

SOUTHERN CONNECTICUT MENSA CHRONICLE



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If you or someone you know would like to be a speaker at our monthly dinner, please contact Jim Mizera at 203-522-1959 or Jmizera@hotmail.com. The dinner is held the third Saturday of the month.



ARCHIVED COPIES OF THE CHRONICLE

going back to 2000 are available on the Internet at <http://scm66.org> (Note: this is a new URL). 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 - DECEMBER

Saturday, December 3, 8:00 pm

Theater Event: The Seafarer

by Conor McPherson, at the Westport Community Theatre, Westport Town Hall, 110 Myrtle Avenue, Westport, Connecticut 06880. A 2008 Tony Award Nominee for Best Play, written by Irish playwright Conor McPherson. A "hilarious and chilling holiday tale." Tickets are \$20, \$15 for seniors. Contact Jim Mizera (jmizera@hotmail.com) or (203) 522 - 1959 for info or reservations.

Friday, December 9, 7:00 pm

Danbury Dinner - Southern Connecticut and Connecticut/Western Massachusetts Joint Dinner

at a new venue, The Pasta Garden, 174 Federal Rd, Brookfield CT 06804 (restaurant phone: (203) 775-0426). Interested M's should contact Ward Mazzucco at 203-744-1929, ext 25, wjm@danburylaw.com or Rev. Bill Loring at 203-794-1389, fr.bill@comcast.net for more info on location and/or reservations.

Tuesday, December 13, 6:30 pm

POST ROAD Dinner

Red Bean Sushi, 1711 Post Road East, Westport, CT 06880. Contact Jim Mizera at jmizera@hotmail.com or (203) 522-1959 for reservations or info.

CONNECTICUT AND WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS 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, 860-888-9867, email: lilith@beadylittleskies.com.

DECEMBER

1, 8, 15, 22, 29 Thursdays 6:30 pm

Scrabble

The word-loving Mensans (are there any other kind?) and non-Mensans gather to play Scrabble at Panera Bread Restaurant at Bishop's Corner, 2542 Albany Ave., West Hartford. For more info contact Lois Cappellano 413-567-4702

2 Friday 5:30 pm

Happy Hour in Wallingford

(ME, 1st Fridays) Ann Polanski (contact her at 203-269-4565 or cell 860-817-9910 or ann.polanski@comcast.net) at The Old Dublin, 171 Quinipiac Street, Wallingford, CT 06492, 203-949-8022, www.theolddublin.com

From Route 15: Take exit 64 toward Wallingford/ Downtown, Sharp right at Quinipiac Street, At 0.3 miles turn left to stay on Quinipiac Street. The Old Dublin will be on the left about 0.3 miles from where you turned left

From I-91: Take I-91 to exit 13 Turn right at end of exit onto South Colony Road. At about 0.2 miles, turn left onto Quinipiac Street (Wallingford center, just before the gazebo). The Old Dublin will be on your right within about two blocks.

9 Friday 6:30 pm

Diner Dinner

(semimonthly, 2nd and 4th Fridays) 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. Questions? For info, contact Howard Brender at 860-635-5673 or howiebren@aol.com Subject: Diner Dinner

10 Saturday 10:00 am

Mensa Admissions Testing - Newington

C&WM Mensa now holds regular testing in Newington, CT on the second Saturday of every month. Please preregister to attend by contacting the testing Proctor Coordinator, David B.

Collier at Testing@CWM.US.Mensa.org for more details, including directions. In addition to the regular testing, additional tests will be made available around the region as candidate interest requires. To register for testing updates, go to <http://www.us.mensa.org/directtesting> and provide an email address. You can also save time at the site by paying for your testing session online at www.us.mensa.org/testingvoucher.

10 Saturday 1:00 - 3:00 pm

ShoreGrass at Advent Tea

Come hear ShoreGrass at the 1st Congregational Church Hall, 1009 Main Street, Branford, CT. Admission \$10.00.

14 Wednesday 5:30 pm

Happy Hour in Branford

(ME, 2nd Wednesday) at Donovan's Reef 1212 Main Street, Branford CT. www.donovans-reef.com has a small map, and here are some directions with distances - from I-95 take exit 54/Cedar Street. Go south on Cedar Street crossing Rt. 1/Boston Post Road for about 0.5 mi. to Rose Street. Take a left on Rose and go 0.25 mi. to a driveway on the right where you will enter the parking lot for a number of businesses in a complex known as Lockworks Square. Drive part way through the lot and look for Donovan's Reef on the left. Locals can also enter Lockworks Square from the Ivy Street side just off of Main Street. The lounge is on the left inside.

I usually have a table reservation and will likely have an "M" sign visible. We start around 5:30. There are free daily bar goodies along with a comprehensive menu. Donovan's: 203-488-5573. We have a great time talking about anything and everything. Hope to see you there! Questions? Contact Mike Wilson at 203-481-2858 or MahoutMike@aol.com

Friday December 16 6:00-10:00 pm

C&WM Mensa Holiday Party

(YE) at the Pitkin Community Center, 30 Greenfield Street, Wethersfield, CT 06109 (860) 721-2950 <http://wethersfieldct.com/town-services/services-and-info/parks-and-recreation/directions#pitkin>

Free food and fun for all Mensans and their guests. Helpers welcome, too, for decorations, shopping, setup, cleanup, etc. Contact the ExComm for details.

