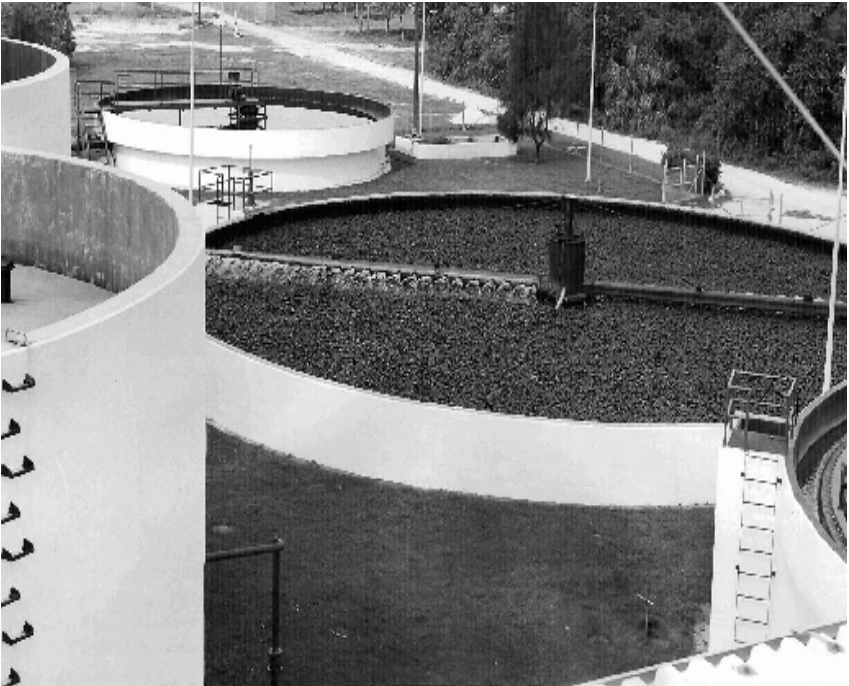


The

SCAM

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In this Issue:

We continue the discussion of the real meaning of the Declaration of Independence. This month, we focus on its present-day implications. As with all opinion pieces, readers are invited to submit responses for publication.

All submissions must be received by the Editor before the 10th of the month preceding publication. Please allow extra time for mailed submissions, which may be **typed** or **legibly handwritten**. Whenever possible, we prefer submissions via e-mail. They may be in e-mail text or any of most **word processing** formats. All submissions should be sent to the **Editor**, whose contact information appears on Page 2.

Page Three

Mike Moakley, Editor

Volunteers...Volunteers...Volunteers! Groups such as ours cannot function without...you guessed it...volunteers. A quick look on Page Two will instantly reveal that we are badly in need of volunteers. A closer look will show that this need is even more critical than is readily apparent. *Hint:* See how many times an individual's name appears more than once. Anyone who is interested (I *know* you're out there...) should contact any member of the ExComm (Page Two). As for me, I'm looking for a few good writers to *volunteer* their views.

For my volunteers in print, both present and future, I would like to bring up a subject that all of us should have at least some working familiarity, copyrights. Since I am not a lawyer and do not even pretend to know the nuances of copyright law, what follows is a layman's familiarity with copyrights as they apply to us.

The SCAM is a copyrighted work. Everything you see on these pages, except for those works bearing individual copyrights, are the property of the Space Coast Area Mensa. Those items bearing their own copyrights belong to the copyright holder (usually the author). In the case of the former, other Mensa publications are permitted to use items published here. The exception, of course, is the individually copyrighted work—permission is needed from the author.

If you belong to another group and wish to reprint anything from The SCAM, please contact me for permission (as Editor, I make those decisions). If you wish to reprint an individually copyrighted

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The SCAM sells classified ad space. SCAM members, non-commercial, no charge. Others: \$20 full page; \$10 half-page; \$5 quarter-page per month, we offer discounts for multiple insertions, and we can help with layout and design.

Subscriptions: SCAM members, included in dues; others, **\$10** for 12 issues.

This is in response to LocSec George Patterson's plea in the July issue to write something, anything, for God's sakes, in response to his May column. Well, George, I intended to at the time, but you somehow got lost in the shuffle, so you are now hereby resurrected.

George, you asked in the May issue if "due to it having been" is correct. No, it is not. You mentioned having seen the subject discussed somewhere and you forgot which side won. I don't think anybody won; everybody stayed stubborn, adamant and unyielding -- but it's "due to its having been," the "its" being possessive. You saw this in a Mensa editor thing on the Internet.

I always enjoy your lighthearted column and I missed it last month. So keep up the good shirk, er, work.

You, too, Mike! I like your righteous indignation!

Why don't we gut the treasury and have a big party -- where we can smoke? Is there such a thing -- a private party at a public place where we can smoke? No, I guess not. A pity.

—Joyce Megginson Kircher

Editor's note: Last month's issue ran two guest columns that originally appeared in another local Mensa newsletter. The guest columns elicited two responses—one for each article.

