

THE BETSY-TACY SOCIETY

Note Book

The Betsy-Tacy Society

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About the Cover

The cover of the *Journal of the Betsy-Tacy Society* may need a little explaining: It's an adaptation of the actual cover of one of Maud Hart Lovelace's personal journals. A copy of the original was provided by Shirley Lieske of Mankato, and the adaptation was done by Trish Hayden of Hayden Design, in Fullerton, California.

Journal deadlines are March 15, May 15, August 15, and November 15 for the spring, summer, fall, and winter issues respectively. Please send news and articles to Patty Warhol, 32228 SeaRaven Drive, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275.

The Betsy-Tacy Society was formed in Mankato, Minnesota in April, 1990. Members, now numbering nearly 1,000, receive the *Betsy-Tacy Society Journal*, to which they are invited to contribute articles and information of interest to other members. We are pleased to print excerpts of your letters as space allows, and assume that you will permit us to do so, unless you request otherwise when writing. Illustrations by Lois Lenski and Vera Neville from the original books are used with permission from HarperCollins.

Membership Notes

If you were confused by the renewal reminders in the Winter Journal, you weren't the only one! I'll spare you all the details of our goof, and just tell you that members who renewed earlier than necessary (Winter 96 renewals weren't due until this coming winter) had their membership extended through the Winter 1997 Journal. If you'd prefer a refund, write to me at P. O. Box 206, N. Easton, MA 02356.

Not sure when your renewal dues need to be paid? Your mailing label will say RENEWAL DUE NOW if it's time to renew. If your membership ended with the previous Journal, your label will read EXPIRED, and this is the last complimentary issue you will receive.

Updating our member database has been a pleasure lately, due to all the members who enclosed cards and notes of congratulations about my wedding along with their renewals. My deepest thanks go to all of you who were so generous in sharing in my happiness. What a wonderful community of friends you are!

Michele Blake

Where to Send it!

Anything having to do with the Betsy-Tacy organization, Board meetings, starting new chapters:

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What Are You Reading When You're Not Reading Betsy-Tacy?

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In Kelly's class the assignment was "Add a chapter to one of your favorite books."

Following is Kelly's submission: Chapter XI of Betsy, Tacy and Tib.

It soon became Autumn and the trees grew crisp and their leaves started falling off. Betsy and Tacy were watching their older sisters, Julia and Katie, try to help out by getting rid of the leaves. But Betsy and Tacy knew their sisters were only trying to make themselves look as if they were taking a lot of responsibility.

"Why, we could do that if we wanted to," exclaimed Betsy. Tacy's eyes gleamed with excitement.

"You really think we could?"

"I bet so. Shall we go over to Tib's house to see if she can come help us?"

"We shall," Tacy said. So off to Tib's house they went. On the way to Tib's house Tacy found two shiny pennies.

"We could buy some candy from the candy shop for you, Tib, and me," said Betsy.

"That would be grand!" Soon they came to Tib's house and knocked on the door. The hired woman, Matilda, answered the door and said Tib could come to play. Tib came rushing out the door in an instant.

"Tib, we are going to help by moving leaves," said Tacy. Tib didn't have to ask any questions. They came to the candy shop and Tacy explained briefly about the pennies and they decided to get gumdrops. They were so excited about the leaves so they were in and out of the candy store in a flash. They ran as fast as they could to get to Betsy's house before all the leaves were gone. Finally they got to Betsy's house. And to their amazement Julia and Katie were gone!

"We have the whole backyard to ourselves!" exclaimed Tib. They got to work

right away on the pile that Julia and Katie had started earlier. Suddenly Betsy tripped over a twig and fell face first into the pile of leaves they had been working so hard on. Betsy started laughing. Then they all started laughing.

"Let me try it next," said Tib. "Since I was the best flier maybe I'm the best jumper." Tib decided to do a half turn into the leaves. Betsy and Tacy clapped wildly. It was Tacy's turn and she looked kind of scared but Tib and Betsy didn't say anything. She jumped in and laughed. It started becoming a game. A little song came into Betsy's head that went like this:

My turn your turn do a half
turn jumping in
Leaves jumping leaves and
sometimes jumping
On our knees.

And whoever's turn ended up on "do a half turn" or "on our knees" they would have to do it. The sun started going down and it was time to eat so they ate as fast as they could. In fifteen minutes they were all back at Betsy's house and jumping in the leaves and singing the song.

Suddenly they heard the talking of Julia and Katie coming closer and closer. "What have you done!!" they exclaimed. Betsy, Tacy and Tib froze.

"We were jumping in theuhhh the....uh leaves."

"Pick them, all of them, up right this minute!" Julia said. So Betsy, Tacy and Tib picked all the leaves up. For they knew snow would soon fall and they could jump in the mounds of snow that their sisters shoveled. Feeling sad about the leaves the three of them sat on their bench on the hill. It started snowing and their idea about the snow would soon come true.

The End

by Kelly Striegel

Fourth Grade
St. Paul, MN

Betsy and the Great World is not often mentioned as a favorite among B-T

readers because it is the one book in the series that does not feature the Crowd and Deep Valley. Away from kith and kin, this is in some ways a different Betsy, and yet her "Betsy-ish" ways still shine through. It is exactly this difference, and the distance from family and friends, however, that makes this book one of the best books for the first-time adult reader and one of the more interesting books for the seasoned fan. The ways in which Maud Hart Lovelace constructed the ninth novel in the series show not only a high level of literary skill, but also a knowledge of herself and her readers.

As I did not begin reading the *Betsy-Tacy* series until I was out of my undergraduate years, I was aware only of the first four books that were in print at that time. When I moved to Hawaii in 1986, however, I was delighted to find that the series continued and further delighted when I found hardback copies of the high school books, *Betsy and the Great World* and *Betsy's Wedding* for a dime apiece at the local library book sale. The night I got *Great World* I dragged my bags of books from the sale over to the nearest ice cream parlor and read it straight through over chocolate chip ice cream.

I still read it a couple of times each year, and it is still as exciting now as it was that night. Why? Maybe because I was out in the Great World myself at that point, or maybe because I remembered my first experience in the Great World as a student in Spain years before, but I think it goes deeper than that. The excitement in this book is so carefully woven into the tale that the reader, regardless of her background, is able to get a real sense of Betsy's own excitement as she enters the Great World. The excitement of the journey is tempered, as real travel is, with

homesickness, loneliness, exhaustion, and the realization that the Great World is significantly bigger than one could ever have imagined.

Betsy sets out to learn about the world, which she does, but she also learns a lot about herself. The self-reflection clearly echoes Betsy's reflection on the Beidwinkles' farm; like many of us, she needs to get away from daily life to realize who she really is and what she really wants. What makes this common feeling so effective is the way in which Lovelace shows the reader that the process of being an adult is an on-going process, not just a one-time revelation. Throughout the series, particularly in the high school books, Betsy "finds" herself, but, as in real life, she doesn't do so permanently; she struggles in nearly every volume with the challenges of life that cause her to rethink her vision of herself again and again.

Betsy and the Great World takes the reader through this process as we make the journey with Betsy. We feel her nervous despair in the early chapters, where Betsy's excitement is tinged with regret and doubt; as she reflects in her stateroom bunk, we learn that this is not to be a simple travelogue. This section is very helpful for the first-time reader, as it introduces Betsy, the Rays, the Crowd and Deep Valley with sufficient detail necessary to follow the story; it also fills in the seasoned B-T fan by covering what has happened since Joe and Betsy stood on the Big Hill after Commencement Day. This important section actually foreshadows most of the action in the book: we know that Betsy will have more difficulty than she planned on in the Great World, particularly in terms of homesickness, and that she will learn more than just the "names of the streets and how they run." We also know that her parents love her enough to trust her (in spite of the chaperonage of the Wilsons, Betsy is on her own for most of the trip); their support and the support of her sisters and friends seems to bolster Betsy in the face of her daunting fears.

It may seem odd to some readers that so much of the book—the first seven-and-a-half



Travel is Broadening: Betsy and the Great World

by Katrine Poe

chapters—deals with voyage on the *S. Columbic*; the rest of the book, after a rather lengthy stay in Munich, goes very rapidly through Venice, Paris, and London. To anyone who has ever taken such a journey, however, the pace is all too familiar. The early days, filled with anxiety and homesickness, seem longer and somehow clearer in memory than the latter portion of the trip, in which the days seem telescoped in rapid success.

