

The

# SCAM

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## The END.. Of the LINE?



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(All Area Codes are 321 except as noted)



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

## *Inside the Pocket Protector*

*Mike Moakley, Editor*

**I**s this truly the end of the line? Unless you are picking up your copy of *The SCAM* for the very first time, I'm sure it is readily apparent that, in honor of the dire prediction of some who attach significance to the Mayan Calendar that the world as we know it will end on December 21, 2012, the theme of all of the 2012 issues is ... *The End*.

I have noted with considerable amusement that much of American Mensa seems, to some extent, to also adopt this theme. Of course, like most of our fellow members, I have adopted this theme all in good fun. It would be very depressing, indeed, to find out on Mickey Mouse News (Channel 9 in this area) that a strange phenomenon came across us as we Mensans plunged to our end by jumping of the roofs of the few truly tall buildings in Brevard County. Now, there's no excuse for that...

On a more serious note, could it be the end of the line for SCAM? That's possible, but whether it is so depends on you. In the minutes, you will read that a new NomElCom has been appointed. This committee's job is to recruit candidates for our ExComm, our officers. If called upon to serve on the ExComm, do you really have a good reason to decline?

As you no doubt have read before, I maintain that it is a good thing we do not have term limits for our ExComm members. Do you have ideas to improve our local group? What better way to see these ideas come to fruition than to be part of our ExComm. On the other hand, is this the end of the line?

That's up to you.

**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.

Part One:

**T**he article in the January *SCAM* concerning the French language brought to mind the languages I had learned and used in my lifetime.

Back in elementary school in Florida, we had Spanish speaking kids (primarily from Cuba) that became good playmates. Many of us picked up phrases from them. We were also provided the opportunity to learn Spanish via a TV show that was broadcast from Orlando. Once a week, a 15-minute presentation was provided by a kindly, Spanish speaking lady. It covered everyday learning the numbers, to tell time, to chat about the weather (almost an early version of “*Sesame Street*” in Spanish). We all huddled around the TV set, anxiously waiting for the lady to ask us questions in Spanish so we could provide an answer in unison.

Flash forward to my graduating from Navy Boot Camp in San Diego, California and being given my first duty station: Rota, Spain!

Two years of living off Base and being able to travel over the Iberian Peninsula. With total immersion in that environment (I never spent any off time on the Base); I received an instruction method that was both interesting and exciting. Dealing with landlords, working with utilities folks, buying groceries in the open air markets, listening to the adventures (real or imagined) of veterans from the Spanish Civil War while sharing bottles of brandy, taking girl friends to the local *feria* festivals and arguing with carnival attendants as to what I won with my ‘play-the game’-for prizes, discussing politics with supporters of King Carlos and the old policies of Francisco Franco, surfing with young Spaniards and giving them cigarettes from the Base for lessons on riding the waves, horse-back riding with experts along the beaches of Costa del Sol, backpacking with Basques along the Pyrenees (and hoping the US Navy and *La Guardia Civil* never found out), traveling to Madrid for weddings and touring the museums with art experts explaining the fine points of the city’s architecture and paintings, running with Spanish friends in Pamplona and jumping up to staircases to escape running bulls (the crowds were MORE dangerous), riding my motorcycles down to Ronda and grabbing a ferry to Gibraltar or a boat to Tangiers to haggle with vendors in the street (in Spanish, English, and Arabic), strolling in Barcelona to translate the information on the *Sagrada Familia* and discussing newspaper articles with Catalans (a strange variety of Spanish, but still understandable) at the outdoor cafes, catching trains to the *Alhambra* and walking with the Spanish speaking tour guides to learn its history. The stories and adventures

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**D**uring the primary season there has been much public discussion about capital gains. The talk is sure to increase before April 15, after the primaries, and before the election in November. Almost everybody agrees that the way the IRS handles capital gains should be changed. But how? To increase the tax on capital gains so that the "1%" pay more to equalize the tax burden, to reduce capital gains tax to put more money into the economy, or some other scheme or schemes to make the tax "fairer"?

To see how capital gains affects our income and our taxes we need to look not at the tax on capital gains, but the root of the problem - just what are capital gains?

