



THE WEEK THAT WAS

DAVID FRESE AND NEIL NAKAHODO | THE KANSAS CITY STAR



SUNDAY

Host **Ricky Gervais** hurts the feelings of all the important people at the Golden Globes. We thought it was hilarious, but, then again, we're a bit fond of chubby guys who try really hard but regularly fail to be funny.

HUZZAH!

HMMM...

HORRORS!

MONDAY

**Anne Hathaway** will stop by "Glee" this spring to play Kurt's lesbian aunt. Meanwhile, we're still holding out hope that Rachel's dads will be played by **Wayne Brady** and **Samuel L. Jackson**.

TUESDAY

**Regis Philbin** announces his retirement from "Live!" Who's going to yell at Gelman? Maybe ... **Ricky Gervais**?

WEDNESDAY

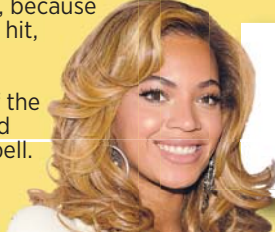
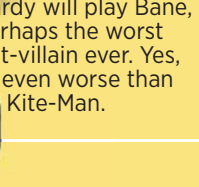
Anne Hathaway update! The actress will play **Selina Kyle**, aka **Catwoman**, in Christopher Nolan's "The Dark Knight Rises." Our excitement at that little nugget is tempered by the news that Tom Hardy will play Bane, perhaps the worst Bat-villain ever. Yes, even worse than Kite-Man.

THURSDAY

Clint Eastwood has signed up to direct **Beyonce** in another remake of "A Star Is Born." The male lead — an alcoholic, washed-up superstar in love with his protegee — has yet to be cast. We suggest **Will Ferrell**, because he needs a hit, and all the previous versions of the film needed more cowbell.

FRIDAY

The friends-with-benefits rom-com "**No Strings Attached**" opens, and our **Ashton Kutcher** fatigue is momentarily overcome by our interest in all things **Natalie Portman**.



FYI



"SHE WAS EXQUISITELY MANNERED, LIKE A QUEEN." | SUSAN HEIM-DAVIS, ABOUT GREAT-AUNT MARY BROOKS PICKEN

COMMENTARY

JENÉE OSTERHELDT



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NO ONE RIGHT WAY TO PARENT

It's the book most of us have yet to read, but parents online and critics across the nation are already talking about Amy Chua's "Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother."

In a Wall Street Journal excerpt two weeks ago, the Yale Law School professor boasts of a parenting style that included no sleepovers, play dates or television and no real choices of her children's own. And then there's the piano practice turned into a power struggle.

I'll admit I was horrified by the essay and the reactions. Never have I seen so much controversy over a book from people who have read only a piece of it. Yet that was all it took to bring Chua death threats, abuse allegations and name-calling.

In the madness surrounding Chua's mothering, a twist in the story may have been lost.

About two years ago, her younger daughter rebelled against Chua's aggressive and seemingly cruel ways. She tamed the big, bad Tiger. Chua herself has said the book was meant to be a self-mocking memoir, not a parenting guide. Her household has balance.

It tips along a tightrope between her demanding style of mother-knows-best and her husband's nurturing and casual one. One reviewer likened the book to a different kind of "Eat, Pray, Love."

That pretty much confirms that the shocking and scary excerpt was just a piece of the puzzle.

In an essay in the New York Post, the older of her two daughters, 18-year-old Sophia Chua-Rubinfeld, speaks up for her mother.

"No outsider can know what our family is really like. They don't hear us cracking up over each other's jokes. They don't see us

SEE JENEÉ | C2



Coming Sunday

**H+H:** Homeowners deconstruct rather than demolish houses  
**Star Magazine:** Mezzo-soprano Joyce Castle  
**A+E:** Lar Lubovitch Dance Company



PHOTOS BY TAMMY LJUNGBLAD | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

**Amy Barickman of Prairie Village, owner of two craft businesses, Indigo Junction and Vintage Workshop, recently wrote a book about Mary Brooks Picken, a Midwestern domestic arts guru. "I was attracted to her entrepreneurial spirit," Barickman says. "She was amazing and is still relevant today."**

'VINTAGE NOTIONS' | Ode to the original domestic goddess

CRAFTING A LEGEND

**A local woman revives interest in Mary Brooks Picken, who won renown for home arts expertise.**

By STACY DOWNS  
The Kansas City Star

Before Martha Stewart, there was Mary Brooks Picken. The Kansas woman was born in 1886 and became a sewing instructor, author and the first American authority on home arts. Picken lived and worked until 1914 in Kansas City, where she taught sewing courses before moving east and gaining international acclaim for her instructional and inspirational writing.

