

Intellectuals may be left out of society, but they have a home in . . .

Mensa

By JOCK HATFIELD
Of the Emerald

A group of men headed by a British newscaster 30 years ago gathered together some of Britain's most brilliant people, hoping a meeting of minds would produce a solution to the world's problems.

The intellectuals didn't solve the world's problems; mostly they met for lunch. But as a social group the British newscaster's idea caught on.

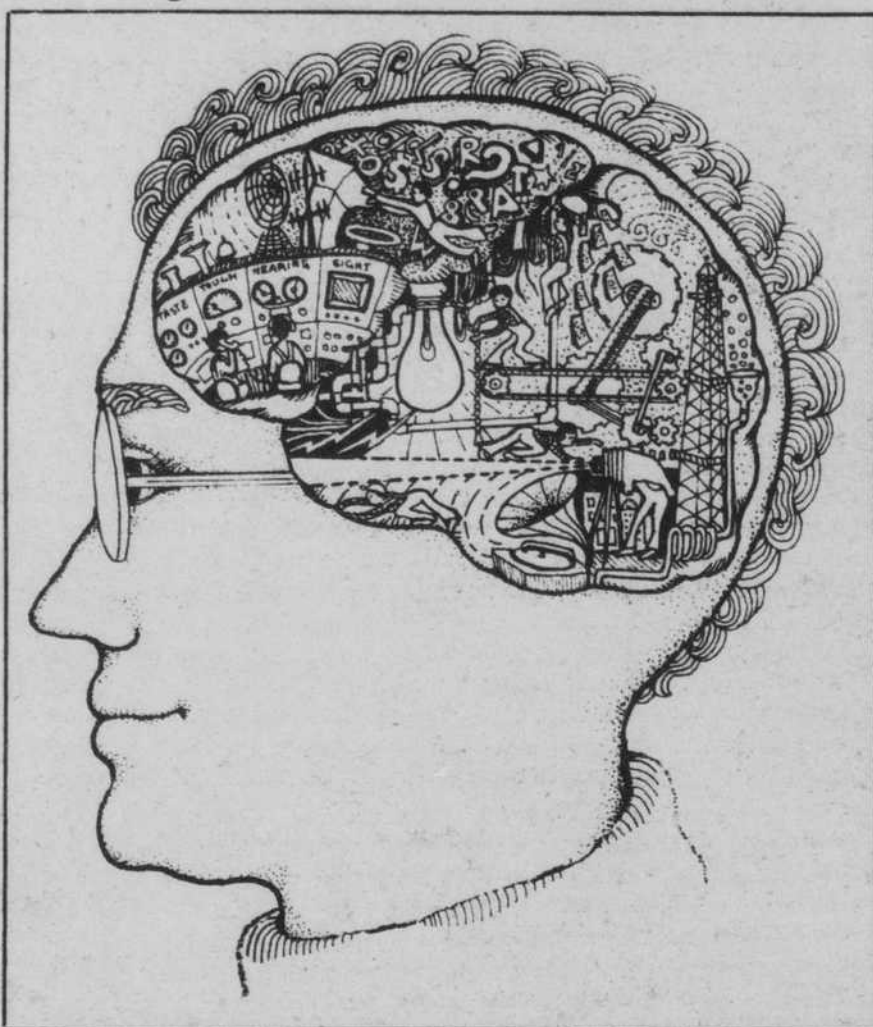
They called the organization Mensa, after a Latin term meaning three things: monthly, roundtable and meeting. Since the group was to meet monthly, probably at a table, the name was a Latin triple pun, for those with an appreciation for Latin humor.

The only requirement for admission was an IQ rated higher than 98 percent of the population.

The group now has 45,000 members internationally. Mensa has given up on the world's problems, but its members now participate in hundreds of mail order clubs, with titles such as biorhythm cycle, games theory, Sweden, hard-hat diving, literature, Ukraine Caucasus — history and culture, and barbershop harmony. Mensa now seeks only to provide stimulating company to persons bored by most of the population.

Mensa members believe the intellectual must put up with a lot in a society programmed for the mediocre. Some people, say local members, go through their entire lives suppressing their intellect.

When trying to classify a study



on high IQ children this year, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare listed intelligence as a handicap along with cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis. Mensa members agree intelligence can be a disability.

