

Paula Krynauw

31.05.1949 – 24.08.2022

Paula Krynauw, (nee Carnell) who, after some months of struggling with cancer, died at home, in her sleep, on 24 August 2022, She will be remembered as a courageous, cheerful, thoughtful, supportive, loving and generous person who filled everyone around her with lively goodwill.

Paula went to Pretoria Girls High, completed a Bachelor of Science degree at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), a postgraduate Diploma in Library and Information Science, and then, much later, Honours in Information Science at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

Although she was at Wits in the late sixties, a very political time, she was not politically active, largely because her father, a conservative man, prohibited her from such activities.

She married Johan Krynauw in 1972 and, because his work as a geologist involved constantly moving, neither of them initially became involved in any political organisations.

When, in the early eighties the Krynauw's settled in Pietermaritzburg, Paula joined the Natal Midlands Black Sash (NMBS), as a direct result of Pat Merrett's friendship and influence. She said that what appealed to her was that this was a women's organisation concerned with the political rights of all people but, beginning to focus more directly on women's rights. This was a perfect fit for her.

Their only child, Mieke, was born in Pietermaritzburg, where Paula worked first as a librarian at the University of Natal, followed by a posting at St John's Diocesan girl's school, and later, when the family moved to Johannesburg at Roedean Senior School, a prestigious girl's school.

As a person intensely interested in information, Paula thought that the role Sash played in the careful and accurate recording of events, withheld by the apartheid government, was critical. She was particularly committed to the 1986 national Free the Children campaign, shocked by the fact that children as young ten were incarcerated in overfull prisons.

Paula was elected NMBS chairperson in 1987 proving to be a dedicated and compassionate leader, a constant presence at protest stands, meetings, and other Sash activities, always supportive and encouraging.

In 1987 Paula was unexpectedly visited by a Smuts from the security police. She was in the garden with Meike when he arrived, and she invited him into the house where he asked her to provide details of other Sash members, addresses, occupations, and family members. She recalls a cordial conversation where, feeling quite calm, she told him that no Sash members would ever comply to his request, adding that he probably knew more about her friends that she did, and politely asked him to leave. Although she knew this was pure intimidation, it was naturally very stressful and frightening.

Paula experienced national conferences as a high point in her membership. She felt that we in Pietermaritzburg, often felt a bit out on a limb because we were such a small region. It was wonderful to go to conference and realize that such remarkable things were being done

throughout the country. So, she came back totally renewed with enough energy to keep doing whatever was possible. The national leaders, and members from other regions seemed so very determined and courageous, that Paula felt it was a privilege to be a member; to have a voice in an organization that was doing such important, astonishing work. When she read the reports she was astounded at the effort and knowledge that went into them.

Paula's family moved to Johannesburg early in 1998 where she missed her connection with Pietermaritzburg. While she was a member of Sash, practically all her friends were also members, all learning from each other. Although she didn't always agree with everyone on individual issues, in general, her outlook was moulded by relationships with other members of Sash.

Working in the Sash was a defining time in Paula's life. She found that it changed how she related to the world – she appreciated that small changes are better than no changes. It changed how her family (father, brother, in-laws) related to her – she was finally allowed to have serious opinions, even ones that differed from theirs. It also affected her daughter's character – from an early age she was part of the meetings, the protest stands, the discussions and has subsequently been closely involved in civic and community activities.

We are deeply grateful for the important role Paula played in our lives and in the activities of NMBS.

Hamba khale Paula.