



TAMPA BAY SOUNDING

A Publication of Tampa Bay (Florida) Mensa

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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- Personal attacks and bigoted, sexist, hateful, or otherwise offensive material will not be published.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 (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!
Happy New Year!

⚓ There isn't much news to report this month. In fact, other than mentioning that our "next door neighbor" Central Florida Mensa will be hosting an RG in Orlando this month (for more information, see their ad on page 35 or the online calendar (<http://www.tampa.us.mensa.org/>)), the rest of the news is reminders for things I have mentioned before.

⚓ There is still time to apply for Tampa Bay Mensa's part of the MERF scholarship program. 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 preslarr1@aol.com, 813-651-1150. See page 22 for more information.

⚓ 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. Jack's e-mail address is trojanowl@aol.com, and his phone number is 727-546-6061.

⚓ Testing Coordinator Teri Elston is looking for members will-

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

Until next month —

Maxine
maxine.kushner@verizon.net



THE TENTH STORY*Alphabet Soup**Elissa Rudolph, R. V.C.*

Wow! 2003 — while you were watching *2001: A Space Odyssey*, did you ever picture yourself weightless in a space station? Or coming to grips with the Big Question — are we alone in the universe? Or not alone? Which is scarier to you? Both prospects give me a chill.

The WG (World Gathering — new moniker?) will be more of a reality after this month. By February we should have a hotel and firm dates. And a web site separate from the National site. Look for progress reports here as 2006 gets closer. Envisioning 2001 back in 1967 was too impossible, too alien, to contemplate — OTOH, 2006 will take shape slowly and will not intimidate us at all!

GOTYA (Group of the Year Award) announcement: Paperwork and forms are things of the past! National will be keeping tabs on all local groups, so that you do not have to rush around at the last minute counting testing sessions, etc. Your group will be automatically entered in your category. All you have to do is keep pushing those early re-

newals, keep up with testing, and get to as many LDWs as you can — you will amass many points for those items.

Speaking of renewals — they will be mailed January 2, 2003. The earlier you renew, the better for your group. Consider a life membership too. Then you don't ever have to look for that renewal form at the bottom of your desk. What, you haven't seen the desktop since 2001? Typical Mensan . . .

We did group spotlights all last year on each of Region 10's twelve groups. In 2003, I will be picking on, I mean, picking out, some little interesting tidbits of information, a joke, an event announcement from your newsletters to share with all readers.

June Brasgalla supplied haikus for *The 4M* (Ed. Edgar Coudal, Manasota Mensa): #2 — "Windows NT crashed. / I am the Blue Screen of Death. / No one hears your screams." #4 — "Your file was so big. / It might be very useful. / But now it is gone."

Miami Mensa is brainstorming for the King Mango Strut (an irreverent



Orange Bowl parade) in Coconut Grove, December 29. Their theme always reflects the craziness of the past year's "news." 2002's theme is the Barf Boat, brought to you by Walt Dizzy Cruise Lines and HurlAmerica shipping. There's more but I see you're turning green already. You go, Miami Ms!! (found in *Flamenco*, Marlene Adams, ed.) 

REGIONAL GATHERINGS

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!



Welcome to Tampa Bay Mensa!

Charles A. Antonowicz*
 Lisa Behrend*
 Lloyd Allen Cook
 Ronald I. Croft*
 Barbara M. Eddy
 Elizabeth Lynn Hapner
 Michael S. Harris*
 Charles Johnson*

John E. Jordan
 David Lupia*
 Ben J. Pethe*
 Marcus R. Reinhart*
 Jane Ann Semones
 Marcia Spakoski
 Lori E. Stangherlin*
 Jeffrey A. Swiantek*

* =new member; others are moves in or reinstatements



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. If you have an idea for a program or a speaker, e-mail John Raymond at 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!



FOLD, STAPLE, AND CUTILATE*Nice November FSM**Max Loick, Interim Circulation Officer*

A really pleasant afternoon in a lovely house — good directions too, Roger! — with fun conversation and snacks. Host Roger Preslar, Max Loick, Willa Harrison, Don Davis, and Ronan Heffernan got the job done in short order. (Max did learn how easy it was to tip over a TV tray, but that's another story.)

We're still looking for more locations, y'all. If you can stand a few hours of good jokes and conversation, and help put together our newsletter, call Max and offer your home for an afternoon. Doesn't *have* to be a Sunday, but that's worked out pretty well, what with the Bucs game on within hearing.

Do call me with your offers and we'll bring out the usual and unusual suspects and about 600 newsletters

and gear and set up shop quickly! We're also out of your hair quickly, leaving only a pile of MT label carrier paper!

A few munchies — you get reimbursed — and suitable potables to keep the crew in blood sugar until the job is finished, and that's all that's needed. As long as there's a table or two to hold our staplers. . . .

Roving FSM has proven to be a goodie — bring it to your house, soon!!

January's FSM will be hosted by Jerry Merchant and Mary Matthews, at 2 p.m. on Sunday, January 26. Mary and Jerry live at 1000 Granville Court N., in St. Petersburg. Granville Court is just off 9th Avenue N., between 7th and 8th Streets. If you're coming by way of the highway (so to speak), take 275 to 375, then immediately take the exit heading for 8th Street N. Go north on 8th Street, turn right (east) on 9th Avenue, and then left onto Granville Court less than a quarter-mile later. Call (727) 502-9301 for more information. (Mary adds, "For those of you who need to know, let us note that our pussycats are well-behaved but not optional!")

*Next FSM:**Sunday, January 26,
2 p.m.**Hosts: Mary and Jerry
St. Petersburg*

RECOVERING GANKEE*Men and Women in Mensa**Mary W. Matthews*

"In Mensa women are underrepresented," Victor Serebriakoff wrote in 1985. "Everywhere, in every country, the proportion is the same. Only one member in three is a woman."

I have always been mystified at why men are overrepresented in Mensa. There is nothing intrinsically superior in the Y chromosome; in fact, intelligence is carried on the X chromosome. And we all begin life as females; gender differentiation does not begin until a fetus is six to 14 weeks old, and if the process of masculinization is interrupted, for example by the mother's poor nutrition, the fetus reverts to female. (This is the main reason we all have nipples.) While there are developmental differences between the genders, I have never in my life heard it suggested that twice as many boys as girls are A students, and indeed, an authority on gifted education tells me that in her experience, no such disparity exists.

Serebriakoff had no idea why men should be overrepresented in Mensa. He could only quote *Intelligence and Personality*, in which professor Alice Heim pointed out that men seem to be more extreme as a gender. There are more males than females on the far ends of all sorts of continua — there are more male morons, idiot savants, felons, deadbeats, and so forth. Women, Heim said, are more "mediocre." So, interestingly, are

creative people; highly creative men tend to have more feminine qualities than the average, and highly creative women tend to have more masculine qualities.

