

No Monuments, Please

By Jamie Buckingham

They've torn down the Carlton house in Pittsburgh. I saw it happen on TV—right before my eyes. A demolition team had just finished setting the charges. Then, with the streets of downtown Pittsburgh blockaded for several blocks, the technician pushed the plunger.

Carefully planted charges of dynamite went off in sequence. The huge hotel, in what seemed to be slow motion, crumbled in dust. In seconds it was reduced to rubble.

The Carlton House was special to me. For more than 20 years it was the world headquarters of the Kathryn Kuhlman Foundation. From her plush offices on the sixth floor came her radio broadcasts—taped in one of the best-equipped studios in the nation.

Here she planned her TV programs. Here she prayed for, and recovered from, the intense ministry at the miracle services—held for years at the old Carnegie Auditorium and later from the auditorium of the First Presbyterian Church just a couple of blocks down the street.

It was through her ministry I was first exposed to the miracle-working power of God. Dan Malachuk introduced me to Miss Kuhlman in the late summer of 1968. I had just finished writing *Run Baby Run* for Nicky Cruz. Dan knew Miss Kuhlman was looking for someone to write a book about the people who had been healed in her miracle services.

We met briefly in her offices at the Carlton House. I was not impressed. In fact, she turned me off. As a Southern Baptist I was opposed to (1) women preachers, (2) healing services, (3) women

preachers who conducted healing services.

Later that morning we attended one of her services at the Carnegie Auditorium. We arrived two hours early but could not get close to the building, so great was the crowd. When the doors opened we were swept into the building like a twig caught in a flood. Once inside the only place I could find to stand was against the back wall—packed in with hundreds of others. There I remained for four hours.

For more than 20 years the Carlton House had been world headquarters for Kathryn Kuhlman.

It was an incredible, awesome experience. Never in all my life had I seen anything like it. Surely, I thought, it must have been like this when Jesus was on earth. But why had I never seen it in a Baptist church—in any church?

I went back to my room at the Carlton House and lay awake long into the night, remembering the people I had seen healed. It was incomprehensible.

Across the years I returned to the Carlton House many times. I wrote an entire series of books for Miss Kuhlman. Many times I sat in her office listening intently as she paraded around the room, waving her long arms and talking machine-gun style: to me, to her staff, to God.

We came from two different cultures, but I could not escape the fact she was God's special servant. Unique. Theatrical. But anointed by the Holy Spirit.

Her fiercely dedicated staff protected her. One of her secretaries once told me Kathryn Kuhlman would never die.

But she did die. And now the hotel is gone also.

Mortality is hard to admit. We do not want our heroes to die. We build monuments to remember them. Yet all flesh is grass, the prophet said. Only the word of our Lord lives forever.

I think of that other magnificent woman I worked with, Corrie ten Boom. For years visitors made special trips to Holland to visit the "hiding place" above the watch shop on the square in Haarlem.

Now the Beje, the old home place, has been closed. It interfered with the business of the watch shop below. And at last report, Tante Corrie herself is gently slipping into her own hiding place next to her heavenly father. The "Tramp for the Lord" is slowly edging for the door. She's going home.

I introduced Corrie ten Boom to Kathryn Kuhlman. Later Kathryn used her on many of her nationwide TV programs. They were quite a pair—the flamboyant redheaded Kathryn, and the stubborn old Dutch woman with her gray hair in a bun.

But both loved Jesus with all their hearts. Both believed in miracles. Both had a hiding place near to the heart of God.

I'm glad the Carlton House is gone. I'm even glad they've closed off the Beje in Haarlem. Neither of these great ladies needs a monument.

For, as Tante Corrie often said, "Jesus is Victor."

And as Kathryn Kuhlman would echo, "It's just like that!" ☞