

Armadillo Literary Gazette

A Publication of Lonestar Mensa

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April 2004



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Please submit ads to the newsletter editor.

A Word To The Wise

-by Karen Werner, President

By the time you read this, the Spring Celebration Party will have come and gone. I suspect we will have scarfed down approximately 60-80 pounds of crawfish, in addition to many other goodies. Thanks to all those who RSVPed, as well as those who just showed up. This month, we will be having a picnic/potluck on April 10. The announcement shows up later in this newsletter issue .

Attendance at our monthly meetings continues to be spotty. If you have suggestions on increasing attendance, please contact me by e-mail or by phone. Last month, our speaker was Randall Ellis, the Executive Director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, who spoke about marriage equality and all of the lobbying activities occurring nationwide on this issue. This month, we are travelling to the opposite end of the spectrum. One member in attendance at our last meeting was bemoaning the seeming paucity of conservative speakers at our meetings. In response, our speaker this month will be Teresa Doggett Taylor, a black conservative Republican from Austin who was one of the eight Republicans seeking the congressional seat in the newly created District 10, stretching from Central Austin to Houston.

Among the speakers we have had in the past were representatives from the ACLU, Hospice Austin, Children's Shelter, the Bob Bullock Museum and Communities in Schools. We have had a Buddhist nun, a shaman, Tito from Tito's Vodka, a genealogy professor, various scientists from UT, a funeral director, an expert on ghosts in English castles, an etiquette expert, and many others. We are always open to suggestions for future speakers. Just e-mail me or phone me to make suggestions. While we cannot accommodate all suggestions due to time and scheduling limitations, we try to always have a wide range and mix of speakers to appeal to all members and I always try to arrange speakers the members would like to hear. Member suggestions are invaluable in this regard.

Even better would be to have someone volunteer for the position of Program Chair. Call me if you are at all interested, and we can discuss the responsibilities involved.

If you haven't yet renewed your membership, **YOU ARE LAPSED AND YOU NEED TO RENEW NOW**. If you are a member in good standing and have not yet submitted your proxy to Proxy Quest, please do so. Even though we are at or near the number of votes needed, lapsed members will throw this total off.

Houston will throw its RG over Memorial Day weekend,

as usual. If you have never attended (or if you have), please consider doing so. It was a lot of fun the last time I went. I also have reserved my hotel room, reserved my flight, and paid my registration for the AG in Las Vegas. Anyone who can go and doesn't will be sorry; I can guarantee you. If you haven't visited the National web site to see what is planned, do so. There are so many activities and speakers, the only problem will be trying to prioritize.

I hope to see all of you soon.



April Monthly Meeting

This month's speaker will be Teresa Doggett Taylor. Ms. Taylor was one of the eight Republican candidates who ran for Congress in the primary elections for the newly created District 10, stretching from Central Austin to Houston. She was also somewhat of an anomaly, being the only black person and the only woman running in the race.

The following information comes from Ms. Taylor's campaign web site and is paraphrased with permission. Ms. Taylor graduated from high school early. She then received a BA from Wichita University, followed by a Juris Doctor from Creighton University Law School. She was selected to attend Brunel University's prestigious Summer Exchange Program. She later received a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard University.

Ms. Taylor has worked as a Tax and Agricultural Lawyer specializing in incorporating family farms. She created Texas Works Together, a mentoring program in 23 cities for Texans entering and re-entering the workplace. She has consulted Third World governments and international business on free market principles, export product and infrastructure development. She is currently employed as a mortgage banker with her husband.

She will be addressing the question, "Is politics public service, business, or none of the above?" While she likes being involved in politics, Ms. Taylor also realizes the price in loss of time and privacy, as well as the pure expense of running for public office. She astutely notes that sometimes it takes owning a business in order to be able to afford to be involved in the public service called politics. She will talk about what she has learned along the way in her gradual transition from the everyday business world into politics, including the highs of public service and the lows of just plain nasty people she has encountered in her travels and adventures.