In Betsy's case, her time on the *Columbic* (a luxury modern travelers cannot afford) is almost like learning to live in another city; meeting new people, seeing new places, learning new customs. She is distracted from her homesickness by the dashing Mr. O'Farrell, and "forgets" sufficiently until she finds herself alone again in the Pension Geiger. Her fortunate stubbornness helps her to break through the initial temptation to flee for home on the next boat, and she begins to make friends, which seems to be her own personal passport to the land of contentment.

By the time she arrives in Venice she has managed to solidify the Betsy she needs to be in the Great World; even if she hadn't met Marco Regali we feel that she would have been happy enough during her stay there. The Marco chapters serve an important function, as they help Betsy (and the reader) to realize who she really loves. This Betsy is a far cry from the high school freshman who wanted to be a belle like her sister Julia, with a train of devoted admirers; she realizes what she needs as a woman, not as a frivolous girl, and it does not include stringing along men just because she can.

Paris brings restriction, but of a respectful kind, as Betsy is once again under the chaperonage of the Wilsons. She shops sensibly, tours sensibly, and realizes the freedom she'd had in Munich and Venice; she realizes as well that Miss Wilson might enjoy a taste of that freedom,

too, but feels it would be disrespectful to suggest it to her chaperon. A chance meeting with the flamboyant Mrs. Main-Whittaker offers Betsy the opportunity to give Miss Wilson "one good bat" and also the opportunity to make things right with Joe. Her time in London is happier because of her clear conscience, and she is able to focus on the plight of England rather than on her own troubled spirit.

The Betsy Ray who spies Mr. Brown at the London American Express Office is not the helpless waif he left behind in Genoa. Although she is in need of his assistance once again, this time it is not through her own ineptitude; before she sees him she has several plans of action and is not worried or sick with panic. She hates the thought of leaving England, but knows that her parents want her to come home and that she must if England were to go to war. In a lesser book Betsy might have been swept off her feet by the American millionaire, but Lovelace developed Betsy's story so that such an attachment would be entirely out of character. Even with Marco the reader knows that he could be no more than a friend. This stronger

Betsy, handed Joe's ad in the Agony Column, knows exactly who she is and what she wants.

For the first-time reader, then, this book is a wonderful introduction to Betsy Ray; going back to read the earlier books in the series would be a logical way to know her better. For the long-time fan this book is the result of many years of hopes and dreams read in the earlier books of the series and an excellent segue into *Betsy's Wedding*. For travel enthusiasts it is a colorful depiction of Europe before World War I, and for those interested in feminist views on history, it shows the domestic side of life in wartime and the era immediately preceding the vote.

Reading *Betsy and the Great World* is not just another installment in the life story of Betsy Ray: it is Betsy Ray taking us along with her as she sees the Great World at last.

Katrine Poe (the "other Poe") lives in Chicago where she is working on her Ph.D. in English Literature. She is President of the Greater Chicago Chapter.



Books about Families and Values

by Michael Lifton

Before radio and television, before marketing surveys and opinion polls, "family values" was more than just a political slogan. It provided people with a sense of community. A hundred years ago, life moved at a slower pace. Children could savor good times with family, friends, neighbors, and classmates. Joys and sorrows were experiences to be shared with others, and the isolation that many people feel today was

unimaginable for most.

Behind the frenetic rush of modern life, there is a longing to regain the cohesiveness of common experience that has been fragmented by technology and scattered lives. That longing has been felt not only in politics but in other cultural arenas as well. Everywhere these days, it seems, nostalgia is big business.

A few years ago, a major New York publisher was surprised at the response to the reprinting of a children's book that was originally published in 1940. The story was about a self-confident, headstrong girl named Betsy Ray and her shy best friend, Tacy Kelly. They were both five years old when Tacy's family moved into a house across the street from Betsy's house. The two of them quickly became inseparable.

Betsy-Tacy was the first in a series of twelve books about the girls' adventures. Ten of the books were part of a sequence that followed Betsy and Tacy as they grew up. Two others were more peripheral but contained material related to the Betsy-Tacy stories. The last book in the series, *Betsy's Wedding*, was published in 1955.

The books were written by Maud Hart Lovelace, a native of Mankato, Minnesota who had previously authored historical novels. She based the tales on her own childhood, drawing extensively on memories of her own family

and friends and entries in a diary she kept for many years.

Ms. Lovelace and her husband Delos, a former newspaperman for the *New York Sun*, lived in Claremont after his retirement.

Paul and Georgenia Irwin were the Lovelaces' neighbors on Eighth Street. Mrs. Irwin recalled that Maud "was always so wonderful with children."

"One day Paul was away, and she invited our sons, who were then about 12 and 15, over to her house for dessert," Mrs. Irwin told the *Courier*. "Our older son was fascinated by uniforms at the time and she showed him the uniform that Delos wore in the first world war."

Because Mrs. Irwin only had sons, she hadn't known about the books during their heyday. But after the Lovelaces moved to town she read "a couple of them and picked up things I'd heard" from other residents.

"The Betsy-Tacy books were wonderful for little girls growing up," she said, explaining: "What was distinctive is that kids get to see an idyllic life, where everybody is being friends."

Also, she noted, "Every little girl wishes her daddy could be home every single day." It is quite a contrast to the way youngsters experience life today, Mrs. Irwin indicated. And Maud "gets so much in about values and interpersonal relationships, you don't realize you're reading about them."

A few years ago, Mrs. Irwin learned that a number of books were missing from the Sycamore School library. Among them were copies of the original editions of the Betsy-Tacy books which had been donated in childrens' names for birthdays or other occasions. These books had been autographed by Maud, who invited the children over to her house for the ceremony, Mrs. Irwin said.

She contacted Merian Lovelace Kirchner, the daughter of Maud and Delos, who lives in New York and "has been in publishing for many years."

BETSY-TACY IS
IN THE NEWS!

As printed in the *Claremont Courier*

Maud and Delos Lovelace lived in Claremont, California during their retirement years.

Mrs. Kirchner told her that because of its success with the first book, HarperCollins was planning to reprint the entire series. She provided copies of the seven books which have so far been reprinted, and Mrs. Irwin donated them to the Sycamore School library.

During the *Courier's* recent visit to the school, librarian Cloyce Morrow Flaten was enthusiastic about her experience with the stories. "This is like my childhood," she said. "They remind me of the town in Minnesota where I grew up."

The intricate relationship among the names of the fictional characters in the Betsy-Tacy books and their counterparts in real life are described in a book titled *The Betsy-Tacy Companion: a Biography of Maud Hart Lovelace* which was published last year.

The author, Sharla Scannell Whalen, is also a member of the Betsy-Tacy Society, a nationwide fan club which was formed in Mankato in April 1990. The society now has more than 1,000 members and publishes a quarterly journal. A Southern California chapter was started in 1995.

Currently, two Sycamore School students have been



Paul and Georgina Irwin

reading the Betsy-Tacy books. Jennifer Parker, a sixth grader, began with the first one and plans to read the entire series in order.

Hannah Segal, a third grader, has recently begun *Betsy in Spite of Herself*, which is about Betsy's sophomore year in high school.

The books were suggested by Ms. Flaten, who explained why she is so enthusiastic. "They describe my childhood fantasy," she says.

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What is That?

by Liz Boardman

"Mamma," Betsy cried, "Tacy has a parasol. May I carry your parasol?"

"No," said Betsy's mother. "But you may carry my cardcase." She got it out of the bureau drawer. One side was filled with cards which said "Mrs. Robert Ray." A little lace-edged handkerchief, smelling of violet perfume, peeked out of the other side. Betsy's mother carried this case when she went calling. She left a card at every house.

Betsy-Tacy

What are calling cards and why did Mrs. Ray use them? Social visiting, or calling, was a ritual left from the Victorian era. A lady measured her status based on the number of calling cards left at her home.

