The Beacher took a fantastic voyage into the halls of ivy recently.

We of the dinosaur generation—meaning we received our education via blackboards and Coronet films—were to encounter a learning environment at Valparaiso University that promotes new insights for engineering and science students.

It’s called the Vis Lab, short for Scientific Visualization Laboratory, and it is open to the public twice a week for tours and demonstrations. You might at first think when entering the little room in Gellerson Hall that you’ve walked into a state-of-the-art theatre. The “star” of the Vis Lab is the Vis Box, which projects high resolution 3-D images upon a screen. But instead of theatre seating, the student (or visitor) stands on a platform directly in front of the screen, and, donning a pair of polarized goggles, enters the world of Virtual Reality.

Vis Lab Director Jeff Will and research assistant Mike Steffen host the regularly-scheduled public open houses for anyone who is curious to see how the advancement of computer technology has changed the world of learning in the 21st century. For a writer dependent upon words on a page, the experience was overwhelming. For a molecular biologist or electrical engineer formerly restricted to formulas on a chalkboard, the world of Virtual Reality translates into images that can be observed from any number of different perspectives. An architectural engineer has the ability to view structural elements the same way—without having to rely on mock-ups or models. Virtual reality, we learned, works as both a tool and as a medium in contemporary learning environments.
Voyage  Continued from Page 1

“As a tool virtual reality makes the intuitive examination and manipulation of complex data possible; as a medium it transforms potential products and processes which do not (yet) exist into a visual experience,” according to the IAO, an industrial engineering institute based in Germany.

We had the opportunity to experience several learning modules during our tour. Jeff pointed to an electromagnetic formula he had written on a board, and then had us put on our goggles to view the same equation in virtual reality. Mike used a set of controls to zoom in, out, and around the waves and to watch how the positive charges repelled waves. We admit that this demo would be more meaningful to someone more learned about electromagnetism, but it gave us a sense of how students can more easily see a complex formula come to life in real time.

Another learning module had us examining the structure of a virtual motorcycle, where engineers could virtually adjust its components as needed—without getting their hands dirty. The Vis Box makes it possible to simulate an actual ride on a motorcycle, great idea for us non-scientific types and scaredy cats. Another module illustrated how engineers can fine-tune an auto’s dynamic design by troubleshooting wind resistance issues via air flow patterns.

“There is no need for engineers to build a wind tunnel,” Jeff explained, adding that the Vis Lab application eliminates many of the old-fashioned ways of doing things.

Easier for us non-scientists to grasp was an architectural engineering application Jeff showed us. We...
Visitors to the lab need to wear a special pair of polarized goggles to experience the effect of virtual reality. The glasses do not resemble the old red and blue gel cardboard variety once used at the cinema.

Learning opportunities for Chemistry students, CAD models for Mechanical Engineering, Vector Calculus, Electronics, Crystallography, Topography, Linear programming and more.

Jeff wants Beacher readers to know that the Vis Lab weekly open houses welcome families with children. Yes, there are virtual reality games that the younger set can enjoy, such as Arkenoid and a Pong-type game. No doubt, those youngsters will feel much more comfortable with this three-dimensional learning environment as the years pass. And it will be they who come up with new and useful applications for virtual reality. Which makes us wonder how far off a similar Vis Box teaching technology is for K-12 school systems.

“The Vis Box technology has become affordable for us,” Jeff said, adding that it cost under $100,000 for V.U. Presently, there are 400 students enrolled in the Department of Engineering, all of whom have the opportunity to be exposed to the state-of-the-art learning tools.

Visitors can experience the Vis Box, which has been conducting open houses for the past three years, on Tuesdays from 4:30 to 6:30, or on Thursdays from 6:30 to 8:30.

The Vis Box is located in room 182 of Gellerson Hall at the southeast corner of the V.U. campus. For more information, contact Jeff Will at the Scientific Vis Lab at 219.464-6875.

Blue Willi's wonderful cable knit sweater with fabric collar and button front. Buttons have rhinestone detail. Cotton. Pre-washed and dries to avoid shrinkage. Machine wash, tumble dry. $298

Fall & Winter Clearance 40-60% off

409 Alexander Street, LaPorte, IN 326-8602
On Hwy 35 - 5 Blocks South of Lincolnway
Turn right on Alexander
Monday-Friday 10 am to 6 pm Saturday 9:30 am to 5 pm

The Scientific Visualization Lab at V.U. offers math and science students a state-of-the-art learning technology using virtual reality models.
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A BRAND NEW KITCHEN COSTS LESS THAN YOU MIGHT THINK DURING OUR 50% OFF KITCHEN CABINET SALE...

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Berrien Artist Guild at the Box Factory

The Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., Benton Harbor, MI, presents two Gallery Openings: “The Watercolor Paintings of Dan Tilstra” and “Meet the New 2005 Berrien Artist Guild Members.” Both will be on exhibit through Feb. 12 during gallery hours of Mon.-Sat., 10 a.m.-4 p.m., and Sun., 1-4 p.m. (MI time).

Paintings by Dan Tilstra, formerly of Berrien Springs and currently of Florida, will be shown in the Hearth Whitlow Gallery. Box Factory Director Mike Murphy will be the curator for the exhibit.

Tilstra’s work is characterized by the use of vibrant colors. Many of the paintings in the exhibit will feature landscapes and people.

In the Riverwalk Gallery, the “Meet the New Members” exhibit will showcase work by the members of the Berrien Artist Guild who joined in 2005. The work will include all media and a wide range of styles including; sculpture, drawing, painting, mixed media and ceramics. The work of approximately 20 new members will be featured in the show.

“We hope to make this an on-going tradition, using the first gallery show of the year in the Riverwalk Gallery to show off the work of our newest members,” Murphy said.

“It not only spotlights their work, but it lets the rest of the members, and the public, get to know them.”

www.boxfactoryforthearts.org or 269/983-3688.

Throw Mandy a Life Line!

The Michigan City Parks & Recreation Department in conjunction with the Michigan City Summer Festival will be honoring Mandy Firnhaber at this year’s Summer Festival Meltdown. Mandy was involved in a car accident on Dec. 1st in which she was seriously injured. She has begun her long recovery and will require extensive therapy in the months ahead.

Mandy and her sister Bethany have both served as Washington Park Lifeguards and as volunteers during Summer Festival events. In order to help the Firnhaber family with their extensive medical costs, donations will be accepted at the Meltdown on Sat., Jan. 28th, at the Michigan City Senior Center. In addition, a portion of the proceeds will be donated to the Firnhaber family.

Buffet dinner will be served from 5-8 p.m. featuring home-cooked chicken, kielbasa, and all the fixin’s. The Current will provide entertainment from 8-11 p.m. Tickets are $15 per person or 2 for $25 and includes dinner & entertainment. A limited number of tickets for entertainment only will be available at the door beginning at 8 p.m. for $5. Tickets are available at the Park Office, the Michigan City Senior Center, Virk’s BP Amoco (formerly Greene’s BP Amoco), any Summer Festival Board Member, or at the door. More information: Shannon Eason at the Parks & Recreation Office, 219-873-1506.
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800-876-1331

www.c21middleton.com

297 Timber Ridge, LaPorte
Beautiful 4 bedrooms, 3½ bath home in Timber Ridge. Hardwood floors, crown molding, 2 fireplaces, beautiful kitchen with high end appliances, 3 porches (1 screened), finished basement and 3 car garage. Fabulous buy! #116491 $439,000
Ask for Larry Middleton @ 874-2121 ext. 19

2919 Lake Shore Dr., Long Beach
Charming home high above the Drive with outstanding Lake Michigan views. Vintage character accents a year round residence with exposed hardwood floors, French doors, entry and garage on Ridge Road and built-in dining room cabinets. Perfect for family gatherings with large living area open to year round porches overlooking the lake. The 46' x 155' lot is surveyed and staked. #141612 $830,000
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297 Timber Ridge, LaPorte
Beautiful 4 bedrooms, 3½ bath home in Timber Ridge. Hardwood floors, crown molding, 2 fireplaces, beautiful kitchen with high end appliances, 3 porches (1 screened), finished basement and 3 car garage. Fabulous buy! #116491 $439,000
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Beautiful 4 bedrooms, 3½ bath home in Timber Ridge. Hardwood floors, crown molding, 2 fireplaces, beautiful kitchen with high end appliances, 3 porches (1 screened), finished basement and 3 car garage. Fabulous buy! #116491 $439,000
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3911 Powhatan Trl., Michiana Shores
Beautiful 3388 sq. ft. 4 bedroom home, minutes from the beach. Features include a screened porch, cement patio, 3 decks, whirlpool, sauna, 22 x 40 great room, wood stove, large dining room, fieldstone fireplace, large L-shaped kitchen with 11 windows, all custom cabinets, unlimited possibilities in the 2000 sq. ft. basement, garage and all on 4 lots. Take a look at this one! #137652 $659,000
Ask for Larry Middleton @ 874-2121 ext. 19

202 Garden St., LaPorte
Motivated Seller! Unique one owner home surrounded by nature. Beautifully decorated and maintained with amenities galore, newer gourmet kitchen with solid maple cabinets (Amish), top of the line appliances. Newer breakfast room overlooks the gardens. Three bedrooms, office could be fourth. Lots of storage, low utility bills, under $125 a month in this one of a kind spacious home. #136915 $212,000
Ask for Roger Miller @ 873-7930

