

238

# Actress to portray Augusta Tabor at Glenwood Springs Library on Thursday

Glenwood  
Springs Post  
Independent  
Glenwood  
Springs, CO  
Circ. 1560  
From Page:  
2  
4/15/2008  
145140

## Free presentation is final event in Winter Lecture Series

By **Stina Sieg**  
Post Independent Staff

**GLENWOOD SPRINGS** — "It's so important that people understand history so we know where we're going."

You've definitely heard words like these many times before. They likely came from teachers and textbooks, and you probably let them sink in several times. Then, after a while, maybe you glazed over.

Yet, when Mary Jane Bradbury utters the sentence, it sounds fresh again. Perhaps that's because she's a woman who breathes life into history — literally.

For the past five years, the actress has become known for donning the personas of famous frontier females. In the name of education, she's become Molly Brown (yes, the "unsinkable"), Jeannette Rankin, Martha Maxwell and more. A Chautauqua speaker for Colorado Humanities, she's brought these women into classrooms, lecture halls and museums. On Thursday, Bradbury, or rather Augusta Tabor, will be giving a free lecture at the Glenwood Springs Library. As the last event in the Winter Lecture Series (a joint venture by the library and the Frontier Historical Society), the night looks to be an eye-opening one.

Bradbury's most shocking idea? Tabor was just a person, like anyone else.

"In humanity, we're all the same," she explained. "We all have to stand up and take risks.

"We're all people, doing what we can in the best way."

A history buff and performer for decades, she was first asked to play Tabor several years ago in a living history show. In the beginning, Bradbury was unenthused, imagining Tabor as stern as her pictures. As she started to

research the woman, however, Tabor became this warm, strong woman. Bradbury began to see she was taking on the role of a generous person, a loyal, "amazing" one, she said. To her surprise, she "got" this lady.

"I thought, 'Wow, this kind of story is attached to every woman that ever lived,'" she recalled.

It was then that she realized how to coax people into caring about these famed figures. They had to experience just what she had for themselves.

"What did it feel like to be a slave, to be a woman 100 years ago?" she asked, for example.

Her in-character, full-costume performances are her answer. She's become "all choked up," she said, when teaching teens this technique. To her, watching them "get really into" the process is amazing.

She recalled how fascinating it is to listen to people try and explain the notion of a cell phone or TV to her long-dead alter-egos. She's not a book, slide show or video. Being there, in front of people, she shows the "personal, human side" of history, she explained.

"Circumstances change, but what we face as people is the same," she said. "It really gives the audience a sense of the time."

Every performance, she went on, she finds herself silently dedicating the show to the person she's portraying. Whatever good she might do, that's for Augusta, Molly, Martha or whomever.

She was full of passion as she described this and other things, and it sounded like she could have gone on for a long while about her work. She emoted deeply over women's suffrage, and spoke of how inspired she was by its activists and their patience. She stressed how essential it is to have the past close at hand. No matter how distracted or abstracted our culture gets, she feels we can't deny the importance of connection. In a way, we're all in it together — and always have been.

As she put it, "We forget that to be in this world, you've got to be part of something bigger than yourself."

And is she ever.





Glenwood  
Springs Post  
Independent  
Glenwood  
Springs, CO  
Circ. 1560  
From Page:  
2  
4/15/2008  
145140



Courtesy Photo

Actress Mary Jane Bradbury will portray famed frontier woman Augusta Tabor during a presentation at the Glenwood Springs Library Thursday.

### **Tabor time**

**What:** A living history presentation, with Mary Jane Bradbury portraying Augusta Tabor. This is the last program in the Winter Lecture Series, presented by the Glenwood Springs Library and the Frontier Historical Society. A Chautauqua speaker for Colorado Humanities, Bradbury has spent years playing famous historical figures.

**When:** 7 p.m. Thursday

**Where:** The Glenwood Springs Library, 413 Ninth St.

**Cost:** Free