

The

SCAM

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Special
Post-
Apocalyptic
Edition!!!



SPACE COAST AREA MENSA

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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

Happy 2013! Yes, in spite of everything, we are in a brand new year. Before proceeding any further, I do have a confession to make. It involves “truth in advertising”. You will note on our cover, this issue of *The SCAM* is billed as the “Post-Apocalyptic Issue”. There is some concern that this claim may not be completely true.

While this issue is intended for January, 2013, which is well after the scheduled end of the world indicated by the “Mayan Calendar” for December 21, 2012, I am compelled to make full disclosure. These words have been written well before December 21st, as each monthly issue must be prepared well in advance of the publication date.

With this in mind, I must advise that as of this writing, December 21, 2012 has not yet occurred. So I might be a bit premature in declaring this the “Post-Apocalyptic Issue” as I have indeed done. So, in the event the world *does* end on December 21st, I shall be prepared to face the consequences of what then amounts to my deception.

If, on the other hand, December 21 passes without incident, you will be reading these words as 2013 begins. Each “new year” can serve as a point for each of us to reflect on where we have been and, of course, we would like to go. Over the last few months, our LocSec has expressed opinions on how best to assure the future of SCAM. This would be a good topic for all of us, as we all have a stake in the direction that our Mensa Local Group will take. Does SCAM have a future? What will it be like?

That is 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.

Editor's Note: There is no LocSec column for this month due to illness. So, as Editor, I am keeping his seat in The SCAM warm awaiting his return. All of us at SCAM wish Wynn a speedy recovery and a healthier new year.

This is the third cruise that Rita and I have taken on MSC (Mediterranean Shipping Company) ships. Our first, the *Opera*, was a delight in design, a brilliant vision in chrome, glass, and mirrors. The food was simply fabulous, the best Italian cuisine I've had, at home or in Italy. Our second MSC cruise was aboard the *Lirica*, a bland example of a large cruise ship's interior design. *Lirica's* food was the opposite of *Opera's*, some of the worst that I have ever encountered, so bad that I was induced to write my only critical review of a restaurant. My reviews of the *Opera* and the *Lirica* can be found in SCAM's files.

The *Poesia's* interior design is no better than the *Lirica's*, every surface in dark reds and browns with the typical polished brass trim. Many or most interior finishes are plastic laminates, imitating wood, including the outdoor open decks. Marble is used extensively, mostly black, dark brown, green, and grey which contributes to the generally somber interior. The theater is finished in a garish purple; the floors, the curtain, and the seats.

Because of the numerous hard finishes the noise level in the public rooms, such as the restaurants, buffets, and bars, is so loud that conversations are difficult. It's like the public rooms are large whispering galleries similar to that of the Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol. You hear every conversation and dish clanging as if it were occurring at your table. There are no urinals on this ship. In the public toilets there are only commodes in stalls. Of course, this is in accordance with Muslim proscription in accordance with *sharia* law.

The passengers on this cruise seemed to be recruited from the roster of Social Security. Virtually no one appeared to be under the age of 65. Of the 2,485 passengers, 2418 were classified as adults. The remaining 67 were infants, children, or teenagers. Also, the vast majority seemed to be obese or

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Under 40 and looking for comrades? **Check out GenY SIG!** We are open to members 18-36, and looking to pull together activities for Ms our age. Pretty sweet, right? Check us out on Facebook at '**Mensa GenY Space Coast!**'

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morbidly obese. This was reflected in their choice of location for meals. The restaurants were more than half empty whereas in the buffet it was difficult to find a seat.

In general, the ship seemed to be running in a minimum cost mode. There was no daily newspaper, the showers and the washbasins in the cabin did not have soap but liquid soap dispensers, a product usually found in the cheapest hotels. There were no toiletries.

The selection of ports was disastrous. In Colon, Panama, we attempted to walk to the center of town. As we approached it, we were accosted by a licensed Panamanian tourist guide who told us not to go further, it is dangerous. Go back to your ship. At Falmouth, Jamaica, there was no town where the ship docked, instead there was a vast shopping mall with hundreds of stalls built and run by Carnival Lines.

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 would you state that you qualified to join Mensa)? Why or why not? Let's hear from *you*.

A couple years back, my lovely wife and I went to downtown Melbourne on accounta this used book store was going out of business and selling all their inventory; paperbacks for 25¢, hardbound for a buck. A lot of books. Wander about, read the flyleaf or blurb on the back, and – if it looked even marginally interesting – into the pile it went. We walked out with a big cardboard box full of books for 10 bucks. Well, we are both voracious readers and manage to stay pretty much book-fulfilled courtesy of the library, but recently we hit a relative dead zone and I went pawing through the used book store loot we'd acquired. Came up with a strange little book published in 1975 called "Migration to the Stars: Never Again Enough People" by a fellow named Edward S. Gilfillan, Jr. According to the flyleaf, Gilfillan was an engineering consultant to the military and the space program, with a Ph.D. in chemistry from Harvard (1932). Despite my most earnest Googling, I was able to come up with exactly zilch on Gilfillan other than what was on the book jacket – shame because this is one interesting guy – however, I'm here to report on his book, not him.

