

Candy Malherbe – a tribute to a Black Sash stalwart (1928-2022)

Candy was born in 1928 in Maryland, U.S.A. Her maiden name was Canby and she was named Catherine Vertrees, usually called Vertrees by her family. She met her husband, Paul Malherbe, when he was studying Chemical Engineering at M.I.T. They married and she returned with him to South Africa in 1952. She immediately embraced his family and his country. Paul's father, Dr E.G. Malherbe, was a liberal highly regarded educationist and through her in-laws in Durban she was introduced to South Africans of substance, black and white. This sparked her interest in South African politics and the injustices of apartheid, an interest which naturally drew her later to the Black Sash.

In 1957 she was very badly struck by polio – a young married woman with two small children – Paul and Louise. An uncle with medical connections arranged for her to be flown to the U.S. for treatment, and the story goes that she left saying, "I'll come back walking." She did, but on crutches, and sometimes bent almost double. She had tremendous courage always – she was never sorry for herself and, with her sense of humour and a gift for friendship, she lived a full and busy life. In the Black Sash she was a very active member of the Wynberg Branch and its chair at one time, and very often hosted meetings at her house in Kenilworth and then in Constantia. Famously, a fundraising 'fashion' show was very successfully held in the courtyard of their Constantia home! She was on the Regional Council, and her knowledge and skills were greatly appreciated there. She also played a vital role as a member of the editorial committee of the organisation's magazine SASH from 1987 until its final issue in 1995, working particularly with Sarah-Anne Raynham and often serving as its editor.

It is difficult to convey the depths and strengths that Candy possessed – she was a natural academic and many people have paid tribute to the contribution she made to the work of the History Department at U.C.T. While working there she co-authored two books – *The Bushmen of Southern Africa* and *The Cape Herders: A History of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa*.

After her husband Paul died - tragically, he drowned while sailing alone at Pringle Bay – she bought a bright, single-storeyed house in Newlands. She very much enjoyed the freedom of driving her own car and she did not allow her disabilities to prevent her from doing anything she wanted to do. For instance, she regularly drove herself to the Baxter and, having arranged to be met with a wheelchair; she could attend a concert or watch a play.

It was in her late eighties that she decided that she would not be able to manage alone indefinitely. With typical resolve she sold her house, disposed of most of her possessions, and moved with her computer into a single room at Summerley Court, with 'Assisted Living'. In her wheelchair she was able to move out of the frail-care section to be among the other residents. She made friends

and took part in whichever of the activities appealed to her. Then in 2020, came the dread years of Covid, a very lonely time for many people. Although Candy was a serious reader, but restricted to her single room, she really suffered from the lack of the stimulus of visiting friends. Her health gradually deteriorated. Although she improved once restrictions were lifted, that was for a short respite, and she became increasingly frail. Candy died on 26 June, 2022.

We miss an inspirational human being.

V.C. (Candy) Malherbe: Historian

Remembered by Nigel Penn

V.C. Malherbe, or Candy to those who knew her, was an exceptional historian. She was one of the first historians, alongside Richard Elphick in the 1970s, to attempt to rescue the Khoisan from the dustbin of history, into which receptacle they had been deposited as “Hottentots” or “Bushmen” (perhaps even as “Coloureds”) by the racist condescension of the past. Not only did Candy see these previously despised societies as possessing identities that preceded and survived colonial conquest, she saw them as being composed of individuals whose lives were both recoverable and fit subjects for historical investigation. A string of articles and chapters in the 1970s and 1980s celebrated the existence of a truly wonderful cast of characters: Klaas and David Stuurman, heroes of Khoikhoi resistance; Hermanus and his sons, picaresque Khoikhoi bandits; Cupido Kakkerlak, a Khoikhoi evangelist, and trans frontier fighters and fugitives who moved between one culture and another, such as Boezak, Andries Stoffel and Hans Trompetter.¹

She placed these individuals in the turbulent context of their times: the oppressive colonialism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century eastern Cape frontier zone. This was a subject with which she had become familiar whilst writing her M.A. thesis on the condition of Khoikhoi labourers in the eastern Cape prior to the “Hottentot”, or Caledon Code of 1809.² With her friend and colleague, Susie Newton-King, she then went on to write a short but invaluable work on the Khoikhoi Rebellion in the eastern Cape (1799-1803) emphasising how the events of the Third

