

MENSA DIPLOMACY SIG NEWS

NUMBER 11

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An irregularly published newsletter of the American Postal Diplomacy Special Interest Group. Hey, how about a real name for this sheet? Anyone have a suggestion?

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1. Yes, if you haven't heard the news elsewhere, Avalon Hill now owns the Diplomacy game. The set still retails for the same price, \$10.95 postpaid, direct from the new manufacturer. However, with A-H's vast distribution system, Diplomacy should start appearing in a lot more stores in a few months. A-H expects to at least double the sale of sets in the next year, so Diplomacy may yet become a household word. We can expect a lot more recruits to the postal hobby.
2. Bill Young announces that the IN-PERSON Diplomacy game at the AG will take place in his hotel room on FRIDAY, June 25th, probably starting around 10 p.m., or whenever the official program ends for the evening. Bill is planning to arrive at the AG on Thursday evening. I don't expect to arrive until Friday Noon, but will be looking forward to meeting some of you then.
3. The New Jersey FTF Mensa Diplomacy Tournament has ended. Three of the regulars, Dave Blank, Pete Botton and Dave Remine, will be attending the Valley Forge AG to play in the games there. The Group still plays in-person games on the fourth Friday of each month in Atlantic Highlands, N.J. (That's an outer suburb of New York, near Red Bank). Any M's passing through the area are welcome to participate. Contact Dave at: 7 Branch Rd., Oakhurst, N.J. 07755.
4. It's not too early to remind SIG members that the posts of Chairman and Senior Committeeman will be up for re-election in the Fall. New two-year terms will begin November 1, 1976. I would like to have someone who is not planning to run for office to volunteer his or her services as Election Commissioner. Then, we will call for nominations for offices on or about August 1st. I would also appreciate knowing whether the incumbents plan to stand for re-election. If no one else wants to be Chairman, I will run again. However, if you would like to run for the post, please let me know as soon as possible.
5. We will soon be faced with the necessity of dropping those SIG members who are not playing in any Postal Diplomacy games, or any in-person games, and have not paid anything toward the cost of printing and mailing this newsletter. The postal rates are too high to go on mailing freebie copies. So, if you are not currently participating in any types of Diplomacy games, but want to remain in the SIG, please send me a \$1.00 contribution for the newsletter. Thankyou.
6. Also, the Officers agree that any SIG member who drops out of a Mensa SIG Postal game without properly resigning (i.e. dropping out without notice to the GM) should be dropped from SIG membership. This action will become effective 30 days from now, for the two people concerned, unless I hear from you that you want to continue your SIG membership. I won't name names here. You guys know who you are. Please write me if you want to stay in the SIG.

(over)

7. May I also remind everyone to renew their national Mensa dues. Only currently dues-paying M's can belong to the SIG, although we do not pursue this matter until the new National Membership Lists come out around August of each year.
 8. I hope everyone realizes that the Gordon Anderson in Chicago who has earned the enmity of the entire Postal Diplomacy hobby is not related to the Gordon K. Andersen of Minnesota who edits the Mensa BULLETIN. This is just a name coincidence.
 9. Members are reminded that the national Diplomacy tournament (DipCon) will be held at the ORIGINS II Wargaming convention in Baltimore on July 23-25. The convention will be held on the campus of the Johns Hopkins University, 3400 Charles St., Baltimore, Md. 21218. There will be a two-round Dippy tournament starting about 1 p.m. on Saturday. The annual business meeting of the International Diplomacy Assn. will be held on Saturday evening. I would appreciate it if any Mensans planning to attend would let me know they're coming.
- You can obtain more information about ORIGINS II (and how to register for the Diplomacy Tournament and obtain reservations at the Holiday Inn Downtown at a reduced rate) by writing to: Mr. Randy Reed, "Convention", 4517 Harford Rd., Baltimore, Md. 21214. When I wrote this, Tournament fees were not yet published.
10. New member and change of address:

SFC David J. Rolfe, 2nd General Hosp., Box 1, APO New York 09180. (eff. 5-31-76)
David L. Carawan, 1400 S. Joyce St., Apt. A-508, Arlington, Va. 22202. (moved)
 11. Last but not least, I've just written a very unorthodox history of Mensa for my own Dippyazine, BUSHWACKER, in the hopes of picking up a few new members. A copy is enclosed for your own amusement (and recruiting plans).

We received four more Thumbnail Biographies of Diplomacy SIG members, but since we have the Mensa history to give you, we'll hold them for the next issue.

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MENSA DIPLOMACY SIG NEWSLETTER
c/o Fred C. Davis, Jr.
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U.S.A.

In response to an ever-decreasing number of requests, we thought we'd tell you something about Mensa. Many normal people have written sensible histories about the high-I.Q. club, but you really wouldn't expect to find that sort of article here, would you?

Mensa was born as an outgrowth of a BBC radio broadcast in 1945, on which Sir Cyril Burt expressed the idea of creating a "brains trust" to help get Britain out of its postwar troubles. Sir Cyril, a leading psychologist of the day, later became the President of Mensa, but neither the British government nor any other group of politicians has ever asked for help from Mensa in running their affairs.

Mensa was originally supposed to consist of people in the top one percent of the intelligence scale. All of the original members must have been either liberal arts graduates or barristers. After several years, someone with a mathematical bent discovered that due to a calculating error, Mensa had been admitting the top two percent! Since half the membership couldn't very well be expelled, the Constitution was amended to admit the upper two percent. (That's how a lot of us sneaked in).

