

Mblem

It's later (or earlier) than you think by David Skaar

Given the high response to my column on Culture Quest (CQ) and the sorts of random facts often used in CQ (1 response), I feel encouraged to continue the series. I also apparently made the trivia questions much too easy, as my one respondent was able to get 6 out of 26 right; hopefully this has been corrected. My original intent for this column was to do a "this day in history" theme for events that occurred in October, as CQ seems to often have questions about events that occurred in the month of the quiz (usually April). It was from one CQ that I learned that the peace treaty between Japan and the allies ending World War II did not take effect until 1952 (April 28), and that Adolf Hitler died 10 days after his birthday (b. April 20 – d. April 30). However, it was then pointed out to me that I would be writing for publication in the November Mblem, so it would not be read until the end of October. A fortunate coincidence came to my aid, saving me from doing extra work, as in my research I came across several October connections to calendar confusion/reform and missing dates. I will therefore use this to justify writing about events in October, for reading in November, because, as I will hopefully point out, it's hard to tell what has actually happened in October.

Most (or all) of the people reading this should be familiar with the major flaw of the Julian calendar. The Julian calendar was created by Julius Caesar, picked up by the Roman Catholic church, and used by most of Europe from the influence of one or both Roman organizations, and it is flawed. It sets the length of a year at 365.25 days, with one leap day every four years to keep things even. However, the solar year is ever so slightly shorter than that, so after about 15 centuries of using this calendar, it was off by 10 days, 10 days behind the solar year, to be specific. The more I read about the subject, the more I realized that in an unindustrialized, agrarian society (and to some extent in a modern society), it's hard to explain the calendar being "off", and why it even matters. Even with the calendar date off from the actual solar cycle, it was still obvious what season it is, so they knew when to plant and harvest crops, move the sheep to the mountains, and whether it's safe or not safe to go ice skating – without needing a piece of paper to tell them the date. People knew what day of the week it was, so there was no confusion over what day was Sunday to go to church, or when to say 'Thank God it's Friday'. Months and numerical days only really mattered for bookkeeping purposes, but as long as you keep the year at 365 days so rent and taxes could be paid regularly, again, it doesn't really matter. Important dates like holidays and the king's or queen's birthday still came once a year, and official announcements would be made to remind people anyway.

But someone did actually care about when holidays fell. With the calendar date drifting relative to the seasons, the spring solstice was occurring too early on paper, and the date of Easter is defined relative to the spring solstice. The options were to 1) Leave Easter linked to the paper calendar, so that it would drift backwards through the solar year, coming back to its original date about every 43,000 years, 2) Link Easter to the solar calendar, so that it would fall at an appropriate time to the actual equinox, but with a paper date that shifted forwards, 3) Change the calendar. Rather than just change the date, a temporary fix that would have to be periodically repeated, the human urge to apply order to the world and make things "fit" insisted that the calendar be made better. Enter the Gregorian calendar (for Pope

Gregory XIII, who was in charge when it was instituted) that sets the length of the solar year at 365.2425 days, giving 97 leap years in 400 years, instead of 1 in 4. It was right, it would work, now it just had to be put into practice. Aloysius Lilius, the designer of the calendar, wanted to do a gradual change to get things back on track over 40 years, but Pope Gregory went with the "tear the bandage off quickly" philosophy, so the change was made all at once. Therefore, in 1582, October 4 was immediately followed by October 15. So, that means that nothing happened in history from October 5-14, 1582, right? Not exactly. Only the Vatican and a few other countries adopted the calendar on those dates, with others taking months or years to switch, with most Catholic countries switched by 1587. Therefore, different countries have different holes in their histories.

But there's more. This was a Roman Catholic idea, and protestant and Eastern Orthodox countries in Europe did not accept it for a while longer. Most protestant countries converted their calendars in the early to mid 18th century. But there's still more. Many countries hadn't truly consolidated yet, and even in those that had, many catholic and protestant regions did not convert together, so particularly in Germany, France, and Switzerland, there are regions next to each other that changed calendars 130 years apart. The reshuffling of the political map of Europe also forcibly converted some areas when they suddenly found themselves in a Gregorian calendar country. This can lead to historical confusion when you think about it too much. There were a few wars fought between countries on different calendars. When history books refer to specific dates, which one do they mean? The definitive battle between the British fleet and the Spanish Armada was July 29, 1588, but Britain and Spain were on different calendars. I'll assume that July 29 is the unreformed British date, since they claim victory, and I read about it in English. The 30 Years War (~1618-1648) was fought among Catholic and Protestant countries, so what do dates of battles mean? The battle in which the king of Sweden died, was fought November 6, 1632, but which November 6?