17 Saturday 10:00 am

Mensa Admissions Testing - New Haven

C&WM Mensa now holds regular testing in New Haven, CT. Please preregister to attend by contacting the testing Proctor Coordinator, David B. Collier at Testing@CWM.US.Mensa.org for more details, including directions. In addition to the regular testing, additional tests will be made available around the region as candidate interest requires. To register for testing updates, go to <http://www.us.mensa.org/directtesting> and provide an email address. You can also save time at the site by paying for your testing session online at www.us.mensa.org/testingvoucher.

17 Saturday 6:30 pm

Barbara Shaw & the FACS-Tones

at the VA Hospital, West Haven
Barbara Shaw will lead a group of carolers known as the FACS-Tones (an acronym from her IT days in a Finance and Corporate Support department) at the VA Hospital in West Haven on December 17 beginning at 6:30 pm. All are welcome to join us in bringing about an hour of holiday music to the patients at the hospital, followed by refreshments for all.
VA Hospital, Building 2, 3rd Floor Rec Center
West Spring Street, West Haven, CT

23 Friday 5:00 pm

Fourth Friday Happy Hour

Hamden, CT We're moving the happy hour back to the Playwright in Hamden - better happy hour snacks. www.playwrightirishpub.com. Come on down and join us this month, we'd love to see ya. Contact Gail Trowbridge 203-877-4472 or gail_trowbridge@yahoo.com

23 Friday 6:30 pm

Diner Dinner

(semimonthly, 2nd and 4th Fridays) 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. Questions? For info, contact Howard Brender at 860-635-5673 or howiebren@aol.com
Subject: Diner Dinner

REGIONAL GATHERINGS

HAVE A BLAST AT MIND GAMES®

by Jared Levine and Jess Byron,
Mind Games co-chairs

Thinking about attending Mind Games®? You've heard about it, thought about it, maybe even checked out the website, but what is it really? Here's what you should know before you go.

Mind Games is a weekend-long event where up to 300 people play games that have been on the market for no more than one year - testing the games out, providing manufacturers with valuable feedback, and selecting the Top 5 games of the year. Every year, Mensa solicits new games of all types (except video games) from the various game manufacturers, including everyone from the big names to small independent outfits. We receive about 60 titles in a typical year, and we get to test them all out. Sometimes we're among the first to even see the finished version of a game.

When you get your registration packet, you are handed the list of games. Everyone gets the same list, randomly ordered, so that the first 30 games listed for each person are different. These are your assigned games for the weekend - the only games which you are permitted to vote for the Top 5, which receive the Mensa Select® seal. Throughout the weekend, you are expected to play those 30 games - while you can play the rest of the games with your extra time, you don't have to.

As you play, you try to find the main features of the games. You can provide feedback to the manufacturers on all sorts of qualities. Some games will be quick to understand and play, while others take longer. There's the occasional dud in the mix, but you'll play many great games over the weekend, some of which you'll be so excited about that you'll decide to play them again. These are some of the best moments in Mind Games - enjoy them.

At the end of the fun, frenzied weekend of play, we announce the Top 5 winners and then hold a games give-away. All of the games played throughout the weekend are repackaged. Then the names of the Mensans in attendance are randomized, and we get to select which game we want to take home with us - a nice perk for the weekend. If there are any games left over when we hit the bottom of the list, we work our way back up the list until all the games are gone.

For 2012, we are holding Mind Games in Herndon, VA at the Hyatt Dulles, a short hotel shuttle ride from Dulles Airport. Registration includes round-the-clock hospitality and all the games you can play. All meals from dinner on Friday through breakfast on Sunday will be provided, including two buffet dinners provided by the hotel.

The official start time, when we hear announcements, is at 4 p.m. on Friday. but if you're trying to decide whether to come early or late, err on the early side. Registration will start around 9 a.m., and the games are fluffed (prepared) starting around 10 a.m. or so; once we've completely finished that process anyone who has already arrived is usually welcome to start playing. We're also looking into hosting some early gaming (not using the Mind Games entries) the night before. To find out additional important information, keep up with the happenings, and ask questions, find us on Facebook (search Mind Games 2012). To register for Mind Games, go to mindgames.us.mensa.org. To make your hotel reservations, go to <https://resweb.passkey.com/go/MensaMindGames2012>.

See page 16 for a list of this year's winning games.

We'll see you in Herndon on April 20 when Mind Games 2012 officially begins!

REGIONAL GATHERINGS

Herndon, Virginia, Fri. - Sun., April 20-22, 2012
Mensa Mind Games 2012

Game manufacturers enter their newest products in pursuit of the Mensa Select seal of proof that the most avid game-players in the country have judged their games to be the best.

Held at the Hyatt Dulles, 2300 Dulles Corner Blvd., Herndon, VA 20171; 888/421-1442. Recently renovated, the all-suite hotel offers a taste of luxury just minutes from Dulles International Airport. It is also just 40 minutes from Amtrak Union Station (estimated taxi fare: \$60) and approximately 25 minutes from the West Falls Church and Vienna Metrorail stations. The hotel offers complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport as well as Reston Town Center.

Herndon offers an ideal locale for exploring the nation's capital or historic sites both in Virginia and Washington, D.C.