Iwould like to respond to John F. Snyder's opinion piece in the Summer, 2006 Flamenco entitled "Islam and Freedom". While many people including myself agree with most of what he says about Islam, it is very critical that we Americans develop the best possible approach when dealing with Muslims so as to reduce terrorism around the world rather than to fuel the flames of hatred between Muslims and non-Muslims. In his last paragraph Mr. Snyder points to the need for solutions when he states that free nations need to "recognize Islam for what it really is and adjust their policies and practice accordingly." Many people in recent years have studied the Koran and conclude that radical Islam can only and must inevitably result. They either implicitly or explicitly suggest a militant posture. Hopefully, we all agree that our goal is to reduce Muslim terrorism and are willing to look at all possible solutions based on current world realities.

One-fifth of the world's population is Muslim and this proportion

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Until the advent of refrigeration there were few methods of preserving foods that didn't utilize salt. Drying and smoking existed, but even those methods often utilized salt in the process. Think of hams, pastramis, and sausages among the meats; cod, smoked salmon, and caviar among the fishes; sauerkraut, pickles, and kimchees among the vegetables; and cheeses, salted butter, and yogurt among the dairy products. The list is literally endless.

Before the industrialization of the production of salt, most salt was derived from salt springs and salty oceans and seas. The need for salt to preserve meats and vegetables was so great that many communities were

Locations such as Salzburg and Halstadt in Germany (any city or town name in Germany that contains saltz or hals in its name is a site of a salt works)

established where salt could be readily obtained. The names of these communities indicated that they were a source of salt and continue so until today.

Locations such as Salzburg and Halstadt in Germany (any city or town name in Germany that contains saltz or hals in its name is a site of a salt works), Salt Cay in the Caribbean, and Salsomaggiore in Italy are examples. The control of the sources of salt was important enough that wars were fought over possessing them. The preserved salted products that we eat now are but a pale simulation of the original salt-preserved foodstuffs. We depend on refrigeration, canning, and vacuum packing for preservation but retain enough salt to remind us of the original taste, but often not enough to preserve the food.

In warmer and drier climates salt was produced by evaporation of salt water from oceans or salt springs. In more northern and colder and wetter climates the same types of sources were utilized but evaporation was made in pans heated with wood, and later coal, fires. In those northern climes, the availability and cost of providing the fuel mitigated against the production of salt. Salt was produced most cheaply in the warmer and drier climates.

Evaporation of sea water and salt-spring water did not eliminate the other dissolved constituents in the water. Thus, sea salt and salt spring salt was rarely pure white. The color and the taste of evaporated salt depended upon the source of the water and the beds in which it was dried. The salt water was dried down to the beds of the

salt flats, usually an impermeable clay bottom, some of which was scraped up along with the salt. In pan-dried salt, the influence of the drying beds was non-existent as the salt was dried in metal pans.

There is one way a pure, white, clean salt was, and is, produced. Where conditions allowed, sea water or salt spring water is evaporated in large beds producing a strong brine. Additional sea water or salt spring water is then admitted to the drying bed. This process is repeated annually until the brine becomes saturated with salt and salt crystallizes out on top of the brine as pure white crystals leaving most of the other minerals behind. This is known as fleur de sel or salt flowers.

Although in the past the admixture of other ingredients was considered detrimental to the quality of the salt, it is

In our atomic era, salt caverns are used to store atomic waste.

now considered to be advantageous. Today, as in the past, different sea salts are preferred for different uses. Fleur de sel, which has the least impurities, or desirable admixtures, depending on whether you are in the 17th or 21st century is often considered to be the finest sea salt. In some areas of the world large accumulations of salt are at or near the surface or in deep buried salt domes. These are the vast remains of dried-out oceans. Where near the surface the rock salt is mined as is any other mineral and has been throughout recorded history. The caverns so produced, after most of the salt is removed, is sometimes used as a tourist attraction, a concert hall, or for storage. In our atomic era, salt caverns are used to store atomic waste. Now, most salt is produced from deep buried salt domes. Hot water is pumped into the salt dome and the dissolved salt is pumped out. As these salt domes are almost pure salt, no further processing is generally needed for the commercial uses of salt. For the relatively small amount of salt used as a food stuff, the brine is filtered before being evaporated, making it a pure, white product.

For a brief description and pictures of some of the varieties of table salt from the common to the most exotic see Salt in the February 2005 edition of SCAM.

Some of my friends have heard my stories of infamous trips – one to Connecticut, in which there was a train wreck, a tornado, an earthquake, and a fire, and the other to a training course in South Florida – cancelled once due to a hurricane, the second attempt cancelled when the hotel caught fire. Well, I just returned from another such incident-filled trip. I was sent to Washington, DC for a training class and they experienced the worst flooding in the last 300 years (IRS building among others are badly damaged) and, there was a hazmat spill across the street from the building in which the course was held. The hazmat spill happened the last day of class. As we went to lunch we noticed a lot of police cars and fire and rescue vehicles were scattered all around. We were back in the classroom for about 5 minutes when we were informed that we could no longer use the front exit (yes, the one I had just used) due to the hazardous conditions. I've never found out what was spilled. I do have photographs of the emergency vehicles and all – I took them just before leaving for the Airport.

And, the airport is the segue that qualifies this article to being in the reader's corner. I had a lot of time on my hands and nothing much to do so I went into a bookstore – and purchased the new Stephanie Plum book by Janet Evanovich called: "Twelve Sharp". I hit some of the funniest parts while waiting in for the plane and managed, with my laughing to clear out a lot of people who had been crowding me in the waiting area.