319 Maplewood Dr., Michigan City
One of the most unique and quality built homes in the area. The main house has approximately 6000 square feet, 4 bedrooms, 5 baths, 4 fireplaces, new custom kitchen, Sub-Zero Refrigerator, fantastic rooms, glass and views. This house is fantastic and there is a 1500 square foot guesthouse, all top quality. Professional landscaping, all on 33 wooded acres between LaPorte and Michigan City. LaPorte Schools. #101522 $699,000
Ask for Larry Middleton @ 874-2121 ext. 19

319 Maplewood Dr., Michigan City
Lots of room in an attractive and functional floor plan. Two bedrooms and a bath on the main level and two spacious bedrooms with another bath up. Kitchen opens to family room. Full basement is unfinished, with some studs walls erected, and suitable for improvement as recreation room, offices and bedrooms. Level 100'x100' lot front Maplewood Drive and extends to Duneland Drive. Walk to public or association beaches at Stop 31. #147609 $325,000
Ask for Rick Remijas @ 874-2121 ext. 36

2708 Duffy Ln., Long Beach
Lake Clare to the front, the Fairways of Long Beach Country Club as your backyard and short walk to Lake Michigan Beach. Enjoy this 3700 sq. ft. 4 bedroom, 3½ bath home with 3 porches and all the 1st class amenities expected in a custom residence of this quality. Call us for details. #147469

2708 Duffy Ln., Long Beach
Lake Clare to the front, the Fairways of Long Beach Country Club as your backyard and short walk to Lake Michigan Beach. Enjoy this 3700 sq. ft. 4 bedroom, 3½ bath home with 3 porches and all the 1st class amenities expected in a custom residence of this quality. Call us for details. #147469

Offered for sale at $795,000
Ask for Steve or Barb Beardslee @ 874-2121 ext. 37 or ext. 20

Each Office Independently Owned & Operated • Equal Housing Opportunity
Judith Joseph continues a 14 year tradition by bringing “The Ballet Lady” to all 18 Head Start classrooms beginning January 26 and continuing through February 17. The schedule and locations vary; the public is welcome to observe.

“The Ballet Lady” is one of the Outreach programs Acting Theatre of Michigan City makes available to LaPorte County elementary school children. It is part show--part educational experience, stemming from Joseph’s work with the National Dance & Theatre Institute and Jacques D’Amboise, who pioneered bringing dance to inner-city youth in New York City.

Joseph, who has worked professionally with legends such as Bob Fosse, Sammy Davis, Jr., Agnes DeMille and Juliet Prowse, is an alumna of American Ballet Theatre, Charles Weidman Company, and in the revivals of the Fosse and DeMille musicals, also holds a BA degree with Dance Major and MFA in Theatre Performance. She developed “Ballet Lady” in New York specifically for pre-kindergarten children in the 1980s. The program became funded locally by Lakeshore Foods, the Indiana Arts Commission and private donors who share the vision of arts in education.

Head Start Director Bonnie Bernard and staff give the program complete use of the city’s facilities as the youngest children learn about posture, how muscles stretch, simple ballet movements and how to create dances of their own. Adding the elements of make-up and costume (“razzle dazzle”) plus movement props (the “Fred” dolls and “silk”) the children become an actual part of the art of theatrical movement.

Phone The Acting Theatre for exact schedule and location information: 872-4221.

Also: See “Head Start” on Page 22.
Dunescape Beach Villa  $410,000
Dunescape Beach Club Villa in Michigan City is just steps away from a gorgeous private beach. Friendly community with a heated indoor year-round pool and exercise room. Enjoy balmy summer evenings on your screened-in porch, barbecues on your deck. End villa affords added privacy. 3 bedrooms, 2½ baths, 2 car garage. Hardwood floors, granite countertops, gas fireplace and vaulted ceilings. Summer fun for the entire family.

Marina Park  $214,000 to $364,500
We currently have 5 units available in this waterfront condominium complex, with a variety of sizes, layouts and prices. All units come with a 50 foot boat slip, private deck, covered parking and views of Trail Creek Marina, Washington Park and Lake Michigan. The common area offers an inground pool and tennis courts.

Long Beach  $369,000
This newly remodeled Long Beach beauty boasts an open concept with 3 bedrooms, two baths, a gorgeous fireplace, maple cabinets in the kitchen, central vac, and beautiful oak floors with cherry and walnut border throughout. Listen to the waves crash from your deck, or take a quick walk down to the beach. This home would be a wonderful full time residence, or the perfect beach getaway.
**Concert at Box Factory for the Arts**

James Dufford of Spring Lake, MI, makes his first Box Factory for the Arts appearance on Sat., Jan. 28 at 8 p.m. (MI time). Admission is $7/adults; $5 (seniors 60+ and students).

Jim is at ease on the 6 and 12 string guitar as well as the mandolin. His performances include contemporary music by popular musicians such as The Beatles, James Taylor, and Van Morrison as well as blues, Celtic and original tunes.

The Box Factory is at 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph, MI. More on this and other Box Factory events at www.boxfactoryforthearts.org or phone 269-983-3688 during normal gallery hours of 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Mon.-Sat. or Sun., 1-4 p.m.

**Sullair Corp. Sponsors UW Auction**

Sullair Corporation will sponsor the 2nd Annual United Way Auction for the Community on Fri., Jan. 27 at the Blue Chip Casino in the Grand Ballroom. The evening's festivities will begin with a silent auction at 6:30 p.m., followed by a live auction facilitated by Auctioneer John Gutt at 7:30 p.m. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., the $5 admittance fee includes music and hors d'oeuvres. A cash bar will also be available. Casual cocktail attire is suggested.

A sampling of items to auctioned off include: A LeRoy Neiman Serigraph, Chicago Dinner Cruise & Hotel Package, Teeth Bleaching, Steaks, Dell Laptop Computer, Chicago Cubs Tickets, Indianapolis Pacer Tickets, and Warbird Flight Experience.

**Step Out of the Shower and Audition!**

Step out of the shower and up to the microphone. Let the world, or at least La Porte County, take note of your talent.

Auditions for “Hoosier Idol,” presented by and a benefit for the La Porte County Symphony Orchestra, will be Fri., March 17 and Sat., March 18 at La Porte Little Theatre, 218 A Street, La Porte. Three judges will select 12 finalists, six in the junior division (17 & under) and six in the adult division (18 & over). The winners will perform at the La Porte Civic Auditorium, 1001 Ridge Street, La Porte, on Saturday, June 24 with the orchestra and Dr. Groovy and the Soul Surgeons.

On the 24th, three on-stage commentators will share their thoughts about each performer's stage presence, vocal range, style and talent. Joe Mellen of Michigan City will be the Master of Ceremonies. The audience will have the final say-so by voting for the Hoosier Idol winners. The three top finishers in each category will receive cash prizes — $300, first place; $200, second place; and $100, third place.

Vocalists may choose to sing classical, Broadway music, country, gospel, pop, rock, jazz, opera or blues. The Hoosier Idol contest is open to amateur soloists only, no duets or group performances. For auditions, applicants may provide their own accompanist, CD or karaoke machine, or sing a cappella. In addition, a piano accompanist will be provided.

Applicants must live in La Porte County or any county touching La Porte County.

Don't miss this opportunity to take the MIC and shine. To receive an audition application, phone the Symphony office at (219) 325-0666 or visit www.lcso.net. The deadline for entry is March 10. The $20 audition fee will be contributed to this orchestra fundraising event.

**Youth Leadership Award**

The Rotary Club of Michigan City is searching for candidates to attend the 18th Annual District 6540 Rotary Youth Leadership Award camp at Camp Tecumseh YMCA Outdoor Center in Brookston, Indiana. The camp will take place April 21-23.

The deadline for applications is Feb. 15. Applications should be delivered to: Michigan City YMCA, Executive Director Bruce Zahn, 1001 East Coolspring Ave., Michigan City, IN 46360 or Mark Franesconi, Principal, Michigan City High School, One Wolf Trail, Michigan City, IN 46360

Bruce Zahn, local RYLA committee chair, said that participants will be selected from students in their sophomore or junior years in high school, who have exhibited leadership abilities in school, church, extracurricular, or community activities. The camp participants will live, work, study and play together in a democratic setting under the guidance of professional counselors and educators.

More information from Bruce Zahn, 219/872-9622 or any Rotary Club member.
BEAUTIFUL FRENCH FARM HOUSE on 11+ acres in the Heston/1000 North corridor with frontage on Spring Creek. Over 2500 sq. ft. with 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, wall of windows in living room, fireplace, walkout lower level, custom features throughout. $475,000

STONEHEDGE ESTATES, a new development in LaPorte, Indiana, offers several homesites and floor plans to choose from. This community of upper end homes offers 4 ponds, walking/jogging trails, and lush landscaping. All floor plans are over 3500 sq. ft. starting in the mid $600K’s, and homesites starting at $69,900.

