in the Tampa Bay area was Tom Reesor, who joined in spring 1964. A year after Tom pioneered, the first Tampa Bay meeting was held in Clearwater, with six members attending. (This is further evidence of the Cosmic Rule of Six: The first official meeting of Mensa in 1946 had six members attending, and the first official meeting of American Mensa in 1960 had six members attending.)

By 1967, Mensa in St. Petersburg was under the leadership of Mary Jane Becker. While there were a few meetings at other homes in St. Petersburg and Tampa, most were held at Mary Jane's home in Viña del Mar.

In 1970, Mary Jane was forced to leave the area because of ill health. The local Mensa group fell into disrepair.

Several groups across Florida were in similar disarray when, in 1973, Suzanne Wright decided to reactivate the group in Orlando. She got

more than she bargained for, because National presented her with the middle section of Florida, coast to coast: Central Florida Mensa.

"Suzanne was a transplanted New Yorker with the energy of a fireball," Jerry Merchant recalls fondly. "She did everything — she was locsec, editor, and general Mother Confessor and guru."

Slowly, Central Florida Mensa began to flourish. A few people from Tampa Bay attended meetings in Orlando once or twice a month, despite the lengthy drive to Suzanne's home in Longwood. Most contented themselves with weekly lunch bunches and other activities in the Tampa Bay area.

In 1974, Dick Pennington, then a new member, along with Angela Nicholson and Mary Sanchez, instigated a revival of Mensa on the west coast. It took Dick only two meetings to find someone willing to take the leadership: Cynthia deBerry Fisher. The group wrote a letter to then-RVC Nathaniel Weyl, asking that Tampa Bay be allowed to split off from Central Florida Mensa. Weyl denied the request, saying that we had to prove ourselves a viable group before we could separate.

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*Adapted from the 1998 TBM Member Handbook, with substantial additions and emendations by Cynthia deBerry Fisher, Evelyn Hallowell, Jerry Merchant, Steve Morrill, Tom Reesor, and Mary Sanchez.*

In 1975, the team of Angela, Cynthia, and Linda Brainard descended on the Atlanta Regional / AMC meeting to obtain the desired permission. Charm overcame bureaucratic kneejerk naysaying, and permission was granted in February 1976. A set of bylaws was written, then rewritten to conform to AMC standards. With Linda Brainard as editor\* and Cynthia Fisher as publisher, the first issue of the *Tampa Bay Sounding* was mailed to 144 members on February 1, 1976.\*\* "I almost lost my faith in Mensa when they named me treasurer," Mary Sanchez remembers, "since those who know me are aware that my knowledge of anything to do with a number is 0. I didn't lose any money,

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\*The very first editor of the *Tampa Bay Sounding* was Jerry Merchant. Unfortunately, Jerry received a job offer too luscious to refuse, and left Tampa for Washington, DC without producing a single issue. This minor event is noteworthy only because Jerry is the husband of Mary Matthews, our current editor. (Cue theme music for "All in the Family" here!)

\*\*Linda Brainard won the Mensa Publications Recognition Program award for Best New Newsletter in 1976. Best Medium Group Newsletter was awarded to Steve Morrill in 1978 and to Steve Morrill / Cynthia Fisher in 1980. Other award-winning editors include Evelyn Hallowell, Kent Akselsen, Karen Eiler, Ben Crumpton, Christopher Thomas, and Sylvia Zadorozny.

but there were lots of entries under miscellaneous."

After Linda had edited several issues of the *Sounding*, she was transferred by her employer to Tallahassee. Steve Morrill then spent more than three years as the *Sounding's* editor, and it was Steve who changed our symbol from the original dolphin (the owl had already been taken) to our current pelican. "It was putting that 40-page newsletter together each month that convinced me that I had what it took to become a freelance writer and editor — as I have been since 1984," Steve wrote. "In a way, I owe my job to Mensa."

"The first Beach Bash was at the Don CeSar in late summer 1978," Cynthia Fisher remembers. "Ostensibly Jeannie Kipe (who moved to Colorado to be with her daughter, and subsequently died) was honcho, but Angela Nicholson, Mary Sanchez, and Steve Morrill had lots to do with it. It was total chaos, as all Beach Bashes I had anything to do with were. The hotel had recently changed hands; they were renovating like mad, and selling cut-rate weekends as fast as the money crossed their hands.\*\*\* We had a

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\*\*\*Tom Reesor adds, "Ann Greeley should also be acknowledged as being very involved with the first Beach Bash. For the first three Bashes, I gave as a door prize a hot-air balloon ride. It got to be somewhat of a hassle, so I discontinued them."

marvelous time, but the mold level was extraordinary. I was occupied with my third husband-to-be and did not attend every activity, but I distinctly remembering the voice of Steve Morrill in my ear, singing, 'Money, money makes Tampa Bay Mensa go round.'

"Soon after the first Beach Bash," Tom Reesor remembers, "Robert Altman filmed an all-star movie there (*Health*, 1979). The Don CeSar then decided that since they were now nationally famous, they should double their rates; that's why we moved the Bash elsewhere. The film was a flop."

"The Second Beach Bash was a blast," Cynthia said. "A Polynesian fellow kept bending to our every wish. . . . One memory was him, with a full-sized mattress under each arm, taking off for storage while we turned the room into the hospitality suite. The food was moderately good, the punch punchy, and the beach right there."

Steve Morrill vividly remembers the Beach Bash of 1980, which coincided with the ramming of the Skyway Bridge by the freighter *Summit Venture*. "I was the steamship agent who ordered that ship to anchor overnight so that I could attend the Bash," he said. When the freighter came in the next morning and hit the bridge, Steve had a busy weekend — but he still attended the Bash.

"The third Bash was a bit quieter," Cynthia said, "except for the belly-dancing trio of Tricia Berrett, Evelyn

Hallowell, and Eloise Hurst (Eloise started belly-dancing because she felt it was excellent exercise) . . . and Evelyn Hallowell reading 'The Cremation of Sam McGee,' by Robert Service."

Evelyn Hallowell adds, "The crowd was rowdy and was tying napkins end to end, trying to reach across the whole room. I interrupted the reading to tell them I was going to finish, no matter what, and that the rowdier they were, the longer it would take me. . . . I finished."

In 1980, Cynthia Fisher and Steve Morrill swapped jobs: Cynthia became editor of the *Sounding* and Steve became LocSec.

Originally, Tampa Bay Mensa extended from Citrus County down to Fort Myers, unofficially broken down into Tampa/St. Pete/Clearwater and points north; Sarasota/Bradenton; and the Fort Myers area. Steve Morrill remembers, "As LocSec [1980-82] I had to drive to meetings in Fort Myers — in those days, before I-75, a five-hour haul each way." (Ouch!) Fort Myers and Naples broke off first and became South by Southwest Mensa in the early 1980s. Under Dwight Gill's leadership, Bradenton/Sarasota separated from TBM and became Manasota Mensa in November 1989.

In 1982, TBM reorganized again, and again the bylaws were rewritten. Cynthia Fisher was appointed National Publications Officer in 1983, and gave up the editorship of the *Sounding*, while

remaining its publisher. Evelyn Hallowell became the new editor, and continued to win awards for our group.

