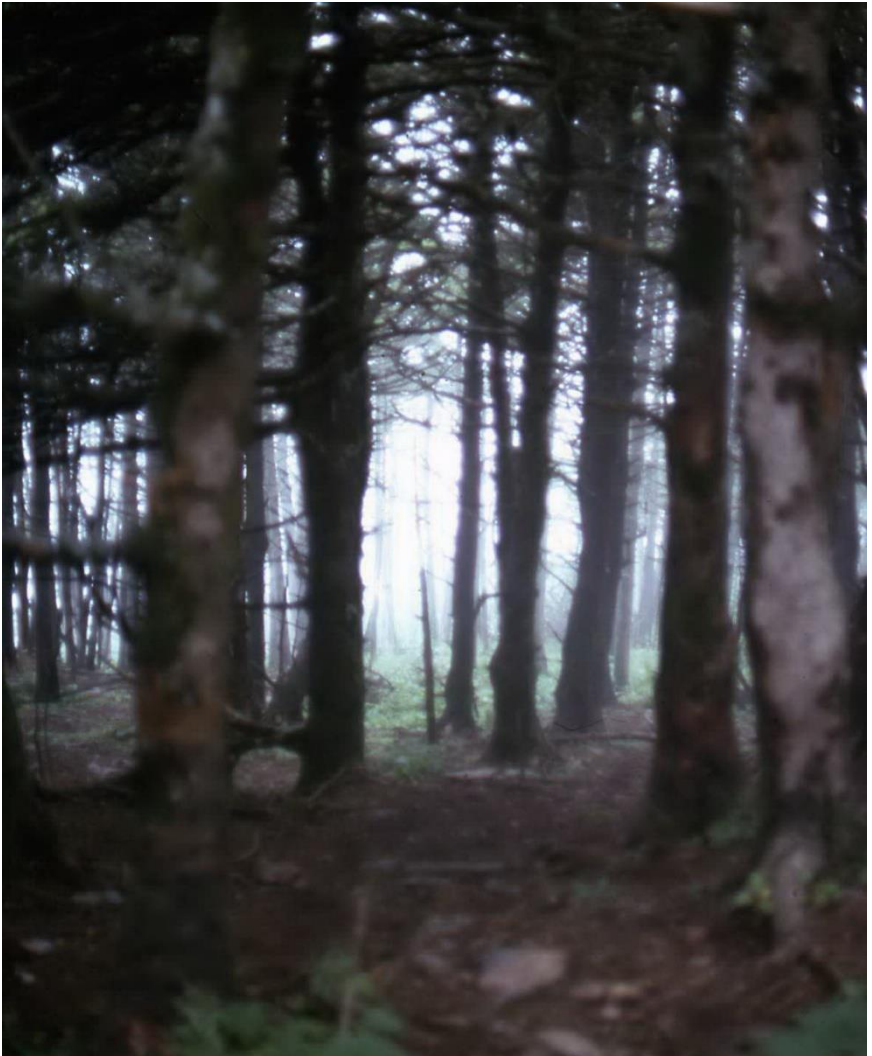


The French Broad Mensa Newsletter

# ***BROADCAST***

Vol. 26, No. 9, September 2020

<http://frenchbroad.us.mensa.org>



***In this issue***

September 2020 FBM Events .....	3
Local Secretary’s Message.....	4
The Kindness of Strangers .....	5
Regional Vice-Chairman’s Message.....	6
Mediocre-Okay Advice from Gabbie.....	8
Mensa Scholarships.....	10
Nominating Committee .....	10
The Little Library .....	11
Moving from Exclusivity to Inclusivity .....	12
FBM Wins Ruby Award .....	17
Josie Wonders .....	18
Thinking Ahead.....	20
Surviving the Pandemic .....	21
Smart Alec.....	22
Executive Committee Report .....	23
Treasurer’s Report.....	23
Contacts.....	24

***On the Cover***

A Foggy Day at Mt. Mitchell

*by Will McGuffin*

***Submissions to the Broadcast***

Deadline for articles, letters, comments, etc. is the 15th of each month preceding publication. Original material is welcomed. Maximum length is 250 words. Editor reserves the right to decline publication or to edit submissions, as long as intent and meaning are retained.

Please, no personal attacks, except against the Editor (if you so choose). The Editor would be so very glad to hear from you that she will tolerate (but not necessarily publish) nearly anything!

