

from the director of administration...

A former chairman and Honorary President of Mensa International, the late Victor Serebriakoff, used to speak of his golden vision of Mensa as a global village.

Mensa did indeed become that but with the technological facilities of our time, the realm of Mensa has grown far beyond a village and is more akin to a small city. With approximately 120,000 inhabitants, this global city exists in a parallel dimension, and has a portal in every part of the world.

Some candidates who receive letters of acceptance are happy just to have the visa to this global city in their pockets for possible use one day. Others actually join and get their passports, but are content just to go to the airport to be able to say, "I've been there, I am a member." Some even set foot outside the airport and start to explore the city, but after a first encounter – good, bad or indifferent – think that this typifies Mensa

Nothing could be further from the truth. As in every city, there is a wide gamut of people, areas, cultures and events. Every city has its Left Bank of artists, its Greenwich Village of writers; its Wall Street of investors, its Fleet Street of Journalists. So, too, does Mensa.

But one needs to seek out these areas; knowledge of the city comes through exploration, wandering down winding alleys, cul de sacs, re-tracking from deadends and not being distracted by difficult people and other obstacles. And when found,

what riches! The Mensa Greenwich Village, for example, includes Jean Aeul, creator of the *Clan of the Cave Bear*, Dr Jack Cohen, scientific writer, SciFi writers such as Arthur C Clarke, and many, many more. We have hundreds of writers who write magazine articles, short stories, romantic novels, poetry, academic tracts ... and we have thousands of writers who have yet to put pen to paper. Who knows what will emanate from their pens and word processors? Mensan Dan Brown, author of *The Da Vinci Code*, didn't write his first novel until the age of 53. Now he is a household name.

Every city also has its ethnic centres: its Chinatowns, its Bohemian quarters; these are easiest to find in Mensa, because of our real-life geographical divisions into national Mensas. Your citizenship in our Mensan realm gives you entry to all quarters; meetings in every part of the world; all enjoying a slightly different flavour and emphasis. And best yet, you can visit several at once: EMAG (European Mensa Annual Gathering) introduces one to Mensans in Europe; AMAG to Mensans in Asia. Last year the AMAG, for example, was held in Bali. Despite this being a popular holiday destination, the theme was a serious one: 'Global Brains for the Poor' and three days of combined M energy was directed towards means of ensuring education for those who couldn't yet afford to access even the most basic of the three Rs.

And, just as in real-world cities,

Therese Moodie-Bloom



we have a wide range of socio-economic strata and members have a wide range of educational levels (some not having completed grade school but ably self-educated, others heads of their academic fields in universities around the world) - with widely divergent occupations, and personalities.

While this global city of Mensa lies in a very accessible notional dimension, with entry tests and IQ scores as portals, it sometimes seems that we have slipped through a different portal – a looking-glass - and ended up in Lewis Carroll's Wonderland! Like Alice, we meet weird and wonderful people. And, as in Wonderland, our Mensa global city inhabitants can be fascinating, extremely clever, eccentric, odd, rude at times, strident, or gentle and kindly; they often appear to speak in riddles, and can be quite unconventional.

In my twenty years of Mensa membership I have met them all. I have empathized with some members who have been turned away by the more strident characters who sometimes seem to dominate a meeting, but Mensa is far bigger and greater than any local group. Explore the

Mensa realm as you would any new city – you will find wonderful surprises if you keep seeking.

Prior to joining Mensa I had enjoyed a variety of occupations and lifestyles: a magic childhood on a sunny Sydney beach, as a rebellious university student, a musician in Viet Nam and SE Asia during the war, a teacher of classical music in Europe, an English language teacher in the Middle East, and a puzzles columnist for a national newspaper. I lived and worked in both first and third world countries, I experienced Islamic, Bhuddist and Christian religious environments, and lived under many types of government. Yet Mensa has further enriched my life immeasurably, in innumerable ways.

I am proud to have this opportunity to give something back to Mensa, as Director of Administration.

Therese Moodie-Bloom
admin-mil@mensa.org

Mark Your Diaries

October 4 - 8

GOM (Mensa Croatia Annual Gathering)
gom@mensa.hr

October 26 - 28

Dutch October-Weekend
More details to come

November 22 - 24

Australian Mensa Conference + Kids' Conference.
www.mensa.org.au/amc-2013
amc2013@mensa.org.au

Nov 29 - Dec 8

Australian MAP (Mensans At Play) Camp: www.mapsig.com

the man behind our science news...

