

INSIGHT

The Journal of the Titan Society

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Editorial

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Membership Renewals: I have received just four renewals so far --from Marilyn vos Savant, Eric Hart, Dean Inada, and Anthony Bruni. I have also been promised renewals by Chris Cole and Ray Wise. Karl Wikman joined late in 1986 and did not seek to have back issues sent to him, so I am extending his membership to the end of 1987. That leaves seven members yet to be heard from.

Revised Admission Standard: Later in this issue (at the bottom of page 3) Eric Hart makes the interesting suggestion that the admission cut-off be raised to, say, 45, and that those who scored 42 be given a second chance to attain that mark. I think it is relevant to point out that of the 21 people who have been offered admission (excluding the two who cheated), six managed to attain a score of 46 or better--three of them on a first attempt and three of them on a second or third attempt. Of these six, all but one have joined our group. But more interestingly, of the five that joined our group, all five are among those who have renewed their memberships for 1987 or have agreed to renew. By comparison, of the 15 who were offered membership (excluding the two who cheated) but failed to reach 46 on a first or subsequent try, only nine actually joined our group, and of these nine, only one has offered to renew for 1987. It seems to me, then, that it makes sense to raise our admission standard to 46 rather than to merely 45 and to allow a maximum of, say, three attempts to attain that standard. Other members would be allowed to renew if they can attain a score of 46 by their third attempt, counting the attempts they have already made. (If you have any questions about how many attempts you have already used, please contact me.) Those who fail to meet the 46 criterion within 3 attempts may continue with us as long as they wish as non-member subscribers, and of course they will have another chance to qualify on my next test.

The One-in-a-million Criterion: By putting our admission standard at a raw score of 46, we can, in effect, claim to have a one-in-a-million admission standard (with second and third attempts being allowed in order to insure that we do not miss any potential member who did not exert himself to the fullest the first time or two). I currently rate the mega level at 46.6, but we can knock off the extra 0.6 points on the grounds that there is a "ceiling-bumping effect," i.e., flaws in the test itself rather than shortcomings in the test-taker tend to reduce scores slightly the nearer to the test's ceiling one gets. There is also the possibility that my norming method is a bit too stringent at present, but we can ignore this point for now.

The Name of the Society: The Mega Society is said to be moribund but not dead since my departure a year ago, so we cannot adopt the name of that group. On the other hand, I am not too fond of the prospect of calling my next test the Noetic Test, in keeping with the results of the survey on which I reported in the previous issue (issue #11, page 4). I think that "The Titan Test" sounds much more appealing to the ear. So I will stick with the present name for our group, for the time being at least.

Questionnaire Responses

from Issue #8

Suggested dues:

Chris Cole: \$30.00

Eric Hart: \$10-20? (It'd help if I knew what the costs were.)

Dean Inada: Costs plus 20%

Richard May: \$15.00

Jeff Ward: \$15.00

Ray Wise: \$12.00

Editor's Comment: The costs can vary depending on how ambitious we want to be. Since I'm putting out only 4-page issues right now, I feel that \$10.00 dues would be sufficient. I will supplement the 4 pages with additional material from time to time, and I will go to 8 pages as soon as I get a saddle stapler. So members will definitely get their money's worth by year's end.

Suggested projects for the society:

Chris Cole: I noticed that a lot of people contributed solutions to problems 33-35 (in Trial Test "A"). If discussions of this type were expedited via expanded newsletter, meetings, online network there might be considerable interest.

Eric Hart: I notice that Chris Cole's suggestions dovetail with my own to some extent. There are a number of modern disciplines in which various levels of contribution are possible: less "sophisticated" members could submit suggestions to more "qualified" members. It would be appropriate to address some issue of Societal interest: A.I., epistemology, psychometrics, etc. Cellular automata might exclude computerless members, unless others were willing to provide time on request. However, CAM's are "hot" and amenable to research by non-academics, and--more importantly--have a good deal of bearing on the future development of computation theory...which, if I don't miss my guess, will converge ultimately with that of human cognition (encompassing, as it does, neural nets, and other "brainlike" models). Such a project might be pursued by interested members while others attempt to design ultradiscriminative problems (all of which are in theory modelable as automata, though the mechanics of correspondence are still open to conjecture) and work towards a meaningful characterization of the process. This is in line with the fondness for puzzles

of most members. Then, within this multi-tiered project, topics of more general interest--ethical, economic, environmental, sociopolitical --could be integrated where appropriate.