**Events Calendar  
September 2020**

**In-person events will be  
scheduled as soon as it's safe  
to do so. None for September.**

We want everyone to stay healthy. We'll resume regular activities as soon as practical. Check the website for up-to-date information.

As circumstances require, the Executive Committee will continue to conduct business via email, telephone, telepathy, or Zoom.

Regular and special events are open to members in good standing. RSVPs are important for table planning. Please respond if you plan to attend an event. If you don't, we might not be able to seat you. And don't forget to look for the Big Yellow M Table on the table at Mensa events!



**New Members: French Broad Mensa welcomes you! Watch your mail for a coupon that you can trade for a \$5 contribution to your first meal with the group.**

***Stay Safe***

***Stay Healthy***

***Stay Connected***

<http://www.frenchbroad.us.mensa.org/>

## **Local Secretary's Message**



**“Stay Home!”**

**“VOTE!”**

And now you can do both. Vote By Mail! North Carolina recently approved the use of an Absentee Ballot for any registered voter who requests it.

In July I called the Buncombe County Board of Elections and went through an automated menu to request a “2020 State Absentee Ballot Request Form.” I filled it out and mailed it back. My ballot should arrive early in September. I’ll have to fill that out, get a witness to sign along with me, and return it by mail.

Why all these steps? This process lets the officials determine that I am a registered voter in this county, so that they can send a ballot to me at the US Mail address I’ve indicated.

**Wayne Stanko** reminds us that absentee voting will be the safest way to participate in the coming election. No waiting in line, no contact with strangers. And Wayne says that now there’s an even easier way to request your ballot: Go to [buncombecounty.org](http://buncombecounty.org) (or your county’s website), click on election services, and follow the instructions to get a ballot. You can apply for one now.

Two independent organizations (Center for Voter Information and the Voter Participation Center) are mailing ballot requests to voters. If you use one of these, be sure to check the address printed on the return envelope, and make sure it’s going to your county’s elections office.

Perhaps you have concerns about the Post Office’s ability to collect and deliver all of the completed ballots on time. The volume of mailed-in ballots is anticipated to be much larger than ever before, and the Post Office is operating under recently amended policies and practices that seem to be slowing everything down. What to do?

Request your ballot ASAP. When you get the ballot, fill it out and mail it ASAP. To be counted, the ballots must be postmarked on or before Election Day, and received by the third day after Election Day. But there's no reason to wait! So please, return your completed and witnessed ballot as early as possible—waiting until the deadline may mean your vote can't be counted.

If you still aren't confident the USPS can deliver on time, you can drop off your completed ballot in person at your county's designated locations.

**VOTE EARLY!!**

Sharron Armel, Local Secretary  
SharronArmel@gmail.com

### ***The Kindness of Strangers***

Have you ever been stranded on the side of a road and a stranger stopped to help? Did you ever fall, and some unknown person helped you up? Have you ever dropped a heavy package and a passerby helped you get it to your car?

I have been a lucky person. Many times in my life, that helping hand that reached out was one that was unknown to me. Because we are currently living in a cruel time with a pandemic raging through our nation, maybe now is the time to share our stories of the friendly people who have provided help when it was most needed.

Next month, let's hear your stories about the kindness of strangers. Perhaps we can restore some optimism among ourselves and maybe even be an inspiration for all of us to be a kind stranger for someone we can help.

*Grace Lehto*

## **Regional Vice-Chairman's Message**



I am embarrassed as a member of the AMC to have to address several Ready-Fire-Aim happenings of late. And some of them weren't even done by the AMC!! But of course, folks don't know that. Here's the scoop – all the news that's fit to print, and some that ain't. Hee hee.

First let me address the recent "badge" email that you received from Credly. The AMC did not vote on this. It was a promotion from the National Office (NO.) Here is the explanation by Trevor Mitchell, the Executive Director at the National Office:

*"This email is entirely legitimate and was sent to you by the credentialing company, Credly. We've partnered with them to provide digital badges for members to allow you to easily share your service, achievement, and pride on social media, with your contacts, and across other digital platforms. I assure you this is not a social credit system. This company is thoroughly vetted and used by several companies and organizations that issue certificates and certifications. Much like your Mensa card, your badge demonstrates your membership to your social and professional circles in an easy, trusted, and easily verifiable way. This service is entirely optional for each member.*

