

# Edna Helfet Tribute

August 1921 – April 2024

Edna Landsman lived a remarkable life marked by her dedication to justice, community service, and family. From August 1921 to April 2024, she left an indelible mark on those around her through her activism, volunteerism, and pioneering efforts.

## Early Life and Influences

Edna was born in George, Western Cape, and raised by a mother who was a leading figure in the local Girl Guides. This early exposure to leadership and community service profoundly influenced Edna's worldview. The injustices of apartheid South Africa ignited her passion for activism. During the 1950s, she became actively involved with Black Sash. Her participation in protests and meetings exemplified her commitment to opposing the oppressive regime.

## Activism and Community Involvement

Edna's activism was fuelled by her strong sense of justice. She was known for her persuasive nature and unwavering resolve. Her involvement with Black Sash provided a supportive network of like-minded women dedicated to combating apartheid. Her commitment to this cause involved significant personal sacrifices, including putting her safety at risk.

A member of the Cape Town – Sea Point branch of Black Sash, Edna often hosted meetings at her penthouse apartment on Sea Point Beach Road. Her dedication to justice extended beyond apartheid; she supported various causes and inspired others to stand up for their beliefs.

*"...Edna had a passion for justice and was immensely supportive of others taking a stand on issues of concern..." Di Oliver*

## Family and Personal Life

Edna married and settled in Calvinia before moving to Cape Town in 1948. It was in Cape Town that she encountered a leftist socialist group that furthered her understanding and involvement in activism. Her urban experiences, combined with her rural upbringing, deepened her awareness of societal injustices.

With her husband Arnold, Edna raised three children in Cape Town. They travelled extensively, exploring the world together. Her family was a central pillar of her life, and she relished her roles as mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother.

*“Mom was a beacon of resilience and courage, and she deeply inspired me in every aspect of my life. Her unwavering commitment to justice and her boundless compassion guided my own path and work. I admired her immensely, not just for her accomplishments, but for the love and wisdom she shared with all of us. Her legacy is a reminder of how one person can make a tremendous difference.” — Linda Helfet.*

## Innovations and Later Life

Edna was a creative thinker and a trailblazer. She played a crucial role in establishing blood donation services in Cape Town and introduced MedicAlert bracelets to South Africa through her Rotary Club efforts. These contributions highlighted her commitment to public health and safety.

In her later years, Edna lived in Boston, USA, for 19 years before returning to South Africa in 2001, settling in Plettenberg Bay. Her return brought her full circle, as Plettenberg Bay was close to her birthplace. She continued to be a revered figure in her community until her peaceful passing on 17 April 2024, at the age of 102.

## Legacy

Edna Landsman leaves behind a legacy of courage, compassion, and relentless pursuit of justice. Her life's work with Black Sash, her volunteerism with the South African Council of Churches Dependents Conference, and her pioneering efforts in her capacity as a Rotary member stand as testaments to her impactful life. Her family, friends, and the many lives she touched will remember her as a venerable matriarch who lived an extraordinarily well-lived life.