Mensa remained a British institution for many years, with a rather low membership. The club didn't really seem to know which way it was going. At one time, there was even a lady member who served as Queen of Mensa, as if the group was a miniature Ruritania. The chosen lady, one Vera Rose Davies, was reported to have been "petrified by the experience."

Then along came Victor Serebriakoff, who became Secretary in 1955. Soon, the club began to expand. Victor has been the guiding light of Mensa ever since. Membership was 400 in 1958; 750 in 1959. In 1960, Victor flew to America to help get things started here. Subsequently, he has flown all over the world helping other national groups form their own organizations in places like Cyprus and Singapore.

It soon became apparent that one central organization in London could not responsibly handle the affairs of all Mensans around the world. Victor then helped to create the idea of an International Mensa over and above the various national groups. He has been either the International Chairman or International Secretary ever since. I once said, "All Mensans are equal, but Victor is more equal than others."

Peter Sturgeon of Brooklyn, N.Y. founded American Mensa in 1960. This is why Mensa's U.S. headquarters have always been in Brooklyn. With Victor's aid, Peter discovered Margot Seitelman. Margot has been the chief secretary of American Mensa ever since. While others ran around like chickens with their heads cut off, Margot kept everything together. Margot [Margaret] means "pearl". She is certainly the pearl in Mensa's oyster.

John Codella was the man most responsible for the rapid growth of American Mensa in the early years from 1961 to 1965, when he was Chairman. Membership jumped from 150 to 7,000 during that period. American Mensa included both the U.S. and Canada then. The early conventions, called Annual Gatherings, were all held in New York. In 1967, in a show of internationalism, the A.G. was scheduled for Montreal. Shortly before the convention, Mensa Canada became an independent entity. Accordingly, Canadian members became guests in their own country at what had suddenly become a U.S. Mensa Convention. This is called Planning Ahead.

The club's titles are full of Britishisms. Instead of chapters, there are Local Groups. The chief officer of each Group is the Local Secretary. When a local secretary calls a media outlet and identifies himself by his legal title, the usual response is, "Yes, but may I speak to your President?" As a result, most of us use "LocSec" only internally, and say President or Chairman in public. Mensa also has "gatherings," not conventions. Anyone who passes the test can learn the nomenclature in two years if he or she tries hard.

(more)

A MADCAP HISTORY OF MENSA - Part II

American Mensa operated with only the ordinary amount of chaos until about 1971. U.S. membership alone had reached about 15,000. Then, the Four Bears entered the scene, and things got very hairy. During the ensuing donnybrook for control of Mensa between the Rational people and the Four Bears, membership ceased to grow. Publication of the long awaited Membership Register was set back about three years, to 1976. The 1973 national election campaign, when each Bear ran for an important office, was the nadir. There were many lawsuits, threats of lawsuits, charges and counter-charges. (For full details, see "Goldilocks and the Four Bears," by Beth Pos, then Editor of the San Diego MENSAN). One of the turning points came when one of the Bears threatened Beth. She is not only an absolutely stunning girl, but one of the finest brains in all the club. Any man who would not rush to her defense would have to be an utter cad.

Fortunately, Marvin Grosswirth, a free-lance author, won the election for National Chairman. With a great deal of cool, he, together with the club's legal counsel and Gabe Werba, the Ombudsman, spent a great deal of the next two years conducting hearings and handling legal problems in and out of court, as the Bears sought to overturn the results of the 1973 election. There was even a lawsuit by one Bear against the Mensa Nine for a total of $4\frac{1}{2}$ million dollars. The climax came at the 1974 AG in Chicago, when the members at the Annual Business Meeting voted to start the machinery to bring the affair to a halt. This was so effective that not one Bear ran for office in 1975.

By the time the 1975 national election was over, sweet reason again prevailed. An all-star team was elected, consisting of Charlie Fallon of Skokie, Ill., as Chairman, Gabe Werba of Detroit as First Vice-Chairman, and Harper Fowley of Louisville, Ky. as Second Vice-Chairman. The lawsuits were thrown out of court, and membership began to grow again.

An article on Mensa in the READER'S DIGEST brought in more than 60,000 inquiries! The story goes that there was so much mail piled up that the Mensa brains were unable to figure out how to open the office door, and had to get the janitor to open it. By 1976, there were 20,000 Mensans in the U.S., with at least one chapter in every State. Canada has about 1,000 M's, with groups in nearly every province.

The current International President is Buckminster Fuller. The International Vice-President is Isaac Asimov. These offices are chiefly ceremonial. Hopefully, they bring prestige to Mensa. However, I'm sure I'm not the only person in Mensa who hopes that one day Mr. Asimov may be President, and will play a leading role in the club.

Mensa has been most successful in places where the culture accepts the value of I.Q. tests, such as the Anglophone and Germanic worlds. It has been a failure in Latin America and other cultures that are hostile to the tenants of psychology in general and I.Q. tests in particular. Although large German and French speaking groups exist, nine-tenths of the membership is still Anglophone.

There used to be a lot of isolated Mensans, with no contact with any local group or pen pals. Then, Harper Fowley (who looks just like Col. Sanders), created a new publication called THE ISOLATED M. Today, most North Americans can become involved through the pages of THE ISOLATED M, and through the numerous Special Interest Groups listed and reported upon therein.

Mensa's strength lies in its diversity. Once, it was thought that the only thing M's had in common was their I.Q. Later, it was found that most Mensans like to talk a lot and there is a pattern of interest in science fiction that seems to be quite common. But it is the Special Interest Groups that are the truly great idea. You name it, and Mensa probably has a SIG that's involved in it. Try it, you'll like it.

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To obtain more information on Mensa (and how to join), please contact the following: