

The

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2005

**Happy
New
Year!**



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WRITER'S BLOCK

Mike Moakley, SCAM Editor

Once again, another year is over — and a new one has begun. Occasions such as this (and birthdays...if you're 21 plus...) find us reflecting on the past and on the future. It's certainly no different for me.

I have just been notified that, like last year, I have been elected to serve on the NomElCom. Our committee is charged with the task of recruiting candidates, conducting nominations and holding the elections for the 2005 ExComm. If you are interested in holding office, or nominating someone for office, please inform one of the NomElCom members. May I also suggest that if you want to see changes made in the Space Coast Area Mensa, that you take advantage of this opportunity to do so?

Now, let's shift our attention to this newsletter. As we begin 2005, I would like to take this opportunity to make a few points.

Throughout 2004, I have introduced several changes to The SCAM, most of which are cosmetic in nature. Quite a few came about as part of my on-the-job learning experience. A few were also "trial and error", in some cases, with the accent on the "error". One major change, however, is the addition of Katherine Cochrane to our editorial staff. She is our Calendar Coordinator and Webmaster, and is doing an excellent job in both capacities.

In my opinion, Kat's most significant achievement thus far is the new online calendar. Not only does it bring our events to the Web, it can be instantly updated, unlike this print newsletter. It is a far more efficient way to keep you updated on our events. Yes, the times, they are a-changing.

Will The SCAM, then, become obsolete? Absolutely not! For starters, not everyone in our group has access to the Internet. Only by re-

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All submissions must be received by the Editor before the 10th of the month preceding publication. Please allow extra time for mailed submissions, which may be **typed** or **legibly handwritten**. Whenever possible, we prefer submissions via e-mail. They may be in **e-mail text** or any of most **word processing** formats. All submissions should be sent to the **Editor**, whose contact information appears above.

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taining the print newsletter will we fulfill our obligation to inform ALL our members of each month's SCAM events. It does, however, change the emphasis of this newsletter. While we will continue, as our bylaws mandate, to publish our calendar of events, as well as other official records and notices, I plan to put more emphasis on The SCAM being a forum of information and ideas on just about any topic of interest to our readers.

To this end, over the last few months, I have eliminated the old calendar grid, using the center pages for the entire calendar of events, thus freeing up two pages for our writers' use. In general, I want to bring out the best writing our group has to offer. This year, I would also like to publish new topics for your enjoyment. What will these topics be? Well, that's where you come in. I've stated on several occasions over the past year that this is your publication. If you would like to see a topic in print, why not write on that topic? Just about any subject will be considered.

While we are on the subject of writing for The SCAM, I wish to emphasize an important point, one which I cannot emphasize too strongly. Many of our published columns are opinion pieces. This is especially true of the three political columns that have run regularly since long before I took over as Editor. ***Here I would remind all readers that opinion pieces are just that: Opinions of the writer. Mensa has no opinions. Neither does the Space Coast Area Mensa. Mensans, however, do; thus, the opinion pieces.***

As Editor, my official column is Writer's Block—the column you are reading now. This column will never express my personal political views. As one of the political columnists, my column, From the Village Idiot, will always reflect my personal views, but NEVER has or will reflect any policy or position of The SCAM. Moreover, my column is subject to the same editorial policies that I apply to any other column. Please keep this in mind. I would also remind you that you are encouraged to write a rebuttal to any published opinion piece. It can be in the form of a "Letter to the Editor" or it can be a column...it is up to you.

Since the interests of our members are wide and varied, it is my policy to place as few restrictions as possible on subject matter. In general, the topic must be within the bounds of good taste. This does NOT mean, however, that an unpopular opinion will fall out of those bounds. Controversy is NOT equivalent to bad taste. So long as I am Editor, no opinion on any topic will ever be suppressed. On the other hand, good taste does dictate refraining from making personal attacks on any fellow Mensan—this I will rigorously enforce.

One final point. If you should ever have any complaint or concern about this newsletter or its contents, ***please contact me.*** My contact info is on Page Three of every issue. As Editor, I am responsible for this publication, so please give me the opportunity to resolve any such matters.

I look forward in the year ahead continuing as Editor of The SCAM. With your help, ours will be the best local group publication in all of Mensa.

Episode 57: It Takes Two to Tangelo

It should not have happened, but one thing is certain: it did happen. Defying the Cheesy Pun Defence League and the prison guards at Abu Ghraib, the Wabasso Triangle has struck again with another anatomically-correct episode:

Anthony Chianti, Licensed Private Eye and Indian River Community Pasta Detective, reporting:

So far, it was a miserable Thursday. I spent the entire morning putting in a few extra hours for the Fire Department – chasing down several suspected arsonists out on the barrier island.

I eventually got to the bottom of it – I told them I was pretty sure it wouldn't happen if the place wasn't called Set Alight Beach.

But the main question is, why am I doing this?

The bottom line, that's why, I'm broke again. Money is surely the root of all overtime. As you can see, the problem is not that I can't live on a buck-fifty a day, after all, most of the world does. No, the problem is that I have to rationalize it to myself just to keep my two-handed stranglehold around the neck of sanity.

It's not that I am short on ideas. It's just that, in a land of intellectual giants, my ideas are congenitally-deformed munchkins. Here is a great example – I can't believe that no one thought of it before: I plan to change my name to Pope Leo the Tenth, move to Vatican Avenue, Palm Bay, then sell indulgencies and annul marriages for a small fee.

