

SMALL TOWN GIRL: The Life and Legacy of Marilyn Kaytor

It was a long way from small town southern Illinois to New York, London, Spain. And further still to inventing, pioneering, embodying the field of modern food journalism. But small town girl Marilyn Kaytor did it.

Kinmundy, Illinois, is a rural, farm-based town of about 900 people, which even today does not have a single street light. For years, its “main street” allowed only one-way traffic. But even in the smallest of towns, there is often a strict social strata. And it was no different even for little Kinmundy back in the 1940s, and, at that time, the three-generations of the local Miller Family were probably considered among the village’s elite.



Marilyn Miller, c. 1940

It helped, of course, that the family patriarch was the town’s physician. Dr. Hugo Miller, the well-respected local doctor, and his wife, Alice, lived in Kinmundy, where Dr. Miller maintained a bustling practice. They had a son, Arnold in 1898. Arno, as Arnold was known, was a one-time clerk at the Chicago Stock Yards. Later, he became an exec at the local Kinmundy bank. He married his wife, Dorcas Harvey, in 1918. Arno and Dorcas would go on to have three daughters: Helen, Norma and Marilyn. Marilyn, the youngest, was born July 26, 1929.

About town, Marilyn’s father was known as a smart, well-educated and civic-ly minded man. Something that he seemed to have passed onto his daughters. According to issues of the local paper, “The Kinmundy Express,” Marilyn was a frequent name on the honor roll, was a Girl Scout and active in a variety of school clubs, including the drama club, newspaper, band and pep club. In 1944, she’s noted as being the single member of the decorating committee for Kinumundy High’s “Hobo Dance.” She was also a member of the girls’ basketball team but had to sit out a couple of weeks when (again, according to the “Express”) she broke her collar bone in gym class; that was in 1945.

(More below...)



Marilyn and her lifelong friend Arlene Roberts

Locally, Marilyn's mother was renowned for her creative abilities, serious artistic bent and her great cooking skills.

As a trio of "city kids," the Miller Sisters were known for their beautiful clothes and, sometimes, keeping their distance from the local "farm kids." According to Marilyn's sister Norma, the Kinmundy Millers were also a "foodie family" who often enjoyed exotic—by southern Illinois standards—dishes among their nightly meals.

Despite their social prominence, and relative financial comfort, the individual ambitions of their daughters were encouraged. And all three were encouraged to pursue higher education. Norma would go on to get both a BS from the University of Illinois and Helen would obtain a BS and MS from the same in the field of nutrition. (It was a tradition that has continued; Marilyn's niece, Yvonne Elet is today a professor of art history at Vassar.)

Marilyn would follow a similar path but, first, in 1947, at age 18, she got married for the first time. Her groom was fellow Kinmundy resident Richard Ray Maulding. Both were graduates of Kinmundy High School. The couple were married on June 8th at the Kinmundy home of the bride's grandmother. The groom had only recently returned from two years of military service as a paratrooper in the 11th Airborne Division. In a nod to her intended's military service, the bride's wedding dress was made from one of Maulding's old parachutes. The dimorphous material, though draping beautifully, was nevertheless a difficult fabric to work with, requiring untold hours of stitching and re-stitching.

(More below...)



Marilyn's first wedding to Richard Mauling, 1947

The couple had been dating since high school and, according to Mauling, marriage just seemed like the next “natural thing.”

Though immediately after their marriage, the newlyweds resided in Kinmundy, they would soon briefly relocate to Kankakee before deciding to each enroll at the University of Illinois in Champaign. But the post-war housing shortage restricted available dwellings in Champaign to squat basement apartments. And, as Mauling stood five feet, 10 inches tall, he didn't want to spend the next four years hunched over. Hence, the couple relocated to Carbondale, IL, and enrolled in Southern Illinois University. At SIU, they lived in a house on Old Route 13, and both enrolled in pre-med courses, with Marilyn obviously deciding to pursue a family tradition. Later—in 1949 and 1950--they resided in nearby Carterville. But, according to Mauling, their marriage began to “fall apart” after only one or two years. Though they separated and then divorced, the couple later both found themselves—separately, of course--back at the University of Illinois. There, Richard Mauling, in June of 1955, would obtain his medical degree. Dr. Mauling eventually settled in Carterville and would have a long, productive career as an anesthesiologist. Meanwhile, Marilyn did a complete switch in her career projectory and departed medicine in order to obtain a BS in home economics.

