

Armadillo Literary Gazette

A Publication of Lonestar Mensa

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July 2004



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Please submit ads to the newsletter editor.

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A Word To The Wise

-by Karen Werner, President

By the time you read this, I will be in Las Vegas, attending the Annual Convention. I'm leaving Austin on June 30 and returning on July 7, allowing me two extra days to become rich after the convention ends. I have never been to an Annual Gathering where I left the hotel, because I was too busy socializing, listening to speakers and attending events to find time to do anything else. This year might be different, because of all of the tours which have been set up as part of the AG. However, the program schedule has at least three different speakers or other events scheduled at all times from daylight until midnight. I can't wait, and I'll report back next month on what you missed if you didn't go.



Our Regional Gathering is scheduled for Labor Day weekend. You will all be receiving postcards shortly telling you more about what to expect at this RG (and RGs in general) and where you can go to learn more. Above all, Gatherings are places to meet new people and socialize. I've made new friends at every Gathering I have attended.

Attendance at our Monthly Meetings and at TGIT continues to rise. In June, our Monthly Meeting speaker was political columnist Dave McNeely. After speaking for 15 minutes or so, he fielded questions from the audience of more than 20 people. He continued answering questions up to the library's closing time. Mr. McNeely has been covering Texas politics for decades and his expertise was in evidence at the meeting. In response to

one question, he predicted the outcome of the presidential election. Here's hoping he is right.

The Local Secretary (President) of the Lausanne, Switzerland chapter of International Mensa is in town until July 7. He came to TGIT and met with some of the 15 or 20 people who showed up. If you haven't been to TGIT lately, please come join us. The crowd is different every week, and there is always someone new to meet. See you after Vegas.

June ExComm Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2004

Attending: Karen Werner, President; Margaret Wofford, Vice President; Kathie Blair, Treasurer; Janet Kres, Member at Large; Mark Kres, Member at Large; and John Neemidge, Membership Chair.

Karen convened the meeting at 5:55.

Karen reported that Kathie had received a debit card from the bank. Attendees discussed the relative merits and exposures of having a debit card. Moved, Margaret, seconded, John, to cancel the card. Motion passed with one abstention.

Janet is making progress toward becoming a test proctor. She will contact Sam Waring to work during the next test session.

Karen reported that she must name a scholarship chair by August and submit the name to National. She will ask for a volunteer.

Karen received a lapsed member list from National. John will attempt to contact lapsed members and encourage them to rejoin.

The North Village Library informed Karen that we must again reserve our meeting space effective with the new library year in August. Additionally, there may be an issue with reserving the room for the August meeting during the rollover process.

The 'Dillo has both Danny South and the Kreses listed as registrars for the RG.

John proposed mailing postcards to the membership advertising the RG and inviting people with no RG experience to a pre-RG information meeting on or near July 17. Moved, John, seconded, Margaret, to mail the postcards. Motion passed with one "no" vote.

Karen adjourned the meeting at 6:45.

Margaret Wofford, Vice President

Hello Region 6!

-by Dan Wilterding, RVC Region 6

Foundation scholarship winners (MERF - Mensa Education & Research Foundation) have the limelight this month — ten groups in the region submitted twelve winning essays! New Mexico Mensa took top honors with three winners. The names of the winners are available on the web at http://merf.us.mensa.org/scholarships/scholarship_winners/currentwinners/region6.php and may be available elsewhere in this newsletter. Congratulations and many thanks also to those who donated their time to read & evaluate the essays submitted. Giving money to deserving students is fun, volunteer now to participate in the next round!

Still looking for an Leadership Development Workshop Coordinator for the region; anyone interested?

Comments, anyone?

Dan Wilterding - RVC6

rvc6@us.mensa.org

dtwtech@swbell.net

817-573-4454 (before 9 P.M.)

