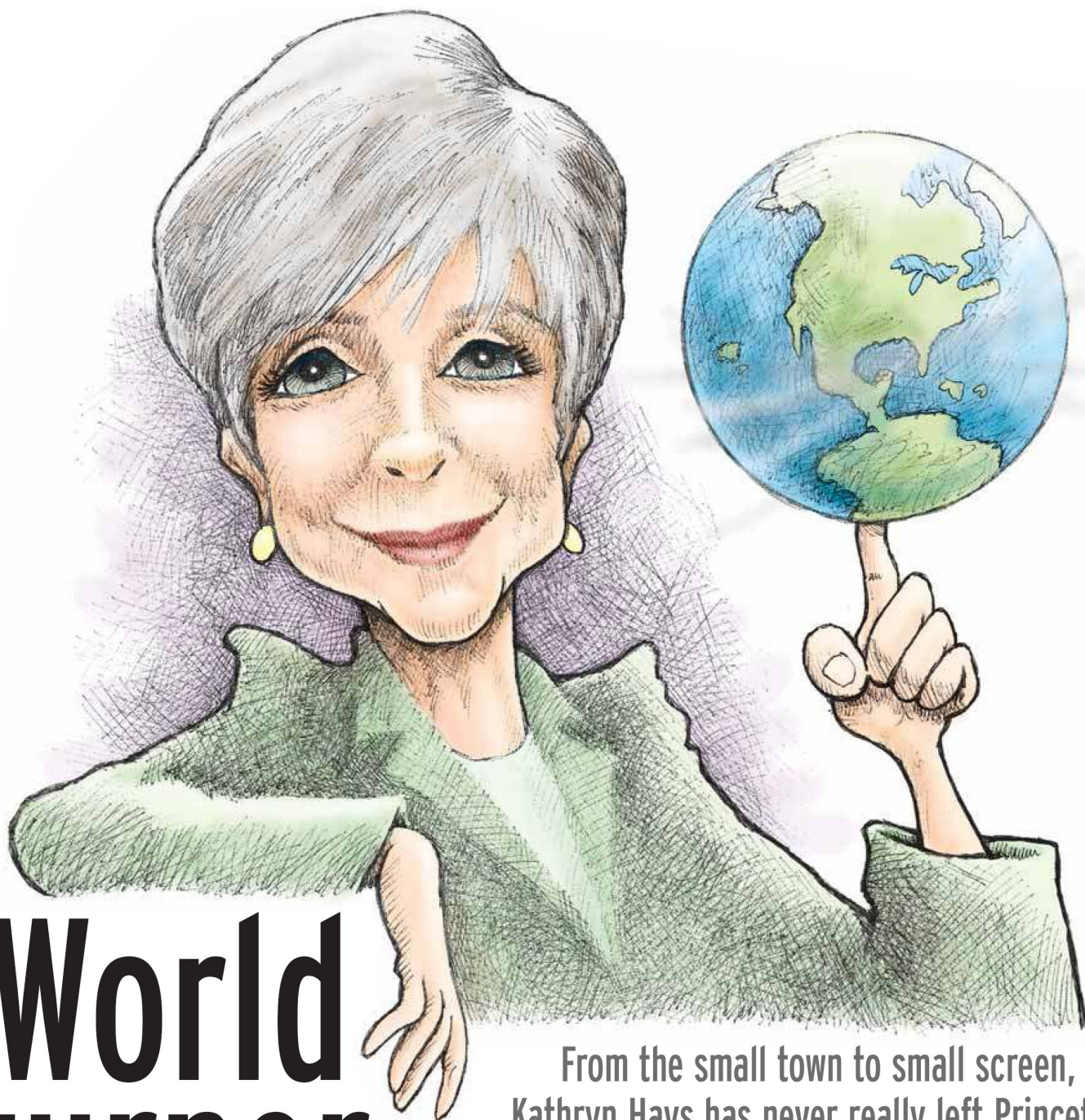


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World turner

From the small town to small screen,
Kathryn Hays has never really left Princeton

By NICK THOMAS
Special to the BCR

For more than 30 years, Kathryn Hays has been a familiar face to viewers of daytime television. She is also

well-known to "Star Trek" fans from her memorable role in a single episode back in 1968, during the iconic show's final season. And she's been married to one of Hollywood's most endearing actors.

While these biographical snippets

don't suggest any connection to Bureau County, Hays has been a regular visitor to Princeton ever since she was born here in 1933. In fact, her father's family was part of the

SEE **Hays** PAGE 3



Photo contributed

Kathryn Hays (left) and Colleen Zenk Pinter take some time out on the set of "As the World Turns." Hays, originally from Princeton, has been a regular on the popular soap opera since 1972. Pinter joined the cast 20 years ago.