Poor Stephanie has been plagued by having two very eligible bachelors chasing after her. One had been dangerous but was now taming a bit and the other is nearly a man of mystery. The man of mystery, however, has attracted the attention of an identity thief (stalker, really) who attempts to take over the life of her man of mystery and then attempts to kill him. Stephanie, in her usual manner, gets caught up in the middle of it all. The stalker believes he needs her to complete his destiny (his destiny to replace the man of mystery) and at the time trying to do her job as a bounty hunter. This job of bounty hunting is not one at which she excels but she manages to get by. Stephanie is actually getting better at the bounty hunting.

Stephanie manages to bring in a man who swears he will jump from the second floor of an atrium in a mall (and then is afraid to get off of the wall), manages to take down a 70 year old woman who owns a sex toy shop, and manages to blow up only one car – this time it was not even her own car. Stephanie has a food fight with another bounty hunter (who also had slept with Stephanie's husband – mak-

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With regard to the minutes, as printed in the July 2006 issue of *The SCAM*, it is stated the audit committee was, at that time, remiss in their duties since the audit had not yet been completed. There was an additional note – this lack of an audit was not of any importance as there was no change in treasurer. Having been on the Executive Committee several times and Local Secretary more than once, I found the comment very interesting.

The Bylaws of Space Coast Area Mensa, states about the audit committee:

“An Audit Committee of three members shall be appointed by the Executive Committee each year whose duty it shall be to audit the Treasurer’s account at the close of the fiscal year and report in the following issue of the newsletter. The term of the Audit Committee expires upon the issuance of the final audit report to the Executive Committee.”

There are standing rules indicating when the Audit committee must be seated, who is allowed to be a member of the audit committee and such items but in no case does it state there is no need for an audit if there is no change in the seated officer.

Perhaps the seated ExComm is not aware that failure to follow such requirements of the Bylaws leaves the group open to audits and investigations from the National Office. The National Office personnel read the Newsletter and are aware when these sorts of mistakes or omissions are made. A pattern of failure to follow the Bylaws and Standing Rules can cause the removal of the Charter. All funds in the local chapter would have to be turned over to the National Office and the memberships would be transferred to another local chapter. Some might believe it is not necessary to follow the Bylaws unless there is a complaint but it seemed to me to be easier to follow the Bylaws and not give anyone a reason to complain.

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ing him now an ex-husband) and gets the worst of it. It was the food fight that got me going.

This book is classic Stephanie Plum and worth the read – if you are a fan of hers, you will enjoy it as much as I did.

Dou know what they are. Little rat like animals that become so over populated that they decide to have a party on the other side of the valley. Everyone joins in and they start running. Unfortunately to get to the other side it is not wise to head directly there because there is a thousand foot precipice in their path. Oh well.

We have our own lemmings. We call them investors. They feed on the good news about how well the economy is doing. Unfortunately, how well the economy is doing and how the price of their stocks and mutual funds are doing are two different things.

The lemmings, oops, stockholders, have been taught to believe all the good news and buy when the talking heads tell them. Brokers and financial planners know so much more than the lemmings? They should not be questioned. Lemmings, there I go again, investors should give their money to the brokers and let them do anything they want with it. That's what Wall Street says. Look at the millions they are making.

Right, but what about your account? What happened to it a few short years ago in 2000? You haven't forgotten have you? Those who ran with the pack last time went over the cliff and lost most of their money. Some of the lemmings decided they would not play in the stock market where they could lose everything. These smart ones chose to invest in real estate and have been doing very well. Nothing down or almost nothing down, get a low interest mortgage and watch the home values rise. Sell out for a big profit?

Real estate never comes down. Well, hardly ever and then not very much. Nothing to worry about here. Unfortunately, it seems interest rates are rising. Many of these homes and lots of the speculative ones have been bought with interest only mortgages. Many are due for upward adjustment this year. Suddenly that \$600 payment could become \$735. It will be a shock their bank account did not expect. Looks like another cliff for the lemmings.

House prices can't possibly be coming down. Let's hope not. Then tell me why the stocks of some of the largest home builders in the nation have fallen 50%. Do they know something the lemmings don't? Because most late comers to various investments whether it is stocks, housing, tulip bulbs, south sea islands, whatever almost never seem to recognize when the top has been reached and it is time to cut and run. Once the mind is set it takes a Caterpillar tractor to run over it to make a change. The professional investor will recognize a market top and get out with a small loss. Joe Sixpack

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is growing. Even though some people may desire it, there is no ethical or practical way of eliminating all Muslims and all existing copies of the Koran. We are left, then, to deal appropriately with Islam, which most people recognize as a religion. Let's also recognize the following:

1. All religions have fanatics.
2. Many religions have sacred texts with passages that should not be taken literally or otherwise misinterpreted, lest the religions lead their followers down the wrong paths.
3. Officially, most Muslim leaders do not believe in terrorism, therefore there must exist theological ways to handle troublesome texts in the Koran.
4. The majority of Muslims are not terrorists even though they may have critical views of American foreign or even domestic policies.
5. Christians conducted unjust crusades against Muslims and Jews a thousand years ago in the name of their religion. This is not to suggest that all religions are equally bad, but that all religions need to progress over time.
6. There are terrorists that are not Muslim; this suggests that there is definitely a component to terrorism that is unrelated to Islam in the first place.