Though antiquated and probably dormant now as a college major, home economics was, at one time, a serious and rigorous curriculum--a field of study devoted to budgeting, food prep and preservation, clothes-making and all other types of now largely-forgotten domestic skills and arts.

Though Marilyn was strongly drawn towards the art and science of food, she also showed great aptitude in other allied topics. For example, a copy of Marilyn's final thesis for “Costume Design/Home Economics 186” from May 29, 1951, shows both a great understanding of and a devotion to fashion. She wrote, “The wardrobe I am planning will cover a two week vacation in the state of New York.... Plate 1: The green coat will be worn over my suit for traveling. It is also designed to be worn over any dress in my wardrobe. The green skirt can be worn with the coat with the black sleeveless cashmere sweater. The skirt and sweater can also be worn without the topper. Black accessories are worn with this.”

Along with her detailed clothing diary, Marilyn's report also included large (13x20), elaborate illustrations of various outfits (drawn by her) and even a color wheel showing the planned pattern of her color story. For her final report, Marilyn received an "A."



Illustration by Marilyn for 1951 school project

Later, in her career, though she usually reported on food, Kaytor would subsidize some of that work with fashion commentary. For example, in 1972, she was quoted nationally on the new summer clothing trends. She said, "All the kookie fashion trends, the gimmicks, the whorish 'uglies' and the 'costumes' we've lived through are long gone."

It was while studying at the U. of Illinois that Marilyn met her second husband, Albert Kaytor. Originally from Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, Kaytor was teaching art courses at the school and Kaytor probably studied with him. After a brief courtship, the couple became engaged and moved to New York City.



Painting: "Friday Tavern with Monkey" by Albert Kaytor

Trained at the American Art School in Manhattan, Albert Kaytor was mainly a painter of abstract works. He was also a graduate of the Pratt Institute. His 1950 work "Sunday Dinner With Monkey" won first prize in the oil class at the Brooklyn Artists Biennial Exhibition sponsored by the Brooklyn Museum and the Brooklyn Society of Artists. Later, Kaytor went to work as an illustrator for CBS television. In 1955, his drawing depicting how CBS would cover the April 1955 nuclear test to be performed by the US government in Yucca Flat, Nevada, was reprinted in newspapers coast-to-coast. Kaytor would also provide artwork to such CBS series as the spooky anthology drama "The Web" (1950-1954).

Marilyn Miller Maulding married Albert J. Kaytor on February 9, 1952. The ceremony took place at Queen of All Saints Roman Catholic Church in New York and was officiated by Father Charles E. Fisher. It was noted in the “Kinmundy Express” newspaper that the bride wore a “John Turman Benedictine and peach silk creation with an asymmetrical collar.”



Painting of Marilyn by Albert Kaytor

Once settled in the city, Mr. Kaytor continued to pursue his career in art and Marilyn began to test the waters of a career in journalism, specifically in the then nascent field of food writing. An early position was for an industrial organization devoted to corn products. Later, she wrote for newspapers and magazines on international food topics. Eventually, Marilyn landed a plum and impressive assignment—food editor for “Look” magazine.

Like its slightly better known newsstand companion, “Life” magazine, “Look” was a large, colorful, photo-heavy general interest magazine that cast the net of its subject matter wide. Each issue covered everything from politics to show biz to social issues to, in every edition, food and fine dining. “Look” was first published in 1937. At its peak in 1969, it was selling over seven million copies a week. Among its distinguished contributors over the years were Norman Rockwell, who worked for “Look” after ending his long tenure with the “Saturday Evening Post,” and Stanley Kubrick who was a staff photographer for the mag before becoming a famous filmmaker.

After beginning with “Look” magazine as an assistant food editor, Kaytor was the magazine’s chief food editor by 1956.

Even when viewed today, Kaytor’s two-page (or more) spreads of photos and food commentary for “Look” are snazzy, colorful, fun and stunning modern looking. And though Kaytor often worked with some of the 20th century’s finest photographers, including Irving Penn, Hiro and Arthur Rothstein, according to her niece, Carolyn, their input on the image seldom amounted to more than just pressing the shutter. The layout, the styling of these images was all Kaytor with her “wonderful eye,” picking the items, styling the scene, lighting them for maximum effect and endlessly finding new ways to revitalize and showcase such common items as green beans or a simple cup of coffee. Today, many of these remarkable layouts are part of the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