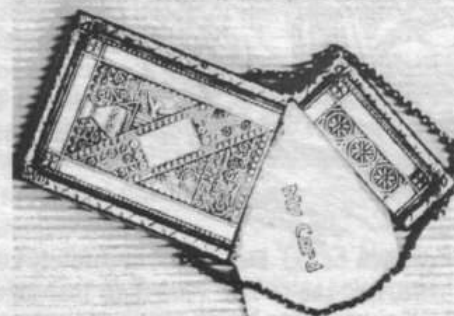
Calling cards became commercially available at the end of the eighteenth century. Laura Ingalls ordered them in *Little Town on the Prairie*. There, May Power described them as being "colored cards, with colored pictures of flowers and birds, and Mr. Hopp would print your name on them."

By the 1860s the card shape became fancier, offering gold edges, embossed designs and textured papers.

Card cases were made of several materials, including hallmarked silver, mother-of-pearl, tortoise shell and abalone, ivory, or lacquer.

The popularity of calling cards declined at the end of the Victorian era, but they continued to be used into the early twentieth century.

Thanks to Lona Falenczykowski for the question and help with research on calling cards.



Lona Falenczykowski

Merian's Column

I have a lovely letter from Linda Sherwood in Calgary, Canada, who wants to know the secret of how Stella and Maud and I all had such happy marriages. The easy answer is that all three of us were very, very, very lucky. But I'll try to dig a little deeper than that.

Remember the list of Rules for Married Life that Betsy made on the morning of her wedding day? I think Maud would stand by those rules, with maybe a little updating. (She wouldn't have a problem with letting Delos take over the cooking. He pretty much did when they were living in California. And she thought frozen foods were wonderful.) But if you'd asked her for just one rule, I know what it would have been: "Love has to be nourished." That was one of her favorite sayings, and it's the best advice for married people that I've ever heard. I guess another way to say the same thing might be, "If you want a good relationship, you have to *work* at it," but I like Maud's way better.

It's easier to talk about Maud's marriage than about Stella's, which is a little too remote (except to say that the portrait of Bob and Jule Ray in the books is as true as Maud could make it), or about mine, which is much too close.

I've been thinking and thinking about what made my parents' marriage so special, because I want anything I say about them to be as true as I can make it.

First of all, I think of how important they were to each other. Delos was absolutely central to Maud's life, and she to his. And their marriage—their shared life with all the trimmings—was absolutely central to both of them.

Next, I think of how much fun they had—how they laughed and joked and teased each other, how

much they enjoyed each other's company. (It's really true that when they were living in California, they kept an alarm clock on the breakfast table to remind them to stop talking and go to their typewriters.)

It's also true, honestly, that they never quarreled. It would have hurt too much, Maud said, so they just didn't. They knew that for some couples quarreling and making up is part of the fun, but it wouldn't have been for them.

I have no idea how many serious disagreements they may have had, but in fifty years they must have had some. And that brings me to a question Linda asks in her letter: Did Delos have the last word on important issues, as Betsy wanted Joe to do?

Well, Maud would have said that was what she wanted, and she would have absolutely meant it. I think it meant a great deal to Delos to know that she did. But he adored her so that he'd have wanted *her* to have the last word if she really cared. And since both Betsy and Joe, as you'll recall, were extremely stubborn, one wonders how decisions ever got made. But if it ever happened—as it does in *Betsy's Wedding* when the letter from Aunt Ruth arrives—that one of them wanted to do the right thing and the other didn't, the problem would have been solved the way Betsy solved it. The one who wanted to do the right thing would have won.

Do I need to point out that their lives weren't perfect? Maybe I'd better. Delos had the bouts of depression that Maud describes in *Betsy's Wedding*. Maud got terribly tired when she was on a deadline, and had killer headaches. They had their share of sickness and loss, money worries, discouragement and disappointment.

But I keep coming back to how much fun they had. Their life was a shared adventure, with every day full of everyday pleasures richly enjoyed, and something new and exciting just around the corner.

*Merian Lovelace
Kirchner is Maud Hart
Lovelace's daughter, and
a regular contributor to
this journal.*



A Note From Lona's Pony Cart

The Betsy-Tacy Society met with David Nystuen, Field Coordinator from the Minnesota Historical Society, to discuss long-range planning for Tacy's house. He was quite encouraging and gave us many good ideas to pursue. After discussing different possibilities, the Board has tentatively decided that the long-range use of Tacy's House should focus on family and women's history. We are also planning on meeting with the Wanda Gag Association to get their advice. About ten years ago they purchased the author/illustrator's childhood home in New Ulm, Minnesota. They have made remarkable progress with the restoration of the Wanda Gag House and will share their insights with us. Maryellen Digre-Mueller is in contact with many historical preservation groups to gain some of their expertise for our project. If anyone has any useful information and ideas, please contact me.

Thanks to Ang Johnson and Heidi Grosch for the great job they did with their portrayal of Maud Hart Lovelace for their History Players Program at the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul. It is well worth a trip to St. Paul to see this production.

The Betsy-Tacy Society held another successful open house. On March 31 we had an Easter Open House at Tacy's. The activities included Easter egg dyeing, decorating cupcakes, making sand-jar art, coloring pages, and registering for door prizes. Special thanks to organizers Wendi and Lee Masters and all our many members who worked on this event. On the same day Barnes & Noble had an event to celebrate the re-release of *Betsy and the Great World* and *Betsy's Wedding*. The Society would like to thank them for holding another Book Fair fundraiser for us.

Now that all ten books in the Betsy-Tacy series are in print, please encourage your bookstores to have them on hand and remember they make excellent gifts for all ages and occasions. Purchase them frequently.

I don't want to put the cart before my pony, but I have exciting news to share. Dean Johnson of the public television program *Hometime* contacted me to express interest in perhaps helping with the restoration of Tacy's house! I'll keep you posted on any developments.

And so they did.

Lona Falenczykowski



A Visit with Maud

by Lona Falenczykowski and,
to a lesser degree, Ms. Emily Scott

On March 10, 1996, Maud Hart Lovelace made a special appearance at the Minnesota History Center for the "Families" exhibit. The program, under the direction of Ang Johnson, was held in an "attic" setting complete with Uncle Keith's trunk. Maud, portrayed by Heidi Grosch, gave a short, dramatization about Maud's life and her writing. She also interacted informally with visitors. The outfit that Maud (Heidi) was wearing was a replica of the stylish green suit Maud wore for her military review and honor at Fort Snelling in 1929, complete with a large corsage. They handed out a copy of a poem that Maud wrote. Maud's father published a booklet of her poems in 1902, her first published works. Many young people attended and were probably hearing about the books for the first time. Heidi did an excellent and enthusiastic job of portraying Maud. After the program, the children were invited to go to the second floor to make their own book.

In the lobby of the history center the Betsy-Tacy Society had a table with large hand-painted dolls by Kelly Reuter. Maryellen Digre-Mueller was on hand to give information about the Betsy-Tacy Society, the purchase of Tacy's house, and upcoming events in Mankato. Maryellen encouraged people to buy *Gentlemen from England* and *Early Candlelight* by Maud Hart Lovelace, published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press. There were many of the Betsy-Tacy Society members there. This was truly a delightful experience.

Thanks to Wendi, Lee, Adam, and Tacy Masters for their excellent help with this event. Thanks also to Maryellen for her help and for spreading the word.

The history player's program is on-going and will continue for some time. However, it will not be playing every day. If you are planning a trip to the Minnesota Historical Society History Center, call ahead to find out Maud Hart Lovelace performance dates at (612) 296-1187.

Note: Pictures from this exhibit are in this month's "Photo Album" which begins on page 10.

*Do the words Renewal Due
appear on your mail label? If so,
it's time to renew! Do it today!*

From Our Photo Album

"A Visit with Maud"

Maud, portrayed by Heidi Grosch, visits the Minnesota History Center. You can read about this exhibit in the article, "A Visit with Maud," on page 9 of this issue.





Photo by Lona Falencykowski

Heidi Grosch, as Maud, visits with some exhibit attendees.



Photo by Patty Warhol

Members of the Southern California Chapter gathered at a recent meeting, held at the home of Chapter President Suzanne Nezin.

Mankato Scenes

"Tacy's House" is pictured at right. Betsy-Tacy Society members in Mankato are devoting many hours to its restoration.



Emily Scott is sitting on "The Bench" in this winter scene. Those Betsy-Tacy Society members who have actually sat on the bench will attest to what a special moment this can be!