With an open mind, consider the following steps to mitigate Muslim hatred and terrorism.

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doesn't understand that a small loss is preferred to a big loss.

Now is the time to reevaluate your portfolio whether it is stocks, mutual funds or housing as the market is changing. Don't be one of the lemmings.

Al Thomas' best selling book, "If It Doesn't Go Up, Don't Buy It!" has helped thousands of people make money and keep their profits with his simple 2-step method. Read the first chapter and receive his market letter for 3 months at no charge at www.mutualfundmagic.com and discover why he's the man that Wall Street does not want you to know. Copyright 2006 All rights reserved.

1. Any retribution for terrorist activity should only be directed at the perpetrators, not towards Islam, Muslims or Muslim countries.
2. Look at grievances of poor people in poor nations around the world and strive to revise policies that may cause just opposition to our country. Although America may not be to blame for their situation, are there things we could do to help poor nations regardless of their culture, religion or type of government?
3. Recognize that developing democratic governments may take varying amounts of time for various cultures. Centuries ago, our European ancestors lived under tyrannical kings. We are very fortunate to have had forefathers who dared to be the first to attempt the democratic “experiment” and also fortunate that there was strong, grass roots support for independence at that time.
4. Make the most of any commonality we may have with Muslims. Muslims believe Jesus to be one of their prophets. American Christians, currently a significant and influential part of our population, should work with Muslims to follow Jesus’ teachings for the advantage of both sides, rather than emphasizing their differences. Let’s not focus on Jihad but encourage Muslim moderates to work with us towards common goals.
5. Recognize that all religions need to incorporate valid, modern thinking and science, because all truth is God’s truth. No ancient, sacred text speaks specifically and completely to life in the 21st Century. Progressive revelation (God’s revelation of himself and his truth over time) should apply and has applied to all religions in one way or another. There are both successes and failures for Christians and Muslims on this point.

On May 8, 2006, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the president of Iran, wrote an 18-page letter to President Bush. He questioned how Bush, as a Christian, could carry out various policies. Mr. Ahmadinejad described his understanding of Christianity and stated that he and our president should be able to come to some agreements based on their mutual acceptance of Jesus’ teachings. I understand that Bush’s primary concern regarding Iran is the nuclear issue and that a response to Mr. Ahmadinejad’s letter may not be appropriate. But I must confess a curiosity as to how Bush could answer all the points raised in this letter in a sincere, fully responsive way.

In conclusion, Mr. Snyder’s suggestion that enlightened Muslims “remove themselves and their families from” their Muslim environ-

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ment is unrealistic. My vision is that enlightened Muslims work within their communities to enlarge the moderate segment of Islam. And on our side, Americans need to act in ways to reduce Muslim hatred towards us, thereby reducing the influence of radical Islam.

—John J. Ritsema
JJRitsema@aol.com

In a guest column in the July issue, Carol McDonald writes about atheism, evolution, Catholicism, et. al. Carol said she started out Catholic and because of various reasons, is now an atheist. Well, I started out Catholic, and for various reasons, am now a non-practicing Catholic.

Carol implies that the Catholic Church is against evolution. That simply isn't true. Even Jeb Bush, a Catholic convert, in answer to a question about evolution, said that he's Catholic. So? There are a lot of people who don't know Catholicism, and that includes a lot of priests and nuns. Evolution is not incompatible with Catholicism. The Catholic Church can view creationism as quaint allegory and still believe in evolution. To keep the fundamentalists happy: God simply went poof! at a certain point in evolution and tossed a soul into Adam and Eve.

Carol said she admired Mother Teresa until she visited a poor part of South America and urged the women to keep reproducing because that was "God's will." Obviously, Mother Teresa was not conversant with Catholicism, either. Better she should have told them to keep their legs crossed.

Carol laughs at the "virgin" birth. Well, if you have an all-powerful God, he CAN do anything, right?

As for purgatory, which I think has virtually disappeared in Catholic theology -- to say nothing of limbo -- Holy Mother Catholic Church has an out for anything that becomes inconvenient: it's "God in His infinite mercy."

—Joyce Megginson Kircher,
Keeping the baby while eschewing the bath water

SCAM Calendar of Events for August 2006

20th - Sunday 11:00 AM

BRUNCH WITH JIM

Join Jim for Sunday Brunch at the Colossus Restaurant, 380 N. Wickham Road, in Melbourne. You must arrive on time or you may not be seated with our group.

Contact: *Jim Trammel, 242-8985.*

26th - Saturday 6:00 PM

S.N.O.R.T.

Join us for some sushi and tempura at The SCAM's best attended event at Miyako's, 1411 S. Harbor City Blvd. (US#1) in Melbourne.

Contact: *Your Newsletter Editor, or e-mail: snort@scam.us.mensa.org.*

Calendar Updates

ATTENTION SCAM MEMBERS!

Every effort is made to bring to you an accurate up-to-date Calendar of Events. However, last minute changes can and do occur past newsletter deadline. For up-to-date info, visit scam.us.mensa.org and click on "Calendar".