Marilyn Kaytor, c. 1959

Kaytor worked for “Look” for over a decade and seemed to cover about every type of food and food angle one can think of; the breadth and depth of her scope is jaw-dropping, the fact that “Look” was a bi-monthly publication at this time makes her work even more impressive. In August of 1960, she published a story on preparing veal chops as they do in Germany. In November of '60, it was all about pumpkin pie; in December of 1960, she looked at three Boston-area specialties (Boston beans, sea scallops and blueberry pie). In March of 1961, she chatted with renowned Spanish guitarist Juan Serrano about his country’s delicacies. In January of 1963, she looked at condiments and published perhaps her most enduring bon mot: “Condiments are like old friends--highly thought of but often taken for granted.” In June of 1963, it was weeds you can eat. In July of 1963, Kaytor and company visited legendary Hollywood costume designer Edith Head in her “elegant” kitchen. In November of that year, it was “Turkey Time” as photographed by Douglas Kirkland. In December of 1963, it was “The Christmas Foods of Wales” as shot by Dennis Stock as well as Christmas in Canada. In March of 1963, it was “Pot-Au-Feu,” the “soup and main course in one.” In April of 1964, it was off to the Casbah for a lavish photo spread about a Tangier house party. Then it was “Artichokes: The Domesticated Thistles.” In June of 1964, Kaytor explored the wonders of Turkish coffee. Then, in July of 1964, it was “Cooling Latin Drinks.” In December of 1964, there was her look at the Shaker revival as well as “Christmas on Nantucket.” Then, in 1965, the great photographer Hiro worked with Kaytor for the expose “The Well-Boiled Egg.” In April of 1965, it was “Soup of the Inner Sanctum: Senate Restaurant Bean Soup.” In July of 1965, it was “Peaches and Cream”; in August of that year, it was a great pasta dish, followed, the next month, with recipes for duck. Then, again with Hiro, “The Well-Kept Refrigerator for the Man-About-Town” which appeared in the September of 1965 issue. In 1966, Kaytor kicked off the year with “The Effortless Summer Lunch” and then, later, softly courted controversy with a Hiro-photographed spread titled “Is the American woman the world’s best cook?” This was followed, in March of '66, by “A Perfect Way to Serve Lamb.” And, then in July of 1966, a “Close-Up on Corn” which was followed by twelve ways to fix “Green Garden Peas” in August.

“She was really quite brilliant,” recalls Marilyn’s niece, Yvonne Elet.

(Examples of Marilyn’s work for “Look” below...)



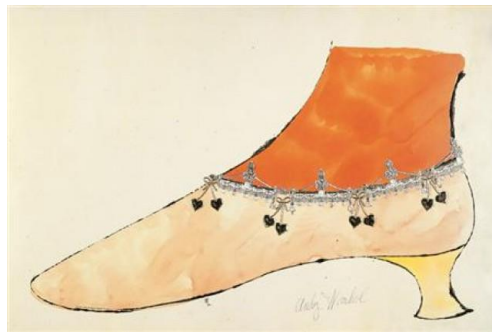
As evidenced by many of the above stories, sometimes Kaytor traveled extensively to ferret out good stories, unusual ingredients and exotic dishes. Marilyn’s niece Caroline sometimes traveled with her on her journeys, once, quite memorably, on a Greek freighter crossing the North Atlantic and then later on a hectic, fraught-filled trip from Antwerp to London to Yugoslavia. That trip concluded in Belgrade and then traveled to various Muslim countries where, as two women traveling alone, they almost weren’t able to leave.

But Kaytor’s stories were not just style over substance. No recipe appeared in the magazine that she had not herself tried. And if a recipe she might have found on the road did not reproduce correctly in her home, she worked and worked and refined it so that it could be easily, correctly reproduced in any American kitchen.

As one of the nation’s foremost food authorities, Kaytor was often called upon to represent “Look” at various food-related functions. In April of 1964, she was honored in Louisville, Kentucky, by the National Association of Produce Market Managers; she received their award for Excellence in Food Journalism. And, in February of 1966, she joined other national food editors (from magazines like “Redbook” and “Good Housekeeping”) in San Francisco for a national bake off.

Despite Kaytor’s demanding work and travel schedule, she often found time to journey back to southern Illinois where her visits to her home town to see her parents were usually noted in Kinmundy’s town newspaper “The Kinmundy Express.” She also maintained a close, life-long friendship with former Kinmundy schoolmate Arlene Roberts (nee Zimmer).

