

COMMEMORATIVE ACCOUNT OF RALPH TAYLOR REGARDING CAROL ANN TAYLOR

Carol Ann Taylor born on 25 March 1948 and died on 21 November 2023

Carol was a much loved wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, cousin, friend, and teacher who was gifted in many crafts and touched so many lives so positively. I Ralph as her widower am making this informal statement in relation to her life and it's poignant that the first day of this inquiry 9 September 2024 would have been Carol and my Golden Wedding anniversary.

Carol was born in Bart's Hospital on 25 March 1948 the first child of Harry and Sylvia King and the eldest of three - John and Sharon followed. The family lived in the area around Great Ormond Street Hospital during her happy childhood.

Her lifelong friend Susan recalls *'I have lots of very happy memories of my childhood with Carol. Our nans lived in the same house and we were always together. We went to St Leonard's Nursery in Corams Fields. Carol had the peg with the picture of the doll on it and I had the teddy bear. I remember always wanting the doll. One day Carol and I were chasing each other around the cloakroom. I fell and hit my head and a massive egg like bump came up on my forehead. I was crying. Carol was crying. We couldn't be consoled and our Mums had to come and pick us up.'*

Susan also records that *'we went to Saturday morning pictures and were the Kings Cross Grenadiers. If you got up on the stage and sung before the film you got a big bag of sweets. Carol and I would get up every week and sing April Love until they got fed up with us, called us over one day and said that we had to give someone else a chance so Century Kings Cross lost its two best two singers!'*

Carol had a happy childhood although her parents remarked that she was always strong willed! She went to Haverstock Comprehensive School and was in the grammar stream. She didn't achieve the academic results that she might have done possibly because she was anxious about being tested in any circumstances which later included taking her driving test which she passed on the fourth attempt. However she persuaded her father to buy her a typewriter on which she self-taught herself touch typing so to expand her employment opportunities. She was always self-driven believing you can achieve anything you put your mind to.

Her first job on leaving school was working in a bookshop near the British Museum where she combined serving in the shop with working in the office. She gave most of her first pay packet to her mother who was a skilled dressmaker and asked that she have her clothes made so that she had an individual style.

After a number of typing jobs Carol started working as a secretary in a solicitor's office which was where we met. I was a young rather naive newly qualified solicitor and noticed a pretty secretary wearing an intriguing short crochet dress. We sometimes chatted and although she didn't work for me specifically she sometimes did if I was busy. One day she handed me a bill for the work which she had carried out, the price of which was a drink after work. I took her for that drink, we immediately hit it off and within five months of our first date we bought and moved into a house together. An early example of Carol being impulsive and

getting what she wanted. I was swept off my feet. Looking back the true cost of that bill was substantially more but was worth every penny.

Our relationship was based on mutual attraction and strong shared family values influenced by her parents whom she adored and my own all of whom were in time able to celebrate their respective Golden Wedding anniversaries with us. From this foundation came our own children David Ann and Jane.

Carol's working life was put on hold until Jane was about two. Carol thought about becoming a teacher. She went to enquire at what was then North East London Polytechnic what qualifications she would require but was told that as a mature student she could be immediately accepted. Leaving Jane at nursery school she cycled to college to study and blossomed in that environment. After she graduated she then embarked on an unbelievable career within teaching, a career that took her from a class teacher at Becontree Heath and other schools via a deputy headship at Cleveland school to a headship at the Leys School Dagenham all within 10 years of graduation.

Carol's friend Linda a fellow teacher comments in relation to her headship that Carol was very popular with the staff, parents and children. She completely transformed the school creating a wonderful stimulating learning environment for the children. She was really involved with the pupils spending as much time as possible in class and leading them in drama and singing as well as extending their knowledge of the environment. Out of her own pocket she bought a variety of animals including hamsters, Guinea pigs, snakes and insects so that the children could experience caring for them. Initially during the holidays these animals had to be kept at home and Jane remembers trying to recover the escaping stick insects. Carol was responsible for overseeing and managing the expansion of the school from a nursery/infant school to a full junior one all the time spending as much time with children as possible and leaving administration matters to be done outside teaching times.

Alongside her teaching career Carol was as a mother primarily responsible for rearing guiding and leading our own children during their own childhood and schooling. One main advantage of her being a teacher was the school holidays when she devoted more time to them. Overall as a family we tried to involve our children in activities such as cubs, scouts brownies, guides, dancing, gymnastics and fishing clubs. Carol was a cub leader and as a family we travelled to Denmark on an exchange visit for Ann's gymnastics club.

Pets were always part of our family life with a succession of cats over the years, rabbits, Guinea pigs, gerbils, hamsters, birds, tortoises, terrapins, fish and latterly dogs. We enjoyed regular visits to park, museums and zoos as well as family holidays initially in my parents' caravan in Pevensey Bay and then renting cottages in Devon, Cornwall and Pembrokeshire until the vagaries of the British weather tempted us further afield

The wider family were also very much in our lives centring around our parents and including siblings and subsequently their partners and children and Carol was pivotal in this. For many years she and I hosted family gatherings particularly around Christmas where the attendance at the Boxing Day lunches increased in size year by year. They are still remembered by the wider family and in recent years Jane has taken over the role of hosting the Boxing Day lunches.

After Carol retired from teaching she wondered what she might do and I told her to enjoy the benefits of grandchildren when they come along which they did like buses with Luran,

Alex, Angelique, Miles and Scarlett being born within five years .Carol doted on them and loved to see them whenever she could. Nanny Carol sitting with them, encouraging to express themselves, creating artwork together and never being critical of their efforts although they understood that there were boundaries not to be crossed. They could and did have fun and for five consecutive years we took all five of them with us to Centerparcs for a week where activities were facilitated, shared and enjoyed. One day after watching the film "Mamma Mia" Carol decided to emulate the character played by Julie Walters by climbing on the table to sing 'If you change your mind' and nearly falling off providing a memorable experience.

During this time Carol developed her skills in arts and crafts initially holding classes herself from home. When we moved to Buckhurst Hill she joined classes for pottery at which she excelled as well as china painting, mosaics, decoupage, knitting, crocheting and jewellery making.

There were also Carol's collecting skills, about which there was something almost obsessional. Most people start a collection with one or two items, but not Carol. Whether that be ducks on the wall, Toby jugs or doll houses there had to be a more or less complete set immediately. Once complete the collection might be retained or passed to our friend David for him to sell in his antique shop and another collection started.

When as a family we met with the Celebrant for Carol's funeral and he asked what interests she had, he was deluged with widespread and varied examples like rabbits being pulled out of a bottomless hat.

Carol had been in the St John's Ambulance Brigade as a teenager, was an accomplished cook, trained in cordon bleu cooking who enjoyed hosting dinner parties, she sang in an adult choir, kept bees and made honey, tried to play the piano (three pianos purchased and sold) tried playing the guitar, was a parish councillor, member of both the National Trust and the RHS. We regularly visited the theatre, ballet, cinema and restaurants together. We also travelled widely, to the USA a number of times Thailand, Goa ,South Africa, Singapore and throughout Europe. In Singapore Carol accompanied me four times on business trips mostly staying in Raffles Hotel where she enjoyed the facilities while I worked. One might wonder how it was possible for one person to have done so much and touched so many lives so positively but that was Carol. Her friends variously described her as unforgettable, special, amazing, talented, impulsive, loving and very loyal.

Someone once asked if I believed in God and I replied that I did and was married to her! Although this was said partly in jest it was partly true as in my way I worshipped her. Without her and my children/grandchildren, my life would have been empty and unfulfilled. I have to go on as Carol would have wanted me to do. I could not do so without the support of my family and friends.

Suffering from mental health issues is cruel. To the outside world you may appear to be normal but inside your head your thoughts are churning around and logic disappears. In 2012/13 Carol had her first serious mental health episode. She was diagnosed as suffering from recurrent depressive disorder and after being treated with appropriate medication her condition stabilized for about ten years. By November 2022 following a series of joint replacements which progressively reduced her mobility and increasingly debilitating associated conditions, Carol's mental health started to be affected. This worsened during a cruise to Iceland in March 2023 to see the Northern Lights which Carol regarded as a trip of a

lifetime. Carol developed pneumonia and had to be taken off the ship in Reykjavik and to a hospital. There she was also diagnosed with diabetes. She had to stay in hospital until she could be repatriated by air after over three weeks.

On her return home Carol's mental condition steadily deteriorated and she recognized that she needed psychiatric help which was unfortunately not forthcoming. On 28 June frustrated and in despair she took an overdose of her depression medication. This was a classic cry for help, as immediately after she took the overdose, she telephoned my younger daughter Jane to tell her what she had done. I was in the house at the time and arranged for Carol to be taken to A&E. She was transferred to St Margaret's Mental Health unit in early July. There she proved resistant to treatment as she had done back in 2013 and also experienced difficulties in eating and drinking which resulted in a significant weight loss. ECT was eventually recommended but never administered.

My daughter Jane and I visited Carol on the evening of 20 November 2023 when although clearly still unwell physically and mentally she seemed a little brighter. By the time we left she had agreed to have her hair cut which she hadn't had done since she was admitted, and also to have new clothes bought for her since her existing ones were far too loose because of weight loss.

We were therefore totally shocked to receive a phone call in the early hours of 21 November 2023 that Carol had passed away suddenly and unexpectedly. The shock seemed to be shared by the staff when my daughters and I came to view Carol's body.

It was only when I read the post-mortem that I became concerned that about Carol's death. Carol's care was entrusted to EPUT. We as a family considered that EPUT's primary responsibility was to preserve and protect Carol's life and they appeared to have failed to do this.

The impact of Carol's death has fallen heavily on both family and friends. I have been deprived of my soulmate of over 50 years. I was diagnosed with Stage 4 melanoma in November 2018. I didn't expect to be here now and have been fortunate to be treated by immunotherapy and to have been cancer free for over 3 years. It is cruelly ironic that as my health has improved over the past few years Carol's declined. I believe that Carol would have recovered her physical and mental health had she received timely and effective treatment.

Carol's children, her grandchildren and wider family have all been deprived of Carol's continuing love guidance and support. This is particularly true for those of them who also suffering from mental health conditions and for whom her support was pivotal and irreplaceable.

Carol's death has left a huge and unfillable hole in the lives of so many.

Photograph of Carol

