



American Mensa Committee Highlights ...

Thomas G. Thomas - RVC 10

The next meeting of the American Mensa Committee (AMC) will be held on Saturday, March 21 in Las Vegas at Alexis Park. As exciting as that might sound at first, it's not a casino hotel, and we'll be spending most of our time gazing at conference room walls and presentation screens as we discuss the 2020-2021 budget, the 2021-2025 Strategy, and various motions. While the agenda is not confirmed at the time I am writing this, you will be able to see the agenda at www.us.mensa.org/lead/amc/meeting-reports/ and selecting **2020-03-21 – Las Vegas** from the dropdown list.

One topic under discussion is related to changes regarding continuous membership. The national office regularly receives requests from members who have lapsed or who are renewing after a lapse asking to bridge the gap in their membership for a period of time. Often there are extenuating circumstances for the lapse, such as family emergencies which should of course take precedence over membership dues, and allowing those members to pay dues for the missing period seems to be a reasonable request. Unfortunately, nothing is ever as simple as it seems at first glance, and because there was no official process in place to make these sorts of exceptions, they were almost always declined.

On one hand, it seems that the value of this to the member is that of showing their pride in membership, and the value to the organization is catching up on the dues the member would have paid if they had maintained their membership, providing additional income to delay future dues increases. On the other hand, there is also value in continuous membership beyond the services the national organization provides. For instance, the recent Longtimer events held by Central Florida Mensa at their January RG and the Palm Beach Area and Broward Mensas in mid-February were specifically in celebration and thanks to those members who have supported Mensa for an extended period of time, and groups might have second thoughts about hosting such events for

members who had not actually been participating for the full period. And in national elections the candidates are asked when they joined Mensa, and whether they've been a member the full time. Such a question might be obscured by allowing members to claim continuous membership by paying for the privilege.

These are just some of the concerns raised, but you may have some of your own, so I would be interested in your opinions if you wish to let me know.

April 19-25 is Mensa Volunteer Week, when local groups are encouraged to participate in projects as part of Mensa Cares!, our internal program for showing our Community Service support. The first of the three purposes outlined in the Constitution of Mensa is "to identify and foster human intelligence for the benefit of humanity". We regularly receive feedback in our membership surveys that our members are looking for opportunities for service to the community, and I hope your group has something in the pipeline (and if they don't, perhaps you have a project of your own in mind). Examples of projects by other local groups can be found at: www.us.mensa.org/volunteer/community-service/ I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Until next month (or until I see you online) ... 

"The \$100,000 Pyramid"

ABC's hit primetime game show is back! Producers are now casting contestants nationwide for Season 5! www.castingpyramid.com/

They're looking for smart, witty, dynamic, and energetic people with a competitive drive!

Or, one of us ...

On the show, contestants will team up with celebrities and put their word association skills to the test for a chance to win big money and prizes. Make sure you upload a video in your casting application!

Filming is April, 2020, in NYC, and they'll be casting folks from across the nation. Must be 21+ and a legal U.S. resident. 

Space Coast Area Mensa Group

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Cape Canaveral Schedule

Again, amazingly vague for the next few weeks ...

Falcon 9 Block 5 | SpX CRS-20
SpaceX
Mon, Mar 2nd, 2020, TBD

Falcon 9 Block 5 | Starlink 5
SpaceX
Tue, Mar 3rd, 2020, TBD

Atlas V 551 | AEHF-6
United Launch Alliance
Thu, Mar 19th, 2020, 3:22 PM EDT

Falcon 9 Block 5 | SAOCOM 1B
SpaceX
March, 2020, TBD

Falcon 9 Block 5 | ANASIS-II
SpaceX
March, 2020, TBD

Atlas V 551 | AFSPC-12
United Launch Alliance
March, 2020, TBD

Getting the Brain's Attention ...

The Harvard Gazette excerpt > 02-2020

Today, the internet is a sensory free-for-all: Pop-up ads burst into articles every few paragraphs, stealing the screen with lollipop colors and music, shouting product information from unseen corners. The human body is not so different. Every fingernail, elbow, nostril, and eyebrow is constantly vying for the brain's attention.

"Right now, your little toe is sending signals up to your brain, as is every square inch of your body," said Adam Cohen, a professor of chemistry and chemical biology, and of physics, "but most of it is not interesting. Your brain has to ignore all that stuff and only pay attention to the very few things that are actually relevant."

Based on their data, the team designed a mathematical model of the circuit, which suggested an intriguing connection to a century-old theory about attention. The so-called Yerkes-Dodson law proposes that a little stress can help increase performance, but it declines when stress increases too much. "Everyone who's ever taken a test knows

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MENSA College Scholarships

Hello members,

Please encourage any local college students you know at accredited schools to apply for the scholarships offered for non-members by our local chapter and national, and also the members-only national scholarships. The announcement has been sent to FIT, Indian River State College, and Eastern Florida State College.