But Marilyn’s heavy work load and travel schedule might have foredoomed her marriage. At some point, she and Albert Kaytor separated and divorced. They were certainly no longer together by 1961 since an October 1961 Cholly Knickerbocker newspaper write-up mentions that “Magazine editor Marilyn Kaytor is creating exotic Greek dishes for handsome shipping magnate Michael Patestides.” (Albert Kaytor died in 1963.)



Warhol illustration owned by Marilyn Kaytor

Marilyn's high professional profile allowed her to enjoy a busy and colorful life in New York City where her social circle was large and glittery and often found her hobnobbing with leading artists, show biz types and various captains of industry. She was even friendly with Andy Warhol and his wild downtown art scene, having met the artist very early in his career when he was working in the field of fashion illustration. (Warhol even gifted to Marilyn a couple of his early shoe illustrations.) It was, probably, while traveling in these tony circles that Kaytor first met the rakish, rouge writer/novelist Robert Ruark.

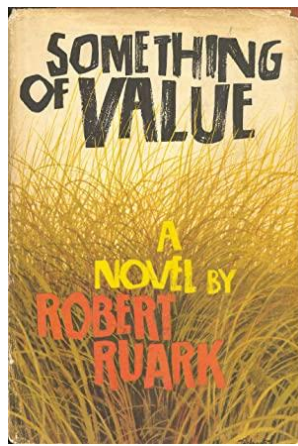


Robert Ruark

Born in North Carolina in 1915, Robert Ruark seems almost like a Hollywood creation. A writer, syndicated columnist and big game hunter, Ruark seemed to live out just about every scenario that that every boys adventure magazine from the 1930s through the 1970s ever dreamed up. After a youthful stint as a merchant marine and as a gunnery officer in the US Navy, Ruark turned to journalism and then to fiction writing, finding success writing for publications like "Esquire" and the "Saturday Evening Post." His first novel, "Grenadine Etching," appeared in 1947.

His writing success eventually allowed him to follow a life-long dream and go on a safari to Africa. That experience would form the basis for his next major work, "Horn of the Hunter," published in 1953.

Ruark's next work, "The Old Man and the Boy" was Ruark's largely autobiographical novel about his coastal Carolina upbringing. It began as a series of articles he wrote for "Field & Stream" magazine. Later, in 1955, Ruark published his book "Something of Value," about the Kenyan Mau Mau uprising. A best-seller upon its publication, "Value" later became a feature film starring Rock Hudson, Wendy Hiller and Sidney Poitier. "Value" was followed by other books including "Poor No More," "Uhuru," and "The Honey Badger."



"Something of Value" by Robert Ruark, published 1955

Along with his exciting, exotic adventures all around the world, Ruark was known for his hard-living lifestyle, leading a type of life even Hemingway might have been envious of. At his peak, Ruark was authoring a syndicated newspaper column carried by over 125 newspapers nationwide, always offering up his strong, wide opinions and what he called his "belt-level journalism." Legend has it that at various times he managed to make enemies of both Frank Sinatra and mobster "Lucky" Luciano. Along with residences in London and New York, Ruark also maintained a stunning home in Palamos, in the south of Spain, which sat on several gorgeous acres. Someone once said of Ruark, "he squeezed every drop of pleasure from the sponge of life."

Though Ruark was something of a Lothario—every inch a proud lady's man—interestingly, when he chose to become involved with women in any long-term situation, he often chose women of great substance. His wife Virginia Webb was a highly-accomplished and respected interior designer and was later a valuable editor for her husband's books and articles. They were married from 1938 to 1963. Then, at least for a time, he was involved with Eva Monley. Monley was a film producer and renowned film location manager who specialized in getting films produced in the difficult terrains of Africa. After beginning her career in the 1950s, Monley would go on to help bring to the big screen such films as "The Man Who Would Be King" (1975), "Out of Africa" (1985) and Spielberg's "Empire of the Sun" (1987) and have a long professional working relationship with Otto Preminger. Before her passing in Kenya, in 2011, she was the recipient of a lifetime achievement award from the British Film Institute and, today, a regularly-bestowed award from the Location Managers Guild of America is named in her honor.

Finally, then, there was Marilyn.

When, and exactly how, the two met is not known. As mentioned, it was probably in New York, though, of course, both traveled frequently and widely. According to at least one book, they were at least a serious item by "the spring of 1965," when Ruark, arriving at his home in Spain, "produced a sharp, mink-clad American girl and secretly announce that they were to be married." According to reports, his household staff was "shocked" by the sudden, unexpected arrival of this new woman in their boss's life but "Bob told his staff that the girl would be no financial drag on him, as she was sufficiently rich not to worry. She worked herself as a magazine editor and writer."