Nearby attractions

Manassas (Bull Run) Civil War historic battlefields
 Historic Leesburg and Middleburg
 George Mason University
 Shenandoah National Park
 The National Zoo
 Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum
 Mount Vernon
 Gunston Hall Plantation
 Luray Caverns
 Northern Virginia Wineries

... to play

Registration rates for judges:

May 1 through July 31: \$75

Aug. 1 through Dec. 31, 2011: \$85

Jan. 1, 2012, through March 25, 2012: \$90

Register online at

<http://mindgames.us.mensa.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Register2>

Fri., May 11 - Sun., May 13, 2012

CAPE CODE MINI REGIONAL GATHERING

Plan Ahead:

The 2012 Cape Cod Mini-RG will be held in Dennisport, MA

Hotel rooms are \$74.95 for 1-4 people until 3/31, then \$79.95. It is never too early to reserve a room. Our block sold out last year and RG goers had to stay elsewhere. Mail your check, made out to "Corsair", directly to the motel at 41 Chase Avenue, Dennisport, MA 02639.

Registration for this event is already available online at: <http://caperg.org>

Wendy Birchmire and Lori Norris will be co-chairing the event. For

information contact Wendy Birchmire (mensatesting@gis.net).

FROM THE REGIONAL VICE CHAIRMAN**ANDREW HEFFERNAN****RVC CHAT**

Soon I will be heading to Nova Scotia to celebrate Christmas with my family. As I am "on-call" in December, it will be a Christmas in November. I have lived in Albany, NY for 5 years, and I consider it my home now. But it is certainly nice to visit with family and see my nieces growing up. Wish me luck... taking the little ones to the bookstore is usually an expensive venture for me.

At the upcoming Mensa Board meeting (December 2nd) there will be a motion on Social Media. The motion, if passed, will require National Mensa events like the Annual Gathering, or Mind Games to be promoted via Social Media in addition to on print media and the national website. The intent, as I understand it, is to take notice of the members who prefer electrons as their main form of communication.

Facebook, Myspace, Yahoo Groups, Twitter, Google+, Flickr, Digg, Youtube and LOTS more. I can only participate in a couple of these at a time, usually trying each out for a while to see the features. But I also like to limit my computer time outside of work. It's about balance for my personal life. Perhaps you live and breathe the Internet, or maybe you prefer paper for most of your reading. That's okay. Diversity of views is one of the great things about Mensa.

Social Media can do many things for an organization like Mensa. It can deepen relationships and encourage engagement. With over 2800 members on the Mensa Facebook Group, discussions range from charity, politics, pop culture, science, to the silly. The regional pages are better equipped to promote local events and Regional Gatherings. And many Special Interest Groups (SIGs) have interest specific pages.

For those who use Social Media regularly, I would like know what sites you use. What content would you like to see locally or even regionally for Mensa? Nationally too? I am not promising anything, but I'm Mensan, so I am curious.

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THE MAY DINNER**THE BOOKS OF MALCOLM GLADWELL**

Malcolm Gladwell is one of the most successful non-fiction authors of the 21st century. A staff writer for The New Yorker since 1996, he has written three international bestsellers about social psychology - *The Tipping Point* (2000; 1.7 million copies sold), *Blink* (2005), and *Outliers: The Story of Success* (2008). In 2005, Time magazine named him as one of the 100 most influential persons and in 2007, the American Sociological Association's gave him its Award for Excellence in the Reporting of Social Issues.

Rick D'Amico, a Mensa regular throughout Gladwell's rise to journalistic success, has read, enjoyed, and reviewed each of Gladwell's best-sellers. At our May dinner, he gave a presentation outlining the three books and led a spirited discussion of their ideas. Some in the audience had read one or more of the books and others had read the reviews on them, so everyone was familiar with some of Gladwell's ideas. Our

Local boy makes good.

Southern Connecticut Mensa member Donald Bobowick has been issued a United States Patent. The patent is for a vertical axis wind turbine design.

Vertical axis wind turbines have some advantages over the horizontal axis style we see most often. A few of those advantages are:

- Vertical axis wind turbines are bird friendly
- Respond to lower wind speeds
- Have the torsional benefits of a long drive shaft
- The generator or pump they are powering can be placed at ground level for easy servicing.

The one major disadvantage to vertical axis wind turbines is that they move in the wrong direction (into the wind) for half their rotation. This newly patented design handles that disadvantage. While scalable to large installations, this wind turbine will be ideal for homes, farms and small businesses.

speaker, however, used a PowerPoint presentation to carefully summarize the themes and the evidence presented in *The Tipping Point*, *Blink*, and *Outliers* so that even someone who had never heard of Gladwell could gain a good understanding of his thought.

THE TIPPING POINT

Rick discussed the books in chronological order, leading off with *The Tipping Point*, a book exploring what causes social trends or 'epidemics' to take off. Gladwell applies the term epidemic to social trends quite seriously, because, as Rick pointed out in his first slide, they are very like infectious diseases in several ways: even the smallest change can start them; they can blow up and die out quickly; and, once started, they follow a geometric progression. One distinction Mr. Gladwell does draw, however, is that social trends can be positive as well as negative.

Rick was impressed by the variety of Gladwell's examples, citing several of the numerous cases the author discusses in his book. Gladwell's examples range all over the lot, from the popularity of hush puppy shoes in the 1990s fashion world, to the explosion of fax machines in offices after 1987, to sociology and the grim outbreak of teenage suicides in Micronesia in the late 1980s.

