**Annie, Annie, who the F##k is Annie!!!**

Many of you may know the tale of Annie and how she came to be the most kissed face in History.

But as someone who is relatively new to the Health & Safety scene, for me, every day is proving to be a school day.

Having watched many delegates give the CPR dummy the kiss of life, it never occurred to me until I was disinfecting Annies distinctive face that she could be based on a real person.

Annie was created in the late 1950’s by Norwegian doll and toy maker Asmund S. Laerdal who showed interest in this area of expertise after saving his own son from drowning.

Asmund teamed up with Austrian Physician Peter Safar and the duo set out to create a manikin fit for the purpose of Safar’s newly perfected CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) technique.

After designing the intricate details of the inner working of Annie, Asmund required a face.

**Death Masks**

For centuries and across many cultures Death masks have cast from faces of the deceased.

Mainly to be used as funeral masks, the Egyptians widely used them as part of their mummification process such as the mask of Tutankhamun.

Casts were also taken to be used as mementos of the dead or for the creation of portraits.

In Annies case, it is based on the rather sad tale of a teenage girl aged approximately 16, who was found dead in the Seine River in Paris in the late 19th century.

The young woman who was never named, was said to have such a gentle expression and noticeable beauty that they took a cast of her face creating one of most identifiable death masks of all time. Some say, she was a prostitute, but it had been noted that she had no signs of physical injury or violence, and it was speculated that for reasons only known to her, she took her own life.

The cast of ‘L’Inconnue de la Seine’ – or ‘the unknown woman from the Seine’ went on to be replicated and sold, eventually reaching the hands of Asmund S. Laerdal.

With an estimated 300 million people worldwide being trained in CPR, the young girl from the Seine has left a lasting legacy and in reflection, saved millions of lives.

So, the next time you take your annual first aid training, thoughtfully ask “Annie are you ok?”

A sculpture of a person's face

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