The British empire, including their part of America, did not convert until 1752 (French and Spanish possessions in America had been on the Gregorian calendar since 1582). Therefore, no American history happened from September 3-13, 1752 (one extra day had to be removed, because by then, the Julian calendar was 11 days off). All history from before the change is suspect too. Anytime the anniversary of an event before 1752 is celebrated, remember, the "true" anniversary occurs 9 to 11 days later. Columbus discovers America? Landing at Plymouth Rock? George Washington's birthday? Not quite when we think they are. Does it matter? Not really, but it's fun to point it out.

Finally, there is Russia. By the beginning of the 20th century, Russia still used the Julian calendar (which they didn't even adopt until 1709). Mostly. The Russian navy and commercial fleets used the Gregorian calendar for effective dealings in other countries. The Department of Foreign Affairs had to convert to deal with their counterparts, as did astronomers and meteorologists, so that their observations could be compared by their foreign counterparts. An attempt to convert was proposed in 1829, but Nicholas I turned it down on the advice that it was premature, unnecessary, and likely to confuse people (an excuse that has never gone out of style). It was only after the revolution in 1918, that Lenin examined the topic, and decreed that it be done "for the purpose of being in harmony with all the civilized countries of the world."

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Really nothing interesting in this issue*
- *Well, maybe CQ talk on pages 1*
- *Poetry. Page 4*
- *Carnivores? Page 5*
- *NPR Winner Page 5*

Rebuild New Orleans

At large column

by Shiangtai Tuan

It might be too sensitive a topic to talk about. Believe me, I have total sympathy with the Katrina hurricane victims and I wish them well.

Why this apologizing introduction? Because I think New Orleans should not be rebuilt, well, at least, not on the same ground "as it was", and I think this statement might offend some people.

It is not new that many cities were built and rebuilt over centuries or over millenniums. Under many cities you find another older city. It is well known to archeologist that it is difficult to dig when a modern residence, office building, or even a palace is standing over a site of interest, say, in London, several layers deep. It has also been true that cities were rebuilt in some different but near by locations, leaving the old sites under volcanic ashes, desert sand, or, under water.

Let's back up a little bit. People seldom built a city out of nowhere. People gather by the river, move to heavily traveled junctions, trading places. Small towns were formed and, if conditions fit, they might grow to larger cities. New Orleans was created like this too, I trust. No one intended to build a city under water, I mean, under sea water level. It was a fine place at the beginning, starting as a small town in a fairly dry place near the French Quarters. Through out the years, the city grew, the river changed, land changed. When water started to rise decades of years ago, people started to build levees to keep the water out. No big deal at the beginning, only a few inches high and not too long either. However, when it is fifteen to twenty feet high and miles long it is a problem. Especially when the heavy, strong, modern top part is build on the old and weak foundation it has become a time bomb. People worried of a pending disaster for the past 10, 20, or maybe 50 years. However, most people are just like me, being very lazy and short sighted. We all say: "It couldn't happen to me." Some people might even know the danger but even they might say: "It couldn't happen to me. No strong hurricanes hit us before and I bet none is to hit us soon. Why me worry."

Well, Murphy's law prevailed*, the combination of all worst possibilities: the Gulf had its warmest water, Katrina lingered, coiled back and then lurched forward with the most fierce strike ever on a major city which happened to be under sea level with weak barrier dams surrounding it. Well, the rest is history, you know what had happened. The problem facing us now is what we do next.

To "rebuild the city as it was" (just a metaphor, not really possible), one has to build a strong, perfect dam without a "weak link"; pump out all water; bulldoze out all the old buildings; rebuild the foundations; rebuild houses one by one like before; move people back in; ... etc. This is of course very expensive. Besides, who is to pay for it? Should the old owners pay for the new houses? They have no money now. Should they use government money, i.e., your tax money? Even after all these, the city is going to be constantly under a threat, a fear, and tremendous up keeping cost of fixing the levee, pumping rain water and sewage water out ... Everywhere else people let the water flow out. In New Orleans, they let the water flow in and then pump out!

The disaster came as the result of a natural development. To avoid possible similar consequences, it is only natural to keep an open mind and think of all possible ways of "rebuilding" while we are at the crossroad.

My proposal? Make a temporarily dam;

pump out the water; retrieve the dead bodies; let people retrieve their properties as much as they could; destroy the dangerously standing houses by bull dozers or by dynamite; re-flood the low areas by completely destroying the temporary dam and old levees. The high and dry part, including French quarters and some other places, should be repaired, of course. It will be "Old New Orleans" (as in Old Salem). One can even build a pretty "city wall" around it if necessary. In the mean while, "rebuild" New Orleans at a nearby location on dry ground (like the place they already propose to start a "tent city") with modern harbor, rail connection, residential, bank, office ... buildings, even a new city hall with a gold dome. There is even an option to build the residential area the spread out "American way" or high rise "European way". In many cities in Europe, or for that matter, in Asia, you see twenty story buildings all around. Many Americans say: "how pitiful" only because they have not been to those places. Apartments or condos there are much cleaner, more modern than the dirty water, smelly backyards in the poor sections in many American cities.

