



**November 2013 RVC Column
by RVC Greg Kontz**

Hi guys -

About a month ago, I was with one of my adult daughters for a few hours in the pickup. There was no radio going, nobody else in the vehicle - it was one of those rare times when you get to actually have real, prolonged, in-depth conversation with one of your kids. We talked about a lot of things that we seldom got a chance to talk about. At one point, I expressed some of my frustrations with the day to day experience of being a LocSec / RVC in Mensa. The question that she asked me was pretty basic - "Why do you do it? Wouldn't it be better to spend more of your time with local non-profits? That way, you could see some of the progress being made up close, and it would be people you know that you'd be interacting with."

My first reaction: "Crap - good question - don't have a ready answer - need to ponder it for a minute." It kinda made me question the whole deal. When you think about the reasons for being active in Mensa, the ones that do NOT typically pop up are:

Fame: I don't know about anybody else, but I can tell you that working in the heavy construction business in western North Dakota means that being in Mensa does not get you much in the way of 'street cred'. At best, if it comes out, it doesn't make things real awkward. At worst, it's a conversation killer big time, and/or seems to irritate some people.

Fortune: Anybody who's been an officer in Mensa understands that your involvement is going to cost you money, vacation time, gas, motel bills, etc, etc. Individual situations and amounts vary, but - it always costs.

Warm and Fuzzies: They do happen. When they do, they're great and they're inspiring. If you can advise, console, assist, or inform someone, and they express some appreciation, that's the thing that probably is the best. The problem is that it doesn't happen much. You're usually contacted when there's a problem and someone is unhappy. It's not because people are 'mean' - it's just the 'nature of the beast'.

So - it ain't Fame, Fortune, or Warm Fuzzies. What then are the reasons to be an active Mensan?

Your belief in the concepts of Mensa. Yes, there are the official Mission Statements and the like, but, I think that most of us have a basic, primary idea that it boils down to. For me, it's "the world would be a better place if people just gave things a little more thought". I believe in that concept, and I think that Mensa is the premier organization to promote it. There are other concepts/ideas/practices that fit well with Mensa: Light is preferable to heat. People's perceptions (realities) can vary. It's much more important to learn from a conversation than to win one. Concepts like that. One thing to keep in mind, though: Concepts are pure things. Human interpretation and implementation of them are not. So you're

going to be disappointed once in a while by the results that you (and others) get. Welcome to life - ya just keep tryin'.... It's not important whether you get to see immediate results or recognition for promoting the concepts.

The conversations. For me, this is probably the most important thing. I enjoy conversations with fellow Mensans very much. You can talk about anything. You almost always learn something. The conversations are different in one very important way - they tend to be non-competitive. That's a huge difference. Mensans simply want to learn something - they're not looking to 'win' a conversation. They're not looking for something that they can 'use' for 'getting ahead' in the world. That's not something you usually find in a business or regular social environment conversation.

The people. I've met some really interesting people. I've gotten to learn things from hearing first-hand experiences. People from many walks of life, many social/financial strata. People that I consider friends. People that I would never have gotten to meet if it weren't for being active in Mensa.

The events and locations. I've been to AGs, RGs, various meetings on a local, regional, and national level. I even went to Prague, Czech Republic for an EMAG presentation in 2010. These are all things I got to do because of being an active Mensan. I look forward to more adventures in the future.

Anyway, that's what I came up with after considering it for a while. Although I found my daughter's question a bit unsettling at first, I'm glad she asked it. It's the kind of basic question that should be asked - and answered. It doesn't just apply to Mensa participation, either.

On another note: We had a LocSec Teleconference a few weeks ago. This is something new that National has started. It lasted for an hour, we had 10 people (one in a car headed to WEEM), and we shared concerns, new ideas, things that were working well, and the like. The conversation was productive, cordial, and thought provoking. It was particularly inspiring to hear that some groups were sharing resources when the need arose - THAT'S the 'Heartland way' - and one of the reasons that this Region is a great one to be a part of.

Later,

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