MEMBERSHIP NOTES

Welcome to SCAM

Michael Musgraves

Welcome Back to SCAM

Michael Freeman

Welcome to SCAM and Mensa

Benjamin Smith

AUGUST BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

<i>2nd</i>	James Vanaman	<i>15th</i>	William Lamoureux
<i>4th</i>	William Armstrong	<i>22nd</i>	Shirley Jones
<i>4th</i>	Robert Johnson	<i>26th</i>	Ronald Wallace
<i>5th</i>	Eric Thompson	<i>29th</i>	Sarah Goldstein
<i>9th</i>	James McNamara	<i>29th</i>	Chester Young
<i>11th</i>	Cypryan Klish II	<i>30th</i>	David MacMakin
<i>13th</i>	Ronald Gaynor		

Deb's Corner

I found some very interesting information in my Library newsletter that I thought you would like to know about, for ALL are welcome at the library.....

The "Friends of the Library" sponsors many public events; here are just a few.....(Melbourne Public Library, 540 E. Fee Ave.)

- Foyer Book Sales: August 19th and September 16th from 10 am to 1 pm.
- July 29th (Friday): 2 pm, Jazz melodies, by Sybil Gage.

August:

- 2nd (Wednesday) 7 pm, Dr. Brandenburg will give a talk about the UFO cover-up.
- 11th (Friday): 7 pm, Darlene with delight everyone with recipes from her book, "It's All About Sass".
- 12th (Saturday): 2 pm, Xavier, Latin Singer.
- 25th (Friday): 2 pm, La Senora, Bess Cohen will sing songs of the "Big Band Era".

September:

- 8th (Friday): 2 pm, Chris Kahl, will perform his selection of songs on his guitar.
- 9th (Saturday): 2 pm, Philip Chien will speak about his new book, "Columbia the Final Voyage".
- 11th (Monday): 2 pm, Friends of the library board meeting, Visitors are welcome.....
- 30th (Saturday): 10 am, Ray Osborne will entertain us with a verbal and musical telling of Florida and her history.

Please Contact Kevan Vance @ 952-4514 (Melbourne Public Library) with any questions you might have and...

SEE YOU AT THE LIBRARY.....

deb

H dear. I said I was going to do it and now I have to deliver. I said I was going to write a critique of an article which appeared in The SCAM about two years ago, and I did this in my LocSec column. Probably not a good thing to do as we had a request last year for our editor to take extra care to separate his views as an editor from his views as a person with views, and then I went and entangled my views as LocSec with my views as a thinking person. But on to the critique.

The article, by Ken Thornton-Smith, who previously achieved fame and notoriety as the creator of Anthony Chianti, the pasta detective in the Wabasso Triangle series, was entitled *Move Over, Darwin – The Creator of Evolution*. (The SCAM, August 2004 – for those who don't save their back issues, it is available on our website at <http://spacecoast.us.mensa.org/>) A thumbnail sketch of the article might go something like this. First, evolution, or Darwinism, or some aspect of it is kicked about in pretty much the same way that liberals are kicked about by Ann Coulter: some truths, some half-truths and some thoroughly invented notions. Then Creationism and religion, or perhaps just the mythological basis of religion, are similarly kicked about, although it is conceded that Creationists have a point in not liking Darwinism. Are we offered an plausible alternate view? No! The penultimate paragraph offers the complaint that we have two implausible alternatives, neither of which suits the author in the least bit. And finally, "Mankind has an incorrigible need to know the unknowable;" and, "Occasionally, we throw the baby out with the bathwater." Oddly enough, we can see the baby has been thrown out, but we don't know what the baby is, whose baby it is, or anything else about it. I might suggest that it is reasonable, measured, temperate, science.

But now – back to the title – *Move Over, Darwin – The Creator of Evolution*. So much wrong here. Immediately we have a problem. Move over for whom, or what? Not a clue in the article. The notion that it might be Creationism is built up in the first section as Darwinism is trashed, but then Creationism is dumped on as well. Identifying Darwin as the creator of evolution implies that evolution didn't exist until Darwin came along. We might as well say that Newton created gravity. Well, they both created theories, but not the phenomena. Does the author believe in evolution – that humans evolved from "lower" life forms, but not via the Darwinian mecha-

nisms? I can't tell.

On to the text. "Darwin ... sought to explain biological diversity", by assuming, "diversity is increasing and that survival implies fitness." So much wrong here. Darwin certainly did not *assume* that survival implied fitness. It's a tautology. The fitness here is fitness to survive and exist as a stable population for a meaningful period of time. People have been getting into a snit over the phrase survival of the fittest for years by reading more into the idea of fitness than is intended and then taking issue with it. Regarding diversity, Darwin offered an explanation and a mechanism whereby one species (let us say a Galapagos finch) differentiated into several species, thus increasing diversity. (Remember, *The Origin of Species* was his title) This differentiating is a tricky business, involving breeding groups separating, the different groups becoming different over time, in different ways, eventually becoming sufficiently different that they can no longer interbreed, and thus qualifying as different species. Each group evolves, or changes some of its characteristics in response to pressures of the environment and it does it primarily through reproductive advantages. As man alters and "improves" various domesticated animals, so Mother Nature altered breeding groups of various species. Most of us understand how that works. Darwin did not have to "assume" diversity was increasing. Once there were no mammals, and now there are lots. QED. Has the number of species decreased from time to time? Of course! Due to changes in environment, natural catastrophes, predation, you name it. Evolution changes and creates species. Other forces, not evolution, eliminate species.

