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Apollo 11 plus 40 years

Still a giant leap

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The measure of what humanity can accomplish is a size 9½ footprint.

It belongs to Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon. It will stay on the moon for millions of years with nothing to wipe it away, serving as an almost eternal testament to a can-do mankind.

Apollo 11 is the glimmering success that failures of society are contrasted against: "If we can send a man to the moon, why can't we ..."

What put man on the moon 40 years ago was an audacious and public effort that the world hasn't seen before or since. It required rocketry that hadn't been built, or even designed, in 1961 when President John F. Kennedy declared the challenge. It needed an advance in computerization that had not happened yet. NASA would have to learn how to dock separate space-ships, how to teach astronauts to walk in space, even how to keep them alive in space — all tasks so difficult experts weren't sure they were possible.

Forty years later, the moon landing is talked about as a generic human achievement, not an American one. But Apollo at the time was more about U.S. commitment and ingenuity.

Historian Douglas Brinkley called the Apollo program "the exemplary moment of America's we-can-do-anything attitude." After the moon landing, America got soft, he said, looking for the quick payoff of a lottery ticket instead of the sweat-equity of buckling down and doing something hard.

In years since, when America faces a challenge, leaders often look to the Apollo

Landing an indelible memory

By Dan Linehan
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MANKATO — On July 20, 1969, a 9-year-old Dave Burgess joined other families in his Milwaukee neighborhood to crowd around a television and watch man walk on the moon.

It was a moon landing party of sorts, hosted by the first family on his block to buy a color TV, which was itself a marvel at the time.

And while Burgess can't draw a sharp line between that evening and his current role as director of Mankato East's planetarium, the moon landing helped inspire a lifelong interest in astronomy.

"I try to tell students nowadays that ... I don't think there's been a time period since then that has

evoked the amount of national pride" as the moon landing, he said. The Cold War, Vietnam war and racial tensions added up to create a time when a symbol of American progress that everyone could get behind was sorely needed.

It remains, he believes, the most important event of his lifetime.

Still, interest in the space program has faded among today's youth as technology becomes a part of their everyday lives. Man has not trod on the moon since 1972 and a space shuttle launch attracts scant interest from his students.

"If we go back to the moon you'll see interest," Burgess said.

NASA has plans to return to the moon and establish a colony.

program for inspiration. In 1971, when President Richard Nixon declared a war on cancer, his staffers called it "a moon shot for cancer." Last year, then-candidate Barack Obama and former Vice President Al Gore proposed a massive effort to fight global warming, comparing it to Apollo 11. An environmentalists' project to tackle climate change and promote renewable energy took the name "Apollo Alliance."

Those still-unfinished efforts

recall
May
25,

Please see MOON, Page A5



Pat Christman

Shelby Kirchner of Amboy hangs pictures in a display at the Betsy-Tacy convention Saturday at the Alltel Center.

Fans flock to Deep Valley

Betsy-Tacy devotees gather for convention

By Tanner Kent
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MANKATO — The Betsy-Tacy books are all about family and friends.

Perhaps that's why this weekend's Betsy-Tacy Convention in Mankato felt less like a convention, and more like a national reunion for those who still find relevance and meaning in the most enduring work created by Mankato's most renowned author, Maud Hart Lovelace.

Mary Huntley attended the convention with fellow members of the Blue Garter

If You Go

What
"Princess Diaries" author Meg Cabot gives keynote address and signs books
Why
Culminating event in Betsy-Tacy Convention
When
11 a.m. today
Where
Alltel Center
Attendance
Free, and open to the public

Gang, a band of Mankato High School graduates who have remained connected over the years.

Erma Vollmer and her
Please see BETSY-TACY, Page A6

Pawlenty, in Iraq, lauds 3 dead soldiers

The Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS — Gov. Tim Pawlenty personally delivered his condolences to a Minnesota National Guard unit that lost three members in an attack in Iraq last week.

Pawlenty spoke to reporters Sunday from Kuwait after making his fourth unannounced trip to Iraq. He said the loss and pain that the families of the slain soldiers are feeling is "unimaginable," but he wanted to share the state's gratitude for the soldiers' "incredible courage."

"Of course no words can describe the sense of loss that their families are experiencing, but we do want to convey to those families that we're thankful for their sons and what they represented, the values that they represented and the service to our country," Pawlenty said.

Please see GOVERNOR, Page A2

Minnesotan dies in Afghan crash

SEYMOUR JOHN-SON AIR FORCE BASE, N.C. — Military officials have identified the two crew members killed when their North Carolina-based Air Force fighter jet crashed in eastern Afghanistan.

A Department of Defense statement released Sunday identified the two as 27-year-old Capt. Thomas J. Gramith of Eagan, Minn., and 26-year-old Capt. Mark R. McDowell of Colorado Springs, Colo.

Their F-15E Strike Eagle crashed around 6:15 p.m. EDT Friday evening in Kabul.

—The Associated Press

UPCOMING

TOMORROW IN THE FREE PRESS
Go! to Walnut Grove
Go! travels to Walnut Grove for the Laura Ingalls Wilder experience.

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New 'Potter' a full-blooded draw

LOS ANGELES — Harry Potter continues to work box-office alchemy, turning his latest movie adventure into an overnight blockbuster.

The sixth installment, "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince," took in \$79.5 million domestically over opening weekend and \$159.7 million since debuting last Wednesday.

The movie also took in \$237 million overseas since Wednesday in 54 countries, bringing its worldwide total to \$396.7 million.

—The Associated Press

NEWS TO KNOW, PAGE A2

'Angela's Ashes' author dies

WEATHER, PAGE B4

Storm coming

Partly sunny and windy, high in mid 70s. Storm tonight; low in upper 50s.



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