Is it possible? Why not? Look at Brazil's new capitol (built in the middle of nowhere), China's East Pu new commerce district (east of Shanghai, built from scratch in less than 9 years), Germany's new capitol in Berlin (moved back from Bonn, rebuilt in a few years after the Wall fell) ... These are a few examples in industrialized countries as well as so called third world countries.

Now, you might say: "Why don't we do it the way the Dutch have done it: build a multi billion dollar dam and forever conquer (i.e., block out) the sea. Two reasons. 1. They have to do it and we don't. Two third of their land is under sea level. Without the Dam, they would have to move many, including their two largest cities and most of their people to the small part of the land next to Germany, the country they did not and would never trust. 2. They are not in a hurricane zone. Their sea is not calm but there is no hurricane to deal with.

Is this proposal likely to be adopted. Probably not, sigh. Why? Even if all you Mensans agree with me, many people probably still think rebuilding New Orleans back under water is a romantic, dreamy, grandioso way to do things. Additionally, there is no "authority" that has the power to make a decision like this. No senators outside the area would want to be "involved" in a debate that cannot gain them anything. No senators from this area (Louisiana, Mississippi ...) would dare to support a "revolutionary" idea that might be in conflict to some special interest groups. This is the price we pay for being in a democratic society. The few examples I gave (Brazil, China, Germany) are under, relatively speaking, dictatorship. In a democratic society, nothing can be done efficiently. In its slow, slow, slow pace, hopefully, everybody gets his/her say and nothing will go terribly wrong.

* Murphy's Law is just a joke, even an excuse, for bad things happening together. Bad things happen all the time without being the worst thousands of times before. For instance, every time there is a hurricane, it is bad. Most of them did not hit land; did not hit populated area; did not kill any Americans (only Chinese, Cubans, Haitians ...). In fact, if Murphy's Law had been true, the hurricane last year would not have veered off from New Orleans at the last minute and New Orleans would have been under water last year. Since there was not even a partial evacuation, more people would have been killed and the "lack of evacuation plan" blame-game would have started last year.

Run, Run, Run

LocSecond column

by Shinagtai Tuan

I don't mean to alternate the leg movement to gain distance. I mean to run for an office on ExComm in MENC. You can do it. A LocSec doesn't have to do any thing, just sit there and look pretty. There is not much for the parliamentarian to settle. Et cetera, et cetera. Well, just kidding, Seriously, being on ExComm is the best place if you have something in mind to improve the way MENC is run. On the other hand, it does not take much of your time either.

(continued from Page 1, Later/Earlier)

That was that, Lenin said it, and it was so. (The USSR attempted a 5-day week from 1923-1931, and a 6-day week from 1931-1940; both were attempts to increase worker productivity, but they didn't work.)

One final fact about calendar changes and uncertain dates, that get back to where this article started. The Russian October revolution, which resulted in the creation of the Soviet government, occurred on October 25, 1917. However, that was under the Julian calendar. The Gregorian date was November 7, 1917. As previously mentioned, after Lenin came to power, he mandated the calendar be updated. So, the October revolution actually happened in November, justifying its inclusion in an article about historic events in October or November, of which I actually only managed to name three. Now, time to cut my losses, before any of the currently used lunar calendars or modern proposals for calendar reform come up. Time for the trivia questions. Putting this together got me thinking historically, so the loose theme of these questions is notable historical figures (and somehow a military theme came along too). There are fewer questions this time, but most have multiple answers.

- 1 I mentioned the king of Sweden who died at the battle of Lützen in 1632, what was his name?
 - 2 Six people have been declared honorary citizens of the USA by the President, pursuant to act of congress. Four of these were posthumous. Who are they?
 - 3 The first father and son pair of Congressional Medal of Honor winners received it for actions in the Civil War and World War II, respectively. Who were they?
 - 4 The second father and son pair to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor both received it posthumously, one of them over 100 years after he was nominated for it. Who were they?
 - 5 Two American army generals have held a rank superior to five-star general (a.k.a. General of the Army), one was awarded posthumously. Who are the men, what is the rank?
 - 6 Many American presidents were army veterans, and five were generals in the Civil War. Who are these five?
 - 7 By far, one branch of the military produced the most 20th century presidents. Which branch, and who were they?
- (See answers on Page 6)

Annual Scholarship Cycle Beginning

by Ed Williams

Every year about this time, our scholarship cycle commences. Applicants must be planning to enroll, for the academic year 2006-2007, in a degree program at an accredited U.S. institution of post-secondary education. Applicants do NOT have to be Mensa members. There is no age requirement, nor is any preference given on the basis of need. A number of scholarships are given at the regional and national levels, and MENC awards one scholarship (hopefully, we may decide to award more than one.) Two of the special national awards are gender-specific, but otherwise race and gender are irrelevant.