Hays

FROM THE COVER

Hampshire Colony that first settled the area a century earlier.

"My ancestors owned a lot of land and raised cattle and sheep," recalls Hays from her current home in Bridgeport, Conn. "My mother went to school in Princeton. She was a bookkeeper at a local bank, and she still lives in Princeton."

Hays was just 5 years old when she left town, after her parents divorced and her mother remarried.

"My step-father was a salesman, so we moved around a lot — Wisconsin, New York and various towns in Illinois," said Hays.

The family eventually settled in Joliet, where Hays discovered her love for acting. In high school, she became a teacher's student assistant at a local children's theater, helping the other students and working backstage with lighting and sets. Later, she attended a summer arts

program at Northwestern University and was offered a full scholarship at a junior college.

After leaving college early, she worked as a fashion model and on live TV commercials for WGN in Chicago in the 1950s. Her big break came in 1962, after moving to New York, when she was cast as the lead in an episode of the popular police drama, "The Naked City."

"It was one of the top shows of the day," she recalled. "Gene Roddenberry wrote the episode I was in, and that really was the beginning of my career."

On the East Coast, Hays studied with famed theater director and acting coach, Wynn Handman. The now 86-year-old Handman, who counts amongst his past students Michael Douglas, Denzel Washington, Mira Sorvino and James Caan, had no difficulty recalling Hays from a half-century earlier.

"She was a very responsive student with a very

"I still get mail from 'Star Trek' fans because of that one episode. It's amazing how many people loved it."

Kathryn Hays

winning and sympathetic quality to her acting," said Handman from his home in Nantucket, Mass. "She's right from the heartland of America and exudes that lovely, warm character."

That quality endeared Hays to casting directors, who hired her for dozens of TV shows throughout the '60s and '70s, including "Route 66," "Dr. Kildare," "Bonanza," "The Man from U.N.C.L.E.," and "The High Chaparral." But it was her speechless role in the "Star Trek" episode, "The Empath," which many Trekkies rate amongst the best of the series.

In fact, it was "Star Trek" creator Roddenberry who tracked Hays down for the part of "Gem," a mute alien who could heal the wounds of the injured just by touching them.

"After the Naked City, Gene wrote parts for me in many of his series, including the role of Gem," said Hays.

"Since I didn't have any lines, all my parts were just written in large print as directions in the script," she said. "I'd never done any miming before, so expressing myself with just body movements and facial gestures was very different

for me. But basically it was up to me to make it work."

And she did. That year, Hays received an Emmy nomination for her compelling performance.

"I still get mail from 'Star Trek' fans because of that one episode," Hays admitted. "It's amazing how many people loved it."

Two years earlier, and divorced with a young daughter from a previous marriage, Hays' life took a new turn when she married popular actor Glenn Ford.

"We had the same agent, and Glenn asked him to arrange a meeting," said Hays.

That meeting, according to Ford's son, occurred in late 1964 at a party in his father's Beverly Hills home, followed by an engagement announcement a year later at another house party. The following March, the couple was married, and Robert Goulet sang the "Lord's Prayer" at the wedding.

"I was 21 and the best man, and Kathy's 6-year-old daughter was the

flower girl," recalled Peter Ford, in a telephone interview. "I remember Kathy fondly and was very happy for the two of them when they got married."

There was no shortage of celebrities at the reception either, which was held at the Ford home.

"Edward G. Robinson, Chuck Connors, Joseph Cotton, Elke Sommer, Van Heflin and Rod Taylor were guests," said Ford. "Andy Williams sang 'The Hawaiian Wedding Song,' and Oscar Levant played on a piano that was a gift to my dad from Judy Garland."

But the marriage would only last three years. Though Hays did not go into personal details, Ford believes his father did not want his wife to continue acting.

"Dad didn't talk about it much, but I think he wanted her to give up her career and stay at home. But Kathy was serious about her career. She was a fine

SEE Hays PAGE 4



Photo contributed

To many, Hays is best known for her role as Gem in a "Star Trek" episode titled, "The Empath."

Hays

FROM PAGE 3

actress, and obviously went on to be very successful in the business."

Hays soon returned to New York but continued to travel back to the West Coast for guest roles on TV shows.

"Back then, it wasn't easy to audition for movie roles in New York, since most films were shot in Los Angeles. So I ended up doing mostly television."

