

**Frederick Manfred:
A Daughter Remembers**

By Freya Manfred

(St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1999. 202 p. Cloth, \$24.95; paper, \$15.95.)

The Girls are Coming

By Peggie Carlson

(St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1999. 204 p. Cloth, \$24.95; paper, \$15.95.)

**Bittersweet Berries:
Growing Up Jewish in Minnesota**

By Ruth F. Brin

(Duluth: Holy Cow! Press, 1999. 215 p. Paper, \$14.95.)

AS I WAS READING Freya Manfred’s memoir of her father, the novelist Frederick Manfred, a crumpled paper came to light in my basement. The brief note, dated September 5, 1980, read: “To Margot . . . who had me in for dinner tonight. Frederick.” Immediately the large frame of Frederick Feikema (Manfred’s birth name) loomed toward the ceiling—a genial eminence who had come to grace a fund-raiser while we lesser lights from The Loft milled about him. I remembered his improbable height and believed, as Freya wrote, that until the months of his dying, Manfred was a distant father.

There are two stories here—a childhood one, which has its charms and surprises, and a more recent one, which feels more fully lived. It’s rare to find a memoirist who can write both ends of life with equal clarity. And perhaps Freya Manfred needed to be an adult before she could see her father and herself more fully. I imagine a sympathy developed during his cancer and the regular association of her daughterly care.

Manfred’s six feet, seven inches made moving him difficult, whether from bed to bathroom or into a vehicle for drives to the hospital. Yet Freya, her husband, and her brother persisted in bringing him home to Roundwind, the house he had built near Luverne, in southwestern Minnesota; here he was convinced he could still write. Once returning home, he lay down outside the door, too exhausted to go further

He lay on his back, blinking up at the sun. “Don’t worry,

this is fine,” he said, panting a little. “The fresh air feels nice on my face.”

“Well, you can’t stay here all night, Dad.”

“Maybe I can,” he said, craning his neck to gaze around at the tall prairie grass. “Get me a blanket, and I can rest awhile.”

I deeply wanted to do just that. I could lie beside him, and we’d eat now and then and chat and maybe have a bonfire, and eventually he’d die out under the stars.

This desire to touch the dying parent down the length of the body lifts the account beautifully into the universal and stands at the core of what is fine and true in the memoir. Manfred’s attachment to the prairies—this is the writer who crawled on his hands and knees and ate bugs to prepare for writing *Lord Grizzly*—is expressed by Freya’s wish that he pass into the ground. She had been coping with the mechanics of dying and with what modern medicine prolongs and induces. I wish she had been more critical of such trials, but her daily account created from bedside journals powerfully depicts her father’s changes and the family’s sympathetic struggle to cope with them. It is a story many of us her age can tell, as the tall trees of the older generation lean and fall.

Manfred’s illness gives the second half of the book a coherence and momentum that the first part lacks. Yet the earlier story contains appealing vignettes of the wilds of Bloomington, circa 1950, before the oak savannas were built up. We learn about Frederick’s writing shed, his rigorous writing schedule, and his naps when the children usually tiptoed and sometimes stomped. We learn of his rages, the family’s poverty, and his delicate, post-tubercular lungs. There are interesting reminders of literary history: in competing twice for the Nobel Prize, Manfred lost out once to another Minnesotan, Sinclair Lewis.

Freya often quotes paragraphs from her father’s works. These excerpts capture the freshness of his language but cannot suggest the novels’ scope or characterization. I found myself often skipping them—perhaps a true Manfred aficionado would not, but I was eager to get on with Freya’s story. I also shied away from sections about her own writing and publishing. The account seemed too overshadowed by the powerful father and not sufficiently her story—but maybe that was the point.

After Manfred’s death, Freya dreamed he appeared in a monk’s habit and stood at the foot of her bed. Tears appeared “on his cheeks like white opals.” He said, “I’m sorry I never knew you, dear . . . I’m sorry I never *really*

knew you.” She knew exactly what he meant: sometimes around him she felt she existed only as a tree. “Dad talked so much and at such length with such glee and charm and abandon that there was no time or need for me to speak.”