Scholarships are awarded on the basis of an essay of no more

than 550 words that describes the applicant's career, vocational and/or academic goals. Most successful applicants write close to, but not in excess of the 550 word limit. Essays are judged first by three local volunteer judges. They do not know whom they are judging (names cannot appear on the essays.) Those that are deemed the most worthy are (within numerical limits) sent to Regional, where they are judged again, and the survivors of that round go to National.

To apply through MENC, an applicant MUST either live in a zip code in our area or be enrolled in school here. If you have children, grandchildren, kinfolks, friends, etc. who might be eligible, let them know about it. The scholarships are not big, but every little bit helps. Entry forms are available at <http://foundation.us.mensa.org/scholarships/zipfinder.php> Questions? Contact me - see address on inside back cover.

Proctor's' Podium

by Ellen Muratori

On November 5, a Mensa Admissions Test is scheduled in Jacksonville, N.C., the last in a series of sessions held for National Testing Day. None are scheduled for December.

Sometime in January (or February?) the

Cameron Village library in Raleigh is supposed to reopen in its renovated location. Would the members in Raleigh, who go to this library, please inform me when this happens? We have Raleigh prospects who would like to take the test closer to home. And I need to survey the meeting rooms before we schedule there. Thanks. summerellen@mymailstation.com

Party Tip

When you give a potluck party, make sure your corkscrew is available. Or, even better, help to open the bottle as soon as it arrives unless it is specifically said to be a gift to you. Why? At my last party, a bottle of wine appeared. Since I provided some wines, that bottle was not

Libs vs. Cons

by Sam Zimmerman

My Dear Friends, September 12, 2005

I have some observations on the "Liberal versus Conservative" controversy raging in our country. The following statement describes both groups, depending on one's point of view:

A fiery outrage, self-righteous indignation, and a condescending, judgmental, close-minded condemnation delivered from a self-perceived moral high ground so lofty it gives one a nose bleed.

This statement describes both the godless liberals and the religious right. It arouses both "Hillary Derangement Syndrome" and "Bush Derangement Syndrome." These people remind me of the Hoarders and the Wasters in Dante's Inferno who are eternally condemned to push on opposite sides of a huge boulder in Hell.

The statement actually describes only about 20% of our population, 10% on the rabid right and 10% on the livid left. The balance of the power of popular opinion, and thus the results of our elections, to the utter chagrin of the extreme groups, lies with the unconcerned 80% majority in the middle!

Both sides see the world going to Hell in a hand basket for the same reason. No one listens to them or does what they say! Both sides wrestle for the attention of the inert majority, but they focus their anger on the other as the enemy. It is a visceral struggle for control of our country.

Both claim the moral high ground. The Libs work from the point of view of human reasoning, relativistic morality, and democracy for "the little guy." They worship "the law." If something is legal, it is right. The Constitution is a "living document" open to modern interpretation. For instance, they say that abortion is legal because the Supreme Court said so, but the war in Iraq is immoral for the reason that it is obvious to anyone with half a brain.

The Cons work from the point of view of Biblical principles and moral imperatives, and maintaining the Republic as it was initially conceived. They worship the original Constitution and the Bible. They seek to use the Scriptures to guide behavior. For instance, they say that abortion is immoral because it murders babies, and the war in Iraq is legal because the Imperial Presidency said so and because Congress financed it.

We see the battle currently raging in the Senate over the replacement of two Supreme Court Justices. The Court has

been leaning in the center-to-left direction since the time of Eisenhower and Earl Warren. President Bush has the opportunity to shift the Court majority in the center-to-right direction. This seems to bode great ill for the Libs' favorite ideas like gay rights, women's rights, gun control, globalism, the secularization of America, tree hugging, Federalization of all of the law, diversity, the dumbing down of public school education, and such like.

The Cons see the chance to push their favorite ideas like maintaining all of the Bill of Rights, life for all the babies, reversing the intrusion of the government into private lives, acknowledging the Christian religion in public, maintenance of domestic sovereignty in international legal matters, the sanctity of traditional marriage, states' rights, reining in liberal bias in the media, using judicial activism to favor conservative causes, and such like.