Setting aside my resentment of the semantically loaded "mediocre," I find this explanation less than compelling. What about the cultural imbalances caused by the patriarchy? It is the height of injustice for women to be declared inferior competitors in a given arena because the patriarchy will not allow them a level playing field.

I recently read a fascinating book, Leonard Shlain's *The Alphabet and the Goddess*, which presents a well-known neurosurgeon's very plausible theory about where the patriarchy came from. Much of the following is a condensation of or elaboration upon almost 500 pages of thorough and carefully researched argument.

Because we are highly intelligent, we humans are born at a stage that would be on the "young fetus" side in other animals. If we remained in the womb for the full two-plus years we would need for a proper gestation, our brains would be much too large for us to be born the natural way, and all mothers would die in childbirth.

As "external fetuses," babies and toddlers must be taught many things that other animals are born knowing, for example how to walk. Their mothers are the natural teachers — who wants a wail-

ing baby along on a hunting party? Well before we were even *homo* (and by the way, the Latin for “man” is “vir”), males began specializing in hunting and killing and females began specializing in collecting and nurturing. As will become clear, at about the same time our gender tasks began to differentiate, so did our brain structure.

All vertebrates have bi-lobed brains. Virtually all vertebrates except human beings have mirror-image lobes: each half performs the same types of tasks. While a few species show a small amount of hemispheric lateralization, only humans do so pronouncedly — right- or left-handedness, for example, or clumping language in the left hemisphere. If each lobe of the human brain performed the same types of tasks as the other, our heads would probably be too large for our necks to hold up.

Most well-informed people know that the left lobe of the brain controls the right side of the body, and the right lobe the left side; most know that the speech and language center is on the left side, the artistic/creative center on the right. Many also know that the two lobes work closely together, with many useful failsafes built in. One significant difference is that women’s corpus callosums have 10 to 33 percent more neuronal fibers than men’s, allowing women better interaction between the two lobes, and thus a greater ability both to express and interpret emotion and to multi-task.

But it is only relatively recently that neuroscientists mapping split-brained and normal-brained people have identified the sharp differences between the two lobes. It is only a slight oversim-

plification to say that if a person is badly injured in the left hemisphere of the brain, the result is paralysis of the right side of the body, a catastrophic loss of speech, reading, and writing, and a catastrophic inability to engage in abstract thinking. If a person is badly injured in the right hemisphere of the brain, the result is paralysis of the left side of the body and a catastrophic inability to solve spatial problems, recognize faces, appreciate music, or engage in holistic or synthetic thinking.

The left lobe of the brain is linear, sequential, reductionist, and abstract. The right lobe of the brain is holistic, simultaneous, synthetic, and concrete. The left lobe is better at “turning off” compassion, the better to successfully hunt and kill. The right lobe of the brain is better at “turning off” the desire to dominate, the better to teach screaming fetuses how to become children.

While all human beings who are not ill or impaired use both sides of their brains, the left lobe of the brain is predominantly associated with masculine traits; the right lobe of the brain is predominantly associated with feminine traits. It is no accident that women invented agriculture and medicine, and that men invented the spear, the bow and arrow, the gun, and the A-bomb.

Before the invention of the alphabet, most preliterate cultures were more egalitarian than not, and most worshipped the Goddess. She was known as Anat, Aphrodite, Astarte, Asherah, Demeter (literally, “mother of the gods”), Danu, Ishtar, Isis, Kali, Mari, Metra, Ningal, Shakti, and a zillion other names, but so far as can be known, in every preliterate culture, the Goddess created

the Universe and kept it going. When she acquired a consort, he was invariably weaker than she. In climates where hunting was highly valued, the consort was relatively stronger; but in almost all cases, the consort died each winter so that the Goddess could resurrect him, and her people's fertility, each spring. A few examples include Ishtar and Tammuz, Cybele and Attis, and Astarte and Baal.

Since the concept of an alphabet (*any* alphabet) was invented in Canaan in approximately 2200 BCE, let us focus on the Fertile Crescent, which gave the world its first and most important literature. The Hebrew Scriptures are the only literature that have been in continuous publication for almost 3,000 years, and, especially when combined with the Christian Testament into the Bible, they have had an indisputable impact on world culture.

In the beginning was the Goddess Asherah. Eventually she acquired a consort, El. After a few thousand years, an upstart god named Yahweh came along, and after a few hundred years, Yahweh muscled El out of the line-up and became Asherah's new consort.

Roughly ONE hundred years after that, the first myths began to appear that Yahweh was the only god that ever was or ever will be; that Asherah was no true god and that it was evil for people (especially women) to cling to her worship; and that Yahweh was going to vanquish anyone who disagreed. (Nevertheless, worshippers still clung to Asherah for another 1,000 years, to the fury of the prophet Jeremiah.) The Hebrew Scriptures were written by priests of the cult

of Yahweh. (Some of the Torah incorporates myths about El.)

What caused this revolutionary change? The Canaanites invented a system of using letters to indicate speech sounds, the first alphabet.

Before there was writing, there were pictures and then pictographs — images whose data relied more on the brain's right hemisphere to process than on the left. The many petroglyphs that archeologists have found may be pictographs we cannot read.

The Sumerians invented cuneiform in approximately 2800 BCE, but it appears to have been used principally in business — how many jars of olive oil were offered to the goddess Inanna, for example. (Inanna's consort was Dumuzi, who died each winter so that Inanna could resurrect him in the spring.) Cuneiform, at first heavily pictographic, eventually became abstract enough to suit the left lobe — but early Sumerian writers disdained linearity and put their wedge-shaped marks anywhere on the writing surface they chose, relying on the right lobe's pattern recognition skills to get their message across.

Five centuries later, the Akkadians conquered Sumer; many educated people have heard of Sargon, the great conqueror. The Akkadians invented phonograms, which translated sounds into writing, jettisoning pictograms altogether and introducing such abstract words as justice, destiny, and truth. They also invented the notion of arranging writing linearly, after about a hundred years settling on left to right. Virtually no one has heard of Sargon's daughter Enheduanna, the world's

earliest known poet. Enheduanna was the Great High Priest of the Fertile Crescent, and her poems honoring Inanna are still exquisite, more than 4,200 years after they were written.

The Egyptians invented hieroglyphs, which were both ideograms and phonograms. One had to have a sense of artistry to read, and especially to write, hieroglyphs. Egypt's most important goddess was Isis, whose brother/husband was Osiris. The jealous god Seth murdered Osiris, hacked his corpse to pieces, and hid the parts. Isis found the remains, took them back to Egypt, and resurrected Osiris — in the spring, of course.