¹ See “The Life and Times of Cupido Kakkerlak”, *Journal of African History*, 20, (3), 1979; “David Stuurman: ‘Last Chief of the Hottentots’” *African Studies* 39, (1), 1980; “Hermanus and His Sons: Khoi Bandits and Conspirators in the Post-Rebellion Period (1803-1818)”, *African Studies*, 41 (2), 1982; “David Stuurman”, “Boezak” and “Andries Stoffel” in *The Dictionary of South African Biography*, Vol. IV (Durban, Human Sciences Research Council, 1981) and “Hans Trompetter”, Cupido Kakkerlak”, “Klaas Stuurman”, *Dictionary of South African Biography*, Vol. V (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, 1987).

² V.C. Malherbe, “Diversification and Mobility of Khoikhoi Labour in the Eastern Districts of the Cape Colony Prior to the Labour Law of 1 November 1809”, M.A. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1978.

Frontier War owed as much to Khoikhoi resistance as they did to Xhosa resistance and that both grew out of the oppressive practices of colonial settlers.³

Apart from these academic articles, Candy was always concerned, as an ex-secondary school teacher of history, to write popular, community-oriented histories, aimed at enabling scholars and non-academics who were curious to learn about their ancestry or their origins to find out more. A steady flow of publications, some of them co-authored, dealt with the histories of slavery, the Khoikhoi and the San. Contentious and topical issues such as land rights and restitution were also presented to a non-specialist audience and she also contributed to a school text book for the western Cape.⁴

As a committed member of the Black Sash Candy wrote works that contributed to social awareness and educational projects. Specific histories of communities in the rural districts of Paarl and Aliwal North are evidence that she saw one of her tasks as recovering and sharing the experience of ordinary and marginal people under discriminatory governments and restoring to them a sense of worth and identity.⁵ In the process of this, and other, research Candy collected oral histories and worked with the Centre For Popular Memory at UCT, depositing tapes of interviews she had conducted with people for safe keeping with the Centre.⁶

³ V.C. Malherbe and S. Newton-King, *The Khoikhoi Rebellion in the Eastern Cape (1799-1803)*, (Communications No. 5, Centre For African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1981, 1984).

⁴ See her works for the Schuter and Shooter History Reference Library, *These Small People/Spore op die Sand* (1983); *Men of Men/Mense Van die Veld* (1984); *Always Working/Werk Altyd Werk* (with Nigel Worden 1986); *Changing the Land/Nuwe Leefwyse, Nuwe Landskap* (with Martin Hall, 1988); *The Struggle for the Land/ Stryd om Lewensruimte* (with Christopher Saunders 1990); *Not Slave Not Free* (with Uma Mestrie, 1992) and A. Bank, C. Malherbe and P. van der Spuy, *People of the Western Cape: A History for Schools* (Cape Town, Juta, 2003). Also Emile Boonzaier, Candy Malherbe, Andy Smith and Penny Behrens, *The Cape Herders: A History of the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa* (Cape Town, David Philips, 1996 and 2000); Andy Smith, Candy Malherbe, Mat Guenther and Penny Behrens, *The Bushmen of Southern Africa: A Foraging Society in Transition* (Cape Town, David Philip, 2000 and 2015).

⁵ V.C. Malherbe, *Paarl, The Hidden History* (Black Sash, 1987); *Lettie's Story: Growing Up Black in Aliwal North* (Cape Town, Hidden Histories Series, Heinemann Publishers); *The Educational Projects of the South African Institute of Race Relations (Cape Western)* (Regional Topic Paper 94/1, August 1994).

⁶ See the section Oral History in the accompanying list of Candy's publications.