Front Porch Stories

-by Jane Thompson

I'm not too sure about this whole concept of an afterlife. The idea of life without a body doesn't do much for me; certainly the traditional notion of everlasting torment in hell and everlasting bliss in heaven just doesn't sound right. I've never done anything to deserve eternal, horrible torture. (There was that one time, but I felt so bad I told my boss about it. He just laughed and said he would have done the same thing and not to worry about it.) As for eternal bliss—well, I just don't know that I'm cut out for that kind of happiness. It actually sounds kind of boring, I guess. I've always thought of the time after death as being a great deal like the time before birth; not real exciting, to be sure, but I don't remember being unhappy, either.

My brother-in-law, John a member of Houston Mensa, died in April. I knew him most of my life and loved him dearly. He started dating my older sister in 1957 and married her in 1958. One of the charming things he did when they were dating was to decorate the envelope of the daily letter he sent her with a beautifully detailed drawing. The postal employees in Oklahoma City looked forward to his letters almost as much as my sister; if one arrived late, it was delivered as a "special delivery" because they knew she was expecting it. Sometimes the postman rang the doorbell just to tell my sister how much they enjoyed that day's drawing or to make a special request: "Hey, the guys wanted to know if he would draw another ship."

I never understood how a jet mechanic could also be an accomplished artist, but he could draw or paint anything. Once, stuck by inspiration with no canvas handy, he simply grabbed a shirt, cut it up, stretched it, and painted a picture on it for my father. That painting hung in my father's living room until the day he died, and he always proudly pointed it out to visitors, even long after my sister divorced John.

He was the first man who treated me as if I was an intelligent human being (which was rather novel in that era), but he certainly didn't take it too far. He introduced me to MAD Magazine back in the late 50s, then carefully mailed it to me once a month so I wouldn't miss an issue. My parents thought it rather odd reading material for a grown man but were so taken with his charm they let it slide. I spent many hot, sticky summers, in Houston as I was growing up—partly to get away from the watchful eyes of my parents, partially drawn to the charms of the

Air Force Base where John worked, but also because John was irresistible. His house wasn't just full of teenage sisters and sisters-in-law; it was also full of airmen. My sister assured us that they swarmed there all winter, too.

John was easygoing, accepting, and a great storyteller. His stories were always funny and usually told with himself as the butt of the joke. Of course, when I got older, I realized that if he couldn't tell a story funny then that story didn't get told. I saw the genesis of one of these on a hot, muggy Fourth of July weekend in early 60s in those innocent times before locked doors or air conditioning. The airmen were off for the weekend, the teenage girls were hanging out with the airmen, and John was working. Houston has a tropical climate; outdoor workers kept to a schedule that allowed for an afternoon siesta and a late supper cooked after the evening sea breeze kicked in. About noontime everyone conked out in the heat; I don't remember the exact configuration of people, but I think Jo, Leon, me, and Kjar were on the couches, with Karen and the bohunk on the kid's beds; the kids were all piled on one bed. Mary Ann was in bed, dead to the world, in her and John's bed. A couple of other airmen stopped by to see what was happening, and following the custom of the times, simply walked in without knocking. They found a whole bunch of sleeping people but nowhere to sleep except the other half of the bed Mary Ann was in. Naturally, they did the only sensible thing and climbed in bed with Mary Ann, promptly falling off to sleep.

When John, the only person who was working and actually deserved a nap, came home a few minutes later, he found two airmen in bed with his wife and no place to sleep. He stretched out on the floor for his siesta. For years he loved telling the incredible story of coming home from work and finding sleeping people all over his house and not one but two men in bed with his wife. Naturally, he embroidered the tale beyond all recognition—but it was very funny the way he told it. He was one of those people you never forget and never stop missing. Another was my good friend Jackie. Over the years, many of my friends have mentioned an odd Southern twang in my voice that doesn't seem to belong to an Oklahoma-Texas hybrid. I got that from hanging out with Jackie, who was an East Texas-Louisiana hybrid. She was supervisor of a Child Welfare Intake Unit in Dallas, a position analogous to sergeant in a rifle platoon on D-Day. She had the combat soldier's sense of humor, too—you never knew what sick thing she'd come up with next. I remember picking up the phone one day to hear "Jane, you just don't know what horror is." Thinking I was about to be regaled with

