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A history professor at St. Lawrence University, Canton, has written a book about the role that American military families played as ambassadors abroad during Cold War years.

"Unofficial Ambassadors: American Military Families Overseas and the Cold War, 1946-1965," by assistant professor and Margaret Vilas chairwoman of history Donna Alvah, is published by New York University Press.

The author describes how the families, "unofficial ambassadors," spread the United States' image of itself and its image or world order, cultivating relationships. The book's publisher states that "Unofficial Ambassadors" reminds us that "in addition to soldiers and world leaders, ordinary people make vital contributions to a nation's military engagements."

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Lowville native Debra Gingerich has had a book of poetry, "Where We Start," published by Cascadia Publishing House, based in Telford, Pa.

Mrs. Gingerich, who was raised in Philadelphia, N.Y., uses contemplative lyrics, historical narratives and edgy prose in her poems. Her poetry has been strongly influenced by her experiences as a part of a Mennonite community and explores the tensions between individual identity and community loyalty.

She also creatively investigates her husband's unique and difficult Eastern European upbringing. He was born and raised in the former Yugoslavia, where community loyalty turned into war.

"Gingerich builds an impressive collection of poetry that is urgent and compelling to any reader willing to explore the dark corners and sharp turns of any life's migration," the publisher states.

Mrs. Gingerich now makes her home in Sarasota, Fla., where she works in communications and

public relations.

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CSS Publishing out of Lima, Ohio, has published "A Good Paddling!" by Jamesville resident Patty Mondore. The book is a collection of 30 nautical adventures written from the perspective of the author's kayak. Mrs. Mondore's stories describe the natural beauty she has discovered on the small lake near her home at Jamesville Reservoir and at her camp in the Thousand Islands.

Mrs. Mondore and her husband, Robert, own Gold-Mountain, a multimedia company that has produced several DVDs on the Thousand Islands.

She is also a well-known singer in the area. She is residency program coordinator for the department of pediatrics at Upstate Medical University in Syracuse.

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John N. Serio of Potsdam, professor of humanities at Clarkson University, Potsdam, recently had his latest book on American poet Wallace Stevens published. "The Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens" is Mr. Serio's fourth major book on Stevens.

"Cambridge Companion" is a series published by Cambridge University Press in England. Each book is about a notable figure or concept. "The Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens" is a collection of essays by an international team of distinguished scholars who are experts on Stevens's poetry and life.

The essays explain major concepts in his poetry as well as the subtleties of his aesthetic theory. Chapter titles include "Stevens in the 1930s," "Stevens and His Contemporaries" and "Stevens and the Supreme Fiction."

In his introduction, Mr. Serio provides an overview on why Stevens is considered a major American poet and how we should approach his poetry. The book also contains a detailed chronology and a guide to further reading.

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Potsdam resident Tommy Szarka has had "Abner's Curse: A Diary of Essays From a Baseball Itinerant" published through PublishAmerica.

Infusing baseball with incidents from the author's past, pop culture, humor and social commentary, "Abner's Curse" allows readers to live vicariously through a nomadic baseball fan and his sojourns to ballparks from Portland, Maine, to Phoenix, Ariz.

Mr. Szarka is also the author of "McGwire the Pitcher: Baseball's Alternative History." He's a former sportswriter for the Watertown Daily Times and writes for Clarkson University and its

athletic department.

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Theresa native and Old Forge resident John H. Briant has self-published the fifth novel in his "Adirondack Detective" series. The latest, "Adirondack Detective - A New Beginning," finds private detective Jason Black and his pregnant wife returning from Arizona to the Adirondacks to help investigate a missing-person case. However, Black finds his life and others are threatened by an outlaw who escaped from prison.

Mr. Briant published his first book in the series in 2000. He spent 28 years in the state police, 14 years in uniform and 14 as an investigator.

He will hold two book signings: 1 to 4 p.m. May 12 at Borders Books & Music at Salmon Run Mall in Watertown and 1 to 4 p.m. May 13 at Waldenbooks at St. Lawrence Centre in Massena.

Compiled by Times staff writer Chris Brock.