A Betsy-Tacy display at the Barnes & Noble bookstore in Mankato



Photos by Lona Falencykowski

I Was Janet Lambert in a Judy Blume World

by Jennifer Davis-Kay

Joe paused as his thoughts went back. "Once when I was about nine I lost my route list. I borrowed a bike from another boy to go back and find it. When I returned the bike and thanked him I offered to shake hands. I thought, from the books I had read, that that was the proper thing to do. But all the boys hooted. I'll never forget it."

Betsy and Joe

How well I understood. I tried to learn how to behave from books, too. I devoured the works of Rosamond DuJardin and Beverly Cleary, sure that the recipe for social success lay within those pages. And, if it had been 1950, I might have seen better results. Unfortunately, it was 1980—and I was a social dud.

Practically Seventeen, and I'd never had a date. Oh, I had plenty of bosom friends. We were almost a sorority—the Unchosen. I enjoyed our warm friendship and was determined not to throw them over for The Popular Crowd (when the time came). I also had a wonderful family. I got mad at Mom sometimes, but I never put any roses down the disposal. Dad was an excellent cook—no onion sandwiches, but a fine veal parme-johnny. And, since I'd probably marry someone like Carlton Buell, I screened my brother's friends closely for husband potential.

But it was *Senior Year*, and I hoped to be popular, a belle. My carrot red hair had deepened to a real nice auburn. The search was on for A Man for Jen.

The first step was to find the right boy. Of one thing I was sure: A Big Wheel wasn't the guy for me. No shortage of examples, here: Jean chased after Johnny and completely overlooked Home. Pam resisted Farmer Jeff until a

Showboat Summer got her priorities straight. Shelley thought she was *The Luckiest Girl* with Phillip, but Harley was her real love—too late. I would learn from their mistakes.

I knew I should date lots of boys, including sophomores and juniors, because I might be stuck without a date for the Prom. A girl had to anticipate these situations. And I wouldn't go steady, not even with The Boy Next Door. *Going Steady* didn't work for Sally and Scotty, and Brose's *Class Ring* brought Tobey nothing but *Boy Trouble* (fortunately, they worked it out and had *A Wedding in the Family*).

This is how it would begin. He'd ask me for a date. I'd wear my pale blue princess dress (with that awful round collar), white Capezio slippers, and Rosy Rapture lipstick, with a black velvet ribbon tied around my throat—Tobey Heydon swears by that ribbon. If I burned my hair on the curling iron I would frizz it into a sort of bang and joke about it later. If it rained I could wear a pink raincoat with a black velveteen collar or a crummy yellow slicker; it wouldn't matter, as long as I was happy. "Jen," he'd say, "you've sure got glamour."

Or maybe it would be a *Double Date!* After all, *Two Are Better Than One*—so long as to my own self I was true and didn't try to be a carbon copy.

If he tried to kiss me I would explain (with a smile and a little joke—girls should keep a stockpile of little jokes) that I wasn't "spoony." There are other ways of getting into the Kissed Club, and I certainly didn't want people talking about That Davis Girl.

I wouldn't pick fights or look for trouble. If he called me "Carrots," I'd merely laugh and leave my slate alone—and if I lost the bracelet he gave me, for heaven's sake, I would just tell him! He

might break up with me (boys can be so moody), but I'd be better off and date a much nicer guy who'd become a priest. And I'd be myself. I wouldn't drink coffee simply to impress him or pretend to like Chinese food. I'd learn all the words to "our song"—something catchy, like "Chattanooga Choo Choo"—and sing it while I knitted Argyle sox. We'd fall in love, just like that, riding around on his Vespa.

Then—the *Senior Prom*. I would go with the first boy who asked me, unless he wanted to do something foolish (like staying out all night). I'd wear a strapless dress and reassure my mother that it had little stays. My date would bring a corsage, which I would carry so my coat wouldn't crush it. If he really liked me, it would be an orchid, unless he was poor (carnations). He shouldn't spend a lot of money; we could turn my living room into a night club and have just as much fun! And if I could figure out a way for all the senior girls to get dates, I would be voted Queen of the Prom.

Well. Astute readers can guess that I had even less social success than Joe Willard. No one was impressed that I knew the words to "Chattanooga Choo Choo." My black velvet ribbons remained unworn, and I never touched my stockpile of little jokes. I wasn't Queen of Anything.

It all worked out eventually, though, just as it did for Joe. I found the right person and lived happily ever after.

(Hmmm. *I Wasn't Queen of Anything*. Catchy title! Maybe I should write a book...)

Jennifer Davis-Kay lives in Newton, Massachusetts. She is busy writing her first novel, working on an M.Ed., and managing an office. Unlike Betsy, she finds any activity, including housework, to be easier than writing.

What Are You Reading When



When I'm not reading Betsy-Tacy I'm reading books that involve history, mystery, and romance—and offer a little substance as well. One of my favorite writers is Celeste DeBlasis. Her *Wild Swan* series uses American history as a backdrop for several generations of colorful characters involved in various exciting pursuits, including breeding and racing horses.

Another favorite is Catherine Gaskin, especially *The Ambassador's Women*, *Family Affairs*, *Promises*, and *The Lynmara Legacy*. Set in England and spanning the mid-years of this century, these novels contain well-drawn characters, beautiful writing, and usually a touch of mystery or intrigue in addition to dashes of history and romance, often in the form of deeply layered relationships.

LaVyrle Spencer's historical novels are wonderful, as are some of her contemporary ones. (Of these I enjoyed *Bittersweet* and *Bygones*.) Barbara Michaels' romantic mysteries, in particular those involving

ghostly presences, are great. Phyllis A. Whitney's early books, *The Trembling Hills*, *The Quicksilver Pool*, are solid romantic suspense novels with vivid historical settings. A good deal of historical detail is interwoven in Alexandra Ripley's novels, so skillfully interwoven you barely realize how much you're learning

about the past as the stories unfold.

I love Jean Stubbs' *Like We Used To Be* and *Kelly Park*, although they have a slightly bitter flavor that you won't enjoy if you like purely frothy novels. If you enjoy mysteries unraveled by smart, fairly feisty women characters, I recommend Mary Stewart, Mollie Hardwicke, Katherine Hall Page, Caroline Llewellyn, Lee Harris, and Rita Mae Brown.

In the late 60s and early 70s I read some paperback romances by a British author named Iris Bromige—at least twenty of them. I'd love to re-read them but can't find them at my local secondhand stores. If anyone has a lead on them, I'd be grateful for a tip.

Susan Hackman
Richmond, VA

Like many Betsy-Tacy fans, I enjoy "old-fashioned" books and children's books set in an era "gentler and kinder." Alcott, Francis Hodgson Burnett, Laura Ingalls

Wilder, L. M. Montgomery, and Gene Stratton-Porter are well-known writers who create these worlds. I also read D. E. Stevenson and Angela Thirkell (especially the earlier books) with great pleasure.

The six semi-autobiographical books of Della Thompson Lutes, *Country Kitchen*, *Home Grown*, *Country School M'am*, *Cousin William Millbrook*, and *Gabriels's Search* are mostly about growing up in southern Michigan at the end of the last century. They are books of great charm and appeal and well worth the search to track them down.

Even more elusive are the works of Jake Falstaff, a wonderfully talented writer and poet born in Ohio in 1901, who died in his mid-thirties. Even so, he left behind five novels and two works of poetry. The three books *Jacoby's Corners*, *Come Back to Wayne County*, and *The Big Snow* are about a young boy named Lemuel who visits his grandparents in the Ohio countryside, perhaps in the 20s. They are such good books it is a shame the writer didn't have a longer life and career.

Other books that come to mind which evoke this nostalgia are Bess Street Aldrich's *Miss Bishop* and *Mother Mason*, Eliza Calvert Hall's surprisingly feminist *Aunt Jane of Kentucky* and *The Land of Long Ago*, and perhaps Kate Douglas Wiggin's *Mother Carey's Chickens*. Anything by Jane Duncan/Janet Sandison also has great appeal.

Some people feel apologetic about reading "escapist" fiction. I do not. First of all, I think I can freely choose the people I want to know and the books as well. Secondly, I think when I was growing up these kinds of books clarified for me the kind of world I wanted to create around me. It's not as impossible as some people seem to think.