Turmoil following the death of LocSec Roy Nilson in January 1987 exposed deficiencies in our bylaws, and a three-year effort began to revise them. In October 1989, the membership ratified the group's third set of bylaws. Among other changes, the ExComm was reduced to nine members and provisions were made to stagger elections.

The original excitement of founding an organization of people who never stare blankly when confronted with a new idea is gone — gone with the youth of Mensa's founders. The joy of Mensa remains.

In the 1970s, most Ms in the Tampa Bay area were in their late 20s and early 30s; today, half our members were born before 1950, and

only about 10 percent are in their late 20s and early 30s. For some of us, staying awake all night at an RG swapping jokes and playing Charades and mandatory double-jump Carnelli has given way to sedately doing the Sunday *New York Times* crossword puzzle (in ink, of course).

Those who remain active in Mensa, whether hosting events or merely attending them, can testify that in some respects, membership in Mensa is like a marriage: After the effervescent sparkle of the honeymoon, one can become disillusioned and "stale out" — or one can discover that with a little effort and a little cherishing of what one finds valuable, the initial ardor will deepen into something richly nourishing.

Mensa will always offer the exhilaration of agile mind meeting agile mind. Long may we wave! 



## *Welcome to Tampa Bay Mensa!*

Yameen Ali\*  
 Jodi Camino\*  
 Thomas A. Downs\*  
 Richard J. Flynn  
 Henry Geiter\*  
 Giles Hafferkamp

John Martz\*  
 Linda J. Moore\*  
 Robert Ober  
 Zoe Vercelli  
 Jennifer West

\* = New member; others are moves in or reinstatements.

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## Fold, Spindle, and Mutilate

### *Great October FSM*

*Gitti Walker*

The October FSM was held on Sunday, October 27, at Gitti Walker's new apartment in South Pasadena. A stalwart eight fought their way through the maze of this huge rental complex and arrived at door 428. Thank heavens, there were enough guest parking spaces so nobody was inconvenienced.

Max Loick, the ever-faithful and ever-vigilant, came right on time — what are we going to do without him??? He's the only one who knows what to do, as far as I can see. . . . Helping out and keeping up a lively conversation were Don Davis, Willa Harrison, Delphine Jenness, Mary Matthews, Jerry Merchant, Brian Walkowiak, and Sylvia Zadorozny, plus your hostess. To my surprise, my "smoking station" on the balcony found no takers. I would not have

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mind a bit, since I feel smoking is a personal matter and does no harm to others in the open air.

Sausages, biscuits, crudités, fruit, cupcakes, sodas, and beer were available in the kitchen, so nobody's strength was flagging. In record time, everything was done, and all my guests vanished like Halloween ghosts.

Thanks to everyone — your eagerness to help and your kind words to the hostess are much appreciated!

December's FSM will be hosted by Ronan Heffernan.

**DIRECTIONS:** Take I-75 to Exit #275 (the new SR56, north of Tampa (this exit is north of the I-75/I-275 split, so you can take I-275 North. After I-75 and I-275 merge, the next exit is #275)). Turn east onto SR56. Go to the stoplight and turn right (south) onto County Road 581 (same road as Bruce B. Downs, with a different name in Pasco County). Turn right at the next stoplight onto County Line Rd. Turn right into the second housing development (Northwood). Wave at the gate guard, if on duty (the barrier raises automatically). Take the second right onto Breakers Dr. #27504 is on the right, at the sharpest part of the curve.

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*Next FSM:*

*Sunday, November 24,  
2 p.m.*

*Host: Ronan Heffernan  
Wesley Chapel*

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## *New Circulation Officer/Publisher Desperately Needed*

*Max Loick, Interim Circulation Officer/Publisher*

Okay everybody out there, it's reality time. Max (that's me) has to stop being the Circulation Officer unless he hits the lotto and buys a car, then gets a secretary to help with various duties here and there. (Sort of like an intern?) It's getting beyond me, and the load on Mary and Jerry is getting heavy, although they've been gracious.

Let's get somebody in to take over, please. I'm unwilling to quit and leave the load on the ExComm to solve.

The best scenario is somebody here in St. Pete, who can then also be publisher; second-best is anybody able to get to the St. Pete USPS at 31st St. and 1st Ave. N. on a Monday or Tuesday with the trays, leaving me as publisher. We need a St. Pete address

for publisher, and moving to another post office is the last resort — expensive, time-consuming, and lots of petty, prickly detail.

But don't let that stop you from offering if you think you can spend a couple years doing the job and you're not in the 337xx zip code. All offers will be considered!

Soon, folks. Very soon.

Let's get it done, folks, and soon. Excellent training available, lousy salary (zero), great benefits, flexible hours. 🍷

### **Internet Flotsam**

*What Your Well-  
Dressed Holiday  
Bird Is NOT  
Wearing. . .*



## *TBM's First Annual Campout*

Tampa Bay's first annual North Counties Picnic and Campover was held the weekend of November 9 and 10, and a wonderful time was had by all. "Chris and Virginia Clement have a couple of acres with electricity and running water, toilet and shower, and piped music," said Max Loick, "and are wonderful hosts."

Much of the credit for an event that flowed smoothly goes to our LocSec, Maxine Kushner, who completed all the arrangements with Chris (including a last-minute re-scheduling, when your editor belatedly realized that the original RSVP-by date came several days *before* FSM!); made the postcards and labeled, stamped, and mailed them; coordinated the RSVPs; bought and helped cook the food; and just generally kept an eye on how things were going. "Thank goodness Maxine was so well-prepared!" Chris said.

Along with Chris and Virginia, Maxine and Bob Kushner, and Max Loick, frolickers included Susie Anderson, in a great gypsy caravan; Frank and Noreen Clarke and their grandson Kylen; Ronan and Dea Heffernan; Evelyn Hallowell (a member of TBM since 1975!); Megan Nash and her sister and mom; Paul Sullivan; Sue Valek, and, said Maxine, "seven invited pooches and one well-behaved party-crasher" — or as

Chris put it, "All the dogs decided to have a singles party and invited a local black lab." Sue Anderson added, "I took my two Australian shepherds. It was Baby's first camping trip, and they did fine."

Paul, who used to live right down the road from the campout site, made the road signs so that campers could find it. Sue Valek is a long-time member of TBM who has lived in the Tampa Bay area all her life, except for some time in Georgia; reports are that she has just recently moved back to the area, which is welcome news to all who reported it. (Welcome home, Sue!)

For a while at first, Bob and Ronan played bocce-ball, "but mostly we sat around and talked," Max said. "Talked and talked; and of course, Chris, Bob, and I had to hit the keyboard a few times." Modest Max! Chris said, "Sue Valek was able to get my old guitar tuned and played. My new keyboard (Yamaha PS292) was a hit with its fresh sounds, and many of us took turns on it. You don't really need to be too skilled to sound good, but it helps. Maxie was really smokin' on it, and we did a little four-handed improvisation of 'St. Louis Blues/Opus One.'

"Ronan and Dea actually pitched a tent," Chris said, "and delighted us all with their travel stories. Susie's

campsite was a party-within-a-party with her nice rig." Sue said, "Along with my camper, I took along a two-person tent, a two-room tent, and a screen room for whoever wanted to put these things up and sleep in them — and most campers elected to sleep in their cars!"