Moved by her work, Amy Barickman of Prairie Village made it her mission to rescue Picken from obscurity. She recently wrote and published the book "Vintage Notions: An Inspirational Guide to Needlework, Cooking, Sewing, Fashion and Fun." It contains essays by Picken, who wrote 100 books of her



**Barickman used graphics from her Vintage Workshop collection in her 12-year-old son Jack's room. The images were scanned from her father-in-law's baseball card collection. Barickman and her husband also have an 8-year-old daughter, Emma.**

own, including "The Singer Sewing Book," which sold more than 8 million copies.

"We've come full circle since Mary's time," says Barickman, who owns Indigo Junction, a craft book

and pattern business, and the Vintage Workshop, a retro and antique image library. "The economy has made people more reflective of

SEE PICKEN | C3

BOOKS

Pondering thoughts of the founders

**Modern political figures have selective memory about the nation's history, author says.**

By EDWARD M. EVELD  
The Kansas City Star

Jill Lepore teaches early American history and studies the relationship between history and memory. So you can imagine how the recent tea party movement, with its references to Revolutionary events and thought, grabbed her attention.

Lepore, a Harvard University professor, wrote a book a few years back about King Philip's War of the 1670s, a big deal in the memories of early Americans, even 100 years afterward. Ever heard of it?

Probably not. That's the way with history. The parts that loom large for us aren't always about the magnitude of an issue or the scale of a conflict, Lepore says.

That is, some history is more useful to us than other history.

The Boston Tea Party of 1773 has been abundantly useful. Lepore will be in Kansas City Wednesday to discuss her book "The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle Over American History."

Lepore says that in the 1960s and '70s it was liberal groups, for the most part, that appropriated language and events of the Revolution — they were the tea parties, the new Sons of Liberty, the protesters against taxation without representation.

Writing about protest, Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Our nation in a sense came into being through a massive act of civil disobedience, for the Boston Tea Party was noth-

SEE LEPORE | C3

MEET THE AUTHOR

**Who:** Jill Lepore, "The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle Over American History"

**When:** 6:30 p.m. Wednesday

**Where:** Kansas City Central Library, 14 W. 10th St.

**Admission:** Free. Call 816-701-3407 to make reservations.

WEIRD NEWS

**Costly klutzniness:** Among the Major League Baseball players (average salary: about \$3.3 million) who spent time on the disabled list in 2010: Kendry Morales (Angels), who broke his leg jumping on home plate after hitting a home run; Brian Roberts (Orioles), who was out a week after he smacked himself in the head with his bat after striking out; Chris Coghlan (Marlins), who needed knee surgery after giving a teammate a playful post-game shaving-cream pie; and Geoff Blum (Astros), who needed elbow surgery after straining his arm putting on his shirt.



# PICKEN: Prolific author ‘loved to give advice’

**FROM CI**  
where creative fulfillment comes from, whether that's in do-it-yourself projects around the house, baking or making handmade gifts.”

A younger audience is interested in craft again, Barickman says. Etsy.com carries all things handmade, “Project Runway” has teens turning on sewing machines, and clubs are forming at schools. This school year, for example, students at Mill Creek Middle School in Lenexa started a crochet club.

Barickman's book has spawned its own club in fabric and craft stores throughout the country. Andrea Rock, a 34-year-old Kansas City quilter, joined the Vintage Notions club at Harper's Fabric and Quilt Co. in downtown Overland Park. About 30 women meet monthly to show their latest handmade creations as well as sample recipes and complete a project, all from the book.

“My mom and I became fascinated by Picken,” Rock says. “There wasn't a whole lot of positive reinforcement for women in that era.”

### ‘Shared the wealth’

Susan Heim-Davis of Kansas City remembers her family rushing to spruce up their Kansas City home before her great-aunt Mary visited from New York. New paint, table linens and draperies were usually involved.