Kristi Ellison Jalies
Akron, OH

You're Not Reading Betsy-Tacy?

I have read all of MHL's Betsy-Tacy books, with the exception of the elusive *Carney's House Party*, and *Winona's Pony Cart*. I have just finished reading *The Betsy-Tacy Companion* by Sharla Whalen, and it's very good indeed. I certainly recommend it for anyone in the Society to read.

I also can't recommend enough the fictional biography *Lark Rise to Candleford* by Flora Thompson. Those who read *Victoria* magazine (get a subscription—it's like coming home to find a bouquet of violets in your mailbox once a month!) will have found an article in the March 1995 issue highlighting this book. It's charming in every way—I guarantee you will be enchanted with it if you like the Victorian era at all. It's set in the 1880s and 90s in England. I also read *Tasha Tudor's Garden* by Tovah Martin, *The Private World of Tasha Tudor* by Tasha Tudor and Richard Brown, and *The Cat Who* books by Lilian Jackson Braun. The two Tasha Tudor books contain a wealth of gorgeous photographs of Tasha's house, garden, and animals—simply glorious.

I guess this may come under the heading of "reading," but I have found a wonderful resource for those who like audio books. It is Recorded Books, Inc., based in Prince Frederick, MD which offers 30-day rentals of beautifully narrated *unabridged* books on tape. They offer all sorts of books, from mysteries to histories to best sellers. I started out renting the almost complete series of Lilian Jackson Braun's books, *The Cat Who...series* that are read by a splendid actor named George Guidall. They also carry several of the Mrs. Pollifax books by Dorothy Gilman. They aren't just for listening to in the car, because I once did a thorough housecleaning while listening to *To Kill a Mockingbird*—and the work didn't seem quite so tedious somehow. They carry many children's

and young people's books, too. I hope someday they may have our beloved B-T books there too, so that anyone with impaired vision can enjoy their favorite books. You can obtain a free catalog by calling 800-638-1304.

Kathy McKinney
Hemet, CA

When I am not reading Betsy...I always have a Judy Bolton mystery going and am slowly moving through that series. I also try to have a book by Lucy Maud Montgomery going.

I enjoy the latest V.C. Andrews whenever they come out, along with Judith Krantz.

I don't like much romance but really love anything by F. Rosanne Bittner. Also enjoyed all Cynthia Freeman's novels.

Have just begun reading the Little Colonel series by Annie Fellows Johnston and enjoy these books too!

Jammie Dennin
Oshkosh, WI

I thought I'd let you know about a good (adult) book I've read recently. It is called *Everlastin'* and it is by Mickee Madden. If you like Scotland and/or romances and strange plot twists, this book is for you! And who says you can't judge a book by the cover? I first picked it up because the man standing by the fireplace on the cover disappears and reappears. But the story is interesting, too!

Other than that, I have been rereading Betsy-Tacy and enjoying them all over again.

Dena Fleurichamp
Sedro Wooley, WA



What Are You Writing When You're Not Reading B-T?

Griffin, Peni. *Vikki Vanishes*. M. K. McElderry Books, 1995. 068900282

Qualey, Marsha. *Hometown*. Houghton Mifflin, 1995. 039572662

Shaw, Andrea. *Seen That, Now What?* Fireside Books, 1996. 0-684-80011-X

What Are You Reading is a regular feature of the Betsy-Tacy Society Journal. Let us know what you're reading and what you love to reread. Send your literary lists and comments to: Stephanie Smith, 824 Kirkwood, Winthrop Harbor, IL 60096. Email: smsmith@ccs.nslsilus.org.

Notes & Notices

Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award

Since 1980, in Minnesota each year, 15 books, suitable for children in grades 3-8, are selected as candidates for the Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award. Then in March, school children from all over the state vote for the book that should receive the award, and the winner is announced on Maud's birthday. This year, 17,746 children voted; the winner was *Cages* by Peg Kehret, who also won last year for *Nightmare Mountain*. In her acceptance speech, Peg observed that Maud is one of her favorite authors and that she plans a visit to Mankato to learn more about Maud's life there.

I am going to write to Kehret, send her some of our last newsletters, congratulate her on behalf of the B-T society, tell her about the '97 convention and see what transpires!

Dolly Blomquist

Spring Book Sale

The Minnesota Historical Society Press is holding its spring book sale. *Early Candlelight* and *Gentlemen From England* are on sale for \$7.80. Dozens of other books are on sale with discounts of 40% to 80%. To order or request the special sale catalog call (800) 647-7827 between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm, CST.

Fashion Show at 1997 Convention

Plans are in the works for a fashion show of period costumes during the 1997 Betsy-Tacy Convention. Anyone interested in participating and/or loaning clothing and accessories for the event may contact Linda Michael, 610 West College Avenue, St. Peter, MN 56082; (507) 931-2435; email: shopcsfa@aol.com.

Donations Requested

The Betsy Tacy Society is looking for donations of turn-of-the-century clothes, furniture, books from the Betsy-Tacy series, or any items that could be displayed at Tacy's House.

Contact the Society office if you have something to donate.

Spreading the Word

Do your family and friends find it difficult to buy you a present on holidays and your birthday? Are you a person who has everything? How about suggesting they make a donation to The Tacy House fund in your name? Or, suggest that they donate, in your name, a set of the B-T books to a library?

How often do you turn to the B-T books when you're troubled and need comfort and inspiration? When you plan to give books as gifts, please remember those who are less fortunate. It may seem frivolous to give B-T books to a shelter for battered women, a homeless shelter, or a residential treatment center for children or teens, but they deal with very basic and immediate needs. If we provide the opportunity, the B-T books may provide comfort, hope, and inspiration to someone who needs it. Maud's gentle wisdom could touch more lives. Any business that sells the *American Girl* books or the *Anne of Green Gables* books can sell the Betsy-Tacy books, too. Possibilities are Victorian gift shops, "Country" boutiques, and Christian bookstores. Ask your Christian bookstore to get their distributor, Spring Arbor Books, to carry the B-T books. Keep your eyes open for other types of stores that might be appropriate and let us know.

Maryellen Digre-Mueller

Andrea Shaw's Book in Print

Andrea Shaw, of our Greater New York Chapter, has a new book now in print. Its title is *Seen That, Now What?* and it's published by Fireside Books, ISBN 0-684-80011-X. Price is \$15.95. This truly is the ultimate guide to finding the video you would like to see. It would make a great gift for any movie fan, and is also a good book to read for fun. Highly informative, it categorizes the movies in a number of different ways, has a rat-

ing system, and has three different indexes that list by movie title, director, and actors/actresses. It also gives a concise and witty review of each movie, rates it, and lists actors and actresses. This is really the world's first useful video guide. No home should be without it!

Review by Emily Scott, with assistance from Lona Falencykowski

Maureen Reed's Paper

Those of you who are on the Maud-L listserv know about the paper written and presented by Maureen Reed, a graduate student at the University of Texas at Austin. For those who haven't heard about it, it's a scholarly work focusing on the Betsy-Tacy books, and the assignment was to look at a previously unresearched primary source and explain how it might be used as a source of American cultural history. Maureen shared with those of us on the listserv her pre-presentation jitters, and we were all delighted to hear how well it was received. Some of us wanted to read the paper, and it can be acquired by sending \$5 for copying and shipping to Patty Warhol, 32228 SeaRaven Dr., Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90275. Maureen can be reached by email at mo.reed@mail.utexas.edu. A version of this paper will appear in an upcoming anthology on girls' series fiction.

Minnehaha, Steamboat Streetcar in Minneapolis, Operates This Summer

The Minnesota Transportation Museum will operate the restored 1906 steamboat streetcar, *Minnehaha*, on Lake Minnetonka this summer from May 26 through September 15, providing service on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays only. Departures will be approximately every three hours, beginning at 9 am and continuing until 6 pm. For information write the Minnesota Transportation Museum, 26120 Birch Bluff Rd., Excelsior, MN 55331; to purchase tickets in advance, phone (612) 474-4801.

