

Mensa: An exclusive group where intelligence is king

Club's local chapter has diverse following

By Hillary Hauser
News-Press Staff Writer

No one knows exactly where intelligence comes from, and there is no foolproof test by which it can be measured, but there is a Santa Barbara organization for people who can pass intelligence tests high above the average guy.

The group is called Mensa, an international group with chapters all over the world. To qualify for membership, you have to have an IQ of at least 143 on the Cattell scale — or higher than 98 percent of the general population.

One of the oldest IQ clubs in the world, it has gathered about 48,000 members worldwide since its inception in the 1940s, including 273 in the tri-counties, and 70 in Santa Barbara.

Diversified bunch

They are a diversified bunch of bright folks — ranging from cartoonist Ashleigh Brilliant and his wife Dorothy, to lawyers, teachers and a lady truckdriver, according to 10-year member Wanda Jacobs, who is secretary for the Santa Barbara chapter.

Intelligence has nothing to do with knowledge, she said. That it might be based on heredity, passed down through genes, is also debatable.

Ms. Jacobs said that intelligence also does not preclude dishonesty, insanity and "plain old obnoxiousness," and that she has met intelligent people with these qualities.

"My crucial working definition of an intelligent person is one who is able to solve a problem," said Ms. Jacobs. "He won't necessarily solve it by himself, but he will know where to go for help."

A function of understanding?

Many experts in the field say that intelligence is simply a function of apprehending connections — or understanding the relations between things.

"It is only when one has an idea of the connections between things, that one knows what methods will produce what results," said Abraham Wolf, a professor of logic at the University of London in the early 1900s. "It's similar

with 'learning from experience,' which is frequently regarded as a test of

intelligence. It is only when experience has taught one the connections between things that he has really learned from it."

Wolf went on to say that the formation of habit, even the acquisition of skill through repetition, need have nothing to do with intelligence.

The two IQ tests given to Mensa candidates are the Cattell IQ test and the California Test of Mental Maturity. Both tests, said Ms. Jacobs, are flawed, as are all intelligence tests. She said that the ideal questions are not to be based on what one knows, but the ability to make connections.

Experience reflected

Questions are not supposed to reflect cultural or educational experience, said Ms. Jacobs, but sometimes they do. Ms. Jacobs pointed to one question that included a picture of a coal bin among other energy appliances, and said that since coal is a thing of the past, a test-taker might not understand its connection to the other, more modern, power sources.

These flaws point up the problems of intelligence tests, and test-takers are told to take their scores "with a grain of salt."

Mensa was started in England after World War II with the idea that intelligent people could be gathered together to solve the world's problems, said Ms. Jacobs. In that respect, it was to be a type of "think tank."

However, the first Mensans ran into big problems, she explained. For one thing, they learned that they couldn't work on such problems without spending a lot of time on them — which meant that they had to be paid.

'On the side'

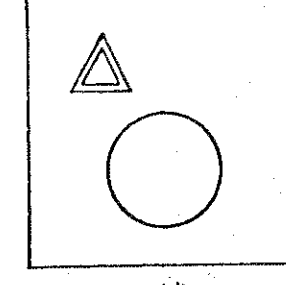
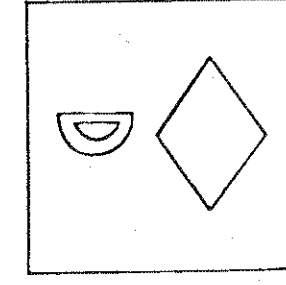
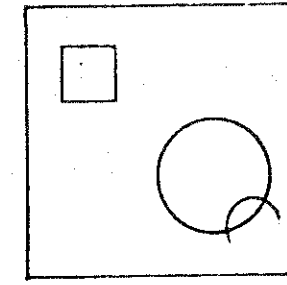
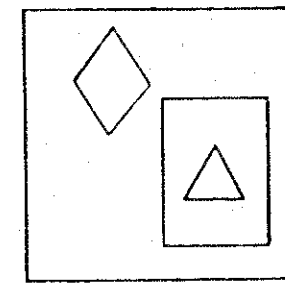
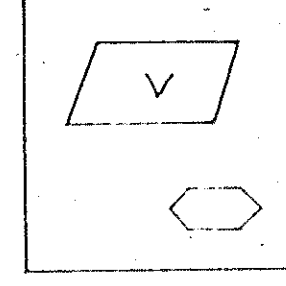
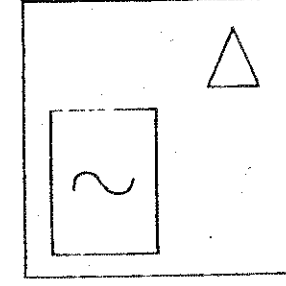
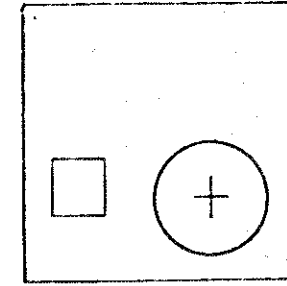
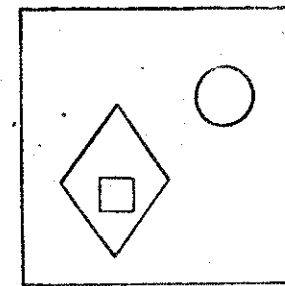
"You can't work somewhere else and solve the problems of the world on the side," said Ms. Jacobs.

