

Rita Steffensen memorial Service

Eulogy given by Alan Howard at the memorial service held at Holy Trinity Church Cannes on October 22nd 2014

We are here today to celebrate the life of Rita Steffensen.

I knew Rita for over 40 years. We were great friends and business colleagues.

Rita was very intelligent, accomplished, caring and friendly. She was a successful business woman and as I will tell you later true entrepreneur.

You will know her especially because of her Papillion dogs Lena and Clara. Lena died last year and her new dog Clara has been by adopted a friend in CPH.

She was a regular attender ah Holy Trinity on Sunday and Wednesday and always stayed for lunch. It was a source of great enjoyment to her and she made many friends, many who are here today. She was a committed and devoted Christian. Holy Trinity and its fellowship were very important to her

She died on October 2 in hospital aged 84

Lydia & I attended her funeral in the DomKirke; the Danish Westminster Abbey where Hans Christian Anderson and Kirkegaard had their funeral service there. The cathedral originates from the 11th century. It was rebuilt after being destroyed by Nelson in the Napoleonic wars. Rita was a regular attender at the church and it was very appropriate her funeral was held there. I was asked to give her Eulogy.

Rita was born in Aabenraa on August 13th 1930. The town is in Jutland about 25 miles from the German border. Rita's maiden name

was Jacobsen. She had two brothers Ehrling who died over 20 years ago and Fleming. Her Father worked in the local bank

In her late teens she went as a live-in governess for the children of a rich Danish family.

She was also an expert in embroidery which she then taught.

In the 1950s Rita married Anton Steffensen a civil engineer and became Rita Steffensen. Unable to have children they adopted Gullmai at the age of 11. They divorced in mid '70s.

At the age of 39 she went back to school to take the Danish equivalent of A levels and entered Copenhagen University to study ancient Danish and English. To perfect her English she came to summer schools in Cambridge and stayed with a family in Oxford and became bilingual.

She then taught English as a foreign language to mature students in Copenhagen.

In 1980 I launched the Cambridge Diet ("CD") in USA. It is a dietary product that is sold not in shops but by trained counsellors. It became very popular among the Mormons. In 1982 I was invited to address several hundred counsellors in Salt Lake City and Rita came with me. She was greatly enthused by the results and saw the commercial potential of the diet.

So, in 1984 she started Cambridge Kuren which is the Danish for CD. Sales were slow at the beginning so she translated my book on the CD into Danish and we held a press Conference at City Hotel. Only one journalist came: from the leading newspaper Berlinske Tidende. This led to increased public awareness. Rita ended up with an office, warehouse and 6 employees. Then she went on to form a Swedish company, arranged a successful clinical trial at the Karolinska

Institute in Stockholm. She formed a Norwegian Company with a well known Oslo Doctor specialising in Obesity. Sales of the diet were even greater, than in the UK, at one point!

After 15 years she retired and gave her retirement speech in 1999 at the Carlton Hotel Cannes where we had an international distributor meeting.

She then sold out her companies and IP to the Norwegian Doctor and became moderately wealthy owning a summer house on the coast north of Copenhagen, an apartment in the centre of CPH and one at the Grand Hotel Cannes.

In 2006 she created the "Rita Steffensen Foundation" with objects to support orphaned children with special reference to Africa. This year she supported an organisation, Kenya Kids, through a member of this congregation.

All her 3 properties are to be sold and given to her Foundation and her fund will be well over 1 million Euros. This could be a tremendous help to children orphaned in West Africa by the Ebola virus.

Rita's 15 year retirement was a very happy one. She spent 6 months of the year in Cannes from September to April, and enjoyed the fine Danish weather in her summer house.

However in the last 3 years or so she was not too well and suffered from a severe back pain, dizziness and glare. She attended the Easter service this year but left for Copenhagen shortly thereafter saying she could not return to Cannes again. Two people from the congregation helped her to the airport. Her death was very sudden and resulted from a complete physical and mental breakdown.

Rita was an excellent companion, quite a character, but exceptionally good hearted and generous. She was a great anglophile and enjoyed the English speaking community here in Cannes.

We, her friends here in Cannes and her family and friends in Denmark will miss her greatly.

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