*John Blinke has been writing for Mensa publications for 23 years and his column, **SuppleMentally**, has been of widespread interest to members worldwide during that time. Many, many thanks to John - the longest-serving contributor to the International Journal and now the Mensa World Journal.*

John lives in Rochester Hills, Michigan, USA. He joined Mensa in 1984 and is a life member.

He's an electrician/thermographer for Ford Motor Company, is single, has no kids and is 62 years old.

He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in English at Wayne State University in 1973, has been a civil defense volunteer and is a trained tornado spotter.

He blames his sixth grade science teacher for his interest in science. "Dr Norvel Scott treated my class like a group of lab assistants. He even took us on tours of other schools to show off the observational skills he taught us. Dr. Scott's classroom was lined with aquariums full of ant colonies, frog eggs, lizards ..."

SuppleMentally was created by then-editor of the American Mensa *Bulletin*, Kent Van Cleave. He asked John to take over the column in 1990, and he has been writing it ever since!

John hosts a monthly Mensa science discussion group called RAM (Rochester Area Mensa) and has given science presentations at a

number of RGs and AGs on varied topics. He also helped organize two Colloquia: Dark Matter and Human Consciousness. His local group is Southeast Michigan Mensa (SEMM) and for his contribution to all things

Mensa, he was given a Mensa Service Award in 1992.

He drifts between a number of "nerdy" hobbies: ham radio, astronomy, rocketry, chemistry, and "just fooling around to find stuff out". John reads a lot of periodicals and listens to dozens of

podcasts, he doesn't watch TV and only turns on broadcast radio for weather forecasts.

"Years ago," John writes, "I read about flying saucers, meditation and witchcraft, among other things. All swore to be the TRUTH, but none of them were. When I discovered science, it claimed to know nothing with certainty, but it tried honestly to find things out. It is still trying. And, so am I."



September 19-23

International Board of

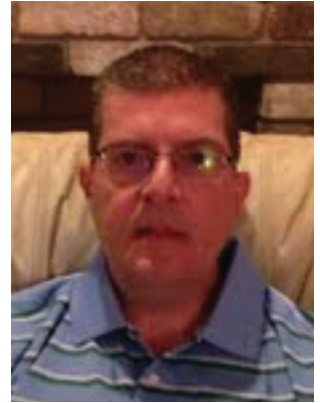
Directors Meeting

Calgary, Canada

www.ibd2013.com

overcoming the odds...

John Pirola recently joined American Mensa in Minnesota. His road to Mensa was a rather different - and more difficult - path than is usual. John outlines his journey for us below.



Earlier this year, I stumbled upon the Mensa Brain Test app and was immediately hooked. Having completed all the tests, I purchased a book of Mensa puzzles and found these to be even more challenging. Completely intrigued by these puzzles, I began to wonder if I was physically capable of enduring the formal Mensa Admissions Test...

In 2001, I had been diagnosed with a cholesterol granuloma located deep within the base of my skull. Though benign, this aggressive tumor had eroded significant bone mass and, left unchecked, would soon have damaged my cranial nerves and/or infiltrated my brain tissue. Eight years and half a dozen surgeries later, the tumor relentlessly recurred yet again and I suffered a traumatic brain stem injury during another surgery in 2010. Fortunately, I finally found a surgeon who was able to eradicate the tumor in 2011; to him I am eternally grateful.

Upon awaking from the 2010 surgery, I was paralyzed on the left side. After months of intensive physical therapy, I re-learned to walk and use my left arm fairly well, but still have other lingering physical issues to this day. As a result of this brain injury, I unfortunately struggle with severe facial pain on a daily basis. This intractable pain is exacerbated by any activity, including speaking and prolonged concentration, which has forced me to leave the workforce altogether. Over the years, I had several breaks in my

employment as a contracts professional (drafting and negotiating various contractual documents for the defense, software and healthcare industries), but I always returned to work. Since the brain injury, however, I have been unable to seek another position similar to the last one I held as Director of Contracts and Procurement.

