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!!! New ExComm !!!

Congratulations, our new Executive Committee members:

Local Secretary: Nina Ward
 Deputy Local Secretary: Eva Hornak
 Treasurer: Dan Singer
 Parliamentarian: Tom Zavist
 Publications Officer: Kim Oliver
 Members at large: Suzie Bolotin and Ann Lewis

Pool Party, Cook Out, and Meet New ExComm LG News by Shiangtai Tuan

Believe it or not, we at MENC actually have developed some traditions*. One of them is a swimming pool party and cook out at member Fran Greenstein's house.

Once a year, Fran would open her pool for friends. Since we MENC members are her friends we are invited with other personal friends, relatives and neighbors.

It so happens that we just had our election. The officers are just announced on this issue in the box next to this article.

So, you might have a chance to meet some of them, those who might be there. (Well, I might have spoken too soon. Please do not go around and ask people if they are Mensans or Mensa officers. Some non-M guests might not appreciate that.)

By the way, talking about ExComm members and meetings, their discussions are often conducted by e-mail because it is so convenient nowadays. If you have issues to address with the ExComm, please contact one or more members. Their contact information are always listed at the inside back cover of this newsletter. After all, officers are all volunteers. They would like to hear about your suggestions on, say, what activities you want see added or what you want to do to raise interest in MENC.

In the mean while, enjoy a day's relaxation in the water. The pool will be open at 3 PM. Grill and dinner can be about 5 or 6, depending on what the guests prefer. You are welcome to bring pool toys such as beach balls, floats ... She has a net and we can play water valley ball if people are interested. Or, feel free to lounge around in the sun or in the shade. Family members and friends are welcome. There is a gas grill. Please bring something to grill for yourself and please bring a side dish to share. BYOB. Since the hostess still has to provide set-up, kitty is as usual (\$3).

RSVP preferred but not absolutely necessary. There is an indoor cat. So be prepared if you are allergic.

RSVP: E-mail editor@menc.us.
 Date: 2006.7.15, the third Saturday.
 Time: Pool opens at 3:00 PM. Grill Dinner: 5 or 6.
 Place and Directions: See back of calendar page (printed Mblem)

*Other LGs in the line of traditions, a Chinese New Years celebration (February), St. Patrick's Day sans parade (March), Penguin Black and White (June), Halloween Down East (October), Confucius Birthday (September), Christmas in the village (December).
 Other forecast: Possibly for this year in November, Cherie Ernest will lead a speaking/discussion session on stress reduction. Her introduction to MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) about two years ago was well attended and very much liked.

Highlights from the ExComm Meeting by Dan Singer

The new MENC ExComm had our first face to face meeting on the evening of June 8, 2006, in a undisclosed hotel near the airport. After scouring the room for listening devices, in hushed tones we proceeded with our agenda.

In attendance: Suzie Bolotin, Evie Hornak (DepLocSec), Ann Lewis, Dan Singer (Treasurer), and Nina Ward (LocSec). We first had some discussion of officer appointments that need to be made; those are still pending.

Dan requested a financial review of the Treasury, as is required by the AML Minimum Standard Bylaws (and, actually, by MENC bylaws, he now realizes). An appropriate recruit was identified, and a request will be forthcoming.

Evie agreed to replace Shiangtai as a second signatory on the bank accounts. Appropriate papers will be signed in the near future.

Discussed Mblem expense, and whether to offer an opt-in electronic version as an alternative to the printed, mailed version. This has come up in the past, and will again require additional consideration.

Some issues regarding the www.menc.us website were discussed. These had to do with domain name registration and site hosting.

Conti. To P. 5 "Highlights"

Paying Attention

by David Skaar

Paying attention is tough, but can have its benefits. First of all, there's just the amusement value. I like reading bumper stickers, and once I saw an older car with two political bumper stickers on it. An old faded bumper sticker proclaimed, "Pay no attention to the rich white man behind the curtain." Directly next to this sticker was a brand new campaign sticker exhorting that I should vote for two well known rich white men. Besides the entertaining, there are examples that lead to deep philosophical issues: why is it that for residential toilets, the handle is usually on the left, but for public toilets, the handle is usually on the right? And speaking of toilets (last one, I promise), I was in a hardware store, and one toilet had a sign proudly proclaiming that it could flush an entire bucket of golf balls in one flush. First, I very rarely need that ability, and second, when my kids learn to read, I don't want them seeing that sign.