And since 1972, she has focused mostly on one role—the part of Kim Hughes in "As the World Turns," a CBS daytime soap set—ironically perhaps—in the fictitious town of Oakdale, Ill.

"When I joined the show, Oakdale was a small, Midwest town much like Princeton," said Hays. "Over the years, it has grown and is now portrayed as a much bigger city."

Hays' character has also grown over the decades and survived the typical drama of complicated soap plots. She has gone through several love interests, open heart surgery and amnesia, and has evolved into a matriarchal figure where her own personality shines through.

"Kim has grown over the years, as I have, of course. You can't play one character for so long without bringing your own maturity to the role," said Hays.

Co-star Colleen Zenk Pinter, who is also an Illinois native, has worked with Hays on the show for 20 years, and they have been friends even longer.

"We have done some beautiful work together," says Pinter, who plays romantic vixen, Barbara Ryan and has herself gone through personal trauma both on and off screen. "She has been my role model, my surrogate mother and dear friend. But most of all, we have shared our lives with each other, all the ups and all the downs."

As for her alter ego Kim Hughes, Hays says "it's really been like having another life! Who would have dreamed it would have gone on for 36 years!"

Back in Princeton, Kathy's "third life" involves catching up with family, and sometimes exploring Hornbaker Gardens. "It's my favorite place to visit in Princeton. I love to walk around the wonderful gardens with the ponds, streams and garden ornaments."



Photo contributed

In the mid-1960s, Hays married popular actor Glenn Ford. Ford's son, Peter Ford, who contributed this wedding photo of Hays and his father, said there was no shortage of celebrities at the wedding or the reception. The union lasted three years.

Not too long ago, during a visit, she drove by her old childhood home at the south end of town.

"Our farm house was behind the old library. The house is gone now, but the

old barn is still there, near the abandoned croquet field," she said. "I have returned to Princeton for visits and holidays my whole life. I've never really left!"

Rockford Medical seeks persons battling MS

ROCKFORD

Residents of northwest Illinois multiple sclerosis (MS) are being asked to participate in a state-funded study to determine the number of area persons with the disease. MS results when the immune system attacks myelin, the protective insulation surrounding nerve fibers of the central nervous system affecting coordination, balance and vision. Previous research by Health Systems Research has indicated that some portions of northwest Illinois may have elevated rates of MS. The University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Medicine at Rockford is one of a handful of research centers studying the epidemiology of MS.

Study participants must:

- Be 18 or older
- Have lived in Boone, Bureau, Carroll, DeKalb, Henry, J. Daviess, LaSalle, Lee, Ogle, Rock Island, Stephenson, Whiteside or Winnebago counties on July 1.

• Have been diagnosed with MS by a health professional.

To take part in the study, or to obtain further information individuals

may:

- Enroll at the study's Web site at www.rockford.medicine.uic.edu.

- Call Health Systems Research toll-free at (800) 854-4461 or (815) 395-5639 in the Rockford area for a participant form.

- Attend a meeting where study background will be presented. Call or email hsr@uic.edu for a schedule of meetings.

Jel Cowen, assistant dean for Health Systems Research, stresses the importance of full participation.

"Unless almost everyone with MS takes part, we will not be able to accurately calculate the presence of MS," he said.

Cowen says that they will link demographic, socioeconomic and environmental factors to the distribution of MS to see whether certain characteristics may be associated with MS. By studying a large region, researchers expect to find that some areas may be higher than others. Names of study participants will be kept confidential, says Cowen. Reports will reflect all participants, but no individual information will be shown.

September is Hunger Action Month

CHICAGO —Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich has declared September as "Hunger Action Month." Throughout the month, he is urging Illinoisans to help others in need by donating food, volunteering and participating in other activities organized by the Illinois Food Bank Association and its network of food banks, soup kitchens and shelters.

The Illinois Food Bank Association (IFBA), whose membership includes the state's eight regional food banks, provides food and services to more than 900,000 people through a network of 2,000 pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters. Earlier this year, the governor also launched the Food for Families program.

In 2006, Blagojevich announced an innovative new plan to make it easier for low-income Chicago area families to receive

Food Stamps.

Express Stamps simplifies the application process and meets the needs of families when they go to a food pantry for emergency food.

Blagojevich also announced this year that an additional nine counties are participating in the 2008 Women Infant and Children's (WIC) and Senior Farmers Market programs. IDHS and the Department on Aging provide funding for the program, which comes from a grant of nearly \$1 million from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

This year, Blagojevich and the Illinois Department of Human Services joined a new public health initiative, Fruits & Veggies—More Matters, to inspire and encourage Illinois families to eat more fruits and vegetables.