

Carol Lebeau

By Judith A. Habert
Photos : Lisa K. Miller

There are some things you can always count on, and having Carol Lebeau come into our living rooms each weekday evening is just one of those things. Carol has been a part of our San Diego lifestyle for close to 28 years. Her melodic voice and brilliant smile have helped inform San Diegans as to what is going on in our city and throughout the world. She is often sharing news that is less than pleasant, but she still manages to report it with a level of class and integrity that we wish all newscasters possessed. What is even more evident each night (on her broadcast) is that she is an incredibly nice lady who obviously enjoys what she is doing. I had the pleasure to sit down with Carol at her Channel 10 Studios in San Diego to learn more about this local icon.

Carol didn't originally plan to become an anchorwoman; it was one of her professor's (at the University of Northern Iowa) who helped shape her career choice. He was a retired broadcaster and complimented Carol on her voice, suggesting that she take advantage of it when choosing a field to pursue. Carol was already involved with the school newspaper and also enjoyed classes in theater. After receiving those words of encouragement from her professor, Carol decided that if she was to utilize her God given talent then radio was the way to go. She applied to all of the local radio stations. Before long Carol found work in public radio at the station operated out of the University of Iowa. During this time she did all she could to help hone her speaking skills. She announced track and swim meets and even read scriptures at church on Sunday mornings.

One of her applications received a response from her hometown of Davenport, Iowa, and off she went to start her career. Her first job was to read the news on a top 40 rock and roll station. Carol did so for about 6 months and then graduated to reading news on an easy listening station.

One day out of the blue her boss informed her that she would be doing the Today Show cut-ins for her local area: This is the section of the Today Show where they break into the national show for local news and weather reports. Carol was stunned. Her first thought was that she didn't, at the time, own a jacket and blouse that matched. She lucked out because the costume of the day was a station blazer - which all of the male reporters wore. They found one which was close to fitting her and she was on her way to a career that would span almost 33 years. Carol notes, "I was so blessed to be where I was at the time. The industry was changing. It was happening on the coast and at the networks; Barbara Walters, Jessica Savage and Carol Simpson were making giant inroads for women in the broadcast profession." Luckily for Carol local stations were realizing that they needed to keep up with this new gender revolution. Carol admits, "I got my break because I was a woman, but I

hope I continued and advanced in my profession because I worked hard and used my God given abilities."



After two years of hard work in Davenport Carol received a nibble from a CBS affiliate in Peoria, Illinois. It was a great opportunity for Carol and she soon took on the position of main anchor. It wasn't a large station and as such Carol wore many hats: Not only did she anchor the 10 o'clock news, she also produced it. Carol learned the inner workings of the newsroom, skills that she is thankful for today. Ironically, it was an unusual event that brought her to San Diego. Carol received a phone call from Ron Mires, the news director at channel 10 in San Diego. Unbeknownst to Carol he had seen a tape of her at work and was quite impressed. A co-worker from Peoria, with connections to California, had sent a tape of his news reports for consideration at news 10. As luck would have it Carol was the anchor introducing his reports. He didn't get the job, but Carol did. At first she was adamant that she couldn't do it. It was her Dad who convinced her to give it a shot. "Dad told me, 'Carol, San Diego is a beautiful part of the country. You are young and single and if you don't like it you can always come home.' My dad is

things she is grateful for, among them a "Sweet husband, a great career and a sport she loves." Tom, a retired navy pilot (with amazing southern charm that swept her off her feet) met Carol on a blind date. The rest, as they say, is history. I asked Carol how he manages to handle her celebrity status? "Oh, he is just great. Even when they call him Mr. Lebeau (Carol's maiden name, which she retained for career purposes) he just smiles. I will often correct them, but it doesn't upset Tom, he just goes along with it"

