

THE SIDEBAR

Check this out

Gustavus invites public to 'Poker Ski Run'

ST. PETER — Ski, snowshoe, or walk the groomed trails of Gustavus Aldolphus College's Linnaeus Arboretum and play a hand of poker when you're finished.

Playing card stations will be placed along the trail and the best hand on return to the Interpretive Center wins.

Enjoy hot chocolate, cider and cookies inside the Interpretive Center. Cross-country skis and snowshoes can be rented from the Lund Athletic Center.

Call Bob Dunlap at 933-7199 for more information.

TV2Nite

'Family Guy' 8 p.m. on Fox

After Bonnie (voice of Jennifer Tilly) has a baby, husband Joe must come up with \$20,000 to pay the medical bills. The situation soon becomes desperate, calling for desperate measures. Meanwhile, Stewie falls hard for the baby, a girl named Susie, and struggles to write a song for her.



On this day ...

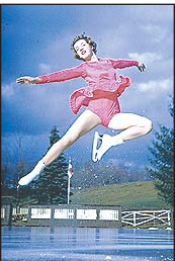
1758 — Mustard was advertised for the first time in America. Finally, hot dogs could be happy, too.

1799 — Printed ballots were authorized for use in elections in the state of Pennsylvania. Hanging chads weren't far behind.

1953 — The first American to win the women's world figure skating championship was 17-year-old Tenley Albright.

1989 — After nine years of intervention, the Soviet Union announced that the remainder of its troops had left Afghanistan.

1995 — The FBI arrested Kevin Mitnick and charged him with cracking security in some of the nation's most protected computers. He served five years in jail and upgraded the operating systems on all the jail computers.



Tenley Albright

Born today

- Actress Jane Seymour is 58.
- Singer Melissa Manchester is 58.
- Cartoonist Matt Groening ("The Simpsons") is 55.
- Actress Renee O'Connor ("Xena: Warrior Princess") is 38.
- Actress Sarah Wynter ("24") is 36.
- Singer Brandon Boyd of Incubus is 33.
- Drummer Ronnie Vannucci of The Killers is 33.



Sarah Wynter

— Free Press Staff and news services



Mad about Maude

Betsy-Tacy Book Club popular with young girls

By Sara Gilbert Frederick
Special to The Free Press

Christina Harman was first introduced to the tales of Betsy and Tacy a year ago.

Harman, who grew up in Iowa, was taking a children's literature course at Bethany Lutheran College. The instructor asked her class to read the stories of Mankato native Maud Hart Lovelace, whose Betsy-Tacy books tell what it was like growing up in the area more than 100 years ago.

"I enjoyed the read," she said. "But I didn't think much more about the books after I was finished."

Then, late last fall, one of the professors at Bethany approached Harman about helping to lead a new Betsy-Tacy Book Club for young girls that was being started by the Mankato-based Betsy-Tacy Society.

"I jumped at the chance," Harman said. "I love books, history and children — it was the perfect combination." Harman wasn't the only one who felt that way. The society had capped registration for the club at 10 people, due to space constraints at Tacy's House, where the group meets. But weeks before the club's first meeting in January, so many girls had already signed up that Julie Schrader, the executive director of the Betsy-Tacy Society, started a waiting list for a second group. That list, she reports, is still growing.

At A Glance

The Betsy-Tacy Book Club is open to girls between the ages of 7 and 10. It meets at 10:30 a.m. on the third Saturday of every month through May. The next club meeting is Saturday. For more information, call 345-9777, or e-mail Julie@betsy-tacysociety.org.



Sonja Reeves

Laura Bowyer and her 8-year-old daughter Gabrielle work on a journal together. The Betsy-Tacy Society began a book club for young readers. The club has been so popular, there's a waiting list for a second group.

In the meantime, however, the first group of girls has already started reading the first book — "Betsy-Tacy." Their assignment for the next meeting, which will take place at Tacy's House on Feb. 21, is to finish that book and to make notes about it in the journals they made at the first meeting.

"Write about your favorite part or draw a picture of a scene you liked," Harman told the girls, all between the ages of 7 and 10, as they glued scraps of ribbon to the covers of their journals.

"And come up with two questions that you want to ask the group. We'll talk about those the next time we meet."