And then the Canaanites invented the alphabet — that is, the system of writing abstract phonogramic symbols in a linear fashion. Instead of literacy being reserved for a highly intelligent elite, almost anyone could learn to read, and even write. That is the great blessing of the alphabet. The great curse of the alphabet (again, *any* alphabet) is that instead of viewing concrete images — “Look, a drawing of a tree!” — people must read in a linear, sequential, black-and-white, highly abstract way. A way almost exclusively left-brained.

At the exact moment that people began overprivileging the left lobe of the brain, Yahweh suddenly demanded that worshippers refrain from creating “graven images,” which some cultures (e.g., the Amish, Muslims) even today interpret as a ban on *all* images. Syncretism — that is, merging the myths of two or more cultures, as when the Hebrews adopted Seth and turned him into one of Eve's sons —

became a major no-no, and still is. Most significantly, Yahweh demanded that all good *male* believers read the Scriptures. Meanwhile, a first-century rabbi remarked that “to teach a girl the Torah [i.e., how to read and think analytically] is to teach obscenity.”

Wherever an alphabet appeared, women were promptly forbidden to own property, forbidden to inherit, forbidden to take part in court cases, and forbidden to do almost anything fun. An ancient myth celebrating the gift of morality to humans by Asherah, symbolized by the Tree of Life and by the wise serpent, was shanghaied by the cult of Yahweh and turned into a myth condemning womankind as a gender for introducing sin, evil, and death into the world. It is no coincidence that the only character in the revamped myth who is specifically cursed by Yahweh is the honest serpent, symbol of Asherah.

I do not intend to go into a detailed exploration of history — *The Alphabet and the Goddess* encompasses 476 engrossing pages — but the pattern is clear. Athens embraced the alphabet and gave us great ancient literature that still inspires the world today. It also gave us the great but misogynistic Plato and Aristotle,* and a culture in which women were deemed subhuman and were supposed to live in harem-like seclusion with few civil rights. Sparta did not embrace the alphabet. While there is therefore

*Socrates, who rejected literacy, declared women “not at all inferior”; Plato was an intermediate figure, a homosexual who considered women untrustworthy at best; Aristotle wrote and taught, “The male is, by nature, superior and the female inferior.”

no great Spartan literature, records do indicate that women owned at least 40 percent of all property and, when their men were off fighting yet more wars, managed the rest.

During the Dark Ages, literacy among the general population declined, and women's status improved dramatically. With scholasticism, literacy rose; women were re-enslaved, and the Church busily massacred the Cathars, a back-to-basics movement of Christianity that believed in gender equality and nonviolence.

The prophet Muhammad was illiterate until Allah miraculously taught him alphabet literacy overnight. The goddesses Al-Lat (the feminine form of Allah), Al-Uzza, and Manat were promptly declared non-deities, and the verses of the Qur'an that speak respectfully of them are vehemently denied even today — in fact, Salman Rushdie remains under sentence of death solely for the crime of pointing out the existence of the respectful, ergo "satanic" verses. The Qur'an, written partly by Allah (who created humanity from a drop of his celestial sperm), partly by Muhammad, and largely by the deity Allah-and-his-prophet-Muhammad, addresses male believers as "you." All other human beings, whether unbelievers or female believers, are referred to as "they." The Qur'an dictates that on every scale except the ability to bear children, women are worth one third to one fourth of what men are worth.

The Church gave hardly a hoot about "witches" until after Gutenberg invented the printing press. With the meteoric rise of literacy that the bless-

ing of printing gave us also came a dramatic plunge in the status of women (who naturally were denied higher education because of their gender). The Church began torturing and massacring already vulnerable women, who made up almost 90 percent of those murdered in its witchhunts (and in Germanic countries, almost 100 percent).

In the 19th century, Faraday, Daguerre, and Edison worked their magic, and women's status began to rise as the brain's right hemisphere was finally allowed a little more exercise. Susan B. Anthony and her "commeres" could not have succeeded, as much as they did, before the invention of photography led to illustrated newspapers and magazines.

In the 20th century, the work of Edison, Philo T. Farnsworth, and the many inventors of the personal computer combined to result in more magic, and the women's liberation movement took off like a skyrocket. The effect of the movies, television, computers, and the Internet on women's lives cannot be overestimated. I have relatives, *alive today*, who were born before women achieved the right to vote. In World War II, women — for the first time in history invited into the work force — were asked not to smoke so that scarce tobacco could go to its "rightful" destination, fighting men. In *Star Trek's* 1969 episode "Turnabout Intruder," Captain James T. Kirk took it for granted that no female was capable of commanding a starship. In the 1970s, Charlie's Angels regularly trounced the bad guys through the mighty power of "T and A." In the 1980s, Diana

Spencer became the first royal bride in British history who did not vow to “love, honor, and obey.”

When I was 17 and on my way to college, my mother said to me, “I used to hope that you’d be a nuclear physicist or something else important. Now I just want you to be married and happy.” My mother was well into her adulthood before she ever saw a television; it has never occurred to her, even at 78, that it is possible for a woman to achieve success in the world *and* be married and happy.

We are only beginning to see the effects of the explosion of creativity and egalitarianism that is computers and the Internet. On the World Wide Web, one does not merely read black marks on a white page sequentially, but wanders through bright gardens of words, colorful still and moving images, and often music. Both halves of the brain participate in thinking.

The left hemisphere of the brain is logical, linear-thinking, dualistic, analytical, anti-image, and hunter-killer. The right hemisphere of the brain is holistic, intuitive, image-loving, music- and art-loving, concrete, synthetic, and collector-nurturer. While just about all of us use both hemispheres of our brains, the left lobe is predominantly masculine and the right lobe is predominantly feminine.

Speech and language reside in the left lobe of the brain. In 90 percent of humans (but only 70 percent of Mensans), handedness favors the left lobe of the brain; the left hand is for shielding, protecting, and other “gross” activities, the right hand for

throwing the spear, using the pen, and other “fine” activities. In reading and hand-writing, the left brain’s discriminatory, analytic mode is used to isolate tiny sections of the visual field and either analyze them to determine what letters they represent, and process them sequentially, or create them sequentially. In other words, the left, masculine lobe of the brain is over-privileged, while the right, feminine lobe of the brain languishes.

The left lobe of the brain is the natural home of standardized tests, which require logic, analysis, abstraction, and linear thinking. To become a member of Mensa, one must perform well on at least one of more than 200 standardized tests — not merely IQ tests, but such tests as the GREs, the LSATs, the GMATs, the GCTs, etc., etc.

At first the proportion of women in Mensa remained at approximately one-third. But with the rise of television, and particularly with the rise of computers and the Internet, this proportion has been rising. Today, in 2003, women constitute close to 40 percent of Mensa. This is an effective increase of approximately 20 percent — further evidence that there is nothing intrinsically superior about the Y chromosome.

