

# SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT MENSA CHRONICLE

If you or someone you know would like to be a speaker at our monthly dinner, please contact Activities Coordinator Nancy O'Neil at NancyOneil@aol.com or 203-791-1668. The dinner is held the third Saturday of the month.

## ARCHIVED COPIES OF THE CHRONICLE

going back a year to July 2002 are available on the Internet at <http://www.solarandthermal.com/mensa>. You can download the latest e-mail version of the Chronicle there, as well as previous issues. All issues are in read-only Adobe Acrobat format so there is no chance of viruses accompanying the files.

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**SCHEDULE OF CHAPTER EVENTS FOR JANUARY**

Friday, January 14, 7:00

**Southern Connecticut and Connecticut/Western Massachusetts Joint Dinner**

Monthly dinner at the Old Sorrento Restaurant, Newtown Road, DANBURY, CT Interested Mensans should contact Ward Mazzucco at (203) 744-1929, ext 25, wjm@danburylaw.com, or Rev Bill Loring at (203) 794-1389, frbill@mags.net.

Saturday, January 15, 7:00.

**Monthly Dinner**

Mensan Ken McConvey will talk on "The Guns that Won the West." Come hear him and enjoy dinner in our private dining room at the Stony Hill Inn, 46 Stony Hill Road (right off Exit 8 on Rte. 84), Bethel, CT 06801, (203-743-5533). Dress is casual. Contact Nancy O'Neil, Nancy-oneil@aol.com, 203-791-1668, for information and reservations. You MUST call and MAKE RESERVATIONS by Friday, January 14 so we can assure that the restaurant can provide seating. If you make reservations and can't attend, PLEASE call and cancel. Directions from New Haven or Bridgeport: Take Route 25 into Newtown, where it becomes Route 6 West. OR take I-84 and get off at Exit 9 (Route 25 Brookfield). At the end of the ramp take a left if eastbound or a right if westbound. At the first light take a right on to Route 6 West. The hotel is located 2 miles on the right, not far over the Bethel line. From Stamford/Norwalk: Take Route 7 to I-84 and follow the above directions, turning right after exiting I-84.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF CHAPTER EVENTS FOR FEBRUARY**

Friday, February 11, 7:00.

**Southern Connecticut and Connecticut/Western Massachusetts Joint Dinner.**

See above listing for details.

Saturday, February 19, 7:00.

**Monthly Dinner.**

See above listing for details.

ARCHIVED COPIES OF THE CHRONICLE going back a year are available on the Internet at [www.44ellen.com](http://www.44ellen.com). You can download the latest e-mail version of the Chronicle there, as well as previous issues. All issues are in read-only Adobe Acrobat format so there is no chance of viruses accompanying the files.

**CONNECTICUT AND WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS MENSA CHAPTER UPCOMING EVENTS**

This is not a complete listing WE - Weekly Event, ME - Monthly Event, YE - Yearly Event CT & W. Mass Calendar Editor Gisela Rodriguez, (860) 872-3106, email: lilith@snet.net.

**Mensans on the Radio:**

C&WM Mensan Janine Bujalski is on the airwaves every 1st & 3rd Friday 6-10 a.m. on 89.5FM, WPKN in Bridgeport, CT. There is a limited internet broadcast - about 25 can listen simultaneously at [www.wpkn.org](http://www.wpkn.org). From 6-9 AM there's jazz, blues & music from Brazil and from 9-10 AM the music is from Louisiana, mostly Cajun & zydeco.

Vice LocSec Will Mackey is hosting Friday evening Classics from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. weekly on 91.3 FM, WWUH, in West Hartford. The name of the program is "What You Will" and its focus is chamber music.

**JANUARY**

1 Saturday 2pm - 7 pm

**New Year's Day Open House**

(YE) in Ellington. Start the bright new year in a cozy mood and come on back to Art Swanson's home for an afternoon of chatter and camaraderie. Come and go as you like, bring something edible or potable to share if you like, or just bring yourselves; this is a very casual and gentle event in which to unwind after last night's festivities. Newcomers always welcome. Call Art at 860-872-9308 or ASwanson34@aol.com for info and directions.

6, 13, 20, 27 Thursdays 7:00 pm

**Scrabble** (WE) at Emmanuel Synagogue, 160 Moughtan Drive, West Hartford. Ellen Leonard, (860) 667-1966 (Please call first to make sure this is happening today).

7 Friday 5:30 pm

**Happy Hour in Wallingford** (ME, 1st Fridays)

Ann Polanski (contact her at 203-269-4565 or [ann.polanski@rfsworld.com](mailto:ann.polanski@rfsworld.com)) hosts us at George's II Restaurant, 950 Yale Avenue, Wallingford, CT 06492 Phone: 269-1059 Directions: Exit 66 off Wilbur Cross Parkway. Turn left (south) onto Rte 5. Take first left onto Yale Avenue. George's II is in the Yale Plaza on the right.

21 Friday 6pm - 8pm or so  
**Diner Dinner** (ME, 3rd Friday) at Olympia Diner, Rte 5, Newington, just north of the Berlin town line and North East Utilities. Menu ranges from toasted cheese sandwich to steak and fish dinners. Basic bar menu available, no happy hour prices, but the food is good and very reasonable. Please contact Nicole Michaud at (860) 434-7329 or email [nirimi@snet.net](mailto:nirimi@snet.net), Subject: Diner Dinner

26 Wednesday 12 Noon  
**Middlebury Lunch** (ME, last Wednesday) at Maggie McFly's in Middlebury, visible on the right from Rte. 63 just south of the Rte 63 and Rte 64 intersection. This intersection is at the end of a long ramp at Exit 17 on Rte 84 west. From this exit, turn left at the 63/64 intersection. If you use Exit 17 on Rte. 84 east (heading toward Hartford), turn left off the exit ramp and see Maggie McFly's on your left. Contact Richard Fogg at 860-274-2370 for more info.

28 Friday 5:00 pm  
**Happy Hour** (ME, 4th Friday) Colonial Tymes, 2389 Dixwell Ave, Hamden. Located about 1/2 mile north of Exit 60, Wilbur Cross Parkway. We are now reserving the middle tables on the left as you walk in the bar. Dinner is a possibility if enough people are interested. Come on down and join us this month, we'd love to see ya. Contact Gail Trowbridge (203) 877-4472 or [Gail.Trowbridge@att.net](mailto:Gail.Trowbridge@att.net).

**REGIONAL GATHERINGS**

**February 5 -13**

**THE SKI SIG OF AMERICAN MENSA**

invites Mensa members worldwide to join us for a half-week or week+ of snow skiing the deep fluffy snow on the Rocky Mountains of Aspen and Snowmass. For details see <http://lists.us.mensa.org/mailman/listinfo/skisig-announce> or contact John Adams, [rip2005@skisig.us.mensa.org](mailto:rip2005@skisig.us.mensa.org), +1 713 666 9277, 8211 Fairhope Place, Houston, TX 77025-3201, USA.