The next morning, it took four or five Mensans to figure out how to properly lower Sue's camper's awnings for shade — but once down, Max said, it was wonderful. Sue added, "Directions? Mensans don't need no stinking directions!"

After the awning was finally down, "Sue then proceeded to make ba-

con, taters, and eggs for the assembled multitudes," said Max, "which was deeply appreciated. Many thanks, Sue!"

The party lasted from mid-afternoon on Saturday until 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, "and would have continued longer if it weren't for the tiny detail of people having to work the next day," said Chris. Several of the campers want to do it again, and well before November 2003.

And Max concluded, "It was all entirely too much fun to keep it at one night — we need to find a way to have a mini-RG there! And order pizza?"



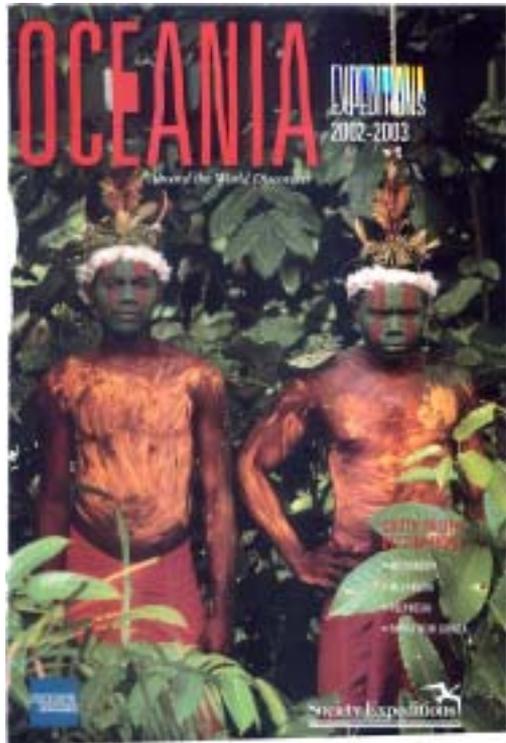
## *Letter to the Editor*

Re: "Green People With Yellow Stripes," Mary W. Matthews, October 2002

Dear Mary,

I completely agree with you. And speaking of striped people we might not want in Mensa . . .

Tom Latus  
Seminole





## *Tampa Bay Mensa's "Brain Bash" Regional Gathering 2003*

Tampa Bay Mensa's next Regional Gathering will be held on Memorial Day Weekend 2003 (from the evening of Friday, May 23, through brunch on Monday, May 26).

We are looking for suggestions, ideas, speakers, and willing hands. No thought or effort is insignificant, so please volunteer whatever you are able. Many hands make light work and even offering to mind the registration table for an hour is much appreciated!

If you are interested in serving on the Brain Bash committee, please

contact Jack Brawner at [TrojanOwl@aol.com](mailto:TrojanOwl@aol.com). If you have an idea for a program or a speaker, e-mail John Raymond at [JMRaymond3@aol.com](mailto:JMRaymond3@aol.com) or phone 727-343-4638. Let's knock the beanies from our fellow Mensans' heads with this RG and make it one to remember! Many thanks from your humble Honchos.

P.S. "Brain Bash" is the working title, but if you have a good idea for a more robust nickname for this event, please let us know. Let your imagination run wild!

**T B C A L E N D A R T B C A L E N D A R T B**

## *December 2002 Calendar*

*Ronan Heffernan, Calendar Editor*

Mensa events are open to all Mensans, their spouses, and accompanied guests. A party at a private home is a private event, and who may or may not attend is at the complete discretion of the host. Kitties mentioned in the calendar offset the cost of refreshments and are **NOT** optional.

Ronan Heffernan ((813) 907-8147) is the Calendar Editor. Please e-mail your calendar event notices to Ronan at *Ronan.Heffernan@shawus.com*, or visit <http://tampa.us.mensa.org/cal/> for complete instructions.

**Hosts:** Please remember to mention any special concerns about your location, such as limited access for the handicapped, smoking restrictions, or presence of pets.

**Guests:** If you have special needs or restrictions, it is prudent to discuss them with your host before attending an event.

*December 2<sup>nd</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> - Mondays - 3:30 PM - \$2*

### **CHILDREN'S GAME DAY/PLAY DAY**

For ages 0-10. Come join us. Bring your favorite games. For directions contact:

Linne Katz - 727-372-9438 - *LINNEKATZ@aol.com*  
10037 Wheatland Road - New Port Richey

*December 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> - Thursdays - 12:30 PM*

### **LUNCH BUNCH**

We meet at Piccadilly Cafeteria, on 11810 North Dale Mabry Highway (next to Barnes and Noble Bookstore), in Tampa. For directions, descriptions, and/or encouragement to attend, call . . . Jim Perry - 813-837-3473 - *philart@gte.net*

*December 7<sup>th</sup> - Saturday - 7:30 PM - \$1*

### **MOVIE NIGHT**

This month we will be watching the newly released extended version of *Lord of the Rings*. This release has 30 minutes of additional footage and a new DTS audio track. The movie will start promptly at 8:00 p.m. (more)

## **T B M C A L E N D A R T B M C A L E N D A R T B M**

Movies will be shown on a wide-screen HDTV plasma television using a progressive-scan DVD player. The sound system will put you right in the movie. You will feel the vibrations through your seat. If loud sounds bother you, please bring earplugs. Come at 7:30 p.m. to socialize. The movie will start promptly at 8:00 p.m. Popcorn and sodas will be provided.

Directions: Head north on I-75. Exit at State Road 54 and turn left (west). Go through the signal at Old Pasco Road. The first right turn after the signal will be the Lexington Oaks subdivision. After turning in, look for Belmont Village, which is the second village on your left. Dana's house is the fifth house on the left side.

Dana Groulx - 813-991-7868 - [dgroulx@mac.com](mailto:dgroulx@mac.com)  
5410 Bold Venture Place - Wesley Chapel

*December 10<sup>th</sup> - Tuesday - 6:30 PM*

### **TAMPA DINNER AT GINO'S RESTAURANT**

Please join us for dinner at Gino's Restaurant. We meet in the dining room around 6:30 p.m. Gino's (813-933-1089) is located at 10006 N. Armenia Avenue in Tampa.

Celeste Terken - 813-933-8700 - [onlyeaze@gte.net](mailto:onlyeaze@gte.net)

*December 12 - Thursday - 7:30 AM*

### **MID-PINELLAS BREAKFAST SIG**

Leave your home a bit early, and join us for breakfast on your way into work. The location is the Village Inn at Walsingham and Vonn Roads in Largo, bright and early at 7:30 a.m. Please call me in advance so I know how much space to reserve when I get there early.

Lori Puterbaugh - 727-399-2419 -  
[puterbaugh@mindspring.com](mailto:puterbaugh@mindspring.com)

*December 14<sup>th</sup> - Saturday - 4:00 PM*

### **EXCOMM MEETING**

All members may attend ExComm meetings. Directions: See the directions for the NPMOH event on this same date.