the latest child abuse story, I asked for details. She explained that had a date with that new guy in her life the night before, and she thought everything was going great. She told me they'd had wonderful, sweaty sex all night, then they went to breakfast...when he revealed what to her was the relationship-buster. Well, the story went on and on. Finally, I decided to make a long story short.

“Jackie, What happened?”

“Well, it’s just too awful, I can’t tell you....”

“Jackie, you have to tell me...”

“Jane, it’s just TOO AWFUL...”

“Jackie...If you don’t tell me now, I’m going to get in the car and come over there and pull your hair out by the dark roots.”

“Well, we were at Denny’s having breakfast, and you know I looked just terrible, I didn’t have any makeup on or anything and my hair was all stringy and everything, and he just told me...”

“Jackie, WHAT?”

“Weeellll, I was just TOO horrified. After I spent the night with him and everything...I just couldn’t believe it...that man told me...that he actually voted for...GEORGE WALLACE!!!”

Anything for a laugh. We were the closest of friends through everything, her daughter’s addiction and arrest, her roommates’ romances, my divorce, all of it. Even through the screaming, monumental fights we had sometimes. Then one day she called with news there was no joking about—at least for a while. She had finally gone to the doctor about that nagging problem she had. The news was the worst—terminal cancer, nothing to be done except some efforts to buy a little time. She didn’t want that kind of time, so she decided to check out with as much dignity as possible. She was 39. I stayed in denial for as long I could, but had to give it up to help her get food stamps; she couldn’t work and had run out of money. For her, dying with dignity meant leaving ‘em laughing. I remember the last Saturday night I was with her with absolute clarity. Only her roommate and I were there; no one else was allowed to see her looking like that. Her family would arrive later when there was no time left. This was my time with her. For two hours she kept us in stitches. Linda and I knew we’d better laugh with her this last time; she would not tolerate sadness. I couldn’t believe she was so close to death. Her voice, her jokes, her intelligence, were all the same. It was only her looks that were altered. Finally, when I couldn’t hang on anymore, I hugged her one last time, then stumbled outside to the lawn to weep in the dark. Linda followed me out, not to

comfort me, but because she couldn’t hold back the tears any longer, either. Jackie died early Wednesday morning.

The two of them didn’t know each other in life and died twenty years apart, but in the afterlife I want to believe in, John and Jackie are sitting in lawn chairs on the front porch trading outrageously funny stories, he in his clipped Midwestern accents, she in her drawly, dulcet Southern tones, both of them roundly cussing me for taking so long. Wouldn’t be so bad, dying, if we knew people like those two were waiting for us.

Member News

Kelly Wagner & Steve Harsch are members of the Austin Symphonic Band. The band will perform “A Texas Toast,” including music about Texas or by Texas composers, on April 24 at 8:00 pm, at Reagan High School.

Hello Region 6!

-by Dan Wilterding, RVC Region 6

Are y’all tired of ProxyQuest yet? I am, but I have to admit the effort proved that a big bunch of Mensans can be mobilized when the need arises. The minimum goal, set at 24,000 (in my opinion about 2K too low for comfort), was met in early March — well ahead of the deadline. Everyone having contributed to achieving this deserves hearty thanks. The concern now is to maintain over 50% (accounting for lapsed members & such) through the Annual Business Meeting in July. In short: more proxies are still needed; if you haven’t yet done so please submit one at your earliest convenience.

I’m still looking for a Region 6 LDW Coordinator. It’s a typical Mensa job — lots of work, some glory (very loosely defined), no money but the potential for intense personal satisfaction. Anyone interested please let me know.