**GRANITE GATHERING 2005**

**Phant-M : The Music of the Night**

February 18th-20th

Please join us in New England for NH Mensa's 15th Annual Regional Gathering! We'll have plenty of food, drink and revelry! Meet new and old friends alike on the top floor of the Radisson Hotel, with a lovely view of the city below. We have a great speaker line-up, as well as games, contests, and surprises spread throughout the weekend. It'll be held FEBRUARY 18-20th at the Center of NH, Manchester NH and the theme will be Phant-M : The Music of the Night. Bring a little intrigue and mystery to your weekend and come up to Northern New England for a great time! We'll have all the usual trappings (great beer and wine selection, games, book sale, auction, chocolate, speakers, children's program) as well as the unusual (you'll just have to come to find out, now won't you?). Please check the website at <http://nh.us.mensa.org/rgnews.shtm> for more details or to download a registration form. Hope to see you there!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on badge: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

e:mail: \_\_\_\_\_

T-shirt (Hemp fabric with embroidered design)

\$16 Size: S M L XL XXL

Golf shirt (Hemp fabric with embroidered design)

\$20 Size: S M L XL XXL

Quantities VERY limited at RG. Please pre-order!

Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

(make checks payable to NH Mensa) or

MC/Visa # \_\_\_\_\_

Expires: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

**FULL SATURDAY NIGHT BBQ BUFFET INCLUDED IN REGISTRATION COST THIS YEAR!!!!**

**Hotel information:** Radisson Hotel Manchester at the Center of NH, 700 Elm Street, Manchester, NH 03101. Single/Double/Triple/Quad \$92. Rates guaranteed until 1/27/04. Call 1-800-333-3333 or 1-603-625-1000 and ask for "NH Mensa" rate.

**Registration:** \$50 until 11/15; \$65 until 1/15; \$75 after 1/15 or at the door. Do not mail registration after 2/1 - please register at the door instead. Children 8-17 \$15 less than the regular rate, children under 8 free. Saturday rate is \$10 less than the regular rate in effect at registration. Make your checks payable to "NH Mensa" and mail your form and fee to: Deb Stone, Registrar 24312 Spartan Street.

**Questions?** Contact [rgchair@nh.us.mensa.org](mailto:rgchair@nh.us.mensa.org) Mission Viejo, CA 92691-3921 or Walter (603-436-7250) or Darlene (603-529-4446) e-mail: [debstone@cox.net](mailto:debstone@cox.net)

February 27

### **NORTHERN NEW JERSEY MIDWINTER BLAHS PARTY**

Fairfield Inn by Marriott  
850 Paterson Plank Road  
East Rutherford, NJ 07073-2130  
Phone: (201) 507-5222

It was such a success last year we're doing it again! Join your fellow Mensans for an entertaining and educational day. Speakers, games, puzzles, and music. Food, coffee, tea, sodas and LOTS OF CHOCOLATE! Prizes!

Open to Mensans and Non-Mensans of all ages  
EASY ACCESS. PUBLIC TRANSPORT FROM NYC.

#### **REGISTRATION:**

Please send check payable to NNJ Mensa for \$5.00 to: NNJ Mensa - Registration, PO Box 64, Hawthorne, NJ 07507. Please include your Mensa ID, Name, Address, Phone number, and (if available) e-mail address For more information, please contact: Nancy Pool (973) 989-8709, [nep@sprynet.com](mailto:nep@sprynet.com) or Mindy Maidens (201) 224-0453, [mmaidens@rcn.com](mailto:mmaidens@rcn.com)

April 15-17

### **MIND GAMES 2005**

#### **HOSTED BY TAMPA BAY MENSA**

An intense weekend of play. Mensans judge and critique games released in the past year and award the coveted Mensa Select seal to the top five. Past winners include Scattergories, Trivial Pursuit, and Taboo. Mind Games begins on Friday afternoon and ends Saturday morning.

Double Tree Hotel - Tampa Westshore Airport  
4500 W Cypress St., Tampa, FL 33607, (813) 879-4800. Mention MENSA to get a special hotel rate of \$99 per night (plus tax). The cut-off date for getting the special Mensa rate is March 15, 2005.

REGISTRATION through April 1 = \$65. Contacts:  
Sylvia Zadorozny, Mind Games 2005  
Chair: [MGChair@mindgames.us.mensa.org](mailto:MGChair@mindgames.us.mensa.org)  
Kathy Crum: [AsstMGChair@mindgames.us.mensa.org](mailto:AsstMGChair@mindgames.us.mensa.org)  
Registration: [Registration@mindgames.us.mensa.org](mailto:Registration@mindgames.us.mensa.org)  
Register online now at [mindgames.us.mensa.org](http://mindgames.us.mensa.org)!

Send your registration to:

Mind Games 2005, American Mensa, Ltd., 1229  
Corporate Dr. W., Arlington, TX 76006-6103

You can also call 817-607-0060 x122 using your Visa or MasterCard.

Please direct registration questions to  
[Registration@mindgames.us.mensa.org](mailto:Registration@mindgames.us.mensa.org)

### **2005 Post-AG Cruise**

The 2005 Annual Gathering in New Orleans will end with a Mensa cruise to Jamaica, the Cayman Islands and Cozumel. Extra-special pricing until August 5, 2004. Details at <http://www.suitecruising.com/ag2.htm>

If you wish to comment on articles or submit material, please write or e-mail Jim Mizera at PMB #181, 7365 Main St., Stratford, CT. 06614-1300, [Jmizera@hotmail.com](mailto:Jmizera@hotmail.com). E-mail submissions are preferred. Please include your name, address, and e-mail address or telephone number. Anonymous material will be rejected, although names will be withheld on request. Items will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Currently, the deadline for postal submissions is the 15th of the month preceding publication, and the 20th of the month for e-mail submissions.

**FROM THE VICE CHAIR**

Marghretta McBean

Once again Boston Mensa put on a Regional Gathering to bring smiles to all attending. From the very young to the young at heart, there was something for everyone. Boston is one of the few RGs where children attend in significant numbers, and its' Kid's Room was the scene of paper airplane and seasonal wreath making, a baking class, and videos for the younger set, as well the kiddie mealtimes. A big tip o' the hat goes to Chris and Dave Picard who coordinated the Kid's Room, and to all the parents and friends who gave so generously of their time and expertise.

Friday night's activities included karaoke, and yours truly (after several liquid libations) took to the mike with my rendition of Janis Joplin's "Take a Little Piece of My Heart". Even I cannot, in good consciousness, call what I did "singing". Saturday night's talent show revealed a wealth of real talent. Region 1 must hold some kind of record: we have four Presidents/LocSecs who are professional singers: John Baumann (New Hampshire), Paul Mailman (Boston), Tom Padwa (Rhode Island), and Michelle Wojtaszek (Mid-Hudson). Paul and Tom did solos and also sang together, with encore requests.

With another nod to regional talent, by now you all must have seen the November/December issue of the Mensa Bulletin, with Michelle Wojtaszek on the cover. Congratulations Michelle! She certainly marches to the beat of her own drummer- she is, in fact, the drummer in her group, Abominatrix.