Maryellen Digre-Mueller

Answers to Last Issue's Crossword Puzzle

Across:

1. Clarke
3. Phyllis
7. Ruth
9. Lloyd
11. Irma
13. Bangeter
14. Lemon
17. Larry
19. Tilda
20. Slade's
22. Caleb
23. Broadway
25. Warrington
29. Mamie Dodd
33. Auto
34. Swenson
36. James J. Hill
39. Clay Dawson
40. Leonard

Down:

2. Rena
3. Puget
4. Leo
5. Sam
6. Al
8. Hunt
10. Don
12. Marco
13. Browning
15. Old Mag
16. Syria
18. Stan
19. Thelma
21. higher
22. Cobb
24. Okto Delta
25. Winona
26. Bea
27. O'Rourke
28. Gaston
30. mess
31. Dad
32. Poppy
35. Drew
37. Mix

The Crossword Puzzle was developed by Kathleen Waldron.

National News

by Kelly Reuter

The National Board met at Tacy's house in February and March. We planned meetings, discussed our strategies, and planned upcoming events. The meeting was a pot-luck, and we all enjoyed the spread in true Betsy-Tacy fashion.

In February, David Nystuen, Field Services Coordinator for the Historic Preservation Field Services and Grants Department of the Minnesota Historical Society was present to talk to us about the possibilities for Tacy's House. He was very interesting and informative, and we will be calling on him and his colleague, Charlie Nelson, in the future. Mr. Nystuen specializes in the interpretation aspects of historic sites, while Mr. Nelson's area of expertise is in the architecture itself.

A committee of members is now working on getting the Betsy and Tacy homes on the Historic Register for their literary significance. The Lincoln Park area is already on the Register for its architectural properties, but this area stops short of our houses on Center Street.

New Mission Statement

The Board worked on a new mission statement, vision, and goals, and came up with the following:

Mission Statement: To promote, preserve, and collect the works of Maud Hart Lovelace and sustain interest in the lifestyle of the period as portrayed in her works.

Vision: To be advocates for Maud Hart Lovelace and her works, and to focus on family and women's history.

Goals:

1. Fundraising-raise permanent funds to meet budget needs.
2. Works of Maud Hart Lovelace—keep books in publication.
3. Preservation-advocate preservation of existing landmarks and sites pertaining to Maud Hart Lovelace books.
4. Membership-increase membership and member participation.
5. Marketing/Promotion: increase visibility, awareness, and image of the Betsy-Tacy Society through events.

On March 14, the YWCA sponsored a luncheon at the Holiday Inn honoring Women in Minnesota's History to commemorate Women's History Month in March. Maud Hart Lovelace was one of the three honored women. Louisa Smith gave a presentation which included a slide show.

Plans were made for the Easter Event at Tacy's House in conjunction with a Book Fair at Barnes & Noble, celebrating the re-publication of *Betsy and the Great World* and *Betsy's Wedding*. Beginning at Tacy's House, there will be egg coloring, cupcake decorating, sand bottle filling, and carriage riding from 1:30 to 3:30. Barnes & Noble will have stories read and will serve wedding cake in honor of *Betsy's Wedding*.

Chapter

Washington, D.C. Chapter

The Washington, DC chapter met for tea on a (rare) snow-free weekend in February. Several bowls of apple cobbler were consumed, brand-new copies of *Betsy and the Great World* and *Betsy's Wedding* made an appearance, and one *Betsy-Tacy Treasury* was dispatched to the American Women's Library in Rabat, Morocco. The Library, operated by English-speaking women, serves both American and English-speaking Moroccan patrons.

With Merian's help, we're researching Maud's ties to our area. One excursion took us to the D.C. Historical Society, ensconced in a Victorian mansion reminiscent of Betsy's era (there's even a pane of red glass over the conservatory door). We've also encountered a local B. Dalton Bookstore manager who just happens to be a native Minnesotan and an enthusiastic B-T fan. He's helping plan a spring Saturday event to be held in the store, hopefully with period clothing worthy of Miss Mix.

Betsy Sherman

Greater New York Area Chapter

The Greater New York Area sistren discovered a new talent at Joan Kirschner's Sunday Night Lunch on February 25: we can sing! Accompanied by Carol Denker (who comes to chapter events all the way from Philadelphia) on Joan's electronic keyboard, we belted out oldies like "My Darling Clementine" and "The Daring Young Man on the Flying Trapeze," winding up with "Sidewalks of New York" and finally "Good Night, Ladies." Before we sang, we ate. Sandwiches and coffee, molded salad, and coconut cake were all up to Ray family standards, and there was lots, lots more.

Plans are shaping up for Saturday Afternoon at the Majestic in April and a wine-and-cheese party for ALA-member Betsy-Tacy fans in July while the American Library Association is in town.

Don't forget New York is a great place to visit, and we'd love to welcome you.

Merian Lovelace Kirchner

Greater Chicago Chapter

On January 20, 1996 we held our first meeting of the new year at the home of our new President, Katrine Poe. After introductions we presented a gift to Melanie Rigney, our outgoing President. Melanie will enjoy using her gift certificate for Lowell's books.

A report from Elaine Pappas and Frieda Maheras advised us that our membership renewals are coming in and that we have \$1,033.27 currently in our treasury.

Those who were able to attend the Pullman House tour in October recapped their visit. The Chapter has

purchased a commemorative brick that will be displayed in the Pullman Visitors Center. We also donated a set of books.

Melanie gave us all a review of the Milwaukee Trip. (A description of the Milwaukee Trip appears elsewhere in this Journal.)

We made plans for our 1996 meetings, including a Sunday Night Supper, a house tour in Pullman, a picnic on the grounds of Catigny Park in Wheaton, Illinois, a Halloween party and a Christmas party. We also plan to meet again at the Brandeis Book Sale held in early summer.

We finished off the meeting with chocolates, muffins, cake, coffee, and tea served on Katrine's antique dinnerware.

Debbie Tranchita

Southern California Chapter

On January 27 the Southern California Chapter met at the beautiful home of President Suzanne Nezin in Lake Forest, California. Since this was our Christmas Party, we had an ornament exchange, featuring some of the most unique and beautiful ornaments any of us had ever seen. We had a delightful potluck luncheon that boasted all the usual goodies and some others that qualified as unusual, and we talked about plans for the rest of the year.

Towards the end of the meeting something surprising occurred: a chance comment by member Jeannie Kusserow triggered a stunned response from member Diane Bean, who suddenly recognized Jeanne as a former schoolmate (from first grade through high school!) in Santa Monica, California. As chapter members looked on with delight, the two held an impromptu reunion, hugging, reminiscing, and posing for photographs. They hadn't seen each other in thirty-five years! What an unexpected and uncanny unfolding of the day's events; Maud and Bick would have been pleased!

Our next meeting will be a Sunday Night Lunch held on Saturday, May 4 at the home of Patty Warhol.

Jeannie Kusserow

Arizona Chapter

The Arizona Chapter of the BTS held its second meeting on February 4 at Borders Books and Music in Phoenix. We had a rollicking good time—reminiscent of Okto Delta!

Kathleen Waldron presented the personality preferences identified by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, and we enjoyed that so much we never got around to

Notes

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applying them to the B-T characters! In fact, we laughed so long and loud that we were a little worried Borders might kick us out of its cafe. At our next meeting (tentatively scheduled for March 31) we are going to discuss *Heaven to Betsy* in terms of personality preferences and anything else.

Several members have studiously been promoting the B-T books by giving them as gifts to appropriately-aged girls, schools, libraries, etc. Kathleen is donating two titles to each of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade classes at her daughter's school, and one of the 3rd grade teachers recently told her that "the girls in my class have been *devouring* those wonderful books you gave us!"

At our next meeting we will be viewing a video made at the last Mankato meeting. Should be fun!

Kathleen Waldron

Cyberspace Crowd

Editor's Note: Some members who participate on the Maud-L listserv approached us with the idea that the Listserv could be seen—and probably should be seen—as an active part of the Betsy-Tacy Society. We agreed. Following is the first report of the Cyberspace Crowd. We will look forward to many more.

Betsy Ray loved to write letters. Whether they were school notes passed to her Confidential Friend, Herbert, letter "diaries" to her family from Europe, or perfume-drenched, sealing-waxed letters to Joe Willard, Betsy went "wild at the sight of a pencil" (as Joe said), and poured her heart out in letters. Would Betsy go just as wild over a keyboard and mouse? Electronic mail, or email, has become another way of talking to friends and strangers alike throughout the world, and B-T fans are right in the thick of it.