In my opinion neither the Libs nor the Cons will ever win complete victory. The pendulum of public opinion seems to be swinging in the conservative direction in recent years with the election of more conservative Congressmen, Senators, and

Presidents, and consequently the appointment of more conservative Supreme Court Justices, but the inert middle will never be swayed far from their comfort level. They reject shrill argumentation, and they still hold the balance of power.

opened. The one who brought it took it away on his/her way out.

See also "Tips Going to a Party" on another page.



New East Pu district in Shanghai as mentioned in September Mblem (Viewed from 88 floor, the Commerce Bldg)

Musical Editor?

Mditor Column
by Shiangtai Tuan

Since last issue of Mblem (October issue) came out, I have received numerous encouraging messages and letters. (Well, I exaggerated a little. There were two.) I am very happy to see them but I know I do not deserve it. All I did was to pile existing material together. How wonderful could that be? However, it inspired me for a new idea:

If I, one of the least literary of MENCans, could learn to use the MSPublisher, and came out with an issue of Mblem in 15 days, any one can be the editor. While consulting and compare notes with Nina, the very experienced, many times editor, I found out that we follow similar paths. We start with a basic structure every month and add material to it throughout the month. So, the idea I am talking about is having rotating, "music chair", "try your own hand" editors. I suggest Nina, myself, and some other experienced people take turns so no one is burnt out and no one is tied down from making plans for work or pleasure travel. Additionally, any others who want to give a try

are more than welcome. Yes, this is a polite way to say we ARE recruiting for an Mblem editor. However, we do offer help for starting up if needed. How?

I will provide the "basic structure". This will be a blank file and will include the calendar page which I will prepare for the next 12 months and the "back of calendar page" with the fixed monthly events as you see in this issue. After that there will be the page with Mblem logo and an empty table of contents. After the blank pages, the last two pages will be provided too. They are the mailing information and the MENC officers/contacts in the inside cover. The whole thing will be in an MSPublisher's file format. This file is only about 260 Kb. Anyone with MSPublisher or equivalent software can open and edit it. By the way, MSPublisher is on sale in Costco till April 2006 for about \$56. Anyone becomes the editor can ask MENC to reimburse the cost. Of course, we will teach you how to make Acrobat readable files for printing and how to create the web version. That's right, have you checked our website <http://menc.us/> for our online Mblem yet?

Other than that, in this issue, there is also a slight change in the calendar. The descriptions of the

events on the "back of calendar" page are now alphabetically indexed by the names that appear on the calendar. That is, when you look at the calendar and wonder what the event is, you may find it alphabetically on the back of the page. However, if you happen to be looking at this event page, you can always find when it is by the day of the week reference, e.g., the second Sunday ... etc.

As mentioned above, one other addition since last month is that we have gone on line. This has been my wish for years. To make Mblem online some preparations were required. The most important of all was to leave all personal references off for privacy issues. This is because the web is open for all people, not just for Mensa members. With this consideration, I have left all such references to the minimum in the body of Mblem. After the final copy was sent to the printer, I simply took such references, the calendar pages, and the back inside and out side covers off, made a PDF copy and sent to Brad, our webmaster. For calendar and contact information, there are separate pages on the web site. So, if you have Adobe Acrobat reader on your computer, you may

Hurricane

by Sharon Ochsman

*It's just not the same,
A lost night, searching
Asking humbly to forgive
With battered soul intact.*

*To be human
To understand
The vicissitudes
Of life unbearable.*

*To wash away slogans
And cruel remarks
From stranded sailors
Who never reached the shore.*

*In these days
Of clouds and ghosts,
Dreams too terrible
To remember,
Remind us to ensure
Our humanity and love.*

go to our website, menc.us, and click eMblem, voila. As a bonus, you will see pictures online in color!

Feghoot by Ed Williams

This is the story of an itinerant Israeli musician and his son. He did musical gigs at all of the port cities around the Mediterranean. He never settled down. While doing a gig in Barcelona, he got acquainted with a nun. Don't ask me how he got into the habit, but he did; and the result was baby Jose. The Mother Superior of course couldn't allow the Sister to keep the baby, so he traveled around the Mediterranean with his dad. As he grew up, he became a musician too, be-

ing especially good on the flute. They were able to live quite well on what they earned. Eventually, Jose's dad died, and he decided to go back to Israel, where he settled in Tel Aviv. He played in the Israel Philharmonic, and got up to second chair flute under Zubin Mehta! But the salary was not good enough to allow him to keep up his accustomed lifestyle, so he looked for other things to do. He was good with horses and mules, so during the planting season, he got a job on a kibbutz doing the plowing. However, kibbutzim are not notorious for high wages, so he needed more. Sad to say, he decided to

become a cat burglar - though not in Tel Aviv where he might be recognized. So he would go up to Haifa, loot a 2nd story apartment, and fence the stuff in Tel Aviv. After about 2 weeks, he would go back up and loot another apartment, and so on. Eventually, he got caught, and became known as "that Haifa-lootin', flutin'-tootin' son of a nun from Barcelona, part-time ploughboy Joe". (Some of our younger members might not recognize this as being a take-off on "that high-falutin', rootin' tootin' son of a gun from Arizona, rag-time cowboy Joe.")