The AMC (American Mensa Committee) quarterly meeting was held in Orlando Florida at the Disney World Coronado Springs Resort, the site of the 2006 World Gathering. Many of the motions aimed at eliminating a lot of the micro-management and administrivia that had crept into the Communications area (Mensa publications and website primarily). Despite the unfortunate resignation of Tim Folks, the former Communications Officer, I was pleased to be a sponsor of his legacy: better and more efficient governance. Robin Crawford, Chicago Mensa's President, was appointed to serve the remainder of the Communications Officer's term. Central Al-

abama Mensa won the bid for the 2007 Annual Gathering to be held in Birmingham, Alabama. Fort Worth, Texas lost in a very close race.

In Old Norse, the term "ves heill" means "be of good health"; the Old English transliterated it to "wes hal". The term was associated with both a spiced mulled beer punch and the tradition of going door to door on Christmas Eve, greeting one's neighbors and drinking to their health.

This wassail is made with wine, since finding beer that warms up nicely is difficult (Canada's Quelque Chose, a cherry beer from the Unibroue brewery, is a great choice but hard to find). Warm wishes for a wonderful holiday season and the best for 2005!

**WASSAIL**

- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 1 lemon, sliced horizontally
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup water
- 6 cups dry red wine
- 2 cups pineapple juice
- 2 cups orange juice
- 1 cup sweet sherry

1. Bring the cinnamon, lemon, sugar and water to a boil, and cook until slightly thickened. Take care not to burn the mixture.
2. In a large non-reactive pot, heat the wine, juices and sherry until hot. Add the syrup. This tastes even better when it has been allowed to stand and mellow.

Chronicle is THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT MENSA #066. The subscription rate for members is \$3.50 and is included as part of yearly dues. Others may subscribe at a rate of \$10.00 per year (Monthly).

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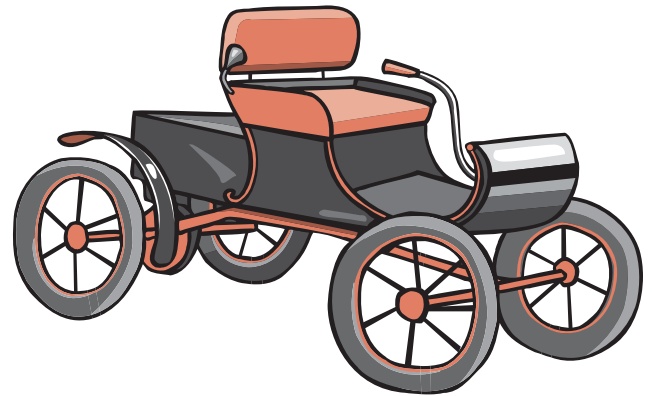
## PUZZLES & QUESTIONS

(Answers may be in next month's Chronicle.)

1. What is the difference between the odds of something happening and the probability of it happening?
2. Name several of the leading economic indicators.
3. What are some secret formulas?
4. What percentage of streets are dead end streets?
5. List as many weasel words as you can.
6. Describe some everyday rationalizations that people use.
7. Estimate the number of computers in the world.

## ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S PUZZLES:

1. What is wrong with the word "reiterate?"  
A: The "re-" in "reiterate" is redundant. To iterate means to say or do again. Computer programmers talk about how many iterations code in a loop will go through, but iterate also means to repeat words or statements. So iterate and reiterate have a meaning in common.



## IS THAT RIGHT

Are the following statements facts, fallacies, partial truths, or uncertainties?

### 1. Henry Ford raised wages at Ford in 1914 so that his workers could help business by buying more Ford cars.

This may be a reason cited by Ford and many others, but it makes very little sense. When he raised wages from \$2 to \$5 a day at Ford, it gave workers more money but there was no reason to believe that most would spend much of that money on Ford automobiles. If that was his purpose, it would have been much more efficient for Ford to give employees a discount on the company's products, which is what many businesses do. Besides, Ford employees made up only a small portion of the market for the cars. The only sales purpose it could possibly serve would be to spark a few purchases and give a little greater visibility to the new car.

Ford's main purpose was probably simply to cut down the employee turnover rate. In the early days at Ford, many farm workers came to work at the factory but couldn't take the grind. So many quit. Ford needed a steady reliable workforce and his new pay schedule enticed people to put up with the mass-production factory routine. It was a work incentive not a sales incentive. Subsequently, turnover plummeted, production boomed, and quality improved. The rest is history.

### 2. If you play radios louder, you will use up the batteries sooner.

Yes. Even small radios use about 200% more battery charge at the highest volume setting than at the lowest. The audio amplifiers consume the extra charge. A boom box requires about three times as much power to play at its loudest as it does as its softest, which means the battery will last only one-third as long. So sanity is more economical.

## NOTED AND QUOTED

In the depth of winter, I finally learned that there was within me an invincible summer.  
- *Albert Camus, (1913 - 1969), French existentialist novelist and philosopher*

Architecture begins where engineering ends.  
- *Walter Gropius, (1883 - 1969)*

Self-discipline is when your conscience tells you to do something and you don't talk back.  
- *W.K. Hope*

I had ambition not only to go farther than any man had ever been before, but as far as it was possible for a man to go. - *James Cook, (1728 - 1779)*

If the world is cold make it your business to build fires. - *Horace Traubel*

Clouds may cover the sunshine, they cannot banish the sun. - *Ella Wheeler Wilcox*

The craving for things that are not induces us to see the world as it is not. - *Eric Hoffer, (1902 - 1983), The Passionate State of Mind, 1955*

The world is a circle - what may seem like the end is the beginning. - ???

A schedule defends from chaos and whim.  
- *Annie Dillard, (1945 - ), U.S. poet, novelist*

I have had dreams and I have had nightmares, but I have conquered my nightmares because of my dreams. - *Dr. Jonas Salk, (1914 - 1995)*

The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are. - *J. P. Morgan, (1837 - 1913)*

The secret of managing is to keep the guys who hate you away from the guys who are undecided. - *Casey Stengel, (1890 - 1975)*

Entrepreneurship is the art of working as hard as you can until luck happens. - *Sal Alfiero*