The Maud Hart Lovelace listserv connects B-T fans from all over the U.S., Canada, and Australia, and daily attracts new fans who thought they were the only ones! Initially organized as a means to discuss the works of Maud Hart Lovelace, the listserv has mushroomed into a giant (close to 200 subscribers) coffee klatch or cyberspace "Crowd," with its loquacious members discussing everything under the sun. The talkative Betsy would feel right at home. The listserv members have dubbed themselves "Maudlers," "Sistren," (in the spirit of Okto Delta), "Maudeleines," and "Dear Ones." The tone of the list resembles the way Maud described Betsy: "friendly, fun-loving, with high spirits," and while most of the members are female, there are a couple of males who are most welcome. B-T fans, as we all know, can be found everywhere and in all walks

of life. List members include teachers, editors, publishers, writers, office workers, scholars, executives, retirees, mothers, grandmothers, daughters, etc., and represent rural, urban, small town, and suburban settings. Books are sold and discussed, movies reviewed, birthdays celebrated, recipes shared, as well as jokes and giggles, stories of children and grandchildren and their accomplishments are exchanged, and mutual support given to each other during hard times.

But running throughout the fabric of the daily conversations are the threads of Betsy, Tacy, and Tib and their creator, Maud Hart Lovelace. The friendships in the books radiate throughout the list, serving as a link to bring many disparate personalities together. Several of the members have met each other through their travels, always reporting back that the first meeting seemed more like a meeting between old friends, rather than between strangers. Some of us are shy Tacys, some are fearless Tibs, and others are talkative Betsys, but once the topic of Maud and her books crops up, everyone chimes in!

What sort of things are discussed on the MHL listserv? Well, the Betsy-related topics have included fashion styles in the books, our favorite books of the B-T series, art and music in the books, which character we'd like to meet, which Deep Valley scene we'd like to participate in (lots of votes for Sunday night lunch at the Rays), Mr. and Mrs. Ray's parenting style, and the importance of traditions in the books. Lately we've been mentioning the characters we most dislike: the sardonic Mr. Gaston, the arrogant Don Walker in *Emily of Deep Valley*, the impossibly selfish Rocky in *Betsy's Wedding*, and the beautiful boy magnet, Irma. There were a few supporters of Irma, however, who felt she got a bad rap, as she never really stole anyone's boyfriends—she usually got them on the rebound. With the publication of *Betsy and the Great World* and *Betsy's Wedding*, I'm sure new topics will surface soon, as those who didn't have easy access to those books reread them again.

So if you need further persuasion to join the Cyberspace Crowd, read Peni Griffin's (a children's author in San Antonio, Texas) hilarious description of the MHL listserv: "the Maudeleines are a mailbox-stuffing bunch. Recent topics include: racism in *Gone With the Wind*, hotdish recipes, the awful things little girls do to Barbie and why grown women applaud them...using novels as historical research material, a recipe for fake snot, what current books will be classics taught in the classrooms of the future...member pregnancies, proms, grandchildren...and onion sandwiches...so no, don't get on the list. You don't want to have this much fun."

Julie Chuba

A Report from the Greater Chicago Chapter on...

Christmas In Milwaukee

by Julie Chuba

The Greater Chicago Chapter hosted the second "Christmas in Milwaukee" trip the weekend of December 2-3, 1995. We had attendees from coast to coast, and everywhere in-between. Julie Chuba from Minneapolis, Minnesota shared her weekend with the Maud-L listserv, and has agreed to share it with all of us:

"There's a place called Milwaukee, Milwauk, MilwaukEE," and I went there to celebrate part of my holiday as Betsy did when she visited Tib in *Betsy in Spite of Herself*. The Chicago chapter of the Betsy-Tacy Society sponsored their second "Christmas in Milwaukee" event, and I went with my friend Martha, not "ahold of my hand," but in the passenger seat of my car. Although Martha had never read the B-T books, she found the group so friendly and welcoming that she didn't feel left out at all.

Our day started with a bus tour of Milwaukee/Betsy-Tacy-Tib sites, ably narrated by Sue Knorr and Julie Rasman, our excellent tour guides. We saw Browner Seminary (Downer College) where Tib went to school, Tib's house, Grosspapa Hornick's apartments, which were above his shop; toured the Pabst Theater, where it was easy to imagine a crowd of pompadoured, rustling silk-attired ladies and their walking-caned, top-hatted escorts attending a play or concert; the statue of Soloman Juneau; the lakefront mansions; the shopping district which delighted Betsy; and lots of beautiful, historic Milwaukee buildings and houses. We had lunch at the historic Turner restaurant where Betsy and Tib saw a performance of "The Messiah," and someone who worked there opened up the grand (but sadly decayed) ballroom on the top floor—what a sight! We all agreed that if we won the lottery we'd contribute a couple of million to restoring it.

In the afternoon we had some free time to shop, tour the Pabst mansion, or visit the museums.

For dinner we went to a German restaurant, John Ernst, which really captured the flavor of old-time German Milwaukee, with wooden beams, stone fireplace with a REAL fire in it, steins and kegs along ledges and shelves, and all decorated for the holidays,



besides. All that was lacking was some leder hosen and an oompah band. At our places we had bookmarks with German proverbs on them and little homemade sachet or potpourri bags. We had our choices of sauerbraten or fish and we had a lovely dinner, ending up with Schuumtorte, a concoction of meringue, ice cream, strawberries, whipped cream, and calories, but I think every

one of us dispatched it without guilt.

Then it was back to the Astor Hotel (a very nice, atmospheric old hotel) where we bid on silent auction items and had a hilarious raffle. The guy who led us on the tour of the Pabst Theater unexpectedly showed up with a photocopy of a review of the play *Betsy and Tib* saw at the Pabst, "Reiterattacke." Someone had asked him about it during the tour, and he wrote the info down, did a little research and bought a few raffle tickets and learned about Betsy, Tacy, and Tib in the bargain.

In the morning we opened our Christmas stockings, which didn't have any onions or chewed pencils in them, but lovely Deep Valley mementos. We were fed a homemade breakfast, and were treated to a wonderful story by Carla Kozak's mom, Gert Margolis Kozak, which told of her brother winning a live turkey, and of the ensuing chaos, delight, pride, and consternation the prize evoked in the Margolis household as it strutted around the kitchen. The bird had to be taken five blocks away to the shochet, the man who humanely slaughtered the chickens and other meat to make it kosher. Carla's mom and grandma lassoed the bird with clothesline and somehow got it downstairs and outside, where it attracted a lot of attention. It ended up being a Thanksgiving parade to rival Macy's with all the neighbors checking out the action. It was a funny, heartwarming, beautifully written story, and we were glad Carla's mom shared it with us. After that we all had to write our New Year's Resolutions, not having stayed up all night to do it, and we sealed them up in self-addressed envelopes, which we'll receive later in the year to see how we're doing.

Going to School With Betsy and Tacy

Kelly Reuter

Members of the Betsy-Tacy Society have been visiting schools and libraries hoping to instill Betsy-Tacy mania into a younger generation of readers. In the past when Shelby was in grade school, I visited Maple River classrooms to tell of the joys of the books, using dolls and other visual



aids. Now that Allie is in 5th grade, her multi-age classrooms have a "relish" program each week to reward the kids who have gotten all their work done (those who don't have to be in "ketchup") and who have been well behaved (those who aren't go into "mustard").

In February I visited Maple River Elementary masquerading as Betsy, dressed in a long, plaid skirt, blue opera cape, and "blue fox" furs. As I came breezing in, I intended to tell the kids I had just arrived here from 1910. When I asked "Where do you think I came from?" one boy blurted out "The bathroom!" I explained I had just gotten in on the train, and began by presenting scenarios of what life would be like if there were no cars and all transportation was by train or horse and buggy. Telling about feeding the horses instead of getting fuel, finding a "parking place" at a hitching post or the livery stable, and stories of playing in the barn and buggy shed immediately captured the attention of the boys as well as the girls.