Now, after his death, she seems free to speak about this giant of a man. And we have many reasons to be grateful.

PEGGIE CARLSON SEEMS to have had no such inhibitions. The first woman hired by Minnegasco (1974) in its pipe-fitting department, she tells her story with spunk, humor, and level-headed honesty. This is a storytelling memoir with scene-building, character description, lots of dialog—the works. It’s often funny, with Peggie playing Catholic-school-proper to her friend Sonny’s black-mini, shove-it-in-your-face outrageous. They are brutishly threatened by men who worked years yet had not advanced as far as the newcomers (the resentment is palpable and understandable); they are bedeviled by others who want to tell the “knockers” jokes. “They’re breasts!” Carlson insists.

The job itself causes Carlson little trouble, especially after the two women are allowed to team up—they install stop signs, paint a truck garage Minnegasco blue, fix Bradley water fountains in the men’s lavatory, a “Female at Work” sign taped to the door. Carlson comes to like the job, and despite her stalled college education and her journalist mother’s protests, she stays. She stays through an incipient rape by a male coworker—downplayed but frightening; she stays to join the union and discover the regulation garb of “Polyester jackets. Polyester pants. Polyester ties. Pastel polyester” gathered at Nye’s Polonnaise room for steak dinners. “The girls” had ordered lobster; they were served steak—an occasion for good-guy supervisor Lenny to take on the higher-up Wimple, cracked and sexist. With such characters and Carlson’s wry humor, I felt as if I were watching re-runs of the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* translated from white collar to blue.

Which isn’t bad; in Peggie Carlson’s account, the feminist revolution is played out in a relatively safe, brightly lit basement. Men are much in evidence, men with beer bellies and hang-ups, wearing grease on their eyebrows but spending lots of time jawing in traffic or playing cribbage in the lunchroom. You wonder how the pipes of Minneapolis ever did get fit.

Women are greasy, too, and toward the end of the series Carlson is awarded her own truck. She soon takes a few days off to marry the son of a Minnegasco cribbage champ. Promoted to foreman, she outlasts her husband and works with the Gashouse until 1985.

One startling discovery: her being African American caused less fuss among her mostly white male coworkers than her gender. It did, however, land her into a hell of a mess early in her career when she read meters: a Minnetonka homeowner came after her with a knife, hissing,

“I don’t like niggers.” Carlson didn’t stay to argue. I wish she had pondered these instances of racism and sexism for what they suggest about either Minnesota or the nation. If her experience at Minnegasco is representative, sexism was far harder to combat than racism. In the end, she’s told us a story of feminism with a light touch; analysis and assessment are for someone else.

IN READING RUTH FIRESTONE BRIN’S memoir of growing up Jewish in St. Paul in the 1920s and ’30s I was reminded of another story from a tightly knit community: Evelyn Fairbanks’s *Days of Rondo*, set in the African American neighborhood of St. Paul about ten years later. Both books have a straightforward innocence, different from our tell-it-all memoirs of alcoholism, incest, rape, and cultural conflict.

Before contemporary feminism and civil rights, these girls experienced strong ethnic and racial communities and, coincidentally, were guided by mothers of determined energy and intelligence. There were differences, of course. Ruth Brin’s Jewish identity was less ghettoized than Evelyn Fairbanks’s African American one, but the Jewish family lived with awareness of quotas—only so many Jewish students admitted to the University of Minnesota’s medical school. And, as Hitler’s anti-Jewish campaign exploded, Brin’s parents worked feverishly to bring friends and family out of Germany.

Her mother also volunteered in many local Jewish civic organizations, notably Sophie Wirth Camp at White Bear Lake. It was meant for disadvantaged Jewish children, but as the only kosher camp in the region, it attracted middle-class children as well. Brin provides quite a bit of detail about her mother’s wide-ranging volunteer work, which amounted almost to full-time employment—a sharp reminder of the power middle-class white women exerted in the era before many entered the work force.