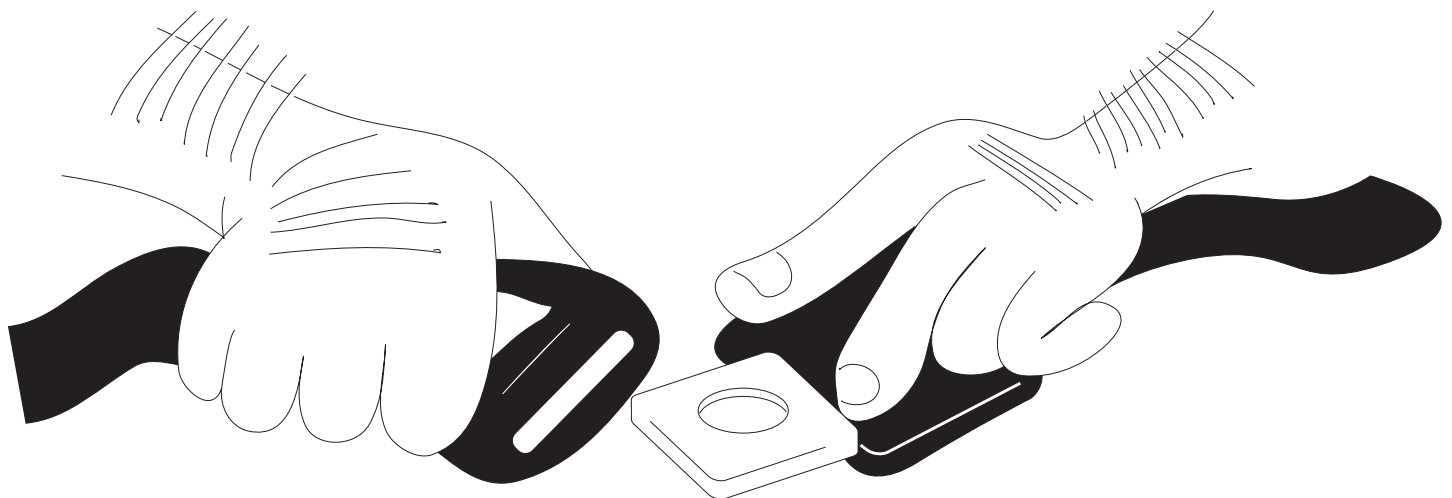
A good diet can cure many of the world's ills.  
- *Dr. Robert Atkins, (1930 - 2003)*

Don't anthropomorphize computers, they hate it. - *Anonymous*

Lying is the most simple form of self-defence.  
- *Susan Sontag, (1913 - ), U.S. critic, novelist, and screen-writer*

There is no human reason why a child should not admire and emulate his teacher's ability to do sums, rather than the village bum's ability to whittle sticks and smoke cigarettes. The reason why the child does not is plain enough -- the bum has put himself on an equality with him and the teacher has not. - *Floyd Dell*

We first make our habits, and then our habits make us. - *John Dryden, (1631 - 1700)*



## WORD ORIGINS

Many of the names of U.S. states and Canadian provinces come from North American Indian languages. Here is a list of Indian languages and the names of places they contributed to the English language, along with the American Indian meanings.

### Algonquin

Massachusetts - place near the big little hills.  
 Missouri - town of the large canoes .  
 Oregon - beautiful water.  
 Wisconsin - grassy place.  
 Wyoming - place of the big flats.

### Choctaw

Alabama - I clear the land.  
 Oklahoma - red people.

### Cree

Michigan - big lake.  
 Quebec - it is shut.  
 Saskatchewan - rapid current.  
 Winnipeg - swamps.

### Iroquois

Canada - village / settlement.  
 Kentucky - meadow land.  
 Ohio - beautiful water.

### Miami

Illinois - warrior men.

### Mohican

Connecticut - at the long tidal river.

### Navajo

Utah - upper land.

### Ojibwa

Mississippi - great river.  
 Ottawa - bulrushes.

### Omaha

Nebraska - river in the flatness.

### Papago

Arizona - place of the small spring.

### Shoshone

Idaho - light on the mountain.

### Sioux

Dakota - friend.  
 Kansas - land of the south wind people.  
 Minnesota - sky blue waters.

## THE READING EDGE - WHAT'S YOUR READING SPEED?

Do you know what your reading speed is? There is an online test that can give you a quick estimate. The Reading Edge, a Wallingford, CT company, has a test at their website [www.the-reading-edge.com](http://www.the-reading-edge.com). The tests take only a minute and calculate your reading speed instantly. For a more comprehensive test, the company a free demo that you can download that will test not only your speed but also your comprehension. The software can be set for different grade levels to test children as well as adults.

The company reports that the average person reads at a speed of between 200-300 words a minute but that people who enjoy reading can read more than 400 words per minute, and that some people can even read well at more than 800 words a minute.

The Reading Edge also offers books, tapes, tele-classes, and personal lessons to help people read faster and more efficiently. For more information, visit their website at [www.the-reading-edge.com](http://www.the-reading-edge.com) or contact them at [info@the-reading-edge.com](mailto:info@the-reading-edge.com)



## RUMINATIONS

### ON ACTORS AND ACTING (1817)

William Hazlitt, (1778 - 1830)

PLAYERS are "the abstracts and brief chronicles of the time;" the motley representatives of human nature. They are the only honest hypocrites. Their life is a voluntary dream; a studied madness. The height of their ambition is to be beside themselves. To-day kings, to-morrow beggars, it is only when they are themselves, that they are nothing. Made up of mimic laughter and tears, passing from the extremes of joy or woe at the prompter's call, they wear the livery of other men's fortunes; their very thoughts are not their own. They are, as it were, train-bearers in the pageant of life, and hold a glass up to humanity, frailer than itself. We see ourselves at second-hand in them: they show us all that we are, all that we wish to be, and all that we dread to be. The stage is an epitome, a bettered likeness of the world, with the dull part left out: and, indeed, with this omission, it is nearly big enough to hold all the rest. What brings the resemblance nearer is, that, as they imitate us, we, in our turn, imitate them. How many fine gentlemen do we owe to the stage? How many romantic lovers are mere Romeos in masquerade? How many soft bosoms have heaved with Juliet's sighs? They teach us when to laugh and when to weep, when to love and when to hate, upon principle and with a good grace! Wherever there is a play-house, the world will go on not amiss. The stage not only refines the manners, but it is the best teacher of morals, for it is the truest and most intelligible picture of life. It stamps the image of virtue on the mind by first softening the rude materials of which it is composed, by a sense of pleasure. It regulates the passions by giving a loose to the imagination. It points out the selfish and depraved to our detestation; the amiable and generous to our admiration; and if it clothes the more seductive vices with the borrowed graces of wit and fancy, even those graces operate as a diversion to the coarser poison of experience and bad example, and often prevent or carry off the infection by inoculating the mind with a certain taste and elegance. To shew how little we agree with the common declamations against the immoral tendency of the stage on this score, we will hazard a conjecture, that the acting of the Beggar's Opera a certain number of nights every year

since it was first brought out, has done more towards putting down the practice of highway robbery, than all the gibbets that ever were erected. A person, after seeing this piece, is too deeply imbued with a sense of humanity, is in too good humour with himself and the rest of the world, to set about cutting throats or rifling pockets. Whatever makes a jest of vice, leaves it too much a matter of indifference for any one in his senses to rush desperately on his ruin for its sake. We suspect that just the contrary effect must be produced by the representation of *George Barnwell*, which is too much in the style of the Ordinary's sermon to meet with any better success. The mind, in such cases, instead of being deterred by the alarming consequences held out to it, revolts against the denunciation of them as an insult offered to its free-will, and, in a spirit of defiance, returns a practical answer to them, by daring the worst that can happen. The most striking lesson ever read to levity and licentiousness, is in the last act of the *Inconstant*, where young *Mirabel* is preserved by the fidelity of his mistress, *Orinda*, in the disguise of a page, from the hands of assassins, into whose power he has been allured by the temptations of vice and beauty. There never was a rake who did not become in imagination a reformed man, during the representation of the last trying scenes of this admirable comedy.