The telephone brought my low earth orbit reverie back to ground zero.

Should I answer it? What if it's a bill collector? But what if it's a client?

I grabbed the phone: "You have reached the offices of Anthony Chianti, Licensed Pasta Detective. All our lines are busy right now helping other customers, please... "

"Mr. Chianti, is that you?" A frail old lady spoke. She sounds so sweet, perhaps she's lost her cat - at the moment I'll take any work I can get....

"Anthony T. Chianti, Licensed Private Eye and Indian River Community Pasta Detective speaking, but you can call me Anthony, how can I help you?"

"You can start by paying your property taxes, Mr. Chianti. This is Rose Douglas from the County... "

This was another one of those scary moments. Not as scary as when your proctologist suddenly starts calling you by your first name, but still pretty frightening.

“Beep... “ I slammed the phone down. That was the final straw: I was stressed, totally burned out, like that lasagna that stayed in the oven for two days after my rear axle went nova, resulting in my current daily affirmation:

“I am feeling relaxed and at peace and can control my emotions and the next time a part on my car starts emitting the Klingon death scream I WILL NOT TURN UP THE STEREO.”

That does it, if I don't get some serious R&R... Something was wrong somewhere, and for once it wasn't Detective Inspector “Raving” Ravioli of the Serious Pasta Crimes Squad breathing down my neck.

Hang on... it's 2.30 in the afternoon, and I haven't had breakfast yet, let alone lunch. So much for my current ideas on cereal monogamy.

That explains it - no food. My glucose is at the cleaners and my blood sugar is in bankruptcy court. On top of that, I was stuck on 17 Down, with no end in sight, no food in the house and a partially evacuated wallet.

It was a nice day for a walk to the store, but as I reached the front door the telephone rang again. I plodded back to my desk, just in time for the phone to stop.

Oh well, it was probably a bill collector anyway...

Again, just as I reached the front door, the phone rang. I walked back to my desk, a little faster this time. It stopped again.

I walked away, it rang. I turned round, it stopped. That happened twice.

This can mean only one thing: the laws of physics had broken down and the Wabasso Triangle has struck again. Exactly like the cosmic anomaly that happened here in Wabasso last week: As you know, beeswax, but Wednesday afternoon I caught one when it was waning.

Years of Pasta Detective training paid off. You learn to be patient in this game. I sat down and waited. Two minutes later it rang and I instantly grabbed the handset: “YOU have reached the offices of Anthony Chianti, Licensed Pasta Detective. All our lines are busy RIGHT NOW helping other customers, please...”

"Don't do it... "

"Who is this?"

"You can call me Dr Martin."

"Doctor of what?"

"All kinds of things really, but at the moment I work for Psychic Hot-line."

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"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah, so don't do it."

"Don't do what?"

"The thing that you were thinking!"

"What, going to the store?"

"No, before that."

"17 Down?"

"No, duh, the annulling marriages and selling indulgences, that thing."

"What? Who is this?:"

"This is Dr Martin – Dr. Martin Luther of Wittenberg Street, Wabasso. Believe me, don't even think about the indulgencies business, you don't want to go there. Things could get very complicated... "

Well, amazing but true, and it can only have happened here. That's about it for this month's update from the Wabasso Triangle.

Anthony Chianti, Indian River Community Pasta Detective, signing off.

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information about ETFs and the easiest is www.google.com . Just type in ETF and you will be inundated with all you need to know.

Unless mutual funds stop chasing customers away with high commissions, redemption fees and poor performance the ETFs are going to take a large portion of the investor funds.

*F*R*E*E investment letter www.mutualfundmagic.com Author of best seller "IF IT DOESN'T GO UP,DON'T BUY IT!" Never lose money in the market. Copyright 2005 Albert W. Thomas All rights reserved. Former 17-year exchange member, floor trader and brokerage company owner.*

For years the mutual fund industry has been going great guns taking peoples' money and for the most part doing a very lousy job of making a good return for the investor. The reason I say that is that 80% of them cannot meet the results of the Standard & Poor's 500 Index.

The S&P 500 is the most important 500 stocks of the New York Stock Exchange with a few others thrown in. If you buy any fund that is not composed of this index you are relying upon the fund manger to be able to weed out the poor stocks and buy the best ones. After all he is a "professional" and should know more than a monkey with a dart.

Having been an exchange member and floor trader I consider it rather easy to go thru the charts of 500 stocks to eliminate the weakest 200 or 300. There are even services that categorize all the NYSE stocks in 5 categories from best to worst if he doesn't want to do the work himself yet the largest majority of managers can't seem to make an average amount of money. By average I mean beat the average performance of all the stocks in the S&P500 Index.

When you go to the hospital do you want an average doctor operating on you? Mutual fund managers are financial doctors only they are operating on your wallet. You sure don't want your money with Mr. Average.

Funds are luring you to give them money because they have a lower expense ratio, a famous manager, a specialized category, a socially responsible portfolio or some other nonsense. Why do I say nonsense? Because it doesn't make any difference which fund you are buying as long as it is outperforming all the others.

There is one sure way to increase your return and that is not to pay commission. That is called a "load" in the industry and it might not show when you buy it, but be charged when you sell. No load funds do as well and better than load funds. Now many funds are adding redemption fees. It is an excess charge of a flat dollar amount to as much as 2% of your sale if you sell before a certain period of time. If their fund is declining they don't want you to take your money out so they put this additional charge as a way of keeping you in.

There is a new group of mutual funds that is called Exchange Traded Funds. There are hundreds of them and they are becoming the bane of the traditional mutual funds. These trade like stocks, can be bought or sold during the day with permanent stop loss orders in place. The commission charge at most discount brokers is \$15 or less. Their expense ratio runs close to zero so you also save money there. A win, win, win for the investor.

Mutual funds will discourage investors from buying these only because they don't want to lose your account. There are many sources of

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: This article appeared in Mensa World, Issue Three, 2004. Reprinted by permission.)

In this article, Dr Moon addresses how underachievement in gifted students may be curtailed.

It is important for parents to have a sense of partnership with schools. If a parent's gifted child is underachieving there is a problem to be solved. Problems like these can best be solved if all parties involved are working together. Educational programs that allow students to meet their educational needs can prevent chronic underachievement in gifted students. A key concept here is "locus of control." In fact, research supports the idea that a student's strong *internal* locus of control is more important than school, teacher or family.

Locus of control is a research construct that refers to a person's belief about what controls their life. If a person believes that they are in charge of their life, they are said to have an *internal* locus of control. If a person believes that other forces outside of themselves are in charge of their life, they are said to have an *external* locus of control. Research on this concept comes from a variety of disciplines and some of the factors associated with having a strong internal locus of control include "happiness," "success," and even longevity. People who have a weak sense of internal locus of control tend to attribute success to their own efforts, but attribute failure to the factors outside of themselves. People who have a strong internal locus of control, accurately recognize their own successes and failures and take responsibility for what went right and what went wrong.

Underachievers have an external locus of control and do not attribute *either* success or failure to internal causes. To achieve more internal locus of control, students should be taught to make realistic attributions and to learn from their failures. Of course, it will help if parents can assist their child in this endeavor rather than side with the child in blaming others for the child's failures. Students should be taught to be self-monitoring and to use self-instructional dialog to change their orientation to one that is more persistent and less helpless.

Children in the highest range of intellectual abilities may have the greatest difficulty with adjustment in the regular classroom. Over thirty years ago, researchers noticed that gifted children placed in regular classrooms sometimes regress to the achievement level of their non-gifted classmates. Boredom may set in and discipline problems can ensue. Proper classroom placement is a key element in helping the gifted underachiever.

Counseling can also help the gifted underachiever. Counseling need not take the form of in-depth psychotherapy but can help students focus upon their self-concept, while providing validating support for a gifted student's unique admixture of interests. Counseling can and should periodically involve the parents of the gifted child to help them better understand issues facing their child.

Parents should be encouraged to help their gifted child set their own goals, while avoiding such common mistakes as comparing the gifted child to siblings and non-gifted peers. I am reminded at how my own parents intuitively knew to treat my brother and me differently. For my athletically inclined brother, the rule was for him to do homework before doing basketball practice. For me, I was not permitted access to my pleasure reading books (mostly science fiction) until my homework was done. My parents never once tried to compare my brother's academic abilities to mine, nor did they compare my athletic abilities to my brother's.

Clearly it is better to prevent underachievement in gifted children than to remediate it. Helping a child to develop a strong internal locus of control is one of the best ways to prevent underachievement in gifted children. Putting gifted children together with gifted classmates is another way to help prevent underachievement. However, once signs of underachievement are present, significant and professional efforts will probably be needed to reverse the underachieving student's situation.

James Moon Ph.D., MBA, is a Clinical Psychologist and the Principal of the Vanguard School Foundation in Florida, a private co-educational international, non-profit school for learning disabled students. A member of American Mensa since 1971, Dr Moon is an internationally known author, speaker, and has previously held Professorships in both the medical and business administration faculties in various universities in the USA.

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Finally, you may notice that the font size in the website is a little larger than originally implemented. Several people asked to have this change made. If you still cannot read it comfortably, try setting the font size or background color in your browser's preferences to something you prefer. Or try a different browser.

An excellent new one is Mozilla's FireFox, available free for Windows, Mac and Linux from <http://www.mozilla.org/>. FireFox offers several advantages over Microsoft's Internet Explorer, including better security and the ability to suppress pop-up windows as well as working better with recent standards developments to display pages the way the webpage designer intended.

It is impossible to design webpages to please everyone or to even work as intended in every browser, but we do try our best to accommodate members' wishes. You might like to check out Mozilla's Thunderbird email client, too. I have been using it for several weeks now, and while there are still a few rough spots, it is not bad, and it is also free. Again, one of the advantages of this application is increased security.

Have a safe and happy New Year! See you next month.

Reminders

Calendar Deadline is the **8th** of the month preceding publication.

Newsletter Deadline is the **10th** of the month preceding publication.

Visit the new SCAM Website:
<http://spacecoastareamensa.org>

Happy New Year! One of your most important resolutions, if you haven't done it already, is to renew your Mensa membership. That can now be done online at the American Mensa Ltd. website: <<http://www.us.mensa.org>>.

Visit our local chapter's website at <<http://spacecoastareamensa.org>> for a printable copy of the calendar (in both landscape -- sideways on the page -- and portrait versions), and to participate in the new blog discussion group.

Just to remind those responsible for activities to be included in the calendar, any changes, additions or deletions need to be received by 5 p.m. on the 8th of the month to be included in the newsletter. Events can be sent to the calendar coordinator at <calendar@spacecoastareamensa.org> any time, but only those meeting the deadline will be in the newsletter and online printable PDF files.