What would Mensa look like today if admission to its ranks were based on tests that favored the *right* hemisphere of the brain — the intuitive, creative side, the side that favors holistic and synthetic thinking over logic and analysis? I think I know. I think it would be 60 to 67 percent female.



The Circus

B. Valsavage

When my daughter was a very little girl, we would plan special events for her. This may not sound so unusual except for the fact that, unlike most children, she could not be told in advance. These events had to be kept a secret until we were actually getting in the car ready to go. If she found out due to some slip of the tongue, she would drive us crazy for days until the event, and she always seemed disappointed that the reality did not measure up to the fantasy she had built up in her mind. So we reasoned that the less time she had to dwell on special occasions, the better.

Her mother is a makeup artist. She did makeup at the Performing Arts Center in Tampa Florida. She would get wind of upcoming events before they were common knowledge and get us tickets. We always had great seats!

Now the part about the circus. When my daughter was three years old, we had opening-day tickets to the Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey three-ring circus. We said nothing. She didn't know. Not until we pulled into the parking lot. When the light dawned, she went nuts! She was jabbering on and on, but we just tuned her out. But as we crossed the street to enter the Bayfront Center, I heard her tell her mother how she

was going to be IN the circus. "No, no, sweet child," I corrected her, "not IN but AT the circus." This subtle difference had no effect on her whatsoever. She was going to be IN the circus. Now as hard as we tried, we just knew that despite our best efforts, this child would be so disappointed when she was not IN the circus. We couldn't win!

We bought her a spinning flashlight and some candy in the hopes that she would be distracted from her circus debut. Then came the final blow. We were led to our seats. These were front-row center, on the floor, with the wires that held up the trapeze BEHIND us. Our good intentions were doing us in. This girl just knew she was going to be IN the circus. We were mortified!

As the lights dimmed, so did our hearts. Her mother and I were just sick. Well, the show went on and it was great, our child laughed and cheered and clapped and was having a super time. We faked it. Oh, we were happy to see this very cute little blonde darling light up at the festivities, but we could just envision her crestfallen face when she became aware she wasn't going to be in the circus.

Then an usher came over to us, and said she noticed how cute our

daughter was. She told us that at each performance, they choose a family from the audience and take them to the center ring, introduce them to the crowd, and let them be IN the show. And would we like to be that family? I was stunned. My daughter just looked at us as if to say . . . see! Well there we were, standing in the center ring as the ringmaster announced our names. Then we were put in a horse-drawn cart with a bunch of clowns and driven around,

with my three-year-old waving and smiling as if she was born to it. Nearly 15 years later, I still hardly believe it. If Florida had lottery tickets, I'd have bought one.

Well, I do not know if my child remembers the event or has had the memory implanted from us telling the story. After all, she was just three. But I'll never forget that special time we got a break as parents when we took our little girl to be IN the circus. 

Letter to the Editor

Re: "Potpourri," Erin Wells, December 2002

Dear Mary:

The TV show *Enterprise* is a "stinker"? Where does a college student acquire the right to pass that kind of judgment?

I became a fan of *Star Trek* on September 8, 1966, almost 20 years before this infant was even born, and I can safely say that I know more about the Star Trek universe than anyone else today who actually has a life. And I say that, aside from a few truly laughable errors of science (like a 51.3-mile-diameter ball of ice with Earth-normal gravity) and a distressing lack of respect for the original *Star Trek's* canon (e.g., Vulcans do not lie; T'Pol lies like a rug, as do most of the other Vulcans we've met recently), *Enterprise* is the best Star

Trek series ever made — even better than the original.

Enterprise may make some ridiculous mistakes (like, how come did I learn about micrometeorites in 1960 but no one in 2151 ever even considered the possibility?), but it has also come up with several episodes that are just whang-doozies — the upcoming "Stigma" (2/5/03) is going to be appointment television for me. The choice between *Enterprise* and Ms. Wells's preferred "Oh, Imzadi, I love you, but the bullhockyum particles are causing my framjanoids to fluctuate in and out of tetrabazinglyonic mode" is, for me, as easy as deciding whether it would be wise to avoid a Denebian slime devil.

That young *whippersnapper!*

Phoebe Hunter
St. Petersburg

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

January 2003 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. Your deadline for the February calendar is January 12.

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.

January 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, & 30th - 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

January 6th & 20th - 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

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

January 9th - 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

January 11th - Saturday - 7:30 PM - \$1

MOVIE NIGHT

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 and to vote on which movie to see. 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
5410 Bold Venture Place - Wesley Chapel

January 14th & 28th - Tuesdays - 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*

January 17th - 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,

Continued on page 23



Happy January Birthday to:

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Ellen Taylor Purpura
Gimon | 20 | Jessica Cameron
Thomas Johnson |
| | Jerry A. Merchant | 21 | James F. Perry |
| | Margaret M. Argudo | | Mamie N. Herring |
| 4 | Betty Sue Taylor | 22 | Joyce Watson Nutta |
| 5 | Lawrence Jay | 24 | Brett Husselbaugh |
| 6 | Rick David Craig | | Joni Michelle Fisher |
| 8 | David Lupia* | 25 | Louise Catherine Kelly |
| | Patricia Arline Johnston | | Michelle R. Kurtz |
| | Ronan Heffeman | | Seena Salyani |
| 9 | Stanley P. Pleban | 26 | Mark V. Ziemba |
| 11 | Helen Martin Parramore | 27 | Gary P. Posner |
| | Russell Brown | | John E. Jordan* |
| | Sean David Smith | | Marsha Patterson |
| | Vivian Bamard | | Raymond |
| 12 | David Bruce Goodrich | | Teresa M. Keller |
| 13 | Scott Wilson | 28 | Ben Gronek |
| 14 | Ronald L. Baker | | K. E. Schneider |
| 16 | B. A. Raines | | Robert John Murrin |
| 17 | Marvin L. Ivey | 29 | Lloyd Allen Cook* |
| 19 | Celeste J. Terken | 31 | Leslie N. Shade |

TAMPA BAY MENSA

January

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
			1 
5	6 <i>Children's Game/Play Day</i> at Linne Katz's New Port Richey, 3:30 p.m.	7	8
12 <i>Schedule your February events now.</i>	13	14 <i>Tampa Dinner</i> at Gino's Restaurant Tampa, 6:30 p.m.	15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 
19	20 <i>Children's Game/Play Day</i> at Linne Katz's New Port Richey, 3:30 p.m.	21	22
26 <i>FSM</i> at Mary Matthews's St. Petersburg, 2 p.m.	27	28 <i>Tampa Dinner</i> at Gino's Restaurant Tampa, 6:30 p.m.	29

