

sort of mass police violence that was to be repeated time and time again in the Eastern Cape and throughout the country. Right from the start Molly kept meticulous records of all such incidents and any action she took was performed with the minimum of fuss and the maximum of effect. I am sure that it is in part due to her initial advice and continued watchfulness and concern that the 19 Port Alfred residents charged with public violence in this case were, on October 4, 1985, acquitted.

Those Sash members who were at the 1985 Conference in Port Elizabeth observed the vicious police behaviour first hand in the Uitenhage Charge Office. It was followed four days later by the Maduna Road Massacre in Langa, Uitenhage.

Molly was catapulted into the limelight. The TV cameras of the world focused on her, the phone never stopped ringing, visitors from far and wide poured into 13 Brighton Drive. She never allowed the publicity and continual attention of the media to get between her and the people she was trying to help. She attended to everything and everybody but the little people, with their often huge problems, always came first. It was at this time, too, that the death threats started coming in, usually at two or three in the morning. These never seemed to really frighten the Blackburn household, but were resented because they disrupted sleep.

I think we all know well the role Molly played during the rest of 1985, the intensification of pressure on us all, but particularly her when the State of Emergency was declared. She used to phone me every morning just after

seven and we would discuss the previous 24 hours, what her plans were, how I and other Sash members could help.

She worked in the Advice Office every Thursday morning and on those days the queue was half as long again. Attempts by the police to interfere with her work by arresting her or removing her township permit were viewed with impatience but did not hamper her.

She was asked to speak at meetings and rallies all over the country and her fluency and stature grew with each appearance. At funerals, and she only went if the communities invited her, she was often asked to speak and this she did so very well, finding the balance between a call for peace and an utter implacability and refusal to give in to the violence of the apartheid system. All over the township, graffiti bear witness to the peoples' acceptance of Molly's relevance to their cause — and the police concern over this acceptance.

These then were the foundation stones of the bridges Molly hoped, with help and her strong faith in God, to build. It is South Africa's tragedy that she will not be here to continue with that work. Her funeral was a testimony to the love and respect she had gained in so short a time from the black community. She said to me once, 'White South Africans think that the gap between black and white is too wide to be bridged. I don't think this is so. If you stretch out a loving hand, somewhere on the other side a loving hand will take it, and that will be the beginning of a bridge.'

Judy Chalmers

Brian Bishop

— a tribute by Mary Burton

For the majority of Black Sash members, contact with Brian Bishop came through Di. Some of us, however, had prior acquaintance and enjoyed working with him in the SA Institute of Race Relations or the Civil Rights League, or had met him as a fellow member of the Liberal Party. Brian gave generously of his time and concern to these organisations and made important contributions as chairman of the Civil Rights League and as chairman of the Cape Western Region of the SAIRR.

Brian was an efficient chairman, attending with equal care to matters of policy and details of administration. He brought new energy to the Civil Rights League, and his frequent letters and statements published in the Cape Town newspapers were a significant contribution to political debate. He was sensitive to the many strands of political thinking which have been current in the Western Cape and extremely acute in his evaluation of major issues. A discussion with him of any particular crisis always helped to clarify the situation.

Even-tempered and good humoured, he was always pleasant company — as Di has said 'He was a very quiet person'. However, he was angered by injustice, and driven to take action. He was also deeply concerned for individual victims of the apartheid system, and we remember in particular his efforts to help Siphiso Mtimkulu and his attempts to trace him after his mysterious disappearance. I remember too his anger at the injury and indignities to which the people of Cradock were subjected.



Di, Molly and Brian working together in the Eastern Cape

In his capacity as a businessman Brian also made a contribution to the task of shaping opinions and laying foundations for change. Through the Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Chambers of Commerce he frequently brought matters of political urgency to the attention of fellow businessmen. The Cape Town Chamber of Commerce is indebted to him for providing opportunities for formal and informal contact with members of black community organisations — important links which will surely not be broken.

During 1985 Brian had succeeded in arranging his business affairs so as to allow him increased time to devote to the struggle for basic human rights in South Africa, as well as to supporting Di in her work and to having more time for his family. His loss is therefore a particular tragedy for us and for them.