The blog was inaugurated with a splash during December's "Coffee Etc. at House of Joe" when several of us did some live blogging. MacMAD, the local Macintosh Users Group, had their Christmas party at HoJ at the same time Coffee Etc. was there, and since there is considerable overlap among the groups' membership, both events were enhanced by some interaction at this event. Read about it in the blog, and see some examples of how the thing works as a discussion.

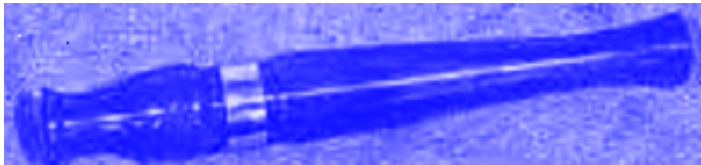
Essentially, someone (at this point, only the webmaster) starts a topic, and anyone may add comments to it. The number of comments is displayed below the topic. Anonymous posting is allowed; you don't have to leave your name or email address, although this can be required if we experience "trolls" who post offensive messages. Right now the blog is available to anyone who visits the site, but it could be moved to a members-only directory if that becomes necessary. Be sure to make your opinion known about what to do with it in the new poll in the blog.

Eventually we would like to make it possible for members to add new topics by sending a message to the blog by email, or by adding it using a form on the website. This will be implemented by the end of January, so watch for an announcement in the February newsletter. If it is available sooner, I will post a message on the site homepage, so members can email a request for the URL where instructions and/or the form will be posted. To prevent abuse by non-members, that page's URL will not be linked from any other pages. It's rather rudimentary security, but maybe better than nothing for discouraging casual vandals. Requests for the URL or any other comments about the site should be sent to <webmaster@spacecoastareamensa.org>.

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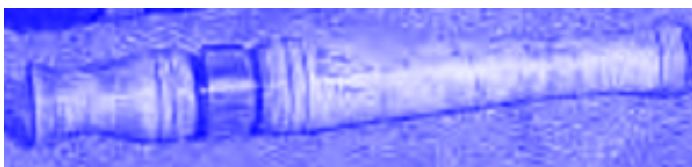
over a year ago, I described the duck-calling contest held each Thanksgiving weekend in Stuttgart, Arkansas. Now we will get into the heart of the matter, the duck calls themselves. First, a little history.

In 1935 it became illegal in the U. S. to use live decoys for duck hunting. Although artificial decoys and duck calls were used before then, the elimination of live decoys fostered the duck call industry. Rice production in the Grand Prairies of Arkansas soared in the early years of the last century with the mastering of the well-irrigation process around Stuttgart. Before introduction of combines to reap the rice, the cut and stacked rice provided a natural feast for the grain-eating birds and they learned where to find the banquet. Thus the connection between Stuttgart and ducks was born. Just as the ducks found a source of food waiting for them, hunters found the ducks, a source of food, waiting for them. During the depression, duck hunting provided sustenance for many families in the area.



The first duck-calling contest was held in 1936 and was won by Thomas E. Walsh using the traditional Native American technique of using his hands, lips, and throat. Every winner since then has used a manufactured duck call. Manufactured duck calls are made of wood, metal, polycarbonate, or acrylic.

The first patent for a duck call was issued in 1870. It was for a wooden model and duck calls were made only of wood for many years afterwards. One duck call patented in 1932 consisted of a duck call integral with a wooden decoy. The duck call was blown by the hunter through a rubber hose that extended to his blind. Originally made of plain wood, soon exotic and fancy wood began to be used such as ebony, cocobola, and mahogany. The turnings and shapes were modified to accentuate the grain and color of the woods. Some of the duck calls are so expensive, in the over \$500.00 range that they are more of collector's items than useful objects. Some collector's metal duck calls have



sold for over \$2500.00.

A duck call consists of two parts, a cylindrical barrel and the stopper. It is similar to a musical instrument, a woodwind. The barrel is turned on a lathe, or in the case of a synthetic material, it may be cast. The barrel gives the duck call its resonance, tone, and quality. Users claim that wooden barrels provide a softer, more mellow tone. There are no stops or fingering in the barrel.

The stopper contains the reed or reeds, a sound board, and a wedge. The reed, which can be either single or double, vibrates when blown just as it does in a clarinet but there is only one tone as the barrel is not tunable. The timbre, loudness, and duration are controlled by the hunter to make it sound like a duck. An interesting early model, c. 1932, was carved in the shape of a duck's head and neck. The hunter blew into the neck of the carving and a tongue inside the bill would vibrate.

There is a museum in Stuttgart that celebrates all the winners of the annual duck-calling contest and has several hundred duck calls on display. In a duck-calling contest, the contestant must reproduce four calls; hail, mating, feed, and comeback, all blown within 90 seconds. In addition to the mandatory duck calls used in the contest, hunters may include other calls in their repertoires such as greeting, alarm, and contentment.

Most duck calls are designed to imitate the sounds of a mallard. East coast ducks, canvasbacks, red heads, and scaup among others do not respond well to duck calls.



Making a Duck Call

EDITOR'S NOTE: J. T. was on vacation during the publication of this issue of The SCAM. This column, which originally appeared in the February 2003 issue, is being re-printed for your reading enjoyment.

“A lie told often enough becomes truth”
Vladimir Ilich Lenin

Every now and then, a Liberal bigwig will say something so outrageous that it sticks with me for a long time. Over the course of that time it will be repeated and reinforced in the media and by other liberals, until the slogan becomes a catch-phrase or a buzzword. Such words and phrases rarely have any foundation in truth, but they don't have to for a Liberal with complete media support. The old saying is just as true today as when said it.

