

## **Marian Nell**

Much water has passed under the bridge since 1962. For me it has been an exciting and satisfying period.

After matriculation I went to Wits and did a B.A. in English, History and Political Science. I later did an Honours Degree in Psychology at the University of South Africa. While I was at Wits, I was active in student politics and served as editor of Wits Student – the student newspaper. I served as a volunteer on a kibbutz in northern Israel immediately after the Six Day War – a wonderful experience.

My first job was as a reporter on the Zionist Record – a small Jewish newspaper in Johannesburg. I found that I was not a great journalist but it kindled in me an abiding interest in organisations. After a few initial jobs and six years as the National Organiser of the Union of Jewish Women of South Africa, in the wake of the Soweto Uprising of 1976, the Institute of Race Relations appointed me to conceptualise and run a programme which was aimed at improving the political situation. It became an independent organisation assisting anti-apartheid structures in the country to improve their effectiveness.

The thirteen years I spent there as Director, enriched my life enormously. I met and worked with people from all corners of South Africa, all ethnic and racial groups, and differing political persuasions. During that time, I met my life partner, Janet Shapiro, and we had two wonderful sons conceived by artificial insemination (Ben, now 29, and Sam, 25).

When change seemed certain in 1990, I enrolled for an MBA degree at the University of the Witwatersrand which I enjoyed thoroughly. Since then, Janet and I have run our own Organisational Development consultancy called, eponymously, Nell and Shapiro cc. It was my very great privilege to be in the crowd at the FNB Stadium that welcomed Nelson Mandela and to have been a small part of the struggle that finally brought an end to apartheid.

Since then, our work has focused on development rather than anti-apartheid and in the 20 years that we have been in business, we have worked with a wide range of people and organisations in South Africa, Africa and the world including Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya, the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Cambodia, India, Egypt and Afghanistan. All interesting!!.

Janet and I got married in 2008 at the request of our kids once same-sex marriage became possible in South Africa. We are very aware of our good fortune in having been born and lived in such an interesting country at such an interesting time.