If the stage is useful as a school of instruction, it is no less so as a source of amusement. It is the source of the greatest enjoyment at the time, and a never-failing fund of agreeable reflection afterwards. The merits of a new play, or of a new actor, are always among the first topics of polite conversation. One way in which public exhibitions contribute to refine and humanize mankind, is by supplying them with ideas and subjects of conversation and interest in common. The progress of civilization is in proportion to the number of common-places current in society. For instance, if we meet with a stranger at an inn or in a stage-coach, who knows nothing but his own affairs, his shop, his customers, his farm, his pigs, his poultry, we can carry on no conversation with him on these local and personal matters: the only way is to let him have all the talk to himself. But if he has fortunately ever seen *Mr. Liston* act, this is an immediate topic of mutual conversation, and we agree together the rest of the evening in discussing the merits of that inimitable actor, with the same satisfaction as in talking over the affairs

**ON ACTORS AND ACTING cont.**

of the most intimate friend. If the stage thus introduces us familiarly to our contemporaries, it also brings us acquainted with former times. It is an interesting revival of past ages, manners, opinions, dresses, persons, and actions,--whether it carries us back to the wars of York and Lancaster, or half-way back to the heroic times of Greece and Rome, in some translation from the French, or quite back to the age of Charles II. in the scenes of Congreve and of Etherege, (the gay Sir George!) -- happy age, when kings and nobles led purely ornamental lives, when the utmost stretch of a morning's study went no farther than the choice of a sword-knot, or the adjustment of a side-curl; when the soul spoke out in all the pleasing eloquence of dress; and beaux and belles, enamoured of themselves in one another's follies, fluttered like gilded butterflies in giddy mazes through the walks of St. James's Park!

A good company of comedians, a Theatre-Royal judiciously managed, is your true Herald's College; the only Antiquarian Society that is worth a rush. It is for this reason that there is such an air of romance about players, and that it is pleasanter to see them, even in their own persons, than any of the three learned professions. We feel more respect for John Kemble in a plain coat, than for the Lord Chancellor on the woollack. He is surrounded, to our eyes, with a greater number of imposing recollections: he is a more reverend piece of formality; a more complicated tissue of costume. We do not know whether to look upon this accomplished actor as Pierre or King John or Coriolanus or Cato or Leontes or the Stranger. But we see in him a stately hieroglyphic of humanity; a living monument of departed greatness; a sombre comment on the rise and fall of kings. We look after him till he is out of sight, as we listen to a story of one of Ossian's heroes, to "a tale of other times!"

One of the most affecting things we know is to see a favourite actor take leave of the stage. We were present not long ago when Mr. Bannister quitted it. We do not wonder that his feelings were overpowered on the occasion: ours were nearly so too. We remembered him in the first heyday of our youthful spirits, in the "Prize" in which he played so delightfully with that fine old croaker Suett, and Madame Storage, -- in the

farce of "My Grandmother," in the "Son-in-Law," in "Autolycus," and in "Scrub," in which our satisfaction was at its height. At that time, King and Parsons, and Dodd, and Quick, and Edwin were in the full vigour of their reputation, who are now all gone. We still feel the vivid delight with which we used to see their names in the play-bills as we went along to the theatre. Bannister was one of the last of these that remained; and we parted with him as we should with one of our oldest and best friends. The most pleasant feature in the profession of a player, and which, indeed; is peculiar to it, is that we not only admire the talents of those who adorn it, but we contract a personal intimacy with them. There is no class of society whom so many persons regard with affection as actors. We greet them on the stage; we like to meet them in the streets; they almost always recall to us pleasant associations; and we feel our gratitude excited, without the uneasiness of a sense of obligation. The very gaiety and popularity, however, which surround the life of a favourite performer, make the retiring from it a very serious business. It glances a mortifying reflection on the shortness of human life, and the vanity of human pleasures. Something reminds us, that "all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."

It has been considered as the misfortune of first-rate talents for the stage, that they leave no record behind them except that of vague rumour, and that the genius of a great actor perishes with him, "leaving the world no copy." This is a misfortune, or at least an unpleasant circumstance, to actors; but it is, perhaps, an advantage to the stage. It leaves an opening to originality. The stage is always beginning anew; -- the candidates for theatrical reputation are always setting out afresh, unencumbered by the affectation of the faults or excellences of their predecessors. In this respect, we should imagine that the average quantity of dramatic talent remains more nearly the same than that in any other walk of art. In no other instance do the complaints of the degeneracy of the moderns seem so unfounded as in this; and Colley Cibber's account of the regular decline of the stage, from the time of Shakespeare to that of Charles II. and from the time of Charles II. to the beginning of George II. appears quite ridiculous. The stage is a place where genius is sure to come upon its legs, in a generation or two at farthest. In the other arts (as **ON**

**ACTORS AND ACTING cont.**

painting and poetry), it has been contended that what has been well done already, by giving rise to endless vapid imitations, is an obstacle to what might be done well hereafter: that the models or chef d'oeuvres of art, where they are accumulated, choke up the path to excellence; and that the works of genius, where they can be rendered permanent and handed down from age to age, not only prevent, but render superfluous, future productions of the same kind. We have not, neither do we want, two Shakespeares, two Miltons, two Raphaels, any more than we require two suns in the same sphere. Even Miss O'Neill stands a little in the way of our recollections of Mrs. Siddons. But Mr. Kean is an excellent substitute for the memory of Garrick, whom we never saw. When an author dies, it is no matter, for his works remain. When a great actor dies, there is a void produced in society, a gap which requires to be filled up. Who does not go to see Kean? Who, if Garrick were alive, would go to see him? At least, one or the other must have quitted the stage. We have seen what a ferment has been excited among our living artists by the exhibition of the works of the old masters at the British Gallery.

What would the actors say to it, if, by any spell or power of necromancy, all the celebrated actors, for the last hundred years, could be made to appear again on the boards of Covent Garden and Drury Lane, for the last time, in all their most brilliant parts? What a rich treat to the town, what a feast for the critics, to go and see Betterton, and Booth, and Wilks, and Sandford, and Nokes, and Leigh, and Penkethman, and Bullock, and Esteourt, and Dogget, and Mrs. Barry, and Mrs. Montfort, and Mrs. Oldfield, and Mrs. Bracegirdle, and Mrs. Cibber, and Cibber himself, the prince of coxcombs, and Macklin, and Quin, and Rich, and Mrs. Clive, and Mrs. Pritchard, and Mrs. Abington, and Weston, and Shuter, and Garrick, and all the rest of those, who "gladdened life, and whose deaths eclipsed the gaiety of nations!" We should certainly be there. We should buy a ticket for the season. We should enjoy our hundred days again. We should not miss a single night. We would not, for a great deal, be absent from Betterton's Hamlet or his Brutus, or from Booth's Cato, as it was first acted to the contending applause of Whigs and Tories. We should be in the first row when Mrs. Barry