A very important work appeared in 1989, a chapter on the Khoisan that she co-authored with Richard Elphick for the second edition of *The Shaping of South African Society*.⁷ This work became a text book for history students in South African universities and Elphick and Malherbe's summary of Khoisan history to 1828 the best possible introduction to the subject. Equally remarkable was a short book she wrote on Krotoa, also known as Eva, in 1990. Candy was probably the first person to write a detailed, sensitive study of this iconic Khoikhoi woman though many historians, film makers and novelists would follow her lead. Her example enabled and encouraged later studies of Sara Bartman, as well as studies of other Khoisan men and women, and should be acknowledged as a historical milestone.⁸

Candy's interest in Khoisan history and the eastern Cape frontier led her, almost inevitably, to a consideration of the Khoikhoi or Cape Regiment. In the fullness of time her work on this regiment would culminate in a beautifully illustrated book, *The Cape Regiment In Peace And War 1781-1817*⁹ but along the way she produced a number of articles on the phenomenon of Khoikhoi soldiers who had been transported – for desertion or rebellion – to Australia, thereby contributing to the limited number of histories linking the two countries together.¹⁰ The role of Khoikhoi soldiers in the Cape's frontier wars, and indeed in colonial commandos in general, had been a neglected topic. Candy's work went some way towards rectifying this neglect and also demonstrated how important an institution the regiment was in the lives of the Khoikhoi of the early nineteenth century.

In 1997 Candy completed her doctorate, "The Cape Khoisan in the Eastern Districts of the Colony Before and After Ordinance 50 of 1828, c. 1820-1835". In many ways this was the logical continuation of her M.A. on the Caledon Code of 1809 and reflected her abiding interest in the condition of Khoikhoi labourers in the Cape Colony. Although Candy had nothing to prove as a writer, historian or academic and had no desire to hold an academic post she obviously thought it was important to obtain the formal recognition of her excellence as a historian in the attainment of a PhD. Like all of her work it was finely detailed and sensitive, providing future generations of

⁷ "The Khoisan to 1828", with Richard Elphick, in Richard Elphick and Hermann Giliomee (eds), *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840* (Cape Town, Maskew Millar Longman, 2nd edition, 1989).

⁸ V.C. Malherbe, *Krotoa, Called Eva: A Woman Between* (Communication No. 19, Centre for African Studies, University of Cape Town, 1990).

⁹ V.C. Malherbe, *The Cape Regiment In Peace And War 1781-1817* (Cape Town, Castle Military Museum, 2012).

¹⁰ V.C. Malherbe, "Khoikhoi and the Question of Convict Transportation from the Cape Colony, 1820-1842", *South African Historical Journal*, No. 17 (1985); "South African Bushmen to Australia? Some Soldier Convicts Investigated", *Australian Journal of Colonial History*, 3, (1), April 2001.

historians with hard won archival evidence of the social, economic and political status of colonial Khoikhoi in the years immediately following their supposed emancipation.¹¹

The status of Khoisan and slaves, or ex-slaves, in colonial society led Candy to the next major field of study in her life as a historian: the study of what makes people “legitimate” or “illegitimate” members of society. Candy became a family historian, or, rather, a historian interested in the role of marriage, sex, and family structures in reproducing or creating identities. Working out of the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies in the Faculty of Law at the University of Cape Town Candy produced a truly impressive series of articles between 2005 and 2010 that explored the intricacies and intimacies of family formation, sex and marriage in the racially divided eighteenth and nineteenth century Cape colonial society. It is a matter of regret that Candy did not ever pull all of this work together into one book, but it is perhaps unrealistic to expect any person to have been more energetic and productive than she was. She seemed tireless, though even attending seminars on campus was a physical challenge for Candy as she was obliged to negotiate its many steps and stairs on her way to meetings. Needless to say it was a challenge she always met with a laugh and a smile.

Over the years, as may be seen from the accompanying list of Candy’s publications, she wrote many important reviews of significant historical books. She was also heavily involved in the time consuming and often thankless task of editing a variety of publications, as well as editing a number of issues of the SASH magazine. This work was undertaken not for the purpose of self-aggrandisement or self-promotion. A great deal of it was inspired by a sense of duty and community service, it was almost anonymous and entirely voluntary.

