

Marymount's impact creates 'a writer'

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Marymount College of Kansas became part of my life by accident of geography. I was a first-generation college student with limited resources and limited mobility when Dr. Wendell Nickell, who served on the Marymount Board of Trustees, recommended that I try a few classes at the college-on-the-hill. So in January 1975, during my senior year at Salina Central High School, I enrolled as a full-time Marymount student. At the age of 17, I harbored dreams of earning an English degree and becoming "a writer."

Aside from choir and theater productions, I did not participate in campus activities. I lived on my own, off campus, and worked nights to support myself. A

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Autographed copies of "Marymount College of Kansas: A History" may be ordered by mailing a check for \$25 (book, tax and postage) to Pat Ackerman, P.O. Box 542, Abilene, Kansas 67410. Regular purchase may be made with the ISBN number 978-1-62619-573-8 at Amazon.com.

1976 monthlong trip to France with Sister Regina Ann Brummel opened my eyes to a world filled with endless possibilities. Marymount's rigorous liberal arts curriculum laid a solid foundation for me to begin a full and productive life. The years since my 1978 graduation from Marymount have been filled with travel, public service and education. I joined the Peace Corps, raised a family and embraced every opportunity to learn. I earned a master of arts degree, a Ph.D., and a tenure-track position at Kansas State University. Each of these accomplishments placed demands on my writing abilities, but I still did not consider myself to be "a writer."

In January 2010, I published an article in "Sunflower Living" magazine about Donnie and Mona Marrs' family home in the tower section of the former Marymount College Administration building. During the interview, Mona suggested that I write a book about Marymount's history. Since I happened to be looking for a sabbatical project as part of my tenure process at KSU, it felt like a fit.

Over the next four years I conducted extensive research about Marymount's history; I spoke at alumni events and listened to hundreds of stories.

Working closely with Sister Bernadine Pachta, I spent the summer of 2013 combing through the Sisters of St. Joseph's archives at the Nazareth Motherhouse in Concordia. I read books and articles about communities of women religious and the vital role they played in shaping history on the American frontier.

In November 2013, I was offered a book contract through The History Press. One year later publication of "Marymount College of Kansas: A History" brought my journey full circle.

Thanks to Marymount College, I am "a writer."

My story is but one small example of how Marymount College continues to impact rural Kansas culture.

My research taught me that there are many lenses through which the story of Marymount might be told.

This book documents the college's history through a 70-year-long paper trail, carefully preserved in Motherhouse archives.

➤ This is the story of how one visionary religious community constructed a million dollar college for women, on the frontier plains of Kansas, even before the 19th amendment of the U.S. Constitution granted women the right to vote.

➤ It is the story of how a 17-year-old Irish immigrant girl became Reverend Mother Antoinette Cuff, and went on to petition the Vatican for permission to complete Marymount College.

➤ It is a testimonial to the possibilities that exist when public officials and religious leaders work together in the spirit of true progress.

➤ It is the story of William Carr, a man working quietly behind the scenes.

Threads of this story are woven into the lives of nearly 7,000 graduates who received bachelor's degrees from Marymount College between 1922 and 1989.

While the doors of Marymount College have closed, the spirit and integrity of Marymount lives on.