504 West Atchley Drive

Granbury, Texas 76048

In Austin:

LonestaRG VI RGMageddon

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 Danny South

2323 Wells Branch Pkwy, Apt B204

Austin, Texas 78728-6764

registrar@lsm.us.mensa.org

... and in Dallas:

Feast of Pleasures and Delights XXV

November 25-28 2004

\$50 till August 31, \$55 after

Contact: Carol Hilson

9413 Shipman St

Rowlett, Texas 75088

972-475-9327

C_Hilson@msn.com

Walter's World

-by Walter Stewart

One of the most used and necessary inventions of the 20th (and most likely the 21st as well) is the motor vehicle. Whether for work or for play, the automobile is a major part of every activity we undertake.

Automobiles are not cheap. Buying one takes a significant amount of capital; operational costs are rated for tax and re-imbusement purposes at approximately 33 cents per mile. Yet, in an item that is commonplace and frequently used (many use their cars over two hours per day!), people accept a level of reliability and engineering that in any other item should be unacceptable.

“What?!? Not So!” I hear the cry from you. Another curiosity I see constantly is people defending their vehicles' reputations. For some reason, they take offense at any insinuation regarding them.

Typically, when you buy a machine, you are concerned with ease of operation, reliability, how well it fits the purpose you need it for, and how hard it is to get it serviced and maintained. Most of these items seem to take a backseat to other considerations when applied to buying a car.

The dealerships and manufacturers encourage the superficial buying of vehicles. 30 years ago, no one would have considered buying a car without opening the hood and examining the engine compartment. Now, most people don't understand anything about how the engine and the related subsystems work – any look under the hood (if they even bother) is cursory at best. In fact, many cars are now built with 'covers' on the engines that need to be removed before even the most rudimentary service is performed.

As a result, the engineering that goes into the vehicles has degenerated at a rate that would (and should!) be unacceptable in any other artifact.

The primary enemy of any machine is wear. The more that it is used, the less life remains. Different parts of machines wear at different rates. For example, tires wear faster than windows. Wear in a machine is inescapable. When a component wears out in a complex and expensive machine, the solution is to replace the used up part. Over the last several decades many innovations to facilitate this process have occurred: indicators, diagnostic monitoring, etc. And in most products, the trend is to facilitate this by making it easier to identify the defective component and quickly replace it. Examples of this include circuit

breakers, fuses that glow when they trip, indicator LEDs, diagnostic displays, and many others.

Not so the auto! Despite the promise of OBDII (On-Board Diagnostics, second generation) a standard which all manufacturers initially lauded and promised to support, many vehicles continue to be designed and sold with proprietary connectors and diagnostic codes.

Rather than use standard fasteners, many manufacturers have started to create 'specialty' fasteners that require mechanics to buy tools that are unique to particular cars. In many cases, prices for these tools are set far above the actual price to produce them in an attempt to dissuade non-dealership mechanics from working on them.

The worst however, are the physical designs and materials. With our knowledge of materials, it is possible for us to eliminate corrosion – especially that caused by galvanic action (the use of dissimilar materials). Yet manufacturers continue to disregard that aspect, and in wet or seacoast areas cars rust quickly. Modern connectors allow for multiple contacts in a wide variety of configurations, yet monolithic wiring harnesses that contact each component separately are still used. Quick-connects are available to handle fluids, but are used infrequently (if at all). Three-dimensional modeling can show how parts fit together (or not), yet all manner of unique brackets exist to allow components to be added to the vehicles. Standardization of parts has become so commonplace in most industries that the base components have become commodity items (resulting in significantly lower component costs) – yet virtually each and every vehicle utilizes different components even in successive model years!

In virtually every other technical industry, trained technicians are at a premium. So, systems are designed so that components can be easily removed and replaced – especially parts that are known to wear quickly. The automotive industry still designs and builds vehicles such that routine maintenance tasks can not be done without special tools, disassembly and/or removal of unrelated systems, or labor intensive processes. My particular favorite is when components are placed in such a fashion that the connectors are either not visible or seem to be designed in such a way as to require someone with triple-jointed wrists to reach.