LONG BEACH LOT. Build your dream cottage on this rolling, wooded lot just 2 blocks from Lake Michigan. Gas, electric and water available. 2738 Floral Trail, Long Beach at Stop 27 $250,000

VACATION LIVING AT ITS BEST in this totally renovated 2-3BR, 2BA end unit condo. Enjoy the gourmet kitchen, fireplace, 2 decks, patio and boat slip. Many custom features throughout. Association beach access, tennis court and swimming pool. $430,000

TRANQUIL & PRIVATE 5 ACRE SETTING overlooking a huge pond in the popular Heston Corridor. 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, fireplace, over 2100 sq. ft., large deck with hot tub, beautiful flower gardens. $625,000

CUSTOM NEW CONSTRUCTION HOME ON 20 ACRES just 40 minutes from Chicago. 4500 sq. ft. includes 5 bedrooms, 4.5 baths, gourmet kitchen, luxurious master suite with private balcony, great room with fireplace & beamed ceilings. The list goes on and on! $1,595,000

ELEGANT CUSTOM HOME in an idyllic setting. This unique, open concept home is situated on a hilltop lot in Rangewood Subdivision. 4 bedrooms, 3.5 baths, a private master suite includes jacuzzi tub, walk-in closet and spacious screened porch, gourmet kitchen, spacious family room, loft, finished lower level, private patio w/built in firepit, and 2-car garage. $439,000

BEST DEAL IN LAKESIDE! This cedar shake cottage offers 3 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, great room with fireplace, loft, 18 ft. pine ceilings, gourmet kitchen with granite counter tops and stainless steel appliances, 2 screened porches and outdoor shower. Now only $599,900!!

BUILD YOUR DREAM HOME on this private 5 acre setting in the Heston/1000 North corridor with a 1 acre springfed pond. You can enjoy country living and still be just 10 minutes from downtown New Buffalo shopping, restaurants and Lake Michigan. $175,000

Check out all my listings on choosechad.com
One of the new kids on the block reflects the increased pace of vibrancy in Michigan City’s downtown. The Southern Shore Art Association, 722 Franklin St, next door to the respected Prince Gallery, drew people from St. Joseph, MI, to Valparaiso, IN to their Art Critique on Thurs., Jan. 12, 6:30-9 p.m. Twenty artists and photographers jammed the Southern Shore Art Association Gallery, having brought paintings, photographs, and sculptures for a critique led by Janey Bartos and Renae Ricks. Each piece, set on the easel by Jimmy Johnston of Michigan City, was commented on by the two discussion leaders, and then the group would add their thoughts and questions.

From richly-colored portraits and Indiana fields to glowing orange abstracts and rainbow colored collages, from three-foot high found-object flowers with hummingbird to Venetian-inspired mystery object—all had their turn in the spotlight. The artists, veterans and “newbies” alike, most often got the insight they sought. In having someone else look at the work, the artist sees ways to give the work even more of creative spirit.

Not only did the group receive; but they brought. Downtown Michigan City is rumored to have three more new galleries about to move in. The revitalization of the downtown Franklin St. area may follow models from Chicago’s River North, to New Buffalo, to Saugatauk, where the introduction of venues for the arts led to those places becoming a draw—and to jobs. The emergence of The Southern Shore Art Association, with its programs of Critiques, exhibits, and plans for future art festivals and perhaps musical performances is one more draw for the downtown.

The Southern Shore Art Association holds Critiques on the 2nd Thursday of each month. The next one will be Feb. 9th. The next general association meeting will be Thurs., Feb. 23, 6:30 p.m. Visitors are welcome to attend either program. Phone: 219-879-4980. More information at http://southernshoreart.org.

------submitted by Robert Stanley
THE FOURTH HOUSE FROM LONG BEACH'S EVER POPULAR STOP 23 has it all. Living & dining rm w/fireplace, built-ins & hdwd flrs. Light wooden cabinets, granite counters & tile floors w/newly redone galley kitchen w/breakfast bar. Light streams through glass block windows in the master BA with his & her closets. Guest BR & BA, built-in garage, appliances & more than ample storage complete this perfect Long Beach ranch for year round or vacation living. Properly priced at $468K
Call Bonnie “B.” Meyer

ICONIC MID CENTURY MODERN HOME designed by nationally recognized architect, Ike Colburn. Exceptional home nestled on 3 wood-ed private acres, adjacent to Point O’Woods Golf Course. For the lover of architecture, this home is a classic that has been meticulously maintained. $427,900
Call Linda Folk at 269-449-0206.

BEACHFRONT RANCH 3 units separated or joined can be rented, shared or used by a crowd. Only fine sand & dune grass separate the deck & patio from miles of shallow LAKE MICHIGAN beach. 5BR/BA compose the well constructed main & lower walk out levels with hdwd flrs, casement windows even separated utilities. 2 gas fireplaces. Perfect for a tax free exchange. Reasonably priced at $995K
Call Bonnie “B.” Meyer

SWAN’S WAY – “Sun’s End” is situated on a secluded & wooded acre in Harbor Country. Interior designer, Susan Fredman has turned what once was a very ordinary house into a joyous mix of color, architectural detailing, arts & crafts furnishing & custom design. With more than 3500 sq ft of space, 4BR/4.5BA, this is a home for all seasons. Expansive screened porch & great room w/fireplace, this home will pull you from the City at every opportunity. $1.449M
Call Gail Lowrie

STONES TIBOW. “The Marshes.” Your own private piece of nature in the heart of Harbor Country. Susan Fredman has woven the beauty of this lush 10-acre wooded site into the shape of these beautifully designed homes. Currently the only home available, is a mix of solid construction and bit of whimsy. 3 BR/2.5BA, lg screened porch, a remarkable kitchen & high ceilings. Stone’s Throw includes a private in-ground pool & wooded walking trails. $689K
Call Gail Lowrie

A LONG WINDING ROAD leads you back to this wonderful country retreat on 3.88 acres complete w/charming guest house & barn. This 3580 sq. ft. home has 4BR/3.5BA with your private path winding down to a private beach! This 3BR/3.5BA home utilizes all space. The adult exercise room contains a current pool for your water work-outs - then step to your exercise equipment while you watch the TV. Come & see all of the fabulous amenities! $1.600M
Call Donna Iwamoto

LONG BEACH LOG CABIN offers 2BR/1BA on hilltop lot with Lake MI views through Hurd windows over treetops. Living room fireplace & woodburning stove warms you through winter as you anticipate summers along the beach at Stop 16. Share more than 11,000 sq ft of woods with cardinals & the occasional deer. Low taxes & entry level pricing encourage plans for improvements & expansion. Great value $345K
Call Bonnie “B.” Meyer

SLEDDING SKIING & SNOWMEN are welcome across all these 33 acres in LaPorte County. The Little Calumet River moves through the property even in winter. Almost half mile of private drive appears beyond the gate. 2 exceptional fireplaces, & 40x24 heated swimming pool. The master suite joins a guest room that comfortably sleeps 10. Two separate garages offer plenty room for boat & tractor storage. Sellers are asking $789K
Call Bonnie “B.” Meyer
Residential
New Construction
also additions, remodels, decks and siding
"Thoughtful building start to finish"
BLUE LINE CONSTRUCTION
Chuck Henderson
219-872-0688

Photos, Original Art Sought for Guide

Photography buffs and artists who have captured the many charms of Harbor Country are asked to share their special shots and artwork for the new edition of the Harbor Country Guide now in production. Both color and black-and-white pieces are welcome to be considered for the cover art and inside illustrations. Subjects can be anything that portrays the flavor of visiting or living in the area. The deadline for submissions is Mon., Feb. 13, at 5 p.m. MI time.

Practically any good nature shot such as beaches, surf, sunsets, woods, farms, vineyards, rolling country roads and dunes are on the “most wanted” list. Shots of people having fun and at leisure along with families at play are in high demand. Don’t overlook those cute pictures of the kids on the beach or sledding. Every season needs to be portrayed in full glory as well. Shops, boats, marinas and special events all contribute to the rich fabric of Harbor Country that needs to be illustrated. Businesses also are encouraged to send pictures of their establishments in action.

The photographer or artist of every picture used will receive a byline and all photos submitted will be returned, providing a stamped, self-addressed envelope is included. Anyone easily recognizable in a photograph must give his or her permission for the picture to be published in the Guide. If shots of children are submitted, their parents must approve the picture being used.

Anyone interested in submitting photos for consideration should send or take them to the Harbor Country Chamber Office at 530 S. Whittaker St., New Buffalo, MI 49117 or e-mail them to chamber@harborcountry.org. Contact Chuck Garasic, 269-469-0332, with any questions.

The 65,000 Guides to be printed this year will be distributed throughout Harbor Country and also are sent to the thousands of people who contact the Chamber asking for information about Harbor Country. Guides also are available at visitor centers throughout the state.

The Chamber and the Harbor Country Lodging Association promote the Guide through advertising that reaches millions of potential visitors and on the official Chamber website, harborcountry.org.

MC Library Seeks Volunteers
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

The Michigan City Public Library is looking for volunteers to prepare simple tax forms for low-income and elderly patrons. Computer skills are helpful but not necessary. Free training will be provided by the IRS. If you would like to help during the tax season, contact Robin Kohn at 873-3049 for more information.

Learning Center Needs Tutors

The Learning Center needs math tutors for math students needing help with basic math, fractions and algebra. Phone Robin Kohn at 873-3049.
THE

maximize

3 bedroom cottage
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full basement
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best buy - beach!
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Sunday, January 29
1-3pm
Directions:
Michiana Drive
south on El Portal
west to 418 Meadow
Michiana Shores, IN

Open house...
Acorn Theater to Hold Auditions

The Acorn Theatre is holding auditions for several supporting roles in what will be the world premiere of Dorothy Tristan’s sexy comedy “Bohemian Nights” to be directed by Academy Award nominated director John Hancock. Auditions will be held at the theater on Sat., Feb. 4, beginning at 1 p.m. EST.

Rehearsals will begin April 17 and performances will be June 9, 10, 16, 17, 23 and 24. Persons planning to audition should notify the director at john@filmacres.com.

Parts being cast include: Harry Tepper, a middle-aged Chicago wholesaler; Desiree, a twenties-thirties female, tough clerk-typist; two “stagehands,” male or female, with a sense of humor; and a Mafioso, a coarse middle-aged male.