I will pass over an awkward analogy involving sausages, pepperoni, and Vichyssoise and assume it was the pasta detective breaking through briefly. This leads to the statement, "Each geological epoch appears to have had a greater diversity at the beginning than at the end." I can't believe this is to be taken literally, since one epoch follows on another. Have the geologists conveniently left out the pepperoni slices between the epochs where vast numbers of species were "magically" created, only to dwindle away during the ensuing epoch? Nevertheless, our author persists, taking the familiar inverted tree so often used to represent evolution, turning it right side up, and stacking a number of them on top of one another. A totally incoherent notion.

Some passing remarks on Punctuated Equilibrium, the "Clovis Police" and Neo-Darwinism wrap up the views on the Theory of Evolution. Possibly the comment that not even a hint of Neo-Darwinism is being taught to our young people is a clue to the authors' beliefs. And if his version of Neo-Darwinism is related to Darwinism (I use

his term) the way the political philosophy of today's neo-cons is related to the liberalism from which they migrated (or so I'm told) then it explains the hostility in this article. But enough of this trash talking.

Let me call attention to a highly regarded text, issued recently in a 30th anniversary edition, *The Selfish Gene*, by Richard Dawkins. Jerry Coyne, writing in the Times (of London) Literary Supplement, says:

“Straddling the boundary between popular science bestseller and scientific treatise, The Selfish Gene has infused all modern discourse on evolution and natural selection, by layman and scientist alike. This fact, combined with its incomparable prose style, makes the book a masterpiece. It is one of the two books on evolution I would recommend to anyone aspiring to be broadly educated (the other, of course, is Darwin’s Origin of Species).”

The first chapter of *The Selfish Gene* is intriguingly entitled “Why are people?” and it starts:

“Intelligent life first comes of age when it works out the reasons for its own existence. If superior creatures from space ever visit earth, the first question they will ask, in order to assess the level of our civilization, is: ‘Have they discovered evolution yet?’”

and then, “. . . it was Darwin who first put together a coherent and tenable account of why we exist.”, and later, “Today the Theory of Evolution is about as much open to doubt as the theory that the earth goes around the sun.”

What was it that bothered me about this article enough to come up with a response two years after the fact? I don't know. Perhaps it was just that I told myself back when I first read it that it should be responded to and then I never got around to it. The attack on a solid scientific theory, without at least the excuse of it flying in the face of a religious belief – the primary impetus for Creationist attacks on evolution is hard to understand. The sneering attack on widely accepted science (see above) is puzzling. The author does not suggest a competing theory. Perhaps he is interested in the question, “Why are we?”, and is angry that science hasn't come up with an answer that he finds appealing. I would really like to hear from him about what he does believe and why the anger with “Darwinism”.

References:

Dawkins, Richard (1976). *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford University Press Paperback, New York. p. 1.

Coyne, Jerry A. , *His tale is true*, TLS (Times Literary Supplement), June 16, 2006, pp. 5-7

Part Two: The Significance Today

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...”

*—Declaration of Independence
July 4, 1776.*

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

—Preamble to the United States Constitution

Last month, in honor of July 4th, we examined the historic significance of the Declaration of Independence, the document that gave birth to our great nation. In this installment, we will examine the present day significance of the Declaration.

The Declaration states *unequivocally* that all men are created equal, that we have certain inalienable rights, such as life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. To secure these rights, we create governments. Government is *by consent of the governed*. The question today is, *is our government securing our rights, and are they acting with our consent? In short, is our current government serving the purpose for which it was created?*

This, of course, brings us to the present. Are “We, The People” represented in our government? Let us consider a few issues facing ordinary Americans today.

- Back in the December, 2004 issue of *The SCAM*, I wrote a commentary on President Bush’s second term agenda. This included “Social Security Reform” with its funds being diverted into “personal accounts”, “Tort Reform” to block citizens from suing large corporations, and the continuous “War on Terror” that too often is a war on our civil rights. On the two latter items, our “representatives”, to put it mildly, enthusiastically supported Bush’s agenda.
- Last September, I wrote about “*another kind of war*”, the one that has been quietly declared on working Americans over the course of many years. This includes our loss of pensions, work-

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place protections and affordable healthcare. Moreover, our jobs are continually being outsourced. Our “representatives” have with their usual gusto passed legislation to make these things happen ever more easily.

Do these things even approach representing the wishes of the American people? Do the majority among us truly *want* to be subject to this kind of legislation...for that matter, is the majority even *aware* of these acts of our “representatives”? I think not.

How, then, do these stunts get pulled off? In my opinion, three elements are at play here: *Deception*, *distraction*, and “*rigging the game*”.

First let’s look at *deception*. The many ways our elected officials misrepresent their issues (or is it “framing the issues”?) is nothing short of legendary. On rather amusing local example comes by way of state Senator Mike Haridopolos, who advocated the abolition of the state’s Intangible Personal Property Tax, contending it was a “retirement tax” that “punished” investors and “penalized” savings. A quick check of the state Department of Revenue website, and found that *exempted* from the tax were retirement plans of all kinds, *money* from checking and *savings* accounts, CDs, annuities, cash value of life insurance. Furthermore, a married couple’s investments valued at \$1 *million* of investments subject to the tax would be \$500 in 2005. I discuss this in more detail in the April 2005 *SCAM*. One can readily see the gross exaggerations and outright lies Senator Haridopolos had to resort to in order to gain support of his issue.

