

## TRENDS

### Charity auction

STAFF WRITER

MEDICINE HAT

Willie Nelson once advised: "Mamas, don't let your babies grow up to be cowboys." The organizers of the Cowboys and Kids Charity Auction disagree.

Set for next Monday night at the Stampede Grandstand ballroom, the event will include music by Tim Herman and mighty fine vittles from Shooting Star Events.

Miss Rodeo Canada Karina Tees and Hat Stampede Queen Andrea Johnston are among the night's special guests.

Proceeds go to the Canadian Pro Rodeo Sport Medicine Team and Medicine Hat Regional Hospital's neonatal unit.

The auction list includes four autographed posters from Terri Clark, an autographed Tigers jersey, a Stampeders jersey, art from Dynes Gallery and numerous other items.

Admission to Cowboys and Kids, which starts at 5:30 p.m., is \$10. Call Dr. Don Smith at 527-2200 during business hours to donate an item or get more information.

# Hat son guides big bucks

MIKE STIMPSON  
Staff Writer

MEDICINE HAT

It's a long way from delivering papers in Medicine Hat to managing investment funds in the English Channel. But that's the story on Robert (Woody) Milroy, a prairie boy who has hit big in the investment world.

Milroy, 53, manages other people's money from his home in Guernsey, a small British island somewhere between France and England. He is managing director of Milroy and Associates Limited and editor of Standard & Poor's Microcap Guide to Offshore Investment Funds.

The former Medicine Hat News carrier's odyssey away from the Gas City began after attending Grade 10 at Hat High. That's when he went off to the St. John's Cathedral Boy's School near Winnipeg to complete his matriculation because, he says, "I wasn't happy with my progress" in Medicine Hat.

From 1962 until it folded in 1990, St. John's provided a rugged curriculum emphasizing discipline, self-reliance and wilderness skills. Its student activities included snowshoeing and long canoe trips, and the boys were assigned daily chores.

Robert's brother Bill, still a resident of Medicine Hat, says the experience at St. John's taught Robert "how to go out on his own."

Indeed. From St. John's young Robert Milroy went to the University of Manitoba and won a Commonwealth Scholarship to attend college in Australia before going back to Manitoba to complete a commerce degree in 1970.



ROBERT MILROY

His resume for the next 20 years or so includes securities trading, working for oil and gas companies in Alberta, and venture capital management in Vancouver.

Along the way, in the mid-1970s, there was an unsuccessful investment in a Peruvian gold mine. The experience yielded "a good lesson (on) how to put money in a goldmine and lose money," he says with a laugh from his home in Guernsey.

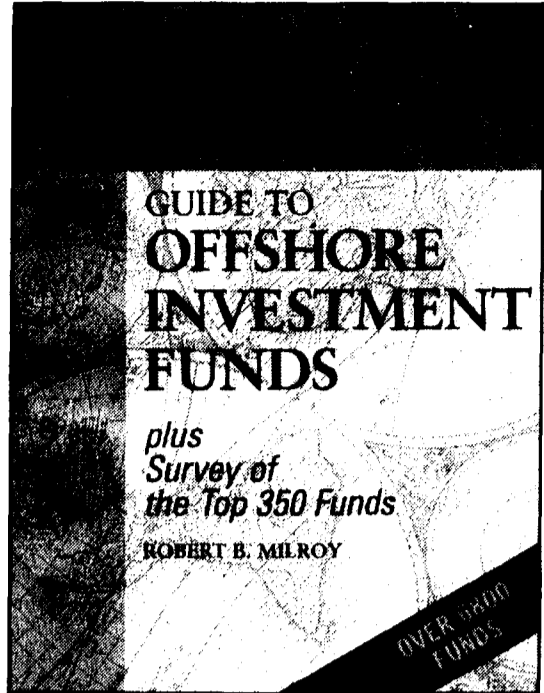
Seriously, he says, the failed venture provided "a good lesson . . . (to) sharpen my skills in dealing in the world of international finance."

A few years ago, he "decided to do more things outside of Canada, to expand my awareness."

"I wanted to look more afield to other opportunities. I wanted to expand my base of knowledge. And that's what happened."

He and wife Carol Raiton, an educational psychologist, moved to Guernsey, a 45-minute plane trip from London, in 1996. From there they operate the asset management firm Milroy and Associates Limited and a publishing company called International Offshore Publications.

The jump into global finance and away from his native land was a liberating experience,



Milroy says. "Little did I know how little I knew until I left Canada."