According to Wikipedia, "A capital gain is a profit that results from investments into a capital asset, such as stocks, bonds or real estate, which exceeds the purchase price. It is the difference between a higher selling price and a lower purchase price, resulting in a financial gain for the investor. Conversely, a capital loss arises if the proceeds from the sale of a capital asset are less than the purchase price". Note that there is no mention of time. A more functional description of capital gains is that capital gains is just one means of how our government uses inflation to cheat the taxpayer by not indexing.

If you had \$10,000 in January 1992, you would have been able to purchase some capital assets. According to the federal government's CPI (Consumer Price Index), in 2012, twenty years later, you would need \$17,210.33 to buy the same capital assets.

If, in 1992, you did buy some capital assets, and held them for twenty years, the dollar value would now be increased because of inflation. \$17,210.33 now equates to the \$10,000 then in purchasing power. What has happened is that the dollar has lost value. You have not gained anything in purchasing power. Yet, the IRS says you have had a \$7,210.33 capital gain and taxes you on that amount. Thus, your present purchasing power is reduced by the tax. You do not have a capital gain, you have a capital loss. Tell that to your friendly IRS.

The remedy, of course, is to eliminate income tax of which capital gains is a part. If, income tax is to be retained, then capital gains should be indexed. Some of your capital assets will sell at a price exceeding the rate of inflation, and the difference can be taxed as capital gains. This, of course, implies that those assets that sell for less than their inflated value would be counted as a capital loss and so figured in your income tax.

I have frequently been characterized as being eccentric. Whether because I bear some not-so-slight resemblance to Albert Einstein on LSD, or that I have been known to drop the occasional [expletive deleted] whilst others of my generation are more genteel, or that I hold some rather unconventional opinions, is irrelevant. Suffice it to say that this characterization is not entirely incorrect. Suffice it also to say, that this has both its up-sides and downsides.

On the one hand, by being eccentric (*plus having the dubious distinction of being sufficiently old*), I can get away with some *outrageous* flirting. I can fling provocative epithets at cuties from eight to eighty and be written off as that harmless old guy (undoubtedly senile) that probably doesn't even realize what he's saying. In earlier, more respectable days, the same remarks would have evoked some frigid response, if not an outright slap in the face.

On the other hand, there is the problem that when I'm being sincere, I may not be taken seriously, since I am – after all – an eccentric old coot, thus severely detracting from any earnest point I may be trying to make.

And on yet the other hand (*using a somewhat liberal limb count*), some people may be fascinated by my beat-of-a-different-drummer personality while others might be rather off-put by it.

All in all, however, I would rather be “different” than boring. I have a friend of over 40 years who got old when we were both 25. Although I love him dearly and would trust him unconditionally, he could put a boulder to sleep. I like to think that my eccentricity actually makes me more engaging.

My daughters, for instance, all three nag me incessantly to buy a new car. Although I could afford to upgrade to a new or, at least, a newer car, I drive an old beater verging on the borderline of bearing Official Antique plates. They ask me why I don't replace it and I will invariably reply with the fact that I don't have to: it runs, the A/C works, as does the radio. (I don't bother to mention that after so many years, the seat conforms very nicely to my posterior.) “But dad,” they respond, “it looks like cr\*p!” “Aha,” sez I, “exactly!” When they give me puzzled looks, I explain to them the advantages of driving a car that looks like it placed low in the demolition derby, to wit: no one is likely to steal it and people on the road with nice cars are going to avoid it like the plague, not wanting their treasured transportation to be sullied by my rolling junkmobile. This effectively provides me a

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cushy, safe buffer zone whilst tooling down the motorway. I try to explain to them that I'm long past the days when my car was a representation of who I am (although thinking about it now, that statement may be inaccurate). They eventually write it off; after all, I'm eccentric!

I'm a Libertarian (itself an eccentric trait). I borrow a few notions from the Democrats, an idea or two from the Republicans but, mainly, I hold views that don't conform to what most would consider the "norm." Nothing I enjoy more than entering a heated debate between loyal opposite party members since I can argue against both sides, agree with some particulars from either side of the aisle, and then go off on a wild tangent of my own: guns on every hip, flat (or no) federal taxes, de-criminalization of drugs, getting government out of the business place and bedroom, and bringing the boys back home. This will generally elicit glazed stares and an end to the endless debate. Love it! Unless, of course, they just chalk me off as a nut and end up buying each other drinks.