*"You can read more about the program and how it all works for Mensa members on our website at <https://www.us.mensa.org/shop/benefits-and-services/digital-membership-verification/>."*

This email took many members by surprise because it was not adequately advertised as a new "benefit" before it was released. The AMC (your national Board of Directors) has taken the National Office to task for the way it was released. Many members thought it was "spam" and simply deleted it. It is intended as a mark of pride in Mensa membership, that can be loaded onto one's Facebook, Linked-In, etc pages as well as one's professional website to identify one as a

member of Mensa. It is totally voluntary. It is free to all current members, and Mensa will pay \$1.50 for each new member in the future that wants it. If you deleted it by accident, don't worry -- it will be made available again with a better explanation!

\*\*\*\*\*

Last month, it was the statement put out on behalf of the AMC that was never voted on by the AMC. LaRae Bakerink asked us for a straw vote on our stance about the George Floyd happenings. We gave her feedback. Imagine our surprise when the statement came out the next day, framed as if it were from all of us, when the straw vote was not at all unanimous. Also, we had thought that there would be further discussion before a statement was put out. LaRae has since taken full responsibility for putting out a statement supposedly from the AMC when some of us felt that “Mensa has no opinions.”

\*\*\*\*\*

What can I say? The natives are getting restless with this COVID thing, so it has been a rough couple of months. And speaking of COVID, there are a number of local groups putting on Zoom type meetings now, and most groups are open to other groups joining in the fun, electronically. If you would like to see more virtual action during these months when everything is closed down, start asking your ExComm to look into virtual meetings. Or take things into your own hands. Search other groups' events in their newsletters, and click on a few of those links. Start with San Francisco Mensa's newsletter, since they have invited other groups to join them for their electronic meetings. Also check out Charlotte Blue Ridge Mensa's newsletter, which lists several electronic meetings each month. Yeah, I know. It just ain't the same. However, if you are yearning for a Mensa “fix”, that's one way to get it.

Nancy Campbell, 704-533-3351 or [RVC5mail@gmail.com](mailto:RVC5mail@gmail.com)

## **Mediocre-Okay Advice from Gabbie**

Gabbie hears your woes, and offers advice. Send your quandaries to Gabbie c/o the BROADCAST Editor.



*Dear Gabbie,*

*What's all this hullabaloo about "Black Lives Matter?" I don't get it.*

*Dubious*

*Dear Dubious,*

*No, I guess you don't get it. And you're not the only one who's missing the point. There are lots of your co-believers out there.*

*I've had a problem with this for a long time, and it isn't with people who are trying to live up to the "all men (and women) are created equal" standard. If you were to do a bit of reading about evolution (which you probably don't believe in either), you'll find that scientists generally agree that we (meaning Cro-Magnon man – and woman) originated in eastern Africa when one of us fell out of a tree and decided to stand up and look around. From there, we spread out, up north into Europe (where sexual harassment was invented in our interactions with the Neanderthals), and east into Asia and the Pacific. They're still trying to figure out how we (Homo sapiens) got to the Americas (Is that where the "one if by land; two if by sea" thing came from?).*

*Anyway, it doesn't take too much thinking to see that we all started from the same place and spread from there. Sure, we took on various*



*Gabbie goes on...*

*characteristics demanded by climate and genetic anomaly, but basically, we all had the same mom and dad (that's a metaphor, by the way). That means, at bottom, that we're all the same species. All that B.S. about racial superiority is just so much cow pucky. We all have the same genetics, the same needs, and the same warlike mentality. We're all one species with minor genetic variations.*

*Oh yeah... What about COVID-19? You might have noticed that random scrap of RNA has the same deleterious effect on all of us. It's an equal opportunity virus. And why? Because we're all the same species, that's why. Everyone's life matters—equally!*

*Of course, this is just my jaundiced opinion. Take it or leave it. I'm no paleoanthropologist.*

*Your opinionated prognosticator,*

*Gabbie*



## ***Mensa Scholarships***

French Broad Mensa thanks **Wayne Stanko**, who has volunteered to chair our Scholarship Committee again this year. This is not a one-person effort – so please plan to help Wayne as he requests.

Starting September 15, the Mensa Foundation welcomes applications to its scholarship program. More than 150 scholarships are being offered. Only one of the scholarships requires membership in Mensa. All scholarships offered by the Mensa Foundation are essay-based.