EVENTS CALENDAR

2003

WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<p>2</p> <p><i>Lunch Bunch</i> at Piccadilly Cafeteria Tampa, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p>
	<p>9</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>10</p> <p><i>Deadline for Sounding submissions</i></p>	<p>11</p> <p><i>Movie Night</i> 7:30 p.m.</p>
	<p>16</p> <p><i>Lunch Bunch</i> at Piccadilly Cafeteria Tampa, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p>17</p> <p><i>Card Night</i> 7:30 p.m.</p>	<p>18</p> <p><i>Testing Session</i> Terri Elston, 727-446-6673</p>
	<p>23</p> <p><i>Lunch Bunch</i> at Piccadilly Cafeteria Tampa, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25</p> <p><i>Games Night</i> 7:30 p.m.</p>
	<p>30</p> <p><i>Lunch Bunch</i> at Piccadilly Cafeteria Tampa, 12:30 p.m.</p>	<p>31</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 C A L E N D A R T B C A L E N D A R T B C A L E N D A R T B

Continued from page 16

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
2077 Druid Rd. - Clearwater

January 18th - Saturday - \$

TESTING SESSION

Call Proctor Coordinator Terri Elson at the above number for more information.

January 25th - Saturday - 7:30 PM - \$2

GAMES NIGHT

This month's Last Saturday Rotating Games Night is at Mark Komula's in Tampa.

Directions: Take the Veterans Expressway to the Erlich Road exit. Head west on Erlich Road and take the first left, Briarthorn, into the Wood Briar West subdivision. The first right is Woodbrook Drive. Mark's house is on the corner. Mark has two cats.

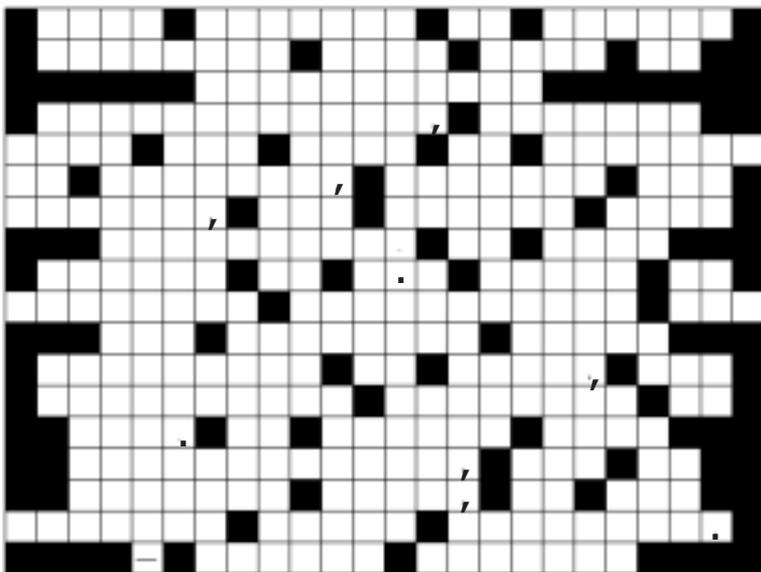
Mark Komula - 813-964-5390
7202 Woodbrook Drive - Tampa

January 26th - Sunday - 2:00 PM

FSM

January's FSM will be hosted by Jerry Merchant and Mary Matthews, at 2 p.m. on Sunday, January 26. Mary and Jerry live at 1000 Granville Court N., in St. Petersburg. Granville Court is just off 9th Avenue N., between 7th and 8th Streets. If you're coming by way of the highway (so to speak), take 275 to 375 (a left-side exit), then immediately take the exit heading for 8th Street N. Go north on 8th Street, turn right (east) on 9th Avenue, and then left onto Granville Court less than a quarter-mile later. Call (727) 502-9301 for more information. (For those of you who need to know, the pussycats are well-behaved but not optional!)

Jerry Merchant and Mary Matthews - 727-502-9301
1000 Granville Court N. - St. Petersburg



H A N G
 ON WEMUNGR NI
 TYOUAHUIEN AP SH
 UAAISEUOEAY IHKSTSTG
 IGESAFLRDTR EVORINTTE
 ALMEFTUFLTIPERENECGNB
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 IUFEQSTRTSLFEHTI HIGHF
 LFBNSRTENS DSNFMHSATTEA
 LAOFOCAOMMEEYEGAWUTOOR
 ROHRSLHENRHNJOONSRIHEY
 HPSHF SIRITTHATSEFTIANHD
 WII EORTIRIOUSMTPGNETHNM
 FAJIERUCEUE DUOHFRNOICYS
 TOGFIBTEFDTBSIWEAASNTERS
 LDCDPASURDTAEROALIDCAEWS

ANSWER.

Life affords no higher pleasure than that of surmounting difficulties, passing from one step of success to another, forming new wishes, and seeing them gratified. He that labors in any great or laudable undertaking has his fatigues first supported by hope, and afterwards rewarded by joy. To strive with difficulties, and to conquer them, is the highest human felicity. — Samuel Johnson

Don's Last Lesson

Joni M. Fisher

The last time I saw Mack was two weeks before friends threw him out of their airplane over the Winter Haven airport. Not many people get an air-show memorial service, but Mack had his own way of living, so it seemed appropriate to send him off this way.

Sure, as legend would have it, he died in bed with a woman who wasn't his wife. He'd lost one wife to cancer and this woman had lost a husband, so they lived together. Guess they thought getting married would complicate their finances. Everyone considered them married in a common-law kind of way. She sure grieved like a widow.

The memorial service took a few hours, as pilots stood in the hangar and talked about their experiences with Mack until they wept and sat back down. Grown men, pilots who had survived combat, guys who didn't flinch during engine failure or at the smell of smoke in the cockpit buried their faces in handkerchiefs. The Quiet Birdmen sniffled. Mack, one man announced, had flown in the Berlin airlift. This amazing, beloved, gentlemanly flight instructor had guided me through the hurricane season in central Florida one flight at a time. He never said, "You did that well for a girl."

He taught me loops and rolls, spins, stalls, and emergency procedures, none of which frightened me as much as standing in front of his peers to praise him. Because I am a writer, the other students had elected me to represent his younger students. I stood behind the podium and hoped it hid my quaking knees.

". . . In the years I flew with Mack, I heard him raise his voice only once." I looked up and saw rows of raised eyebrows. "He was teaching me the difference between the Cessna 172 and the retractable-gear Cessna 182. We had just landed and taxied to the ramp and he told me to open the cowl flaps. I put my hand on the gear switch—" Mack had saved me from pancaking the aircraft on the taxiway.

Four more people followed with poignant eulogies, then a woman took the podium and invited us to all chant the name of God, which she said was Hugh. As the chanting began I bit my lip and snuck a peek at a row of gray-haired pilots, who rolled their eyes.

