

# M-Ark

The Newsletter of Arkansas Mensa

April 2017



## Gerry's Grumbings: LocSec Column

By Gerry Schulze

This is not the first time I've written about a convention to fill a LocSec column. In 2005 [I wrote about my adventures at Shadowcon](#). If you want to read about my adventures in a Vampire LARP, they are preserved on the archive page of [www.arkansasmensa.org](http://www.arkansasmensa.org).

Helena and I attended [MidSouthCon 35](#), March 24-26, 2017. MidSouthCon is a science fiction, fantasy, gaming, and costume play convention in Memphis. We enjoy MidSouthCon for several reasons. The biggest reason we enjoy it is because our sons like to go to play games, and we get to hang out with them. Both of our sons have been gamers since early youth. Helena was a very active Dungeons & Dragons player in her youth. I was an occasional player, but she was very experienced. When our older son, Christopher, was very young he found some of Helena's Dungeons & Dragons materials. He's been a gamer ever since. Gaming was part of Benjamin's life as soon as he was old enough to figure out what it was.

We mostly come for the games, but the presentations are probably more interesting for the general readership of this newsletter. We attended a presentation on *Commercial Development of Outer Space*. We were originally inspired to see the presentation because a friend of ours from the Word Virus Book Club, [Max Nelson](#), was one of the panelists. Max is a graduate of the University of Chicago, George Washington University, the International Space University, and the Rand graduate school at the Rand Corporation. He also worked at Rand in the defense technology department. Max has worked predicting the future for businesses. He has some very interesting stories about successes, and sometimes even more impressive near-successes, in predicting the trajectories of various technologies. I attended another session he did about predicting the future that I may try to incorporate into another article

*(Grumbings, continued on page 2)*

### Calendar

Monthly meetings are usually held on the last Thursdays of most months at Shorty Small's, 11100 N. Rodney Parham Rd., Little Rock, at 6:30 p.m.

Our next meeting will be on **Thursday, April 27, 2017**, at Shorty Small's.

[Before you drive a long distance to join the fun, you might confirm that Shorty Small's hasn't burned down or some other tragedy hasn't happened — call Earl Weniger at (501) 868-4409.]

(Grumblings, continued from page 1)

someday.

Other panelists on the *Commercial Development of Outer Space* panel were Les Johnson and Ethan Siegel.

[Les Johnson](#) was the Science Guest of Honor for the convention, Les Johnson. Les Johnson is a physicist, a science author, a science fiction author, and in his day job he works for NASA as a technologist. What caught my eye was that in his curriculum vitae he mentioned that he's a member of Mensa. In addition to the panel discussion, Helena and I got the opportunity to have breakfast with Les Johnson, his wife, Carol, and four other people Sunday morning. At breakfast, he talked about one of NASA's current projects, [NEA Scout \(Near Earth Asteroid Scout\)](#). He is a Principal Investigator on the project. This project will use a solar sail propulsion system to fly by a small asteroid, observe it, take pictures, and send information back. The solar sail technology will allow the project to turn in space and make a second set of observations, something we cannot do with jet propulsion. He showed us a piece of the material the sail will be made of. It was an extremely thin and extremely light fabric, half the thickness of a piece of paper. The sail technology will allow scouting missions at a fraction of the cost of earlier missions. The launch date is scheduled for November 2018. There will be testing in April at Huntsville. Johnson and a couple of colleagues wrote a book, [Solar Sails: A Novel Approach to Interplanetary Travel](#) in 2008. They have recently published a [Second Edition](#). I now have an autographed copy of the Second Edition.

[Ethan Siegel](#), a former Science Guest of Honor for the convention, a PhD in theoretical astrophysics, was also on the panel. It seems like we have seen Siegel there every year. Siegel crosses the lines between science nerds, science fiction nerds, and costuming nerds by wearing some of the most colorful garb at the meetings. He is a professor at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Oregon and



writes a popular science blog, [Starts With a Bang](#) published on Sb (ScienceBlogs) and Forbes.

I mention the credentials of these panelists because the topic, *Commercial Development of Outer Space*, seems rather speculative. It was indeed somewhat speculative, but not excessively so. Human beings, being what we are, will eventually figure out a way to make a buck out of anything. Space tourism may end up being a real thing, at least for the very wealthy. The session was entertaining and informative. There was a lot of time developed to justifying space exploration from a practical point of view. The concept of space tourism--still a long way off for almost all of us--was discussed, as well as the problems and promise of gathering resources and generating energy in outer space. Helena and I really enjoyed the presentation.