Our Senior Mensan in Iceland by Ed Williams

Back in the early '80s, I somehow got in touch with a woman in Iceland who was (and is) a Mensan. I don't recall how we "met" - probably through a publication. Her name is Bjorg ("Bagga") Sigurvinsdottir. We corresponded, since she seemed like a very nice lady and I was interested in Iceland. In 1986, I planned a trip to Europe to visit a lady friend in Geneva. I found that the cheapest fare was by IcelandAir, which went to only one place in Europe - Luxembourg - via Iceland. So I told Bagga about it and she invited me to stay in Reykjavik for several days on the way over. I bought a ticket well in advance, but shortly before the time came to depart, I had a falling out with my friend in Geneva and got disinvented. I decided to make the best of it by going ahead with the trip and staying a week in Luxembourg.

The plane left from BWI and landed at Keflavik. Bagga met me there and took me to her large apartment in Reykjavik (a couple of her children had grown up and moved out). She was indeed a very charming lady. She showed me all around Reykjavik and environs. It's an amazing place. All the home and business heating is geothermal. There are saunas and open hot pools all over. It was September, and the weather was getting cold, but we went into the crowded hot pools - where people go all winter. I found that the city has an active night life - a number of clubs. I enjoyed my stay thoroughly,

but after a few days, I had to take my flight for Luxembourg. (I'll write about that another time.)

After my return, Bagga and I kept in touch. Then, in 1989, she told me she was celebrating a milestone birthday with a big party in May, and asked me to come. I quickly agreed. As a retired Army reserve officer, I am entitled to fly on military aircraft on a "space available" basis. So I drove to the Norfolk Naval Air Station, from which flights regularly go to our base at Keflavik, and caught a flight. Bagga's party was great! Her three children and friends had planned some special things for her. Aside from the party, I decided to take some short tours around the country to see things I had not seen before. I saw Mount Hekla, the original Geysir (from which the name comes), and I walked down a gorge which is part of the Mid Atlantic Rift or Ridge. Iceland is the only place where it is above water.

Finally, I had to return. So Bagga drove me back to the base at Keflavik, where I caught a flight on a C-5 back to Dover AFB, from which I caught another flight back to Norfolk to get my car. It was a great trip. Bagga and I are still in touch via mail and phone. Some years ago, at my annual Christmas party, I used to call her and (with the assembled multitude listening) would ask whether she had seen Santa Claus flying over headed south. She would always tell us he was on his way. I don't do that any more, because, after all, the time difference is 4 or 5 hours, and I hate to wake her up. But she always asks me to tell the MENC group that there are some Mensans in Iceland, and she would love to see anyone who wants to visit her country.

COORDINATOR'S CORNER

by Ellen Muratori

When the Greensboro lunches were cancelled, I heard from one of our newer members that he would miss them. I told him that all it would take is for someone to choose a place that he/she eats at, and become an anchor at that location once a month. If two persons were to do so, we could have two lunches. If three, then three, etc. That would spread the weight of being anchor person for an event.

Just let me know, and I'll do the write-ups.

Well, I'm delighted to say that Greensboro Lunch has been revived. Tim Joseph has come forward to anchor a monthly lunch for us. We'll try out a new place to see how it fits and then we'll decide if we're staying there.

We're calling it Tweak Tuesday. You see, most months it's happening ten days after First Saturday, and ten days before Fourth Friday, our other two Triad events. Since the calendar on the website is written in stone, we have to "tweak" the event to fit. Some months (like last month) it gets even tweakier. Just mark your calendar for the tenth day after the first Saturday!

Besides, you'll be among the Smart Set in using a newly-emerging, fashionable word. Have you noticed how "tweak" has become the tenth word in everyone's conversation? Ever since Tom Hanks used it in "You've Got Mail", tweak has caught the

public tongue.