Max Loick - 727-896-4270 - [OldMax1@juno.com](mailto:OldMax1@juno.com)

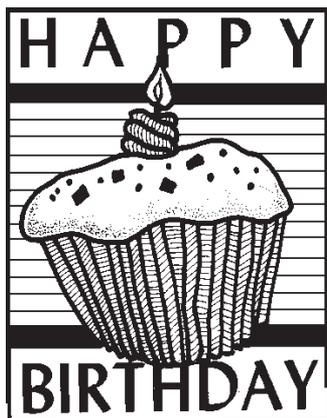
Event is held at Dottie Gondela's  
3000 Red Oak Court, #101 - Palm Harbor

*December 12<sup>th</sup> - Thursday 6:00 PM*

### **NPMOH - NEW AND PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS OPEN HOUSE**

As with TBM's other ExComm-sponsored events, there will

*Continued on page 23*



### *Happy December Birthday to:*

- |    |                       |    |                      |
|----|-----------------------|----|----------------------|
| 1  | Dana E. Groulx        |    | Kathy Robbins        |
| 2  | Louis Lonnie Lykins   |    | Renee A. Foran       |
|    | Raymond Cherubini     | 18 | Bill L. Lewellen     |
|    | Celli                 |    | Geoff LeCain         |
|    | Roger L. Preslar      |    | Ronald S. Klein      |
| 4  | Betty Gorman          | 19 | Constantine Vlachos  |
|    | Robert Joseph Miller  | 21 | Alvin John Bedgood   |
| 6  | Susan D. Dunlevy      | 22 | Christopher Schmidt  |
| 7  | Barbara B. Counts     | 23 | Dorothy E. Gondela   |
|    | Kenneth D. Googe      |    | Richard F. Bruckart  |
| 9  | Dorothy B. Butler     | 24 | Edwin Michael Kelley |
| 10 | Richard P. Flatau     |    | Joe Jenkins          |
| 11 | Elliott M. Loyless    |    | William Lee Dennis   |
| 12 | Evelyn N. Hallowell   | 25 | Rush W. Miller       |
|    | Robert Alan Van Dyke  | 26 | Allen F. Garber      |
| 13 | Michael Wenditz       | 27 | John T. Henderson    |
|    | Thomas L. Guy         |    | Robert C. Kane       |
| 14 | Anthony L. Citta      | 28 | Don Alan Davis       |
|    | Dhyan Appachu         | 29 | Frank Clarke         |
|    | Ryan Kennedy          | 30 | James Kitchens       |
|    | Ryan Smith            | 31 | Les Milewski         |
|    | Susan Lynch Entringer |    | Martin Joseph        |
| 17 | Daniel A. Chesnut     |    | McGowan              |
|    | James B. Clack        |    |                      |

TAMPA BAY MENSA

December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
1	2 <i>Children's Game/Play Day</i> at Linne Katz's New Port Richey, 3:30 p.m.	3	4
8  <i>Deadline for Sounding submissions</i>	9	10  <i>Tampa Dinner</i> at Gino's Restaurant Tampa, 6:30 p.m.	11
15  <i>Schedule your January events now.</i>	16  <i>Children's Game/Play Day</i> at Linne Katz's New Port Richey, 3:30 p.m.	17	18
22  <i>FSM</i> at Ronan Heffernan's Wesley Chapel, 2 p.m.	23	24	25 
29	30	31	

*EVENTS CALENDAR*  
*er 2002*

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p><b>5</b></p> <p><i>Lunch Bunch</i>            at Piccadilly Cafeteria            Tampa, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> 	<p><b>7</b></p> <p><i>Movie Night</i>            7:30 p.m.</p>
	<p><b>12</b></p> <p><i>Lunch Bunch</i>            at Piccadilly Cafeteria            Tampa, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p><i>ExComm Meeting</i>            4 p.m.</p> <p><i>NPMOH</i>            6 p.m.</p>
	<p><b>19</b></p> <p><i>Mid-Pinellas            Breakfast Group</i>            at Village Inn            Largo, 7:30 a.m.</p> <p>—</p> <p><i>Lunch Bunch</i>            at Piccadilly Cafeteria            Tampa, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>20</b></p> <p><i>Card Night</i>            7:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>21</b></p>
	<p><b>26</b></p> <p><i>Lunch Bunch</i>            at Piccadilly Cafeteria            Tampa, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>27</b></p> <p><i>TG9F</i>            at Horse &amp; Jockey            South Pasadena,            5:30 p.m.</p>	<p><b>28</b></p> <p><i>Games Night</i>            7:30 p.m.</p>

## MERF Scholarships

### *The Mensa Education and Research Foundation (MERF) and Tampa Bay Mensa Announce the 2002-2003 Scholarship Essay Contest*

MERF and Tampa Bay Mensa are accepting applications for MERF's annual scholarship contest. The only **eligibility requirements** are that the applicant be enrolled, for the academic year following the award, in a degree program in an accredited American institute of post-secondary education, and be a citizen or a permanent resident of the United States. For the general awards, the applicant need *not* be a member of Mensa nor qualified for Mensa, and the general awards are unrestricted as to age, gender, level of post-secondary education, and financial need.

Awards will be made on the basis of an essay of 550 words or fewer describing the applicant's career, vocational, or academic goal toward which the scholarship is to provide aid.

Entries will be judged and awarded at three levels: Tampa Bay Mensa,

regional, and national. Awards are made in amounts ranging from \$300 to \$1000.

Applications may be requested via US mail by sending a *legal-sized* (#10), *self-addressed, stamped* envelope (SASE) to:

Roger Preslar  
P.O. Box 1023  
Seffner, FL 33584-1023

All SASE requests for applications must be postmarked by **December 21, 2002**.

To download an official entry form via the Internet, visit the following URL: <http://merf.us.mensa.org/scholarships/zipfinder.php>.

Essays and completed entry forms must be mailed to Roger Preslar at the above address and postmarked by **January 15, 2003**.

The Mensa Education and Research Foundation is a philanthropic, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization funded by gifts from members of American Mensa Ltd. and others. The Foundation works to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity and to encourage research into the nature, characteristics, and uses of intelligence.



## T B M C A L E N D A R T B M C A L E N D A R T B M

*Continued from page 16*

be no charge for the NPMOH. The ExComm will provide soft drinks, and participants will bring along pot-luck dishes to share, as well as whatever non-soft drinks they might wish to imbibe. This particular NPMOH is also TBM's holiday-season party, which all members are invited and encouraged to attend.

Directions: Take U.S. 19 to Curlew Road (Texaco on corner) and turn right (east). At McMullen Booth Road (CR 611), turn left (north). Turn left (west) at the second condo entrance, "Oaks at Countryside." Building 3000 is at the rear of the development, and condo #101 is at the left side of the ground level. **Please park in areas marked "guest parking" or in front of the swimming pool.** (If you're coming from south Pinellas, just get onto 49th St. heading north and stay there: the road will turn by magic into McMullen Booth Road after you've crossed the Bayside Bridge.)

Dottie Gondela - 727-785-7573

3000 Red Oak Court, #101 - Palm Harbor

*December 20<sup>th</sup> - Friday - 7:30 PM - \$2*

### **CARD GAMES NIGHT**

Love Card Games? Bring your favorite deck of cards & your favorite game(s). Teach your game to us, learn a new one, and/or play an old one! Smoking on patio only. Four indoor cats are on board. Hope to see you all!

Card Night will be at my new house. You just continue south on Belcher about 7 lights. My new street is two lights south of Rt. 60 (Gulf to Bay). Turn right onto Druid Road, go two blocks and I am at 2077 Druid on the left (south side of street on the corner of Druid & Woodley). I would turn left on Woodley and park on it. You can't park on Druid.