An example with more serious economic repercussions concerns a chain Chinese themed restaurant, that perhaps tries a little too hard to satisfy the customers. As a new restaurant, their great fear is people walking in for the first time, not liking it, and never coming back. Therefore, this restaurant has signs on the tables proclaiming something like, "We want you to be completely satisfied, if your food is not what you expected for any reason, we will refund or substitute it." A noble effort, but with a glaring flaw to my way of thinking. According to their guarantee, I could claim that I'm not satisfied because when I ordered teriyaki chicken with noodles, I expected lobster stuffed with crab, because I'm insane. According to their rules I should get my money back, no matter that my complaint completely fails any test of rationality.

A better example of the importance of paying attention is in shopping. The assumption that we are all supposed to have in the grocery store is that any packaged item that we buy will be intact within its packaging and perfect. However, cursory inspection will frequently identify dented cans, open plastic wrap, torn cardboard boxes, and others. Then there's the more subtle stuff. I've bought six-packs in glass bottles with one bottle cracked and in metal cans with one can punctured. Once I bought a box of frozen empanadas that, while the box was completely sealed and perfect looking, it only contained one empanada instead of two. I even thought the box felt a little light, but assumed that I must be wrong, after all, how could anything be wrong? These are profes-

sionals at putting empanadas in boxes, how could they make that kind of mistake? Well, they did, I could have caught it, and didn't.

As entertaining (and annoying) as these incidents may be, they're not exactly earth-shaking or life-threatening. Except, maybe for the dented can of chili that gives you botulism. Then there's the truly significant cases for paying attention, like an air traffic controller, or a surgeon, or pretty much any job that people care about doing right. I was just at a meeting for autism, and came away with lots of examples. One talk was about a computer tool that reads the literature and makes the connections for you. There are just too many journals and articles out these days, for anyone to try to not only know what relevant work has been published, but to actually read it, understand it, synthesize it into something applicable to their own work, and then still manage to get that work done. This program recognizes trigger words and phrases, so that if you name a specific gene or protein, it will find all the references that connect it to others, and how they relate to each other. It can then do the same for the interacting factors, and continue out from them, building a nodal network of interactions. Comparisons between this tool and a group of students doing the same task manually showed that the computer did better than most, and as well as the best people. Thus, a computer frees us from the drudgery of paying attention, makes the connections for us, and gives the people (me) the time to do the actual work. Now if the computer were able to order the materials we need to do the experiments, program the automated machines that do the assays, and print out instructions for the hourly wage workers who keep the machines operating, and write up the results, I'd be out of a job, and could spend my days paying attention to my navel.

Another thing I learn at meetings like this, are symptoms and behaviors of autism and other developmental disorders. Everyone with small children who hears these talks recognizes some of the symptoms in their children, and then goes home and tests their kids for autism. There is some question about the autism "epidemic" going on, with the number of diagnosed cases going up tremendously in the last few years. One kind of paranoid take this to mean that there is something in the environment causing autism, and another kind of paranoid takes it to mean that parents and doctors have gotten to paranoid about autism that they're seeing it everywhere. Theory number two (the one I subscribe to) means that a lot of kids who should have been properly diagnosed as autistic in the past were not, and quite possibly, a lot of kids who aren't really autistic are

being incorrectly diagnosed as autistic today. This kind of hypervigilance means that in families where more than one child is autistic, any child past the first is diagnosed much sooner, nearly as soon as they are walking and talking, sometimes. This is because the parents know what they're looking for now, and as soon as the child exhibits any symptom at all, they are rushed to the doctor. As far as overdiagnosis may go, if you are in any field of science, engineering, or computers (or a Mensa member), reading an autism diagnostic checklist will frighten you, as you will probably identify a lot of the characteristics in yourself.

One of the classic symptoms of autism involves paying attention. There are two pictures commonly used by researchers as examples. One is of the man who was the basis for Dustin Hoffman's character in *Rain Man*; the picture is of him intently reading a phone book, with all the other phone books he's memorized on a shelf behind him. The other picture is of a man studying, with equal intensity, a golf tee. To psychologist and psychiatrists experienced in autism, these pictures immediately suggest that these people are autistic. As a counterpoint to the ability to focus intently on objects uninteresting to the average person, autistic people have great difficulty paying attention to other people. They tend to not be interested, or more accurately, are unable to understand how other people feel, and don't pick up on verbal and body language cues that would tell them how other people are reacting to them.