Then there's appearance. Since I've been married almost 35 years, as long as I can pass muster with SWMBO (She Who Must Be Obeyed), I pretty much don't care what I look like as long as I'm comfortable. I have no problem mixing plaids and stripes, think purple and green are just dandy together, and manage my coiffure by glancing at it in the morning while I brush my teeth. I'm not "on the prowl," so I'm not trying to impress the wimmenfolk. I'm not in the job market, so I don't need to impress employers. And I'm not selling anything, so I don't have to impress prospective customers. This allows me the freedom to dress and look the way I please. If I don't feel like shaving, I don't. If the hole in my shirt doesn't bother me, I don't really care if it bothers you. And if my socks don't match... well, actually I hardly ever wear socks. But it's all good because I'm eccentric.

And I'm in good company. Einstein was considered eccentric. Mark Twain, Izzy Newton, Siggy Freud, Salvador Dali, Winnie Churchill, Lady Gaga, Michelangelo, Nicky Tesla... I could go on. Look these people up and you'll find that they were all considered anywhere from a little to a lottle bit wacky. But wouldn't you love to party with this gang? Sure would beat an evening with Woodrow Wilson, Justin Bieber, and any of the housewives from <name of city> reality show.

So, I carry my label with pride. Plus, it's a helluva lot of fun!

*The George*

## SCAM Calendar of Events for March 2012

**2nd - Friday 5:30 PM**

### FIRST FRIDAY AT HOOTERS SIG

Come join us for drinks, open discussion and food (latter two optional) at the Melbourne Hooter's, 877 S. Babcock Street.

Hosted by: *Dennis Logan, 501-7547.*

**7th - Wednesday 6:00 PM**

### EXCOMM MEETING

This is our monthly business meeting. See back page for location.

**10th - Saturday 6:30 PM**

### DINNER AT DAVID'S

Join us at David's Restaurant, 2480 S Washington Ave (US1) in Titusville for just about any kind of dinner, ranging from steak to sushi.

Contact: *Mike Zielinski, 747-0097.*

**26th - Saturday 5:45 PM**

### S.N.O.R.T.

Join us for some sushi and tempura at The SCAM's best attended event at the Miyako Restaurant, 1511 S. Harbor City Blvd., Melbourne.

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

### **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 [spacecoast.us.mensa.org](http://spacecoast.us.mensa.org) and click on "Calendar". Also, we are putting together a current e-mail notification list of all members who wish to be kept up-to-date on our activities. If you wish to be included, please contact George Patterson at 777-3721 or [George3141@cfl.rr.com](mailto:George3141@cfl.rr.com).

### Of CABAGEs and Coffee: (Our Regular Events)

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

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

## Membership Notes for March 2012

### WELCOME TO SCAM

Rose Marie Martinez

### WELCOME TO SCAM AND MENSA

William Mason

Dorota Woodbury

### WELCOME BACK!

Andy Barclay

Dean Zentner

### MARCH BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

1st	Kathryn Mendoza	13th	Gary Sizemore
2nd	Joseph Smith	15th	Gary Cordelli
5th	Lennis Bearden	15th	Joseph Cona
5th	Stephen Schneider	16th	Robert Roth
5th	David Terry	19th	Gisela Bahr
6th	Susan Caswell	20th	William Daffron III
8th	Gabriel Shih	22nd	Jack Harris
11th	Dennis Schindler	26th	Jenifer Mina

### MENSA TESTING

**Mar. 17** at Central Brevard Library, 308 Forrest Ave., Cocoa. Please arrive by 9:45 am, as testing begins at 10 am. \$40 fee and photo ID required. Reservations encouraged but not required. Candidates must be age 14 or older. Testing next month will be on Apr. 21.

**Contact:** Hank Rhodes, [mensatest@cfl.rr.com](mailto:mensatest@cfl.rr.com), for details.

### The "Fine Print" for Calendar Events:

Membership in American Mensa, Ltd. makes you eligible to attend SCAM social functions. Escorted and invited guests of a member or host are welcome. Adult family members of Mensans are encouraged to participate in SCAM activities, as are well behaved children. However, attendance at any social function in a **private home** is subject to the hospitality of the host. Compliance with published house rules is required, and "Kitty" payment is **not optional**. As a courtesy, notify the host if you plan to attend. Announced hosts should attend their events or arrange for a stand-in if unable. When reservations are required, you may not be able to participate if you fail to call.