Terri Elston - 727-446-6673 [TeriProfsr@aol.com](mailto:TeriProfsr@aol.com)

2077 Druid Rd. - Clearwater

*December 22<sup>nd</sup> - Sunday - 2:00 PM*

### **FSM**

December's FSM will be hosted by Ronan Heffernan.

DIRECTIONS: Take I-75 to Exit #275 (the new SR56, North of Tampa (this exit is north of the I-75/I-275 split, so you can take I-275 North. After I-75 and I-275 merge, the next exit is #275)). Turn east onto SR56. Go to the stoplight and turn right (south) onto County Road 581 (same road as Bruce B. Downs, with a different name in Pasco County). Turn right at the next stoplight onto County Line Rd. Turn right into the second housing development (Northwood). Wave at the gate guard, if on duty (the barrier raises

automatically). Take the second right onto Breakers Dr. Our house (#27504) is on the right, at the sharpest part of the curve.

Ronan Heffernan - 813-907-8147 -  
*ronan.heffernan@shawus.com*  
 27504 Breakers Dr - Wesley Chapel

*December 28<sup>th</sup> - Saturday - 7:30 PM - \$2*

### **GAMES NIGHT**

**GAMES & PIZZA** (to the tune of "Let It Snow"):

Oh, the games are quite delightful,  
 And the Mensans so insightful,  
 And the pizza tastes good, you know.

Let us go, let us go, let us go!

Oh, you're asked to smoke outdoors please.  
 Petting cats is fine, just don't tease.

Come and bring a friend or so.

Let us go, let us go, let us go!

*Directions:* From Tampa: Take Hillsborough Avenue west to the Hillsborough/Pinellas County border at Racetrack Rd, and turn left onto Lafayette Blvd (it's the same traffic light as Racetrack Rd). When Lafayette Blvd ends, turn left onto Shore Drive. About one mile farther, turn left onto Lexington, left onto Windtree, and left onto Timber Bay Circle West.

From North Pinellas: Take US 19 to SR 584 (Tampa Rd) or SR 586 (Curlew Rd), whichever is closer, then head east (toward Tampa). When you get into Oldsmar, turn right (south) onto Bayview Blvd (across from the Oldsmar Post Office). Go all the way to the end of Bayview, then turn left onto Shore Drive. Go about 1.5 miles, then turn left onto Lexington, left onto Windtree, and left onto Timber Bay Circle West.

From South Pinellas: Head north on US 19. Turn east (right) on SR 580, go over the Oldsmar bridge, and at the traffic light turn right onto St. Pete Drive (it's Forest Lakes Blvd going the other way). Turn right onto Bayview Blvd (across from the Wanna Save; no traffic light). At the end of Bayview, turn left onto Shore Drive. About 1.5 miles later, turn left onto Lexington, left onto Windtree, and left onto Timber Bay Circle West.

I'm the fourth or fifth house on the right, slightly pinkish with dark brown trim, with a green mailbox. (Warning: there is also a 651 Timber Bay Circle East, but last time I checked, it didn't have a green mailbox.)

Sylvia Zadorozny - 813-855-4939 -  
*szadorozny@aol.com*  
 651 Timber Bay Circle West - Oldsmar

## *Harvest Time in the City*

*Joni M. Fisher*

For five years I watched for a certain homeless man as others anticipate the first robin in springtime. He came out with the perennials in downtown New Orleans, Louisiana. A frail, aging black man, dressed in thrown-away clothes, he stood for hours on the lawn of the public library on the corner of Tulane and Loyola Avenues. Neither soaking rain nor scorching sunshine moved him indoors. He endured like a displaced scarecrow.

Having grown up in Wisconsin, where the homeless sometimes freeze to death, I wasn't used either to seeing guys like him or pretending I didn't. For the most part he was deliberately ignored and he ignored in return. Could he see more than shadows and motion through the white film of cataracts? Even other "street people" avoided him, sleeping instead in the remote seats of the air-conditioned library during the day while this scarecrow stood outside on the lawn.

His five-foot frame stooped as his overcoat flapped against his orange and green plaid shirt and brown pants. The crotch of his pants sagged halfway down his thighs, pants unsupported by his rope belt or his shrunken frame. Stick-like shins stuck out beneath the tattered ends of his pants then disappeared into large,

unbuckled, black rubber boots. His wrists extended into knobby, gnarled fingers, the kind that grew from years of painful arthritis or repeated injury. Thick, yellow nails and hard, dry calluses covered his stubby fingers.

Like a scarecrow overseeing crops, this shrunken form drove birds, squirrels, and other timid souls away. He had somehow defied the efforts of weather and the natural process of decay that recycles things. Three wild patches of yellow whiskers sprouted from the furrows on his face. It was a sign that something grew from the living humus. The horrific-smelling rot of his body and clothes refuted the life still clinging to him. It drove people downwind of him off the sidewalk and into traffic.

What kinds of tragedy or mental illness drove him to become so detached from life? I didn't understand. As an officer at the largest bank in the state, I aspired to absolute yuppiehood. I had the status job with the window office and overpriced, covered parking. In my late twenties, a college graduate, I was making enough money writing user manuals and designing training aids to convince myself I couldn't afford to pursue my real goals in life. I couldn't afford to write a novel, to risk failure. I had plenty of time.

The Scarecrow, as I came to think of him, communicated through simple gestures — an open hand, a shrug, a nod. He was harmless, small, old, and pathetic, which made it easy for me to approach him from upwind. By giving him an apple a day on my way to work in the Big Easy, I thought we both benefited. He gained a little food and I felt noble for doing a good deed that could not be repaid. Ignoring him would have eaten away at my conscience.

One day during the second spring he didn't bob his head in response to receiving the apple. Of course, it was a small thing, a tiny change in a familiar routine, but it got my attention. For the first time, I spoke to him.

"Do you like apples?"

He nodded and then bared his naked gums.

Chagrined, I said, "What do you do with the apples?"

His pants had crusty, stiff folds that scraped together like sandpaper as he shuffled along on the grass. By the time we reached the *Times-Picayune States-Item* vending box, there was a scruffy-looking man standing by it. Scruffy and I looked at each other suspiciously, while Scarecrow placed the apple on the box.

Scruffy suddenly smiled and held out his hand to me. "You the apple lady."

I presumed it was a question. "Yes." We shook hands.

"Why you been giving him apples?"

"I like apples." At that moment I

envied all tunneling animals. No such escape for me. Scruffy laughed and handed grapes to Scarecrow. For the next three years he got bananas, oranges, and grapes from me. I enjoyed our daily ritual. It gave me purpose and a feeling of being needed. The giant corporation I worked for proclaimed it needed its people even after profits fell below projections and they handed out pink slips at Thanksgiving. My colleagues called the layoffs "getting the bird" because the pink slips came with the customary coupon for a Thanksgiving turkey. Did I really belong in a place where managers called their people resources?

In mid-May of my fifth spring of feeding this nameless, toothless soul, he disappeared. I asked at the library. They didn't know. I called a friend who worked a few blocks away as an intern at Charity Hospital, also known as the Big Free. After Kay complained that someone had stolen her wallet while she was sleeping in the doctor's lounge, I asked about Scarecrow.