What does it take for a fashion, a technology, or an act to reach a tipping point and turn into an 'epidemic'? According to Gladwell, there are three rules of epidemics or social change: 1) The Law of the Few; 2) The Stickiness Factor; and 3) The Power of Context.

The Law of the Few is a variation of Pareto's Law, which states that 20% of the people do/provide 80% of the work/results. This means that a relatively few people cause a trend to take off. These few people, however, must have rare talents for influencing others. They are the key.

For Gladwell, the influential few who spread trends fall into three types: connectors, mavens, and salesmen. Connectors are people who can spread information through word of mouth through many different social networks. Drawing on Stanley Milgram's six degrees of

separation research in social psychology, Gladwell points out that connectors know a lot of different types of people on a first name basis - many more than the 100 that a typical person knows. They are sociable and personable, and together with their diverse contacts, this makes them great at spreading information.

Maven is a Yiddish word that has become part of our language. It means one who understands. A maven knows a lot about his subject and people value his recommendations. Gladwell describes them as information specialists who collect useful info and share it with people. Because they communicate well and people listen to them, they can start word-of-mouth epidemics.

The third type of the key few is the salesman. Salesmen are skilled persuaders. They win people over because they are likeable, and have rapport and charisma. Salesmen can make a trend that is on the cusp a trend that catches fire.

Even if a trend has mavens, connectors, and salesman, it will not catch on unless it is sticky. Gladwell defines the stickiness factor as how long a message stays with you. Trends, be they ideas or products or practices, must have a certain character which keeps them in peoples' minds. What makes them sticky is often hard to pin down though. On this point, Rick quoted Malcolm Gladwell: "Some things are sticky for the darndest reasons." That does not mean there are no guidelines for advocates or promoters. The author cites many studies to argue that for advice to be sticky, it must be practical and personal. To be memorable, ideas should also be simple. Essentially, people spreading trends need to find simple ways to present information that makes it irresistible.

The power of context says that because the environment strongly influences behavior, epidemics are sensitive to times and conditions. Gladwell's best example of this is the fall in New York City's violent crimes since the early 1990s. Crime surges are often described as epidemics and the New York City crackdown on crime, led by City Police Chief William Bratton, drew on a theory that viewed crime that way - the Broken Windows Theory. This theory was put forth in a

1982 article by criminologists James Q. Wilson and George Kellner. Their idea was that small signs of decay in a neighborhood, such as broken windows, invite serious crime. The New York plan was to combat minor crimes on subways - things like fare jumping, graffiti, loitering, panhandling, and vandalism - to head off violent crimes like robberies, rape, and murder. It seemed to work, as murders plunged from a high of 2,400 annually down to 600. It was a positive epidemic that few expected after three decades of rising crime rates.

Why would fixing broken windows and cleaning up graffiti prevent murder? According to Wilson and Kellner's theory, defaced property signals urban disorder because it suggests that standards in the neighborhood are not observed and no one is watching out for vandalism, encouraging criminals to feel they can ply their trades with impunity there. Rick summarized the factors in the spread of crime in another list of three: 1) Social Conformity; 2) Monitoring; and 3) Social Signaling. Combating the minor crimes changes the signal, setting up a virtuous cycle.

BLINK: THIN-SLICING VS. FAT FUMBLING

Rick's discussion of Blink was the shortest part of his talk but provoked the most debate. Blink is a book that discusses rapid thinking - the kind that takes place in the blink of an eye. It's the type of thinking we do when we meet a person, see a place, or play a fast-moving game like basketball. Gladwell calls this rapid cognition or just intuitive thinking.

Intuitive thinking is undoubtedly common. Someone in our audience cited research that said that most hiring decisions are made in the first twelve seconds of the interview. Can such rapid thinking be good thinking? Somewhat surprisingly, Gladwell argues yes, spontaneous decisions can be as good as or better than deliberate and carefully planned ones. One advantage of intuitive thinking has it that it avoids "paralysis by analysis" - the problem where people feel so overwhelmed by information that they can't make a decision. Too much info confuses people or causes them to lose sight of the more important factors. Everyone realizes that you can't wait for perfect information and absolute certainty, yet too often people seem to

do just that. This is intellectual procrastination.

Our ability to avoid paralysis and make good intuitive decisions, Rick told us, rest us on what Gladwell terms "thin-slicing." This is the ability to gauge what is really important by ignoring the static and paring down information to the decisive factors to make fast, sound decisions. Gladwell argues that people have a powerful but generally overlooked talent for this, one that the indecisive need to recognize. As Rick quoted General Colin Powell, "If you have 40% of the info and 70% confidence, go for it."

Once again, Gladwell had some strong examples, these ones showing how thin-slicing can perform much better than laborious analysis in critical situations. Rick discussed several of these - the firemen who got out of a burning building before the floor collapsed underneath them, the art historian who quickly identified a forged painting that chemists had judged authentic, and the psychologist who expertly predicted which marriages would fail just by watching couples conversing for a few minutes. This expert intuition usually comes from experience. Experience teaches us how to sense the right decision from a multitude of subtle clues. This is a sense we need. Rick summed up Malcolm Gladwell's view with the ancient Roman maxim, "A gladiator forms his strategy in the arena."