I played a video that was made in 1992 featuring Kelly Karow, Allie Reuter, and Emily Scott dressed as Betsy, Tacy, and Tib visiting Deep Valley sites via horse and buggy. As each locale was shown, I told a story from the books about something that happened there. I stressed the fact that almost everything in the books really did happen, right there in Mankato, almost one hundred years ago. The kids were very excited and receptive, asking lots of questions and eagerly signing up to read *Betsy-Tacy*.

The BTS has a quantity of the first book available for use by schools who wish to have groups of

students read the book at the same time. The kids at Maple River were able to take advantage of this program by signing up and checking out a book. After they read it, they can get a worksheet* from the teacher. After answering the questions on it, they will then be eligible to participate in a special Betsy-Tacy workshop in the spring. I will be returning then with a special craft project and refreshments for the kids who read at least one book. For more incentive to continue reading the series, they have the option of reading the first four books, completing the worksheets, and receiving a special surprise.

After signing up and getting their books, the students enjoyed looking at the memorabilia display, asking more questions, and eating Chocolate Men.

* Worksheets/Book Reports For Elementary Students

When preparing a visit to schools, I thought it would be important to have a way of proving that the kids who said they read the books, actually did so. To be fair, I didn't want them to just say they had read them to get into the special workshop that was planned. I came up with a worksheet relating to *Betsy-Tacy* which would be required for entrance to special programs. The sheet would be easy and fun for the kids who read the book. There is a fill-in-the-blank question for each chapter, so that those who didn't actually read the book would still get something out of it by searching through each chapter for the answers. I went ahead and made up these worksheets for the first four books. The final question on each one asks, "What was your favorite part of this book?" I thought we would all find the answers to this question to be very interesting.

If you would like copies of these worksheets for use in a school or library program, please send a self-addressed, long, double-stamped envelope to me at Box 31, Amboy MN 56010. You will receive a copy of each worksheet and can make as many duplicates as you wish.



Letter to the Editor

Dear Friends:

I am enclosing a copy of a letter I send to libraries along with donations of the Betsy-Tacy books. The librarians I have talked with don't seem to know the books. I was surprised that they would be so unfamiliar with them, and I thought it might be good to write something out for them in the hope that they will be encouraged to suggest the books to library patrons, and buy copies that are available in library editions.

Dear Ellsworth Library:

We hope you enjoy these books by Maud Hart Lovelace. They are part of a remarkable series of books she wrote about a girl, her friends, and her family as she experiences life in middle America in the first quarter of this century. The stories are veiled autobiography, and are historically accurate.

The books begin with *Betsy-Tacy*, when the main character is about five years old, and continue through her early adulthood. One very special feature of the series is that each book reflects the feel and perspective of the age at which Betsy is presented in that particular book. Reading through the series, then, gives the reader the "experience" of growing up right alongside Betsy.

Betsy is quite human. She makes mistakes, lives life with enthusiasm and sometimes trepidation, and is always full of dreams and ideas. Her friends are a wide circle of boys and girls that are a real gallery of characters whom the reader gets to know. She is also supported by loving family members busy with their own lives, and by characters from school and the community. Maud paints the Mankato, Minnesota of Betsy's time with realistic brush strokes which leave the reader with a strong impression of an earlier era with its unique quality of life.

Our experience with the books shows that they appeal across age lines. Each of my three children started reading the books when they were between eight and ten years old, and continue to read and re-read them (my oldest is now 19). The stories are full of life, touching, funny, inspiring, indirectly educational, and—most importantly—skillfully and charmingly written.

The Betsy-Tacy Society, to which we belong as a family, was formed within the last few years to promote re-publication of those titles in the series which had been out of print. (The first four books have continued to be available.) The publishers have recently re-issued Betsy's high school era books through *Betsy and Joe*, and await the success of the series before publishing the next books: *Betsy and the Great World* and *Betsy's Wedding*. Maud also wrote *Emily of Deep Valley* (an exceptional book which can stand alone from the series), *Carney's House Party*, and *Winona's Pony Cart* in which other "Betsy" characters take center stage. Those books wait in the publisher's wings at this time. Maud also wrote adult books on her own and in collaboration with her husband, Delos Lovelace, a renowned journalist/author of his time.

We are such advocates of these books that we want to share them with others. Please point readers in their direction so that others can enjoy discovering Betsy's world for themselves.

Sincerely,

Marie Pavish
Seattle, WA

Editor's note: Since we received Marie's letter, both Betsy and the Great World and Betsy's Wedding are back in print. If you decide to copy Marie's letter and send it to libraries in your area, please reword that section to reflect the correct status of Betsy-Tacy books in print.

Betsy-Tacy in Cyberspace

Betsy-Tacy Homepage!

Betsy-Tacy now has a presence on the multimedia World Wide Web portion of the Internet! Nava Cohen, with the help of members of the maud-l internet discussion list, has created the Betsy-Tacy Homepage. The Homepage contains information about Maud's life, the Betsy-Tacy books, and Maud's other works; information on how to join the society, and a Betsy-Tacy trivia section. If you have access to the World Wide Web, all you need to do to see the Betsy-Tacy Homepage is point your webbrowser to:

<http://virtumall.com/homepages/navaho/betsy-tacy>

Please spread the word of this new publicity effort!

Nava Cohen

Getting On the Maud-L Listserv

If you have access to email, we invite you to join the cyberspace Crowd! To subscribe, send an email to listserv@mitvma.mit.edu. Type this in the message space:

Subscribe maud-l
First Name Middle Name Last Name

The message will look like this:

Subscribe maud-l
Betsy Warrington Ray

Do not sign your note. To post a note to the listserv, address it to maud-l@mitvma.mit.edu and it will be sent to all listserv subscribers.

The Train to Mankato

Let's all meet in Mankato for the 1997 Betsy-Tacy Society Convention! Better yet, let's extend the time we can be together by traveling, as a group, to Mankato! It's easier than you may think.

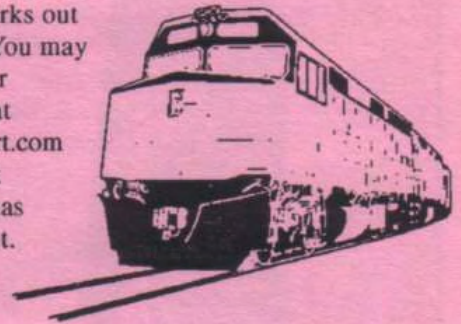
Society member Maureen Thomas, a member of the Southern California Chapter, has started researching a possible itinerary for just such a trip. Her work so far shows that it is possible for the Southern California group to board an Amtrak train in Los Angeles and travel to San Francisco, where the Northern California Society members would join us. The train then will wend its way across the country, picking up conventioners in such cities as Albuquerque, Denver, and Kansas City before that train reaches its final destination of Chicago. If those traveling from the east coast plan their travel through Chicago, the two groups could meet and travel together on the train to Minneapolis. Transportation from Minneapolis to Mankato can be arranged, but some may want to form small groups and rent a car in Mineapolis for the trip to Mankato, so that

the car is available to travel around the Mankato area.

This trip is designed to be a train/air combination; at the end of the convention, those arriving by train will fly home. The total cost for the train/plane trip is competitive with the cost of a round-trip plane ticket although meals will need to be purchased on the train portion.

Maureen will keep us all informed as she works out additional details. You may correspond with her through her email at mrskiwi@greenheart.com or by writing her at

Maureen Thomas
1948 E. Villa St.
Pasadena CA
91107-2336.



Betsy-Tacy Society Membership Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (____) _____

Please check either: Renewal New Member

If new,
have you received a Newsletter? _____
If so, which number? _____

Membership Levels

____ Sustaining \$100 and up

____ Individual \$10

____ Patron \$25

____ Child \$5

____ Family \$15

____ Europe or Canada \$15 and up

____ Extra donation for Tacy's House Fund in the amount of \$ _____

If you prefer that your name not be given out for future Betsy-Tacy product mailings, check here

Make checks payable to the Betsy-Tacy Society and send, along with this form, to:

Michele Blake, Post Office Box 206, North Easton, MA 02356



Photo by Elizabeth Boardman

Caitlin Adams, a thirteen-year old Betsy-Tacy fan, poses at the Moorish Cafe. This Moorish Cafe is located in the EPCOT Center, Orlando, Florida.

The Betsy - Tacy Society
c/o The Heritage Center
Blue Earth County Historical Society
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