You may read more about it at:

<https://www.mensafoundation.org/newsroom/press-releases/mensa-foundation-scholarship-period-starts-sept-15/>

## ***Nominating Committee***

French Broad Mensa thanks **Will McGuffin**, who has volunteered to chair our Nominating Committee this year. Forming our Executive Committee is another essential function of our group that can't be done by just one person.

Your current ExComm has learned that much of what we do for French Broad Mensa can be done without in-person meetings. Even after the pandemic restrictions ease, we can still conduct some of our business at a distance.

Geography is no longer an obstacle – so can you imagine participating in FBM governance activities via Zoom, email, or telephone? We're a fun group, and would welcome some new faces. Please contact Will at 828-274-5050 for more information.

## ***The Little Library***

Last month my husband and I finished our Little Library. Here is a picture. A lot of books have already changed hands, especially kids' books. We were amazed at the number of people, kids and exchanges we have seen. So many more people are walking now or biking. That helps. And our library is still closed.

Fun thing to have in the front yard!

*Johanna Dokter*



## ***Moving from Exclusivity to Inclusivity***

In response to a request in last month's BROADCAST, suggested by the new MEDIC SIG, several members share stories of their personal experiences in transitioning from exclusivity to inclusivity.

*Johanna Dokter recalls:*

When I was a child and even an adult in the Netherlands, I only ever saw Black persons on TV or Film or, if they were singers, featured in the Music Magazines of the time. In real life, not so much so. Racism and segregation for sure were there, but not right in my face. Zwarte Piet (Black Peter), the helpers of Sinterklaas, were just white guys schminked as blacks. So like blackface singers. No one took offence because we were mostly all white. (It is very different now, most people even in the Netherlands find Zwarte Piet offensive. But childhood memories of this figure are also a big part of all our lives.)

Of course the history of the Netherlands as far as slavery is concerned, is very evil. Many, many slave ships were registered Dutch ships. So...

But now back to the time of South African Apartheid. This was also caused by Dutch East India Company, which was a big factor in colonizing South Africa. Later the British took over and in 1948 Apartheid became the law of the land. Not until in the 1970's real protest against this form of institutionalized racism became more vocal. At that time the Outspan boycotts began (against South African white producers of citrus produce) and made a real difference in our knowledge of Apartheid. Protests all over the world, other boycotts and other actions such as denying sport teams to play in South Africa or players from South Africa to play elsewhere resulted in a change of heart in many people. But to say that it changed the Dutch Policies regarding South Africa is not realistic. The Dutch Government on and off supported the Anti-Apartheid movement, but certainly not wholeheartedly.

When we first came to the USA in 1980, Apartheid in South Africa was still ongoing. One day when we visited a Dutch family in California, a

church member even, their comment on South Africa was that at least that country still believed in the Sabbath in not allowing work or play on that day, just church and family visits. Yeah, Dutch people did not always have their priorities right either. And in my own family even, there is still racism against black and brown people that come there to live to this day.

***Karen Youket remembers:***

Our high school class of mostly white Catholic and Protestant kids was the first one in our school to have a black classmate. It seemed to me he was welcomed as a star football player and subsequently as a member of key clubs and activities. I never saw or heard of any racial slurs, though I'm sure he experienced some. His younger sister arrived a couple years later. The only other black person I knew then was my cousin's best friend. As a sophomore in college I became a "Big Sister" to a black freshman. Getting to know him and his friends introduced me more to their culture. After I moved south, I encountered much more integration of our races both at school and in the workplace. About that time the term 'African-American' came into usage. I asked my black employees what they preferred to be called. I was told, "We call ourselves black." It was the same thing when the term 'Native American' started being used. I asked two with whom I worked what they preferred and they said, "We call ourselves Indian."

Another incident comes to mind, back in high school. We had a history teacher that the kids were not very nice to. One day as a joke we turned our desks around to face the back of the room. I did it as well, being enmeshed in that peer culture. However, when I asked why we were doing it, I was told it was because he was Jewish. I grew up Roman Catholic, but was never taught to hate Jewish people and I thought that was no reason to treat him that way. After that, I no longer participated in their antics. And after that semester that teacher no longer participated in our school.