In a nutshell, Gilfillan writes about leaving Earth and populating orbiting space environments and then eventually venturing out to the starts and populating distant planets. No big deal, right? Except that this guy is not just predicting it, he's actually spelled out the details of *how* to do it. In *excruciating* detail: what resources will be required, in what quantity, where they will/might be obtained, designs, specifications ad nauseum (with all facts and figures carefully worked out and checked by his team of students in China, where he spent an extended period of time teaching. Amazing! Especially when one considers that Gilfillan is basing his extrapolations on 1975 technology, before the advent of PCs and a host of things we take for granted that he could not possibly have foreseen.

But it's not just the remarkable amount of research that went into the detailed presentation of how we are to achieve extraterrestrial habitation that made this book so fascinating for me. In addition were his observations on human society and humanity in general. For instance, he sees people as a commodity; a necessary resource in order to achieve the stated goal of populating beyond terra firma. As such, they are expendable. And a good thing, too, as this expansion to the stars will involve a very high casualty rate due to mechanical failures, societal revolts during the centuries-long trips involved, succumbing to hostile environments upon arrival at one-way destinations, and a plethora of other pitfalls which await. But then, an excess of population

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SCAM Calendar of Events for January 2013

2nd - Wednesday 6:00 PM

EXCOMM MEETING

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

4th - 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.*

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.*

MENSA TESTING

Jan. 19 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 Feb. 16.

Contact: Hank Rhodes, mensatest@cfl.rr.com, for details.

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*

Membership Notes for January 2013

WELCOME TO SCAM

Jonathan Haley

Jon LaVine

WELCOME TO SCAM AND MENSA

Adam Cherwinski

WELCOME BACK!

Lynette Johnson

JANUARY BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

2nd	Rose Marie Martinez	19th	Lynette Johnson
4th	Vito Jimenez	21st	Diane Mullinax
4th	Joseph Richardson	22nd	Sean Jodoin
8th	Ramon Vicioso	23rd	Michael Mustard
10th	Dennis Logan	27th	William Mason
11th	Anthony Roma	28th	Jeffrey Lineweaver
12th	Arleigh Sharpe	28th	Joseph Carrier
14th	Barry Signorelli	30th	Jeffrey White
14th	Lee McLamb	31st	Joanne Ricker Abowitt
14th	Gary Tower		

IN MEMORIAM

Donald Elmore

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.

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is what got us to the position of needing additional space in the first place, so providing more “fodder” is the least of our worries. Of course, there is the issue of making sure that our adventurous space-farers are not particularly well-educated or intelligent because their primary qualification is not to be intrepid explorers, but to be faithful direction-followers!

Some thought-provoking quotes plucked from a wealth of opinions throughout the book:

The mission of our public high schools and colleges has been for twenty years [written in 1975]... little more than child-sitting facilities, keeping the students out of their parents' hair.

There should be no compulsory education beyond the eighth grade and no student should be allowed to go further in public institutions unless he demonstrates outstanding ability and a real vocation for learning. Most of those finishing the eighth grade should go directly into factories or, more likely, construction work.

Strictly speaking, overpopulation is impossible. As you get more and more people each gets less and less food until some people get too weak to reproduce and the population levels off.

It is often thought that we are a great nation because we are smarter and more industrious than anyone else. The fact is that we are not either as industrious or as good organizers as the Chinese, not as imaginative as the Arabs, not as smart as the British Indians, not as perceptive as the Blacks, and not as inventive as the Latins.

I'm calling this a book report rather than a book review because I'm not offering an opinion on it, rather just presenting it for your evaluation. I found it fascinating on two counts: the incredible detail and thoroughness put into describing *exactly* how we are to become a space-faring species; and the sometimes insightful, sometimes brazenly callous insensitivity to the human condition. Gilfillan was undoubtedly a highly intelligent person and a gifted engineer. I believe he was also somewhat eccentric and quite probably a fellow I'd have liked to chat with over a few adult libations.

The George

This Page is RESERVED:

JUST
FOR
YOU

We want to hear from YOU...!

See Page Three of every issue for
SCAM submittal guidelines.

Recently, I came across a *New York Times* opinion piece, “*More Babies Please*”, by Ross Douthat (December 1, 2012) decrying the declining birth rate in America. Understandably, the author attributes the decline (which he says began in 2008) to our recent economic downturn when the housing market collapsed. Further, he argues that a higher birthrate leads to prosperity. As Douthat puts it, “*Today’s babies are tomorrow’s taxpayers and workers and entrepreneurs, and relatively youthful populations speed economic growth and keep spending commitments affordable.*”

Concern over declining birthrates is hardly a new phenomenon. When I first read the Douthat article, it seemed to me to be reminiscent of a 2001 book by Pat Buchanan, *The Death of the West*. In his book, Buchanan chronicles the declining population in several European countries attributing the decline with the relatively prosperous Europeans opting for a comfortable lifestyle to the sacrifices necessary to rear children. He warns (perhaps correctly) that continuing to allow the population to decline will lead to an economic collapse in these countries. Buchanan then turns his attention to the United States.