Brin takes pains to create a childhood persona for herself—her battles with her mother over food were early memories. She was born small, and her mother followed a rigorous feeding regime set forth by the doctor that didn’t fit Ruth’s cries. In her middle childhood, affection for middle brother George made for amusing romps, and the loss of friendship at puberty is sympathetically told:

One morning when I was eleven, I found blood on my toilet paper. I had a belt and sanitary pad already supplied, of course, so I put them on. Weird—some strange bulky thing between my legs. As we waited for the bus that morning, I told my brother George. He didn’t say anything, but turned away and looked down the street. Now, even our private moments of intimacy were gone. That was when the gate of my childhood really clanged shut.

Where’s the innocence here? you might ask. In the lecture on menstruation, Brin’s Vassar-educated mother

had told her about Margaret Sanger and birth control. Yet the role of sexuality in their lives, and in the culture as a whole, was muted and innocent of complexities we take for granted—such as a sister’s disclosure embarrassing a brother, the girl’s feeling shunned and tainted and not understanding her incipient self-loathing. As Brin wrote:

I was eleven years old, four feet, eleven inches tall, and overweight . . . still dreaming that I would grow slim and beautiful, with blonde curls, but I knew I was short, dark, and dumpy.

If this were a modern story, we’d probably hear quite a bit more about body image and eating disorders. But by the next page Brin has moved on to describe the death of her grandmother Donny, who was living with them. It is this glancing over personal earthquakes, seeing the chasm but stepping over it, that sometimes mutes Brin’s story and makes us wish, if not for the disclosures of today, then for a more wide-ranging analysis that would consider family dynamics and long-term effects.

Even the telling of her religious rebellion—refusing at first to be confirmed in the Reformed Judaism of Mount Zion Temple—has a kind of disembodied quality. Brin’s confirmation speech expressed her melancholy:

Adolescence was the autumn of life, and maturity was the winter. This exactly mirrored my feeling of loneliness and depression. . . . The rabbi demanded to see our speeches and called me into his office, smoking his smelly cigar, to tell me that youth is the springtime of life.

After a struggle with the rabbi and her father she was allowed to keep the idea but not the tone. Next she balked at the concept of immortality which she couldn’t believe after her grandmother’s death. This aggravated the crisis, and Brin refused to be confirmed. Though her Reform congregation encouraged equal status for women and men, it was her father, patriarchal representative of an essentially patriarchal religion, who answered her rebellion. “There was no point in talking to Mother, who was easier to talk to; the temple was Dad’s department.”

Given her father’s explosive temper and her fear of it, we would expect their religious encounter to be full of sparks. Brin summarizes it in a few paragraphs. Her father pled with her to go through the motions without saying anything. “That way you’re not lying and I’m not in hot water,” he said. She complied. And that’s essentially all we hear about it.

So the book moves to its conclusion, with Brin going to Vassar as her mother did, leaving us full of admiration for her family’s tenacity, energy, and intellectual honor but a bit dissatisfied with the tale’s lack of dramatic intensity. Some of this may be due to an earlier genera-

tion’s reticence, especially as regards middle-class women—though we all know rousing, dramatic fiction written by women far older than Ruth Brin. It’s also possible that she inherited an embattled group’s reluctance to reveal itself too fully to unsympathetic outsiders. But ultimately, we must judge the text on its own.

Her story is valuable for its insight into one branch of Judaism, as it was played out in one young life, and, more broadly, for the way a cultured, educated family skirted ethnic discrimination to continue its community contributions. I imagine it might also appeal to young readers who might be charmed and informed by its account of an earlier era and quieted by its sincere response to the inevitable stresses of growing up.

Reviewed by Margot Fortunato Galt, who teaches in the graduate school of Hamline University in St. Paul. The author (with George Morrison) of Turning the Feather Around: My Life in Art (1998), she is currently doing an oral history project on work in Red Wing, Minnesota.

Controlling Vice: Regulating Brothel Prostitution in St. Paul, 1865–1883

By Joel Best

(Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999. 184 p. Cloth, \$29.95; paper, \$16.95.)