(who was kept by Lord Rochester, and with whom Otway was in love) played Monimia or Belvidera; and we suppose we should go to see Mrs. Bracegirdle (with whom all the world was in love) in all her parts. We should then know exactly whether Penkethman's manner of picking a chicken, and Bullock's mode of devouring asparagus, answered to the ingenious account of them in the "Tatler; "and whether Dogget was equal to Dowton -- Whether Mrs. Montfort<sup>2</sup> or Mrs. Abington was the finest lady -- Whether Wilks or Cibber was the best Sir Harry Wildair - Whether Macklin was really "the Jew that Shakespeare drew," and whether Garrick was, upon the whole, so great an actor as the world have made him out! Many people have a strong desire to pry into the secrets of futurity: for our own parts, we should be satisfied if we had the power to recall the dead, and live the past over again, as often as we pleased! -- Players, after all, have little reason to complain of their hard-earned, short-lived popularity. One thunder of applause from pit, boxes, and gallery, is equal to a whole immortality of posthumous fame: and when we hear an actor, whose modesty is equal to his merit, declare that he would like to see a dog wag his tail in approbation, what must he feel when he sets the whole house in a roar! Besides, Fame, as if their reputation had been entrusted to her alone, has been particularly careful of the renown of her theatrical favourites she forgets one by one, and year by year, those who have been great lawyers, great statesmen, and great warriors in their day; but the name of Garrick still survives with the works of Reynolds and of Johnson.

Actors have been accused, as a profession, of being extravagant and dissipated. While they are said to be so as a piece of common cant, they are likely to continue so. But there is a sentence in Shakespeare which should be stuck as a label in the mouths of our beadles and whippers-in of morality. "The web of our life is of a mingled yarn, good and ill together: our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not: and our vices would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues." With respect to the extravagance of actors, as a traditional character, it is not to be wondered at. They live from hand to mouth: they plunge from want into luxury; they have no means of making money breed, and all professions that do not live by turning money into **ON**

**ACTORS AND ACTING cont.**

money, or have not a certainty of accumulating it in the end by parsimony, spend it. Uncertain of the future, they make sure of the present moment. This is not unwise. Chilled with poverty, steeped in contempt, they sometimes pass into the sunshine of fortune, and are lifted to the very pinnacle of public favour; yet even there cannot calculate on the continuance of success; but are, "like the giddy sailor on the mast, ready with every blast to topple down into the fatal bowels of the deep!" Besides, if the young enthusiast, who is smitten with the stage, and with the public as a mistress, were naturally a close hunk, he would become or remain a city clerk, instead of turning player.

Again, with respect to the habit of convivial indulgence, an actor, to be a good one, must have a great spirit of enjoyment in himself, strong impulses, strong passions, and a strong sense of pleasure: for it is his business to imitate the passions, and to communicate pleasure to others. A man of genius is not a machine. The neglected actor may be excused if he drinks oblivion of his disappointments; the successful one if he quaffs the applause of the world, and enjoys the friendship of those who are the friends of the favourites of fortune, in draughts of nectar. There is no path so steep as that of fame: no labour so hard as the pursuit of excellence. The intellectual excitement, inseparable from those professions which call forth all our sensibility to pleasure and pain, requires some corresponding physical excitement to support our failure, and not a little to allay the ferment of the spirits at-

tendant on success. If there is any tendency to dissipation beyond this in the profession of a player, it is owing to the prejudices entertained against them, to that spirit of bigotry which in a neighbouring country would deny actors Christian burial after their death, and to that cant of criticism, which, in our own, slurs over their characters, while living, with a half-witted jest.

A London engagement is generally considered by actors as the ne plus ultra of their ambition, as "a consummation devoutly to be wished;" as the great prize in the lottery of their professional life. But this appears to us, who are not in the secret, to be rather the prose termination of their adventurous career: it is the provincial commencement that is the poetical and truly enviable part of it. After that, they have comparatively little to hope or fear. "The wine of life is drunk, and but the lees remain." In London, they become gentle men, and the King's servants: but it is the romantic mixture of the hero and the vagabond that constitutes the essence of the player's life. It is the transition from their real to their assumed characters, from the contempt of the world to the applause of the multitude, that gives its zest to the latter, and raises them as much above common humanity at night, as in the day-time they are depressed below it. "Hurried from fierce extremes, by contrast made more fierce," -- it is rags and a flock-bed which give their splendour to a plume of feathers and a throne. We shorolling player in Gil Blas, soaking his dry crusts in the well by the road-side, presents to us a perfect picture of human felicity.

**KICK IRRATIONAL** Brian Lord is a cartoonist and member of Middle Tennessee Mensa (Nashville area). His cartoon Kick Irrational is read weekly by people in 192 cities, 46 states and 9 countries via the Internet. You can see the Kick Irrational comics page at [www.kickirrational.com](http://www.kickirrational.com)

**KICK IRRATIONAL by Brian Lord**

[www.KickComics.com](http://www.KickComics.com)



**GOOD WINE CHEAP****(and good food to go with it)**

By John Grover

Portugal is a land of good food and excellent wine, known for its delightful seafood and many other aromatic dishes. Most of the meat recipes start with "In a large pot, saute' garlic and onion with olive oil, braise the meat (chicken, beef or pork), cover with wine and.....". How can you go wrong with that? Just go on to your search engine and enter "Portugal recipes" for a real adventure.

The wine this month is the 2000 Cardeal (brand name), a red from the Dao Region of central Portugal. Produced by Caves Dom Tedosio, this wine is a blend of 40% Touriga, 30% Rufete and 30% Bastardo grapes (I think I know a few of those guys.). It has a dry earthy flavor with a hint of berries, but it's old world taste of moderate tannins and acidity is what's most noticeable. It finishes on a slightly spicy note. Cardeal Dao is a good food wine matching well with cheese, roasted chicken, and the zesty soup below. I paid \$7 a bottle for this wine.

**PORTUGUESE GREEN SOUP**

(from "Bon Appetit" magazine).

**Ingredients**

- 2 tbsp. olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 bunch collard greens, center stems cut away, leaves thinly sliced
- 1 pound fully cooked spicy sausage (such as linguica, andouille, or hot links), cut into 1/2-inch-thick rounds
- 5 3/4 cups low-salt chicken broth
- 1 3/4 pounds russet potatoes, peeled, diced
- 1/2 tsp. dried crushed red pepper

Heat olive oil in large pot over medium-high heat. Add onion and garlic. Sauté until onion is soft and golden, about 5 minutes. Add collard greens and sauté until wilted, about 4 minutes. Add sausage and sauté 5 minutes. Add broth and potatoes. Simmer soup uncovered until potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes. Transfer 2 cups soup (without sausage) to processor. Blend until smooth; return to pot of soup and bring to simmer. Mix in crushed red pepper. Season with salt and black pepper. Makes 4 main-course servings. Serve with a loaf of crusty peasant bread for a wonderful meal during the cold months ahead.

