

Building on a rock solid foundation



Alumni UPDATE

TYREES ALLEN
CLASS OF '78



Cast members from the Marymount Theatre production of "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," from summer 1977. From left, Tyrees Allen, Robert Brake, David Stump and Roy DeWitt.

There are times in life when unpredictable, wonderful things happen. It's as if the sky opens up and drops a gift into your lap.

In the fall of 1973 such a thing happened to me. It was just a few months after graduating from Salina Central High School and I wondered what in the world I was going to do. College seemed like the thing to do, but I hadn't a clue about where I should go or indeed if I even wanted to.

My friends had been making post-high school plans, but I wasn't thinking much past the next Community Theatre show.

Then one day I got a call at my mother's house. The person on the phone said, "Tyrees, Dr. Dennis Denning has heard you're in Salina and not in school, and he would very much like to speak with you about coming to Marymount."

I was certainly aware of Marymount College and its theater program — I had seen some productions and had been very impressed — but going to school there never crossed my mind. So the meeting with Dr. Denning changed my life and set me on a new journey.

How do I put into words what my time at Marymount meant and still means to me?

I have had the great privilege and honor of being in two hit Tony Award-winning plays. I've

played "Othello" at The Old Globe. I was in the American Premier of David Hare's "Stuff Happens" and I've worked in some of this nation's most prestigious theaters. I've had two television series and have guest starred in more than 30 TV programs.

But I don't say this to brag. Instead, I say it because none of those things would have been possible without the rock solid foundation Marymount gave me.

First there was that excellent theater experience Dr. Denning made possible for us, with wonderfully talented teachers and performers — teachers like Buzz Herman and Kate Lindsey and actors like Mary Murfitt and Kim Grimaldi, and many more. Then we were doubly blessed by the incredible minds and dedication of the beloved Sisters of St. Joseph — Sister Antionette Readey, whose laughter I can still hear; Sister Francis Ellen Riordan, whose knowledge seemed endless; Sister Mary Mark Whitehair, who made every class a challenge; Sister Julia Stegman, who perhaps had the sweetest spirit I have ever encountered; and Sister Lucille Herman, who was the embodiment of the school. I don't have enough room or time to list them all or

to explain what those women meant to me.

In 2000 I was doing the musical "Aida" at the Palace Theatre on Broadway, and it was the hottest ticket in town.

One night the cast was told there would be a mandatory meeting the next day, and everyone wondered what it was about. We were sold out for a year and a half, so we knew we weren't in danger of closing; what could be the problem?

We soon found out: One of the producers

opened the meeting by saying, "We need to talk about the importance of being on time; this company is getting sloppy about it."

Then he added, "There's only one actor in this company who has never been late for rehearsal or performance and that is Tyrees!"

I couldn't help myself — I burst out, "That's because we didn't allow that late stuff at Marymount!"

I suppose that says it all. I've had some wonderful experiences and opportunities, but none match the joy and excitement I felt on the Marymount stage. I have never felt as safe, as loved, as valued as I felt at Marymount.

You can see Tyrees Allen in "A Life in the Theatre," scheduled to be presented at Salina Community Theatre in July. As soon as dates and times are confirmed, they will be posted at salinatheatre.com.

Trying to find other alums or info?

We don't have an Alumni Office these days, but we're still here to help if we can — and we want to stay in touch!

- To order transcripts, go to <http://www.fhsu.edu/registrar/transcripts/>
- Go to the Sisters of St. Joseph website: www.csjkansas.org
- To follow us on Facebook, search for "Marymount College of Kansas Alumni"
- For other information, contact Jaci Morey Walsh at 785/823-2149. Please leave your name, purpose of your call and the year graduated or attended.