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On threshers, local food, faith, reason and more ...

Pioneer Press
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OF THE MIDWAY

A workshop in St. Paul's Midway area is home to some serious retro tinkering. The shop in the office of Compatible Technology International is a museum of hand-cranked, bicycle-powered agricultural devices — threshers and grinders and a model of a crop storage building that needs no electric power.

Roger Salway, executive director, and Bert Rivers, vice president of operations, told us these are the types of devices the small operation ships to hungry places in Africa, Asia and the Americas. CTI's focus is on assisting local farmers "post harvest" so that crops can be processed or stored and the communities can receive the maximum nutritional benefit.

Salway once traveled the globe for John Deere. Now he and other former agricultural experts and engineers try to design and ship simple devices that can be used in places without electricity or fuel. A hand-cranked device for threshing pearl millet — a popular cereal grain in hot, dry areas of Africa and India — is awaiting field tests in Mali. In Haiti and India, CTI is attacking malnutrition by using grinders to develop shelf-stable, high-protein foods, including packets of peanut butter. In Ghana, the group has developed a grinder to turn the super-nutritious leaves of the Moringa tree into a shelf-stable powder.

This small, non-profit organization was founded in 1981 by a group of missionaries, engineers and General Mills food scientists. Funded mostly by contributions, the

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group tries to find simple improvements to stretch limited food resources. The threshers have no power cords because most of the areas where they will be used have no power. Hooking up a bicycle or an

exercise bike to a grinder can increase revolutions and save work.

These hardy tinkerers of the Midway believe there is a solution in the back shop that can alleviate suffering.

We wish them well and encourage readers to learn more at the web site at www.compatibletechnology.org.

LOCAL PUPILS, LOCAL FOOD

Speaking of food, Minnesota farmers grow a lot of it. There's corn and wheat and sunflowers and barley and oats and canola and flax and spuds and beets and soybeans and other beans of many colors. There are cows and pigs and sheep and turkey and chicken and bison. A summer stroll through the St. Paul Farmers Market produces a list of delectables much longer, if less by volume.

With 27 million acres of farmland, the right rain and sunshine, tens of thousands of farmers, an outstanding land-grant university and some of the world's greatest food companies, Minnesota produces a bounty of nutrition. It seems obvious that some of it should find its way into our school lunches.

But big school districts need a big, predictable, easily processed food supply. St. Paul Public Schools, for example, feeds more than 10,000 students breakfast and more than 30,000 students lunch every day. It takes some doing to figure out how to get more locally grown food into that pipeline — on time and on budget. A partnership between the Minnesota School Nutrition Association and the Minneapolis-based Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy is helping with the figuring, and the results are impressive.

In the first six weeks of this school year, St. Paul schools bought 110,000 pounds of local produce — more than half its supply of fresh produce. Local farms supplied apples, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, corn, cucumbers, grape tomatoes, onions, peppers, potatoes, watermelon and zucchini for school meals. In the works are locally sourced buffalo, wild rice, cranberries, flaxseed, wheat flour, hummus, hot dogs and chicken.

Among the purposes of the push, say St. Paul Schools nutrition boss Jean Ronnei and JoAnne Berkenkamp, director of IATP's local food program, are to:

- get kids to eat more fruits and vegetables
- create incentives for processors to supply healthier foods
- help students learn where food actually comes from
- help sustain local economies in sustainable ways.

So far, so good. Hooray for all hands.

Next challenge: winter.

GOINGGONE GONE

It was a young outfielder, Carlos Gomez, who did a swan dive into the dirt circle at home plate to score the winning run in the Minnesota Twins' playoff victory over the Detroit Tigers a month ago. And now "GoGo" Gomez is gone — traded to Milwaukee for shortstop J.J. Hardy.

Our Friday Opinuedo Poet was distraught.

His bat was often a no-show

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But he never cantered in slo-mo
He sniffed his bat on the logo
And leaped as if on a pogo
So long, sweet wood, dear GoGo!

FAITH IN REASON

"Intelligent Design" is an explanation of life's origins that seeks to leave room for a Designer, AKA God. "ID," as it is called, is at the front lines of our continuing debate over evolution and science education, still going strong 150 years after Charles Darwin published "Origin of the Species."

Thanks to the University of St. Thomas School of Law, we understand the battle a little bit better.

At a symposium at the Minneapolis law school on Tuesday, we heard Casey Luskin of the Discovery Institute argue he wants "to see 'ID' advanced as a scientific proposition." But he argued that public schools should "teach the controversy" over evolution. He said many states, including Minnesota, have incorporated this critical approach into their state science standards.

He said: "We're not trying to ban evolution. We're not even asking that 'ID' be taught, even though we do think it's science." He followed that with a power-point demonstration in the college's moot courtroom that questions whether the correct metaphor for man's descent is a "tree of life" with a universal ancestor or an "orchard" suggesting multiple sources.

He raced through how African monkeys could have ended up in the Americas — an unlikely event that, he said, gives credence to the "orchard model" of multiple lines of descent.

Luskin was followed by Peter Hess, a theologian, author of "Catholicism and Science" and a defender of teaching evolution in schools. He said Intelligent Design is "not science" but is "poor theology." He said it presents God as a "mere designer, and not a very good one at that," responsible for "eons of suffering" such as genetic diseases and praying mantises that mix courtship with cannibalism.

He said intelligent design arose from the Protestant evangelical movement, and that mainline churches do not see evolution as conflicting with their beliefs. He said the alternative to seeing God as a meddling "designer" is to see "God remaining hidden, indecipherable, behind the veil of nature."

Hess said "theistic evolutionists" like himself are comfortable with an "unimaginably vast, dynamic, ancient, evolving universe." He added: "If we accept the idea of creation at all, why can't we accept the autonomy ... of what has been created?"

St. Thomas is a Catholic law school whose mission is "integrating faith and reason in the search for truth...." We appreciate a setting in which faith and science can be discussed with respect and passion.

OPINIONETTES

Spero Daltas was not a household name in his native St. Paul. But he was a well-known, globe-trotting architect with projects in **Iran, Uganda, Turkey, Somalia** and **Mexico**. He died Sunday in St. Paul, where he maintained a home. His architectural offices were in Boston and Rome and his clients included the leaders of **Saudi Arabia**, where he designed and built a new city, King Khalid Military City, in the 1970s and 1980s.

Daltas' parents were Greek immigrants who ran restaurants in the Twin Cities. Spero went to **Central High School**, served in the Pacific in WW II and went on the University of Minnesota and MIT. He is credited with recruiting U graduates to help on his projects and was described as a "**bulldog**" in seeing his designs brought to life. He was a unique and important St. Paulite who "**built globally**" but "**mentored locally**," as our headline said on Thursday.

We offer a loud shout out to **Tom Goldstein**. He was in his final months as a member of the **St. Paul School Board** because he narrowly missed winning re-election Nov. 3. Normally, he would stay on until January. But as the board prepares to appoint a **new superintendent**, he stepped aside to allow a newly elected member, **Jean O'Connell**, to take part in the superintendent decision. It was a classy **display of leadership** and concern for the district.

Further, may the horn of plenty visit your doorstep, Opinuendo sayeth not.

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