A few particular examples:

Alternators. Because of the harsh under hood environment, alternators last between 75K and 125K miles. Since this component will have to be replaced, logic would dictate that it have a simple, easy to plug in,

connector and simple easy to handle fasteners. However, in most vehicles there are two (and even up to four!!!) electrical connectors of multiple types (plug, terminal, bolt on lugs), and at least one (or more!) bolts are under or behind it. Worst of all is when it is located below another component, which must be removed in order to access it!

Engines. All engines will fail. Even with the best of maintenance, they will wear to the point that something will just not function. An obvious solution would be to design the engine so that one electronic connector, one or two fluid connectors, and a few mechanical mounts get disconnected, and out it comes! However, most manufacturers have designed their vehicles so that there is no discrete engine wiring harness, no unified connectors, nor mounting that cannot be easily disengaged. The engine 'pack' for a M-1 tank can be totally exchanged in a couple of hours by two mechanics – yet to replace a V-8 engine in a large SUV can take over 60 man-hours.

Automotive manufacturers like to sell their products based on image. They also point to aspects such as safety. What they don't point out is that their products are designed with image as the most important aspect. Car designs begin with a body shape and style. It is then up to the automotive engineers to pack the components and features required into that body. Rather than form following function (the most fundamental tenet of engineering design) functionality is sacrificed to form. Small wonder that poor and shoddy quality and high levels of sub-system failures exist in today's vehicles.

Most of you are probably thinking 'Not MY car!'. However, I'd like you to open your hood and look closely at your engine. Can you reach your hand all around it? Can you easily see all of the accessories, 'black boxes' and the fasteners holding them in? Are wires labeled? Are components? Are they even obviously color-coded? Can you see the diagnostic connector? Relays? Are they labeled?

You expect that level of engineering from a \$499 computer, but strangely most people don't expect it from a \$50,000 car.

Go figure.



Cooking with Karen

-by Karen Werner

I thought you might like an easy, no bake dessert recipe. This dish is one of my most requested desserts.

Frozen Chocolate Banana Loaf

- 1 cellophane pkg. (1/3 box) chocolate graham crackers, crushed (put in plastic bag and crush with rolling pin)
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 3 tbl. melted butter or margarine
- 1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
- 2/3 cup chocolate syrup
- 2-3 ripe bananas, mashed (3/4 cup)
- 2 cups (1 pt.) whipping cream, whipped

Line 9x5" loaf pan with aluminum foil, extending over top of pan; butter foil. Combine crumbs, sugar and butter; press firmly on bottom and slightly up sides of pan. In bowl, mix milk, syrup and bananas. Fold in whipped cream. Pour into pan; cover. Freeze 6 hrs. or until firm. Slice and serve, with or without sliced bananas on top as garnish.

Here's another popular, easy no-bake recipe to try.

Cherry Cheesecake

- 1 9" graham cracker crust
- 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
- 1/3 cup lemon juice concentrate (I only use Realemon)
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 can cherry pie filling, chilled

In bowl, beat cheese until fluffy. Gradually add milk; beat until smooth. Stir in lemon juice and vanilla. Pour into crust and chill 3 hrs. Top with pie filling before serving.

July Monthly Meeting

July's Monthly Meeting will be held on Monday, July 12, 2004, at the North Village Library at 2139 W. Anderson Lane.

July's Monthly Meeting will feature Amanda VanHoozer, Director of Program Services at the Center for Child Protection (the Center), previously known as the Travis County Children's Advocacy Center.

According to its web site (centerforchildprotection.org), "In 2003, Travis County Children's Advocacy Center provided forensic interview services for 683 new children. Referred children were victims of sexual assault, serious physical injury or witnesses to violent crime. Each carry (sic) the enormous burden of victimization and while each has needs that are unique, all come with a need for protection."

The Center helps children and their caregivers within the criminal and civil justice systems. They work in cooperation with the Travis County District Attorney's Office, Child Protective Services, Austin Police Department; Travis County Sheriff's Office; Children's Hospital of Austin; and all other law enforcement agencies in Travis County.

Services offered at no charge at the non-profit Center include therapy, parenting and support groups, parent education, child witness preparation, information and referral and child care for siblings during court proceedings.