What keeps you going? What slows you down? Do you like to share your thoughts, examine new ideas, and converse with intelligent others on subjects mundane and arcane? Sign on to the Region6-chat list and make that happen; all it takes is a few people to get the ball rolling and there’s no telling where it might go! On the web at <http://www.lists.us.mensa.org/mailman/listinfo/region6-chat>.

Comments, anyone?

Dan Wilterding - RVC6
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504 West Atchley Drive
Granbury, Texas 76048

Restaurant Row

-by Karen Werner

This column will appear periodically and will review some of my favorite restaurants. One of my favorites is Polvo's. Polvo's is a Mexican restaurant on South First Street. It serves breakfast all day (prices rise after 3:00 p.m.), including nine different egg dishes and \$1.25 tacos. Dinner entrees are varied and extensive. There are 12 different kinds of enchiladas, with 15 different sauces to accompany them. They serve huge burritos and flautas.

But that's not why I recommend this restaurant. I go there for some of the best ceviche in town; there are two sizes, the larger being a large serving platter which would fill up two people, for \$8.50. I go there for the guisado de puerco, another large serving plate of mouth-watering tender pork in a green sauce, for \$7.50. I go there for their camaron diablos, jumbo shrimp in a sauce made of tequila, sun dried peppers and chipotle sauce (very hot); and their camaron margarita, with a sauce made of a large number of garlic cloves, mushrooms and tequila. Both are \$9.99. All of the plates come with either rice or beans and a salad. All of their plates are the same large serving platters. Chips and salsa cost \$1.25, but this includes a salsa and escabeche bar that is the best in town.

Service is hit and miss. Most of the time, I've experienced excellent service. On the other hand, twice, the same server gave me camaron diablos when I ordered camaron margarita. The second time, I pointed out the error, and he took the plate back, put some mushrooms in the sauce and brought it back to me. Since one is spiced with garlic (what I ordered) and one is spiced with chipotles and sun-dried pepper, this wasn't the change I was looking for. This type of service has been rare, though, in my experience; however, people writing into Citysearch.com have also noted similar service lapses.

If you want to know more about the menu, go to austin.citysearch.com and type in Polvo's in the search box. This will take you to a restaurant review page with a link to Polvo's website. There is also a coupon on the website for 1/2 off a second entrée.

Again, this restaurant has some of the best and freshest seafood, meat, hot sauce and breakfasts in town. There are also numerous vegetarian options.

Polvo's

2004 South First Street

Open 7 days, 7:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. (11:00 on Saturday)

March ExComm Meeting Minutes

-submitted by Karen Werner

The meeting was called to order at 6:10. Present were Karen Werner, John Neemidge, Kathie Blair, Helen Siders, Mark Kres and Janet Kres.

Kathie stated bank statements are still going to Midge. She will check with the bank to make sure statements start going to the right address and that signature cards have been properly recorded.

Upcoming social events were discussed. March events include the Spring Celebration Party and the Book Sale. John will get flyers from National for the book sale and will send out an announcement soliciting volunteers.

We discussed having a picnic in April. We settled on Saturday, April 10. We will put an announcement in the newsletter regarding the picnic.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Region 6 Calendar

Coming soon to a Houston near you:

SynRG: *Swingin' Soiree*

May 28-31 2004

You're invited to a special party for special people. It's classy. It's fun. Maybe naughty; definitely nice. A magical weekend where anything can happen. Created by the same team that produced the '96 AG: Black Gold Blowout. Indulge yourself!

<http://www.gcmensa.com>

contact: Pat Spence
10650 S.W. Plaza Court #41
Houston, Texas 77074

In Austin:

LonestarRG VI REmageeddon

September 3-6, 2004

A post-apocalyptic paradise! Themed speakers, costume dance, games and contests, discussion room, late night pool & hot tub, prizes, abundant hospitality - meals included! Bring the whole family and party like it's the end of the world!