Marilyn with Robert Ruark

It must have been a whirlwind of a courtship but, sadly, a wedding was never to take place. Robert Ruark died on July 1, 1965. He was only 49 years old, his death hastened by years of alcohol abuse.

Only days after his passing, one newspaper reported, “If novelist Robert Ruark hadn’t met an untimely death in London last week he would have been honeymooning in Spain with Marilyn Kaytor.... She rushed to London when he telephoned her that he was very ill and she spent only five minutes with him before he was placed under heavy sedation from which he never emerged. The grim footnote: His last book, which he delivered to the publishers last month, ends with his central character—an author whose life resembles his own—dying...”

Ruark’s funeral was held on August 8, 1965 at St. Mark’s Church in London. Kaytor, accompanied by her niece, Caroline House, solemnly attended. A later ceremony was held in Ruark’s adopted country of Spain where Ruark’s body was eventually buried.



Marilyn at Ruark's funeral, 1965 (Alan Ritchie on the left; MK's niece Caroline on the right)

At the time of his passing, Ruark left a complicated estate with a bank account in the UK containing about \$67,000 (about \$600K in modern dollars). But that was just the tip of the

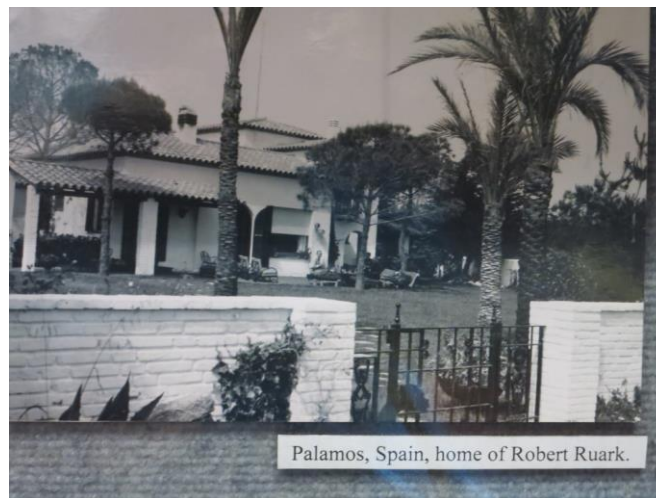
iceberg. Ruark also owned the large, well-appointed home in Spain, as well as a Rolls-Royce, and collection of rare tribal artifacts, among other notable items. He also maintained homes in the US and the UK and, additionally, there was the value of his literary estate.

Ruark did die with a final will in place; it was signed by him on May 6, 1965, only about two months before his passing. It left his Spanish estate to Marilyn and bequeathed half of his “residuary estate” to his ex-wife Virginia Webb Ruark. (Other items were left to Ruark’s long-time secretary, Alan Ritchie, and his agent Harold Matson and a few additional friends and staff.)

However, about one month after the contents of the will were disclosed, Virginia Webb Ruark filed papers in Manhattan contesting the document. She argued that an earlier separation agreement between her and Ruark, which guaranteed her half of the Palamos home, took precedence over the final will and testament transferring its ownership to Marilyn.

A flurry of legal actions and counteractions then commenced. Much of the legal back and forth got detailed in the newspapers and what was not reported in print nevertheless got whispered about in gossip with both women being frequently dragged through the mud and accused of staging public “hate campaigns” against the other.

Eventually, a surrogate court judge ruled that the final will was inconsistent with the separation agreement and, thus, ordered a fifty-fifty split between the two women.



Ruark’s estate in Spain

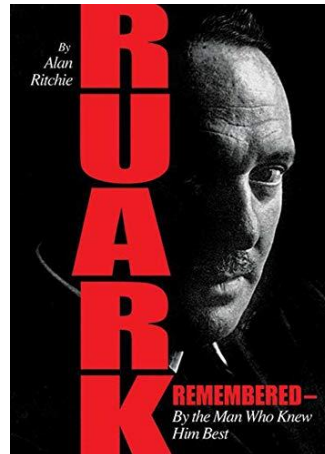
In the end, the bitter battle over Ruark’s estate had no winners. Though the full estate was, originally, estimated to be around \$350,000 (over \$3 million in today’s dollars), once all the legal fees were deducted and death duties were paid, there was little money left over to be shared. Had Virginia and Marilyn chosen to meet outside of court, a mutually beneficial arrangement could have been worked out but, in the end, neither was willing to compromise or even be in each other’s presence.

