

Region 1 Roundup
by Ian Randal Strock
Region 1 RVC
(written 31 July 2019)

Jumping right in: July was the Annual Gathering in Phoenix. I arrived two days before the AG. Those of you who follow me on Facebook will have seen that I travel a lot. Mostly, it's for conventions. What that means is that, though I'm frequently on the road, I very rarely have to think about what city I'll be visiting or which hotel I'll be sleeping in. But for the AG, for seemingly the first time, I planned my own trip in the two days before. I spent a day at the Grand Canyon (and finally, truly understand the word "awesome"), and then another day in a rental car, visiting Winslow (and the corner mentioned by the Eagles), Meteor Crater, Flagstaff, the Lowell Observatory, and Sedona. I put 396 miles on that rental car in one day. Then I didn't leave the hotel for five days.

The AG is a marathon of all the best things about Mensa, and for AMC members, it's also a marathon of business meetings. (See my previous column; email me for a copy if it didn't appear in your newsletter.) The marathon started Wednesday when Registration opened. As chairman of the Licensing Committee, I had a meeting with the head of Licensing department in our national office. Wednesday evening, I hosted the Region 1 Meet-and-Greet. After that, I attended the Mr. Mensa event (a beauty-contest-type event that is also a big fund-raiser for the Mensa Foundation).

Thursday was a meeting day. Since this is the beginning of a new AMC term, we started the day with an AMC orientation session, broke for lunch with LocSecs from around the country and members of the Foundation board, and then we had the AMC meeting. The meeting had a very long agenda, but many of the items on it are of the type I call "housekeeping": changes or updates to ASIEs that need to be made, but which are neither controversial nor difficult.

There were a few items that led to in-depth discussions. One I co-sponsored: to Restrict Attendance of Expelled Members from Private Events. It's a difficult topic, and I'm still not sure I like the wording of the motion. I seconded it solely to enable it to be discussed, and we did discuss it, before deciding to refer the motion to a committee for further research. We'll revisit the issue at our next meeting. Another motion which led to serious discussion was a proposal to remove the provision that one RVC sit on the Executive Committee (which is also made up of the five nationally elected officers, to manage the business of the AMC that needs to be taken care of between meetings). Ultimately, the motion was defeated, keeping an RVC on that committee. Then my fellow RVCs elected me to that position, so I am honored to serve on the Executive Committee.

The minutes of AMC meetings are action minutes, meaning they only list the motions made and voted upon, leaving out discussion (though our new Secretary is now including brief summary comments of the discussion). For motions, this is fine. But we also have two sections of the agenda: comments from the AMC before the meeting, and comments at the end of the meeting. The latter section is usually used by RVCs to announce upcoming Regional Gatherings, and

other matters normally found in a meeting's "good and welfare" section. But I've recently realized (well, I've known all along, but didn't really internalize the fact), that what is said during this portion of the meeting, though it may be heard by those in attendance, then disappears. So I've decided I'm going to be sharing my comments with you. At the AMC meeting held on July 4, I used my time in the post-meeting comments to suggest that future Annual Gatherings schedule all Regional Meet-and-Greets at the same time, to minimize potential conflicts with other interesting program items, so that more members can meet each other (there were two other events I was supposed to be at during the Region 1 M&G). I also urged my fellow AMC members to attend the Annual Business Meeting (to be held at 9am the next day), but to attempt to make the meeting go quickly, because I'd been scheduled to give a 10:30am speech on Isaac Asimov's centennial. I went on to say that there ought not be any program items scheduled opposite the ABM, which is the business reason for the Annual Gathering in the first place. Those two ideas will be reduced in the minutes to "questioned AG scheduling." Finally, I commented on our two upcoming RGs, noting that MoNNY's RechaRGe will be held on Labor Day weekend, and that Boston Mensa has moved the date of their RG to the week before Chicago Mensa's long-running WeeM (which drew spontaneous applause from many of those present), and urging people to consider attending back-to-back RGs.

