



Legacy of an Icon

I heard about Carry, her passion and work with alcoholics, before I met her.

In 1992 when I moved to South Africa, there were no rehab centres for alcoholics and addicts. The William Slater facility had already closed and, although there was a strong presence of AA and, to a lesser degree NA, there was no Minnesota 12-step based in-patient treatment centre.

One day, I received a call from Carry who asked if we could meet and talk about the Minnesota model of treatment as she had heard I had some experience of the programme. Carry had been working for some time to find interested parties to fund a rehab centre and had recently been offered the opportunity to start a facility at Kenilworth Clinic. She arrived with a lot of paperwork and information on the Minnesota model which she had been researching for some time.

Carry's energy was amazing and I had no doubt the project would fly. She surprised me by asking where I thought 'we' should start – I suggested she buy a file for all her papers!! In 1993 the unit was started in a small office and a group room at the back of Kenilworth Clinic. There may have been some doubters in the medical world but the facility took off like a rocket and when the 'Doc' arrived to give credibility and Medical Aid approval, the unit became the first credible and respected Minnesota Model treatment centre in South Africa. The rest is history.

The success of the unit led by Carry and Roger, was quickly established. The multi-disciplinary model of group and individual therapy, family programme and 12-step meetings for AA and NA became the template for other facilities, some of which were later run by recoverees from Kenilworth Clinic. Over the years, Carry's tireless work, skill and commitment to helping alcoholics and addicts, led thousands of people to the gateway of recovery; housewives, teachers, businessmen, doctors, nurses, lawyers, students, secretaries, surgeons, politicians and even a drug lord (I think the latter came to see what we were up to that was affecting his business, although he himself had become addicted to his stock!).

Carry's energy was infectious. Her insight and knowledge, compassion and love for the suffering alcoholic was an inspiration to all who worked with her. A formidable number of counsellors, therapists, clinical psychologists and psychiatric nurses were launched into the burgeoning industry of rehabilitation that has attracted clients from Africa, the U.K, the Netherlands, the United States and many other parts of the world.

During her time at Kenilworth, Carry lost her darling "Gugs" to cancer. But she came back and carried on the work that became her lifelong commitment. At her side for many years was "Russell", her faithful hound. Carry said time and again that

he gave her the balance she needed and the strength to cope with difficult situations. This window into another aspect of her personality is not only endearing but rather a counter to her reputation as a *'femme formidable'*.

Stepping Stones was launched in 1997 and became the rehab of choice for thousands. The Beach House was opened for secondary care treatment. Carry set about the alterations and then the total refurbishment of what had been, ironically, the Kommetjie Hotel, a well-known watering hole in the Southern peninsula. The bar and restaurant continued to live convivially next door to the first rehab facility in Southern Africa to receive International Accreditation. In addition to the all-important programme, everything from catering to the linens and wall paint duly received Carry's attention. All of this was done with the same passion and enthusiasm, the hallmark of anything to which Carry turned her hand.

The Open days at Stepping Stones were always well-attended, and brought much-needed information and education about the nature of the disease to the community, giving everyone a chance to celebrate the success and sobriety of the grateful recoverees who had passed through the doors. Of course, all of the work would have been impossible without the magnificent dedication and skill of the multi-disciplinary teams and support staff at Kenilworth, Stepping Stones and The Beach House.

Carry's legacy is reflected in the thousands of recoverees who were enabled to turn their lives around, to once again be useful members of society and to regain the trust of their families.

Carry Bekker was tough, funny, resilient and loving and, I'm proud to say, a loyal friend and colleague.

Jeni Cole

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