The Acorn Theater is located in the historic Featherbone Factory at 107 Generations Dr., behind the Three Oaks Post Office on N. Elm Street. For maps, directions and other upcoming programs at The Acorn Theater, visit www.acorntheater.com.

State Parks and Reservoirs Offer Much

The holidays are over, but winter has just begun at Indiana state parks and reservoirs. These state properties offer a wealth of opportunities for exercise, entertainment or a weekend of relaxation with trails to hike, vistas to enjoy, winter birds to see and lots of family fun.

Turkey Run Inn will host a Sweetheart Getaway on Valentine’s Day, and Clifty Falls and Potato Creek state parks both will hold bluebird nesting box-building workshops before spring. When there’s snow, the sledding hill at Fort Harrison State Park is a popular destination. The Wine Tasting Getaway, along with the bridge or euchre tournaments at the Canyon Inn at McCormick's Creek State Park provide a winter break, and hunter education classes at Roush Lake can provide an excuse to visit the new shooting range. At all state parks and reservoir properties, Hoosiers can enjoy the hikes, talks, crafts and games that are the hallmark of the interpretive services.

Indiana state park inns offer a special “Pay for One, Stay for Two” program. Visitors can enjoy two consecutive nights for the price of one, Sun.-Thurs., through Feb. 24.

Camping is still available in many places for hardy souls who enjoy the brisk temperatures.

Check out a list of winter events and activities at www.in.gov/dnr/winter. For a complete schedule of interpretive programs at each site, visit www.interpretiveservices.IN.gov or call individual properties. Make reservations at state park inns at www.indianainns.com.

Some events require a small fee. Donations to help defray the cost of supplies for events are always welcome. The standard entrance fee ($4/car Mon-Thurs; $5/car Sat-Sun; $7/car for out-of-state license plates) is in effect during the winter season in most locations.

Hertzlieb at Gallery Talk

Greg Hertzlieb’s mid-winter Gallery Talk at the Chesterton Art Center will center on images of pre-Katrina New Orleans.

Hertzlieb, Director of the Brauer Museum of Art at Valparaiso University, will provide commentary on V.U. photography professor Aimee Tomasek’s image of whimsical slices-of-life in the French Quarter as it used to be.

“Aimee possesses a talent for showing people having a good time,” Hertzlieb said.

The informal Gallery Talk series takes place on Sun., Jan. 29 at 2 p.m. The free event, sponsored by the Chesterton Art Center, is open to anyone having an interest in art and art-related subjects.

The Chesterton Art Center is located at 115 South Fourth Street, one-half block south of the stoplight at Broadway and Fourth. Phone 219/926-4711. Gallery hours: 11 a.m.-4 p.m. weekdays, and 1-4 p.m. weekends.
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CTG is pleased to bring the work of Harold Pinter, the 2005 Nobel Prize winner for Literature, to their audiences in Northwest Indiana this February.

This early masterpiece by the celebrated playwright was the original “Comedy of Menace.” It offers a compelling blend of wit and dread, as a pair of mysterious strangers arrive at a rundown seaside boarding house in search of its sole boarder, the reclusive Stanley. First produced in 1958, today this classic seems more resonant and timely than ever.

Pinter, known for his spare prose style and haunting, elliptical plays was awarded the $1.3 million Nobel literature prize in October 2005. In its citation, the Swedish Academy said that Mr. Pinter “uncovers the precipice under everyday prattle and forces entry into oppression’s closed rooms.”

In his acceptance speech, Mr. Pinter began by explaining the almost unconscious process he uses to write his plays. They start with an image, a word, a phrase, he said; the characters soon become “people with will and an individual sensibility of their own, made out of component parts you are unable to change, manipulate or distort.” “So language in art remains a highly ambiguous transaction,” he continued, “a quicksand, a trampoline, a frozen pool which might give way under you, the author, at any time.”

The Story: In a small house at a coastal resort live a man, his mentally wayward wife and their boarder who has been with them for a year. He is a strange chap, unkempt and in flight from we know not what. Enter an even stranger sleek Jewish man and his muscle bound Irish henchman. The mentally immature wife accommodates them with a room and then decides that it is time for the boarder to have a birthday. At the party she arranges, the new guests play cruel games with the boarder—break his glasses, make a buffoon of him, and push him over the psychotomic precipice. The next morning he is reduced to a gibbering idiot and meekly leaves with them.

Praise for “The Birthday Party”
“Fascinating capacity to be menacing, ominous and evocative of some dark and threatening doom.”
-N.Y. Post.
“The most interesting play to be seen on Broadway.”
-N.Y. Times.

Opening Night Gala
After the show on Fri., Feb. 3, there will be an Opening Night Gala hosted at Billy Jack’s, 2904 N. Calumet Ave., Valparaiso

Party with Cast and Crew on Second Saturday!
Immediately following the 2nd Saturday performance of each mainstage production, gather for a casual meet and greet with the cast and crew at the Elks Lodge, 157 Jefferson St., just one block from the theatre. Enjoy the opportunity to discuss the production with the staff... your feedback is important and helps shape future seasons.

Tickets, Etc.
Adults/ $15, Students (21 & under w/ ID) $10, Seniors (62 & over w/ ID) $12, Groups (10 or more) $12. Reservations at 219/464-1636; e-mail boxoffice@ctgonline.org or log onto www.ctgonline.org
CTG’s Chicago Street Theatre is located at 154 W. Chicago St., Valparaiso, IN.

Performances:
Fri, Feb 3 at 8 p.m.; Sat, Feb 4 at 8 p.m.; Fri, Feb 10 at 8 p.m.; Sat, Feb 11 at 8 p.m.; Sun, Feb 12 at 2:30 p.m.; Thurs, Feb 16 at 8 p.m.; Fri, Feb 17 at 8 p.m.; Sat, Feb 18 at 8 p.m.

Cast
Piper Bakrevski as Meg; Kelley Bilski as Lulu; Eric Brant as McCann; John Evans as Stanley; David Pera as Goldberg; Ron Shurte as Petey.

Directed by Deb Weiss and Stan Christianson.

CTG is supported, in part, by a grant from Northern Indiana Arts Association, the Indiana Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts.
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301 Lady Lane • $239,000
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Travel & Study Trips Offered by PNC

Field-Study Volcanoes in Hawaii Trip
Purdue University North Central Office of Continuing Education is offering a field study course that will take participants to the volcanoes in Hawaii.

This course, led by Dr. Ronald Janke, will review the existing knowledge about volcanoes, as well as the recent research advances using the Hawaiian volcanoes as the natural outdoor laboratory.

Participants leave for Hawaii on July 8 and return home on July 16. In addition to PNC course fees, a program fee of $1,900 covers round-trip airfare, lodging, park entrance fees and on-site transportation. All participants are responsible for their own round-trip transportation to O'Hare Airport, food and incidentals.

The course is offered for credit for students to include in their degree programs or as a non-credit option for students or community residents who want to learn more about volcanoes and have the opportunity to visit sites in Hawaii on their own.

Smoky Mountains Natural History Trip
Purdue University North Central Office of Continuing Education is offering a field-study course designed to study wildlife, plant life, ecology, geology and environmental problems unique to the Smoky Mountains.

The course is offered for credit for students for their degree programs or as a non-credit option for students or community residents who would like to learn more about the Great Smoky Mountains of Tremont, Tenn.

A program fee of $325 covers lodging, meals, class activities and student insurance. All participants are responsible for their own round-trip transportation to Tremont, Tenn., as well as incidental and personal expenses.

Field-Study Trip to Alaska
Purdue University North Central Office of Continuing Education is offering a field study course that will take participants to Alaska.

Led by Dr. Ronald Janke, this course is a five-day field study of glaciers in south central Alaska.

Participants leave for Alaska on June 10 and return on June 17. In addition to PNC course fees, a program fee of $1,500 covers round-trip airfare to Alaska, lodging, tours and student insurance. Participants are responsible for their round-trip transportation to O'Hare Airport, food and incidentals.

The course is offered for credit for degree-seeking students or as a non-credit option for students or community residents who want to learn more about glaciers and see other sites in Alaska on their own.

To obtain further information, to register for these classes or to receive information on other Continuing Education courses, contact the Valparaiso Academic Center at (219) 548-2468, or visit www.vac.pnc.edu. Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations should contact the Valparaiso Academic Center.
It’s time for sign-up for the winter session of Toddler Time and PreSchool Story Hour at Michigan City Public Library. Programs begin Jan. 31. Preregistration is necessary for both programs; phone 873-3045.

Toddler Time is a half-hour program for 2 & 3 year old children with a parent or adult. First session will be Tues., Jan. 31, 10 a.m., or Wed., Feb. 1, 9:30 a.m.

PreSchool Story Times is for 3-5 year old children. A parent or adult must remain in the library during the program. First session will be Tues., Jan. 31, 1:30 p.m., or Wed., Feb. 1, 10:30 a.m.

Dance at The Acorn Theater

Singles and couples are invited to another in a series of dances featuring the sounds of the big band era at The Acorn Theater on Fri., Jan. 27. Duo Wayne and Laurie Shick will be the featured performers.

Known at many of the area’s dance clubs, the Shicks perform a variety of music for those who love ballroom dancing. Laurie, backed by Wayne on keyboard and vocals, has a vocal range and depth that, according to critics, “sends chills up and down your spine.”

Whether she is singing a soft Barbara Streisand type ballad or a high energy Chattanooga Choo Choo, listeners are caught up in the mesmerizing quality of her voice.