Friday morning was the Annual Business Meeting, at which the Chairman, the Treasurer, the Executive Director, and the President of the Mensa Foundation report to the members on the state of the society. They also present the annual financial audits, which are available on the web site. As I said earlier, I had to leave before the end of the ABM, because I was scheduled to share the stage with *Mensa Bulletin* columnist Richard Lederer, talking about Isaac Asimov. That talk was not part of my official RVC attendance at the AG, but did draw an enthusiastic and responsive audience of about 400 people.

Friday afternoon, I had back-to-back meetings of the Communications Committee and the Finance Committee (I serve on both of those committees). Then it was a quick break before the Foundation Reception and the Gala dinner and speaker. Friday night ended on a significant down note, however, when I learned that Bruce Kent (who had been a very close friend of mine, who succeeded me as editor of Greater New York's *Mphasis*, and then was appointed AMC Publications Office in 1994) had died on July 4th. [I was in Pittsburgh July 26–28 for a science fiction convention, which enabled me to attend Bruce's memorial service on the 28th.]

Saturday, things started to slow down a bit, while I ruminated on friendship and loss. I attended the Awards Ceremony, during which I applauded as six Region 1 groups earned Jewel Awards. And finally, my official duties were at an end, and I had a few hours to relax and try to experience the AG as most members do; I didn't make it to any of the speakers, but I did get to the dance Saturday night, and spent some time talking and noshing in hospitality and several of the SIG suites. Sunday, as people were departing, I finally felt myself relaxing from the go-go-go of the week. I had a late-night flight back home, which meant I was able to take advantage of the "survivor's party" that Hell's Ms were sponsoring in their suite, the last scheduled event of the AG, and a welcome addition to the schedule.

I was home for just over a week before I flew out to San Diego for Comic-Con, which I'd never attended before. 140,000 official attendees plus another 300,000 experiencing the outside events

without actually going into the convention center meant it was an overwhelming experience (the largest science fiction conventions I've attended before topped out at about 6,000 people). I was there to participate on the panel Chairman LaRae Bakerink had arranged, "Mensa presents: How Science Fiction Shapes Our Reality." The six of us on the panel paid our own way to be there, but Mensa reaped some wonderful publicity rewards: we had a wonderfully large, responsive audience, and as I write this, I've seen newspaper articles quoting the panel and mentioning Mensa in at least five newspapers. For more details, see my personal blog or Facebook page. My flight home was delayed and rerouted, so that it took me 36 hours to fly back to New York. I spent about 12 hours at home before leaving for a family event for two days. We got back from that, and again, 12 hours later I was on the road for the previously mentioned science fiction convention in Pittsburgh.

So July was pretty busy. I was away from home 17 of the 31 days in the month. But now that it's almost August... I'm back at it again. Tomorrow morning, I'm leaving for Massachusetts, a mostly personal trip, but I will be attending Boston Mensa's New Member Party. The following weekend, I'll be at Northern New Jersey Mensa's Annual Picnic. And then Metropolitan Washington Mensa's Pandemic RG. And then Mensa of Northeast New York's RechaRGe RG. Yep, it'll be a busy month.

If you're looking for more Mensa events than just what you see in your local group, remember that 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:

Mensa of Northeast New York's RechaRGe: (August 30–September 2) in Albany, New York. For more info, see <https://mensaofnortheasternny.wordpress.com/>

Boston Mensa's Wicked Good RG: (October 25–27) in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. For more info, see <https://rg.bostonmensa.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.

LocSec: Local Secretary, aka president: the elected leader of a local group (the name comes from our British roots)

SIGHT: the Service of Information, Guidance and Hospitality to Travelers

(<https://www.us.mensa.org/connect/sight/>)

YM: Young Mensan: teenaged members and those younger

YAM: Young Adult Mensan: members in their 20s and 30s