All known surgeries, drugs and treatment options have proven unsuccessful, including intrathecal infusions of incredibly powerful drugs via an implanted pain pump, which was recently surgically removed. However, although the injury was physically devastating, my cognitive functions, fortunately, remain

intact. Rather concerned that these too might atrophy without continued mental stimulation, I made a concerted effort to work my brain on a regular basis. This has been rather challenging since the act of focused concentration exacerbates my condition fairly quickly. Nonetheless, I had been working hard each day by engaging in various mental activities (mostly on my iPhone), e.g. playing chess, Sudoku and working on analytical puzzles.

Then I began to concentrate on Mensa puzzles! In an effort to foster a teachable moment for my four young children (two boys and two girls, ages

eight to fourteen), I decided

to sign up for the test and give it a try, understanding that the outcome was secondary to putting forth my best effort. Each day, as my children diligently studied and pored over their homework, I too was deep in thought, reviewing countless Mensa puzzles

while fighting through the exacerbated pain. I decided to use this increased mental activity as a precursor to also increasing my physical activity in an effort to further build upon my already extraordinarily high pain tolerance. My ultimate goal: having the ability to re-engage with my family, as I had effectively become a housebound invalid since the injury.

As the May 2013 test date approached, my children's excitement level began to surpass my own and provided additional impetus to continue my preparation. Not surprisingly, the test experience required a Herculean effort (both mentally and physically), but in the end, it was worth it, as this exercise went a long way in further increasing my pain tolerance - not to mention the fact that I somehow scored high enough on the test to gain admission into Mensa! Upon hearing the news that I had achieved a score at or above the 98th percentile, my eight year old daughter

“Not surprisingly, the test experience required a Herculean effort (both mentally and physically), but in the end, it was worth it...”

continued on p6

Dyslexia - an overview

Thomas Hally

Although most of us have the ability to read and write with little or no hindrance, for the dyslexic, these fundamental skills are elusive and difficult to master. Before I go any further, let us look at one very good definition of “dyslexia”:

“Dyslexia is a speech learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction.” (Lyon, Shaywitz and Shaywitz 2003)

The word “dyslexia” is made up of two distinct parts: “dys”, meaning “not” or “difficult”, and “lexia”, meaning “words”, “reading” or “language”. Research indicates that the dyslexic’s problem originates in the brain, more precisely in the geniculate body in the thalamus. At the heart of the problem of the dyslexic is his or her inability to correctly identify speech sounds in spoken language. A “short circuit” in the medial geniculate area in the auditory thalamus causes an error in the processing of speech sound. Hence, dyslexic or “reading disabled” adults and children incorrectly transfer auditory information from the ear to the cortex.

The dyslexic adult and child do not lack the intelligence necessary to read as a “normal” person; however, persons with dyslexia have difficulty reading and explaining isolated words and entire texts. A common misunderstanding about dyslexia is that it

is a problem of letters and word reversals; juxtapositions of letters, words or entire sentences. These “move about” or “dance” and appear in various positions on the page being

read. But, writing and reading words backwards is quite common in the incipient stages of learning to read and write among both the “average” and the dyslexic person. The presence of this “extra condition” does not necessarily indicate a reading disability. (Reading disability is the most common and carefully studied of all learning disabilities, affecting 80 percent of those who are learning-disabled).

Dyslexia is neurobiological in origin, meaning that it is a physical problem in the brain. Dyslexia is not the result of poverty, developmental delay, speech or hearing impediment or learning a second language. Children with dyslexia often show two main difficulties when asked to read a grade-level appropriate text: they will not be able to read by first sight as many words as the average reader; guessing, stumbling, and unsuccessfully attempting to sound out some words. Secondly, they will often show decoding difficulties: they will not be very accurate in using letter-sound relationships in combination with context to identify unknown words. Dyslexia is a condition that affects people from childhood through to



old age. With remedial instruction, some of the difficulties can be helped significantly. Imaging research has shown that the brains of people with dyslexia show different and less efficient patterns of speech and sound processing than average readers during specific tasks. One commonly used method for imaging brain function is functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), a safe, non-invasive method that measures physiological signs of neural activation using a powerful magnet to pinpoint blood flow. Participants perform tasks while “under the magnet” rather than letting the activity of the brain be measured while it is “at rest”. Hence, the fMRI technique is “functional”.