A portion of the proceeds of the evening will be donated to the local chapter of COPSMART, a national organization that provides counseling services for families of police officers.

The dance begins at 7 p.m. EST. Tickets are $15 and can be reserved at 269-756-3879 or purchased at the door. The Acorn Theater is located in the historic Featherbone Factory at 107 Generations Dr., behind the Three Oaks Post Office on N. Elm Street.
Open House for sixth, seventh and eighth graders and their parents

Monday, February 20 - President's Day
Program: 11:00 am - 3:00 pm (lunch provided)

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Tom Brokaw, former White House speechwriter, Class of ’77

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January 28, 2006 8:00 am to 11:00 am
Admission and Scholarship Qualifying Exam

February 25, 2006 8:00 am to 11:00 am
Admission and Scholarship Qualifying Exam

April 8, 2006 8:00 am to 11:00 am
Admission Exam

Additional testing by appointment.

Testing Site:
La Lumiere School
6801 N. Wilhelm Road
La Porte, IN 46350
Phone: 219.326.7450
Fax: 219.325.3185

Questions:
There is no fee for the entrance exam, but advance registration is required.

Call our Office of Admission at 219.326.7450, or email us at admissions@lalumiere.org.
foodstuff by carolyn m'connell

I visited one classroom in particular and now, several weeks later, I'm still agog. Though I myself am a mother of three, with many child-school years behind me, I have never seen a more polite room of classmates. And these are 3-4-5 year olds! Michigan City's Head Start does an incredible job of educating preschoolers.

Held in a bright and glistening clean school building, Head Start has been here 30-plus years, having begun in 1967. More than 300 pre-school children are presently enrolled with a teacher plus an assistant and volunteer in each of the classrooms. Approximately 18 children attend mornings or afternoons in each room. This program enriches each child's life and prepares him to comfortably enter the public school system.

Play, creative art, stories, poems, field trips and music open the world for each student. Self-reliance, self-esteem and self confidence are encouraged and fostered, as each child is made to feel special as a person as well as an important part of a group. (Readers, I assure you those traits are easily recognizable in the kids I visited.) As for health – all enrolled children receive physical, dental and vision examination; also, lab work. Follow-up treatment is provided if needed.

Head Start Child Development Program
A snack and hot lunch are enjoyed each day. The children are introduced to new and different foods and sometimes cook school foods themselves. The day I was there at lunchtime, they were served green beans and, by george, they ate them! (My own kids, when little, wouldn’t touch green beans.) These pre-schoolers ate everything on their plates. Amazing. Each child stands in line to wash his hands before sitting down at the table.

Most of the kids are from needy families – that’s the way Head Start functions. Lula Lewis, the teacher whom I interviewed, has held that position since 1968, is still going strong. She tells us the three-year-olds who leave their home for the first time are scared, sometimes terrified. They spend a few months in an upset and nervous state, but then, all of a sudden, they’ve become the perfect student, one who often says “Stop! I can do it all by myself!” Even some parents are helped to improve their lives by entering GED programs through Head Start direction.

A rare and pleasant Head Start lunchtime – watching healthy, happy and polite little kids enjoy their meal. A rare and memorable crowd indeed.
Best lists, Olympics, Kooky

It has become a tradition for media to post “Best of” lists as the old year folds into a new one. I’ve found two worth noting this week. Also, as we look forward to February, many of us will be watching the Winter Olympics on the tube. Knowing how each sport is judged is easy enough with a mouse click. Plus, I’ve found two wacky websites to put a grin on your face.

MSNBC Year in Pictures (www.msnbc.com/modules/yip2005/). Get ready for some spectacular photojournalism. In this slide show set to music, you’ll see some photos that are downright pretty, and others that are difficult to look at. All capsules the year we’ve put behind us. Let’s hope that 2006 brings us all pretty-to-look-at pictures of major news events. At the end of the slide show, you’ll have an opportunity to vote for your favorite.

Best of Online Games (www.jayisgames.com/best_of_2005.php). I have no idea how many office workers find time to play video games on the clock. I have to guess that the numbers are large, based on the sheer numbers of “best games” found at this website. The games could keep a person busy for an entire year, nonstop. One redeeming factor is that there are a few categorized as “Games for the Brain.” That ought to keep senility at bay.

2006 Winter Olympics (www.olympic.org/uk/games/torino/). The athletes who participate in the Winter Games learned long ago that if you can’t beat the cold, snowy winters, you might as well get out there and enjoy a winter sport. The rest of us who waited too long to pick up on that philosophy can sit in our warm homes and watch the action in snuggly comfort. This website is the official Olympics organization site with plenty of stuff to click on. It’s a good place to get information about how each sport “works,” or is judged. The site provides links to Turin’s official Olympic website, too. You can keep track of athletes and scores by country, too.

M-Law’s Wacky Warning Labels (www.mlaw.org/wwl). This website is officially the “Michigan Lawsuit Abuse Watch,” where outrageous litigation within the state is monitored by a nonpartisan organization. Go ahead and wade through the litigation examples, or if you’re not up to it, just skip over to the wacky labels. They’re more fun, anyway.

Kooky Chow (www.kookychow.com). When I first saw this site, I thought that it would be perfect for our food writer, Carolyn McConnell, to review. There are some very strange concoctions on the market. Bloater pate is one of them. Tuna jerky is a treat for dogs, cats, and yes, humans too. The pickled fiddleheads do not sound too outrageous, though. Have fun looking around this online grocery sampling.

Consumer Reports Webwatch (www.consumerwebwatch.org). The slogan for this information-packed site is “Look Before You Click.” This is a good place for anyone new to the Internet to begin learning the dangers of surfing and possibly messing up a perfectly good computer system.

Send your questions/comments to cyberscribbles101@yahoo.com. Read CyberScribbles Too online at http://cyberscribbles.blogspot.com.

Visit my website: Artmedia-IN.com

Reflections of Superior - Artists Under Sail

Fritz Seegers realized a life long dream - to sail and live aboard the boat he built himself. In 2001 he invited a crew of artists to join him in circumnavigating Lake Superior. From June 1st to Sept. 30th, the rotating crew had an opportunity to create artworks inspired by the rich mosaic of geographic, historic and mythic features of the great lake.

At 1 p.m., Sat., Jan. 28th at the Michigan City Yacht Club, Seegers will share a multimedia travelogue, documenting the 1200-mile journey of exploration into pristine wilderness, sublime landscapes and past thousands of islands. The classic wooden yacht, “Alwihta” was the artist’s home for the four-month journey. The travelogue includes video clips, photographs and examples of the artists’ work. The marine perspective offered is unique in that much of the area is very wild and still inaccessible by road. Seegers will also share descriptions of the steps he uses in creating compositions combining both digital and traditional methods.

Sailing, nature and art enthusiasts of all ages are welcome. This program is open to the public. Tickets are $5 each. Reservations recommended; doors open at noon. Lunch menu available, RSVP required. Reservations at 219-929-7668 or email: jennie@calldmi.com.
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January 26, 2006

THE Diggin' in the Earth
with Maggie Beyer

It's Super Bowl time again, our national spectacle, so what could be more fitting for my earthy column than our national symbol, the Bald Eagle. That's what I thought when I saw this American icon looming from the front page of the Prescott Daily Courier on my recent visit to Arizona. Benjamin Franklin, a recent January birthday boy, wanted our national symbol to be the wild turkey, but the Continental Congress outvoted him deciding that the white-topped, bold and stalwart visage of the bald eagle depicted our nation more aptly. We could have been calling it the “baeld” eagle, the Old English word for white, but somewhere in history the word became “bald”. What’s news -- and worthy of it -- is that the bald eagle was on the brink of extinction in the 20th century, placed on the endangered species list in 1978.

These amazing raptors that can travel over two thousand miles in migrating south from Canada disappeared and were not seen in Indiana at all until just recently. Some unique methods have gone into bringing them back: foster homes in nests from the Columbus, Ohio Zoo, is one; another are the back packs created at Navajo Camp in Arizona that carry a transmitter tracking and delivering their route six times a day. Banning DDT, used as a pesticide in the 50's and 60's, was a biggie, which among its horrors, seeped from the eagle’s bodies to their eggs, making the shells fragile so that they would break when nesting eagles tried to sit on the nest, killing their own young. Now it seems the high tech world is stepping in.

The world wasn’t so high-tech back in the 1890s when the Grand Kankakee Marsh was drained, a habitat that drew Eagles migrating from Canada to its wetland habitat. It seems hard to believe that the Kankakee River you cross if you travel south on Rt. 421, a river that seems little more than a healthy creek, once meandered through the Grand Kankakee Marsh, over a million acres, as immense as the Everglades of Florida. My only sighting of eagles has been on a trip to Mexico when my children were young. It was on Matanchen Beach near what was once the sleepy village near San Blas that we saw the eagles soaring in spirals to their nests on the cliff overhead. They cir-
eled the sky in an aerial ballet. On the beach below, the sun-soaked bodies of young men seemed to join the dance, twisting their bodies to dig for clams with their toes. Since habitat restoration began in Indiana in 1985, I’m glad that eagles can still have their day.

