

Region 1 Roundup
by Ian Randal Strock
Region 1 RVC
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Last month, I wrote of the then-upcoming AMC meeting in Denver. The big item on the agenda was the annual budget, which we adopted after an in-depth presentation (I'd sat in on the finance committee's meeting to set the budget a month earlier). And while I went into the meeting assuming that \$4.5 million budget (which we expect to be just a shade over break-even) would be the big hairy discussion item, it wasn't.

The most contentious issue on the agenda turned out to be a proposal to institute guest memberships (asking members of other national Mensas to pay for the privilege of enjoying the benefits of American Mensa membership in addition to their home-groups' activities). As a member of the Communications Committee, I was one of those involved in drafting the motion, and from a strictly financial point of view, it made sense to me. But in the lead-up to the meeting, one facet of the proposal grabbed all the attention of members who expressed opinions to me: foreign members' participation in American Mensa Facebook groups. By the time I arrived at the AMC meeting, my opinion was wavering, and eventually, I fell back on my non-Mensa reading. Specifically, I remembered Peter Zeihan's book *The Accidental Superpower* (which I recommend). He starts the book by discussing the outcome of the Bretton-Woods Conference.

The Conference, which was held toward the end of World War II, was a wide-ranging discussion, but the piece of it I'm thinking of now is that the United States decided to guarantee the safety of the world's oceans, allowing the destroyed nations of the world to rebuild their economies without the need to rebuild their navies to protect their shipping—and thus, trading—interests. That action cost the United States significantly in terms of military spending over the following three quarters of a century, but it also enriched every nation through cheaper and easy international trade, leading to the world economy we have come to expect.

In the same vein, I thought, American Mensa is the Mensa world's powerhouse. Half of all Mensans are members of American Mensa. And while Mensa members of other nations participating in American Mensa activities are a slight draw on our resources, as the Mensa world's eight-hundred-pound gorilla, we should accept those costs in order to promote the common good of Mensa International. With that thinking, I urged my fellow AMC members to vote—and did so myself—against the motion. The motion was not adopted.

In Regional news, I visited two local groups. On March 24th, I joined Connecticut & Western Massachusetts Mensa at their annual meeting. It was a catered event at a yacht club on the coast, and a wonderful time. I met some great people I'd only known through electronic communication, saw others I've known for quite some time, and I was even roped into participating in a hatting ceremony for their new ExCom members. It was a great day, and a very good time. And something that I've been noticing in Mensa in general again came to my attention: there is a very clear divide between older members of Mensa and younger adult members. After the scheduled activities there was unscheduled socializing time, and the group

immediately split along generational lines. The older members split off into smaller discussions, while the younger members gathered around a table playing games (in this case, Codewords). I point out the difference only to accentuate the fact that both subgroups were enjoying the company of their fellow Mensans. As an organization with only one requirement for membership, we need to remember that there are always others who participate in Mensa differently, but that's okay.

After C&WM, I hightailed it up to Massachusetts, for Boston Mensa's New Member Party that same evening. This party—a pot-luck event in a warm and comfortable home—also brought me into contact with many members I hadn't met before (even though Boston is my “other home”). There was less formal event at the party, but ample opportunity to interact with Mensans new and old.

At both events, everyone wore name tags; something I heartily recommend. Even though most of the attendees knew each other at both events, name tags make it much easier for the few new members to interact, to not feel left out. They may not be cool, but they are a painless and useful idea. Also at the new member party, new members were given strings of Mardi Gras beads, which certainly helped me identify them to try to make them feel welcome. Simple ideas, but I note them to remind you that, when you're planning an event, expect to see your friends, but also try to make your future-friends feel welcome.

Remember, the newsletters (and calendars) from your nearby local groups are available to you on the Mensa web site (from the main us.mensa.org web site, pull down the “Read” tab and click on “Local Group newsletters”), and I urge you to share your events with those surrounding groups' calendar editors. Keep up to date with the latest goings on in the region in Region 1's Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/188180494045/>

Upcoming Region 1 Regional Gatherings:

Maine Mensa's Fun & Games mini-RG in Portland, Maine (April 27-29): for more info, contact LocSec Anne Allen at durhamme@yahoo.com.

Boston Mensa's Cape Cod mini-RG (which over the years has been outgrowing the “mini” label) in Dennis Port, Massachusetts (May 11-13): for more info, see <https://cape.bostonmensa.org/>.

And registration and hotel reservations are open for this year's Annual Gathering, in Indianapolis, Indiana (July 4-8). For all the details, and to join American Mensa's big annual get-together, see <http://ag.us.mensa.org/>

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Glossary:

AMC: American Mensa Committee, the national board of directors

RVC: Regional Vice Chairman, a member of the AMC with responsibility for a specific region

of American Mensa

Region 1: The northeast region of American Mensa, comprising New England, Northern New Jersey, and most of New York

AG: American Mensa's once-a-year five-day Annual Gathering, featuring the Annual Business Meeting, more than a hundred speakers, and more than a thousand Mensans.

RG: Regional Gathering: a weekend-long get-together hosted by a local group featuring speakers, games, events, and more with 100–400 of your closest friends you haven't met yet.

ExCom: Executive Committee, in some groups known as Board of Directors: the members who have volunteered and been elected to take care of the day-to-day business of operation a local group. The local group version of the AMC.