*John Grover is a member of Mensa of Northeastern New York. He lives with his wife Sharon in the Hudson Valley of New York.*

*I hope that you will contact me with your comments and favorite wines at [jgrover@berk.com](mailto:jgrover@berk.com). I will be happy to share them with the broader Mensa group.*

KICK IRRATIONAL by Brian Lord [www.KickComics.com](http://www.KickComics.com)

## THE DECEMBER DINNER

PAT HENNESSY ON

### PUTTING OUT A MONTHLY PAPER

What's it like putting out the paper with the largest circulation in Fairfield County? That's the task Pat Hennessy, the speaker at our December dinner, faces every month as Associate Editor of Fairfield County Catholic. Pat gave us a good look at the demands and rewards of her job, and almost everything that goes into putting out the award-winning monthly publication.

Although she noted that the job of associate editor differs from newspaper to newspaper, Pat wears several hats in her post. She has to in order to put out the monthly on time with a staff that consists of only two full-time and six part-time employees. Her byline is sprinkled throughout Fairfield County Catholic, but her touch graces almost the entire paper. She not only assigns articles, but also covers stories in the community, writes many of the features, edits the articles of free-lance writers, and does the nitty-gritty work of proofreading, adding captions, and helping with layouts.

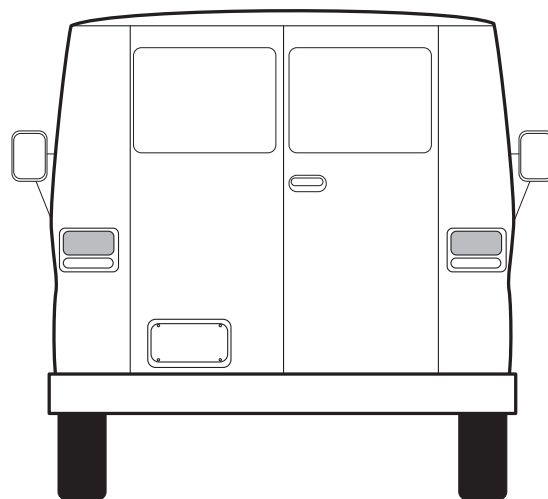
Fairfield County Catholic goes out 11 times a year to the 44% of the county's population that is Catholic - approximately 90,000 homes. As Pat made clear, there is very little slack in getting this kind of job done. They complete the paper the last Tuesday of the month, take a break, and then come back the next Thursday for a meeting to make up the story sheet and assign articles for the next month's issue. As news events come in throughout the month, the tension builds. Late-breaking stories sometimes bump long-planned features. But each month, readers gets 36 - 48 pages comprising regular columns, world news, parish and school news, stories on charitable campaigns, profiles, reviews, letters, obituaries, a special Spanish section, a calendar of events, and advertisements. Submissions are due the 10th of the month, and then Pat and her colleagues shift into editing, organizing, and completing the issue. The news beat never stops, but Pat keeps up with the tempo, and makes sure that deadlines are met.

How did Ms. Hennessy get her start in journalism? Interestingly, she majored in Spanish in college and started out as a Spanish teacher, and

followed that by teaching English as a second language for many years. But writing always appealed to her. She took a course at the Institute for Children's Literature in Redding, Connecticut, and then became a prolific travel and technical writer. She enjoyed the pay and perks of travel writing, but had to endure the ups and downs of freelancing. Eight years ago, after Pat had suffered through a lean season, someone at a party asked her to fill in for a departing staff member at Fairfield County Catholic. Pat took the opportunity, and four years later become assistant editor. Now she has an award as the best copy editor for a Catholic paper, and has helped Fairfield County Catholic win more awards than any other Catholic newspaper in the country.

Pat meets many demands as editor, but she flatly stated that editing is mainly gloss. The heart of the newspaper, she insisted, is writing, and the heart of newspaper writing is storytelling. Pat takes great satisfaction in telling people's stories because she believes that everyone has a story and every story is valuable. Whether she's writing about international disaster relief for Haiti or the continuing service of volunteers in local parishes, Pat does not just report the news but tells of people's struggles, hopes, pains, and prayers.

Our speaker was kind enough to answer all the questions the audience could throw at her, and to stay around to talk with Mensans about her take on the news. She helped all of us see the work behind Fairfield County Catholic, and we came away with an appreciation of the many roles she plays as an associate editor.



## MIND AND MONEY

### ARE PEOPLE RATIONAL OR IRRATIONAL WITH MONEY?

Economics has usually assumed that people behave in approximately rational ways with money. But over the last quarter century, a new field of economics called behavioral economics (or finance) has emphasized how people act inconsistently and irrationally in their buying, selling, and saving. By surveying people, statistically analyzing real markets, running controlled experiments, and even conducting neurological tests, behavioral economists have brought out the biases and weaknesses humans have in making financial decisions. Behavioral finance reached new heights when Daniel Kahneman, one of the pioneers in the field, shared the Nobel Prize in economics in 2003 with experimental economist Vernon Smith. Several other scholars in this school such as Richard Thaler are thought to be on the short list for future Nobel Prizes.

There is a certain popular wisdom that people can act very foolishly with money. But this belief is usually just vague hindsight. What is new about behavioral economics is that it has made a good case not just that people behave irrationally, but that they do so in predictable ways. That is, humans have cognitive biases or illusions that lead them to consistently make the same mistakes with money. They use rules of thumb that may simplify situations but don't serve them well. Here are some of the irrationalities behavioralists point out:

- Strong loss aversion. People feel the regret and pain of losses much more than they do the pleasure of gains. Thus, people are very reluctant to sell stocks that have gone down because selling would make them confront the loss and the mistake they made. So they hold onto the stock interminably in the hope that it will eventually get back to their buying price. They are much quicker to sell stocks that have gone up.
- Framing and anchoring. Buyers make decisions based on how decisions are presented or framed. Richard Thaler found an example of this in 401k choices. Investors who had two choices, bonds or stocks, were apt to put 50% in each while those who had four choices, three stock funds and one bond fund, often simply put 25% in each, giving them 75% in stocks. In an even more startling case, subjects in an experiment were willing to pay more for randomly priced items when the random number was high than when it was low.
- Humans misjudge risks. They are not good intuitive statisticians. They fear new risks more than they do old familiar risks, even when the new risks are smaller. Studies also seem to show that people pay too much to insure themselves against relatively frequent but inexpensive risks, such as when they buy auto insurance policies with low deductibles.
- People are overwhelmed when there are too many choices. In these situations of information overload, they postpone or avoid decisions.
- Mental segregation of accounts. Money is money, but people treat some sources of income much differently than they do others. For instance, in gambling they are much more reckless with money they have won from the house than with the money they started out with. They treat financial windfalls the same way. Even more incredibly, some consumers keep putting money into savings account when they are regularly paying 18% on credit card debt. In general, they fail to look at their portfolio as a whole and tend to focus more on individual stocks or investments.
- People often pay attention to sunk costs instead of focusing on future prospects. They will continue sinking money into an old car or a project that is obviously failing because they can't bear to give up on it.
- Overconfidence. Entrepreneurs consistently overestimate their chance of success. They usually rate their chances as better than those of similar businesses. Even though they overestimate the probability of success for others, they are even more irrationally optimistic about their own fortunes. Similarly, stock analysts miss the mark 35% of the time when they are asked to make their own 90% confidence interval for stocks.