THIS IS AN EXCELLENT BOOK, one that fuses history and sociology to tell the story of prostitution and its regulation by city police in the years after the Civil War. Best’s thesis is that St. Paul authorities chose to regulate prostitution rather than prohibit it because that policy allowed them to maintain order in the city and to control a vice that they deemed impossible to eradicate. While the police used existing laws prohibiting prostitution to arrest and fine madams on a regular basis, the authorities allowed those madams who kept orderly brothels to practice their trade. In effect, although not by law, the city licensed their activities. On the other hand, the police forced madams with disorderly establishments to shut down by applying against them the full measure of the law. This policy was not a corrupt one involving graft or bribery but, rather, an open process adopted to maintain order. While the city received some revenues from the fines that madams paid, this income was a relatively small percentage of the municipal budget. Individual police officers did not profit. In addition, St. Paul newspapers regularly reported on the force’s regulation of prostitution via the arrests and court appearances of the city’s madams. Thus, the public was well aware of the city’s policy of regulating prostitution.

Because St. Paul’s regulatory policy was practical in basis, it was vulnerable to criticism from reformers who

argued for the prohibition of vice on moral grounds. Best describes five moral-reform crusades against the regulation of vice in St. Paul between 1870 and 1885. All five failed, largely because most citizens supported regulation as the only means to control immoral but inevitable activities. The majority's practical approach recognized that prohibiting vice did not eliminate illicit behavior but only drove it underground. Most American cities did not make the prohibition of prostitution a permanent policy until after 1900, when Progressive reformers targeted the regulation of vice as a primary urban evil. Even so, prohibition did not eliminate prostitution. Rather, it led to official corruption and increased the influence of organized crime over the vice. While prostitution became less visible in American cities, it also became more geographically widespread. Best argues that the twentieth-century decline in some forms of prostitution, including brothels, had more to do with social changes than with prohibition.

In addition to describing the regulation of prostitution, Best also exams the nature of prostitution as a profession for women. In doing so, he challenges several assumptions that were popularly embraced in the nineteenth century. Reformers and others claimed that most prostitutes lived short lives that declined quickly into despair, disease, and death. Once a prostitute, women were seen as doomed, for it was assumed that they could never move back into respectable society. Another popular assumption was that most prostitutes had been innocents seduced and abandoned by men or forced by pimps or madams into a life of squalor. The idea that a

woman might *choose* to be a prostitute because it offered economic security, or because she liked the lifestyle, probably did not occur to most nineteenth-century Americans because it was antithetical to deeply ingrained notions of womanhood. Best found that most of St. Paul's prostitutes were neither tricked into nor trapped by prostitution. Most were not passive victims but freely chose prostitution as a career at a time when there were few decently paid jobs open to women. Prostitution offered independence and a comfortable lifestyle that were otherwise unavailable to many women. Moreover, many women moved in and out of prostitution during the course of their careers. Marriage, retirement, and reform were just as likely paths out of prostitution as the early death that reformers claimed was inevitable for the "fallen" woman.

Controlling Vice is thoroughly researched and persuasively argued, and it places St. Paul in the larger context of urban vice regulation in the late-nineteenth-century United States. Best contends that the regulation of prostitution in St. Paul, an intentional policy adopted to maintain order, offered a legitimate alternative to prohibition. This argument challenges the usual sociological approach to social-control issues, which presumes a simple dichotomy of prohibition or corruption as the model for examining social-control policies dealing with vice.

Reviewed by Jane Lamm Carroll, who teaches history at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul. Among her publications in Minnesota History are several articles about criminal justice and police work in early St. Paul.

NEWS & NOTES

A FAMOUS Minnesotan once clicked her ruby red slippers and chanted "There's no place like home." In *Salt Lantern: Traces of an American Family* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997, 173 p., cloth, \$29.95, paper, \$15.95), William Towner Morgan investigates the many places his family has called home over the past 150 years: Ireland, Scotland, England, Vermont, North Dakota, Wisconsin, and Goodhue County, Taylors Falls, and Pipestone, Minnesota. Morgan's talismans are a "salt lantern," a clear glass lantern globe filled with sea salt, a drawing of his English family's mid-nineteenth-century home, and other mementos commemorating his great-

grandmother's trans-Atlantic journey in 1855.

Morgan's knowledge of the built environment and material culture distinguishes this book from most family reminiscences. A professor of American Studies at St. Cloud State University, he discerns and describes the similarities between floor plans of family homes in Vermont and Minnesota and between the driveway into a Scottish farmstead and one leading to a farm in the Mississippi River bluff country near Lake City.