I have listed here a few of these, in no particular order:

Diversity is Good! – Possibly the single most repeated buzzword in the Liberal lexicon is “Diversity”. Like all other Liberal codewords and phrases, it has become a mantra of the religion of Liberalism. One to which failure to toe the line of Liberal Orthodoxy is heresy, causing you to be forever cursed as a “bigot”, “racist”, or “homophobe” unless you cough up a large penance in a public arena.

Like most of the Left's orthodoxy, “Diversity” fails the test of its own definition. It is trumpeted as a philosophy wherein “all viewpoints have merit”. Of course, the orthodoxy insists that the fine print between the words “viewpoints” and “have” be micron-sized. Under close enough scrutiny, the fine print reads “... that agree wholly with ours...” For under any examination it is readily evident that policies and beliefs that do not conform to the Liberal Orthodoxy, such as Christianity, or the Boy Scouts refusals of homosexual scoutmasters or atheist members, cannot be admitted into the utopia of Diversity.

Such an example is currently found in California. Numerous lawsuits, all of which have failed, attempt to force the Scouts to accept lifestyles and beliefs that are anathema to the principles the organization was founded upon. For example, how can the Scouts accept atheists as members? The Scout oath states: “On my honor I will do my best to do my duty for God and my country.” Will they be forced to remove “God” from the oath, since by definition an atheist cannot swear to do his duty for God? Most certainly such would be attempted – just look at the lawsuit to remove “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance. Scouts also pledge to be “reverent” - something rather difficult for an atheist to do.

But while the Liberals are trying to force the Scouts to accept members, they are also trying to force California judges to cease any affiliation

with the Scouts, by virtue of a law expressly forbidding judges to be members of the Boy Scouts of America.

An interesting use of logic: to both argue for and against the First Amendment - protected freedom of association in regards to the same social organization.

The truth of the matter is that in practice the Liberal version of "Diversity" is nothing more than a method of discrimination – against what is traditionally considered the norm in America. Diversity emphasizes only physical attributes – race, gender, and religion – and does not promote that which is traditional – Christianity, marriage, the two-parent family, etc.

The best current example of the discriminatory nature of Liberal Diversity can be found in the case soon to be heard in the Supreme Court concerning the admissions policy at the University of Michigan. The University will grant 20 points to non-white applicants based solely on the color of their skin. In contrast, a perfect score of 1600 on the SATs will garner an applicant only 12 points. Diversity? Sorry, that's pure racial discrimination.

Can't We All Just Get Along? – Tolerance is prated about by the Left in a manner that is almost synonymous with Diversity. However, in tolerance they supposedly espouse the intellectual intent that they discarded under diversity. But again, like diversity, tolerance is a rather one-way concept.

Religious philosophies are one area where "tolerance" fails to live up to its name. In schools of all levels, Christian studies and principles are banned, while those of other beliefs are supported.

After 9/11, schools in California had an immersion day on Islam. Elementary school kids wore robes and burqas, adopted Moslem names, and were led in daily prayers by the teacher. These same schools denied the use of school facilities to Christian students for after-school meetings and worship on the grounds of "separation of church and state." Which, if either, is the violation of the First Amendment restriction that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"? So why are the two beliefs treated differently?

In the Senate, the majority of conservative nominees for the federal courts were denied the opportunity of a full vote of the Senate by the Democrat-led Senate Judiciary Committee. Yet nowhere is there mention of such power to a committee. It is the Senate as a whole that has the duty of advise **and** consent with respect to judicial appointment. To a Liberal Democrat (a redundant description in the majority of cases), bipartisanship means the Republicans give in to them.

Fairness – We continue to hear the old Liberal Democrat chestnut that President Bush's tax plan consists of only "tax cuts for the wealthy" and that it isn't fair that low-income Americans don't get nearly as much from it. We even hear that it is unfair because the people who don't pay taxes at all don't get a tax cut! The Dems, as usual, offer instead a "tax rebate" for all Americans, even those who paid nothing in the first place.

It is a shame that the members of the leftist media have suborned

their duty of reporting the facts in a fair and unbiased manner to their need of forwarding their personal socio-political agendas. Their failure to confront the Liberal Democrats who rant on about “tax cuts for the rich” with a few questions of devastatingly simple logic shows how ethically bankrupt they both are. A simple question like: “Senator, you are opposing these tax cuts because you say they are for the rich. Wouldn’t it be more accurate to say that they are for anyone who actually pays taxes? And, when you consider that the IRS reports that the top 50% of all wage earners (*those who earned more than \$26,000!*) paid 96.1% of all income taxes in 2000, don’t you think that giving them a break is the fair thing to do?” Don’t hold your breath waiting for the Dan Rathers of the media to ask that one.

Spirit of the Law – Nobody proposes more laws than the liberals in power. And very few of those proposed do anything more than restrict the rights of everyone... except those who are counted among their minority and special interest groups. A shooting someplace? Propose gun control/ban/confiscation law 24,001. Some minority member get assaulted by a white? Propose one more “hate crime” law that fails to provide “equal protection under the law”.