He travels worldwide conducting investment seminars and consult with clients.

His business has put him in touch with another former Hatter who is now in international financial. Milroy recently visited the Turks and Caicos Islands to talk business with Robert Whitney, who is president of a trust company there.

## Aviator stamped

SYD KRONISH

For Associated Press

Billy Mitchell, one of the founders of the U.S. Air Force, is hailed on a new 55-cent self-adhesive U.S. stamp. It is good for international postage on letters weighing no more than 1 ounce to Canada and for postcards mailed to countries other than Canada and Mexico.

The new offering features a portrait of Mitchell and a rendering of the SPAD XVI aircraft, a two-seat reconnaissance plane which he used as a commander of the American Expeditionary Force Aviation Program during World War I. Mitchell (1879-1936) was considered the first major proponent of air power in the United States. He claimed that air power could be a decisive factor in ground combat and that planes could sink warships during battles at sea.



BILLY MITCHELL

— AP photo  
Billy Mitchell, one of the founders of the U.S. Air Force.

Mitchell was the first U.S. officer to fly over enemy lines. Returning home a much-decorated hero in March 1919, he was made assistant chief of air service. In 1920, he became brigadier general on a permanent basis. On July 25, 1946, Congress voted to give him a special medal of honor.

First day of issue postmarks are available by mail for the Mitchell stamp.

## DOWN SYNDROME

# Mothers may need folic acid supplements

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON

Women who have trouble metabolizing the vitamin folic acid are at a higher risk of having children with Down syndrome, a discovery by government researchers that raises the question of whether folic acid supplements might fight the syndrome.

Mothers with a genetic abnormality that hinders how the body processes folic acid were 2.6 times more likely to have a child with Down syndrome than mothers without that genetic defect, concludes the study published Tuesday in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

But the discovery by Food and Drug Administration researchers is only one piece in the complicated puzzle of Down syndrome, cautioned FDA Commissioner Jane Henney. That's because millions of women appear to have this genetic abnormality, yet the risk of having a child with Down syndrome actually is small — one in 600 births.

So something else has to help trigger the devastating condition.

Still, "this opens the door to look at other genes," explained S. Jill James, an FDA biochemist who led the study.

And birth defect experts were excited because the study points to a possible, albeit still unproven, way to reduce the risk: Eating more folic acid.

**"If you have this mutation and you happen to have a very poor diet, it magnified the problem. We call it a gene-nutrient interaction."**

— Author

"If you have this mutation and you happen to have a very poor diet, it magnified the problem," James said. "We call it a gene-nutrient interaction."

Folic acid is a B vitamin found naturally in leafy green vegetables, beans, tuna, eggs and other foods. Also, in 1998 the government ordered some grain products such as flour, breakfast cereal and pasta to be fortified with folic acid.

Women who eat 400 micrograms of folic acid a day cut in half their chances of having babies with birth defects of the brain and spinal cord, such as spina bifida. Whether a baby develops these defects is determined in

the first days after conception — well before a woman knows she is pregnant. And even with food fortification, it can be hard to eat enough. So health experts recommend that every woman of childbearing age take a daily dietary supplement, such as a multivitamin, containing 400 micrograms of folic acid.

There have been hints that folic acid might play a role in other birth defects, too, but the FDA research is the first good evidence.

Down syndrome is a genetic disorder that combines mental retardation with such physical abnormalities as a broad, flat face and slanting eyes. Affected children are at high risk of heart defects, visual or hearing impairment and other health problems. The March of Dimes estimates there are 250,000 Americans with Down syndrome.

If eating extra folic acid does prove protective, getting women to take it for several months before they conceive — in time to protect eggs produced during ovulation — would be vital, said Dr. Donald Mattison, medical director of the March of Dimes.

"Folate status prior to conception is more critical than we might have thought," he said. "The important message to women is this reinforces the importance of them taking folic acid on a daily basis."

## New Family look

CANADIAN PRESS

TORONTO

The Family Channel is coming up with a new look, logo and attitude this weekend.

Two years ago, the channel shifted down from a premium service to the extended basic tier, at which time viewership jumped dramatically.

Now 11 years old, its programmers say surveys showed viewers want something a little less squeaky clean and Pollyannish. While 60 per cent of its programming will continue to come from Disney, Family says it aiming for a more a more contemporary image.

New programs include Microsoap, a satirical soap opera for kids, and Misguided Angels, the filmed-in-Montreal comedy.

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