**S-Smoking; NS- No Smoking; SS-Separate Smoking Area; P-Pets in the home; NP-No Pets present; BYO\_-Bring Your Own: \_Snacks, \_Drinks, \_Everything.**

**E**very once in a while, there is a day, that for some reason, stands out in a way that is totally unexpected. Such a day for me was Sunday, February 12<sup>th</sup>. There were two items in my e-mail from [NYTimes.com](http://NYTimes.com) dealing with the subject matter of this month's column.

The first item is an "interactive" feature showing a map of the United States using various shades of a reddish color to indicate the degree of the population's dependence on government programs.<sup>(1)</sup> What was most striking to me was that, if one was to compare this map with an election map (with the all-too-familiar "red" states and "blue" states), the states that register the most dependence on government handouts are almost without exception occur in the "red", that is, Republican states. Coincidence?

The second item, an article entitled, "Even Critics of Safety Net Increasingly Depend on It,"<sup>(2)</sup> is sure to be enlightening. The first individual featured, a small business owner in a Minnesota small town who owns a logo apparel shop, prides himself as being self-sufficient and aligns himself with the Tea Party movement. Too many people, he believes, are too dependent on government when they should be living within their means.

It appears, however, that our small town business owner has, for the last several years, received the Earned Income Tax Credit (which refunds taxes not owed or paid in). The federal government picks up the tab for his children's "free" school breakfasts and lunches. His elderly mother has had two hip surgeries courtesy of Medicare.

Another Tea Party supporter does not want to pay higher taxes despite the government assistance his family receives to take care of the special needs for his disabled 14-year-old daughter. Still, he insists, the government should do less.

Other Tea Party supporters featured in the article receive Social Security and Medicare. They fully support cutting back both programs so long as they do not touch the benefits for those currently over the age of 55. After all, as one such supporter said, a promise made should be a promise kept. Unless, of course, you're 54 or younger – then you're on your own.

Yet, does this phenomenon stop at some small town in Minnesota? Is this unique only to people who happen to be interviewed by reporters of

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the New York Times? I think not. Let's take a look right here on the Space Coast. If you have lived or worked here in Brevard County for any significant amount of time, you cannot help but notice that our fortunes are tied to the space program. For the two people who do not already know it, NASA is part of our "Big Government".

"But," one worker with the space program might protest, "I work in the private sector, not at taxpayer expense." Really? The major corporations here in Brevard are, for the most part, "government contractors." Remove all government programs from Brevard County and let's see how long it takes to become a "ghost town" ... any takers? Yet, how many local Tea party supporters work for these government contractors?

A number of my coworkers are also Tea Party supporters. Too often, I hear the grumbling about how evil "Big Government" is along with a lecture on how we need to rein it in. Since, like me, these people are public employees, I simply remind them, "You ARE Big Government." To date, I've never met a coworker willing to make the supreme sacrifice.

The true Tea Party slogan? "I want mine, but cannot afford to give you what's yours."

**Sources:**

1. "Interactive Map: Where Americans Most Depend on Government Benefits," New York Times, February 12, 2012.
2. Binyamin Appelbaum and Robert Gebeloff, "Even Critics of Safety Net Increasingly Depend on It," New York Times, February 12, 2012.

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go on and on... but all of them involve experiencing a deeper meaning and appreciation for them by being able to understand the native language.

Like English (or any language), the Spanish of Spain was somewhat different than the Spanish I learned of a Cuban nature (and what I used traveling in Mexico which was another variety as well). However, the difference was mostly in the speaking format rather than the written format. The spoken form always has the innumerable colloquialisms and slang terms that were always difficult for me at first. Reading the newspapers and train station information was always faster than translating the local dialect and idiomatic phrases of the various regions of Spain. Also, the rhythm and vocabulary could also be different and make me ask them to sometimes repeat a sentence or speak it more slowly.

I noticed that Spaniards pronounced letters “s” and “z” before the letter “i” and “e” with a slight “th” sound (I guess that was the Castille influence from King Phillip II days). Also, learning Spanish in America seemed to avoid the ‘vosotros’ form of plural, familiar “you” when studying the textbook and tapes. While that noun for ‘you’ appeared in many locales in Spain. Like most tourists, the vocabulary could be challenging (especially in distant areas I stayed at where I shared wine with friends and watched flamenco dancing to the tune of Spanish guitars at hole-in-the-wall taverns). Pocket dictionaries always got a workout in the more distant and less traveled, non-tourist stops in Spain. This was thirty years ago, so much may have changed. There may be more English translations available for tourists and more English-speaking Spaniards today.