One of the presentations I saw at this meeting showed how autistic people do not do well in copying the actions of others, but are quite good at complex sequences of actions necessary to solve a problem. This comes from a greater interest in objects and processes than in relating to other people. Behavior therapy can teach autistic children to pay attention to their playmates, and to imitate them, a type of play that turns out to be very important. Children instinctively copy the actions of others, with the role of leader and follower being traded back and forth. They have a much better time playing when doing this, because it is comforting to be with someone doing the same things as you, and much easier to like someone who is like you. This is another way of thinking that most of us can see in ourselves and in those around us; examples of people completely oblivious to the feelings of others, and unable to recognize how others react to them abound. Pay attention, and you'll undoubtedly see them all around.

SEDUCTIVE NONSENSE

by Gene McMahon

Probably all of us have encountered memory tests in which those tested are given a string of numbers and afterwards tested to see how much of the string they remember. The string may also contain letters, or even some combination of numbers and letters.

Aficionados of this type of memory test have learned stratagems to perfectly capture the strings to memory. The most popular stratagem relies on mental imaging. For example, said aficionado memorizes a picture image for each integer up to some limit, that is, he/she causes to see in his/her mind a specific picture coupled with each and every integer from "one" up to some highest integer. Then, when this individual must remember one-by-one a string of nonsense, this individual imagines a ridiculous combination of his or her memorized picture PLUS the given new whatever -- the more ridiculous, the better. Because the combined image has been made ridiculous, it sticks in memory, and so, is easily recalled, and in any order, backwards, forwards, or by random access.

Once I was accustomed to demonstrating my ability to remember perfectly a string of 50 random nouns on any given occasion. I used the foregoing stratagem. I was always successful.

A more difficult memory test derives from nonsense syllables, conventionally of three letters, but distinct from any of the three-letter formations we like to recognize, for example, "zoz." Here the objective is to confound us with "words" that have absolutely no meaning. Thus the imaging stratagem becomes less effective because the meaninglessness gets in the way of imagining some symbol to represent such a nonsense syllable.

O. K. We have a way to grapple with even such nonsense! We associate a VALUE with capturing strings of nonsense syllables, that is, we reward whoever can manage to remember such strings! They have an incentive! Yes! Eager beavers who can remember long strings of nonsense are rewarded!!! This may apply mostly to savants or near savants that have enviable photographic or phonographic memories, but let the games begin!

Whoops! What of all us other players who shun nonsense, so having to deal instead with coherent symbols, i.e., with our familiar reality? Common reality can be terribly mundane. I expect one's gamesmanship shall consequently suffer.

But here we confront the essence of a game! By a game's rules we mostly deal with random symbols or circumstances, and in so dealing with them, we put specific values in our memory of the corresponding immediate relevant

events. And because some of these events may have more value than others, subsequently we seek a total value directing us towards a maximum greater than that possessed by the other participants, thus to achieve the total value that "wins!"

We recognize that all gamers are in the same boat -- everyone does his or her own thing more or less according to the foregoing description. So, does anyone have an advantage? Yes! Anyone possessing extraordinary abilities! And as well, anyone preparing oneself to encounter the random symbols or circumstances according to the method described above! Weighing against one's opponents is the length to which events are completely random at any step of the game. That is, to the extent that any step of the game is completely unpredictable, all participants have equal advantage! Except someone who remembers all past steps!

All right! We who are less endowed demand nonsequiturs and dice! If no dice, we demand lots of free food and drinks!!!

Now, be advised! This is absolutely not a polemic against Mensans gathering to participate in games! Far from it! During those years when I hosted Mensan gatherings, I tried many different keynotes (foods only of a specific color, offbeat movies, specific discussion topics, etc., etc.), with an idea to guide these events, but never really successfully. They inevitably turned into discussion sessions! So gradually I was forced toward the conclusion that, whatever the intended format of a Mensan gathering, the actual format was going to be that of a discussion! Hey, my younger brother once said that a successful party required that everybody talk, and nobody listen! No, I didn't connect this then with a Mensan gathering, but -- is it possible?