Restoring a species on the verge of extinction like the Bald Eagle, gets counted, not by the dark clouds of birds that once filled the sky over the Grand Kankakee Marsh, but by each eaglet that survives. In one project at Indiana’s Lake Monroe in 1992, eight active nests were watched with five surviving chicks, one of them using that foster nest from the Ohio zoo. Just a year later, a record number was considered to be the 126 bald eagles that wintered over. In Prescott, the time to view eagles in breeding season is now, and Joanna Dodder, reporter on the Daily Courier, wrote: “People who think they had a whirlwind courtship don’t really know the true meaning of the phrase until they see bald eagles in the midst of it.” She described the male and female eagles climbing high into the atmosphere, hooking talons, then free falling toward the ground, locked and spinning together. Moments before crashing to the ground, they unlock and fly off in opposite directions.

“It must be a rush,” she wrote. Hold that censorious urge, however. This is not a mating ritual, just the foreplay, with even Girl Scouts getting involved in eagle protection. In Prescott they’ve teamed up to offer recycling spots for fishing lines and hooks discarded by fishermen, one of the chief hazards that kill eagles when they become entangled while diving for fish, their favorite food.

Woods and water, whether it’s wetlands or lakes, draw wildlife and sportsmen...and development. Draining the Kankakee marshlands gave way to the farms that fill the area. The four lakes of the Prescott National Forest are artificial, like all but one of the lakes in Arizona. “It’s kind of cool that this artificial habitat is being used by a threatened species,” biologist Noel Fletcher said. It’s striking this balance between what the species need and what people want that is the challenge, he went on to say. When I watched the eagles in Mexico in the 60’s, little did I know that survival of a species could become part of the picture in the future. Then, few people knew. Now we do. It’s a challenge.

And so it is.

Before 1890, a million acres of the Grand Kankakee Marsh surrounded the Kankakee River.

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Glaciers of Alaska
June 10 through June 17, 2006  Course led by Dr. Ronald Janke.

Volcanoes in Hawaii
July 8 through July 16, 2006  Course led by Dr. Ronald Janke.

Natural History of the Great Smoky Mountains
July 31 through August 5  Course led by PNC faculty.

For additional information and fees call the PNC Valparaiso Academic Center (219) 548-2468 or visit www.vac.pnc.edu and “Off Campus Travel Courses.”

THE Lubeznik Center Gift Shop Special

The Lubeznik Center for the Arts in Michigan City is offering a special, one time only, 20% off shopping spree in their Gift Shop. You can find a nice selection of unique and art-related offerings, from tote bags and games to handmade jewelry and original works of art. Shop any day between now and Feb. 15 and take 20% off your total purchase with a special coupon that can be printed off their web site: www.lubeznikcenter.org or is available at the Center.

The coupon is only good once, so make a list and check it twice! Consignment items are not included in this offer. Happy Shopping!

The Jack and Shirley Lubeznik Center for the Arts is located at 101 2nd. St., Michigan City. E-mail them at artinfo@lubeznikcenter.org or phone 219-874-4900 with any questions.
Chinese New Year at VU

Valparaiso University will celebrate the Chinese New Year, the Year of the Dog, on Sat., Jan. 28 with a dinner and the performance of traditional Chinese music by VU students who studied in China during the fall semester.

The dinner begins at 6 p.m. in the Valparaiso Union on campus. Tickets are $5; purchase at the Union Information Desk or phone (219) 464-5415.

The menu includes spring rolls, Gongbao chicken, fried chicken wings, fish, fried rice, vegetable slices, fruit and cookies. Following dinner, students who studied at VU’s Hangzhou Study Center in China will discuss their experiences and perform traditional Chinese music.

Dr. Brent Whitefield, assistant professor of history, is master of ceremonies for the dinner. Dr. Dennis Friesen-Carper, Reddel professor of music, and Jianyun Meng, lecturer in foreign languages and literatures, are the program’s music directors.

The dinner is sponsored by VU’s Chinese and Japanese Studies Program, with proceeds to support the student-led China and Japanese clubs. For more information about the University’s Chinese and Japanese Studies Program visit www.valpo.edu/cjsp.

Readers Group Discussion

A Readers Group Discussion will be held at 7 p.m. on Tues., Jan. 31, at the Coolspring Branch of the LaPorte County Public Library. You may choose to read Booked to Die by John Dunning (fiction), or Moving Toward Stillpoint: A Mother’s Transformational Journey with Her Dying Son by Therese Luce (non-fiction). Both books are available for check-out. This program is free and open to the public. No preregistration is necessary.

Book Reading and Signing

Coolspring Library is also hosting a book reading and signing with author Therese Luce on Sat., Feb. 4, at 1 p.m.

The Coolspring Library is located at the corner of Johnson Rd. and 400N, Michigan City; phone 219/879-3272. Phone 48 hrs. in advance, 219/362-6156, to request signing for the hearing impaired.

Is Your Group Looking for Grant Money?

The LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave., downtown LaPorte, is offering a special program on researching grant money. The class will teach you how to utilize the Foundation Directory Online to find grant money.

The class will be held on Thurs., Feb. 9, 6 p.m., in the large meeting room of the library, and is free and open to the public. No preregistration is necessary. For signing for the hearing impaired, or for more information, phone 219/362-6156 or visit www.lapcat.org
**Digital Photography Courses**

Purdue University North Central’s Office of Continuing Education will offer a series of digital photography courses this spring.

The series begins with “Beginner’s Guide to Digital Photography” which introduces students to the use of digital cameras. Students will learn how to analyze digital photographs to determine and solve root problems. This course will be offered at the PNC Valparaiso Academic Center at 600 Vale Park Road South on Thursdays, Feb. 2-23, from 6-8 p.m. and at the PNC Westville Campus Tuesdays, Feb. 7-28, from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

The series continues with “Beyond the Basics of Digital Photography” which will expand the student’s photography skills and show the creative use of digital cameras. Fundamentals of composition, depth of field and exposure control will be explored, as well as using lighting to change the mood of the subject. This course will be offered at the PNC Westville Campus on Tuesdays, March 7-28, from 6:30-8:30 p.m. and at the PNC Valparaiso Academic Center on Thursdays, March 9-30, from 6-8 p.m.

The final course in the series, “Beginner’s Guide to the Digital Darkroom” will show how to create photos that get noticed. Students will learn how to transfer photos from the camera to the computer and to use Photoshop Elements to perform functions such as removing red eye and changing colors. This course will meet at the PNC Westville Campus Wednesdays, March 29 through April 19, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and at the PNC Valparaiso Academic Center on Tuesdays, April 11- May 2, from 6-8 p.m.

The course fee for each class is $114 with an Early Bird special of $99 if registration is completed more than two weeks in advance.

Registration at 872-0527, ext. 5343, or by visiting www.pnc.edu/ce. Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations should contact ext. 5343.

**“Penguins in the Snow”**

BABYTALK and Parents as Teachers will have a special program at the LaPorte County Public Library on Mon., Jan. 30th, beginning at 6:30 p.m. There will be an hour of stories, fingerplays, activities and snacks. The program is recommended for ages birth to 5 years.

Every child attending will receive a free book. The program is sponsored by Dunebrook in cooperation with the library. Contact them at 800/879-0007 to reserve a spot for you and your child. This program is free.

Other programs in the series: Feb. 27, “Shadowplay and Groundhog Day”; and March 27, “A Wild Dinosaur Dig!” The library is located at 904 Indiana Ave., downtown LaPorte. Phone: 219/362-6156 or visit www.lapcat.org for more information. Signing for the hearing impaired is available if you phone 48 hours before the program.
Maple Syrup Time Reservations

Groups of first graders through adults may make their reservations now for Deep River County Park’s 2006 Maple Syrup Time program. The 1-1/2 hour tours will be available by reservation on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from March 2 through March 14 at 9:30 a.m. and at 11:30 a.m.

The program is in three parts: an outdoor program among the tapped maple trees, a visit to the sugar shack to see the evaporator working to make pure maple syrup, and a stop in the Visitor Center to learn more about maple syrup and to sample a taste of the syrup made in the park. Participants may also purchase the syrup and other souvenirs in the Gift Shop as part of the program.

The fee is $1 per child or adult, minimum of $20, and that amount must be deposited to secure a reservation, the remainder due the day of the program. Groups of 90 may be accommodated at one time. To reserve a spot for your group, phone the Lake County Park Department’s office at 219/945-0543 or 219/755-3685, Mon.-Fri., 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Deep River County Park is located on Old Lincoln Hwy, southeast of Hobart, IN. (Take US 30 west of Valparaiso, past Deep River Water Park to next signal light; turn right and follow signs to park.)

Sign Up Soon to Sing in Choral

The La Porte County Symphony Orchestra and Michiana Choral Society are offering the public a chance to sing with the orchestra at two upcoming concerts, the Classic Concert on March 25 and The Music Man Pops Concert on April 22.

Sign up and plan to stay at the first rehearsal of The Music Man choral from 7-9:30 p.m. on Thurs., Jan. 26 at LaPorte Little Theatre, 218 A St., LaPorte. The performance, with musical director Philip Bauman and stage director Jim Snyder, will not require memorization. Seven additional rehearsals are scheduled from March 30 until the concert on April 22 at the La Porte Civic Auditorium.

On Thurs., Jan. 26, Robert Dure, artistic director of the Michiana Choral Society, will also be providing an opportunity to join this new group. The first vocal performance will be “Five Mystical Songs” by Vaughan Williams and Handel’s “Zadok the Priest” at the British Invasion, Irish Excursion Classic Concert on Sat., March 25 at Elston Middle School Theater, Michigan City.

More information at (219) 325-0666 or www.lcso.net.