Adding to the uselessness of the conflict was the fact that, Virginia Ruark would, herself, pass away only a short time later, in July of 1966. (Some sources state December of 1966.) According to one source, she had spent the last year of her life suffering from a terminal illness and struggling financially.

Meanwhile, as for Kaytor, despite her profound professional success and influence (that which she had already achieved and which she was still developing), the dark legacy of her Ruark legacy seemed to cast a deep shadow over her. A case in point: some years later, Ruark’s devoted secretary, Alan Ritchie, composed a manuscript about his life with his legendary boss.

After Ritchie's death, and edited by Jim Casada, the manuscript was published, in 2009, under the title "Ruark Remembered."

In the book, while he is firmly devoted to his deceased employer, Ritchie is not kind to the final woman in Ritchie's life. The chapter which details Ruark's final days and then recounts the drawn-out conflict over his estate is titled "The Honey Badgers at Work," a reference to one of Ruark's more misogynist novels. Furthermore, Ritchie doesn't even deem to identify Marilyn by name! Instead, he continually refers to her only as "the girlfriend" or "the fiancé."



Book by Alan Ritchie, 2009

Later, Ritchie, in his pages, largely accuses Kaytor of plundering the Palamos estate, taking from it many valuable items ("skins, leopards, colobus monkey rugs") that, he says, were meant for members of the staff or to be given to the University of North Carolina, Ruark's chosen depository for all his career-related artifacts. He writes that, "two days before the first anniversary of Ruark's death, his elected heiress arrived at his home in Palamos with a brand new husband, a small man with a full beard, on their honeymoon. The staff was speechless and the village horrified." (To be fair, Ritchie also accuses Virginia Webb of removing a "good proportion of furniture, just about all the antiques..." from the home.)

That Kaytor may have, knowingly or not, rightfully or not, removed from the home items originally intended for UNC is borne out by various actions later taken by UNC archives who repeatedly contacted Kaytor about several artifacts—including a bronze bust of Ruark's head—that, though supposedly promised to the University, Kaytor refused to part with. In the mid-2000s, University archivist James Cheatham even went so far as to attempt to visit Marilyn at her New York apartment to discuss, or retrieve, certain items. She refused to see him.

Despite the sudden loss of Ruark, according to reports, Marilyn soon found a new love. In January 1966, a coy item appeared in newspapers that stated that "'Look' co-editor Marilyn Kaytor, who was to wed writer Robert Ruark, is being consoled by one of the biggest names in radio's history." Sadly, the identity of that broadcasting mystery man is lost to history. But whoever it was, it was not a relationship that lasted. For in June of that same year, Kaytor's name returned to the press when it was announced that she had "quietly" married "art expert Walter Randel, Jr.," assumedly the "new husband" once referenced by Ritchie.

Along with being an art expert and antiques dealer, Walter Randel, Jr., also owned his own New York art gallery for many years. But, that marriage, too, also ended in divorce and, probably, not a friendly one. Contacted in June of 2016 by this author to set up an interview, Mr. Randel replied via email, "I have no interest in discussing anything about Marilyn Kaytor."

Marilyn's long association with "Look" magazine eventually ended. She and the magazine had definitely parted ways by 1970 when a news article about Americans traveling to Paris appeared

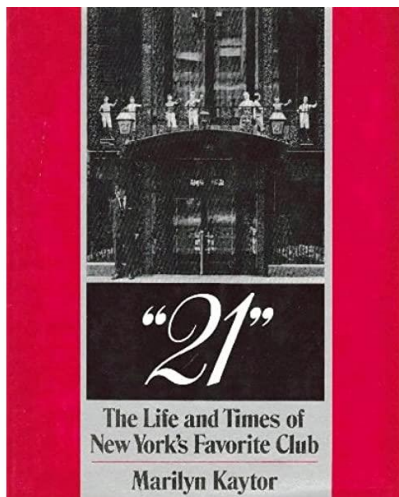
under her byline in various national newspapers around the country in November of that year. It noted that Kaytor was now an “international freelance journalist, specializing in food and travel.” Supposedly her departure from the magazine was due at least in part to her sometimes missing her deadlines. “Look” magazine itself ceased publication in 1971. Upon its shuttering, its full archives—including the majority of Marilyn’s work for it—were acquired by the Library of Congress.