Dean Inada: ---

Richard May: (1) test norming, (2) communication among members, (2) harmonious, longterm, continued existence (of the group) following initial enthusiasm.

Jeff Ward: I am presently working on a fairly extensive list.

Ray Wise: ---

Editor's comment: I like the idea of having competitions with groups of top graduate students at various prestigious universities on tough problems (preferably not overly technical) posed by a panel of interested professors. This could give us useful publicity (if we acquitted ourselves well). It might perhaps permit us to develop into a "think tank" of sorts if our members show that they can solve problems that others cannot. Whether we work on the test problems as individuals or as a group would be left open, depending on how the professors who designed the problems would like us to proceed. But we would need to get the attention of some professors who would be willing to cooperate, and that strikes me as a major obstacle. I am also interested in the idea of a sperm bank, but I'm told by one of our members who contributes to the "Nobel Prize" sperm bank in California that it costs as much as \$100,000 per year to operate such a facility, so I guess that makes the idea impractical for the foreseeable future for our group.

Suggested methods of expanding the Society:

Chris Cole: (1) mass mailing to alumni of various universities, (2) advertising in various magazines.

Eric Hart: In view of your ideal of exclusivity, is rapid expansion appropriate? If so, post notices on the school and university bulletin boards of test availability and Society particulars (e.g., Stanford, Princeton, MIT, Caltech, etc.). Solicit nominations from educators, counselors. Engineer a competition. Send a mailing to personnel departments of labs, research facilities, professional organizations. Write articles to stimulate interest; query likely journals. Make membership attractive by soliciting privileges for members. Send a letter to high scorers (in the Omni testing) who did not try again, inviting them to do so. E.g., take your original "cutoff" of 42 as a mailing list (some of whose members may have spent only as much time as they believed would be required for Mega membership) and require a significantly higher second score, say, 45 or so. Some of these people may have felt they got a "raw deal" and might appreciate the encouragement.

Dean Inada: ---

Richard May: "Appropriate" points of distribution of the "Mega" tests.

Jeff Ward: Advertise--in magazines that appeal to the better educated, in IQ society newsletters, etc. Then test with a Mega-type test using some or all of the safeguards mentioned by Chris Cole.

Ray Wise: Advertise the admission test on college campuses.

Editor's comment: Advertising and mailings tend to be quite expensive. The advantage of getting another test into Omni, as I am hoping to do, is that the magazine reaches millions of people, at virtually no cost to me. But I do not discourage members from trying to recruit members by other means. (Incidentally, a Ph.D. candidate at Caltech recently tried my test and scored just 35, so our admission requirement of 43 is difficult even by Caltech's rather rarefied standards.)

What is your opinion of intelligence testing in general? Can it really be used to locate those capable of (or likely to make) extraordinary intellectual contributions to mankind? If yes, in its (intelligence testing's) present or more evolved form?

Chris Cole: I don't think the standard IQ tests measure exceptional intelligence well. I think the Mega Test is a step in the direction of measuring intelligence "that matters."

Eric Hart: Plausible. Yes. More evolved.

Dean Inada: Dubious.

Richard May: I think that most intelligence tests are not very good, and that the Mega Test is a notable exception. High intelligence is necessary but not sufficient for extraordinary intellectual contributions. Those likely to contribute are fewer than those (who are) capable.

Jeff Ward: Intelligence testing is certainly measuring something of importance. I am becoming increasingly convinced of the ability of tests requiring a relatively large length of time to complete, such as the Mega Test, to discriminate in favor of people who are thoughtful, rational problem-solvers. This is in contrast to the quick-response type of test (Stanford-Binet, California Test of Mental Maturity) which seems to produce high scores for a sizable number of flakes having irrational thought and behavior patterns.

Ray Wise: I feel that those who are likely to make extraordinary intellectual contributions are those with insight and creativity. I am not convinced that those parameters are effectively measured via intelligence testing.

Editor's comment: I hope that my Mega Test does tap insight and creativity at least to some extent.