As an engineer and scientist by formal training, I found some word interpretations interesting. The word ‘lapiz’ always seemed to mean ‘pencil or crayon’ wherever I traveled in Spain. But an *el lapicero* meant a ‘mechanical pencil’ in one area of Spain and a ‘ball-point pen’ in another. And the computer was an ‘*el ordenador*’ in Spain at the time, while the Cuban version of Spanish I had learned called it a ‘*la computadora*’. But whatever the technical item was, usually either through the universal hand gestures, figure drawing, or charades... they could get the idea across to me!

My advice to all people is to learn a language, at some time in your life. It not only sharpens the wits, helps to better experience foreign travels and

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living in foreign lands, as well as assist in having a richer appreciation of other cultures. It also helps to widen your circle of friends and become prepared for the global village that we are quickly becoming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Next time, I will write about how learning German in college not only helped in my profession, but helped in my employment and finding the wife of my life. For now: *Vaya con Dios*.

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### **A Mensan in the Workplace?**

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

**I**t's probably no real surprise that when the recession hit, Mensa membership numbers dropped. When people have less discretionary income, activities like Mensa are the first to go.

One would therefore have expected membership numbers in Florida, where the recession has been particularly nasty, to have dropped like a rock. They didn't. While membership numbers are slightly down in Mensa nationwide, Florida has been the exception. Our numbers are actually up.

I recently had a conversation with one of the locsecs here in Florida about why that might be. He thinks, and I agree with him, that it might have something to do with the way so many of the local groups here in Florida go out of their way to engage members.

With a dozen local groups some will naturally be more active than others, but overall there is no real shortage of Mensa-related things to do. Look at Mensa newsletter calendars throughout Florida and there are almost nonstop opportunities to eat, play games, have book discussions, go on outings, hear interesting speakers (and I don't only mean when the RVC is in town), and other fun and exciting things. Many of our groups have membership officers that contact members and make sure they feel welcome.

In other words, you are the secret to the success of Region 10. By "you" I mean local officers who keep the groups running and the members engaged. I mean the members who introduce themselves to new people and make them feel welcome. I mean the editors who put out high quality newsletters with calendars. All of you play an important role in our ability to recruit and retain members. And I thank all of you for your good work. Keep it up.

*Mel Dahl*

**Minutes of the February SCAM ExComm Meeting**

**T**he ExComm met at the home of Karen Freiberg (*etc., etc.*), on Wednesday, February 8, 2012. Called to order at 6:19 pm by LocSec George Patterson.

**Members Present:** George Patterson, Karen Freiberg, Dennis Logan, and George Lebovitz.

**Guests:** Wynn & Zanne Rostek (*although not so much guests as just hanging around for the RG Committee meeting which was to follow the ExComm meeting*).

Minutes for the December 7, 2011 meeting were approved as published in the January 2012 SCAM.

**Officer/Committee Reports:**

Dennis reported that he and George P. were in the process of getting approval for online access to our bank account.

George P. reported that he had recruited 3 volunteers to serve on the NomElCom.

The committee authorized the Treasurer (*Dennis*) to transfer funds from the general account to the RG account to cover the cost of the deposit to the hotel.

The ExComm then approved a motion to appoint Mike Zielinski (*Chairman Pro Tem*), Art Belefant, and Suzanne Leichtling as the NomElCom.

The next meeting was set for Wednesday, at March 7, 2012, at 6:00 pm, at Karen Freiberg's house (*etc., etc.*), and the meeting was adjourned at 6:27 pm.

*[n.b.: In the interests of full disclosure, it should be noted that the meeting was actually adjourned prior to the motion to accept the NomElCom volunteers. In actuality, the meeting was un-adjourned, the motion made, seconded, and carried, and the meeting was then re-adjourned. Furthermore, when George P. made the movement to accept the NomElCom volunteers, Dennis objected strenuously on the grounds that under Robert's Rules of Order, the presiding official is prohibited from initiating a movement. When it was pointed out that the ExComm did not operate under the strict confines of RRO and that we could pretty much do whatever the hell we wanted to do, Dennis graciously allowed the movement to proceed without further ado, the results being as reported above.]*