“She was like royalty to our family,” says 63-year-old Heim-Davis, pastor at Missouri City Christian Church. “Although she didn't flaunt herself, she was exquisitely mannered, like a queen.”

Picken's beginnings were humble. Originally Mary Brooks, she was one of three girls and six boys born to a sheep farmer and a midwife near Arcadia, Kan. Mary's grandmother taught her to sew. She decided at an early age to make sewing her profession and went on to graduate from seven schools of dressmaking in Kansas City, Boston and New York.

In 1906, she married Harry Picken, and they settled in Kansas City. Five years later, at age 25, she became a widow. She taught sewing at the YWCA, to female inmates at the Leavenworth Penitentiary and at the American College of Dressmaking in Kansas City. Picken encouraged sewing as a springboard to women's independence, financial security and self-esteem.

In 1914, she moved east and wrote books, including “The Secrets of Distinctive Dress,” published in 1918. In 1939, she wrote the first comprehensive



PHOTOS BY TAMMY LJUNGBLAD | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

**“Vintage Notions” by Amy Barickman (\$29.99) is a book of essays and easy-to-sew projects for each month of the year. It includes seasonal recipes and decorating ideas and four storage pockets.**



**Barickman's stash of Picken wisdom includes “Inspiration” newsletters from the Woman's Institute of Domestic Arts & Sciences in the 1920s.**



**A new line of fabrics licensed with Red Rooster Fabrics, based on the art in “Vintage Notions,” is scheduled to come out later this year.**

about bowls of red apples as centerpieces because her father said “it wasn't a party” without them.

Picken, who remarried, never had children of her own. She treated her brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews to huge boxes of fabrics and thimbles. “Major swag,” Heim-Davis says. “She shared the wealth.”

Picken taught at Columbia University, was the first woman to be named a trustee of the Fashion Institute of Technology and was one of five original directors of the Costume Institute, now part of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. She died in 1981.

### Writer inspires writer

In 2008, Barickman was reviewing vintage newsletters and magazines she'd collected for artwork for her Vintage Workshop company. Her basement studio also contains massive files of greeting cards, board game boxes and ephemera from decades ago.

Barickman thought newsletters between 1916 and 1934 titled “Inspiration” and “Fashion Service” by the Woman's Institute of Domestic Arts & Sciences, though aged, were still relevant today. She scoured the Internet for information on Picken and started collecting her books.



FROM AMY BARICKMAN

### WORDS TO INSPIRE

Taken from “Vintage Notions,” which excerpted Mary Brooks Picken's 1924 book “Thimblefuls of Friendliness”:

“No matter what our environment, no matter what our circumstances — a singing tea kettle, a cozy fire, some one to care for, some one to care, a conscience that does not disturb — all these help in our walk up the steps to divine contentment.”

“Cheerfulness is much more to be desired than riches. Those who possess it have something riches cannot buy — a great possession because it creates goodwill and makes for real happiness.”

“If we build for the future by being faithful to our desires, we lay paving stones that make a safer and more comfortable road for the rest of our lives.”

So far, Barickman feels her own book is a success. “Vintage Notions” is in its third printing, and she is considering writing a biography on Picken.

“People have connected to it on a real emotional level,” she says. “They bring up their family. Maybe there's a recipe their great-aunt made. Or a sister who loves embroidery.”

Barickman feels akin to blogger Julie Powell, who cooked all 524 recipes of Julia Child's “Mastering the Art of French Cooking” in a year, wrote a book and inspired a film.

“I feel like Mary's my kindred spirit,” Barickman says. “She's my Julia.”

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# LEPORE: Exploring history-memory link

**FROM CI**  
ing but a massive act of civil disobedience.” The National Organization for Women asserted that “taxation without equal rights is tyranny.”

The 1970s baldly exposed something else, Lepore says: The country didn't know how to talk about its own beginnings. As the bicentennial approached, some minorities and liberal groups were unsure how best to observe the anniversary. They saw the shortcomings of the nation's genesis — for African-Americans, for women and others — shortcomings not yet fully overcome.

The conservative reaction was to decry liberals and “left-wing academics” for besmirching U.S. history. The current tea party movement echoes those sentiments with even stronger language. Supporters claim that now they are the new Sons of Liberty.