O. K. When nobody listens, they hear the equivalent of nonsense syllables. Therefore they hear absolutely nothing. Consequently, they are deaf to fresh information. Bottom line: such fresh information is indistinguishable from garbage.

Hey, I could never deny talkers their talking "high."

Conti. From P.2 "Pay Attention"

Now a few questions to see if you've been paying attention:

1. In a standard deck of cards, how many face cards don't have facial hair?
2. Who won the Stanley cup in 2005?
3. What kind of plants do green, black, and oolong teas come from?
4. What does Dr. Who call himself?
5. When Sweden changed from driving on the left side of the road to the right, what time of day did the official changeover take place?
6. "Don't Panic" appears in large friendly letters on the cover of what famously helpful book?

See answer, "Pay Attention" on P. 6

Greensboro Coordinator's Corner by Ellen Muratori

Tweaky Tuesday lunch at the cafeteria brought several of us together: Cherie Ernest from Pittsboro, and Max and Cathy Harless from High Point. Tim Joseph anchored the group. Lisa Muratori showed up and surprised her mom, Ellen. Melinda Kite was in a radiant mood; she was expecting a week-long visit from her Mom and Sister from Kansas. Conversations never stopped,

and even those who had to return to work lingered on. Finally, we conceded to the hour and left.

For a Memorial Holiday weekend, Friday Games Night was well attended. Two tables, eight players. Melinda, Ellen, and Dave Powers revived a dominoes game, Mexican Train. We've renamed it "Tweaky Train", for political correctness, but somehow the Mexican influence took over the humor department. Robert Jones and Tom Zavist joined us. Then when Ray Burton, Kay Bishop and Rick Tolley came, another

table was set up with Carcassone, two versions. A couple of games of Trumpet, plus a brief encounter with Spades, and the evening came to a quick end.

Anyone want to anchor a monthly, week-day night, get-together at different ethnic restaurants? There are so many new Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, Indian, Mexican eateries to choose from. Contact me (see address on printed version of Mblem, editor's note) to find out what has to be done to get this started.

Der Meistertrunk (The Great Drink) By Ed Williams

Rothenburg ob der Tauber is a small city in northwestern Bavaria. It is on the Tauber River, which flows into the Main. It is one of the most beautiful cities I have ever visited. It is a walled city without a single modern building. Most of the buildings within the walls were built by 1400. In the late '50s, I was doing my annual two-weeks Army Reserve training at our base at Schweinfurt. I met a nice young lady who was a teacher at the base's school. She suggested that we spend the weekend visiting some nearby scenic places, and suggested Rothenburg as one of them. I had vaguely heard of Rothenburg because my UNC Professor of German used it to illustrate how an umlaut over a vowel in German changes the pronunciation. The example was "Alle die dächer der Häuser in Rothenburg sind rot." (All the roofs of the houses in Rothenburg are red.) And, as we saw on approaching the city via a hill above it, that is true.

We visited the Rathaus (town hall) and heard about Der

Meistertrunk, without which the Rothenburg we know would not exist. It was during the Thirty Years War (1618-48) between Protestant forces and those of the Holy Roman Empire. Most of the fighting took place in what is now Germany, and the country (or countries, as it was then) was completely devastated. Rothenburg was too small to be of any great significance, but it was part of Protestant Germany, and in 1631, one of the Imperial armies under Count Tilly was advancing towards the town, leaving utter devastation in its wake. The army surrounded Rothenburg. The Mayor, Georg Nusch, decided to make an effort to save his town. He went out and offered Count Tilly a drink of local wine. Count Tilly liked the gesture and the wine. He made what he thought was an impossible offer:- if someone in the city could drink a tankard holding about 6 pints in one draught, he would spare the town and move on. The Mayor, too, thought it was impossible, but he tried and succeeded. Tilly was a man of his word, so he spared the town and, with his army, marched off towards Nurnburg. This event is celebrated and re-enacted every year in early June.