After the hangar service we gathered outside under the hot Florida sun and enjoyed an easterly breeze. We, Mack's students, were part of his legacy. While we waited for the

memorial fly-by, we swapped more stories and comforted one another. Mack made 77 seem too young an age to die. Despite his having said that he believed in reincarnation, he lived as if each day might be his last. He lived with gusto.

All heads turned toward the sound of small planes approaching in the bright blue sky. Each plane represented part of his aviation career: the military trainer, a sea plane, the Cessna 172 he owned, and the Murphy Rebel he had helped build but never flew.

"I didn't know he believed in that reincarnation crap," a gruff-voiced pilot said. "Guess he'll have to come back as a bird."

"Have to be an eagle," another pilot said. All agreed.

"Well," a devout Christian pilot snorted, "I wonder what Mack will say to God when he gets to heaven?"

Three of us answered in unison, "When can I fly?"

Of course, Mack's ashes were loaded into the Murphy Rebel so he could finally ride in it. His ashes were mixed with a pound of flour for better visibility. The Murphy Rebel had taken six men seven years, two marriages, \$60,000, one heart surgery, and umpteen thousand cigarettes to build. Mack had been the designated test pilot for the maiden flight, not because he counted flight time by logbooks instead of hours, but because he was the oldest.

Skip, the second-oldest of the

plane builders, had served as test pilot weeks earlier, while Mack was in North Carolina with his girlfriend. Rumor has it the microphone was keyed on during the first landing and everyone tuned to frequency 123.05 heard language forbidden by FCC rules. When asked about it, Skip said he could neither confirm nor deny the use of profanity during the test flight.

Mack's son approached and thanked us for speaking. He said he regretted not learning to fly. Sometimes wives object. No one asked.

"I can tell you're the writer Dad talked about," he said.

Had Mack told him about the time Tampa Approach Control gave me instructions at auctioneer speed and I asked them to repeat it at dumb-blonde speed?

"What was that last thing you said?" he asked.

Tugging paper from my pocket, I recited the ending of my eulogy. "My life is better because Mack replaced my fear with confidence and my doubt with knowledge. Now when planes fly over, I look up and remind myself that, thanks to Mack, my world is bigger. I can fly."

I looked up in time to return his hug. After he let go, sniffing, he asked if he could have my speech. I handed it to him. His wife strode out of the shady hanger toward us with two children in tow. She had a determined look that turned into a stiff smile when she reached our group.

"Daddy, look at the planes!" one

of Mack's grandchildren said as he hopped.

As the planes reached mid-field, one plane broke away, leaving a gap to create the traditional missing-man formation. This was not the high-speed fighter jet version, but it was impressive that such dissimilar planes could maintain a formation. Suddenly, the ash

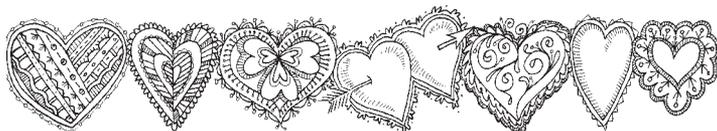
and flour mix shot out of the Murphy Rebel. The wind spread the mixture in a great plume toward us, sending us scrambling back to the hangar.

"Leave it to Mack to deliver one last lesson to us," I whispered to Skip.

Skip grinned.

Mack's son said, "What lesson?"

"Pay attention to wind direction." 🗼



Northwest Florida Mensa's First Regional Gathering!

"ValenTime"

February 14-16, 2003

(3 p.m. Friday through 3 p.m. Sunday)

Holiday Inn,* 1020 Highway 98 East, Destin, Florida

Registration: \$31 per person for the weekend if paid in advance
\$36 per person at the door, or
\$15 per person for a single day

Please make checks payable to Northwest Florida Mensa. (Sorry, no credit cards.)

Name(s) _____
Phone _____ e-mail _____
Address _____

Please mail this form to: Registrar - ValenTime
616 North Overbrook Drive
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32547

Questions? Contact John Mochan, 850-863-3599, or jmochan@cox.net. Visit us at nwflorida.us.mensa.org

* Room rates range from \$70 to \$105 per night depending upon the view; contact the Holiday Inn at 850-837-6181 and tell them you're with the Mensa Group.

WELLS-SPRING*Rocky Horror**Erin Wells*

I'm going to detour from my usual style this month to talk about a movie that is very dear to me that no one else really seems to appreciate, enjoy, or understand. I'm hoping that if I write this column well enough, people will give it a second chance. I will admit right off the bat that I like unusual movies. Some of my favorites are "Army of Darkness" (the third installment in the "Evil Dead" trilogy), "Pitch Black" (one of Vin Diesel's first movies), and the classic Patrick Swayze film, "Red Dawn." But this movie is especially unusual: "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," complete with Tim Curry in fishnet stockings and red lipstick.

For those who don't know, the basic premise of the movie is that two wholesome 1960s-era twentysomethings have a flat tire and end up at the creepy castle of the alien Dr. Frank-N-Furter. They arrive as Dr. Furter is finishing his creation, Rocky, a Frankenstein-inspired love slave. This wholesome couple, Brad and Janet (played expertly by Barry Bostwick and Susan Sarandon), soon find themselves corrupted and, in a way, enlightened by Dr.

Frank-N-Furter and his eccentric fellow "conventioners." (Yes, this column eventually includes spoilers.)

Understanding "Rocky Horror" begins with understanding the history of the movie. The movie began as a play, written by Richard O'Brien, a London actor and playwright who felt there was a dearth of good theater for the city's active gay population. He wanted to pay homage to the B-movies he loved, as well as expressing themes he felt were important. The play ran in several smaller venues before moving onto some of London's better-respected stages, and eventually crossing the pond to Broadway, where it received a very cool reception. However, within 18 months of its first production, Lou Adler and Michael White decided to finance a movie. Thus



began the international phenomenon of "Rocky Horror" and its infamous midnight screenings.

There are three layers of meaning in this movie. The first is just the surface, and it is the tribute to science fiction, B-movies, and comic book caricatures of good and evil. Many of the references are in the music. The opening song, "Science Fiction Double Feature," features lyrics such as, "Michael Rennie was ill the day the Earth stood still but he told us where we stand/And Flash Gordon was there in silver underwear/Claude Rains was the invisible man." It is also largely a spoof of "Frankenstein," especially in the creation of Rocky Horror, which takes place in an outlandish pink laboratory. The costumes and sets reflect the silliness at this level, as they are often chaotic, gauche, and colorful to an extreme. The sex and accompanying innuendoes are obvious to the point of parody here as well.