Each meeting will include time for discussion as well as a craft and a snack. The snack will be pulled from the pages of the books the girls are reading. When the weather warms up, the group will be able to walk up to the bench commemorating Lovelace at the top of Center Street to eat the snacks.

Please see BOOK CLUB, Page E5

Entrepreneur finds a racy route to success in business

Sometimes it's the unexpected things that can help a startup business.

Like Oprah touting the adult "massager" that your business offers.

"Within a half hour we were sold out. And it's 70 bucks. I'm sure it's a great product," says Robert Linnemann, an engaging young entrepreneur who lived in the Le Center area for a few years.

He now makes Duluth home, where he and five business partners are wrapping up the first successful year of Racy.com.

The e-commerce site offers the full gamut of lingerie, adult toys and sex aids. But it doesn't have one thing most similar businesses have — and that is the genius of the endeavor.

"We don't have any pornographic images on the site. We don't sell videos or magazines that aren't instructional. It's a non-threatening site people don't mind telling their friends about."

To be sure, it's not the Disney store. The site has all the adult products for every desire and fetish. But it's tame by adult Web site standards. Which was the niche Linnemann and his associates saw waiting to be exploited.

The 28-year-old Linnemann is bullish on entrepreneurship, believes now is a grand time to start a business and has a broad range of knowledge and experiences.

Raised near St. Cloud, he went to the University of Minnesota-Duluth for computer science, a curriculum which he found unchallenging as he'd been writing programs since he was 8, starting on an Apple II.

"I ended up with a music composition degree." Which, he says, isn't as odd as it seems.

"There's a similarity between computer programming and writing music. You need to focus on

the overall scope of the project while paying attention to the most detailed minutia of writing notes or lines of programming."

Music remains a passion. He's in Tangier 57, a lounge-music group that plays in the Duluth area.

After graduation he landed in Le Center, staying and working with a friend who owned a restaurant there. He returned to Duluth and joined on as a programmer in the Racy.com startup.

While he's become more at ease answering customers' e-mails and phone calls about all manner of sexuality and sex aids, he admits it's a business that still draws some ribs from friends and acquaintances.

"It's an interesting business to be in. I'm not shocked by much."

The Oprah moment came last month when her sex expert guest, Dr. Laura Berman, touted the Aphrodite Infrared Rechargeable Massager. "It wasn't a great seller before," Linnemann said. But one endorsement on Oprah and there

was a nearly instant sell off of every one of the massagers in the country.

The fact Oprah does shows on sex toys, Linnemann said, is evidence of the mainstreaming of what was not long ago a seamy business.

"The pervasiveness of vibrators at Spencer's or Wal-Mart is amazing, really. You can label it a back massager, or whatever, but when it looks so phallic, people are going to figure out the uses for it."

Still, he says, there's a disconnect in a nation that at once is fixated on sex but similarly ashamed to really talk about sexuality.

"It's important stuff. You can teach abstinence only, but at some point you need protection and prophylactics."

The sanctimony is displayed nowhere more than in Alabama. "We still can't ship anything to Alabama," said Linnemann of the last state to retain laws preventing the import of anything of a sexual nature.

"I feel bad for them. I have to

call people and tell them we can't ship it. Hey, these people really want these things."

Linnemann, whose family is entrepreneur intense, including operating a string of general stores from the 1800s to the 1990s, is a passionate advocate of small business.

"With all the fear in the media and all the layoffs, it seems prudent to support small businesses. They may not grow fast, but they don't lay off people so much either."

"I think right now is the perfect time to start a business. There's a lot of talent out there, people who've been laid off from big companies."

He said a few well-versed people can cut a wide swath in business. "There are a lot of good businesses starting up. Americans can still make things. Still be successful."

Tim Krohn is a Free Press staff writer. He can be contacted at 344-6383 or tkrohn@mankatofreepress.com.

Man strives to put money only where his mouth is

DEAR ABBY: I consider myself to be a "free spirit." I bike and hike to get around, do not own a car and pretty much try to live "off the grid."

My recently married sister and new in-laws are my favorite people in the world. But they constantly arrange weekend events — movie nights, shopping trips and coffee bar-hopping. The objective, of course, is the joy of sharing good company.