Pure Black and White At Large Column by Shiangtai Tuan

It was numerologist's delight that we just passed the date June 6, 2006. The 06.06.06 date has not appeared since June 7, 1906 and will not come back again till June 6, 2106. Boy, an once in two hundred years event! Well, as all we Mensans know, it is only an intellectual game. In many calendars (say, in Jewish, Muslim, or Chinese calendars) this is not the year 2006. It was not necessarily the sixth month or sixth day either. (See David Skaar and my discussions in previous issues of Mblem.) However, it was a lot of fun to talk about it and indeed there were a lot of talks on TV, News paper, and on e-mail discussion groups. There were actually people seriously predicting the end of the world. I am glad there were no mass suicide. Too bad for the Darwin Award penal.

It is, however, serious matter when you talk about cultural traditions. For instance, why is 666 the symbol for evil? We

all know it came from Revelation 13:18. It was the sign on the "beast". The number six hundred sixty six was translated from the Greek letters Chi, Xi, and Stigma on the beast. In ancient Greek they used letters to denote numbers where Chi stands for 600, Xi for 60, and Stigma for 6. By the way, Stigma is an old Greek letter, not in use in Modern Greek. For Greek Numerals please refer to the website, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_numerals. Now, since the beast represented Nero, someone please tell me how Nero and these three letters were related.

Because the influence of Christian religion, especially those denominations that believe in the New Testament literally, the number 666 has become a symbol of the devil, the representation of the true evil. In some other beliefs it can be quite an innocent number. Since the pronunciation of 6 is similar to "prosperity" in Cantonese, 6 is a "good" number. In Hongkong and Chinatowns an many cities (say, Vancouver, San Francisco ...) houses with numbers 6, 66, 666 are sold in much higher price than same type of houses on the same streets. This is

today's lesson of Fengshui for you.

That was only the origin of 666 representing evil. What about the belief of "good verses evil" itself. In ancient Chinese philosophy there was nothing like good force struggle against evil force. Confucius teaching was to be kind and forgiving to others. You may use your own modern interpretation to say that kind is good and not kind is evil but he surely did not imply it that way. The concept of absolute good and absolute evil was not in Buddhist or Greek philosophy either. I was told that Zarathustra was among the first if not the first to introduce the idea of a struggle between the good force and the evil force. It was then expended into the idea of the second coming or the "final battle" of Armageddon. It is a very powerful concept because people can use it freely. When the good vs. evil believers don't like someone or disagreeing with someone they call him/her evil. When they have done something wrong they say "the evil force made me do it." They even have proof: "Of course there are absolute good and absolute evil. It is like absolute black and white."

Conti. To P.5 B&W

The Adventures of Presenting a Mensa Scholarship Award

by Byron West

Introduction by Ellen Muratori

A student at Mt. Tabor High School in Winston-Salem has been awarded a Mensa scholarship. The Winston-Salem Area Coordinator, Byron West, was called upon to present this award at the commencement ceremony. This happened on Friday, June 2. Several of us in the Triad area of MENC know Byron West. He wrote up his experience. The school allocated him 2 1/2 minutes to give his speech. There were many scholarships given out. Many speeches made. Byron's account of his "ordeal" is hilarious. I have gotten Byron's OK to have it published in Mblem. No doubt it will appear in C/BR's IdioM.

I just got back from the presentation. What a madhouse!

There were probably a thousand people in that gym, it was at least a thousand degrees, and they were running big turbo fans to keep people from dying of heatstroke -- so you couldn't hear a thing anybody said. And Mt. Tabor is a high-performance high school; they must have presented three or four hundred scholarships and awards. My turn was midway down the first page of the program, and there were two more pages after me. It was maybe 9:45 a.m. when I stood up to speak.

Young Brian stepped up to the stage after

my introduction, shook my hand, accepted his certificate (provided by the school) with a smile, and melted back into the impenetrable crowd. Not a great photo op.

I was seated with the presenters, and the rule seemed to be that once you'd finish your presentation, you could leave. And they were leaving as soon as they could, because it was suffocating hot in there. But I wanted Brian's picture. So I kept my seat, and around eleven o'clock, when they were nearing the bottom of page 3, I snuck out and stationed myself beside the door through which the students marched in, figuring they'd leave the same way. It was a good two and a half to three degrees cooler in the corridor, and I had a good view of the general area where I thought he was seated.

I pulled out my cell phone/camera to get it ready. I thumbed the on-off switch, and nothing happened. I tried again. Nothing. Sometimes when you turn this phone off, it doesn't turn off; it sits quietly all night and drains its battery. Evidently that happened last night. It was quite dead.