Despite our speaker's admonition, some readers of *Blink* and some of the listeners in our audience seemed to think that it endorsed acting on whims or impulses. Nothing could be further from the truth. Gladwell does not advocate "just going by your gut." He argues that intuitive thinking is better in certain situations - where quick thinking is needed and where the sheer quantity of information overwhelms us. On the other hand, he argues, there are definitely situations where quick, intuitive thinking can be disastrous. Two such cases were the beating of Rodney King by L.A. police and the police slaying of immigrant Amadou Diallo in New York City on Feb 4, 1999. In the Rodney King case, after a high-speed car chase, police beat suspect Rodney King mercilessly. Gladwell pointed out that several riots have been sparked by police over-reaction after these types of chases, which is just what happened after King's beating.

Police tend to lose restraint in these situations because, as psychological tests have shown, it is very difficult to exercise good judgment when your adrenalin is pumped up. In the Diallo case, poor reading of the situation provoked a hasty and tragic decision. New York police shot an innocent black immigrant who did nothing to provoke the attack except reach for his wallet. The police, quite likely acting on preconceived notions, interpreted ambiguous information as a threat, started shooting and didn't stop until they had fired 41 shots at Diallo, killing him. As Gladwell points out, police did not follow procedures in either the King or Diallo case and they did not take precautions that psychologists have suggested for such intense situations. Oddly though, it seemed that people who belittled Gladwell's views on intuitive thinking thought there was nothing wrong with the impulsive actions of police in the King and Diallo cases.

OUTLIERS - SWEAT, TOIL, AND MORE

Lots of people have intelligence and ambition but not many are outliers - people who reach the summit of their profession. Malcolm Gladwell's third book, *Outliers: The Story of Success*, examines the causes of top-flight achievement in the professions, business, the arts, and athletics.

One thing that elite achievement requires is practice. How much? Would you believe 10,000 hours - about 20 hours a week for ten years? When Rick showed us a slide displaying this 10,000-Hour Rule, there were some gulps from the audience. But much psychological research supports this rule of thumb, as Gladwell elucidates in his book.

While practice is certainly necessary for reaching the top ranks, it is, unfortunately, Rick explained, not sufficient. Practice will improve your skills, but to reach the top, opportunity and luck are just as important. Consider a case that Gladwell discusses - professional hockey players. Hockey is the national sport of Canada and very popular in many northern European countries. Millions of youngsters start playing it at a very early age. Few, however, ultimately make it to the professional level. Astonishingly though, roughly 40 percent of the players who make it to the pros are kids who were born in January,

February or March, while only 10 percent were born in October, November or December. Why? It happens that the cutoff birth date for many youth hockey leagues is January 1. So kids born in the first quarter of the year are slightly older, bigger and stronger than their competitors on the ice. These older children use their physical and mental advantage to make the all-star teams that offer more advanced training. By the time these early-born youngsters reach their teens, this superior training has multiplied their early advantage, making them much better prepared for pro competition than their peers.

Similar accidents of birth have played a role in many great fortunes. Gladwell points out that 17 out of the 75 richest people in history were born in the U.S. within nine years of each other - 1831 - 1839. Rick showed us this list, which included John Rockefeller, Andrew Carnegie, J.P. Morgan, Jay Gould, and thirteen others who all gained their wealth during the post-Civil War era when America expanded across the continent, creating big markets for railroads, industry, and banking. In this period, many new technologies also emerged which these businessmen were able to take advantage of. Hence, the timing of their births provided special opportunities for the new industrial and financial titans. The same could be said for Bill Gates today. Gates was fortunate not only to grow up after the integrated circuit had been invented, but also to have access to a school computer when they were not yet common in high schools. Gates put in his 10,000 hours at computers, but he could not have done so if he had not been born in the right time and the right place.

What about the role of intelligence in professional success? Whether it is due to nature or nurture, it is undoubtedly an advantage. But drawing on psychological research, Gladwell argues that there is a "threshold effect": once you reach the 120 score on the I.Q. test, increased intelligence doesn't make much of a difference. Beyond this level, other factors play a larger role. Rick showed us a slide bringing up a very unusual case that illuminates Gladwell's point - that of Christopher Langan, a man who, with his stunning IQ of 195, could lay claim to

being the smartest person in America. But abuse by his stepfather and poverty prevented Langan from approaching his potential. Despite his intelligence, he never finished college and spent 20 years working as a bouncer. Ability did not meet opportunity, so this extraordinary outlier did not achieve what you would expect.

Rick ably discussed other case studies in *Outliers* - the factors in airplane crashes, the professional achievement of minority students in law schools, and Gladwell's own success, all of which show that there is more behind outstanding success than intelligence and ambition.

Once again, the turnout for the dinner was low - only 7 out of the approximately 250 members in Southern CT Mensa showed up. Mavens, connectors, and salesman alike stayed away in droves, continuing the downward slide in attendance. While Malcolm Gladwell's books have been very popular with the reading public and sparked interesting discussion at the dinner, not many Mensans were interested enough to attend.