Valentine Day Reminder

The Valentine issue of The Beacher is just around the corner on Feb. 9th. If you have a sentiment you would like to share with a loved one, a poem perhaps, you may submit it to the office, 911 Franklin St., email sallyc@thebeacher.com, or fax to 219/879-8070 by Feb. 3rd.
On January 26, 1784, Benjamin Franklin, in a letter to his daughter, Sarah Bache, disapproved of the eagle as a symbol of the United States. His reasons: “I wish that the Bald Eagle had not been chosen as the Representative of our Country. He is a Bird of bad moral Character; like those among Men who live by Sharping and Robbing, he is generally poor, and often very lousy. The Turkey is a much more respectable bird, and withal a true original Native of America.”

On January 26, 1967, the “Great Blizzard of ’67” began piling up snow (eventually totaling in excess of two feet), and bringing many midwest cities, including Chicago, to a virtual standstill.

On January 27, 1854, the first regularly scheduled trains began rolling on the Canadian Great Western Railway.

On January 27, 1880, Thomas Edison was granted a patent for an incandescent light.

On January 27, 1978, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio were declared federal disaster areas as severe winter storms swept the areas.

On January 28, 1754, English writer Horace Walpole read a fairy tale called “The Travels and Adventures of Three Princes of Serendip.” He was so impressed with their capacity for making accidental discoveries that, in a letter written on this date, he created the word serendipity to describe this ability. This is one of the rare instances in history when the exact date of origin of a word can be documented.

On January 28, 1807, London’s Pall Mall became the world’s first street to be illuminated with gaslight.

On January 28, 1878, in New Haven, Connecticut, the first telephone switchboard went into operation.

On January 28, 1878, the first daily college newspaper, the Yale News, began publication in New Haven.

On January 28, 1915, the Life Saving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service were merged to form the United States Coast Guard.


On January 29, 1861, Kansas became the 34th state to be admitted to the Union.

On January 29, 1936, Ty Cobb, Babe Ruth, Honus Wagner, Christy Mathewson, and Walter Johnson were elected as the first members of the Baseball Hall of Fame.
On January 29, 1989, Eddie LeVeque, the last of the original Keystone Kops, whose comic antics endeared them to a generation of silent movie fans, died at the age of 92.

On January 29, 1989, Morton Da Costa, who directed some of Broadway’s biggest hits of the 1950’s, including “The Music Man,” “Auntie Mame,” “No Time for Sergeants,” and “Plain and Fancy,” died at the age of 74.

On January 30, 1815, Congress authorized purchase of Thomas Jefferson’s library, making it the nucleus of the Library of Congress.

On January 30, 1882, Franklin D. Roosevelt, who would become the 32nd President of the United States, was born at Hyde Park, New York.

On January 30, 1933, the first episode of The Lone Ranger was broadcast on Detroit’s radio station WXYZ.

On January 31, 1752, American Revolutionary War patriot Gouverneur Morris was born at Morrisania, New York. He headed the committee that wrote the final draft of the United States Constitution, and much of the credit for the wording in the document belongs to him.

On January 31, 1797, world famous Austrian composer Franz Schubert was born in Vienna.

On January 31, 1949, television’s first daytime soap opera, “These Are My Children,” was broadcast from Chicago’s NBC studios.

On January 31, 1958, the United States entered the Space Age with the launching of Explorer 1, its first successful launching of a satellite into orbit.

On January 31, 1990, Anna M. Michelotti, who helped educate her six children while they attended the last one-room schoolhouse in Cook County, died at the age of 66. Of the six; three have become doctors of medicine, two are lawyers, and one is a physicist.

On February 1, 1859, Irish composer and conductor Victor Herbert was born in Dublin.

On February 1, 1862, Julia Ward Howe’s “Battle Hymn of the Republic” was first published in the Atlantic Monthly magazine.

On February 1, 1893, in Orange, New Jersey, Thomas Edison completed work on the world’s first motion picture studio. The cost was less than $650.

On February 1, 1911, in the Criminal Court of Cook County, Illinois, fingerprints were used for the first time as evidence to obtain a conviction. The conviction was upheld by the Illinois Supreme Court.

On February 1, 1941, the United Service Organization (USO), whose purpose was to entertain United States troops, was founded.
Activities to Explore

In the Local Area:

January 26 -- 2nd Annual United Way Auction for the Community sponsored by Sullair Corp. 6:30 pm in the Grand Ballroom of Blue Chip Casino. $5 adm. includes music & hors d’oeuvres. Auction begins at 7:30 pm.

January 27 -- Screening of “Blue Hawaii” at the Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. 2nd St., MC. 7 pm. In conjunction with the exhibit “Elvis?: Photographs by Parry Carroll” now showing. Enter raffle for prizes or contest for best (or worst!) Hawaiian shirt. Adm. $3/adults, $1/children. 219/874-4900. www.lubeznikcenter.org

January 27 -- Dance to the sound of the Big Band Era at The Acorn Theater featuring duo Wayne and Laurie Shick. 7 pm MI time. Tix $15; reserve at 269/756-3879 or purchase at the door. 107 Generations Dr., Three Oaks, MI.


January 28 -- Fundraiser for MC lifeguard Mandy Firnhaber at the Senior Center, Washington Park. 5-8 pm buffet dinner (chicken, kielbasa, etc.). Music by The Current at 8 pm. Full evening $15/per person or $25/couple. Dancing only tix $5 at the door. 219/873-1506. Story this issue.

January 29 -- Gallery Talk by Greg Hertzlieb at Chesterton Art Gallery, 115 S. 4th St., Chesterton. 2 pm. Free and open to the public. 219/926-4711.

January 29 -- Faculty Recital: Saxophone Music from the Soviet Era with Stacy Maugans, saxophone, Joseph Bognar, piano, and others. 3 pm in the Duesenberg Recital Hall on campus of Valparaiso University. Free & open to the public.

January 30 -- Great Books discussion group. 2 pm at MC Public Library. This month’s selection: Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte. New members invited to attend. Info: 873-3049.

January 31 -- Free computer classes at LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave., downtown LaPorte. Intro to Spreadsheets Using Excel, 9:30 am. Basic Mousing, 6:30 pm. Register at 219/362-6156. www.lapcat.org

January 31 -- Readers Group book discussion at Coolspring Branch Library, corner Johnson Rd. & 400N. 7 pm. Booked to Die by John Dunning and Moving Toward Stillpoint by Therese Luce will be discussed. 219/879-3272.

February 1 -- Free computer classes at LaPorte County Public Library, 904 Indiana Ave., downtown LaPorte. Intro to the Internet, 9:30 am. E-Mail Basics, 1:30 pm. Register at 219/362-6156.

February 4 -- Valentine Making Studio at the Lubeznik Center for the Arts, 101 W. 2nd. St., MC. 12:30-3:30 pm. Family event. $3 per person. Materials will be available. Info: 219/874-4900.
January 26, 2006

**Every Monday** -- New Buffalo Chess Club, 6 pm (MI time) at the New Buffalo Public Library, 33 N. Thompson, New Buffalo. Open to all ages and skill levels. Info: John Calo, 269/469-6507 or email jscalo@localnet.com

**Places to Visit:**

- **Barker Mansion**, 631 Washington St., Michigan City. Adm. $4/adults, $2/kids 18 & under, free/kids under 3. Guided tours Mon.-Fri., 10 am, 11:30 am & 1 pm; Sat/Sun noon & 2 pm. 219-873-1520.
- **Great Lakes Museum of Military History**, 360 Dunes Plaza, Michigan City. Open 9 am-4 pm, Tues-Fri; 10 am-4 pm Sat; closed Sun & Mon. Adm. $3/adults, $2/vets & senior citizens, $1/ages 8-18, and free to under 8 and active military personnel. Info 872-2702 or on the web at www.militaryhistorymuseum.org
- **LaPorte County Historical Museum.** Currently closed for move to new location. Projected opening: Spring 2006. 219/326-6808, ext. 276 or www.lapcohistsoc.org
- **Lubeznik Center for the Arts**, 101 W. 2nd St., Michigan City. Tues.-Fri., 10 am-5 pm; Sat-Sun, 11 am-4 pm. Phone 874-4900.
- **New Buffalo Railroad Museum**, 530 S. Whittaker St., New Buffalo, MI. Mon-Fri, 9 am-5 pm; Sat-Sun, 10 am-3 pm (MI time). Info: 269/469-5409.

**Farther Afield:**

- **January 28** -- Benefit Dinner for Tuition Assistance for St. Patrick’s School. Italian dinner served 4-7 pm. Raffles & silent auction, music. Cash prizes of $500, $100 and $50. Tix $10. American Legion Hall, Legion Dr., Walkerton, IN. www.stpatrickschool.us
- **January 28** -- James Dufford in concert at The Box Factory for the Arts, 1101 Broad St., St. Joseph, MI. Contemporary, Celtic, blues and original tunes will be featured. 8 pm MI time. Tix $7/adults, $5/seniors (60+) and students. www.boxfactoryforthearts.org or 269/983-3688.
- **February 1** -- Winter Video series at Krasl Art Center, 707 Lake Blvd., St. Joseph, MI. Noon MI time. This week: “The Nude in Art: The Modern and The Renaissance.” Discussion following video. Take your lunch; coffee will be served. Free & open to the public. 269/983-0271 or www.krasl.org
- **February 1** -- “The Family Trees of the Olivers and Studebakers: Insight in History for Seniors.” 1:30 pm (EST) at the Northern Indiana Center for History, 808 W. Washington, South Bend. Includes a tour of a related exhibit in the Center. Adm. $3 (adults 55+); reserve at 574/235-9664 by Jan. 30.