In a 2003 study (Hayward *et al*) using brain-imaging techniques, 10 children with dyslexia were compared with 11 average readers before a 28-hour intervention that only the students with dyslexia received. The two groups of students were compared in “out-of-magnet” reading tests as well as sound identification tasks based on level of activation. The results showed that while the control children showed

(continued on p06)

a look inside children's minds

When young children gaze intently at something or furrow their brows in concentration, you know their minds are busily at work. But you're never entirely sure what they're thinking. Now you can get an inside look. Psychologists led by the University of Iowa for the first time have peered inside the brain with optical neuroimaging to quantify how much 3- and 4-year-old children are grasping when they survey what's around them and to learn what areas of the brain are in play.

The study looks at “visual working memory,” a core cognitive function in which we stitch together what we see at any given point in time to help focus attention. In a series of object-matching tests, the researchers found that 3-year-olds can hold a maximum of 1.3 objects in visual working memory, while 4-year-olds reach capacity at 1.8 objects. By comparison, adults max out at 3 to 4 objects, according to prior studies.

“This is literally the first look into a 3 and 4-year-old's brain in action in this particular working memory task,” says John Spencer, psychology professor at the UI and corresponding author of the paper, which appears in the journal *NeuroImage*.

The research is important, because visual working memory performance has been linked to a variety of childhood disorders, including attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism, developmental coordination disorder as well as affecting children born prematurely. The goal is to use the new brain imaging technique to detect these disorders before they manifest themselves in children's behavior later on.

“At a young age, children may behave the same,” notes Spencer, who's also affiliated with the Delta Center and whose department is part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, “but if you can distinguish these problems in the brain, then it's possible to

intervene early and get children on a more standard trajectory.”

Plenty of research has gone into better understanding visual working memory in children and adults. Those prior studies divined neural networks in action using function magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). That worked great for adults, but not so much with children, especially young ones, whose jerky movements threw the machine's readings off kilter. So, Spencer and his team turned to functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS), which has been around since the 1960s but has never been used to look at working memory in children as young as three years of age.

Like fMRI, fNIRS records neural activity by measuring the difference in oxygenated blood concentrations anywhere in the brain. You've likely seen similar technology when a nurse puts your finger in a clip to check your circulation. In the brain, when a region is activated, neurons fire like mad, gobbling up oxygen provided in the blood. Those neurons need another shipment of oxygen-rich blood to arrive



to keep going. The fNIRS measures the contrast between oxygen-rich and oxygen-depleted blood to gauge which area of the brain is going full tilt at a point in time.

The researchers outfitted the youngsters with colorful, comfortable ski hats in which fiber optic wires had been woven. The children played a computer game in which they were shown a card with one to three objects of different shapes for two seconds. After a pause of a second, the children were shown a card with either the same or different shapes. They responded whether they had seen a match or not.

The tests revealed novel insights. First, neural activity in the right frontal cortex was an important barometer of higher visual working memory capacity in both age groups. This could help clinicians evaluate children's visual working memory at a younger age than before, and work with those whose capacity falls below the norm, the

researchers say.

Secondly, 4-year olds showed a greater use than 3-year olds of the parietal cortex, located in both hemispheres below the crown of the head and which is believed to guide spatial attention.

“This suggests that improvements in performance are accompanied by increases in the neural response,” adds Aaron Buss, a UI graduate student in psychology and the first author on the paper. “Further work will be needed to explain exactly how the neural response increases - either through changes in local tuning, or through changes in long range connectivity, or some combination.”

Contributing authors include David Boas from Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School and Nicholas Fox, research assistant at the UI.

(<http://now.uiowa.edu/2013/06/look-inside-childrens-minds>)

(continued from p03)

squealed with delight. The next day, she told her whole class that, although her Daddy is very sick, he’s still smart and now “does Mensa”.

Aside from my helpful Mensa test proctor with whom I still communicate from time to time, I have not yet met any other Mensans. Hopefully, the daily struggle to increase my pain tolerance will afford me the opportunity to do so (before too long), as I have been unable to socialize on a one-to-one basis much at all since the injury, let alone in a large, public setting. Otherwise, perhaps my current team of physicians may be able to eventually identify a helpful treatment option.

I remain cautiously optimistic...

(continued from p04)

no differences between the two readings, the dyslexic students showed a significant increase in activation in those areas important for reading and language during the phonological task.

Before the intervention, the reading-disabled children showed significant under-activation in these areas compared with the control children. The profiles of

both groups were very similar when the treatment was over. This appears to be good news, although a word of caution is advisable. The results are somewhat “suspect” due to a lack of specificity about the intervention that was provided, the small sample size, and the lack of an experimental control group.