As a younger colleague of Candy’s I was, and remain, a beneficiary of her kindness. Her generous notice of me in the footnote to the title of her chapter in the *Shaping of South African Society* launched my career, or at least, launched incredulous laughter amongst less generous colleagues. At one stage, as she was easing out of academic life, she gave me photocopies of all the history articles she had been collecting over the years, thinking that they might be useful to a teacher of South African history. She introduced me to the international scholars who came to visit her and invited me, and others, to dinners and social events at her gracious home. She shared her knowledge enthusiastically but was so modest about her own achievements that one was sometimes unaware that she had already written about a subject that one was only just discovering for oneself. Her contribution to the history of the Cape’s marginalized peoples –

¹¹ V.C. Malherbe, “The Cape Khoisan in the Eastern Districts of the Colony Before and After Ordinance 50 of 1828, c. 1820-1835”, (PhD. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1997).

Khoisan, slaves, women, bastards, convicts - is inestimable and cries out for a collected volume of her work. But she should not only be honoured for her historical writings. She should be be honoured too for the person she was – a generous colleague, a brave and cheerful woman and a faithful soul.

Remembered by Brad L and Robert M

The other aberrations in dear Candy's otherwise incredible tolerance and discretion toward other's actions (she was always able to find something positive about everyone and especially if others in our company would slip and acknowledge a flaw in someone) were in reference to "our" presidents GW Bush and Donald Trump! We had so many mutual rants over these 2 stupid, conniving men, neither of us able to grasp how presidents could be behave as they did! And possibly our loudest howls were over Donald Rumsfeld's wrangling "Known Unknowns" conundrum! Despite her 70 years of permanent residence in ZA, Candy remained so proud and committed to being a genuine American in terms of its definition when she grew up in Maryland during the Depression.

Candy was probably if not surely the most sanguine, morally sound, intelligent, well-rounded, understanding, well-read epistemophilial (to use a newly-learned word) friend I will ever know; she always had interesting things to discuss, was always up on current world affairs, films, movies, theatre, music, art, and always had 3 or 4 books simultaneously on the go. We will ever cherish and be grateful for her friendship. I never left visiting her without the awareness that I was certainly more enriched and blessed by her company than she could ever have been by mine!

And man did she love seafood and ice cream, the latter being top priority! Just two days before her passing, Robert sensed it was pressingly imminent when she for the first time ever didn't finish the ice cream he brought her!

- Brad Liebl.

Vertrees 'Candy' Malherbe

In the late 80s I met Louisa when I started working at Rozenhof, the wonderful restaurant that she had opened in 1984. I got to know Candy and her husband Paul fairly well as supportive patrons of Rozenhof from 1992 onwards, when Louisa continued in the role as consultant and mentor.

The friendship that my partner Brad Liebl and I had with Louisa started to extend to one with Candy and Paul, particularly as the two Americans Candy and Brad were never short of subjects to discuss. We enjoyed many weekends at their Pringle Bay house with its breath-taking location. After Paul's death our friendship grew incrementally, and there was no shortage of things we

liked to do together: plays at the Baxter Theatre, live opera screened at Cinema Nouveau, the documentary festivals and special performances such as that by the Alvin Ailey modern dance company, and Bryn Terfel. When the Fugard Theatre and later the Norval Foundation opened, these added to our list of favourite cultural destinations. The enjoyment of food was an essential component of our outings, if not a meal with a glass of wine and time to talk, at least somewhere that had good ice cream! We loved celebrating birthdays together.

Our friendship across generations made perfect sense to us, whereas strangers sometimes seemed perplexed and I still chuckle remembering one or two of those occasions. There was little that irked Candy (equanimity and kindness were constants with her) but she did not like over-solicitousness and inquisitiveness. One sunny Sunday, Candy, Brad and I were enjoying oysters and bubbly ... we were seated outside at the Waterfront when two women who were on a cruise on the Queen Mary passenger ship, docked in Cape Town, approached and started a conversation. They seemed to have a great need to understand how we fitted together. Candy was far keener to continue with the oysters and their analysis that Candy and Brad were wife and husband and I their son, provoked Candy to exclaim, "Here we go again!"

- Robert Mulders

PUBLICATIONS - V.C. MALHERBE

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