The most important thing the early Mensans learned was that intelligence alone could not solve problems, she said.

"Intelligence doesn't mean you have common sense," said Ms. Jacobs. "It's not just a matter of getting people together with high IQs. You have to agree on what the problem is, and you

Here's one way to test intelligence

Just how smart are you? Have some fun with this Mensa Mini-Test. You can check answers with the key at the end.



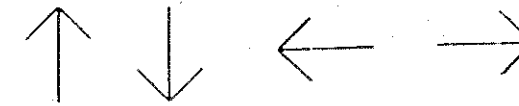
(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

1. The arrows, right, represent a simple code. What word(s) could they spell when rearranged?



2. Given the statement, "You'd BETTER solve the problem or I'LL solve it for you!", pick out the relationship most likely to be represented.

- a) Doctor to patient
- b) Examiner to test taker
- c) Father to son
- d) Lawyer to client

3. Find a word with two meanings, one the same as the word on the left and the other the same as the word on the right:
hard _____ company

4. Alex, Ailan, Carol, Celia and

Sharon took intelligence tests. Celia scored higher than Carol, Allan scored higher than Celia, and Carol outscored Alex. Sharon scored lower than Allan. Therefore:

- a) Celia scored higher than Alex but lower than Carol
- b) Both Alex and Allan outscored Celia
- c) Celia outscored Alex by more than she outscored Carol
- d) Sharon scored higher than Carol
- e) None of the above

5. Your friend says to you, "That's a

nice platitude." She is:

- a) Complimenting you
- b) Criticizing you
- c) Telling you that you have said something commonplace
- d) Describing something she has seen

6. A man has \$240. He spends 33 1/3% on rent, \$60 on food shopping, 25% for a present, and then decides to save the rest. How much does he have left to bank?

7. Which bottom figure in above drawing belongs with the top figures?

ANSWERS — (1) News, Sewn, Wens; (2) C; (3) firm; (4) C; (5) C; (6) \$40; (7) a.

have to have a philosophical base and common purpose."

She said the club has no political goals, axes to grind or causes to celebrate. It exists simply because the people in it like to get together and tickle each other's brains (Mensa means "round table" in Latin).

The favorite game of the average Mensan is bridge or Scrabble, she said. There are also monthly literary discussions, as well as lectures on topics ranging from black holes to psychic phenomena.

The games, discussions and lectures

are the organized meetings. Most of the time, members just get together and talk.

"It's been said that the favorite activity of Mensans is talking, sharing ideas," said Ms. Jacobs, explaining that the two IQ tests which members must take are favorable to the person who is verbally inclined.

Many people take the IQ tests not to join the club but to satisfy their curiosity, she said. There are those, too, who will join the club so that they can say they belong to Mensa, but will never come to the meetings. In the 10 years

she has belonged, Ms. Jacobs said there are people on the local roster she has never met.

But the ones that do attend the meetings get into some interesting conversations, she said. The literary "sig" (special interest group), which meets once a month, recently discussed the best-selling novel, "Clan of the Cave Bear" (its author happens to be a Mensan from the East Coast). A palm reader recently demonstrated to Mensans how a person's hand reveals his character, and another lecture was about automatic writing — how people

write when they "receive messages."

Ms. Jacobs said that Mensa, as a national, non-profit group, also has the more serious job of lobbying for gifted children. The organization gives scholarships to gifted students in each of its nine U.S. regions, and attempts to persuade public schools to have special programs for such students.

Mensa includes people from ages 4 to 94, from high school dropouts to Ph.D.s. Persons wishing more information about the organization may write American Mensa, Ltd., 1701 W. 3rd St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11223.