Defeated, I put it back in my pocket and stomped out of the building, got in my car and headed toward home.

Two blocks toward my house though, there's a shopping center anchored by a big Harris Teeter. I was approaching the entrance when it occurred to me (I'm a Mensan, y'know; I think of these things). I stopped in and grabbed a Fuji disposable camera, checked myself out, and raced back to the school.

It was now past noon, and I figured they'd be finished, but they were still on the last agenda item: recognition of every Mt. Tabor

student who has received a scholarship offer from any college. Did I mention that Mt. Tabor is a high-performance school? I resumed my seat and watched the senior class president read off two pages of names while the principal gave out certificates, and then the senior class vice president stood up and began reading two more pages.

People who couldn't stand the heat were starting to leave. I took up my position in the corridor again, camera in hand. And waited. Not surprisingly, nobody stopped and asked me for a Mensa brochure.

The scholarship list was finally finished, and then they introduced the 2007 class president and he made a speech. And then they cut the lights and played the senior class video, after a brief struggle to get the projector working. It ran about fifteen minutes and was evidently enjoyed by all who saw it. I was behind the screen and didn't see it. When it was finished, the band broke into the school song, and the seniors stood up to sing it one last time. All the verses. I waited.

Finally the band transitioned into "Pomp and Circumstance" and the seniors stood up and marched out, through the very door that I was stationed in front of. They emerged in alphabetical order, and when they got to the Gs, there was Brian. I grabbed him, propped him up against a wall, and fired off four or five shots.

So my plan is to hold onto the camera until the Second Thursday (June 8) and use some of the remaining film on Lauren Pressley, our other scholarship winner. I have reason to believe it won't be as hard to get her picture.

Conti. From P 4. B&W

Well, I have this observation which I have not heard from anyone before. Look around you. There is nothing that is pure black or pure white that is not artificial. All naturally existing things are either of some interesting color or grey. Pure black or white does not exist in nature. They are men made. So is absolute good and evil. They do not exist in nature. People made them up to scare others so as to rule them or made them up to use as excuse to praise themselves or to prosecute others. I know, you are probably out looking for the pure white or black flowers by now. Good luck. The only place that is black is where there is no light, say, close all your doors and windows. Well, things are still not black. They are simply not given the chance, the light, to show their colors. Give yourself some chance. Be kind and be forgiving is "good" enough though not absolute.

Conti. From P. 1 "Highlights"

Another topic was the Treasury: in particular, our current surplus. Are there membership benefits or activities which could be facilitated by the infusion of a bit of lucre? Some ideas were thrown around, but nothing decided. Perhaps some membership input would be in order.

Last ExComm cycle, Tom had proposed some extensive revisions to the MENC Bylaws, but little additional progress was made in that area. It was generally agreed by that ExComm, and again by this one, that the MENC Bylaws are in need of a serious overhaul. We will try to put more effort into that this cycle, as coherent, up-to-date bylaws will facilitate all other functionings of the group.

We also talked about some possibilities for some more substantial group activities: more than an LG, but much less than an RG. MENC has sponsored a few weekend beach trips in the past, and we might pursue another such adventure. Perhaps a fall beach trip, if the momentum gets going.

Mission accomplished, we then disbanded, and each headed off separately to our next assignments.

That's all for now. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact an ExComm member, you know the protocol.

Don't Let the Title Fool You book news from Chris Roerden

If any Mensa member has submitted a novel to an agent or publisher and received one of those infamous rejections, Chris Roerden can tell you why. This 25-year Mensa member has been an editor for more than 40 years. Originally from New York, she has lived in Greensboro since 1999, and her 10th book was just published: *DON'T MURDER YOUR MYSTERY: 24 Fiction-Writing Techniques To Save Your Manuscript From Turning Up D.O.A.*

"Don't let the title fool you," writes the reviewer for *Futures* magazine. "ALL fiction writers can benefit."

"Smarter, more comprehensive, more effectively targeted, and more accessible than most books on writing," says the past president of the international writers' organization Sisters in Crime, Kate Flora, who reviewed the book for *ForeWord* magazine. "An essential handbook for writers longing to improve their knowledge of craft and technique. One of this volume's greatest strengths is that it grows out of a large body of experience." *ForeWord* gave Roerden's book a full-page spotlight review in its May issue.