All is not negative for the dyslexic, however. The average reading-disabled person has a pretty nifty” collection of abilities and assets which can be of great use in the right situation. Dyslexics are hyper-perceptive and environmentally-aware; highly curious, intuitive and insightful, and they have

lively imaginations. Most are very creative, adaptable to change, and they are holistic, getting to the gist of the matter and not getting “bogged down” in details. And above all, dyslexics are

often leaders and in charge of their destiny. There have been many, many accomplished people in the annals of history who are dyslexic, among them: Alexander Graham Bell, actress Ann Bancroft, Pierre Curie, Thomas Edison, Michael Faraday, Albert Einstein, and actor Tom Cruise.

There are currently a number of research studies in progress with the goal of determining the most effective and utilitarian methods of intervention to help the child or adult afflicted with dyslexia. The future looks very bright indeed for the reading-disabled person.

References:

- 1) “Dyslexia and the Brain: What Does Current Research Tell Us?” by Roxanne F. Hudson, Leslie High, and Stephanie Al Otaiba. LD online (2007).
- 2) “New Insights into the Neuroscience of Dyslexia” by Rick Nauert, PhD, Senior News Editor. Psych-central.com
- 3) “The Upside of Dyslexia” by Anne Murphy Paul. The New York Times Sunday Review.

“Dyslexia is neurobiological in origin, meaning that it is a physical problem in the brain.”

S.I.G.H.T

SIGHT is an acronym meaning Service for Information, Guidance, and Hospitality to Travellers. SIGHT connects Mensans who want to meet other Mensans. Some travel themselves while others give advice to travellers including the best places to stay or visit.

SIGHT also puts members in touch with each other as hosts and guests, providing each party with the information to make contact.

sight@mensa.org

mensa world journal

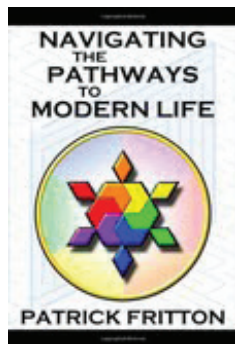
books

tom elliott

This Way Madness Comes by Robert Alan (Cycd Press). Although written for entertainment purposes, this tale admittedly touches upon the dangers of the double-edged sword of technology and extreme ideologies. And a spellbinding tale it is. In a remote Arctic laboratory, Soviet scientist Alexi Truskov discovers a virtually unlimited source of energy (no, it isn't cold fusion) that sets off a desperate intercontinental race for a device that could change the course of human history – or end it. A thriller full of unexpected twists and turns both in the air and under the sea, the book's cover sports more seals than a well-used passport, including the 2011 International Book Award for "Best New Fiction" and 2011 Indie Excellence Award for "Fiction/Adventure".

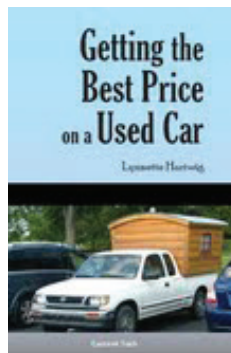


Navigating the Pathways to Modern Life by Patrick Fritton (Good Oak Press LLC). Conflict in life is nothing new, but what seems to cause us the most strife is getting along with others. Designed to be a "swissarmy tool for life's problems", this self-help guide focuses on these relationships: how to understand them and rebalancing ourselves to solve life's problems, big and small. But it gets quite deep and requires levels and charts showing the

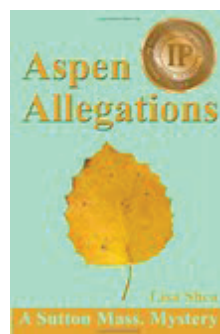


interactions of many different categories such as physical, psychological, mental, volitional, spiritual, and metaphysical and how they all combine to affect who we are, what we believe, and how we behave.

Getting the Best Price on a Used Car by Lynnette Hartwig (CreateSpace). A mechanical engineer, mechanic, daughter of an auto repair shop manager, and journeyman toolmaker, Lynnette has the chops to steer you right not only about choosing the best car for you, haggling over the price, arranging for financing, and getting the most for your trade-in, but also about finding a good mechanic, negotiating warranty work and repairs, and the many other details of car ownership. Bottom line: if you're planning to buy a used buggy, don't leave home without this guide!