Yep, they love to pass new laws. Too bad they fail to abide by them themselves. What’s that, you have a 20 year-old law that mandates that all ballots must be tallied within a given period, and you can’t make it? A Liberal simply files suit to ignore that particular law. Your senator is so far behind in his re-election bid that he can’t possibly win, so he drops out of the race 11 days after the latest date state law mandates he can be replaced on the ballot. Do the Liberal thing: ignore the law and replace him with someone who can win. After all, they really didn’t mean it when they passed that law, did they? They probably meant it to be two weeks later.

I Feel Your Pain – Liberals love to act concerned. What better way to seem caring than to claim empathy with your audience? Trouble is, their empathy can’t stand up to a passing glance, no less intense scrutiny.

Empathy is the ability to put yourself in the other guy’s shoes, to understand what he feels. Bill Clinton told the poor and working class, “I feel your pain.” How? Bill Clinton had never held a public sector job in his life, had never in his life had to go without. So from whence comes the empathy? Can anyone truly believe that Ted Kennedy has any concept of what low and middle income people go through in their daily lives? The man has enjoyed the wealth, prestige and protection of his family name since birth.

Can any of the 26 Senate and 71 House millionaires actually have a clue as to what the “regular people” go through every day to put food on the table? Can individual legislators making \$155,000 a year, with all the perks and benefits thrown in, know what Americans feel and experience, when their constituents must make do on a median family income of \$43,000? Can those with the power understand what it is to never have it?

They should live as we do, under all the laws, liabilities and limitations they impose on us. THEN they’ll know our pain.

Well, yet another year has just begun. This means, among other things, that pinnacle of the football season, the Superbowl, cannot be too far behind. Our conservative brethren would have us believe that the Superbowl represents the ultimate in family entertainment. At the outset, I must confess to being a bit biased, for I am not a sports fan, much less a football fan.

I was rather amused to hear about last year's game, particularly its halftime show featuring Janet Jackson's "Wardrobe Malfunction" as well as the resultant stir it caused. More amusing, however, was the moralizing by the conservative pundits claiming that Janet's exposed mammary somehow desecrated the great family event. I also learned that during the game, ads were run for Viagra, Levitra and Cialis, the three most touted medicines prescribed to treat erectile dysfunction. What was not clear to me (as I did not see the game) was whether the ads were shown before or after halftime. I suppose if the ads had been shown afterwards, the viewer would be able to determine whether he had a need for the advertised medication. Curiously, I never heard or read of any conservatives protesting the pill ads.


Strangely enough, however, I do find the present course of professional sports becoming increasingly immoral, albeit not for the same reasons. One case in point: upcoming plans to build a new football stadium in New York City. According to a recent Washington Post article, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg proposes a massive taxpayer subsidy for a new \$1.4 billion stadium for the New York Jets. This is the same city that cannot afford to properly educate its children or provide affordable housing for the 25% of its population that live below the poverty line.

Bob Herbert, an Op-ed contributor to the New York Times, observes: "We learned from a page-one story in last Thursday's Times that pupils at Public School 63 in the South Bronx have to take their gym classes in the school's lobby" (1). In his same column, Herbert also notes the sports section of the same issue covers Bloomberg's proposal to help build the new Jets stadium. I guess our national passion for sports does not include introducing sports to underprivileged students.

According to the Washington Post, "But grand vision comes married to grand cost. New York City, which faces near-perpetual fiscal problems, could end up paying close to \$4 billion to give flesh to this vision. ... Neighborhood residents complain, loudly, that the development offers too few apartments for middle- and working-class New Yorkers. ... And the City and state could wind up paying \$600 million to help the billionaire owner of the New York Jets construct the most expensive football stadium in the United States" (2).

The true obscenity here is that the sporting world, in keeping with the

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 ne cannot help but notice that the Bush Administration tends to keep its cards close to the vest as it makes policy, thus necessitating a fair amount of speculation as to how a stated goal might be accomplished. Such being the case, last month, in my “*From the Village Idiot*” column, I speculated as to how the upcoming Social Security crisis might be solved, given the declarations of President Bush, as reported in the November 5, 2004 *Orlando Sentinel*, shortly after the news of his recent reelection. According to the same article that I used as source material for last month’s column, President Bush asserted the following:

1. The President supported a plan that would put part of the funds withheld for Social Security at the disposal of the worker to set up a private account that, he maintains, will yield a higher return than the present trust fund.
2. The President states that the payroll taxes will not be increased to correct the Social Security crisis.
3. Social Security benefits will not be reduced.

One member responded that my speculation was preposterous, and that my column should, therefore, not have been published in a Mensa publication such as The SCAM. Thus, I am an Idiot in search of a Village. I come to you with this question: Given the information above, and the President’s declarations, how might the Bush Administration solve the Social Security crisis? On this question, I seek your written feedback: it can be a “letter to the editor” or a column – your choice. **Let’s hear from you!**

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rest of Corporate America continues to assert that maximum profits are the absolute right of the private sector, but the public sector must bankrupt itself in participating in the expenses necessary to produce those profits. I am certain most of New York’s taxpayers will never be able to afford to go to a football game in this new stadium they will be forced to help build. If ever one needed a reason to boycott the Superbowl, I could not think of a better reason than the above example of raping the working class for the benefit of Billionaires’ Row.

Sources:

1. “Feed the Billionaires, Starve the Students”, Bob Herbert, *New York Times*, November 15, 2004, page A21.
2. “On New York’s Far West Side, Rebirth or Waste of Money?”, Michael Powell, *Washington Post*, November 26, 2004, page A03.