"You'll have to be more specific," she said, "Short, old, black, and unkempt sounds like half the crowd here."

"I don't know his name. He probably weighs ninety pounds and has no teeth. He has cataracts. Wears huge black rubber boots."

"Oh, that's Stinky. I haven't seen him lately, but I'll check on it and get back to you. Why do you want to know about him?"

"I haven't seen him lately. I just

wondered.”

“Tell me you don’t give those guys money.”

“I don’t give those guys money.”

“Good. Let me remind you that some of them are reality-challenged and addicted.” A high-pitched tone sounded in the background. “Crap, the ER’s tugging my leash again. Gotta go.”

I went back to my office, where two M.B.A. interns, wearing identical Brooks Brothers suits, introduced themselves. They had been sent as test dummies to take the computer-based training lesson for the new system scheduled to go on-line in a month. The fruits of years of labor would soon be harvested. These men were representative of the typical loan officers at our bank, only twenty pounds lighter. They couldn’t type and they feared computers. Like the upcoming software system, these guys were models of impersonal efficiency. At the rate they poked their keyboards, their thirty-minute lessons took an hour. I was tempted to reveal that the secretaries we used to test the lessons earned higher scores in half the time, but the male ego is such a fragile thing. I bit my lip.

That night at 6 p.m. the phone rang in my office. Managers often called after-hours to identify the “dedicated” employees, so I played along, delivering the full official telephone greeting according to company policy. After a long pause, Kay’s voice responded.

“I was waiting for the beep to leave a message. Geez, I thought bankers had better hours.”

“Sure we do, Kay. Just like all doctors have time to play golf.”

“Well, I found the chart on Stinky. He’s a fifty-year-old John Doe. He died two days ago. No friends or family. So he went unclaimed.”

Unclaimed meant buried without a headstone. Unclaimed meant his body could go to one of the medical schools in town for cadaver lab, dissection by the numbers. I didn’t ask.

“Thanks for checking.” Fifty?

On the way to the parking lot I passed his spot on the lawn and saw birds gathered there. I cried all the way home. There I began my writing career in earnest — with a letter of resignation.

Scarecrow had died years before he was buried. Just as he was waiting to die, I had been waiting to live. Bribed by luxury, I had given up living and hadn’t realized it. Scarecrow showed me the high cost of postponing goals and dreams. This was real life in the grownup world. No guarantees for a second chance. No do-overs.

In his last years, Scarecrow hadn’t voted or paid taxes. Gallup hadn’t polled him. Census takers hadn’t counted him. Presidents and fashions had changed without him. Out of work, out of hope, out of time, he had waited through his season with outstretched hands and quietly disappeared.

He taught me that the safety net from failure is not money. It’s courage. 

## Wells-Spring

### Potpourri

Erin Wells

Trying to determine a topic of general interest this month has been difficult. I wrote one column that I subsequently threw out, although the topic was close to my heart, because I thought it lacked wide appeal. Instead, here's a different format for me. Let's cover a few different topics, shall we?

▲ I live in a dorm. That means I don't live at home (except during breaks). So, now that I'm not longer home, what does my mom do? Buy a big screen television and get DirecTV. This reminds me of when I first went to college and she got a cool new car. Of course, that cool car is now mine. And I did get the old TV (a four-year-old 32" Toshiba) for my room at home—with satellite. I'll try not to complain too much. My mom did find the silver bullet for getting me to come home more often, though. That TV rocks my world, especially since it gets every NFL and movie channel available to DirecTV subscribers.

▲ The semester is concluding here at the University of Tampa. The students (and faculty) are thanking our lucky stars because classes are killing us, but most of us don't want to go home. Our friends (and lives) are here on this campus. Six weeks apart?! We're all hoping we don't die

of boredom, especially since many of us are from small towns, or at least towns not as exciting as Tampa.

▲ I'm going to be serious for a few minutes. The case of (now) Captain Scott Speicher of the United States Navy has recently come to my attention. He was shot down eleven years ago (when he was a lieutenant commander) during the Gulf War and was originally ruled KIA/BNR (killed in action, body not recovered) after an investigation by the Navy, including review of the crash site.

The Iraqis produced a uniform but could not explain the absence of a body. When the flight suit was analyzed, it was determined that the suit had not been worn during a ground impact, meaning Speicher apparently ejected before the plane crashed. His status was changed to MIA/captured in January 2001 due to new evidence, such as an Iraqi defector who claimed he drove a wounded American aviator matching Speicher's description to a hospital eleven years ago. There is doubt that even if he was captured he is alive today; however, an Iranian pilot was released by Saddam Hussein in 1998 after being held by the Iraqi government for 17 years.

If Scott Speicher is still alive, it is difficult to imagine what he has

been through, because we all know how concerned Saddam Hussein is with human rights. (I doubt he can even spell "Geneva Convention.") However, with these questions remaining, we should do everything we can to rescue Capt. Speicher and return him to freedom's waiting arms. To get involved in the effort, check out [www.freescottspeicher.com](http://www.freescottspeicher.com). There's merchandise to buy to fund the effort, plus ways to get involved.

⚓ Speaking of the military, I would like to remind everyone that no matter what your views are on war or "American imperial aggression" (what is up with THAT ridiculous politically correct term?), the men and women of our fighting forces sacrifice immensely so that you can have those views. They work long hours away from family, friends, and creature comforts while putting their lives on the line under great stress. I'm writing this on Veterans' Day and you won't read it until December, but it's never too late to thank a veteran. One of my proudest moments was being able to call my grandfather (a World War II medal winner) and thank him for fighting so hard for our freedom. Without them, America (and possibly the entire world) would have succumbed to the evils of tyranny and oppression long ago.

⚓ Florida is no longer the election stinker. My old hometown — Ft. Worth, Texas — got it this time. It makes me laugh. The rest of the country made joke after \*&%\$! joke during the 2000 election, even

though they had similar problems. They really hung us out to dry, so I think I might enjoy watching someone else twist in the wind for a while.

⚓ I'm sure there aren't a lot of *Star Trek* fans out there, but it really rings my bell, so I think I'll write about it anyway. I heard a *fabulous* rumor that *Enterprise* (the Scott Bakula prequel stinker) might be canceled and replaced by a series headed up by William Riker (yes, with his own ship) and his lovely wife, Deanna Troi. This is news that any serious fan (like me) has prayed for. When a friend of mine gave me the news, I was on my cell phone going through the toll booth on Veterans Expressway at Anderson Road. I screamed and nearly dropped the phone. It really freaked out the friend I had in the car with me (until I gave her the news, at which point she, being a fan herself, understood my reaction perfectly). "Star Trek: Nemesis," the tenth movie premiering December 13, is shaping up to be pretty good, too. Even if you're only an occasional viewer, go see it. It's an even number, so it has to be good. (For non-fans: There's a tendency for odd-numbered *Trek* movies — The Motion Picture, "The Final Frontier" — to be real raspberries, while the even movies — "The Wrath of Khan," "The Voyage Home," "First Contact" — tend to be high-caliber.)

That's enough from me this month. Have a great holiday season, whatever you're celebrating. Just remember to relax!