As a vehement anti-consumerist and anti-materialist, I find it deeply upsetting to be asked to spend money on things I consider to be exploitive industries and endeavors. On the other

hand, there's nothing I enjoy more than being in the presence of these kind, loving, nurturing people.

So, just as I can't stand the way they spend their money, I don't want to spoil their good time by being some kind of "psycho naturalist in-law." What can I do? — **Principled brother-in-law**

DEAR BROTHER-IN-LAW: Limit the movie dates, refuse the expensive coffee dates and do not buy anything you don't need. This doesn't mean you can't accompany your sister and the in-laws on their shopping trips. Reciprocate by inviting them to your home for an evening of board



DEAR ABBY
Universal Press

games, conversation or rented movies. Many people have begun to see the wisdom of your philosophy of frugality, so consider yourself in the forefront of a new wave.

DEAR ABBY: I remember when I was a child, the library was a sacred place where one could go and find peace and quiet, study, meditate or just relax and read a good book.

I am 30 now and working on an advanced degree and rely on the library as a place to get things done, but I'm beginning to wonder what happened to that "silence" rule. Patrons talk on mobile phones, converse loudly and act like they're at home. I remember when librarians

were quick to make sure the library was quiet, but now they are some of the worst offenders.

If silence cannot be found in the library, where can it be found — and is there anything I can do to turn back the clock? — **Needs peace and quiet in Wisconsin**

DEAR NEEDS P AND Q: Much as we might wish to, no one can "turn back the clock." So have a chat with the head librarian and make your concerns known. While it may not be possible to have total silence, it would not be out of line to ask if there is a room in the library that could be designated as a conversation-free and cell-phone-free zone. If the answer is no, speak to one

of your professors and inquire if there is a study hall where you can find the peace and quiet you need.

DEAR ABBY: I am an 86-year-old woman, blessed with good health and mobility. I do not need a walker or a cane. My problem is some of my younger relatives grab my arm when we are walking. I know they mean well, but it actually makes it harder for me. I haven't said anything to them for fear of offending them. How should I handle this? — **Elderly, not feeble in Beverly Hills**

DEAR NOT FEEBLE: I'm glad you wrote because your question is an important one that applies not only to older people, but also to people who are visually impaired.

Often, well-intentioned folks will grab someone by the arm in order to "help" him or her step down from a curb, cross a street, etc. Doing this is counterproductive, and can actually cause the person to lose his or her balance. It is far more effective to offer the person one's arm to take if that person feels he or she needs assistance.

Explain this to your younger relatives.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Put opponents under maximum pressure

Q: I held ♠A-9-6-2, ♥Q-7-4-2, ♦K-J-5, ♣8-3, and my partner opened two hearts. Should I pass, or do I raise hearts? If I do raise, to what level? — **Upping the Ante, Kenosha, Wis.**

A: In all these situations my instincts are to raise to the maximum, which means bidding four hearts. I may not expect to make it, but I like to put opponents under maximum pressure to get them to make the wrong decision. I would probably only raise to three if vulnerable against not.

Q: Recently my partner passed in first seat and then jumped to three spades at her next turn. She said this was a legitimate pre-emptive bid. I always assumed that a pre-emptive bid must take place during the first round of bidding. Am I right? — **Leaping Lizards, Galveston, Texas**

A: The delayed jump to three spades is a pre-empt, but it suggests a hand unsuitable for a pre-emptive opening — perhaps a bad suit or maybe a 7-4 or 7-5 or 7-3-3 shape. There are no strict rules here. Players tend to bid this way on hands that they won't open three on — but since standards for THAT action vary, they also vary for this sequence too.

Q: Assume you were dealt ♠A-J-4-2, ♥J-4, ♦K-5, ♣A-7-5-4-2 and opened one club. When your partner responds one heart and the next hand overcalls one spade, what do you do now? If you pass and hear partner double for takeout, what next? — **In or Out? Bellevue, Wash.**

A: Directly bidding one no-trump suggests a maximum hand in the 12-14 range with a double stop, but should be more balanced than this. Move the spade

two into the diamonds perhaps? After partner's double, a case could be made for passing, but I would take the low road and bid one no-trump.

