

## HUISGENOOT – English Translation

By Almari Wessels

SHE calls him “the deadly seducer” – her ex who apparently deliberately infected her with the HIV virus. And now – 10 years, two strokes, TB meningitis, a rare glandular cancer and a book later – Cindy Pivacic is dragging the man to court to claim R2, 1 million in compensation.

“He’s Wayne Mardon,” the 56-year-old brunette says, laughing as she hears herself saying the 42-year-old Durban plumber’s name out loud.

“I still get nervous when I say his name because I’ve never been allowed to identify him,” she explains. “But now that the legal papers have been served I can disclose his name, because it’s public knowledge.”

Cindy, a former sales manager who’s an Aids activist these days, is chatting cheerfully with us in Cape Town about everything she’d been through since meeting Wayne in Durban in 2004.

In 2012 she and two other HIV-positive women revealed on actuality show Carte Blanche how they’d contracted the lethal virus from the same man (Wayne’s pseudonym was “Brad” at the time). While Cindy and \*Jane went public about their experiences the third woman remained anonymous.

“Three months after the Carte Blanche interview was broadcast I found out that he’d already in 2002 known that he was HIV positive,” Cindy tells us, and fidgets with the ring on her right hand.

And when it dawned on her that Wayne had had unprotected sex with her knowing full well that he was HIV-positive, Cindy decided she would sue him.

She’s claiming R1 million from him for loss of income due to illness, R600 000 for pain and suffering and R500 000 for medical expenses – R2, 1 million in total. She’s not being vengeful, Cindy says, but by pursuing her damages claim against Wayne she hopes to deter him from “infecting more women”.

AT 46 Cindy had been divorced twice and was the mother of two adult children from her first marriage when she met Wayne – 14 years her junior – through mutual friends in Pinetown 10 years ago.

“I didn’t want to date anyone at that time,” she says. “But he was such a charmer that I agreed to go out on a date.

“I don’t think I was in love with him. He was fun to be around, I’ll say that much probably because he was younger and I find people my age are boring.”

Five months later they started living together, and it wasn’t long before the deadly virus also made its presence felt in their midst.

She'd taken him to hospital with a perforated bowel. "I suspect the doctors then told him that he needed to have an HIV test," Cindy says.

"I think it was the perfect opportunity for him to let me believe that he hadn't known until then that he had Aids," she adds.

When Wayne was confirmed HIV-positive, Cindy was furious, but not with him. She took out her rage and shock on a nursing sister who'd told her in front of ward filled with patients about Wayne's status.

She was also immediately tested. When she got the results she wasn't particularly shocked or sad. "I think at the age of 46 you're more able to accept certain things," she explains.

"I also had a week to reflect before my results came out and already knew there was a good chance that my results would come out as positive."

When Wayne was discharged from hospital because his medical aid cover had dried up, Cindy took care of him. Three years later she ended their relationship, because after two strokes, and covered in shingles and weakened by pneumonia, she realised she was in no condition to take care of both of them.

Even if her shingles went out the door with Wayne, Cindy's health still deteriorated. She got pneumonia again as well as TB meningitis and in May 2008 she was also diagnosed with a rare glandular cancer called Angioimmunoblastic lymphadenopathy.

But, as with all the other setbacks that had hit her, cancer didn't spell her end. After six months of chemotherapy she beat the feared disease.

Only shortly before her cancer diagnosis did she start using antiretroviral medication. Initially it was she, not her doctor, who decided not to use ARV therapy. "There was such a lack of information about it even in 2008," Cindy explains.

And, since she's overcome cancer and started ARVs, "I'm probably healthier than you," she teases.

Cindy became more and more involved in awareness projects and started her own website in 2011 ([cindypivacic.co.za](http://cindypivacic.co.za)). Through a support group she started the same year in Pinetown she met 'Jane', who later appeared with her on the Carte Blanche programme. While the two women chatted about how an acquaintance of Jane's had got HIV, Cindy asked if it had been from a plumber. She was stunned by Jane's reply. "No, he gave it to me!" she said.

Cindy was furious when she realised that after she and Wayne had broken up he'd started a relationship with Jane but kept her in the dark about his Aids status. Cindy and Wayne initially remained friends and she recalls a woman once called him on his cellphone while they were together. Cindy tracked her down, but it was too late – she'd also tested positive for the virus after being involved with Wayne. She later appeared anonymously on the Carte Blanche programme.

It wasn't easy for Cindy to go public with her HIV-positive status when her book *The Deadly Seducer* appeared in 2012. Her mom Lindsay Heydenrych (80) had had her suspicions after Cindy landed in hospital following a stroke. Lindsay heard a doctor ask whether Cindy used antiretrovirals. She later confronted Cindy who then played open cards with her mom. Since then Lindsay has been her biggest supporter. Cindy's son Shane Botha (30) and daughter, Danya Potgieter (27), found out in a roundabout way their mom was HIV positive, but when she later spoke to them about it they handled it well.

"My kids understand that I'm a pretty strong person and I take things in my stride," Cindy says. Her advice to other Aids sufferers? "Rather disclose your status because the people who love you can support you and the stress of not disclosing makes you ill. Did she ever go through dark time when she felt like collapsing in a heap and crying and giving up?"

"People don't believe me when I say I never cry," she says. "I'm fortunate to come from a family that never suffered from depression – we've always been positive. We're four siblings and I'm the only girl. My mom is strong and my late dad was quiet, but also a strong character. Now you know where my strength comes from!". Thinking back she realises she was too trusting of Wayne. "I come from a very trusting family. I'm not going to lie to you and I don't expect you to lie to me." For now she's not interested in romance. "I'm quite content on my own and if something comes along, I'll try not to take it," Cindy jokes.

For now she wants to focus on her Aids awareness initiatives. Two months ago she moved from Pinetown to Cape Town because she thinks the corporate environment in the Mother City is more open to these kind of projects.

As for Wayne, she hopes he'll accept responsibility for what he's done to her and others.

"What's happened has happened. You can't do anything to change the situation. All you can do is deal with it. One of my favourite sayings is 'Just deal with it'."

When YOU approached Wayne for comment he killed the call after saying, "No comment, speak to my attorney." But he didn't respond to requests to provide YOU with his attorney's name. When he appeared on the *Carte Blanche* as "Brad", he said, "I was pissed most of the time and don't know half the women I've slept with."

\*Jane – Not her real name.