The *Southern Review of Books* (April) calls it noteworthy and adds, "Get a copy."

To learn how fiction submissions are instantly eliminated, long before characters or plot can be appreciated, read the first chapter on the publisher's website:

<http://bellarosabooks.com/dontmurderyourmystery.html>.

You'll also find a detailed, witty table of contents.

Ask your library to order this book for its collection: ISBN 1-933523-13-1; 304 pp trade paper, indexed, annotated; Bella Rosa Books, May 2006; distributed by Baker & Taylor and Ingram.

Admission is free and open to the public for a talk by Chris Roerden on submitting, getting published, and book-selling, Thursday, July 6, 7:30 pm, at the Roy Culler Senior Center, 600 N. Hamilton, High Point, NC. For directions, call 336-883-3584. She will also be presenting at the 2006 Cape Fear Crime Festival in Wilmington, Halloween week-end.

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Chris Roerden, *DON'T MURDER YOUR MYSTERY*, May 2006 from Bella Rosa Books

\* "It belongs in every library collection." --Kate Flora, past international president, Sisters in Crime

\* "Whether your work-in-progress is a mystery novel or not, I highly recommend Don't Murder Your Mystery as a useful and enjoyable guide to moving from someone who writes to someone others want to read." --[MyShelf](#)

\* "This book is good....I can honestly highly recommend this title to anyone wanting to publish any type of novel." -- Review by Jane Cohen for the DorothyL list.

## News about LG News

MEditor Column  
by Shiangtai Tuan

As you have seen in the LG news column, I have listed the potential Local Gathering themes for more than half of the year's worth, seven out of twelve months. All seven of them are of "party-type" though with different themes. One of our members has found the LSs with speakers potentially very interesting, although it depends on the speaker, in the mean while the picnic-type activities boring. I hope the parties with various themes are less boring than picnics. Another member also wished the meetings be more meaningful. So do I.

Local Gatherings are also called Speaker Meetings. When I first join MENC, it was done in a club house in Cary. It was a combination of a potluck and a lecture with chairs lined up like a school classroom. Members back then thought it was too much burden to prepare a dish and then spent the Saturday evening being lectured after a week's hard work. Some of us made the improvement by eliminating the mandatory potluck part. We also started to ask members to volunteer hosting. All the hosts have been very gracious. However, the attendance has been so unpredictable it is

hard to say if we may have four or fourteen. And then at times the smart Mensans (redundant words) can be rather enthusiastic in asking questions or showing the speaker how much (more) they know on the subject. I gradually feel more and more hesitant to invite speakers for fear there may feel offended by small audience or being confronted. I suppose this is why I started to arrange more and more party-type of gatherings. Well, a gathering is a gathering. Presumably, many Mensans join Mensa so they "can talk to other intelligent people". I think a party can give more chance for members to enjoy fellowship, at least in this sense.

Throughout the years we have had some fun times. We had one on computer generated movies, one on death penalty by an assistant attorney general, one on massage, one on gem stones, one on belly dance, one on Mozart ...

In any case, if you have any suggestions, potential speakers, favorite subjects, topics you would like to hear, creative ideas, please let me know. Let's weigh the practical side and see if it can be brought to reality.

There are thirty days in a month. LG only takes one. Because of the fact MENC covers such a huge area, even these days can serve a small portion of the mem-

bers in 1/30 of the capacity. Then there are dinners, brunches, games nights, Mensa movies ... but still not enough, I feel, for the majority of the members. My agenda for being LocSec had been to bring activities to MENC covered areas. Hope I can still work on that in the capacity of just being a MENC member. You can do that too. Suggest something for some, if not all of us to do. It does not have to be monthly events. Celebrate your children's graduation, your spouse's birthday, newly planted roses ... by invite other members to celebrate with you. Have a MENC party. Send me a note and I will put it on Mblem!!!

Answer to "Pay Attention", P. 3

- 1) Seven. The King of Hearts, Jacks of Clubs and Diamonds, and the four queens.
- 2) No one, the strike canceled the play-offs.
- 3) All come from the common tea plant, *Camellia sinensis*, the difference is in how the leaves are treated after picking.
- 4) The Doctor, never Dr. Who.
- 5) During the afternoon rush hour, so everyone would have to pay attention to it.
- 6) The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy.