

## *Eulogy of a Friend*



### **Carol L. Kwoka**

**October 12, 1954 – May 30, 2007**

A few weeks ago when it became clear that Carol was going to die I decided to write something about her life for our web-site. After several attempts I stopped. The words were not there. For the last month Carol had peppered me with emails about the office and how things were going. Writing her obituary while she was still with us seemed unnatural. When she died last week, the words came and the note for the web-site turned into a eulogy of a friend....

She was my friend, my employee, and my silent partner for nearly 25 years. She was above all a wife, a mother, a sister, a grandmother, a mother-in-law, an aunt, a niece, a friend and a daughter. Those were the relationships that formed the rich tapestry of her life. An ordinary girl from Pennsauken leaving this world as an extraordinary woman of grace, style and competence. Losing her is exquisitely painful but remembering her brings a smile- and more than a few tears. Remembering her is also cause to say out loud - ***Carol made a difference in every life she touched.***

It is a legacy all of us here would be proud to leave our loved ones and friends.

Many of you never saw the side of Carol that I worked next to for over two decades. She was known in legal circles throughout this country, and internationally as the go to person in our office. ***By name.*** Without compromise she

would translate the fragmented stories of unspeakable memories into a cohesive narrative that focused each survivor, providing me the tools to take up their cause.

Carol beamed with a mother's pride watching her son Dan develop into a first rate film maker and editor, brining these terrible stories life. Her work ethic was nothing short of a daily search for excellence. Nothing seemed out of her reach, no request went ignored. Her natural curiosity in the world and how things could work better, framed her competence. She was like many other high octane professionals I know, a perfectionist. Her passion was mastery. Whether it was the binding of a file or preparing a brief to the Supreme Court it would not leave the office, unless and until, it was perfect.

She was my most strident critic. *"Did you really write this when you were awake?"* It is a voice I will forever remember. She was my protector. Fiercely loyal, sometimes to a fault but never in doubt. As I speak to you this morning, I wonder how it was I deserved such loyalty. Her intolerance for cutting corners was legendary and for the survivors of sexual abuse, her door was always open keeping them centered dispensing unending compassion with a keen ability to listen.

We grew into middle age together. Working side by side, keeping the clients interests first, Carol providing her patented dry wit and humanity. We were combat veterans, fighting everyday - institutional hubris and neglect of children. She was driven by the facts. She was driven by the truth.

I have always been somewhat put off by the phrase dying with dignity. From my vantage point there was nothing dignified at all about her death. This brutal disease strips people of all of their dignity but as I looked at my friend I realized what she leaving us was a template for living. A week before she died Carol called me and asked to bring her a White House sub and a cannoli from Atlantic City. I said well OK- so I got in my car, drove to Atlantic City, got the sub and the cannoli and drove them to Manahawkin. Of course she could not eat any of it and soon needed to retire to her bedroom. As I was saying good-bye, she looked me dead in the eye and said, *"You know- this really sucks, I am going to miss everyone...But what are you going to do"*. That was Carol. An elegant woman, possessed with a purpose driven life to the end, imbued with integrity, logic and love. So instead of sadness, her memory brings a smile to my face. We were lucky to have had her for as many years as we did. When her family and friends gathered with Carol to share her last days, Carol set an example for all of us.

You have but one life, live it well. She will be remembered. She will be missed.

Stephen Rubino  
June 5, 2007