**MIND AND MONEY cont.**

- **Overreaction.** Investors typically overvalue favored stocks and undervalue unpopular stocks. They overreact to mild disappointments, and extrapolate the current outlook. Thus, the markets don't correct themselves for a long while.
- Humans pay too much attention to the current case or recent events rather than looking at the long term statistics. Many times, investors think they see patterns based on just a few examples. They may think that they know which way new technology stocks are going to go based merely on one or two successes. Or they pay too much respect to tips that come out of the blue or recommendations by one analyst.

Behavioral economists not only identify problems but also try to solve them. Richard Thaler has come up with a plan that would make saving psychologically easier for people. Under a program he set up, employee's raises automatically went into a savings plan. It didn't bother the workers because they thought of it like "house money" - it wasn't already in their hands so it was easy to let it go into their savings. Economists are trying to come up with more designs like these that can help consumers and businesses overcome their irrational urges.

Several critics of the behavioral finance school say that what it presents is not a theory but a collection of anomalies found mostly in artificial experiments. But the behavioral economics researchers are not just dealing with students in ivory towers, they are also dealing with professional traders, consumers, workers, and even economics professors in the real world. Other critics may have a better argument when they display evidence that people become more rational as the stakes become higher. Furthermore, some theorists point out that behaviors that appear irrational in the short term, such as continuing projects because of money already sunk into them, may actually be rational in the longer view because they help people discipline themselves emotionally not to throw in the towel too quickly. Still, Kahneman, Thaler, and other behavioral economists seem to have collected enough evidence of habitual and widespread irrationality at all levels to strengthen their case.

Behavioral economics is becoming more popular, although it is still not quite fashionable. It is sure to produce more interesting research for economists, psychologists, and the public to ponder.





**POETRY CORNER****January**

Helen Hunt Jackson (1830 -1885)

O WINTER! frozen pulse and heart of fire,  
 What loss is theirs who from thy kingdom turn  
 Dismayed, and think thy snow a sculptured urn  
 Of death! Far sooner in midsummer tire  
 The streams than under ice. June could not hire  
 Her roses to forego the strength they learn  
 In sleeping on thy breast. No fires can burn  
 The bridges thou dost lay where men desire  
 In vain to build.

O Heart, when Love's sun goes  
 To northward, and the sounds of singing cease,  
 Keep warm by inner fires, and rest in peace.  
 Sleep on content, as sleeps the patient rose.  
 Walk boldly on the white untrodden snows,  
 The winter is the winter's own release.

**Scroll**

By Carl Sandburg

Memory is when you look back  
 And the answers float in  
 To who? What? When? Where?

The members who were there then  
 Are repeated on a screen  
 Are recalled on a scroll  
 Are moved in a miniature drama

Are collected and recollected  
 For actions, speeches, silences  
 Set forth by images of the mind  
 And made in a mingling mist

To do again and to do over  
 Precisely what they did do once--  
 This is memory--  
 Sometimes slurred and blurred

This is remembering--  
 Sometimes wrecking the images  
 And proceeding again to reconstruct  
 What happened and how

The many little involved answers  
 To who? What? When? Where?  
 And more involved than any  
 How? How?

**The Lighted Window (1915)**

by Sara Teasdale

To ERNST

HE said:

"In the winter dusk  
 When the pavements were gleaming with rain,  
 I walked thru a dingy street  
 Hurried, harassed,  
 Thinking of all my problems that never are solved.  
 Suddenly out of the mist, a flaring gas-jet  
 Shone from a huddled shop.  
 I saw thru the bleary window  
 A mass of playthings:  
 False-faces hung on strings,  
 Valentines, paper and tinsel,  
 Tops of scarlet and green,  
 Candy, marbles, jacks--  
 A confusion of color  
 Pathetically gaudy and cheap.  
 All of my boyhood  
 Rushed back.  
 Once more these things were treasures  
 Wildly desired.  
 With covetous eyes I looked again at the marbles,  
 The precious agates, the pee-wees, the chinies--  
 Then I passed on.

In the winter dusk,  
 The pavements were gleaming with rain;  
 There in the lighted window  
 I left my boyhood."

**Do You Fear the Wind?**

By Hamlin Garland (1860-1940)

O you fear the force of the wind,  
 The slash of the rain?  
 Go face them and fight them,  
 Be savage again.  
 Go hungry and cold like the wolf,  
 Go wade like the crane:  
 The palms of your hands will thicken,  
 The skin of your cheek will tan,  
 You'll grow ragged and weary and swarthy,  
 But you'll walk like a man!

## MENTAL MATTERS

### THE LONG AND SHORT OF MEMORY

Memory is the ability to store and retrieve information in the brain. Without memory, learning is impossible. But memories go through different stages, and there are hurdles to clear before we can remember something well enough to say that we know it.

The first stage of memory is sensory memory, sometimes called extremely short-term memory. It is the briefest stage of memory - just a fraction of a second (blinking time) for visual images, and about two seconds for sounds. This is the memory that helps you read the words in a sentence, or handle multiple tasks simultaneously. Sensory memory handles almost everything we sense, however briefly. If we didn't have sensory memory, reality wouldn't appear continuous. But sensations fade quickly, and we don't focus on most of them enough to bring them into the next stage of memory, working memory.

Many memory classifiers call working memory short-term memory but others reserve that term for a third stage of memory. Working memory is temporary-storage memory, the link between sensation and action. It lasts about 30 seconds to a minute or two. We use this memory to converse with others, dial phone numbers, solve problems, and to hold names and similar information that we retrieve from memory. We can't hold too many things in working memory - about 5 to 9 items, and if we get distracted, we easily lose these memories. Most strategies for improving memory focus on overcoming this limitation because memories must go through working memory to make it into long-term memory.

Psychologists who classify memory into four stages place short-term memory as a stage between working memory and long-term memory. They consider it a phase where memories stay for a day or two for processing before going into permanent storage. This is the time when students review notes, sort, categorize, cross-reference, and organize ideas, and make associations in order to solidify them in their minds. The more connections they can make, the easier it will be for them to retrieve these thoughts.

Long-term memory is permanent or almost permanent memory - memories stored for years or a lifetime. It doesn't seem to have storage limits. People have more than they think in long-term memory, it's just that they often can't retrieve it easily, for they don't know how it is filed or indexed for searching. Still people routinely recall things from among the trillions of pieces of information they have stored in their minds. Even seemingly long-lost memories return, sometimes in surprising detail, under special conditions, such as accidents or circumstances similar to the original event.

There are many things that can go wrong with memory, of course, but most problems seem to affect shorter-term memory. Many people worry about their memories fading in old age, but working memory actually starts to deteriorate in the 40's. A lack of oxygen may impair short-term memory in elderly people. When their arteries harden or their heart pumps poorly, not enough oxygen may get to the brain. Oxygen treatments can boost short-term memory, but there is no surefire remedy for the many memory problems plaguing older people.

Researchers continue to try to come up with mental exercises and drugs that can help people with impaired memory. Meanwhile, the vast majority of people typically either complains about their memory or takes it for granted. If they considered the countless experiences and ideas the average person remembers however, perhaps they would simply appreciate its wonders.



**CHAPTER NOTES**

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