Here are the particulars: We had our first lunch last month on Tuesday, October 11. If you're on my emailing list, you were informed about TWEAKY TUESDAY Lunch: (second (or third) Tues, 11:45 am-1:30pm) November's day is Nov 15. We are lunching at the K&W Cafeteria, Friendly Shopping Center, at the corner of Pembroke and Northline. Please send Tim Joseph, the originator and contact person, a big HURRAH at josephnc@att.net

WESTWARD HO!, or Mensa Vintage-2005, a Winery Tour and picnic, was held in Mocksville, in conjunction with Charlotte/Blue Ridge Mensa on Sept 24. There were 28 persons, some from Charlotte, Wilkesboro, Clemmons, Winston-Salem, Raleigh, Durham, Greensboro. Including a member from England! Since final plans weren't ready by MBLEM's deadline, we could only notify members by email.

If you would like to be notified when such events occur (specific to the Triad area), please send me your email address. I will notify you on an individual basis, if you do not wish to be on a multiple listing. Of course, all MENC event announcements go to the menc-announcement list, but perhaps you don't subscribe to it! Aw, shucks.

To make the most of your Mensa membership, y'all come! send to summerellen@mymailstation.com

CARNIVORE PRESERVATION

LG News
by Shiangtai Tuan

Remember the time we used to fight the other carnivores for food? No, I don't remember either. That was millenniums ago. By now, we have not only won the battle, but also we have won so definitely that we actually took away most of the competitors hunting ground. We are starving them to death if not hunting them to extinction.

A Ming dynasty novel made Wusung a folk hero for he single-handedly beat a tiger to death with his bare fist. Back then, there were still tigers roaming around and occasionally "came out of the mountains". The farmers did not know what to do and Wusung came to the rescue. This fictitious character has been in folklores ever since. The good old days (for these beasts) have long been gone. We even need active effort to preserve some of the remaining species.

Do you know we are lucky to have one of the organizations near us called Carnivore Preservation Trust? They have a team of well trained people taking care of a group of animals being rescued. In their own words: "Carnivore Preservation Trust is a wildlife sanctuary, offering unique opportunities to learn about these animals and their critical importance to our quality of life on Earth."

For November, our LG will be a visit to this place. We are going on an afternoon tour starting 1 PM which may last one and half or two hours. This is what they say about their tours: "All of our tours are guided by a trained volunteer. You will see tigers, leopards, jaguars, and various other exotic species of carnivores. These tours will not only allow you to view our animals up close (as close as five feet), but are highly educational. Your tour guide will give you the history of CPT and our mis-

sion for the future. They will tell you all about the animals you are seeing, from scientific facts about the species, to the story of how different animals came to live with us."

After the tour, if any one is interested, we may go for a snack or a tea/coffee somewhere.

Important notice: Those who want to join the tour would have to call them to make your own reservations. Call (919) 542-4684 as soon as possible and ask to be on the November 19, 1:00 PM tour. Their admission charges are \$10 for adults, \$5 for youth 6 – 12, and free of charge for children 5 or under. A one time \$3 photo release fee is required if you want to take pictures. Please inform me (see RSVP below) as soon as you made your reservation.

RSVP: Shiangtai Tuan at shiangtai@alumni.duke.edu, 688-6607
Date: 2005.11.19, the third Saturday.
Time: Notice: gathering: 12:30, tour: 1:00 PM sharp.
Place: Carnivore Preservation Trust, 1940 Hanks Chapel Road Pittsboro, NC
Directions: See back of calendar page. Or check their website at <http://www.cptigers.org/about/directions.asp>

NPR Price Winner

by Max Harless

Have I got a fehoot for you! My hoot was read during intermission of a Baltimore Symphony Broadcast on National Public Radio. I was briefly famous! Herewith proffered for your delectation:

Isaac Stern was playing first violin in a string quartet, the piece started with a first violin solo. When the score calls for another instrument to play, Stern said, "Don't play." When another player prepared to enter, Stern said: "Don't play." Every time another player tried to join in, "Don't play."

The other players, frustrated, asked why they couldn't play. Isaac argued, "I want to leave no tone un-Sterned."

Tips Going to a Party

Did you see the Party Tip on another page? Read it first. Tip: when you bring a wine with you to a party, don't open it and pray no one else opens it. If it is not opened when you leave, take it with you. On the same token, if you bring a dish with you for the covered dish party (same as a potluck), don't open the cover and pray no one else uncovers it. Take it home on your way out to enjoy at home. Now, a even better idea: Bring something you are sure no one is to eat, say, a bag of crab apples. Since no one is to touch it, take home so you can bring the same bag of crab apples to the next party as your contribution. This is second best only after the perpetual motion machine.

Palace

by Shiangtai Tuan

Went to the Palace Museum, the Forbidden City, in Beijing, China on July 7, 2005.

I thought since I was a tourist, I might as well do the whole ten yards, taking a Taxi. It cost 25 Y (Yuan, of Ren-Ming, people's Bi, currency), equivalent to \$3. Not bad for crossing half the city of Beijing. Of course, it was expensive in comparison to subway at 40 cents or even better, bus, for 12 cents.