I also got a chance to meet Alan Smale. Alan Smale is an astrophysicist working at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland. An interesting aside about Smale is that he is the author of a fantasy book I had recently downloaded on the advice of a friend. The premise of his novel, [Clash of Eagles](#), is that the Roman Empire never fell. The book is about the Romans discovering the New World. I had downloaded the book a week or two before the convention. I had no idea he would be at the convention until I saw a big stack of his books on a table at the convention. I also had no idea who he was when I bought the Kindle version of the book. It was recommended to me because of my interest in the Roman Empire. I thought it was just some more speculative historical fiction. I have forgotten who recommended the book, but I think it was someone at the Word Virus book club.

Now for our main reason for being there--the games. There is a game room in which you can try out new games. Those who play the games are asked to evaluate them.

(Grumblings, continued on page 3)

(Grumbings, continued from page 2)

Helena and I found some two-player games we liked, and we tried out a very interesting but complicated game called *Sentinels of the Multiverse* with Benjamin and some of his friends. We all played *New York Slice*, a pizza-themed game. We played a dexterity based card game called *Garbage Day* Which I lost spectacularly. Our sons both enjoyed Pathfinder adventures. Their group won a new Cthulhu gamebook in the raffle.

Much effort is devoted to costuming. There were stormtroopers and superheroes. There were plenty of scantily clad cosplayers, male and female. We saw some quite impressive Deadpools and Harley Quinns, and enough Jokers for several decks of cards. There was also at least one Queen of Hearts. There were enough starfleet personnel to man a small starship. The amount of effort put into garb varies, but some of the outfits were very good. One of the great things about these conventions is that not everyone in the hotel is here for the convention.

When the traveling salesman, the family with little children, and the tourist visiting the United States see some of the costumed characters, the reaction can be priceless. Imagine riding up an elevator with Superman, Chewbacca, and elf, and three Jokers. There weren't nearly enough Batmen here for all the Jokers, by the way. Maybe next year. But Helena is somewhat reluctant to make a Batman costume for a 300 plus pound 4XL Batman.

We really enjoy conventions. MidSouthCon is one of the best for us. It's close enough that we can make it in a long weekend. We've become familiar with the activities and we've developed a system for attending. Conventions like this one have been a family event or us for many years. While it would be a bit of an exaggeration to say that there's something for everyone there, I think most Mensa members could find something interesting at MidSouthCon.

[For the pixel-impaired folks reading this on paper, just Google the subjects mentioned to learn more. – Ed.]

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## Don't Miss this Book...

Desmond Walls Allen

*Eight Flavors: The Untold Story of American Cuisine*, by Sarah Lohman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016)

The title of this book forced me to open it; anytime there's a list, I want to know more. Eight flavors? Black pepper, vanilla, chili powder, curry powder, soy sauce, garlic, MSG, and sriracha.

I knew about black pepper - the story of the search for the spice islands, etc. But I'd never heard of John Crowninshield and his trips to Sumatra that put black pepper on everyone's tables. And vanilla, how wonderful is that! But it took a 12-year-old slave to make it world-wide crop. Chili powder, curry, soy sauce, and garlic were predictable additions to the list, considering the influence of Mexican, Indian, Chinese and Italian cultures in the US.

But MSG? Monosodium glutamate is making a comeback after "Chinese restaurant syndrome" has been shown invalid. But do you know where it comes from and what it does for food? It started with seaweed in the hands of a Japanese biochemist.

After I read chapter eight on sriracha (see-ROTCH-ah) and the story of a Vietnamese refugee who named his hot sauce business after a nightmare boat trip to Hong Kong, I had to make a trip to Target for a bottle of Huy Fong Sriracha Hot Chili Sauce (\$3.49). It really is delicious.

For more, see <http://www.fourpoundsflour.com>, a blog by Sarah Lohman. And don't miss the link under "popular posts" about moose muffle. (A story about a moose recipe is among the founding documents of Arkansas Mensa.)

# The Emergency Management Assistance Compact

By Danna Weaver, Planning Branch Manager for Arkansas Department of Emergency Management

A couple of earlier articles mentioned the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). “EMAC” is an acronym that has practically become a name, so it’s rarely called “the EMAC” in emergency management circles. EMAC is an agreement between all the states and four U.S. territories that provides a procedure and tools for sharing resources across state lines. EMAC has proven its usefulness in disasters over the last 25 years, including the September 11 attacks, Hurricane Katrina, and Super Storm Sandy.

EMAC is built on 13 Articles of EMAC Law. Every member state and territory has passed this legislation, making identical commitments to share resources under these procedures and rules. Here are the major points covered in the EMAC Articles.

Each state has designated ‘authorized representatives’ (ARs). ARs have the authority within their states to commit resources and spend money. There are three parts to an EMAC agreement and each part must be signed by an AR. In part one, a state suffering a disaster requests a specific resource. In part two, unaffected states make offers to meet that resource need. Each offer includes a good faith estimate of what the resource will cost. In part three, the state experiencing the disaster chooses the offer(s) it will accept. When part three is signed, a legal, enforceable contract exists between the states. This process is also used when National Guard resources are shared between states.

