

The Kids' Table
by
Pamela Miller

Mensan Risk Taking

The cable channel VH1 has again been inundating its line up with another retro salute to the 1980s. The sequel, "I Love the 80s Strikes Back," was watched briefly during our recent 80s Movie Night. My favorite segment was about the commercial for the Klondike Bar, a chocolate coated brick of vanilla ice cream presented to the eater sans stick. The people in the commercial were posed with the question: What would you do for a Klondike Bar? It's been a long time since I seriously considered the question, and even longer since I shelled out money for packaged ice cream bars. People in the commercial were asked to walk like a chicken or hop on one foot, hardly worthy challenges in this time of Fear Factor and Survivor. Like many moments from the 1980s, it just seems dated and silly, unlike my continued affection for 1970s favorites Shrinky Dinks, Duncan Yo-Yos, Wacky Pack stickers, and the film Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.

The following week, I parked my car and walked for a mile in order to attend the pre-dinner before our group visit to Zoo Lights. Our dinner coincided with the Tempe Arts Festival, an event so popular that it got away with charging attendees \$7.00 for parking. While I strolled towards the restaurant, I wondered what other sacrifices one might do for the Gen X group, or GPM, or American Mensa. It seems there are several levels of commitment.

Would you suggest a SIG?

Would you plan an event?

Would you run for office? If elected, would you serve?

Would you take on an appointed position at the local level? Would you accept an appointed position at the national level? Do you see yourself someday as an RVC?

But let's back up a bit. How about: Would you share your knowledge with others, knowing full well that being wrong opens you up to public humiliation?

On a strictly unofficial level, several Gen Xers get together for a weekly trivia contest at a North Phoenix pub. Each team puts in \$10 for participation in an 18 question quiz. The origins of the questions are secret. Typically 20 to 30 teams are

ying for the cash prize. The key to success is blended knowledge. We all bring something unique to the table.

Last year the question was posed: At what IQ number is one certified as a genius. Almost yanking my shoulder out of its socket, I claimed to know: two standard deviations above the mean of 100--the equivalent of the 98th percentile. Every Mensan knows that. However, they didn't want a percentile; they wanted a number. In my long ago educational psychology class, I was told the magic number was 130. The group insisted it was 140. In the end, the group was right, but I still claim that everyone else was wrong. (Just bringing up this subject with The Usual Subjects led to a day of various people quoting from statistical manuals and debating the term genius.)

At least weekly, there are questions that bring tears to our eyes. The length of service of an FBI Director? The bitter alkaloid recently banned in Myanmar? The comic book company that once presented the character Bouncing Boy? We all now know the most common street name in America in Park Street, and, in Switzerland, someone decided to use the sides of grazing cows as advertising space.

But let's get back to the humiliation. Just showing up every week is taking a risk. When one of us jumps up and down stating loudly we know we have the right answer, only to discover we didn't know what we were talking about, that opens us up for trash talk for weeks to come. My own reputation has taken some serious hits.

Take a risk. Start at the beginning. Suggesting an event for the Gen X SIG is a good place to start. If you know an interesting restaurant, sporting event, cultural activity or museum, let us know. In a few years, you may just find yourself in a very important national position such as SIG's Librarian.

(Disclaimer: this writer is the SIG's Librarian for the National SIGs Committee. Her role consists solely of reading every SIG newsletter in the country. It's both the coolest and the easiest volunteer position in the history of Mensa.)

Gen X, often.