***Pat Benard: “Good Trouble”***

The Civil Rights Movement was in full swing back when I was a sophomore at Tulane U. in New Orleans, in 1963. Some friends of mine were causing “good trouble”, by getting up in the faces of the segregationist powers-that-be, and I decided to join in.

The immediate project at hand was the integration of the New Orleans City Hall Cafeteria. There had been sit-ins during the past week or so, where Black people would go through the line and try to get served. But each time, the cafeteria manager was there, forbidding them food. When they wouldn’t leave, the police were called, and the Blacks were hauled off to jail.

So the plan was made that we would go through the serving line and get extra food. Then we would sit at a table, and 2 Blacks would run in and join us. The idea was that - Hey, they are already served, seated at the table with food in front of them. Unfortunately, It didn’t quite work out that way. The Manager was on high alert due to a couple of other Blacks who had tried to get served, and had then gone away when they were refused service. So in we come, a couple of young white folks, and we got in line and started filling our trays. But when we got to the register, the Manager (correctly) decided we weren’t City Hall employees and snatched our trays away. Not to be put off, we got in the line again and started collecting food. But the Manager ran up and yelled, “Don’t serve them!” So we refused to leave, and the cops were called, and off we went to jail. A couple of hours later, I was told I’d been “parolled” and released.

In the days and weeks following, we met with our lawyers (provided by C.O.R.E.). We soon received summonses to appear at the Orleans Parish Courthouse, and our lawyer put in a motion to have the case “continued”, and we were free to go. This was repeated for a few months, until our case was moved up to the State of Louisiana Court, and we went through a similar procedure, with a different lawyer. When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed by Congress, the charges (“taking temporary possession of a public building”) were dropped.

A few days later, another group successfully pulled off the plan. They were of course also hauled off to jail.

Epilogue: Ernest “Dutch” Morial, a black activist, was elected as the first black mayor of New Orleans in 1977, a position he held for 2 terms, until 1986. From then on, all the mayors have been black until Hurricane Katrina. In the aftermath, Mitch Landrieu served 2 terms as mayor, followed by black mayors since.

*Sharron Armel reflects:*

When I was in high school in the early 60s, Virginia schools were still segregated (despite the U. S. Supreme Court’s 1954 unanimous ruling in the landmark civil rights case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*: State-sanctioned segregation of public schools was a violation of the 14th amendment and was therefore unconstitutional.) The nearest “colored” high school required a 2-hour bus ride for my neighbors, while I rode about 15 minutes to my school. Then Integration! During the first year, there was ONE Black student attending my high school. Luckily I knew him as we lived on neighboring farms. On the first day of school, he got onto the schoolbus and I was overwhelmed with thoughts of what must be going through his mind. “Hello, J!” I said loudly. Nobody chimed in. I gave him a hastily-sketched map of the school’s floor plan and pointed him in the right direction to get a hall locker assigned. The school grapevine being what it was, I was called quite a few unkind names that day, and each time I wondered what J must be experiencing, and if he’d come back to school the next day. But by the end of the day, something unexpected happened – the school grapevine took a sharp turn and let everyone know J was a terrific running back, just what our football team needed. His way was smoothed, a bit.

Decades later, I learned that someone had tried (unsuccessfully) to buy the farmhouse that J’s family rented from my grandmother, in order to kick the family out and delay integration of the high school. I wish I could have told her how proud I am of her principles. That was then, and now...I could say it took a long time for integration to be accepted, and racial discrimination to disappear, but that “long time” is nowhere

near finished. Arguments I hear today about the disposition of Confederate soldiers' statues sound a lot like what I heard more than a half-century ago about school integration. And I still haven't found enough ways to do more about it.

***Grace Lehto: "We ran into each other."***

I was enrolled at the University of Maine in Orono when it happened. I was nineteen years of age and from a small town of approximately 800 people and never had met or even seen a black person before. Coming from different directions, we rounded the corner of the cafeteria building and ran smack dab into each other. At first, I was frightened and flabbergasted. The black man I had run into had raised dots in a pattern all over his face. I just stared at him, not knowing what to do. He introduced himself as an exchange student from Africa and invited me to go to the movies with him. I stammered, stuttered, and agreed to a date. He was a decent person, but we had so little in common that a couple of movies was the sum total of our "relationship."

I realized even then that my initial reaction to him was probably hurtful. It was not that I did not know that black people existed. I just figured they were too smart to want to go live where the winters were so cold.