But the end of Marilyn’s relationship with “Look” did not spell the end of her writing and publishing career. At that time, before the plethorization of the internet, writing for national magazines, even on a freelance basis, could be quite lucrative so, while Kaytor, probably did not become rich in her later years, she could continue to live well. She also remained prolific. In November 1976, she published a “New-Fashioned Thanksgiving” in “American Home” magazine. In January 1977, she celebrated the kiwi and other edible outliers in “Strange Fruit” for “Esquire,” and, in February of 1977, she took a look at hot peppers in “Devil’s Food” also for “Esquire.” Also early in 1977, her recipe for hot pork sandwiches appeared in “Sphere” magazine. Other publications that at one time or another that contained her byline were “Bon Appetit,” the “Los Angeles Times,” “Cuisine,” and “Gaceta.” Additionally, Kaytor contributed to various industry publications related to wine and travel.



One of Marilyn’s post-“Look” efforts; “Esquire,” Feb. 1977

Then there was the October 1981 article on “Dinner at the White House” for the “New York Times” where Kaytor reported on the entertaining style of President and Mrs. Reagan. Among the other items Kaytor related about the First Couple, “The Reagans are weight conscious and, in general, their menus for both daily dining and entertaining balance fancy foods with simple dishes. They also have the occasional Tex-Mex meal, prepared by Hans Raffert, an assistant chef. Chef Haller, who has been at the White House for 15 years and five administrations, says Mrs. Reagan goes into more detail about menus and food than past First Ladies.”



Earlier, in 1975, Kaytor wrote and published her only book, "21: The Life and Times of New York's Favorite Club." Printed by Viking Press, the book is hardbound, over 100 pages in length and lavishly illustrated. It relates the history of the exclusive bistro from its founding as a speakeasy during the Great Depression up to its then current state as a New York institution. Along the way, is a who's who of 20th century luminaries—from Helen Hayes to Clare Booth Luce to a few US Presidents--who all wined and dined there at one time or another. True to form, the end of the book concludes with reproductions of some of 21's famous menus and recipes for some of its most delectable dishes including its pate maison, vichyssoise, striped bass poche au court bouillon with sauce mousseline, and roast baby pheasant with sauce perigourdine.

Though since their divorce 27 years prior, Richard Maulding and Marilyn had had almost no contact, in the mid-1970s, Maulding found himself in New York City to attend a medical conference. On a whim, Dr. Maulding decided to look up his ex-wife. Via the New York City phone book, he found Marilyn and called her and she invited him over.

Maulding remembers being impressed by Marilyn's apartment, adorned as it was with "horns, hides and trophies" and with various, extra-large photos of Marilyn standing alongside such notables as US Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

According to Maulding, the exes had a nice chat and caught up on old times and Marilyn related many stories from her life in the intervening years including sharing an account of Robert Ruark's sad last days. Their meeting went well. In fact, so well that—briefly—the two even considered trying to pick up where they had left off years ago. Marilyn even came back to Carterville for an extended visit. It was during the winter and the two got snowed in together for about two weeks during which time Marilyn seemed to grow bored with small town life and some of the couple's old conflicts seemed to return; apparently, voices were sometimes raised and at least one dish was thrown. When the thaw came, Marilyn returned to New York.

Marilyn's father, Arno Miller, died, in Kinmundy, at age 82 in 1980; her mother, Dorcas, passed away two years later. Dorcas's passing occurred only days before Kinmundy's annual high school alumni banquet, a yearly event where all graduates are invited back. That evening, in her honor, a moment of silence was held.



On the left, Arno "Arnie" Miller, Marilyn's dad, c. 1959

Even after the deaths of her parents, Marilyn maintained ties to Kinmundy. Dr. Maulding said, "She was always proud of her small town." The long-standing Miller home (now razed) remained in Marilyn's ownership for years after her parents' passing even if it sat empty most of the time except for Marilyn's occasional trips back to the Midwest. During Marilyn's absence, the home was often looked after by her good, childhood friend Arlene Roberts (nee Zimmer) who resided in Kinmundy only a few streets away.

In 1986, two old friends of Marilyn's, from Kinmundy, journeyed to New York and were royally shown around the Big Apple with Marilyn. Len Rose, of Kinmundy, would eventually purchase from Marilyn farm land she inherited from her father. But, before that transaction, he and his then wife, met up with Marilyn where she treated them to a meal at the World Trade Center's Windows on the World restaurant. Rose remembers well his very talkative, chain smoking tour guide; he says, "It seemed like she knew EVERYBODY in town. And it seemed like, for her, money was never an object." Having first Marilyn in 1970, he would talk to her regularly—once or twice a year—until the end of her life.

