

Sarah Wright Kimball

Principal

Kimball Communications

(Member since 1990)



of the job.”

Milwaukee gained a tremendous friend when a young Sarah Wright came to Milwaukee decades ago from New York City. She has remained a strong supporter of her adopted hometown ever since. Her trajectory here is an interesting combination of talent and serendipity.

After graduating from Penn State with a degree in Journalism and Public Relations, this young upstart from the Poconos (East Stroudsburg) moved to New York City. Prior to graduation she had spent time in Northern Ireland, (during “The Troubles”), Scotland and England. She lived with a farm family and it gave her tremendous insight into international living. That experience helped her land her first professional job as the Director of the Visitors Bureau for the English-Speaking Union. She planned every aspect of trips to NYC for Headmasters of schools in England. *“It was a dream job. I met wonderful people and got to show off NYC. However, with more than a somewhat fear of heights, trips to the iconic Empire State Building was probably my least favorite part*

This career woman fell in love with a Professor of French Gothic Architecture who left his role at Penn State and migrated to Milwaukee. They married and Sarah moved from the Big Apple to the Fresh Coast. The newlywed landed a job at Chapmans Department Store as the assistant to the Personnel Director. She edited the company newsletter and then was offered a promotion to Special Events and Fashion Coordinator. Her public speaking ability was honed as a fashion show commentator for the stores and legendary fashion designers including Bill Blass. While she loved the job at Chapmans, she also was at a crossroads personally as the marriage to the Professor did not stick.

Chapmans owner Verne Reed was also pulling in the financial horns of his retail empire and decided to eliminate Sarah’s position and offered to make her a junior buyer instead. Sarah wasn’t having it and told Mr. Reed she was going to go work for Ben Barkin instead. (Barkin was the public relations guru in Milwaukee, leading Barkin, Herman, Solocheck & Paulsen--the largest PR firm in the state). Despite never having met Mr. Barkin, Sarah was undaunted. She had, however, met Fannie Grombacher Enzer, a confidant of Barkin’s, so Sarah called Fannie. Fannie became Sarah’s mentor and champion, calling

Barkin's partner David Herman telling him he had to hire the young Sarah Wright. Gimbels was one of Barkin/Herman's major clients and Sarah's retail experience was a natural asset.

"Working at Barkin/Herman was one of the best things that ever happened to me professionally. It was a wonderful, magical place. We did a lot of good things around the world including developmental work in Africa and South America under the aegis of the United Nations. My principal role was special event management working with leading executives throughout the country and the Secretary General of the United Nations."

Sarah's career at Barkin was very successful. Starting as an account executive, she became a Vice President, then a Partner until finally a full-fledged principal and the Barkin Herman firm morphed into Barkin, Paulsen, Meissner & Kimball.

Around the same time as her career change, Sarah met Richard Kimball, a Bass Trombonist for the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (MSO). Introduced by mutual friends, she and Richard have been married for more than 40 years.

MSO encourages its musicians to retool and take a sabbatical every seven years. The Kimballs used that opportunity to travel around the world for 10 months, staying about a month in each selected country. Upon their return Sarah opened her own public relations consulting business and ratcheted up her community involvement.

Sarah's commitment to giving back started with her work with Ben Barkin. The agency had a big quotient of interest in civic affairs in Milwaukee and encouraged every member of the leadership team to become active in the community. Sarah has served on many volunteer boards of directors including: Friends of the Golda Maier Library at UWM, Boys & Girls Club, the Pabst Mansion, Milwaukee Ballet, Medical College of Wisconsin Cardiovascular Center, River Revitalization Foundation Board, Prevent Blindness and more.

And joining Rotary served as a lynchpin to service, too. *"Rotary has been a major part of my life. The spokes in the Rotary wheel have led me from one thing to another. My husband and I are both only children. I am always looking for people to hang out with and I can't imagine me without the Rotary Club of Milwaukee. Norm Paulsen and David Meisner introduced me to Rotary and Rick Luedke took this tenderfoot and nurtured me along."*

Since joining RCM, Sarah has played a major role in increasing its strength. She's served on the Program Committee, the Environment and Ecology Committee as well as the highly creative Marketing Committee.

"My husband and I now live in Miami Beach from Thanksgiving to May. I love it there, but I miss the opportunity to stay connected to Rotary. Sometimes I wish I were here year-round, for I feel I miss out on some of Rotary's important work and fun events. Of course, Mary McCormick does a phenomenal job keeping the Rotary profile front and center and connecting with the movers and shakers of this community."



Editor's Note: We feature the popular Rotary People of Action series bi-monthly. Given the Thanksgiving Holiday, the next edition of *Rotary People of Action* will be December 6 and feature former RCM President M. Kathleen Eilers. *Rotary People of Action* profiles are written by RCM Board Member (and its Sargent at Arms) Barbara Velez.