Big thanks go to Hank Rhodes and Libby Wilder for serving as scholarship judges. There were 26 submissions to consider for the local student scholarship award. Winners are usually announced sometime in May.

Details regarding eligibility:

An applicant must be intending to enroll in a degree granting accredited college/university the academic year following their application. Students just need to become enrolled and provide documentation of enrollment if they receive the award.

For more information - read the scholarship FAQ: www.mensafoundation.org/what-we-do/scholarships/us-scholarships/

Thank you,

Julie S. Costopoulos, Ph.D.
Space Coast Area Mensa (S.C.A.M.)
Scholarship Chair

Testing:

All testing conducted at Central Brevard Library, Cocoa, Florida (633-1794) unless otherwise noted. Testing starts at 1000. (Proctor arrival approx 0930, Candidate arrival approx 0945.)

Mar 21 Proctor – Hank Rhodes. 

Sulfur Miners Inside a Volcano ...

Wired excerpt > 02-2020

To celebrate his wife's birthday last year, Canadian photographer Larry Louie took her to a sulfur mine. That wasn't the plan—their original itinerary was in Bali. But after a couple of days in that tourist-plagued paradise, they began looking for something a little less commercialized. A bit of online research led Louie to the sulfur mines of the dormant Mt. Ijen on the nearby island of Java. Famous for their electric-blue fire (created by the spontaneous combustion

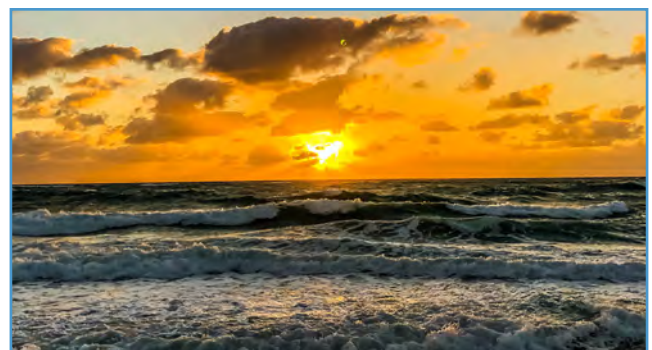
of subterranean gasses) and toxic yellow smoke, the mines would make an interesting photography project, Louie thought.

His wife agreed, so the couple packed their bags, booked a flight to Java, and hired a local guide to take them to the sulfur mine. They started climbing Mt. Ijen in the middle of the night and reached the summit just before dawn in order to see the blue flames. As the sun rose, they descended into the vast volcanic caldera, which emits billowing clouds of sulfur from hundreds of cracks in the earth. Ceramic pipes placed by miners in the caldera floor direct some of the smoke toward collection points, where the superheated gas instantly turns into a solid, forming dripping yellow stalactites.

These stalactites are what the workers mine. Using picks, they chip off chunks of sulfur, place them in reed baskets, and carry them up to the top of the crater, where they are loaded into wheelbarrows for the trip down the mountain. (Sulfur is used in cosmetics, explosives, and agricultural products.) Louie learned from his guide that workers spend 12-hour shifts dodging plumes of poisonous smoke (with many protected only by rags tied around their mouths) while carrying up to 180 pounds of sulfur on their backs. With temperatures reaching 100 degrees Fahrenheit and a pervasive smell of rotten eggs, it's one of the most dangerous and unpleasant jobs on earth—but pays \$12 a day, a relatively high salary for that part of Indonesia.

Louie's guide provided him and his wife with gas masks, but they were too clogged to be useful. This became a problem when Louie insisted on getting as close as possible to his subjects. After three hours of shooting, he nearly passed out from all the toxic smoke. "I got a little dizzy and was losing my eyesight a little bit," he says. "Fortunately my wife saw me and she yelled to the guide to get me out of there." They eventually made the decision to end the

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PLACE
STAMP
HERE



Be Safe, Gang

Getting the Brain's Attention – Cont. from pg. 2

this," Cohen said. His model showed that layer one neurons behaved in a similar way: A little top-down activation wakes them up so they are more responsive to sensory inputs, but too much activation makes the circuit freeze and ignore incoming information. 🍌

Just Meandering By ...

The Editor

Any ideas, experiences, horrible flops?

Feel free to throw your life's tidbits our way - the blackmail beat is getting pretty thin ...

P.S. the new Executive Committee members need some livening up - complacency is never good ...

SCAM, SCAM, SCAM!!!



Sulphur Miners Inside a Volcano – Cont. from pg. 3

expedition early and descend the mountain. Louie had hoped to return the next day to shoot more photographs, but he felt too sick to make another climb.

Louie has photographed people working in some of the world's most extreme environments, including a Bangladeshi garbage dump, an Indian jute mill, and a Moroccan tannery. But few workers labor under conditions as difficult as the sulfur miners on Mt. Ijen. "I've always been interested in highlighting the strength of people and the struggles of workers around the world," he says.

He'd like to return to Mt. Ijen someday—but this time, perhaps, with a functioning gas mask. 🍌

