

I WAS GOING TO MARRY ERROL FLYNN

(1947 - 1952, age 14 -19)

As remembered by Trudy Mc Vicker

When I was 14 I fell in love with Errol Flynn and was determined to marry him someday (at that age such dreams make perfect sense).

And so I set to work developing a plan of action. I realized that it would not be easy. I was starting at ground zero with practically no formal education, poor as a church mouse, a scrawny, red-haired, awkward young thing - but I had intelligence, imagination and tenacity going for me.

In those early post-war years in Germany the country lay in ruins and my schooling could be described as fragmented at best. My mother had farmed me out as a domestic which gave her one less mouth to feed. The woman I worked for had no interest in furthering my education and so, very simply, I did not go to school and nobody seemed to care.

I would have to begin my transformation by educating myself so that I would be able to keep up an intelligent conversation with this sophisticated man when I finally met him. I had always liked to read. Now I began to read voraciously - anything I could get my hands on. I absorbed bits and pieces of knowledge like a sponge and it was exhilarating!

Next, I decided that I would have to impress Errol Flynn not as a pretty girl - they were a dime a dozen and swarming around him like moths around a flame - but rather as a skilled professional: I would design his costumes.

For that I needed to go to art school.

When I turned 16 I applied and was accepted at the Wiesbadener Kunstschule. My parents could not afford to pay my tuition, so I had to come up with the money myself. I held some rather strange jobs after school: I worked as a detective, an "Olympic Swimmer" for the circus, a gadget demonstrator, a night-shift nanny and finally, during semester breaks, as an extra and stunt girl at the local film studios - where I encountered some of Germany's top movie stars.

But I was not star-struck; I still had my master plan. I was hanging out in the wardrobe department at every opportunity, learning all I could and making myself useful. When the wardrobe designer's assistant quit I was her logical successor.

This meant that had to leave art school without graduating, but the two-and-a-half years I worked for this designer (Alfred Bücken) were worth the sacrifice. We worked well together. I got to travel and go on location, and I was given raises and more and more responsibilities. I had the time of my life! I acquired poise and confidence - and curves. Errol Flynn - here I come!

But a strange thing happened on my way to that dream: It gradually faded away. Real young men became much more interesting to me and I flirted and dated and danced with the best of them. Eventually I came to America to marry one of them (we were divorced after 26 years of

marriage It was a civilized divorce and we are on good terms to this day).

While I never realized my dreams of designing Flynn's film wardrobe, I was able to stay home with my kids and contribute to our family's income by becoming a "doll artist". crafting intricately costumed collectors' dolls that were sold exclusively at Marshall Fields for many years. Once, early on, I sent Errol Flynn a pair of figurines modeled after him and one of his leading ladies and received a very gracious thank-you letter from him in return. (I gave it to a friend a few years ago but I still treasure the memory of it).

I got to know fascinating people - most of them writers - because of our shared interest in Flynn. We met and corresponded and sometimes I assisted them in their work, and over the years some of them became cherished friends. One of them even invited me to Tasmania (where Flynn was born) - AND I WENT! Tasmania is a gently strange and beautiful country and I fell in love with it. However, I rejected my friend's proposal of marriage - Tasmania, beautiful as it is, is too far away from home and all that is dear to me. . . .

It is just as well that I did not marry Errol Flynn, but for more than half a century now, he has occupied a special, warm and secure place in my heart. He gave me dreams and hope and something to hang on to when everything was bleak and seemed hopeless. He motivated me to take charge of my life. I will always be grateful to him.