Some of his most instructive observations, poignant in their detail, are those from his small-town boyhood in Pipestone, including a World War II

"airborne attack," a week-long sojourn at the Mudcura Sanatorium in Shakopee, and visits to Minneapolis's Forum Cafeteria and Great Northern Station.
—Patty Dean

THE WOMEN'S Great Lakes Reader, edited by Victoria Brehm (Duluth: Holy Cow! Press, 1998, 408 p., paper, \$18.95), brings together accounts of Native Americans, lighthouse keepers, fur traders, cooks on sailing vessels, missionaries, and fearless travelers who lived along or on the Great Lakes. Spanning the late eighteenth century to the present, the selections in this anthology range from published accounts to unpublished letters,

diaries, and log-book entries. The book seems ideally suited to northern-lake vacation reading.

29 MISSING: The True and Tragic Story of the Disappearance of the S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald by Andrew Kantar (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998, 50 p., paper, \$14.95) retells for young adults the story of the Great Lakes freighter that sank in 1975 during one of the most violent storms on Lake Superior. Kantar also details expeditions to the wreck site and the leading theories about what caused the ship's tragic demise.

FIASCO AT 1280: The Rise and Hard Fall of a Twin Cities Radio Station by Jeff R. Lonto (Minneapolis: Studio Z-7 Publishing, 1998, 221 p., paper, \$10.95) recounts the ups and downs of AM Radio WWTC, the station that survived "in spite of itself and failed because of itself." Focusing on the years 1979–1984 when the station played oldies, the insider author brings to life colorful radio personalities and shares humorous tales from the station's wildly erratic years of "creating fun and taking chances."

INDIAN WARFARE is the subject of three recent publications. Historian John D. McDermott's *A Guide to the Indian Wars of the West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998, 211 p., paper, \$16.95) tells why the U.S. military engaged in wars with the indigenous peoples of the West between the 1860s and 1890s, particularly stressing the consequences of government inaction to prevent settlers from moving into Indian territory. The author describes the participants and the circumstances underlying battles, analyzes the events and results, and fits the episodes into the nation's larger historical framework. Almost half of the book is a guide for students, tourists, and history buffs to more than 100 historic sites, battlefields, monuments, parks, and museums in 17 states including Minnesota.

A new biography by James Van Nuys of a Wahpekute Dakota leader, *Inkpaduta (The Scarlet Point): Terror of the Dakota Frontier and Secret Hero of the Sioux* (Denver: the author, 1998, 479 p.,

paper), takes a revisionist look at the severely nearsighted leader of a band that in March 1857 killed settlers at Spirit Lake in Iowa and in southern Minnesota, carried off captives, and escaped into Dakota Territory. The event has been seen by some historians as directly leading to the Dakota War of 1862. The book may be ordered from the author at 5001 Benton Way, Denver, CO 80212.

That 1862 war is the setting for *Flash Point of Deceit* (Moorhead: Gold Fire Publishing, 1999, 195 p., paper, \$11.95 plus tax and \$3.00 handling), a novel by Larry Stillwell. Based on decades of research, the story looks at Christianized Dakota Indians John Otherday and Little Paul, who saved the lives of hundreds of whites and mixed-bloods during the war. Order from the publisher at 218-236-1042 or www.goldfirepublishing.com.

NEW FACES OF THE FUR TRADE, edited by Jo-Anne Fiske, Susan Sleeper-Smith, and William Wicken (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998, 265 p., cloth, \$39.95), is a collection of 15 essays from the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in 1995. The articles question the traditional focus of fur trade literature and, utilizing insights gleaned from modern social and gender history, suggest that there are more diverse ways to look at the trade. Of special interest to Minnesotans are chapters by Bruce M. White ("Balancing the Books: Trader Profits in the British Lake Superior Fur Trade"), Laura Peers ("Fur Trade History, Native History, Public History: Communication and Miscommunication"), and Gerhard J. Ens ("After the Buffalo: The Reformation of the Turtle Mountain Métis Community, 1879–1905").