"In school, I was always conditioned to communicate at a lower level, to not be smart in front of friends," says local Mensa member Diana Hastings. "In Mensa, you don't have to be afraid

to be intelligent. The people in it are interesting."

University political science Prof. William Baugh, who transferred from a Michigan Mensa group, agrees. "Women particularly have had to play down their intelligence," he says. "They couldn't let on. Some of our members have never been active elsewhere; they never fit in."

Mensa sponsors a national program to encourage the location and separation of high IQ children from the average, so their young minds can be stimulated.

"If the handicapped are supposed to be developed to their full potential, why shouldn't the high IQ children have the same advantage?" explains Baugh. "If they aren't recognized, they can become bored, and be a discipline problem."

Baugh and other Eugene Mensa members hope to reactivate the Eugene Mensa chapter, which has been comotose for the past few years.

He believes an active Eugene club will help out the intellectually

handicapped. "We hope to have occasional dinners and a games night," he says. Later on the group may invite in speakers to help stimulate thought.

Mensa members hope to get new support by linking themselves to campus.

"We want to reach University people," says Hastings. "The campus recognizes the value of intellectual activity."

Not everyone can enter the group, but Baugh believes Eugene has a large supply of undercover intellectuals.

"I'm quite sure Eugene has enough intelligent people to form a group," he says. "An area this size, with the University ought to have gobs and gobs of intelligent people."

An introductory meeting, at a bar last week, drew eight new members, who will have to show themselves mentally superior to most of the population before they become official members. High IQ persons, according to Baugh, can be identified by their curiosity and diverse interests. Someone with nuclear physics and stamp collecting as hobbies, for example, probably ranks above average, he says. But the only way to be sure is the IQ test. Mensa has an official home and supervised IQ test. Mensa members can qualify either by taking these or by getting high scores on LSAT, SAT or GRE tests. These tests, Mensa's leadership feels, determine the contestant's level of intelligence, and the severity of the case.

The IQ entrance requirement draws criticism from Mensa member Jim Heinrich. "The only thing IQ shows is you're good at taking tests," he says. "Mensa is not an intellectual organization. It is just like a group of brown-eyed people. I enjoy it as a social outlet."

"You'll find every race, every income level, every occupation in Mensa. We have everything from garbage men to real-estate workers. The biggest career is unemployment."

Heinrich, who joined the organization before coming to Oregon, says it doesn't work out that way in practice. "We've never had an intellectual discussion," he

says. "People are too diverse to do anything intelligent."

"I joined for purely egotistical reasons, I'm sure," he admits. "I stayed on because I made some very good friends."

One popular informal IQ test is the intellectual joke. If you laugh at the following joke from a Mensa magazine; you may be Mensa material:

"My friend and I often exchange our hypnagogic hallucinations. The other night I sleepily commented upon the occasional nyc-talopic distortion of these, mumbling in free association: '... etymology ... nox ... noctic ... nocti ... noctem ...' That startled me into wakefulness and I carped, 'Dear — it's a noun — not a verb!' She murmured: 'That's true — but you know that I'd rather conjugate than decline!'"

Those interested in Mensa can attend a bar meeting this Thursday, by contacting a Mensa member.

Do you have an IQ?

For those interested in whether they are mediocre, Mensa provides the following home test. The actual IQ test is closely guarded, but Mensa says the questions are similar.

1. Aggravate means the same as (burden, enrage, infect, intensify, complain).
2. Autocracy means the same as (autonomy, dictatorship, oligarchy, republicanism, technology).
3. Mark the word which does not belong: stone, brick, canoe, pontoon, anchor.
4. Mark the word which does not belong: iced, steamy, wet, frozen, snowy.
5. Procure is the opposite of (retain, abscond, forfeit, appropriate, purchase).
6. Optimal is the opposite of (extreme, auditory, lowly, worst, pessimist).
7. Green is to yellow as orange is to (blue, purple, brown, yellow, white).
8. Adversary is to victor as suicide is to (depression, corpse, religion, cowardice, achieve).

Answers: 1. intensify; 2. dictatorship; 3. stone; 4. frozen; 5. forfeit; 6. worst; 7. yellow; 8. corpse.

Answers:

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DATES & TIMES:

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