A state may hold resources in reserve for potential use in the home state. Assistance is provided voluntarily, there is no obligation to deploy, and Governors use their good judgment to make sure their state doesn’t leave itself vulnerable. For example: Arkansas will never be obligated to send its Zombie Strike Team to another state, because that would leave Arkansas defenseless against the zombie peril.

An important provision of the EMAC legislation is that



licenses, certificates, and permits issued in the home state are accepted by the affected state. Under EMAC, a Registered Nursing license issued by the State of Montana to the nurse listed by name on the EMAC agreement is a valid license in Arkansas. This acceptance of out-of-state credentials applies to the medical field, firefighting, various levels of driver’s licenses, hazardous materials certifications, etc. It applies to law enforcement except for the powers of arrest. Powers of arrest are not transferred, but can be conveyed by administration of a temporary oath of office.

Another noteworthy provision covered by the statute is that individuals deployed through EMAC who act in good faith, are not negligent, and perform within their training, are not liable for acts of omission. They are agents of the requesting state for purposes of tort liability and legal immunity. As agents of the state, responders are covered under their home state worker’s compensation programs. Individuals who self-deploy in a frenzy of compassion for their fellow humans do not enjoy these protections.

There may be more about EMAC in the next newsletter. Anything in government that actually works well deserves some attention. For more information, here’s the EMAC website: <http://www.emacweb.org/>.

# Taz Talks

Taz Cris, Vice Chair, Region 6, American Mensa

Another membership year has begun, and with it, the biannual national and international Mensa elections. As I write this, the elections are about to begin. The deadlines for voting are May 15 for the international elections and May 31 for national elections. I hope that you will all participate in our electoral process. There were several uncontested positions in the national election that have been declared already, including Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and Regional Vice Chair – Region 6. On the national ballot, you will be asked to vote for the offices of First Vice Chair and Second Vice Chair, as well as several bylaws amendments. You can find more information about the candidates and the individual bylaws amendments online at <http://bit.ly/2ngFgrT>. International election information is available at <http://bit.ly/2p22O4R>. Note, the international website requires a separate registration as a user.

For many local groups, this is also the time for local officer elections. As officers come to the end of their time of service, I hope you will join me in extending your thanks to these local leaders. Volunteers are the life blood of this organization. Our annual member survey consistently reflects that those who are involved with their local groups are more engaged and find more value in their membership. If you are considering getting more involved in your local group, I encourage you to reach out to your local ExComm or Board.

Spring means that Region 6's Regional Gatherings are getting kicked off for the year. Gulf Coast Mensa's annual SynRG will be held over Memorial Day weekend. This RG has been steadily growing, and had 175 people in attendance last year. It's a fantastic time. This year's mystery theme has allowed the committee to build a fantastic lineup of speakers. You can find more information and register online at [www.gcmensa.org](http://www.gcmensa.org).

In the summer, the Annual Gathering will be held in Hollywood, FL. This is the biggest opportunity to meet your fellow Mensans, with close to 2000 attendees from all over the country, and even some from around the world. You can find more information and register online at <http://ag.us.mensa.org>.

As always, I ask that if you have any questions, concerns, or general comments, please let me know. I have created a simple online form where members can offer feedback on any topic, both by name or anonymously. You can find this form at <http://tinyurl.com/AML-R6-Feedback>. Of course, if you prefer, you can always contact me via email at [rvc6@us.mensa.org](mailto:rvc6@us.mensa.org), phone at 512-779-3945, or snail mail at 10518 Horseshoe Bend Dr, Houston, TX 77064. — Taz Criss

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## Intriguing Book on Memory

By Desmond Walls Allen

Dr. Lynne Kelly's *The Memory Code: The Secrets of Stonehenge, Easter Island and Other Ancient Monuments* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2017) describes a brand-new theory about how non-literate cultures passed on information about ancestry, natural features and events, cultural values, and more. She says they used memorization techniques tied to objects, some hand-held, some as large as the giant stones at Stonehenge. She actually tried the methods herself. Her information is interesting historically, but it gets really exciting when you apply what she's learned. I borrowed my copy of the book from the library, and it's available from Amazon.com.

# A Review of What's on the Shelf this Month at Casa Schulze

By Gerry and Helena Schulze

**Helena:** Gerry and I have been doing the "Book Club" circuit recently. I had been attending one for "girls only" at McMath Library for about 3 years now. Gerry was hit and miss with his Freethinkers group over the years, but lately we have tried together a book club we can both attend, the Word Virus Book Club. My recent reads include: *The Husbands Secret* by Laine Moriarty, *Daddy By Default* by Pat Tucker and *Crooked* by Austin Grossman.