BELATED HOLIDAY CHEER

Like a hangover after the party, the chore of writing thank-you notes inevitably follows the season of giving and receiving. Here are a few belated expressions of appreciation for gifts that we can all feel happy about:

-To Congressman Mike Ross (Democrat-Arkansas), we thank you for spending \$5 million of our tax money on refurbishing bath houses in Hot Springs. Considering that town's reputation as a proto-Las Vegas, we can only wish what happened in Hot Springs got subsidized in Hot Springs. ¹

-To Senator Ted Stevens, (Republican-Alaska), we thank you for spending \$500,000 of our tax money to develop a Nordic skiing training center in your home state. Winning more Olympic medals in this sport, where Americans have historically suffered the agony of defeat, is certainly a compelling national priority, right up there with providing adequate Kevlar body armor and ammunition for our troops. ¹

-And to all the members of the House of Representatives, in addition to your continuing inability to control pork-barrel spending, we thank you for voting yourselves a \$4000 pay increase in the middle of the night. It is true that the 27th amendment to the U.S. Constitution prevents this pay raise from taking effect until the new Congress convenes. This law, which was intended as a disincentive for Congress to raise its own pay, seems to be undermined by the continuing reelection of many House members-for-life. Included in this group is our own Dave Weldon, who broke his promise to impose term limits that he made in 1994 (Remember the *Contract on America?*). ²

SPEAKING OF BROKEN PROMISES

In an effort to boost manpower, the Army has imposed a “stop-loss” program. What this means is that soldiers who have completed their contractual obligation to the government of the United States are retained in the military indefinitely.

Additionally, the Army is recalling numerous individuals who were honorably discharged years ago. And, tours of duty within the combat zone have been extended beyond the promised one-year limit.

Instead of being honest, admitting a defective strategy, and stating the true shortfall of troops, our government is demanding more from those who have already given their fair share. This is sort of like the proverbial dead-beat relative, who having once been taken in and fed, repeatedly appears on the door step seeking lodging and a meal. Certainly, conservatives can feel outrage when someone seeks a perpetual handout.

The author offers the following solution: Hold a national referendum on the continuation of the war in Iraq. If the measure fails, all American troops are withdrawn from the combat zone within 30 days, all stop-loss measures are terminated, and all reserve and guard units in theater are

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returned stateside and demobilized.

Anyone who votes in favor of the referendum enlists themselves for the duration. (This is not an original idea, it was proposed by the noted architect Frank Lloyd Wright back in 1932.)³

Better yet, anyone voting in favor of the current war would be required to enlist their own children and grandchildren when they come of age. The measure would also repeal any tax breaks for gas-guzzling SUVs, and impose a 10% gas tax to fund the no-bid, cost-plus contracts that the Pentagon believes are essential to conducting the war.

BECAUSE WE'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT "FAMILY VALUES" LATELY

Item: The Fox network, whose "fair & balanced" news division is the oracle of the modern conservative movement, is contesting the Federal Communications Commission's fine of \$1.18 million. Apparently, a Fox broadcast of the program "Married by America" in April 2003 involved nudity, strippers, and something to do with whipped cream. (Unfortunately, the author must admit that he missed this notable "fair & balanced" offering from the finest creative minds in the television industry.)⁴

The author has a fail safe suggestion to combat the toxic sludge Fox and its sister networks are serving us: It is commonly known as the on/off switch.

AN UPDATE

In a follow-up to "Silence is Golden," which appeared in the September 2004 edition of *The SCAM*, former U.S. Park Police Chief Teresa Chambers' appeal of her dismissal was rejected by the Federal Merit System Protection Board. Chief Chambers had sought relief on the basis of whistleblower protection. Further legal action in this case is expected.

AND A CORRECTION

In the article, "Ad Astra...", which appeared in the December 2004 edition of *The SCAM*, this author committed an error. The X-15 crash that claimed the life of Pilot Michael Adams actually occurred in November 1967.

Notes & Sources:

1 "A Pork Festival," *TIME*, December 6 2004.

2 "Congressional Pay Raise Scam," *Taxpayers for Common Sense*, <http://www.taxpayer.net>.

3 Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography*.

4 "Fox calls for court review of indecency standards," *Florida Today*, December 5, 2004, p.17A.

For latecomers, "FLR" pertains to how some of the author's conservative friends fondly refer to this column- "Fallacious Leftist Rantings."

ValenTime RG on the Gulf



February 11-13, 2005
(3 p.m Friday - noon Sunday)
Holiday Inn, 1020 Hwy 98 E.
Destin, Florida

*You loved us last year -
come love us again!*

What better place to be in February than a warm beach on the Gulf of Mexico? The Holiday Inn had minimal damage from Hurricane Ivan (The Terrible) and is running at full capacity. Room rates are based on double occupancy: Inland view \$73 per night; partial Gulf view \$85 per night; Gulf front \$105 per night. Phone 850-837-6181, toll free 877-837-6181, FAX (850)-837-1523 and tell them to give you the Mensa rate.

Lots of good stuff planned to sweeten your life! Like our famous Chocolate Orgy, a Double Decker Hearts Tournament, Improvisation, provocative speakers, good food, and hospitality, hospitality, hospitality.

Registration is \$35.00 per person for the whole weekend if paid before Feb 1, \$37.50 Feb. 1-10, \$40.00 each at the door, or \$15.00 per person for a single day. Cash and checks accepted. Sorry, no credit cards. Make checks payable to: Northwest Florida Mensa.