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Travels with Charley:

2nd Sunday Sojourns to See the Monks in Merrillville

by Charles McKelvey

Monks in Merrillville?
I know; I know — last time anybody checked, there was no monastery sitting there off the Merrillville exit from I-65 on U.S. 30.

And the Star Plaza Theater was still the Star Plaza Theater last time anybody happened by.

So where I am going with this journey to Merrillville to see the monks on the second Sunday of most months of the year?

Well, a brief explanation is in order:

You may recall from past epistles that I have developed a certain fondness for a certain Benedictine monastery called Saint Meinrad Archabbey way down there in southernmost Indiana. Well, I grew so fond of the monks and their magnificent archabbey in the “Little Switzerland” of the fair Hoosier State, that I became a Benedictine Oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

Which is to say I am a lay member of the Benedictine community at Saint Meinrad. Yes, much in the manner that one becomes a member of the Third Order of Saint Francis.

Anyway, the wonderful thing about being a Benedictine Oblate of Saint Meinrad Archabbey is that I have but to travel to Merrillville on the second Sunday of each month to be in the presence of a venerable monk from that monastery I love so much.

We oblates, you see, are organized into chapters throughout Indiana and the country, and the lively group in Merrillville was closest to me so I joined up a few years back.

And I have been happily traveling to Merrillville on those second Sundays ever since.

Yes, good food is certainly a benefit of being a member of the Merrillville chapter, and, oh, the spread we enjoyed at our annual Christmas party in December, and, of course, we got 2006 off to a grand start at our January meeting by feasting on assorted cheeses and grapes and . . .

I am starting to sound like Carolyn McConnell when I should be sounding like that “Travels with Charley” guy you have come to expect to find back here near the classifieds.

Okay, so to get to the point of this travel piece, please join me for a recent second Sunday sojourn of 105 round-trip miles to see the monks, or a monk, in Merrillville.

While I normally avoid I-94, I don’t mind making my way westward along that popular passage on my second Sunday mornings. That’s because traffic is usually light and laid-back. And so it was on a recent Sunday morning as I glided down the on-ramp in Union Pier.

The sun was shining; there were few if any trucks, and the other cars were content to let me hang in the right lane and do the speed limit.

As per custom, I tuned into the “Hello Beautiful” show on Chicago Public Radio’s WBEZ and enjoyed the lively discussion of the arts scene in the Windy City.

I was hankering to see all the new plays in town by the time I reached the I-65 junction and was headed south a short ways for Merrillville. Traffic was actually heavier on I-65 than I-94, but I was again content to head on over to the right lane and do the limit in a relaxed manner.

Then, in no time flat, I was driving west a short ways on U.S. 30 to Broadway, hanging a right, and then hanging another right at 78th Street and cruising into St. Joan parking lot.

As always I was warmly greeted, and, as always,
the Mass appealed at St. Joan because the lifting of voices was so wonderful. Yes, they do music right at St. Joan, and even vocally challenged souls such as myself have no choice but to join the heavenly chorus.

I was also happy to see that the church had fully recovered from the catastrophic fire it suffered during the Easter 2005 season. Thankfully no one was hurt in that blaze, but the church sustained extensive damage and had been closed for much of 2005 for major repairs and restoration. The fire, by the way, was started by a candle that sparked and ignited a tapestry.

Among the many precious items lost in the fire were the four stained glass windows depicting Saint Joan’s life and martyrdom. Yes, ironically, Joan of Arc was burned at the stake, and one of the custom windows depicted just that.

But the good saint must have interceded for her church because the artist who designed the windows said she was cleaning her files the week of the fire and decided for some strange reason to keep her drawings of the St. Joan windows. Just in case.

Well, I had a case of gratitude on a second Sunday as I watched the sunlight play through the new windows that that sensible artist created for my church-away-from-church.

And, yes, we had a wonderful meeting with a monk from Saint Meinrad — one Fr. Adrian Burke, OSB, who spoke to us about the role of the laity in the world. It turned out that Father Adrian spoke to us through the miracle of videotape, but our chapter coordinator, Deacon Steve Zubel, assured us we would have a live monk in our presence for the February meeting.

After enjoying a delightful afternoon with my fellow oblates and our virtual monk, I repaired to the nearby Panera Bakery on U.S. 30 for some food for the journey home.

Then I headed north on I-65, but instead of heading east on I-94, I took I-65 to its timely end in Gary and proceeded harmoniously eastward to Harbert through the sun-dappled dunes along a lightly traveled U.S. 12.

What could be better than a Sunday afternoon drive eastward along U.S. 12 through Dunes country?

Some people have to travel to Tibet to find peace, but I have only to sojourn to Merrillville on the second Sunday of the month to keep my engine from overheating.
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SATURDAY, JANUARY 28

1:30-3 p.m. WINTER WONDERS. Explore one of the trails and investigate animal life in the winter. Examine tracks and scat and learn some of the adaptations animals use to combat the harsh winter months. Meet at Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center.

3 p.m. FEEDING TIME AT CHELLBERG FARM. Experience life on an 1880-1910 era farm by helping a ranger feed the resident farm animals. Meet at Chellberg Farm barn.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 29

1-2:30 p.m. A PRE-GROUNDHOG DAY CELEBRATION. Feb. 2 is Groundhog Day. Will he see his shadow or not? According to legend, if a groundhog sees his shadow on Feb. 2, there will be six more weeks of winter. If he doesn't, then spring is just around the corner. Through an interactive puppet show, Ranger Cliff and his special guest will answer this question while presenting many other facts and myths about groundhogs. Plenty of groundhog-related games and activities follow the slide and puppet show. Meet at Dorothy Buell Memorial Visitor Center.

3 p.m. FEEDING TIME AT CHELLBERG FARM.

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The Lost Painting by Jonathan Harr

Can you say “Caravaggio?” If so, you probably know that he is a famous Italian painter of the early Baroque period; full name Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. He was born in 1571 and died in 1610, a short but eventful life. His lust for life, love, fighting and painting (not necessarily in that order) certainly led to his early demise. It seems he would find rich patrons, make enough scudi to keep himself living a really good life, and then fall prey to his temper, get in a fight (the last resulting in another man’s death), and having to flee the city to avoid arrest.

The thing about the elusive artist is that no one back in the 17th century though that highly of his work. It wasn’t until the mid-20th century that he became a force to be reckoned with.

“After two centuries of disdain and neglect, the great tide of style had shifted, and… the Italian Baroque had come back into fashion… And no artist of that era has become more fashionable than Caravaggio.”

My book recommendation this week takes on the hunt for a missing Caravaggio, “The Taking of Christ,” which drove art critics and collectors alike nuts and running around in circles trying to find it. Copies of various Caravaggio paintings have surfaced all over the world, but actual originals number only somewhere between sixty and eighty paintings. And before you ask the obvious, no, our Caravaggio never signed his paintings.

Author Harr starts out with an English art scholar, Sir Denis Mahon, who has been regarded as the foremost authority on Caravaggio. He had been called in to study many paintings attributed to Caravaggio and other famous Baroque artists. “Sir Denis believed that by studying the work of an artist he could penetrate the depths of that man’s mind... And no copy, however good, could possibly reveal those depths. That would be like glimpsing a man’s shadow and thinking you could know the man.” Sir Denis would have given his eye teeth to set his eyes on the original “Taking of Christ.”

The story shifts to two art students, Francesca Cappelletti and Laura Testa in 1989. The girls had been hired by Giampaolo Correale to do research on some paintings at the Capitoline Gallery in Rome. Their job was to research two copies of the “St. John” painting with both purported to be by Caravaggio.

How do you research a four hundred year old painting? Carefully, my friend, very carefully. The girls started out in the library, looking to trace the history of the painting from the first person who commissioned the artist. Then there was the long and arduous task of finding out where it went from there. Now this may sound all dry and dull to some, but to a bona fide history buff, it’s all heaven! In learning the provenance of a painting you find out a lot about the period of time it was painted in, what was going on in the world at that time, who was the rich patron who commissioned it, what was his family history, and when and why did he sell the painting. In other words, the whole of history opens up before your eyes and may take the researcher to old and beautiful places as Francesca and Laura soon found out. An annotation in some letters led the girls to the town of Recanati and the ancient palazzo of the Mattei family who might have bought the “St John” painting in 1602.

The girls’ finagling to get to see the archives in the family home showed some Henry Kissinger-like diplomacy and reaped them a bonanza. It also brought them face to face with the possibility that the “Christ” painting was also once in the hands of the Mattei family.

The Italians were especially good at keeping inventories of their possessions, and detailed records going back hundreds of years showed items bought and sold, along with a fairly complete description.

The trail seems to end for the girls at this point and the scene shifts to Ireland where a Jesuit house needs some paintings cleaned and restored. They turn to the National Gallery of Ireland for help and when art restorer, and native Italian, Sergio Benedetti went to inspect the paintings, one particular one caught his eye...

It was very old, the colors had dulled to ugly hues, but the style was unmistakable. It had to be “The Taking of Christ” by Caravaggio. Benedetti does research on his own and when he comes across the findings of the two girls in Rome in an art publication, things start to move at a faster pace.

I can’t emphasize enough that this book, in the hands of another author, would have broken down in the first chapter. But in the hands of Jonathan Harr, author of the best-selling A Civil Action, the parallel stories of the modern hunt for Caravaggio and the story of the man himself, is told in sparse but eloquent prose that keeps you begging for more information.

As Francesca’s boss said, “I didn’t expect that you would find something this important.” That’s the way you’ll feel after reading this book.

Till next time, happy reading!
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