The second level is an American coming-of-age story, which seems unusual coming from an Englishman. However, O'Brien gets it dead on and holds a mirror up to our culture. Brad and Janet represent "Ike age" Americans, still innocent and not yet turned by the cultural revolutions of the late '60s and early '70s, not yet made cynical by the assassination of President Kennedy and the crimes of President Nixon. Dr. Frank-N-Furter represents the coming sexual revolution, as well as the new era of dis-

trust that Americans were set to encounter. The transformation of Brad and Janet during the movie is startling. Brad has a sexual encounter with Dr. Frank-N-Furter, both Brad and Janet dance in a transvestite musical revue, and by the end of the movie they find themselves narrowly escaping death at the hands of a madman while struggling to cope with their own sins and imperfections.

After many viewings of this movie, I have concluded that part of this level of meaning is the love story between Rocky and Dr. Frank-N-Furter. Rocky was created for Dr. Frank-N-Furter's pleasure, but Dr. Frank-N-Furter obviously feels something for his creation. He is disappointed, hurt, and extremely jealous when he discovers that Rocky and Janet had an intimate encounter. Conversely, when Dr. Frank-N-Furter is killed at the end of the movie, Rocky rushes to his body and cries in tormented grief until he too is killed.

The deepest level of this movie is a morality tale about hedonism and its inevitable consequences. Brad and Janet are extremely naïve and somewhat closed-minded (demonstrated by their condemnation of the motorcyclists they encounter at the beginning of the movie), but basically decent people. The decadence they encounter in Dr. Frank-N-Furter and his compatriots is completely foreign to them and they react with shock, horror, disgust, and curiosity. Unpre-

pared, they are pulled deeper into Dr. Frank-N-Furter's lifestyle and find themselves eventually enlightened about a larger world,



but at a terribly high price. Their sense of security and direction is gone, and they are left feeling torn apart. One of the final songs in the movie is called "Superheroes," and the most telling lyrics are, "I've done a lot/God knows I've tried to find the truth/I've even lied/But all I know is, deep inside I'm bleeding." I tend to think of it as a Garden of Eden parable. They ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and were thus

cast out of the beautiful, secure Garden they had known.

I find myself frustrated with people who see Tim Curry in fishnets and lipstick and react with homophobia so strong that they never try to understand the way the elements of the movie come together in a cohesive and moving way. Or who see the wild sets and costumes and write it off as another "acid trip" movie. I recommend that all of you who are open-minded enough to give it a chance (and I know that's all of you), sit down and watch it with my words in mind.



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03h

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03g

URBAN COWBOY*Updates and Amplifications**Bud Urban*

Mensa must have changed a lot in the few years since the times of Roland Berrill. Apparently he and I had a lot of common interests. I was also autocratic in the areas in which I worked, but I didn't work in Mensa, just played. Did the other members fuss about his activities because he was pushing his opinions, or were the others pushy?

Now, the dictum that "Mensa has no opinions" rules the roost. When a fellow Mensan tells you what to believe, just say, "And how is your SIG coming along?" Thus we are like St. Patrick's shamrock, united in having "no opinions," but diverse from one SIG to another. Some people still get booted out,

Editor's note: In his remarks about Roland Berrill, one of the founders of Mensa, Mr. Urban is responding to my history "Green People With Yellow Stripes" in the October 2002 Sounding. He is right; Mensa founder Roland Berrill was interested in Dianetics, not the later-arriving Scientology, based on Dianetics. Berrill enjoyed using his position as LocSec of all Mensa to publicize his wacko ideas.

and I might feel safer if I knew the particulars. Or I might not, but I still feel we should know.

Let me list Berrill's aberrations. (That's an inside joke. L. Ron Hubbard, author of *Dianetics*, called everybody an aberree.)

♠ Astrology had been prominent in England, especially since Leo brought an at-that-time updated practice from India. Leo changed his name to match his sun-sign and his wife changed her name to match his, so although he was a Leo . . . oh well! In this country most of the hippies knew a smattering of astrology. I loved a woman who had eight kids (by her husband), and since she didn't have them in one litter like a sow, each had a horoscope and the personalities tended to match the horoscopes.

I did horoscopes at one of our RGs, simply acting as a technician who ran the computer. Modern astronomy has meant everything to modern astrology, but although for years people studied astronomy for astrological purposes, now astronomers mention astrology only to damn it That's what they are taught.

♠ Phrenology. I can't match up here. I have studied the human cranium, but I understand phrenology

concentrates on the bumps, whereas the work I have been exposed to is concerned with the sutures and the bones as such.

⚓ Scientology. Surely you mean Dianetics. Scientology came later. I checked my card from the HDRF, and sure enough *it* expired in 1951. The book, *Dianetics*, came out in 1950, having been previewed, as I recall in the magazine, *Astounding Science Fiction*. A bestseller, the book was read by everyone who cared about the human condition. Except for the majority, who already knew everything.

⚓ Palmistry. I may have a palmistry gene. They were having a whoop-de-do at the Masonic lodge and Mamma decided she would read palms. She got a comprehensive book from Iowa City Public Library and did it. This was in her old age. I can only imagine what she was like teaching a one-room school at the

previous turn of the century. Someone was always carrying a gun to school in those days. but in her case. it was the teacher.

⚓ Flamboyant clothing. Bright colors only.

The National Scrabble Association reports that its tournament officials have been given more authority to control disruptive persons. In an obvious reaction to the deadly seriousness associated with Scrabble, one sponsor of Scrabble tournaments has added a tourney of the game, UPWORDS. It had to happen.

Thanks to Donna Myrher for the Shakespeare quiz. I am doing the same for Gilbert and Sullivan (see next page). On her Shakespeare quiz, I missed four. Not outstanding for a Mensan who claims to know Shakespeare, but I'll take it. 

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.

The deadline is February 1, 2003.

À la D'Oyly Carte

Bud Urban

1. A song with the lines, "Young man despair, likewise go to" is from which work?
 - A. The Pirates of Penzance
 - B. The Mikado
 - C. Ruddigore
 - D. Patience
2. This work probably was the most offensive to the English clergy.
 - A. Ruddigore
 - B. The Sorcerer
 - C. The Mikado
 - D. Utopia Limited
3. Which work opened in New York before its London opening?
 - A. The Mikado
 - B. HMS Pinafore
 - C. Patience
 - D. The Pirates of Penzance
4. This principal had a brother who was a very funny man and played the judge in "Trial by Jury."
 - A. D' Oyly Carte
 - B. Gilbert
 - C. Captain Shaw
 - D. Sullivan
5. A traditional obscene ditty, the "Ballad of Chris Columbo," is from a tune in "The Gondoliers." It is sung by
 - A. The Grand Inquisitor
 - B. The Duke of Plaza-Toro
 - C. Luiz
 - D. Marco and Giuseppe
6. The song "Climbing Over Rocky Mountain" occurs in
 - A. HMS Pinafore
 - B. The Pirates of Penzance
 - C. Cox and Box
 - D. Thespis
7. A character appearing to be a thinly disguised Oscar Wilde appears in
 - A. Princess Ida
 - B. Trial by Jury
 - C. The Yeomen of the Guard
 - D. Patience
8. "Schoolgirls We, Eighteen and Under" form a chorus in
 - A. Princess Ida
 - B. The Mikado
 - C. Iolanthe
 - D. The Grand Duke
9. "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here" is set to a tune from
 - A. The Pirates of Penzance
 - B. Ivanhoe
 - C. HMS Pinafore
 - D. The Gondoliers
10. This work is subtitled "The Witch's Curse"
 - A. Ruddigore
 - B. The Mikado
 - C. Trial by Jury
 - D. The Sorcerer