At least one of books, *Outliers*, should have attracted the attention of Mensans, because it revisited the debate over what role intelligence plays in success. Personally, Rick said that he preferred *The Tipping Point*. He judged that the most compelling of the Gladwell books he reviewed, followed by the *Outliers*, and then by *Blink*, whose evidence he found less persuasive. Regardless of how convincing he found them, however, he said that all of them well written, entertaining, and thought provoking. For Gladwell fans, Rick mentioned that Malcolm has a fourth book, *What the Dog Saw: And Other Adventures* (2009), which is a collection of pieces he wrote for the *New Yorker*. Readers who want to think more about Gladwell's ideas can read many reviews of each of the three bestsellers and Gladwell's newest book on the web. Those who have no interest in trends, thinking, or success can ignore them.

TRAVEL BLOG

Chapter 3: Nevada Businesses

One point seven miles north of the road construction I caught a glimpse, on the left, of a commercial sign "something RANCH" near a concrete block motel looking complex, on a rise, at the end of a quarter mile driveway.

1.9 - 2.1 - 2.3 miles past. Oh. Oh! Well, that is a legal Nevada business. 3.1 -3.2 That changed the Jeep lady's smile a bit - from inviting to enticing. It also cleared my thinking on the possible conversation she had with the female flagger. "Hey, how are you? I wanted to let you know that we are just a couple miles up the road. If you want to get out of the sun for breaks or lunch we are air-conditioned and can rustle up some cold lemonade or iced tea." Like the parts store and the auto repair shop, just another friendly Nevada business.

5.3 - 5.4 That business is something I did not need right then. I could have used a shower though. I was going to stop the previous night at a truck stop parking area just north of Bishop, CA. The lot was half filled with livestock trucks so I stayed on the road until turning west on rural Five Bridge Road. Over two bridges, I backed into a seldom used side road, finding a level spot for the night. First light found Blue Van surrounded by range cattle. Their notoriously poor eyesight led them to mistake Blue Van for Babe the Blue Ox. The steers were probably hoping to get autographs.

7.6 - 7.7 After a night in the rural, an hour in the repair shop's typical waiting room, and more than a couple days on the road I was feeling quite gritty. A shower would have been very welcome. Staring into full high desert sun on the road made me a little drowsy. A nap would also have been nice.

8.4 - 8.5 miles. The code of the desert requires water conservation such as always showering with a friend. I am sure there is also something about napping with a friend. These are things that could be provided by the Ranch now just 7.1 miles back, or by Matt Dillon's Miss Kitty, except for the shower part in her case. Both would set me back less than a monthly BMW payment -700 Series.

9.2 - 9.3 Sensuality and sexuality are about as human as you can get. Without them a person would make a horrible ancestor. These things are a little dicey in this era, definitely more so than the Age of Aquarius, my last single reference point. The radio doctor, Dean Edell, felt that these are as important a part of quality of life as being able to walk up a hill, do a crossword puzzle, sit in the sun reading a book or watch a live baseball game. 10.4 - 10.5 Being, by no means, a "Merry widower," this dicey area of life has gotten even dicier. I assume someone has a map through the land mines and pitfalls but I haven't found it. Haven't looked yet. Half the time, in my mind, I am a twenty year old single man on the road, the other half I am an, of an age, retired widower who still wants only to see what is over the next hill.

Fifteen point three miles past the "something Ranch," on this trip, this Blue Van, has no turn-around.

Next: Chapter Four Ways to Get Home

If you would like, follow my blog at bsawatzki.blogspot.com

WORD CHECK

Define these words. Check your answers at right.

- 1. dastard -
- 2. demesne (di - MAYN) -
- 3. descant -
- 4. dissemble -
- 5. dotard -
- 6. empyreal -
- 7. emulsion -
- 8. equipoise -
- 9. entente (en - TAHNT) -
- 10. esculent -
- 11. cadenza -
- 12. cenotaph -
- 13. confabulation -
- 14. contemn -
- 15. curio -

- 1. dastard - a coward.
- 2. demesne (di - MAYN) - domain; land over which one has full sovereignty.
- 3. descant - discuss fully.
- 4. dissemble - disguise, pretend.
- 5. dotard - an old foolish man.
- 6. empyreal - celestial, fiery.
- 7. emulsion - a mixture of liquids in which one liquid's particles remain suspended in the other liquid.
- 8. equipoise - 1. an equal distribution of weight. 2. a counterbalance.
- 9. entente - an understanding, especially among nations friendly to one another.
- 10. esculent - fit to be used for food; edible.
- 11. cadenza - a musical passage in showy style for a soloist in a concerto.
- 12. cenotaph - an empty tomb used as a memorial for someone buried elsewhere.
- 13. confabulation - 1. a conversation or discussion. 2. In psychiatry, the replacement of a gap in a person's memory by a falsification that he or she believes to be true.
- 14. contemn - to regard with contempt.
- 15. curio - a small article valued as a collector's item, esp something fascinating or unusual (shortened from curiosity).

ANSWERS:

PUZZLES & QUESTIONS

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

1. What should people underline when they are reading?
2. About how many customers does Connecticut Light and Power have in Connecticut? About how many does United Illuminating have?
3. Define style.
4. List the 12 tribes of ancient Israel.
5. How do writers of fiction create suspense?
6. About how many stars are in the Milky Way Galaxy?
7. Which is harder, algebra or geometry?
8. What is the approximate speed of meteorites?
9. What techniques do writers use to create suspense?
10. The 2010 U.S. Census gave Connecticut's population as 3.5 million. What was Connecticut's population in 1900?
11. Which nutritionists have the best track record? Which have the worst?
12. What is the difference between the Internet and the World Wide Web?
13. What were the best retreats in the history of war?
14. What was the average number of pitchers used per game by major league baseball teams in 2011?
15. Compare Moby Dick and Hamlet.
16. Which Hall of Fame National Football League quarterbacks threw more interceptions than touchdown passes?