We have many reasons to be grateful for Brian's life, but most of all we have to thank him for giving us Di — for encouraging her, supporting her, and selflessly setting her free to give her time to Black Sash work.

And as the Black Sash work continues so Brian will live on in our memory.



Di and Brian Bishop at their home in Cape town with Siphiwo Mtimkulu on Christmas Eve, 1981. Di explains: It was Siphiwo who brought Brian and me into much closer contact with Molly. For though we had been involved in investigating living conditions of certain squatter communities, it was Molly's phone-call from Port Elizabeth to us about Siphiwo in November 1981 that got Brian and me involved in the question of detainees and extended our work with Molly.

Siphiwo, who as a member of Cosas, had been in detention for some five months. He was detained on Republic Day 1981. His parents were never informed. For weeks they hunted for him and it was through the release of other detainees that they learnt that he had been seen in police custody with gun shot wounds. His father then discovered his whereabouts and it was confirmed that he had been shot and was having treatment to a wound on his arm. He had been detained under Sect 6 of the old Terrorism Act.

Within two days of his release at the end of October 1981 he became very ill. Not being able to diagnose his problem the hospital staff in Port Elizabeth made arrangements for him to be transferred to Groote Schuur in Cape Town. Molly had phoned to ask us to visit Siphiwo.

At Groote Schuur, where he was under the care of Professor Francis Ames, it was discovered that he had thallium poisoning. The symptoms of this poison only appear some weeks after it is imbibed. This diagnosis gave rise to the assumption that Siphiwo must have received the poison during the time he was in detention. There was a great deal of publicity about it and a claim for damages of R140 000 against the police was instituted.

Siphiwo spent two months at Groote Schuur. During that time we got special permission to have him with us for Christmas. When he was discharged from Groote Schuur at the end of January he became an out-patient at the hospital in Port Elizabeth. On April 13 he left home with his friend, Topsy Madaka to visit the hospital where he was to collect his aeroplane ticket and other papers. At that stage the court case was still pending. He and Madaka never reached the hospital. To this

day his whereabouts and those of Madaka have never been discovered.

Brian, who was chairman of the Civil Rights League, took up the matter of Siphiwo and Madaka's disappearance. The Civil Rights League offered a reward of R1 000 to anyone who could supply information that would lead to their whereabouts. That reward is still unclaimed but the interest that Brian generated around the disappearance has since waned.

Dear Sash Members,

I know you will all forgive me for replying in this way to your kind message of sympathy and affection. Dearly as I would love to respond to each of you individually, I fear that with all the other responsibility now on my shoulders it would take me many months to do so.

My children and I would like you all to know how much we appreciate your love for Molly and your concern for us. As you can imagine, her death has left us completely devastated, but it has been of tremendous comfort to us to realise how much she was loved and by how many, and how personal was the sense of loss felt by an enormous number, many of whom had had only brief and infrequent contact with her.

One aspect of that wonderful ceremony of Molly's funeral deserves special comment I think. This is the fact that there was such a cross-section of the population, and that there was no incident. It showed a vast number of South African citizens that it is possible, even easy as many remarked, for all 'groups' to breathe the same air, pray together, mourn together, live side by side, without the sun stopping in the heavens. And this I believe is one of Molly's main messages. She was not a politician: certainly she had no political ambitions or aspirations. But she did have a very strong sense of right and wrong, and cared for people. Therefore she could not abide the injustices and inhumanity shown to so many by the upholders and enforcers of Nationalist Party policy.

This message must not be allowed to go unheeded. The help and care that is required by so many must continue to pour out from every concerned person. Contact must be made and maintained, and we must realise that such contact can only be achieved by each and every one of us making effort and sacrifice. It cannot be achieved by comfortable arm-chair platitudes.

We must get ourselves to the funerals of victims of the injustices, to the courts for the trials of those who are being harassed, to the authorities to help those whose husbands, wives, children have been detained and who can get little or no redress.

For these are things that Molly did, and there was ample evidence at her funeral of how much it was appreciated.

We can no longer afford the complacency with which we have all viewed these events to date. On the day after Molly died I remarked to a friend 'This is something that happens to other people'. One's own experience of it makes one realise what these other people suffer. I believe we must now start to feel what other people suffer before it happens to us.

GAVIN BLACKBURN

January, 1986