11. The lines “I am the last person to insult the British sailor, Sir Joseph” and “You are the last person who did, Captain Corcoran” are from
 A. The Pirates of Penzance
 B. HMS Pinafore
 C. The Yeomen of the Guard
 D. Trial by Jury
12. Gilbert picked the names Tipseion, Preposteros, and Stupidas for characters in
 A. The Mikado
 B. The Grand Duke
 C. Utopia Limited
 D. Thespis
13. “Now for the eggs, the ham; Now for the mustard and cress, Now for the strawberry jam!” is from
 A. Princess Ida
 B. Patience
 C. The Sorcerer
 D. Iolanthe
14. Instead of taking advantage of the star system, the head Savoyards fought it — in one work by having two male and two female leads. This was
 A. The Yeomen of the Guard
 B. The Gondoliers
 C. The Pirates of Penzance
 D. Thespis
15. Which work can no longer be produced because the score was lost?
 A. Thespis
 B. The Mikado
 C. The Grand Duke
 D. Princess Ida
16. Sullivan studied with
 A. Felix Mendelssohn
 B. Richard Strauss
 C. Oscar Strauss
 D. Johann Strauss, Jr.
17. The lines, “Man is Nature’s sole mistake!” and “Free as a tethered ass!” are from
 A. Patience
 B. Iolanthe
 C. The Gondoliers
 D. Princess Ida
18. This title character sings “In some old cabinet, Memorials of thy long-dead bride Lie, dearly treasured yet, Then let her hallowed bridal dress — Her little dainty gloves —”
 A. The Mikado
 B. Iolanthe
 C. Princess Ida
 D. Ivanhoe



ANSWERS.

- | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------------|
| 1. B | 2. B | 3. D | 4. D | 5. B | 6. B and D |
| 16. A | 17. D | 18. B | 7. D | 8. B | 9. A |
| 13. C | 14. B | 15. A | 10. A | 11. B | 12. D |

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!

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DONNA'S DIARY*A Gem-Studded New Year for You All**Donna Myhrer*

I've been looking at my encyclopedia again and ran across an article about birthstones. So here is a little quiz on that subject. I will list, in no particular order, a number of birthstones (more than one per month, since several months have different stones in the "modern" and "traditional" lists). Then I will randomly list two statements for each stone, all mixed up. Match

the stones with the statements about them.

Birthstones:

Garnet, Amethyst, Opal, Peridot, Aquamarine, Emerald, Moonstone, Diamond, Citrine, Ruby, Topaz, Tourmaline, Zircon, Turquoise, Sapphire, Sardonyx, Alexandrine, Chalcedony, Pearl.



1. It is found in deposits of coarse granite, called pegmatite dikes.
2. The color of this gem is from a trace of chromium oxide impurity.
3. When first mined, these gems are commonly cloudy and clear up only after being heat-treated by baking them in mud balls for several days.
4. It is the national gem of Iran.
5. The largest of this gem is known as the Star of India.
6. The Book of Revelations says that the third foundation of the wall of the Holy City is made of this gemstone.
7. It is cut from flat layers of banded masses of agate.
8. It is a transparent greenish variety of olivene.
9. It is the hardest naturally occurring substance known.

10. It is a transparent variety of beryl.
11. The name of this gem is derived from the French word for lemon.
12. This gem is a whitish variety of feldspar.
13. Precious stones of this type include the pyrope or Bohemian and the transparent almandine.
14. It is a crystal formed almost entirely of carbon.
15. Sometimes this gem contains liquid or gas-filled inclusions that resemble fried eggs.
16. A precious type of this stone is called a girasol.
17. This gem is the anniversary gemstone for the 17th year of marriage.
18. It is a variety of quartz, found in the form of six-sided, pointed crystals.

19. The people of Manta, Peru, once worshipped a stone of this type, which was the size of an ostrich egg.
20. This gem is a symbol for the 40th wedding anniversary.
21. This stone is believed by some to release occult powers in the wearer and bring serenity of mind.
22. A colorless variety of this stone is often used as a diamond substitute.
23. When this gem is exposed to heat and pressure, it becomes electrically charged and is used in electrical instruments.
24. This stone is the second hardest of all gemstones.
25. This gem is made of aragonite and conchiolin.
26. A mystical property of this stone is that it is said to balance yin and yang.
27. This gem is found in the mineral chrysoberyl.
28. This gem was named for an ancient city in what is now Turkey.
29. This rainbow-like stone is made of common sand or silica.
30. This gem is a green colored variety of beryl.
31. As a birthstone, it represents constancy.
32. People in the Middle Ages thought it could magically overcome the effects of poison.
33. The Oriental is a purple variety of this stone.
34. This gem absorbs, as well as reflects, light.
35. This gem is green in daylight and red in artificial light.
36. Since ancient times, this stone has been color-treated to improve its color.
37. It is a compound of aluminum, silica and fluorine.
38. It is made of hydrous phosphate of aluminate.

ANSWERS TO DONNA'S DIARY.

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 31. Garnet | 21. Topaz | 1. Tourmaline |
| 32. Aquamarine | 22. Zircon | 2. Ruby |
| 33. Amethyst | 23. Tourmaline | 3. Zircon |
| 34. Pearl | 24. Sapphire | 4. Turquoise |
| 35. Alexandrite | 25. Pearl | 5. Sapphire |
| 36. Sardonx | 26. Moonstone | 6. Chalcedony |
| 37. Topaz | 27. Alexandrite | 7. Sardonx |
| 38. Turquoise | 28. Chalcedony | 8. Peridot |
| | 29. Opal | 9. Diamond |
| | 30. Emerald | 10. Aquamarine |
| | | 20. Ruby |
| | | 19. Emerald |
| | | 18. Amethyst |
| | | 17. Citrine |
| | | 16. Opal |
| | | 15. Peridot |
| | | 14. Diamond |
| | | 13. Garnet |
| | | 12. Moonstone |
| | | 11. Citrine |

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