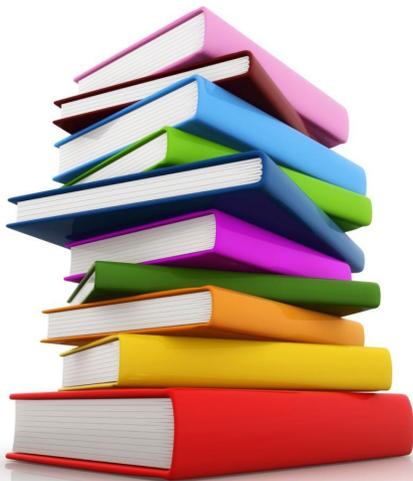
*The Husband's Secret* was one of those back and forth multiple stories about a murder mystery that occurred when most everyone involved were young. Although some evidence pointed at a clear suspect in the eyes of the murdered person's parents, there wasn't anything that would offer a clear arrest or conviction. All the persons in the book crossed paths in some ways, some of them being odd. All this occurs in Australia, so some of the references to time and weather caused me to half to adapt to the differences that we experience. I don't want to spoil the book, so I intend to be a little vague to get you interested in reading it. There is a clever twist at the end.

*Daddy by Default* exposes the injustice that can sometime occurs to men who have been named as possible fathers. This is a story of a man, unjustly arrested and accused of being a deadbeat dad and his struggle to clear his name. It exposes some of the abuse of the welfare and Department of Human

Services Divisions and holes that existed at the time of writing of the book. Most of the readers of the book were as disgusted with some of the characters as I was and we all agreed it made it hard for us to continuing to read, but you were compelled to continue because you wanted to know the outcome.

The book that Gerry & I got to read together this month is *Crooked*. It was probably the one I enjoyed the most. First, with the current political climate making me have "60s-70s" flashbacks of my youth, this book fit right in. It is narrated by Richard Millhouse Nixon as the true story behind his political career. This book is supposed to be fiction, but as I read on I think the events truly described what happened. I was living in Washington, DC when Nixon was elected to office. I was there for all the turmoil and

protests. My dad was transferred a couple months before Nixon resigned. The events that the "Nixon" in the book tells about can justly described what was behind all the craziness that happened just before his resignation and his rise in political power. I am a history buff, and I love a book that look at history from a clearly different angle, yet makes it believable that it might have happened that way.



(Casa Schulze, continued on page 7)

(Casa Schulze, continued from page 6)

Well, maybe Gerry will offer a different perspective on this review as well. What have you been reading off the shelf?

**Gerry:** *Crooked* contains some supernatural elements. Clearly parts of *Crooked* are fiction. My fear is that here and there some the clearly fictional parts might be true. Many of the details that tie the plot together plainly did not happen and could not happen, but they do explain the otherwise inexplicable history. The character of Henry Kissinger is remarkably familiar to those of us who lived through the times. Although the events are often fictional, the character of the *dramatis personae* came straight from the newspapers.

We have enjoyed the two meetings of the Word Virus book club that we have attended. The first meeting we attended was dedicated to “*They Call Me Naughty Lola: Personal Ads from the London Review of Books*.” The *London Review of Books* aims at a highly literate audience, so self-deprecatory advertisements (or as they say in British

English, adverts) seem to get the most attention. For example, “Bald, short, fat and ugly male, 53, seeks shortsighted woman with tremendous sexual appetite.” Another reads, “146 is not only my IQ but also my waist size in centimetres. Lecturer in advanced maths and Mensa bore, 51.” The adverts are followed up with mailbox numbers, just in case someone actually responds to one. Mention of the lack of effectiveness of the adverts is one of the sources of humor. E.g. “seriously considering going gay unless the standard of replies from this column improves.” The advert that gives the collection its name reads, “They call me Naughty Lola. Run-of-the-mill beardy physicist (M, 46).”

One interesting thing about this volume is the footnotes. It’s interesting not only for the explanations given, but the explanations that are missing as well. The reader is often left on his or her own about obscure literary references, but allusions to television shows are often explained.

I try to reserve “LOL” for instances in which I audibly laugh. I did LOL at some of these adverts.

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# M-Ark — Arkansas Mensa Newsletter

Desmond Walls Allen, editor

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## Treasurer's Report

— from Earl Weniger, Honorable Treasurer

Arkansas Mensa Financial Report  
(Jan. 1, 2017 - Mar. 31, 2017)

Beginning Balance .....	\$12,668
Inflows .....	\$1,882
Outflows.....	(\$1,021)
Net Flows.....	\$861
Ending Balance .....	\$13,529

“Thousands of geniuses live  
and die undiscovered — either  
by themselves or by others.”

—Mark Twain

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