Q: My husband and I do not understand quantitative bids of four no-trump. Recently I was faced with the problem of a balanced 29-count facing four. That caused us more trouble than 20 facing 13. But how do we find minor-suit fits? — **Moving On Up, Sunbury, Pa.**

A: A sequence such as two clubs - two diamonds - four no-trump to show a balanced 28 or more makes some sense. Facing that or any quantitative jump, one tends to pass with a minimum. You bid a suit at the six-level with five, and respond five no-trump to offer a choice of slams (then bid good four-card suits up the line at the six-level, after which you can revert to six no-trump without a fit). Responses of five clubs and five diamonds show four.

Q: I picked up ♠A-10-2, ♦K-J-9-5, ♣J-9-7-4-3 and passed in first seat. When my partner opened one heart and the next hand overcalled one spade, I made a negative double. What is the right way to continue over a two-heart rebid from my partner? — **Settling for Less, Grenada, Miss.**

A: It is best to try two no-trump now. Given that you are a passed hand, partner will have a fair idea of what you have. Paradoxically, partner's failure to open two hearts in third seat (which he might do with a minimum opening bid) suggests he has more, rather than less.

If you would like to contact Bobby Wolff, e-mail him at bobbywolff@mindspring.com.

Justice Department to probe Ticketmaster deal

The Associated Press
WASHINGTON — The Justice Department will investigate the proposed merger of ticketing giant Ticketmaster Entertainment Inc. with Live Nation Inc. to see if it would create an unfair monopoly in the ticket-selling business.

Federal antitrust lawyers are "committed to vigorous enforcement of the merger antitrust laws and will conduct a thorough investigation," Justice Department

spokeswoman Gina Talamona said Wednesday. The deal would match the world's dominant ticket seller, Ticketmaster, with Live Nation, which was once its biggest client and is the world's No. 1 concert promoter.

A Justice Department investigation could take months or longer, and the department has probed Ticketmaster in the past.

Some lawmakers are already urging the government to reject the deal.

Can B-12 help Bell's palsy symptoms?

DEAR DR. GOTT: I would like to tell you about my experience with an annoying condition called Bell's palsy while on a tour in Italy.

I had been riding near an open window on our bus and woke up the next morning with partial facial paralysis (drooping cheek, mouth and more). My father had died of a stroke a few years before, and some of his symptoms were similar, so I became worried. Our tour director immediately took me to a doctor in the town where I was diagnosed with Bell's palsy.

It was explained to me that if I left it untreated, the affected nerve might die and cause a permanent drooping and weakness. I was then given a massive dose of vitamin B-12 by injection. The doctor suggested to me that I have two more shots at six-day intervals, which I did. Within six weeks, the symptoms were completely gone.

The following year, almost to the day, the same thing happened. This time, however, I had been sitting near a window air conditioning unit at work. Upon waking the next morning, I found that my face had the same partial drooping and weakness.

I went to my primary-care physician, who wasn't very concerned. He suggested it was a temporary thing and would probably go away in time, which was quite the contrary of what the Italian doctor had told me. When I related my pre-

vious experience, my doctor indicated that he had never heard of such a thing but agreed to give it a try. So, on my instruction, he gave me the three shots, each six days apart, and was somewhat amazed when the symptoms disappeared in about six weeks.

In reviewing this with some doctor friends and other medical personnel, none seemed to have heard of this treatment, yet the Italian physician made a very quick diagnosis and treatment of the Bell's palsy as if it were common knowledge in his area.

Do Italian doctors know something that American physicians do not in regard to treating this condition? **DEAR READER:** Bell's palsy is a condition that causes partial facial paralysis and weakness. It can occur at any age but rarely affects those over 60 or under 15. It is important, once the facial paralysis or weakness has been discovered, to be seen immediately by a physician or hospital emergency room to ensure the symptoms are not due to a stroke.

Symptoms include the sudden onset of paralysis or weakness on one side of the face, loss of taste, headache, pain in, in front of or behind the ear on the affected side, changes in the amount of tears and saliva produced, facial drooping, difficulty making facial expressions and more.