PUZZLES & QUESTIONS ANSWERS TO LAST MONTH'S PUZZLES:

2. How many towns are there in Fairfield County?
 A: Fairfield County has 23 towns: Bethel, Bridgeport, Brookfield, Danbury, Darien, Easton, Fairfield, Greenwich, Monroe, New Canaan, New Fairfield, Newtown, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Shelton, Sherman, Stamford, Stratford, Trumbull, Weston, Westport, and Wilton.

 Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk, Shelton, and Stamford are incorporated as cities.

 The 2010 Census estimated that 916,829 people live in Fairfield County, a 3.9% increase from 2000.

 Fairfield County also has two "ghost towns" or abandoned settlements -
 Pleasure Beach in Bridgeport and Cuties Island off the coast of Stamford.
4. When was the language Esperanto invented?
 A: Esperanto was created by Dr. L.L. Zamenhof in 1887. About 2 million people speak Esperanto.
6. How many Kurds are there in the world?
 A: About 30 million. Most of them live in the Kurdistan Region, which comprises adjacent parts of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Kurds are not a majority in any country, but they are a significant minority in each of these countries. An estimated 16.5 live in (western) Turkey (about 19% of the Turkish population), about 5.5 million in both Iran (10% of the population) and Iraq (about 23% of the population), and about 1.5 million in Syria (about

4% of the population). About 200,000 Kurdish Jews live in Israel. Approximately 1.3 million Kurds live in Western Europe, 2 million Kurds live in other parts of the world. About 100,000 live in the U.S. and 50,000 in Canada.

Kurdish communities also exist in Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Russia, and Lebanon.

Kurds have had partial autonomy in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1991, and there is a movement to create an independent Kurdish state in the region.

Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East after Arabs, Persians, and Turks.

8. About what percentage of hospital Emergency Room visits result in hospital stays?
- A: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), only 13% of Emergency Department visits result in hospital admission.

NOTED & QUOTED

Judge today not by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant.

- Robert Louis Stevenson, (1850 - 1984), U.S. novelist

I will not be triumphed over.

- Cleopatra VII Philopator, (69 - 30 B.C.E.), Queen of Egypt, 51 - 47 B.C.E.

The world's a forest, in which all lose their way; though by a different path each goes astray.

- George Villiers, (1592 - 1628), English duke

You must have plenty of sea-room to tell the truth in.

- Herman Melville, (1819 - 1891), U.S. novelist and short-story writer

Facing it, always facing it, that's the way to get through. Face it.

- Joseph Conrad, (1857 - 1924), Polish-born English novelist

One does not learn how to die by killing others.

- François-René, vicomte de Chateaubriand, (1768 - 1848), French writer and politician., *Comparison of Washington and Bonaparte*, Book VI: Ch. 8

It is the nature of probability that improbable things will happen.

- Aristotle, (384 - 322 B.C.E.)

To the mediocre, mediocrity is a form of happiness.

- Friedrich Nietzsche, (1844 - 1900)

It's not a very big step from contentment to complacency.

- Simone de Beauvoir, (1908 - 1986), French novelist, philosopher, and commentator

Contentment may be goal number one, But discontent is what gets things done.

- Dr. Mardy Grothe, U.S. psychologist, quote collector, speaker

Always make the audience suffer as much as possible.

- Alfred Hitchcock, (1899 - 1980)

I fell asleep reading a dull book and dreamed I kept on reading, so I awoke from sheer boredom.

- Heinrich Heine, (1797 - 1856), German poet, journalist, essayist, and critic

Repose is a good thing, but boredom is its brother.

- Voltaire, (1694 - 1778)

I am one of those for whom superfluity is a necessity.

- Theophile Gautier, (1811 - 1872), French novelist, dramatist, poet, critic, and journalist

Numberless are the world's wonders, but none more wonderful than man.

- Sophocles, (496 / 495 ? - 406 B.C.E.), Greek playwright, Antigone

Most of the important things that a human being ought to know cannot be comprehended in youth.

- Robert Hutchins, (1899 - 1977), U.S. educator; president of University of Chicago 1929 - 1945

The worst cynicism -- a belief in luck.

- Joyce Carol Oates, (1938 -), U.S. novelist, essayist

Blue jeans? They should be worn by farm girls milking cows!

- Yves Saint Laurent, (1936 - 2008), French fashion designer

In my house I'm the boss, my wife is just the decision maker. - Woody Allen, (1935 -)

All happiness depends on a leisurely breakfast. - John Gunther, (1901 - 1970), U.S. journalist, novelist

The only thing people are interested in is people. - Diana Vreeland, (1903 - 1989), U.S. fashion columnist, editor

The more I detest men individually the more ardent becomes my love for humanity. - Fyodor Dostoevsky, (1821 - 1881)

Destiny has two ways of crushing us -- by refusing our wishes and by fulfilling them. - Henri Frederic Amiel, (1821 - 1881), Swiss philosopher

I see the mind of the 5-year old as a volcano with two vents: destructiveness and creativeness. - Sylvia Ashton-Warner, (1908 - 1984), New Zealand writer, poet, and educator