Unlike Buchanan’s European examples, the United States population has continued to increase each year. His concern, which has to some extent been realized, is that, here in the United States, the share of the *white* population would decline, as he saw the white birthrate lag behind the birthrates of other racial groups. Since the most recent election, this seems to have become a major concern of the Republican Party as it sees a potential loss of support for its political goals.

However, Douthat does not seem to fall into the same bigotry trap that snares Buchanan. He does not specify the changing demographics by race, but sees the birthrate declining among everyone. The point on which both authors do agree is that if the trend of fewer births continues, it will produce adverse economic effects. Given the structure of our economy, they both may have a valid argument.

Assuming, as both authors seem to advocate, we should adopt a public policy of encouraging more births (and, presumably, we wish to do so without any government mandates to that end), what are we to do? While I do not claim to have all the solutions, it seems government ought to get serious. Below are a few ideas:

Adopt a “Living Wage” policy. At the risk of alienating single parents (many of whom are excellent parents), the ideal environment is when both parents are present. To this end, I would advocate that one wage earner should be able

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to support the family on one paycheck. This would allow one of the parents to be “stay-at-home” while the other holds down a job. I do NOT advocate that families must follow this model; I DO advocate that this model be viable for those who would choose this option. In our seeming opposition to what many see as the “welfare state”, a living wage, by definition, would eliminate the need for government subsidies to support the family’s basic needs.

Invest in education. It seems rather ironic that the same people who would like to see a higher birthrate are the ones cutting back on necessities for our children. It seems that our priorities have shifted away from providing a quality education for our children and toward “smaller government”. The conservative ideals as I understand them are “less government” and promoting “family values”. The reality is that we must choose between these ideals – they cannot coexist. Which will it be? We need to make up our minds.

Invest in our infrastructure. Whether the issue is our water supply, transportation needs, energy needs or whatever else, it seems that for the last generation, we have neglected to maintain and upgrade the very things we need for a thriving society. Some of the resultant issues have reached near-crisis proportions. Families cannot thrive without this sort of support from society.

Invest in “Medicare for All”. In light of the recent presidential campaigns where, in no small part, the Republican campaign was essentially a referendum on “Obamacare”, this may seem counterintuitive. While “Obamacare” is a somewhat better choice than the preceding privately-run model, we need to establish basic health care as a right and not merely as a privilege reserved for those who can afford it. One of the critical issues one must face in deciding to start (or expand) a family is, will we have access to needed, affordable, health care?

My comments above merely scratch the surface. Here is the challenge. If it is, indeed, better for society as a whole to place more emphasis on families in general (and birthrates in particular), then is it not an obligation of society to provide an environment conducive to those goals? If, on the other hand, a family’s decision to produce more babies comes under the heading of “personal responsibility” and not that of society, then why should society encourage high birthrates?

If our social goal is to reverse the current trend of declining birthrates, we need to get serious. At the very least, this would certainly mean an end to the whining about “big government”. What will it be?

At our last AMC meeting, among other things we voted to endorse candidates for international office. American Mensa is part of Mensa International, and Mensa International has officers and board members. It is not uncommon for people running for international office to ask national Mensa organizations for their endorsement. And this brings us back to a topic I've discussed before in this space: American Mensa's role in an international organization.

American Mensa is the largest and wealthiest national Mensa by far. In fact, if American Mensans voted in international elections in any great numbers, we could pretty much run Mensa International. In fact, this does not happen because American Mensans vote in international elections in smaller numbers than almost any other national Mensa group, so we exert far less influence than we could. Accordingly, I encourage everyone to vote in the upcoming international elections.

One thing that was very educational for me was making a decision about whom to endorse for international development officer. Mensa is experiencing its greatest growth in countries in which Mensa is a new organization. In fact, if you look at growth numbers for old, established Mensas such as Britain, the United States and Canada, and then compare them to growth numbers for China, it is possible that at some point in the future China could challenge other Mensas for membership and influence. We are nowhere near that point yet, and probably won't be for some time to come, but I could definitely see it as a possibility at some point in the future.

For that reason, it is especially crucial to have an international development officer, as well as an officer in charge of smaller national Mensas, who understands the importance of increasing our membership in places we haven't been before, and has the technical ability and skills to increase our market share.

Mel Dahl

The SCAM ExComm Meeting did NOT meet in December.

George



A Mensan in the family?

Are you the Mensan in your family? Or, is your spouse, child, parent or sibling the Mensan in your household? Are two or more (maybe all) in your household Mensans? If any of these apply, The SCAM is soliciting an article from *you*. All members of SCAM or family members are invited to respond. What are your impressions and experiences?