

Stimulator and Educator

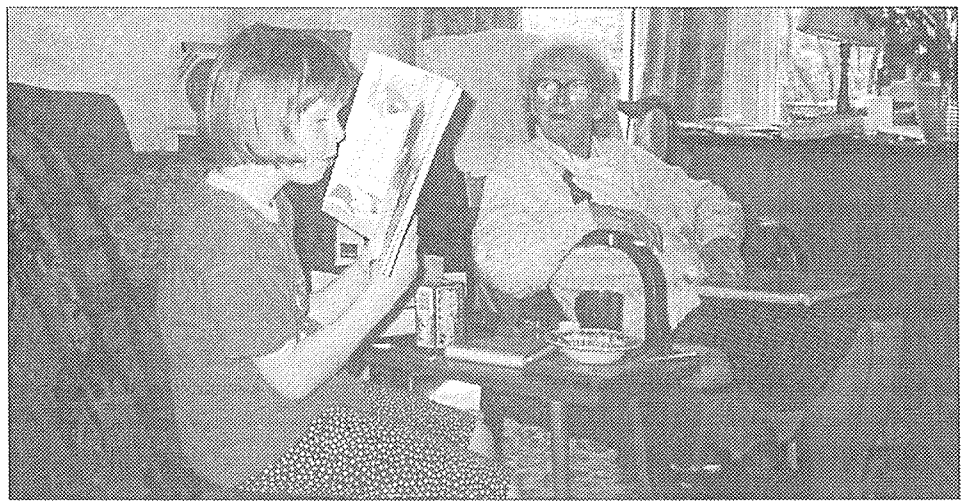
Kirstie Morrison, 1903 - 1998

CHRISTINE MORRISON, known to all as Kirstie, was a Scotswoman with a passion for teaching English. She was born in Ootacamund, India, in 1903 and was educated at St Leonard's School in St Andrews, Scotland. For seventy years she was actively associated with St. Anne's College, Oxford. When she went up as a student in 1923 it was to the Society of Home Students, a non-collegiate foundation. This became St Anne's Society in 1942 and was incorporated as a college in 1952. She was first Tutor and then Fellow through the years of the growth and establishment of the college.

Kirstie achieved a brilliant First and then taught for two years at Bradford High School. She returned to Oxford as tutor in English and thus began her distinguished career in energetic and stimulating teaching. Her joy was in seeing the talents of her students blossom and flourish and many of them have publicly expressed their indebtedness to her, including Sister Wendy Beckett, the art expert and author.

During those seven decades she saw enormous upheavals in society and world politics and made a substantial contribution to the issues she felt most keenly about: the role of women in education and intellectual leadership, the environment and religious tolerance and freedom. Her Christian faith, both personal and active through her association with Moral Re-Armament, was fundamental to the effectiveness of her life.

She was fun to be with. A *Polestar* contributor remembers staying overnight with other guests in her home. "At breakfast Kirstie threw down a proposition and the



Grace Riddell, then aged 8 reading to Kirstie (1996)

entire meal was spent discussing it. She kept throwing in literary quotations and philosophical arguments and if one was bold enough to make a statement, one was expected to substantiate it. It was the most stimulating and enjoyable breakfast conversation I can remember."

Another of the *Polestar* team writes, "In 1948 I was a freshman at another Oxford college. Attending a social gathering with a number of colleagues, I was greatly encouraged by Kirstie's warmth of manner and vivid wit. It was a great welcome to the university.

"Our sense of awe and diffidence in the face of its august institutions was just a little abated when she recounted how, as a very nervous and gawky freshman herself, anxious to make a good impression at the Principal's reception, she had accidentally knocked over an occasional table, hurling her cup of tea, saucer, plate, cake and everything to the floor. It sounded hilarious the way she told the story: at the time it was probably anything but!"

Countless Friends

The warmth of Kirstie's hospitality was experienced by countless people. From the

1970s to the end of her life she entertained many from around the world, including students from Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine who were part of an exchange programme which she helped to sponsor between Arab and British Universities.

C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien and Lord David Cecil had been her friends and colleagues. Like these literary giants, Kirstie never talked down to children: she fed their imagination and she could enter into their world, perhaps because she had never lost the wonderment of childhood herself. She spent happy hours introducing her youngest guests to the delights of poetry.

During her years of retirement, she kept in close contact with St. Anne's as Fellow Emeritus and she continued to befriend and encourage past and present students and faculty. "Her name was synonymous with that of St. Anne's," said the Principal speaking at the Celebration of Kirstie's life. Friends from many parts of the world remember her with gratitude and count themselves privileged to have known her. *Polestar* adds its tribute to a great lady and an outstanding educator.

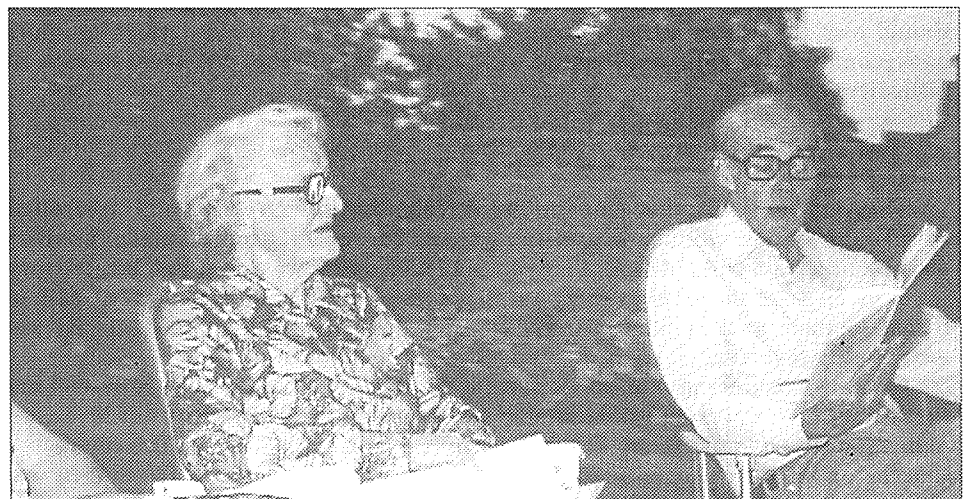
K.H.

Illiteracy (cont'd)

such technological advances have deepened the gulf between rich and poor; between those affluent and educated enough to benefit and those disqualified by poverty and illiteracy.

The world would need to spend an additional \$7 billion a year over the next ten years to eradicate illiteracy. A vast sum? Less than a tenth of the world's annual military spending and less than is annually spent on cosmetics in the USA or on ice-cream in Europe.

Mike Smith



Michael Thwaites, the Australian poet, reading his poem "The Jervis Bay" on Kirstie's 80th birthday