

## Jennifer Verbeek (1934–2018)

JENNIFER Verbeek (née Rafferty), who died on 6 April 2018, was brought up in the Free State and came to Pietermaritzburg as a student. She had a highly developed sense of fairness and was a resolute member of the Natal Midlands Black Sash.

Jennifer met her husband, Alistair, in the 1950s when they were students at the University of Natal, both becoming lecturers, he in Chemistry and she in Library Science. Jennifer was passionate about her subject and an enthusiastic lecturer, inspiring her many students over the years. She specialised in the historical development of libraries and information retrieval, and published in both fields as well as in bibliography and indexing. In 1982, Jennifer and Alistair published *Victorian and Edwardian Natal*, a collection of photographs that depicted activities and events in the daily lives of ordinary people.

Jennifer had a larger-than-life personality with tremendous energy, and was outspoken and sometimes intimidating; but her warmth and friendliness were legendary. She was a Quaker and believed that in the face of violence a position of pacifism was very important.

As a committed member of the Black Sash for many years she was always available to take part in protest stands and was unwavering in her strong sense of justice. In 1988 when members of the Natal Midlands region were arrested



and charged for allegedly holding an illegal gathering, in court Jennifer showed her strength of character by refusing, as a Quaker, to take the oath. She maintained this was unnecessary since her word was enough to guarantee the truth would be told.

At a Black Sash meeting in January 1987 Jennifer reported that her daughter Clare, who was very active in the End Conscription Campaign, had been in detention since 2 December 1986. While expressing her concern for all detainees, she described conditions at John Vorster Square police station as disastrous, but a bit better at Diepkloof prison to which Clare had been moved.

Jennifer leaves her daughters Clare and Jean, her son Julian, and her grandchildren.

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