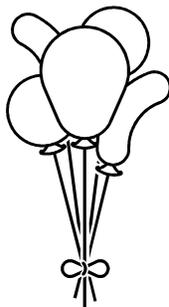
The talk will concentrate on what the Center does, as well as its partners in this endeavor. Ms. VanHoozer will also talk about the signs and symptoms of child abuse people should look for in their interactions with children.



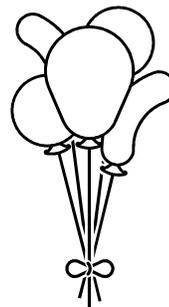
Happy Birthday



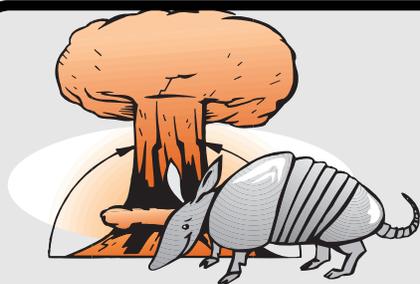
07/01 John Foshee
07/02 H G Flinn
07/05 Kristofer Danner
07/06 Arval Bohn
Margaret Peloquin
Janet Swisher
07/08 David Posh
Jimmy Roberts
07/11 Daniel Mohan
Albert Neff III



07/12 Katharine Muller
Michael Swanzy
07/15 Donald Davis
Mckenzie Morse
07/16 Sharon Leal
Jerry Spence
07/19 Jacob Carriker
Alan Crudden
07/20 Calvin Burgin
Alex Ortiz



07/23 Richard Barnett
Judy Jones
Kathleen Theilig
07/26 Crystal Ritchey
07/27 Jon Kurylowicz
Joseph McMillen
07/28 Mary Montgomery
Wendell Weatherford
07/29 Brian Rash
07/30 Barbara Rodriguez



LonestaRG

LonestaRG VI (VI VI!): RGmageddon Sep. 3-6, 2004 Austin, TX

- Speakers on war, famine, pestilence, death, chaos, mayhem, and other cataclysmic matters
- Post-apocalypse Dance
- Abundant hospitality, with meals, fresh-baked bread, veggies, snacks, soda, beer, wine, and more
- Late-night pool & hot tub
- Discussion room
- Games and contests
- Scholarship raffle
- Goodies and Prizes
- And much more!

It's a post-apocalyptic paradise! Join us for our own version of armageddon, and see what comes next. Hospitality will be a whole lot better than fallout shelter rations. Wear your best camouflage outfits and come prepared to party like it's the end of the world! Bring the whole family – we have discount rates for children. Registration is only \$40 until June 7th (children 7-14 half price, 6 and under are free). Register online at our web page (<http://www.lsm.us.mensa.org/rg6reg.htm>) with payment via PayPal, or send registrations to Danny South, 2323 Wells Branch Pkwy Apt B204, Austin, TX 78728-6764; make checks payable to "Lonestar Mensa RG". For more information, including pictures from previous LonestaRG's, and more, see the web page (<http://www.lsm.us.mensa.org/lonestarg.htm>) or contact John Neemidge at 512-310-7863.

What's Happening in July?

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.

ExComm Meeting

Monday, July 12

5:30pm

Buffett Palace

1012 W. Anderson Ln, Austin

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

Monthly Meeting

Monday, July 12

7:00pm

Austin Public Library
North Village Branch

2139 W. Anderson Lane, Austin

Please see page 6 for meeting details.

Potluck SIG & Games Night

Saturday, July 17

6:00pm

Kelly Wagner & Steve Harsch's Home

1001 E. Riverside, Austin

(512) 443-9650

Theme: Corn. Foods made with corn or with ingredients made from corn are all welcome. Please make your contribution low sodium if possible (salt shakers will be provided). Please call ahead and tell us what you plan to bring so we don't get 7 platters of corn on the cob.

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, July 21

7:00pm

Barnes & Noble Café

4909 W. Waco Dr., Waco

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

Fold & Sticker

Thursday, July 22

(at TGIT)

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

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July						
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2004