Next is the *distraction* issue. In this category are such gems as the “Defense of Traditional Marriage”, and the posting of the Ten Commandments at courthouses and other government buildings. The former, proposed as a Constitutional amendment failed to gain traction this year (as in 2004), while the latter cannot be implemented until the First Amendment has been repealed. Last October, I did offer a compromise: let’s post the “Nine Commandments” as our leaders certainly won’t refrain from killing anyone who stands in the way of their corporate sponsors. It has since occurred to me that our leadership does not follow *any* of the Ten. “Do as I say, not as I do” seems to be the order of the day, but that’s the subject of a future column.

Finally, let’s address “*rigging the game*”. In this category are such items as our current campaign financing system to ensure no one can seriously run for office without corporate sponsorship,

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and redistricting so that our “representatives” get to choose the ones they represent. The Supreme Court recently reaffirmed that these practices are indeed legal.

So, where do we stand? Clearly, “We, The People” are *not* represented in our government. Laws are being passed to the detriment of most Americans. Is *this* government with *consent of the governed*? I think not. In fact, I believe we find ourselves in circumstances similar to what our colonial forefathers faced some 230 years ago.

What shall we do? Shall we overthrow the U.S. Government? Certainly, the Declaration of Independence, whose anniversary we celebrate as I write this clearly states we *have the right* to do so when circumstances warrant. Yet, the same document cautions us to exercise prudence. To me this means we must exhaust all other reasonable avenues to correct these conditions first.

What steps shall we take? While these may not be the complete solution, I can think of three suggested remedies. First, we need to stop considering corporations “persons” with the same rights and privileges as natural persons. One way is to adopt a “Defense of Human Citizenship” amendment to our Constitution. Such an amendment might be similarly worded to the following, which appeared in a recent article I came across:

“Citizenship in the United States shall be conferred only on human beings. Neither this Constitution nor the constitution of any State, nor state or federal law, shall be construed to require that citizenship or the legal incidents thereof be granted to corporations, partnerships, proprietorships or trusts.”

Second, we need to, for once and for all, abolish the Electoral College. Besides the fact that in a few close races the candidate with the most votes lost the election, we need to consider the way Presidential campaigns are run. Both major parties adopt strategies to target certain states they believe will deliver the Electoral Votes needed to win. Most importantly, when the majority (or plurality) of voters vote for a candidate, he gets ALL the votes for that state, thus nullifying the voice of a significant number (sometimes even the majority) of state residents. If we are to be represented, we – not our states – must be counted in choosing our leaders. This, too, will require amending the Constitution.

Third, let us make a minor change in the manner we register to vote. I propose we *eliminate* the political party designation on

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both the registration application and the Voter ID card. No one registering voters would be permitted to ask for a party affiliation, nor would any records reflect a voter's preferred political party. This would in no way affect a voter's right to vote the way he chooses or to join or aid the political party of his choice. What it would do is eliminate the practice of redrawing the lines of Congressional districts for partisan advantage. Voters should be choosing their representatives, and not vice-versa. It would also eliminate the need for costly primary elections.

If we are serious about preserving democracy, we need to restore government that is accountable to us. If we fail to do so, it will only be a matter of time until this nation is dissolved.

Source:

“Corporations Aren’t People,” Joshua Holland, *AlterNet*, July 3, 2006 (text of suggested Constitutional amendment).

A Mensan in the Workplace?

Are you the Mensan at work? Do you work with other Mensans...or...are you the only one? If the latter is true, do your coworkers know you're in Mensa? What about your boss? What are your impressions and experiences at work? Do you have a leadership position? Do you serve in any kind of “support” (formal or informal) role? Does your status as a Mensan have a positive or negative impact on your work relationships? Finally, if preparing a resume, would you include your Mensa membership as an item (or state that you qualified to join Mensa)? Why or why not? Let's hear from *you*.

It was a quiet week in Lake Wobegon. So quiet, in fact, that the ExComm decided to skip its August meeting and hold the September meeting on August 30. A little too quiet, perhaps, for Clara Woodall-Moran, who, in a letter to the editor appearing elsewhere in this issue, takes the ExComm to task for treating the lateness of the annual audit in too casual a fashion. Point well taken. However, the minutes did not state that the lack of an audit was not of any importance. The phrase was not a problem. After quoting Article VIII, No. 1 of the Bylaws, Clara goes on to say that there are Standing Rules governing the Audit Committee. My various copies of the Standing Rules, have 14 or 15 rules, none of which mention the Audit Committee. From one version to another, the rules get shuffled around a bit, but are pretty much in agreement with each other. Incidentally, the 15th rule is about making new rules. The Guidelines are another matter. There are long versions and short versions. There are separate collections of guidelines for different committees. I have found nothing relating to the Audit committee.

I have one very official looking version that has three single sentence guidelines for the RG committee and six for the NomElCom. Elsewhere I have a page and a half on the RG committee and a similar amount for the NomElCom. Truly we need to get this material into shape. We had versions of the Bylaws, the Standing Rules, and the Guidelines posted on our website, but they were taken down a year or so ago because ---. Actually, I don't remember why. I think it was because it was easier to delete them than to fix them. Now we are putting them back up on the grounds that it's easier to fix them if you can see them. (Not the Bylaws, just the SR&G) I am not sure what to make of Clara's final remarks on the potential for problems with the National Office. I haven't talked to the other ExComm members recently about the dangers of the National Office behaving irrationally, but my guess is they don't feel that slipping an audit by a month or two constitutes any sort of a problem. I believe that if National actually felt we were functioning in a manner that was unsuitable for a Mensa chapter, the first thing they would do would be to tell us about it.