For the latest update and program info, registration form, and pictures go to our website: www.nwflorida.us.mensa.org.

Name(s) _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Address _____

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

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

ExComm Meeting Minutes

November 14, 2004, Continued.

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the vote on the email ballot: Moved, H. L. Moore, Seconded, George Patterson and Joe Smith, That the Executive Committee appoint Clara Woodall-Moran, J. T. Moran and Michael Moakley to the Nominations and Elections Committee for the 2005 election. Passed. FOR- Moore, Patterson, Smith; Kirschten and Leichtling not voting." This was preceded by an Email of Nov. 15 requesting ExComm members to move, second, and vote. The appointment of Clara, J.T. and Mike was briefly discussed on Oct. 31, and then not acted upon in the Nov.14 meeting. Mea culpa from the RecSec who should probably do a better job managing the agenda. Also, it will be raised at the next meeting as to how the ExComm ought to deal

Ring in the new! Hope your new year is a great one! At last month's AMC meeting at the Coronado Springs Resort in Walt Disney World, a Planning and Review Committee was established to evaluate the executive director and to poll the AMC on perceptions of how American Mensa is functioning. National Publications Guidelines were adopted. Central Alabama Mensa's bid to host the 2007 AG in Birmingham was accepted. MindGames 2006 will be hosted by Oregon Mensa in Portland. The core committee for the 2006 World Gathering (<http://WG06.us.mensa.org>) was approved. For more details on this AMC meeting, go to the Mensa website and click on "member resources."

Scott Rainey, RVC 9, and Marghretta McBean, RVC1, took many photos at the Coronado Springs Resort. Go to: <http://www.or.us.mensa.org/pix/2004q4/> to see what this venue looks like. Plan to be there in 2006 at the World Gathering!

Speaking of unusual gatherings, this one sounds fascinating. Borderline Mensa hosts the Colloquium, "Earth in Mind: Fueling the Future" on March 4-6, 2005, in Tucson, Arizona. If you've been thinking about the purchase of a hybrid vehicle or an energy-saving home, well qualified experts in the sustainable energy field will tell you what you need to consider when making these purchases. To learn details or to register, go to <http://colloquium.us.mensa.org>. Registration is \$150 for members and \$200 for non-members through mid-February. This weekend will give you a glimpse into the future!

Coming attractions for the Florida region:

ValenTime, Feb. 11-13, Northwest Florida's RG on the white sand beaches of the Panhandle, www.nwflorida.us.mensa.org/valentime.html for info.

MindGames, April 15-17, hosted by our very own Tampa Bay Mensa, Double Tree Hotel-Tampa Westshore Airport. Registration is \$65 to 4/1. Send registrations to MindGames 2005, 1229 Corporate Drive W, Arlington, TX 76006-6103.

FloRanGe '05-Suite Mayhem, Broward Mensa's RG over Memorial Day weekend, May 27-30, Tampa Bay Mensa's traditional spot on the calendar. Since that group is doing MindGames, Broward Mensa is hosting the 3-day RG in Fort Lauderdale. Can't miss a chance to party! Contact Robin Rhea, 954.575.1639, robinrhea@bellsouth.net for information.

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<http://wg06.us.mensa.org>

The ExComm met at the Cocoa Public Library on Sunday, November 14, 2004. Called to order at 4:08 pm by LocSec Sam Kirschten.

Members present: Sam Kirschten, Joe Smith, and George Patterson.

Suzanne Leichtling and Helen Lee Moore were unable to attend.

Welcome guests: There were no guests, welcome or otherwise.

Minutes for the October 31, 2004 meeting were approved as circulated by Email. Moved by Joe, unanimous vote. It is expected that the published version will correspond.

Officer Reports:

Treasurer: It was noted that Helen had circulated the account balances as of Nov. 14 by Email to all ExComm members.

Member-at-Large: Joe reported that he had received an Email communication from the Ronald McDonald, son of the founder of McDonald's. He is a Mensa member, currently splitting his time between Tampa and Melbourne. He asked to be placed on the newsletter mailing list as he was interested in attending some events. It was moved that Joe send him a free copy of the newsletter and inform him that he could subscribe for \$10 per year, or join SCAM and receive it free. Passed by acclamation.

Committee Reports:

RG Treasurer: Helen's report via Email was as follows: Funds in RG checking account \$209.30. All registration and meal fees have been refunded, all expenses paid, and all receipts collected. If another RG is planned within one year, I would suggest leaving the \$200.00 hotel refund in the RG checking account. If not, I recommend it be returned to the General Fund.

Proctor Coordinator: Helen reported via Email that one candidate was tested on Oct. 13. There were no other committee reports.

Old Business: Sam observed that the status of the NomElComm (Nominations and Elections Committee) was still in doubt since the proposed members were not present. (See RecSec comments below.)

New Business: none. Joe moved to adjourn at 4:15 pm, passed by unanimous vote. The next meeting of the ExComm is scheduled for Sunday, January 9, 2005, at 4:00 pm at the Cocoa Public Library. This is to be preceded by 15 minutes (i.e., 3:45) by a meeting of the RG committee which intends to close the books for the 2004 non-RG.

Recording Secretaries post-meeting comments. The status of the NomElComm referred to above in Old Business is in fact settled. An Email sent by Helen to all ExComm members on Nov. 17 reads, in part, as follows: ". . . I've notified the NomElComm of their appointment so that they can get started finding a slate of candidates. . . . Let the next set of minutes reflect

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