The World's a Stage: Kristin Tyrrell
A Friends' Personality

Act I

Oak Park, Illinois, has been the birthplace of several distinguished individuals who have enhanced the culture of this country through a variety of artistic contributions. From Ernest Hemingway to Frank Lloyd Wright to Robert Burns, these individuals have left their mark on the world. However, this essay focuses on Kristin Tyrrell, who embodies the spirit of creative expression.

Kristin grew up in the environs of Oak Park, where, from birth, she was exposed to the contributions of creative artists to the society. Whatever the reason, Ms. Tyrrell readily admits to being "bitten" by the acting bug so early in her life that when she "came of age" and enrolled at nearby Rosary College, a theatre major was the obvious choice. (And, it must also be noted, when she did encounter students studying to be librarians, she tended to think of them as “rather weird.” Later, you will see the irony!)

After earning her bachelor of arts degree from Rosary, Kristin sought out a chance to practice the art form that dictated her interests and enthusiasm. This brought her first to Kalamazoo as an intern with the Civic Players. As is typical of interns, she did everything—painted scenery, sewed costumes, swept floors—and had her premier professional role in Johnny Belinda. This was the first of more than seventy roles that she would act on Kalamazoo stages including her current role in The Thurber Carnival. She continued to perform, both as a member of the Civic Players and the Old Vic, at least two, often three, and even four roles a year. Some were extra special:

*The lead in The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.
*The lead in The Witching Voice, Western Michigan University Professor Arnold Johnston's play about Robert Burns. The opportunity to work with a playwright on an original script, to have a hand in shaping the play’s outcome is something few actors or actresses ever enjoy.
*The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby had been performed in New York City in a nine-hour period broken by dinner. In Kalamazoo, the Old Vic performed it in two successive evenings with Kristin playing three different roles.

Act II

Up to this point, the reader is caught up with Kristin’s life in the theatre, but, did anyone mention that acting on Kalamazoo stages is usually a volunteer effort? That’s right, no salaries are paid. Thus, what began for Kristin as a career path ended as an avocation that did not pay the bills. Herein lies the irony noted earlier. Those “weird students” who were studying library science at Rosary turned out not to be so strange after all. While pursuing her avocation as an actress,

Kristin, in 1972, became a clerk in an elementary school library and ended up, two years later, running the library—except that she still was earning a clerk’s salary. A little thought about this led her rather quickly to the fact that she needed a professional degree and, fortunately, a master’s program was offered at Western Michigan University.

By 1976, Kristin had her ticket to the profession, the Master of Science in Librarianship. Since that time, with two exceptions, she has worked as an elementary school librarian in Kalamazoo’s public schools. One interruption was a year in the Brooklyn Public Library in 1980, and, when state allocations eliminated funding for elementary school librarians in 1981, Kristin turned for a time to the Powell Branch of the Kalamazoo Public Library where she continued to work with children. When support for elementary school libraries was reauthorized by the State in 1984, she returned to the schools.

In 1994, she jumped a few grades and joined another librarian at the media center in the Kalamazoo Central High School where she continues to work today.

Act III

With two major occupations, is there time for anything else? Kristin adores three nephews: John, an Oberlin graduate; Luke, a senior classics major at Kalamazoo College who recently finished a foreign study in Greece; and Paul, a remarkable pianist who has just completed basic training in the Marines. Her household is graced by one part-Siamese and one Scottish fold cat who add a touch of activity, and, when not attending to them, she turns her hand to the collecting of arts and crafts, furniture. Part of her ability to keep up with her demanding schedule is enhanced by her biking. She is a member of both the Kalamazoo and Three Rivers bicycle clubs, groups who think nothing of thirty mile jaunts. Curiosity about what else “fuels” her body and mind brought a quick response; her favorite food is “desserts.” And, adding to her many commitments, she became a charter member of the Friends of the University Libraries serving the Board as its first Secretary. Finally, as the curtain closes, we see Kristin Tyrrell ...

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“A good book is the purest essence of a human soul.”

Thomas Carlyle