## Whoosh!

Frank Clarke

My wife and I recently toured Austria and Germany and did most of it by train. That's really the way to travel in Europe if the train route fits your travel plans (and they usually do). The trains are quiet, smooth, relatively inexpensive, fast, and convenient. As we left Munich, however, we were going to places that required we travel freely. We picked up our car, a Ford station wagon, at the Hertz office in the Munich Hauptbahnhof and headed north up the Romantische Straße to see some castles.

Along the way I was able to stop and get a picture of an especially odd road sign. You see them all over Europe, but most people have no idea what they mean. They are circular, yellow with black markings, divided into left and right halves. On the right there will be an up-arrow and a number; on the left there will be a different (smaller) number with an up-arrow and a down-arrow. They are always at a bridge and they are always mounted much higher than normal road signs. The numbers are speeds in kilometers per hour and those speeds are always substantially faster than the ordinary marked speed for the road. The signs represent the design limits for the bridge for one-



way traffic and for two-way traffic, and they exist so that drivers of heavy military equipment, tanks and such, will know how fast they can safely cross this bridge. Europeans unfortunately have had much more experience than we of tanks crossing bridges in a hurry.

German and Austrian speed limits are, in most cases, advisory. Unless you are driving erratically you are unlikely to get a speeding ticket, regardless of how fast you drive. The Autobahn is legendary for having “no speed limit,” but this is not precisely true; there are sections — usually construction areas — where the speed limit is rigidly enforced. “Rigidly” in this sense means you can get a ticket for going ONE kph faster than the posted limit.

I have long wanted to experience the Autobahn because I had to know what kind of road supports the “no limit” mentality. I got a rude shock when I first saw the Autobahn with my own eyes.

Most of the Autobahn in Germany is two lanes each direction, with a reinforced metal rail separating oncoming traffic. Many parts are noticeably twisty, and there is very little in the way of “shoulder” where you might pull off and

fix a flat tire. In rural sections it's not uncommon for the forest to come right down to the road.

Compare this with the typical U.S. Interstate highway: by law these must be designed (at a minimum) to handle 85-mph traffic. They typically have two lanes each direction in rural sections, at least three in busier sections; grassy medians that are normally three lanes wide and usually trenched to prevent crossovers; wide shoulders; multi-lane setbacks; and long sight lines. A German driver would think about breaking the world's land speed record on a road like that. She would be convulsed with laughter when told that for twenty years the speed limit was less than 90 kph (55.8 mph), nor would she stop laughing when informed the limit has now been raised to 121 kph (75 mph). On the Autobahn between Rothenburg and Munich I cruised at 180 kph (110 mph, thereby setting my own personal speed record), while VW beetles blew by me doing at least 230 kph and BMWs went by so fast I could only identify them by their shape.

\* \* \* \* \*

Why do we have a speed limit on our interstates? After Congress repealed the NMSL, Montana went to "reasonable and prudent" as their speed limit — in April 1996. During the last nine months of 1996 Montana saw a 28 percent *decline* in highway fatalities. This lowered accident/fatality rate continued with occasional bumps through Memorial Day 1999, when Montana's legislature set 75 mph as the replacement for R&P. Since then Montana's crash statistics

have shown a steady rise. Counterintuitively, having *any* speed limit appears to be more dangerous than having none at all.

During the early '90s, states widely raised their rural Interstate limits from 55 mph to 65 mph. While it has not been widely reported, it is common knowledge among traffic safety types that these sections afterwards had a noticeable drop in both accidents and fatalities. Counterintuitively, having a too-low speed limit appears to be a positive danger. A sheriff's deputy once remarked, "55 is fast enough to kill and slow enough to make you think you're safe." Oops.

If we're really interested in highway safety (more so than, say, the revenue our town or county gets from speeding tickets), we probably should be looking at the Autobahn as a model. Wouldn't it be nice to pass a Florida trooper parked on the shoulder of I-75, knowing that he's there ready to respond to a driver-in-distress call — and not, as today, to make sure you aren't violating a law that, we now know, puts you in danger each time you drive?

By the way, people who should know suggest that Montana's surprising safety during the years of "no limit" was due partly to increased lane courtesy (yielding the left lane to faster traffic) and partly to marginal drivers abandoning the Interstates for roads whose limits more closely matched their abilities. 

## Urban Cowboy

### Scrabble

*Bud Urban*

"Except as a fellow handled an axe, / They had no way of knowing a fool." — Robert Frost, from "Two Tramps" in *Mud Time*

If you attend the Gainesville Scrabble club, you may anticipate being judged only on the matter at hand, but being judged severely by most standards. Winners get their names in the daily paper, the *Gainesville Sun*. Names of losers are published only if they have played some magnificent word. High-scoring, that is.

I have appeared on the list many times, but when I was there, I was always at the tail end. (Reminds me of a pig I had years ago. Really a minor swine; we called him Spare-ribs.) When I get in the paper I have won two games and lost one; I never won three. And when I won two, my scores were never as high as those of the other players who won two that night. As yet.

The best Mensans I have seen at Scrabble were David Nabutovsky and Betty Wadsworth. In the Gainesville milieu I am afraid they would be just two fish in a large and predatory school. This is not a personal attack — David is an all-time great at Boggle, and Betty is probably the

best at whatever it is that she does.

It still bothers me a little bit that you have to put aside some of your vocabulary when you play Scrabble. I used to carry Webster's Second, but you can't do that in a real game. The rules that please me most are those that have amplified the Official Word List (OWL). Some of these came up when some hippie used to mention "free speech." Or some people call them "words you're not supposed to say." Back in the days of World War II, *Sexology* magazine published a list of euphemisms. For the words you would find in *Serology* magazine, of course. I'll settle for not using the euphemisms.

The National Scrabble Association, and others, are currently sponsoring Scrabble in schools as a learning/teaching aid. With all the profound language in the OWL, you couldn't send it to school, you might get sued. So they are selling a lesser dictionary for that use, even though the OWL does not *define* any words.

Let me say what pleases me about the scope of the OWL: Yiddish slang. I'm kind of short on the feminine viewpoint on this, but overall I think I learned what I have learned of Yiddish in the best place possible, os-

teopathic school. Picked up a lot for a goy.\* Japanese. Physically at Kyushu Imperial University, Fukuoka, but probably not enrolled. Here I'm short of the male viewpoint. Though the teacher was a man, I spoke mostly to women (as I do today).

I've already been kvetching (down, spell-checker!) about Latin — four high-school years, including three with Effie. Also two courses at the U. of Iowa on the relation of Latin and Greek roots to English words. The OWL also contains English as used in Shakespeare and the King James Bible, and a number of exclusively Scots words.

The OWL is not terribly inclusive with Chaucer, but that may change

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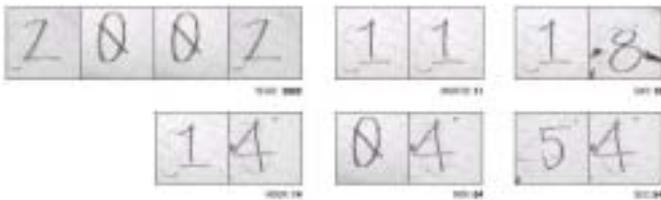
\*But not in Scrabble. The OWL lists only "goy." This in a publication containing SIXTEEN variations on *ganef*. That's a lot of ganefs for only one goy!

in international play as the British get tireder (a Scrabble word) of the Yank tail wagging their bulldog. After all, they claim that "English" is an English word.