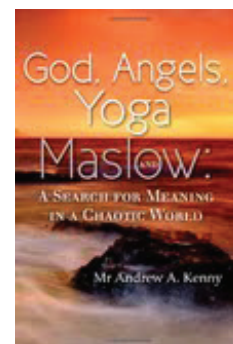


Aspen Allegations: A Sutton Mass. Mystery by Lisa Shea (Minerva Webworks LLC). Lisa, as I've mentioned before, is the founder and leader of the Boston Mensan Writers group and a prolific author in her own right. I love stories set locally, and am familiar with Sutton, Purgatory Chasm, and other



sites to which she alludes. Morgan's quiet life in Sutton alongside her cat, Juliet, is suddenly shattered when she stumbles across a body in Sutton Woods, first assuming an accident but soon suspecting something more sinister, a turn that puts her life in danger. To tempt you further, know that Lisa has woven in bits and pieces of poetry, literature, science-fiction, computer-gaming, yoga, music, and other elements that Mensans will especially understand and appreciate.

God, Angels, Yoga, and Maslow: A Search for Meaning in a Chaotic World by Andrew A. Kenny (CreateSpace). I'm not all that keen on self-help books in general, but I've always wanted to learn a bit more about yoga and Buddhism, and this book provides a relatively painless way for me to do so. Andrew describes the effects of moving up in Maslow's Hierarchy



beyond the God Union level that characterizes Christianity and delineates the distinctions between insights derived from experiential versus those from intellectual knowledge. Don't let all the tables and diagrams throw you off, as everything will begin to fall together and start making sense as you

continue.
All books reviewed in this column are authored by Mensans.

Check www.mensa.org for contact details of events open to all members internationally

mensa world journal

What do these organizations share in common?



What do these people share in common?



Mensa International Board of Directors invites you to a gala secret agent induction session and banquet

When: **Saturday, September 21, 2013 at 7:00 pm**

Where: **Delta Bow Valley – 209 – 4th Avenue SE, Calgary**

Dress Code: **Spy Wear**

international directory

Chairman: Ms Elissa Rudolph chairman-mil@mensa.org Tel: +31 (0)20 661 2718
Director Admin: Ms Therese Moodie-Bloom +612 99549937 admin-mil@mensa.org
Director Development: Mr Björn Liljeqvist development-mil@mensa.org
Treasurer: Mr Rudolf Challupner treasurer-mil@mensa.org
Dir. Smaller National Mensas: Mr Lars Endre Kjølstad dsnm-mil@mensa.org
Hon. President: Dr Abbie Salny 407 Breckenridge, Wayne NJ 07470 USA Tel: +1 973 305 0055
SIGHTCoord: Mr Steve Mai SIGHT@mensa.org
Int. SIG Coord: Ms Barbara Kryvko sigs@mensa.org
Ombudsman: Mr Martyn Davies ombudsman@mensa.org

editorial staff

Editor: Ms Kate Nacard 407/23 Corunna Rd, Stanmore NSW 2048 Australia
Tel: +61 2 9516 1024 mwjeditor@mensa.org
Science: Mr John Blinke Johnb44221@cs.com
Books: Mr Tom Elliott tme@verizon.net
Feature Articles: Mr Thomas Hally tjh@thomas-hally.com

Executive Director: Mr Michael Feenan, Slate Barn, Church Lane, Caythorpe, Lincolnshire NG32 3EL, UK
Tel/Fax+44(0)1400272 675 mensainternational@mensa.org

The Mensa World Journal (MWJ) is produced under the auspices of the Mensa International Board of Directors. Mandatory content as identified by the MWJ editor must be published in every national Mensa magazine. Publication of other content is recommended but optional. Opinions expressed in the MWJ are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of any other individual or any official Mensa body. Submission Guidelines: Language: English only. Text: MS Word (Windows), .rtf (Word/Mac), plain text, PageMaker (Windows), InDesign (Windows) Length: 500 word limit. Send by e-mail, fax, snail mail to the Editor. The Editor reserves the right to include or edit submissions for space and content considerations. All unoriginal submissions must be accompanied by written permission for publication from the original author. Permission is granted for MWJ articles to be reprinted in any Mensa publication provided that the author, MWJ and MWJ's editor are acknowledged. Permission must be sought from the MWJ editor for reprinting of any part of the MWJ in non-Mensa publications.