With a job that inherently is filled with daily stresses I had to ask how she manages to cope. Carol admits that the stress does get to her at times, but it is just the nature of her business. Very rarely is there good news to report, but Carol jokes, "If we started the newscast with a listing of all of the banks that weren't robbed today or every plane that took off and landed safely, our listeners would most likely tune out." In addition to Carol's busy schedule she manages to do a lot of community service and has been the News 10 health reporter for 26 years. Her main passion is mental health which touches very close to home. Carol's mom took her own life due to severe depression and anxiety. Sixteen years after her mom's death Carol found herself faced with a similar condition. "It was horrible; I thought life as I knew it would end. Then I sought the care of a fantastic psychiatric physician who prescribed anti-depressants that saved my life." Unfortunately, when her mom suffered the same disease the only treatment available at that time had been tranquilizers. Luckily the situation has changed and there is help that allows sufferers to lead a happy and productive life. Carol has made it her mission to educate San Diegans on mental health issues. As she notes, "It isn't crazy to have mental illness, it is crazy to think that people don't have mental illness. We completely accept that every other part of our body can go awry, and yet this complex mechanism that controls our moods, appetites, our ability to go to sleep and wake

up, every function of our life should somehow be exempt from illness." Carol supports a host of charities that helps sufferers and their families deal with the devastation of mental health issues. She has even been known to stand up at a podium and say those words that most celebrities would not admit to. She clearly states, "I have depression and anxiety but I am treated successfully, I don't have horns and neither do you. You too can be helped and get past this." Thanks to Carol's efforts many San Diegans better understand mental illness and have moved on to lead productive lives.

Carol's career has blossomed at Channel 10. She was originally hired as a weekend news anchor and Sky 10 reporter, but as soon as they recognized her talents they moved her to anchor the late night week day news with Harold Green. When he moved to Los Angeles, they brought in consumer reporter Bree Walker. She and Carol were the first female anchor team in the country. After Bree's departure, Kimberly Hunt joined forces with Carol and today they hold the distinction of being the longest running female anchor team in the country. When I asked about her relationship with Kimberly, Carol smiled with fondness evident in her eyes and responded, "She is my blond beautiful sister. We are great friends. We even talk to women's groups about how to improve women's working relationships.



Editor Judith Habert, Carol Lebeau and Creative Director Sonali Soni

one of those great guys who, even back in the day when girls were only supposed to do certain things, he and my mom as well never suggested that there might be anything that I couldn't do." Encouraged by Dad's words, on March 15th 1981 Carol set out for San Diego. "I had never driven a freeway before. I remember seeing the signs on interstate 8 that said beaches, and I just kept following those signs." If Carol was going to move across the country she was determined to live at the beach. So she took an apartment in Pacific Beach and before long considered San Diego her home.

Her love of the beach has led to her number one passion; rough water swimming. Carol lives in Coronado and as long as the water is over 60 degrees you can find her out there swimming at least three times a week. On weekends she joins her swim group in La Jolla while her husband of 24 years, Tom, plays golf. Laughingly Carol admits, "Speedos are the great equalizer. No matter what you do for a living it doesn't matter, we are all great swim pals." Carol has competed in rough water events all over the West and Hawaii and even served on the support crew for her close friend, Becky Jackman, who swam the English Channel. "I swam 4-5 miles with her, it was quite an experience." Carol finds that swimming is a great stress reducer - which is often an occupational hazard for her job. Carol says there are many



Kimberly and I have been blessed with a wonderful relationship in what is an extremely competitive field.” With this in mind, Kimberly and Carol show no signs of competitiveness or ego, they both truly enjoy their work and their relationship. With the increased use of the Internet to find the minute to minute news around the world, I had to ask Carol her feelings on an industry that many say is dying. Carol believes that there will always be a need for news on TV. Although she does admit, “The average age of television news viewers in this country today is 61, young people out there don’t feel they need appointment viewing when it comes to information. They don’t want to wait around until 5 or 6 pm to find out what is going on in the world.” For some finding out what is going on in their own town is what keeps them tuning in to the local news stations, something that the Internet hasn’t mastered. Carol Lebeau is a woman full of warmth, love and determination and it clearly shows in everything she does.

Her passion for the many charities that she supports, her determination to inform and entertain, her love of her sport



and her husband, are all reasons why there is really no one whom we would rather invite into our living rooms.

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