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about volunteer opportunities by visiting the WG06 website, click on contacts, then on volunteer.

Hope to see you there.

Maggie Truelove, RVC 10
3333 Honeysuckle Lane
Orlando, FL 32812
407-855-9078
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work appearing in *The SCAM*, please let me know, and I will contact the copyright holder for the needed consent.

If you submit an item for publication in *The SCAM*, should you copyright the work? That is entirely up to you. *The SCAM* does not require you to do so. In most cases, there is no need. Here are some things to consider in making your decision.

As an opinion columnist I do copyright my columns. My reason is to maintain ownership of the work. In the future I may wish to write a book that may contain some of my columns as part of the content. As the copyright owner, this presents no problems. Without my copyright, *The SCAM* owns the work; I would need a future Editor's consent to use it. The main question is, do you anticipate using the same work for other purposes? If so, copyright your work.

The procedure for copyrighting your work is simple. Registration is *not* required. It *is* advisable with for-profit writing—be sure to register your copyright when you write that book! For *The SCAM*, simply note at the beginning or end of your work, "Copyright 2006, Your Name". That's it!

One final note is in order here. We have quite a bit of mail traffic on these pages this month. One such letter, written by a former LocSec, expresses concerns of the direction of the present ExComm. Our current LocSec addresses these concerns in his column. Be assured, this is not a crisis. Rather, a group functions better when there are differing among people who care. In our group, as well as in *The SCAM*, all opinions are always welcome.

August is the hottest part of the summer and the height of hurricane season. But this year it signals one of the biggest events in American Mensa history - the World Gathering to celebrate Mensa International's 60th birthday, to be held right here in Florida at Disney's Coronado Springs Resort, August 8-13. For this year only, this replaces the Annual Gathering, which is usually held in July. I can promise you that there will be at least 2000 people there, both from the US and internationally, as that many have pre-registered as of this date of writing.

There will be programs Wednesday through Sunday, running from 9:00 a.m. until midnight each day except Sunday, when they end at 2:30. There are too many to list here, so I will only mention a few better known names: Jean Auel (author of "Clan of the Cave Bear"), Bill McArthur (astronaut who returned in April from more than 6 months on the International Space Station), Tarek Saab from the recent "The Apprentice Show"), Alan Rachins (from numerous TV series, including "LA Law" and "Dharma and Greg"), and Richard Lederer (author of numerous books dealing with the English language). There are a few hundred more, so please visit the website <WG06.us.mensa.org> and click on programs for the complete listing. You can even plan your time at the WG, as they are listed by day and time scheduled. There will be numerous LDWs (Leadership Development Workshops), as well. So whether you are already actively involved or simply want to be, you can plan to attend some of those. These are listed in with the programs.

There will be three dances at the WG. Thursday night is an International Dance. Friday night is a GenX Dance. And Saturday night is the big Gala Dance, with none other than nationally known Michael Andrew and Swingerhead performing. On Wednesday, you might choose to sit in and observe your AMC taking care of business. Thursday is American Mensa's Annual Business Meeting. On Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, you can do the same thing with the IBD meeting. (That's the American Mensa Committee and the International Board of Directors.)

And of course it isn't too late to decide to get involved. There is always room for another volunteer! One of the best ways to have a good time at one of these large gatherings - and to get to know people - is through volunteering. You can find out more

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The ExComm met at the home of George Patterson on Wednesday, July 5, 2006. Meeting called to order at 6:21 pm by LocSec George Patterson.

Members present: George Patterson, Joe Smith, Terry Valek and Thomas Wheat. Bud Long was unable to attend.

Welcome Guests: None.

Minutes of the June 3 meeting, as published in the July 2006 SCAM, were approved unanimously.

Officer Reports:

LocSec: George reported that Ellen Paul, recently installed as MERF Scholarship Chair, was leaving the area and therefore, we were again in need of a volunteer to fill the position.

Treasurer: Bud submitted the June Treasurer's Report by email. It showed total funds of \$3980.14.

Testing: Helen Lee Moore (Proctor Coordinator) reported by email that six people were tested on June 17. Two were at no charge, participants in the 2-for-1 special. She also reported that Bud Long has finished his training as a proctor and should be certified by National in a couple of weeks.

Committee Reports: There were no committee reports.

Old Business: There was no old business.

New Business: There was no new business.

Open Discussion: George observed that an email mailing list was being compiled so that brief reminders of upcoming social events could be sent out to those interested. In an informal discussion (actually preceding the call to order) it was agreed by all that there was no real need to meet every month when the agenda was light. It was noted that the Bylaws call for at least one scheduled meeting per quarter.

Joe moved to adjourn at 6:37 pm, passed by unanimous vote.

The next meeting of the ExComm is scheduled for Wednesday, **August 30, at 5:30 pm at George Patterson's house, 301 Sand Pine Road, Indialantic. (321-777-3721)**