The cause of Bell's palsy is nerve damage. On each side of the face, there is a

narrow tunnel of bone through which a nerve passes. These nerves control the facial muscles on each side of the face. When either of the nerves becomes inflamed or swollen, it can be pinched by the bone. The pressure can then damage the protective covering over the nerve, leading to poor or absent communication between it and the facial muscles.

There are several reasons why this facial nerve can become pinched. The most common cause is the herpes simplex virus (colds sores or genital herpes). Other known viruses include herpes zoster (chicken pox and shingles), Epstein-Barr (mononucleosis) and cytomegalovirus (mono-like syndrome). It has also been linked to Lyme disease, pregnancy, diabetes and upper-respiratory infections.

Most people will recover from Bell's palsy within six months without treatment, depending on the severity of symptoms. For more severe or prolonged symptoms, your physician may recommend physical therapy, prescription medications or even alternative therapies.

There are two types of prescription medications used to treat Bell's palsy, but study results have been mixed. Corticosteroids, such as prednisone, can reduce swelling and inflammation, which, for some,

can lead to improvement. Antiviral drugs, such as Famvir, may be given to those with known viral infections. Physical therapy to massage and exercise the facial muscles can reduce the extent of weakness and paralysis, which can reduce the risk of developing permanent damage to the muscles.

Alternative therapies such as biofeedback, acupuncture, relaxation techniques and vitamin therapy (B-12, B-6 and zinc) have proven successful in reducing the symptoms and duration of Bell's palsy for some people.

I am not sure that Italian doctors know something about the condition we do not know; however, I believe they may simply be more accepting of alternative therapies. American doctors are a bit more skeptical, which can be both a blessing and hindrance, depending on the situation. In terms of Bell's palsy, I don't see anything wrong with vitamin therapy. Even if it doesn't work, it is safe and, chances are, recovery will take place on its own anyway.

If readers would like to contact Dr. Gott, they may send their mail directly to Dr. Gott c/o United Media, 200 Madison Ave., 4th fl., New York, NY 10016. However, if readers want to request a newsletter, they should write to the Ohio address.

BOOK CLUB: Mixing good literature, local history

Continued from Page E1

In the process, they'll be digesting both good literature and local history as well.

"This is a fabulous opportunity for young girls to enjoy good literature, learn about history that is based right in their own area, meet new people and share their love of the Betsy-Tacy characters," Harman said. "It's low-stress learning with maximum fun."

It's also a good way for the Betsy-Tacy Society to introduce a new generation of readers to the work of Maud Hart Lovelace.

"It's important for us to find new ways to bring up a new group of Betsy-Tacy lovers, and potential society members too," said Joan Brown, vice president of the society who is helping to facilitate the book club meetings as well.

Schrader held the idea

for the book club started after she read "The Mother-Daughter Book Club," a novel by Heather Vogel Frederick. She still can't believe that the idea never came up before.

"It's such a great fit," Schrader said. "Sometimes things can be staring you in the face and you just don't see it. But this book helped give me the idea."

The enthusiastic response to the club has been encouraging. Schrader hopes to start a second group as soon as possible and to see where it leads from there.

Harman, meanwhile, is already looking forward to the next meeting.

"I wasn't sure what to expect at the first meeting, but I was pleasantly surprised about the enthusiasm of the girls," she said. "I can't wait to help plan the next meetings and see how the girls respond to each of the books."

What's playing at the movies?
Plan your day or your weekend!
Check out "Local Movies" section of www.mankatofreepress.com

SENIOR SERVICES GUIDE



HY-VEE PHARMACY
Fast, Convenient Drive Thru Service
Downtown - 345-5091
Hilltop - 625-7565

OPHTHALMOLOGY ASSOCIATES
Outpatient Cataract Surgery
Laser & General Eye Surgery
Eye Examinations
1630 Adams St.
Mankato
345-6151

Willow Brook Cooperative
(Adults 55+ Independent Living)
As a Willow Brook member you'll enjoy new construction, heated parking, a fitness center, workshop, free transportation & much more!
Call for a TOUR today:
388-2886
(Corner of Hoffmann & S. Victory in Mankato) (www.willowbrookcoop.com)

NEW ULM FURNITURE
Adjustable Beds, Lift Chairs, Electric Scooters, Wheel Chairs
Free Delivery
16 N. German St., New Ulm
507-354-2716
800-968-3876