As the game has seasoned, both the board and the tiles have matured. New boards can have hollow squares for the tiles to fit into, and with the best plastic tiles, the tops and the bottoms all feel the same, so there is no cheating in those areas.

When we fought the Japanese, a lot of Americans read all they could about Japan to try to know the enemy. Now that we are fighting the Mohammedans, let us include the names of Arabic letters in the OWL. Maybe we can beat them in Scrabble.

And, the way Scrabble is growing, it's a shame the U. S. national tournament is not held every year, but is biennial like a burdock. 🏠



## Cool Clock

Frank Clarke recently wrote a note to the *Sounding*, saying, "The University of Poland science students have finally finished the digital clock they have been working on for four years. Go to this site to see the results: <http://www.yugop.com/ver3/stuff/03/fla.html>."

This turns out to be an oddly mesmerizing Flash-movie clock that animates your own computer's internal clock. Check it out!

## The Three Bandits

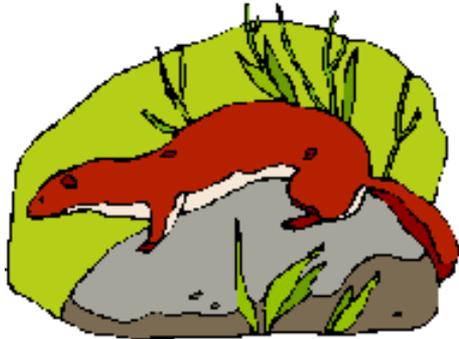
B. Valsavage

I call them bandits, and that is how they acted. I am referring to Sissy, Sassy, and my personal “favorite,” Savage. They were three little pet ferrets that we had as my daughter was growing up. Each had (as any person who has ever had pets can attest) totally distinct personalities, with differing likes and preferences. And they had varying talents too! As for acting like thieves, their very name comes via the Latin *fur*, or thief — if you gave any of them some treat, she would slink off, shifty-eyed, head down looking for cover, and a cover story!

As for talent, well, let’s just say ferrets act like miniature raccoons. Being a very social mammal, female ferrets cooperate like a surgical team.

One time in particular, after my divorce, I had bought a telephone (the ex cleaned out the house). When I came home after work I threw the box containing the phone, still in the bag I might add, on the bed in my room. I left the room to go check my mail and clean up before I ordered a pizza for dinner. The gang of three was in my room. About ten minutes later I walked in to find a full-scale ferret phone assembly production in progress. They had taken the phone box from

the bag, opened the box (it was shrink-wrapped), and pulled out the three components, the handset, the cord, and the cradle — each of which was also wrapped in plastic. The operative word being “was.” So intent were these gals, they did not seem to notice me, stunned, mouth agape. It was plain to see they were conferring on which end of the cord plugged into which component. As I stood there stupefied, I was left to wonder whom they were planning to call! Needless to say they were rather miffed with me when I put a halt to their furry phone fun. Yet even now, years later, whenever I use that phone, I still think of those little ferrets and muse that if I had been ten minutes later, they would have placed a call — and if it was long-distance, I doubt they’d have called collect. The little bandits!



## Tampa Bay's New Calendar

Ronan Heffernan, TBM's new calendar editor, is an expert with computers and the Internet. He has found, implemented, and even tweaked a terrific calendar for our web site: <http://tampa.us.mensa.org/cal/>.

What you see when this page first pops up is a very attractive conventional calendar. Find out the details of an event by clicking on it; RSVP to that event by clicking on "RSVP." Schedule your own event by clicking on "Submit Event"! — it's all as easy as using a mouse.

Want to find out what RGs are

going on? Either click on "National Gatherings" (the name is meant to cover both RGs in other areas and the AG) or go directly to <http://tampa.us.mensa.org/cal/month.php?cal=Gatherings>.

In the fullness of time, we'll offer a calendar of TBM birthdays. Meanwhile, if you think of any other calendars you'd like to see on our site, contact Ronan or Mary Matthews.

And of course, if you're not on the Internet, Ronan is always available by phone or snail-mail.

Thank you, Ronan! The new calendar looks terrific!



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03g

## Donna's Diary

### *The Joy of the Season*

*Donna Myhrer*

Whatever else may be going on in your life this month, I want to convey my hopes for the joy of the season for all of you. With that in mind, I have assembled a number of words that all have meanings related to "joyful," all of which are used in their adjective form

(e.g., "joyful" rather than "joy"). Below I have listed the derivations of these joyous adjectives and the number of letters in each one. All *you* have to do is to find the word. To make this quiz really easy, I put the answers in alphabetical order.



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Anglo-Saxon for "sweet."<br>(6 letters)        | 5 letters)  |
| 2. Latin for "shackle." (7 letters)               | 10. French for "genteel."<br>(6 letters)                          |
| 3. Greek for "the head." (8 letters)              | 11. Latin for "of Jupiter." (6 letters)                           |
| 4. Latin for "to bear abundantly."<br>(9 letters) | 12. Old High German for "fragile"<br>or "transitory." (5 letters) |
| 5. Old High German for "lively."<br>(6 letters)   | 13. Anglo-Saxon for "pleasant."<br>(8 letters)                    |
| 6. French for "brilliant." (3 letters)            | 14. Latin for "spoke of a wheel."<br>(7 letters)                  |
| 7. Anglo-Saxon for "shining."<br>(4 letters)      | 15. Swedish for "smirk." (7 letters)                              |
| 8. Anglo-Saxon for "music."<br>(7 letters)        | 16. Latin for "to live." (9 letters)                              |
| 9. Middle English for "good luck."<br>(5 letters) | 17. French for "orange peel."<br>(5 letters)                      |

### Answers to Donna's Diary:

- |               |              |            |              |
|---------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
| 14. radiant   | 10. jaunty   | 6. gay     | 1. blithe    |
| 15. smiling   | 11. jovial   | 7. glad    | 2. buoyant   |
| 16. vivacious | 12. merry    | 8. gleeful | 3. cheerful  |
| 17. zesty     | 13. mirthful | 9. happy   | 4. exuberant |
|               |              |            | 5. frisky    |

# Central Florida Mensa

presents

## “Smarti Gras”

January 31st – February 2nd, 2003



All Mensans are welcome to return to a taste of New Orleans, right here in the Central Florida sunshine. Smarti Gras was so popular last year that we decided to continue the party. Our hotel is preparing the GIANT hot tub for our late night use, and our hospitality is always the best. Meals are provided in your registration, except for the Saturday dinner on the town. Ask your friends that attended Smarti Gras 2002 if it was not the best party in town.

We are sorry to report that the Alien Booby Toss will not occur due to the aliens having lost their visas. We are planning something equally strange for your enjoyment, but we will never tell. The hotel is fully accessible by those with limited mobility. All events and hospitality are on the same floor, so please join us at the RG in January to celebrate Smarti Gras!

**Send registrations to:**

Eddie TrueLove  
3333 Honeysuckle Lane  
Bell Isle, FL 32812  
(407) 855-9078  
[etruelove@cfl.rr.com](mailto:etruelove@cfl.rr.com)

**Registration rates:**

\$70 through Jan. 1  
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Make checks payable to “CFM”

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