I had heard about civil rights demonstrations but had no experience that was helpful regarding the entire situation. I did not know about "Whites Only" fountains and sitting always in the back of the bus. In fact, the high schoolers always seemed to claim the back of the bus like it was the best place to be seated.

More than half a century has passed since that experience and I now see things in such a different light. I am appalled that there are many who hate for such a stupid thing and wish that we were at least as smart as dogs and cats who pay no attention to the color of each other's fur. We're all wired differently, and those black people? They got more melanin than I did. Sheesh!



***French Broad Mensa Wins RUBY Award!***



Congratulations to French Broad Mensa for earning the American Mensa Ruby Award AGAIN. The Local Group Jewels recognize and reward Local Groups' membership-related activities and participation in all that Mensa has to offer to positively impact the experience of the Local Group members.

<https://www.us.mensa.org/recognize/group-awards/local-group-jewels/>

## ***Josie Wonders...***

### ***What Could Possibly Go Wrong? A Lot of Bull!***

I had a friend named Terry. He was a member of 4H. For his animal project, he decided to save up and buy a fine young bull and raise it. He named it Tank.

Terry worked hard raising Tank, feeding it, making sure it was healthy, building a fenced-in area for it, caring for it, doing all the required paperwork, getting it tattooed, and much more. Tank thrived with that wonderful care and grew to well over 2000 pounds.

Then the big day came. Tank was awarded Grand Champion at the State Fair.

While unloading Tank from the hauling trailer, he broke free and ran for it. Terry and his family searched everywhere, but they could not find Tank.

Well, don't you know, Tank found himself a field full of dairy cattle. In less than a week, Tank had lost over 1,000 pounds. He impregnated the entire herd.

The farmer that owned the dairy cattle sued Terry, but he withdrew the suit when he found out that his herd-to-be was fathered by a state champ.

### ***What Could Possibly Go Wrong? Bonsai!***

When my son was born, I planted 50 juniper tree seeds. I was going to raise and train them into traditional bonsai trees. My plan was to use adorable little trees to cover a big chunk of his college tuition when the time came.

The trees started life in my refrigerator in little containers with plastic tents over them.

At the end of first year, I took them out to clip certain parts to start them on the path to bonsai. I then put them back in the refrigerator.

At the end of the second year, they came out of the refrigerator for Round 2 of trimmings to properly stunt their growth.

At two years old, the trees were still tender little green things. So cute! I had them out on the counter and went into another room for a few minutes. When I came back, all the little trees were gone. It turned out that my cat found the tender little trees to be delicious.

Fortunately, my son did not want to go to college.

### ***What Could Possibly Go Wrong? Spanish Moss!***

I used to live very close to the Gulf of Mexico. I used a lot of Spanish moss in my container plants. The moss was outrageously expensive.

Fortunately, Spanish moss hangs in trees all around the Gulf, so one of my friends and I headed to the ocean to harvest some of the free stuff. We found a house with tons of moss hanging in the trees and asked the owner if we could gather some moss. (The fact that we were not rolling stones is implicit in this action.)

Anyhow, while pulling the moss out of the trees, the itching started, and the disturbed groups of spiders were mobilized. We were covered in things that crawl!

Who knew that the moss was full of spiders and chiggers!?

### ***What Could Possibly Go Wrong? Quitting Smoking!***

As part of my job for a large international company, I used to do equipment evaluations/troubleshooting for new electronics that were in development.

There were times that the equipment would burn up as I put it through the paces. Small amounts of smoke would waft out of my office and into the hallways. Of course, the people in neighboring offices would always come running over to see what new equipment I was cooking.

This happened on multiple occasions.

And then one day the company installed a new heating system. When they turned it on, smoke filled the hallways.

I had quite the crowd outside my door, and for the first time, I was innocent.

## ***Thinking Ahead***

Edgar Cayce, the sleeping prophet, said many years ago that Western North Carolina and Virginia Beach are the two safest places to live on the eastern seaboard. I think he lived in Virginia Beach. He also said that Phoenix would be next to the Pacific Ocean. I think Hollywood is going to have a 7.3 mag. earthquake soon, maybe that's why Jimmy Kimmel took the summer off and is spending it in Wyoming, where he no doubt now has property. So you definitely are safe here but stock up on food for about 3 months. And that should include small canned hams.

When we lived in NJ I bought \$500 worth of dried foods which I brought with me, now it's 30 years old, wonder if it is any good.