When they say no parking they really meant no parking, not even stopping for taxis to let passengers off. The taxi driver did not even dare try the front gate. He drove to about 50 yards from the back gate and illegally stopped to let me out. Well, still better than the closest bus stop, about 400 yards away, in 100 degree F hot summer sun, at Tien An Men Square.

Luckily they do make that electronic gadget that talks about points of interest in reverse order, starting from the back gate entrance. Trouble is: they did not change the wording. Occasionally you hear them referring to the places "you just saw". In fact, they are the next points of interest you are going to.

The best thing near the back is the Royal Garden. If you have seen any Chinese gardens at all you would know that this one is really not very large, covering only the area of about four or five football fields. Oh, well, it was only their "backyard Garden". The Chin Royal family had two more "gardens" gardens not too far away, Yuan Ming Garden and Yi He Garden.

Additionally, they used to have a Summer Palace in Cheng De. The Summer Palace is a big "garden" about the size of a small city. When I mention a garden in the palace, you may be thinking of a French Garden or an English gar-



den by some palace in Versailles or Windsor. No, a Chinese garden is not a patch of land with symmetrical or asymmetrical arrangement of flower beds with slopes and ponds, maybe. It is a complicated arrangement of pagodas, sheds, houses the size of southern mansions, interlaced with water lily and lotus ponds connected by bending pathways, constructed with picture painted columns and rails. Of course, there are exotic trees and flowers of various color and shades. I cannot imagine how it looks in the spring.

You have to buy extra tickets to go into some "side palaces" with special exhibitions. There are two. I have seen the clock collections before so I skipped it. The other is the jewelry collection. Its entrance leads you to the famous Nine-Dragon Wall. Each is a bas-relief made of pieces of colored glazed tiles. Not that I have seen dragons but these do look real and alive, truly extraordinary. The jewelry collection is spread out and placed in many separate buildings. I imagine those buildings were part of the residence halls for the "three thousands beautiful maidens" who waited on the royal family. In any case, there are all sorts of treasures in the collection, jade would be something too common to mention. <- A garden in Shanghai



The residence palace of Dowager, the Queen Mother who ruled the country for many years, is preserved the way it was on her wedding day. I am glad they did that because I got to see the Phoenix shaped crown and the "Light of Dawn" shoulder throw which I had heard of.

Since the Dowager liked Peking Opera, there is a special courtyard for the performances. At one end there is a large covered stage complete with trapdoors on the floor as well as from the ceiling so characters could emerge from above or from below. Maybe Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon got the idea from this. The Royal viewing boxes are across the little courtyard in a separate palace, nicely shaded with maidens fanning them from behind. It would be a special honor if some of the high cabinet level officials were invited to be the Royal Company. In that case they would have to wear their full gear standing in the courtyard in the heat or cold for hours. Wouldn't you hate to imagine Condy Rice being put in such a predicament?

(To be continued. Three main palaces and others to come.)

Answers to "It is later (earlier than you think", Page 1,2

- 1 Gustav II Adolf, a.k.a. Gustavus Adolphus
- 2 Received while living – Winston Churchill (1963) and Mother Teresa (1996). Posthumous – William and Hannah Penn (1984), Marquis de la Fayette (2002), Raoul Wallenberg (1981).
- 3 Arthur MacArthur (Battle of Chattanooga) and Douglas MacArthur (for actions in the Southwest Pacific Theater).
- 4 Theodore Roosevelt (awarded 2001 for actions in the Spanish-American war, 1898) and Theodore Roosevelt Jr. (for actions at Utah Beach, June 6, 1944 – died of a heart attack one month later).
- 5 John Pershing and George Washington (awarded 1976), "General of the Armies". This rank has been considered a "six-star general", but that is not an officially recognized rank. By executive order, no officer can ever outrank George Washington, a moot point, since he's not around to give orders.
- 6 Andrew Johnson (Brigadier General), U.S. Grant (General of the Army), Rutherford B. Hayes (Major General), James A. Garfield (Major General), Benjamin Harrison (Brigadier General). Also Civil War vets were Chester A. Arthur (quartermaster general), and William McKinley (brevet major).
- 7 The Navy – John F. Kennedy (Lt., WWII, Purple Heart), Lyndon B. Johnson (Lt. Commander, WWII, Silver Star), Richard Nixon (Lt. Commander, WWII), Gerald Ford (Lt. Commander, WWII, 10 battle stars), Jimmy Carter (Lt.), George H.W. Bush (Lt. j.g., WWII, Distinguished Flying Cross).





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A Carnivore Preserved on a Piece of Marble

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