This is getting us nowhere, of course, Lepore says, and she partly blames historians.

“Where did we drop the ball?” she asks.

One explanation is an artifact of how we learn U.S. history, she says. Many high school and college students concentrate on later American history. They have a fairly textured understanding of 19th and 20th century U.S. history. The 1700s, however, are often a focus in elementary school.

“It has a cartoon-y character to it,” Lepore says. “It's two-dimensional.”

But there was nothing two-dimensional about the people who lived here in the 18th century, she says. They were real people who suffered through pov-



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

**Historian Jill Lepore will speak Wednesday at the Kansas City Central Library.**

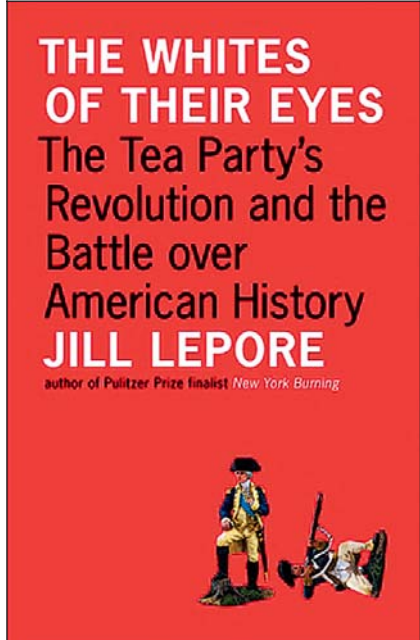
erty, debt and disease. And there was nothing unified about their struggles in dealing with the British or establishing new institutions here.

Lepore writes: “The remarkable debate about sovereignty and liberty that took place between 1761, when James Otis argued the writs of assistance case,

that reached 300 newspapers, including The Kansas City Star. “She loved to give advice,” Heim-Davis says of her no-nonsense aunt.

Heim-Davis' sister, Cynthia

Boles of Tyler, Texas, remembers Picken telling her what types of fabric were appropriate for everyday napkins because they didn't have to be ironed. Picken sentimentalized



and 1791, when the Bill of Rights was ratified, contains an ocean of ideas. You can fish almost anything out of it.”

And so advocates of one side or the other fish out what they need and expunge the rest, simplifying the story for their purposes.

“I find that quite heartbreaking as a historian,” Lepore says. “There's much to admire about yearning for unity, but not at the cost of erasing the past.”

Does that matter for the present? Yes, Lepore says, because it causes us to veer from real discussions about policy matters. Or stifles debate altogether.

It's not helpful, for instance, to oppose a policy because it's “taxation without

representation,” Lepore says. The colonists could make that claim. They had no representatives in the British Parliament. But Americans today enjoy universal suffrage and elect a multitude of representatives, far beyond anything contemplated by the founders.

Disturbing to Lepore are claims that advocates somehow know the minds of the founders, that the founders would have a certain opinion about a modern issue. The Founding Fathers, they say, are “rolling over in their graves.”

But the assertion, for instance, by TV's Glenn Beck that George Washington would have opposed socialism makes no sense, she says. Lepore recently heard from an e-mailer that Benjamin Franklin would be “rolling over in his grave” about Glocks, referring to the Jan. 8 shootings of a member of Congress and others at a Tucson, Ariz., grocery store.

“Franklin can't speak to us about Glocks,” Lepore says. “I adore Franklin, but none of us can know what Franklin would have thought about Glocks. What to do about Glocks is for us, as a people, to decide.”

Calling on the founders becomes most disturbing when coupled with the misguided desire, also not new, to venerate them with near-religious zeal. The result is this: You can't argue against my side because the founders are on my side, and the founders were divinely inspired.

“Then the debate isn't a debate anymore,” she says. “It's gridlock.”

To reach Edward M. Eveld, call 816-234-4442 or send e-mail to [eeveld@kcstar.com](mailto:eeveld@kcstar.com).

### Who should be nominated?

The Oscar nominations will be announced Tuesday, but first we want to hear from you. What were your favorite performances of the year? Favorite films? Go to [KansasCity.com/entertainment](http://KansasCity.com/entertainment) and cast your vote for the movies, actresses, actors and directors you liked the most this year. Your deadline is noon Monday. We'll print the results with the academy's list next week.