*Marie Lewis .*

**What has 4 letters, occasionally has 12 letters,  
always has 6 letters, and never has 5 letters?**



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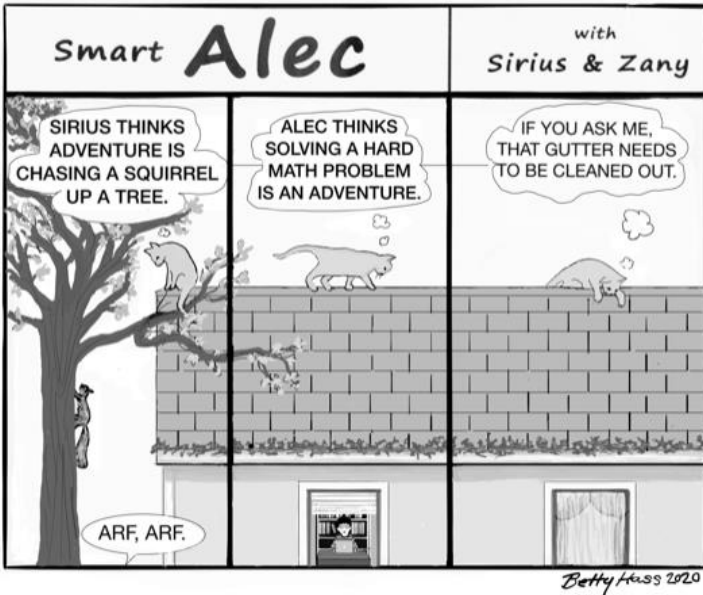
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## ***Surviving the Pandemic (A good sense of humor helps!)***



So we're moving into our 8th month of defeating COVID-19. These words may make you laugh, but there's a lot of truth mixed in to consider...

1. Just wait a second – so what you're telling me is that my chance of surviving all this is directly linked to the common sense of others? You're kidding, right?
2. Is it too early to put up the Christmas tree? I've run out of things to do.
3. If these last months have taught us anything, it's that stupidity travels faster than any virus on the planet, particularly among politicians and bureaucrats.
4. People are scared of getting fined or arrested for congregating in crowds, as if catching a deadly disease and dying a horrible death wasn't enough of a deterrent.
5. If you believe all this will end and we will get back to normal just because we reopen everything, raise your hand. Now slap yourself with it.
6. Another Saturday night in the house and I just realized the trash goes out more than I do.
7. Whoever decided a liquor store is more essential than a hair salon is obviously a bald-headed alcoholic.
8. The spread of Covid-19 is based on two factors: 1. How dense the population is and 2. How dense the population is.
9. It may take a village to raise a child, but I swear it's going to take a whole vineyard to home school one.
10. When this virus thing is over with, I still want some of you to stay away from me.



## **Executive Committee Report**

The ExComm members and advisors (Sharron Armel, Michael Havelin, Grace Lehto, Will McGuffin, and Wayne Stanko) continue to confer as needed, via email and telephone, to maintain continuity in the group's activities. We agreed to go on meeting remotely until we agree it's safe to get together in person.

As most of the active members of our group are categorized as "at risk" due to age and/or health, we will continue to exercise great caution.

During August, we considered a draft budget for 2021, and considered the pros and cons of accepting paid advertising on our website or in our newsletter. Conclusions will be published next month.

Submitted by  
Grace Lehto  
Deputy Local Secretary

You may suggest topics for future agendas by emailing [SharronArmel@gmail.com](mailto:SharronArmel@gmail.com).

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## **Treasurer's Report**

Opening Balance at June 30, 2020 .....	\$4,680.19
Receipts:	
Am. MENSA Monthly Subsidy .....	\$120.15
Total Receipts .....	\$120.15
Disbursements:	
None	
Total Disbursements .....	\$.00
Closing Balance at July 31, 2020 .....	\$4,800.34

Submitted by Wayne Stanko, Treasurer

## ***French Broad Mensa Contacts***

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Carmen Jessup ..... ciej@aol.com

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#### **Ombudsman**

Will McGuffin ..... 828-274-5050 ... wmcguffin@gmail.com

#### **S.I.G.H.T.**

Lizz Russell ..... [lizz@dnet.net](mailto:lizz@dnet.net)

**Membership Coordinator** ..... Position Open