READERS with access to the World Wide Web may be interested in the online *Journal for MultiMedia History*, www.albany.edu/jmmh/vol2no1/v2.html, which includes articles, conversations with historians, and reviews of material in a variety of formats. In volume 2 (1999) Kathleen Kerr's paper on the Minnesota WCTU appears in the journal's Web Sites section as part of

Robyn Muncy's review of "Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1830–1930." This site, edited by Kathryn Kish Sklar and Thomas Dublin, (1998, updated in 1999) publishes research projects completed by students at the State University of New York at Binghamton, where the two teach.

Muncy's review includes many links; the one for the Minnesota Women's Christian Temperance Union led to two possibilities, Kerr's "How Did the Reform Agenda of the Minnesota Woman's Christian Temperance Union Change, 1878-1917?" which includes a photo of WCTU activists praying outside a saloon in Anoka as part of the 1870s Women's Crusade, and Kerr's epilogue, containing her conclusions, a document list, several speeches by Minnesota WCTU presidents, and endnotes for all text sections. Kerr began her study of this topic in a 1992 honors thesis at Macalester College. —Deborah Miller

LAURA WEBER'S article, "Wins and Losses: The National Register of Historic Places in Minnesota," published in the Fall 1997 issue of this magazine, has won the David Stanley Gebhard Award for the best article on an historical aspect of Minnesota's built environment. Given by the Minnesota chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, the award considered articles published between July 1, 1997, and June 30, 1999. Fred Peterson's MHS title, *Building Community, Keeping the Faith: German Catholic Vernacular*

REMINDER: Handsome, sturdy slipcases, open at the back for maximum protection and convenient storage, keep your back issues of *Minnesota History* within easy reach on your bookshelf. Each container holds eight issues. The maroon-colored cases are embossed with the magazine title and come with a gold-foil transfer for marking the year and volume number on the spine. Available for \$9.95 (MHS member price, \$8.96) plus tax and shipping from MHS Press (651) 297-3243 or 1-800-647-7827 and in the Society's museum store.



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Architecture in a Rural Minnesota Parish, won honorable mention in the books category.

TWO ARTICLES in the January 2000 issue of *Journal of the West* devoted to topics in Native American history are especially noteworthy. "A Northwestern Indian Territory—The Last Voice" (pages 16–22) by historian Rhoda R. Gilman details the provisions of and politics behind an abortive 1841 treaty that would have made much of Minnesota "an all-Indian territory that excluded whites." Caught up in national party politics, the economic interests of powerful fur traders, and questions about Constitutional powers and Indian policy, the hastily negotiated treaty was resoundingly defeated by the U.S. Senate in 1842. This action, according to Gilman, not only ended all hope for a northwestern Indian territory but was also "one more emphatic rejection of ethnic and cultural pluralism as a principle in the development of American society."

In "Early Scandinavian Incursions into the Western States" (pages 72–86) Richard Nielsen, a doctor of technology who also holds degrees in mathematics and engineering, fires another salvo in the debate over the authenticity of the Kensington Runestone. Reexamining runic and

artifactual evidence and revisiting the discussions about possible travel routes and potential evidence found in the oral traditions and physical remains of Indian people, especially the Mandan and Arikara, Nielsen concludes that early Scandinavians did explore "deep into America's hinterland." He calls for a concerted interdisciplinary program to evaluate all of the evidence.

For a copy of this issue, send \$12 plus \$3 shipping and handling to *Journal of the West*, P.O. Box 1009, Manhattan KS 66505-1009 or call 1-800-258-1232.

AN ATTRACTIVE VISUAL and historical account of the development of Richfield Township and the city of Edina is told in Deborah Morse-Kahn's *Edina: Chapters in the City History* (City of Edina, 1998, 162 p., paper, \$19.95). Essays examine life in the early days and modern times, touching on topics such as the mill on Minnehaha Creek, Black pioneers, Morningside and the Country Club District, and the postwar boom years that transformed the area from a farming community into a suburb. Exceptional-quality printing and design distinguish this handsome volume that represents local history at its best. Proceeds from sales benefit the Edina Historical Society.

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