<http://www.lsm.us.mensa.org/lonestarg.htm>

Contact: Mark & Janet Kres
P.O. Box 80635
Austin, Texas 78708-0635
registrar@lsm.us.mensa.org

... and in Dallas:

Fest of Pleasures and Delights XXX

November 25-28 2004

\$25 until May 31, then \$50 till August 31, \$55 after

Contact: Carol Hilson (972) 475-9327
9413 Shipman St
Rowlett, Texas 75088
C_Hilson@msn.com

What's Happening in April?

Thank Goodness It's Thursday

Central Market Café

Every Thursday

6:00-8:00pm

4001 N. Lamar Blvd., Austin

(512) 206-1020

Meet us in the Café after work for fun, conversation & food. Prospective members welcome. Central Market Café is located in the Central Park shopping center on the east side of Lamar Blvd between 38th and 41st Streets. Central Market is the anchor store. Central Market Café is adjacent to Central Market on the south side. We meet upstairs.

Spring Picnic

Saturday, April 10 4:00pm

Northwest District Park

7000 Ardath St, Austin

See the announcement in the facing column for details.

ExComm Meeting

Monday, April 12 5:30pm

Souper Salad

2438 W Anderson Ln, Austin

Contact Karen Werner at (512) 291-4677 to get an item on the agenda. All members welcome.

Monthly Meeting

Monday, April 12 11:00am-1:00pm

Austin Public Library

North Village Branch

2139 W. Anderson Lane, Austin

Please see the announcement on page 3 for meeting details.

Potluck SIG & Games Night

Saturday, April 17

6:00pm

Kelly Wagner & Steve Harsch's Home

1001 E. Riverside, Austin

(512) 443-9650

Theme: Italian. Any effort to reduce salt or leave salt out of your dishes greatly appreciated. (Salt shakers will be available to add salt to your food yourself, of course.)

Directions from Riverside Dr between IH35 & Congress Ave: the house is on the SE corner of the intersection of Travis Heights Blvd & Riverside Dr. There is a traffic light at the intersection. Park on Travis Heights & enter the house at the back door. Do not attempt to park on Riverside Dr.

Waco Area Mensa Get-Together

Wednesday, April 21

7:00pm

Barnes & Noble Café

4909 W. Waco Dr., Waco

Prospective members welcome. RSVP to Jerry Lenamon, (254) 399-9450.

Fold & Sticker

Thursday, April 22

(at TGIT)

Help us assemble the newsletter! See Thank Goodness It's Thursday for directions.

Mensan Spring Picnic

4:00pm, Saturday, April 10, 2004

April 10, 2004, at 4:00pm, come to a Spring Picnic at Northwest Park in north central Austin. This picnic will be similar to the previous events Mensans enjoyed the last couple of years, which means we will have a lot of fun. Pets on a leash are welcome. Bring significant others and bring kids.

Bring potluck food to share with everyone. Bring uncooked meat for your own family and grill it at the park.

Misty has developed a website with information about the picnic. You can access <http://b-b-fam.home.Texas.net/LSMPicnic/> to get directions to the picnic, enter what potluck food you can bring and see who else is coming. Questions check the above website or email xlartemis@austin.rr.com



**A
P
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I
L**

- 03 Jean G Wang
- 04 Joseph Parsons
- 09 Elizabeth Williams
- 10 David DeVore
- 11 Dawn Hancock
- Martin J Lee
- 12 Irene Konig
- 13 Milton Z Deal
- Grace Lehto
- 14 Johnnie Ray Vaughn
- 15 Janet S Kres
- 16 Gary E Guazzo
- 17 James Moore
- 18 David J Burgett
- Allison R Whitehead
- 19 Nancy Meilahn
- 20 Susan Folger Ward
- 22 William E Jones MD
- John L Neemidge
- George Nincehelter
- 23 Robin D Green
- Andrew M Rooke
- 24 Patricia B McCormick
- 26 Wes Davenport
- 27 Dr Dan B Dydek
- Brent Ritchey
- 29 Ted Alexander
- 30 Michael J Davidson
- Justin M Davis

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April						
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2004