Understanding human needs is half the job of meeting them. - Adlai Stevenson, (1900 - 1965), U.S.

politician, presidential candidate
Shame is the social side of guilt.
- Dero Saunders, (1914 - 2002), Forbes Thoughts columnist

There are more people free from self-interest than from envy.
- Baron Francois Duc de La Rochefoucauld, (1613 - 1680), French epigrammatist

Our friends are that part of the human race with which one can be human.
- George Santayana, (1863 - 1952)

A starving man will eat with the wolf.
- Oklahoma Indian proverb

There is no death, only a change of worlds.
- Duwamish Indian proverb

A guilty conscience needs no accuser.
- English proverb

A failure is a man who has blundered but is not able to cash in on the experience.
- Elbert Hubbard, (1856 - 1915), U.S. editor, author, lecturer, and moralist

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A poet's autobiography is his poetry. Anything else can only be a footnote.

- Yevgeny Yevtushenko, (1933 -), Russian poet

New York is not the cultural center of America, but the business and administrative center of American culture.

- Saul Bellow, (1915 - 2005), Canadian-born U.S. novelist, Nobel Prize laureate Literature 1976

Anyone wishing to see what is to be must consider what has been: all the things of this world in every era have their counterparts in ancient times.

- Nicolo Machiavelli, (1469 - 1527)

Just as it makes no sense to ask 'why people eat' or 'what they sleep for', so fighting in many ways is not a means but an end.

- Martin van Creveld, (1946 -), Israeli military historian and theorist, *The Transformation of War* (1991)

In order to understand the universe you must know the language in which it was written. And that language is mathematics.

- Galileo Galilei, (1564 - 1742)

Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light.

- Joseph Pulitzer, (1847 - 1911), Hungarian-American editor, publisher

Men strengthen each other in their faults. Those who are alike associate together, repeat the things which all believe, defend and stimulate their common faults of disposition, and each one receives from the others a reflection of his own egotism.

- Henry Ward Beecher, (1813 - 1887), U.S. cleric, editor, writer, abolitionist

War is an area of uncertainty; three quarters of the things on which all action in War is based on are lying in a fog of uncertainty to a greater or lesser extent. The first thing (needed) here is a fine, piercing mind, to feel the truth with the measure of its judgment.

- Carl von Clausewitz, (1780 - 1831), German soldier, military theorist

Vulgarized knowledge characteristically gives birth to a feeling that everything is understandable and explained. It is like a system of bridges built over chasms. One can travel boldly ahead over these bridges, ignoring the chasms. It is forbidden to look down into them; but that, alas, does not alter the fact that they exist.

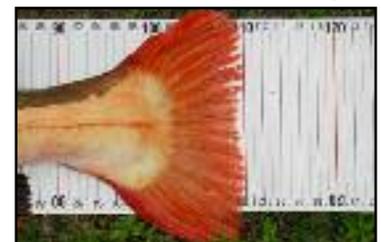
- Czeslaw Milosz, (1911 - 2004), Polish poet and essayist, Nobel laureate Literature 1980

CHAPTER NEWS

Take a look at this monstrous fish. It's a world record size - 109 cm., or slightly over 42 inches - red-tail catfish caught by Southern CT Mensan Michael Ma on June 2, 2011. Mike caught it while fishing in the Ratchaburi Province in central Thailand The International Game Fishing Association (IGFA) verified Ma's record-breaking catch in September.



Mike's photos have appeared in the national Mensa Bulletin sent to members each month and these pics will probably appear in a forthcoming issue. He has been a member of our local Mensa chapter for nearly two years and he often attends the Post Road Dinner and the monthly dinner in Bethel. Stop by one of our dinners and you might get a chance to hear about Mike's world record and his global travels.



You can read an article about Mike's achievement by the Darien Times at <http://www.darientimes.com/news/darien-features/5001587-world-record-fish.html>.

MENSA MIND GAMES 2011 RESULTS

This year's winners are:

InStructures

(4 or more players, ages 8 and up; designed by Jane's Games, published by Jane's Games)

Pastiche

(2 to 4 players, ages 10 and up; designed by Sean D. MacDonald, published by Gryphon Games)

Pirate Versus Pirate

(2 to 3 players, ages 8 and up; designed by Max Winter Osterhaus, published by Out of the Box Publishing)

Stomple

(for 2 to 6 players, ages 8 and up; designed by Greg Zima, published by Spin Master)

Uncle Chestnut's Table Gype

(for 2 to 4 players, ages 10 and up; designed by Paul E. Nowak and Christopher Nowak, published by Eternal Revolution)

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Fiscal Year: April 1 - March 31

Opening balance at 4/1/11 \$10,162.66

INCOME

American Mensa	
Local Group Support Funds:	\$1247.80
Total Income	\$1247.80

EXPENSES

Chronicle Printing Expenses:	\$387.96
Chronicle Postage & Supplies:	176.00
Speaker Dinners:	160.86
Event Expenses:	629.93
TOTAL EXPENSES:	\$1354.75

2nd Quarter Balance 9-30-11 \$10,055.71

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Check out the Holistic Kidney website online. <http://www.holistic-kidney.com/articles.html> My first article is an interview with the author of How I Avoided Dialysis and You Can Too! Dr. Jenna Henderson Holistic Kidney A Safe, Natural Approach for all stages of Kidney Disease

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