Also sometimes visiting Marilyn in the Big Apple was her niece Alissa. Alissa remembers her aunt's "magnificent" apartment filled with ornate objects, art and luxurious rugs. Alissa also remember elaborate shopping trips in the city with her "fun" aunt who she visited four or five times.

Still, as she got older, Kaytor came back to Kinmundy less and less and even became less prone to even leaving her NY apartment. Though always "very private," Kaytor seemed to become even more so with each passing year. Some family have since speculated that Marilyn might have had agoraphobic tendencies. Even her (increasingly rare) trips back to southern Illinois saw her seldom venture out of her parent's home when in town. Age also brought with it a decided slant in her personality. Having long called the shots on her photo shoots and in her career, Kaytor could be difficult when not directly in charge of a situation.

The fire occurred in the early morning of October 20, 2007 on the third floor of a six-story brick building located on 79th Street in New York. It was a lux residential neighborhood with former First Lady Jackie Kennedy living not far away. After the fire broke out, at about 7am, smoke billowed from the apartment's windows. A newspaper account published later that day stated: "Shattered windows in Ms. Kaytor's apartment were visible from the front of the gray building. Shards of glass lay on the sidewalk. The area around the windows was charred, as was part of the ceiling in the apartment that could be seen from the street."

It was around 11am that morning when Marilyn Kaytor's body was removed by medics from the structure. Due to the effects of the fire, Marilyn could only be positively identified via her dental records. Though one neighbor reported that he once had a short conversation with her and she told him she had been an author and a journalist, few other residents knew too much about the deceased woman. One described her only as a "reclusive" and as a "heavy smoker and drinker." Most neighbors noted that they seldom saw Ms. Kaytor and she often had food delivered. That last detail seems, in retrospect, especially sorrowful: did a woman who once so valiantly celebrated and elevated the art of food spend her final days living on take-out?

Ultimately, it was determined what Kaytor died from. Her autopsy found no smoke in her lungs but evidence of cardiac arrest. She suffered a fatal heart attack while smoking and the flame from the cigarette she was smoking ignited something in the bedroom of her apartment.

In articles on the fire and her passing, Marilyn Kaytor was described as an "art collector" and "writer" who lived in an "ornate, wood-paneled apartment with stuffed animal heads displayed on the walls." A more thorough examination of Kaytor's life and oeuvre was not forthcoming.

Though, in her later years, they seldom had much contact with their aunt, after Marilyn's death, because Marilyn was childless, it nevertheless fell to a couple of her nieces to mobilize and take care of both their aunt's funeral arrangements and her estate. Together, they saw to the excavation of Marilyn's apartment, rescuing what could be salvaged. Sadly, per her own wishes, many of her old papers and documents related to her celebrated career were destroyed by her executor despite the protests of Marilyn's family.

Thankfully not lost in the blaze, were many of Marilyn's other personal treasures, including two early works by Andy Warhol. Also collected were an imposing pair of elephant tusks, once the property of Robert Ruark. These horns, each mounted separately, stood over 70 inches tall and weighed in excess of 150 pounds. Later, these and other notable items were sold at auction. From those proceeds, Marilyn's heirs established a scholarship fund, in journalism, at Kaytor's alma mater, the University of Illinois.



Ruark tusks later auctioned as part of Marilyn's Estate

Around this same time, an estate sale was held in Kinmundy in preparation for the sale of the Miller home. After years (almost 20) of sitting empty and untouched, Marilyn's niece Alissa Ferguson Phillips was able to gain access and was able to the family home and rescue for the family many of Marilyn's art works, vintage *objet d'art* and other important mementoes. Later, some personal items of Marilyn's were up for sale as were various small artworks by her and by Albert Kaytor. What was not sold that day, mostly ended up in a large antique store located in the nearby town of Odin, Illinois.

The nieces also saw to Kaytor's burial alongside her parents in a cemetery in Kinmundy. A large marble slab covers Marilyn's final resting place notes her birth and death dates and contains the inscription "Vaya Con Dios" ("May God Be With You"), an inscription requested by Marilyn in her will. The grave also further identifies her. In stone it is engraved: "editor and journalist," no doubt, the very way Marilyn Kaytor should be remembered.



Marilyn's grave marker in Kinmundy, IL

(More of Marilyn's work for "Look" below...)

NOTE: VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO DOLORES FORD-MOBLEY FOR HER ASSISTANCE WITH THIS ARTICLE.