

# Family

## Stroll through China in books

I have been hankering to write about two books on China. I love to read about distant lands and people. We learn so much about other cultures and their traditions. Some may seem strange to us, but it increases our ability to bust out of our stereotyped image of being so U.S.A. based and ignorant of the rest of the world.

The first book is “The Great Wall: An Extraordinary Story of China’s Wonder of the World,” by John Man. This book shows that the Great Wall is a combination of dirt and rocks, as well as immense brick-like construction.

The first dynasty that began to build the wall started to erect it using dirt and land formations. Later dynasties built the masonry which hundreds of thousands of tourists trod upon each year near Beijing.

What is so appealing is the real truth that Man brings to the history of the wall. He makes it interesting with a mixture of honest evaluations of how myths and folktales surround the wall. Even these stories bring understanding and clarity to China’s epic development.

Some of the landscape looks like it could be just as easily placed in the western part of Kansas and Nebraska. The prairie, sand and rock formations look familiar. If a person is a history buff and is looking for historical dates to dynasties and a chronology of the Great Wall, it can be found in the back of the book along with a bibliography and index. This is Man’s eighth book, with the most recent and well received being “The Terra Cotta Army.”

The second book is entitled, “The Last Days of Old Beijing: Life in Vanishing Backstreets of a City Transformed,” by Michael Meyer. The author has lived in Beijing, teaching English, since 1995. He began seeing the old buildings of families, businesses and cultural entities torn down to



### Melany Wilks

#### Library Links

make way for new high rises.

Having traveled to China in 1986 myself, I can affirm some of the descriptions he provides. The old edifices are classic Chinese structures that he shows in pictures. My own experience, however, is that many of the oldest classic structures were destroyed during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. But Beijing may have been spared some of the worst destruction.

The most dramatic current revolution going on in Beijing would be the removal of old courtyard - type homes where multiple generations of a family live together. Man points out that many of the structures needed bathrooms and heating systems, but that the foundations, framing and roofs are too fragile to handle improvement. Another factor is that the majorities of residents do not own their own homes, and thus are not willing to spend their own money to improve the property (p. 257).

His chapter on the Widow’s Story was insightful. He gives you a very good image of the culture and beliefs of this elderly person. Having lived in Asia for 13 years and learning about others in their culture, I can read between the lines and appreciate the learning and growth that he experienced just having conversation and tea with his neighbors in the lane.

Once again this book provides great resources. His description at the beginning of the bibliography made me smile because of the understanding I gained in my journeying in China: “Using the public latrine in the dead of win-

ter is nothing compared to the challenges one faces in tracking down Beijing’s history.”

While I have not tried to compile history in China, I do have experience using public latrines When I was in China, their public latrines were trenches surrounded by cement structures and a metal roof.

We are preparing for a great Murder Mystery at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, March 7. Please be sure and get your dinner tickets (\$20 each).

Set your calendar also for Booked for Lunch on Wednesday, March 4 Author, Nancy Pickard will review her novel, “Virgin of Small Plains.” Lunch is served, so come and enjoy it with us.

Middle school students need to remember that we will be adding Ad-Lib At Da Library beginning at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 28. I also just had a Census Bureau representative come to my office and give me information on jobs available to help with the Census. They are looking to train leaders and workers for the 2010 Census who can work between 30-80 hours a month, with a pay between \$16.50 - \$17.50 an hour and vehicle mileage that meets the federal standard (between .50 to .55 cents per mile).

He said to go to [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) and read about it. If you are interested, you must take the practice test on the website. If you need more information, come to the library and we can give you a poster or business card. You can use our computers for free to research the site and take the test.

## Newest chamber member



EVAN BARNUM / Colby Free Press  
Leta Lee (left) showed off one of her twin grandsons at the monthly After 5 gathering of the Colby Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday afternoon. Admiring 3-week-old Parker Lee were Jiten Morris and Deanna Mallory.

## Pittsburg State honors locals

Emily Sloan, a psychology major, and Derrick Bailey, a technology education major, both of Colby, have been named to the Pittsburg State University all-A’s honor roll.

Another area student making the all-A honor roll was Loren Cressler of Hoxie, an English major.

We want your local news: e-mail to [colby.editor@nwkansas.com](mailto:colby.editor@nwkansas.com).

## Corrections

The Colby Free Press wants to maintain an accurate record of our town. Please report any error or lack of clarity in a news story to us at 462-3963.

## Pilots to study safety

A Federal Aviation Administration safety seminar for pilots will be held in the terminal building at Colby’s Shalz Field Municipal Airport from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 28.

The program will include technically advanced aircraft; the New Wings program (a training program that counts towards required pilot safety training); airport operations class B, C, D, E and G; the sport pilot program (a new program for which information

will be available); and medical issues (FAA requirements and what medical issues affect licensing).

Lunch will be free. For information or to preregister, contact Mark Ostmeyer at (785) 460-4438 or check [www.faasafety.gov](http://www.faasafety.gov).

The event is sponsored by the Federal Aviation Administration Safety Team/Wichita Flight Standards District Office, MC Aviation Service, Great Plains Spraying, Friends of the Colby Airport, CBK Flyers and Dillon Stores.

## Riders of Kansas to organize

The Colby American Legion Post will hold an organizational meeting for a unit of the American Legion Riders of Kansas at 2 p.m. Sunday at the post. Officers will be elected and installed.

The group is open to members of the Legion, its auxiliary or the Sons of American Legion who

own a larger motorcycle. Anyone who’s interested should attend; membership to Legion groups will be available at the meeting.

For questions, talk to any Legion member or call C.W. Hamilton II, Levant, (785) 586-2341, or go to [www.geocities.com/kansasriders1](http://www.geocities.com/kansasriders1).

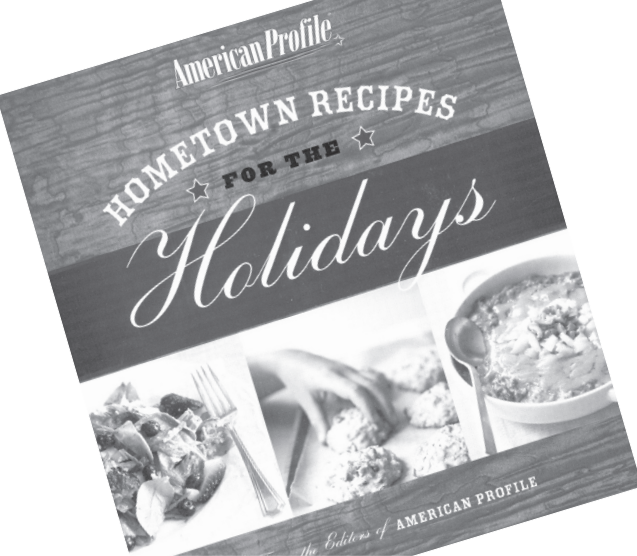
## Seminar covers annuities

Modern Woodmen of America will present Steven W. Bradley of Topeka at a seminar on annuities at 7 p.m. Monday at the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave.

Bradley has 23 years of experience in financial services.

The seminar will cover index, bonus, variable, income and fixed annuities; and options for Individual Retirement Accounts.

Modern Woodmen plans to present a seminar every two months, said Shawn Carney, financial representative in the Colby office.



## Give the gift of good taste ...and smell, fun and good memories

American Profile — yep, the magazine that comes in the local paper and always has a great recipe — now has

a great cookbook. Get 120 recipes categorized by holiday for yourself or as a gift. Just \$18.95 plus tax. Available at:



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