



# KATHY THE GALLANT



**W**ith his film star good looks and charm, the young Kathy was not immune to attraction of young women. While he started exploring relationships while still at school, his life was marked by two loves. The first was Sylvia Neame, a comrade in the Communist Party whom he met in Cape Town, during the relaxation between his second and third banning orders. Enjoying the breathing space he went to Cape Town where he met Sylvia. Wanting to avoid state attention and particularly for something as innocuous as a relationship with someone of another colour under the infamous Immorality Act, Kathy was careful.

But it was his third banning order, when the apartheid regime chose him as the second person in South Africa to Helen Joseph to confine to his home, a particularly cruel punishment.

Luckier than others such as Jack Hodgson, he was not confined to his home for 24-hours because he connived with some printers to have them pretend he brought them work – and this resulted in him having to spend 13 hours at a time at home, Flat 13 Kholvad house, where he had lived since 1947. It was a lonely existence with the less courageous of his friends abandoning

him and his only foil, his flat-mate packing up and leaving, after Kathy asked him to act as if his visitors were his own if the police raided

Kathy was desperate for "some sort of a life" when Sylvia relocated to Johannesburg after getting a bursary to study at the University of the Witwatersrand. "I thought, well this is ideal", he said later. While the relationship bloomed he was asked to go underground and spent his time between Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia, a cottage in the Johannesburg suburb of Mountainview where he had to pretend to be Portuguese to avoid problems with the police, and Sylvia's flat. His arrest at Rivonia on 11 July 1963 under 90-day detention brought their physical relationship to an abrupt halt but they continued communicating.

It was a needle, thread and pencil lead concealed in a ripe banana sent in by comrade and friend Amien Cajee that gave Kathy the idea of sewing messages into his clothes when his

laundry sent home for washing. That way he and Sylvia and others, through her, could write to each other each week.

During the Rivonia sabotage trial, lawyer Bram Fischer who, with his wife Molly "the kindest people you would want to know," offered to continue sending letters between Kathy and Sylvia. He found out that their son Paul used to love hurtling down the streets of Johannesburg on his new bicycle, delivering letters to Sylvia and bringing something back. After he was sentenced, along with Mandela, Sisulu, Raymond Mhlaba, Andrew Mlangeni, Elias Motsoaledi, Denis Goldberg and Govan Mbeki to life imprisonment on 12 June 1964, Kathy believed it was only fair to not expect Sylvia to wait for him. She herself, served (two) years under the Suppression of Act in 1965. She left South Africa on an exit permit after her release from Barberton prison in 1967. Only two photographs of Sylvia arrived on Robben Island.

One was of her in a group with the "Fordsburg Aunts" and the other, one of Sylvia alone was destroyed by a particularly sadist prison official "Major Visser".

While in prison Kathy got to know, through smuggled newspapers, about the political prisoner, Barbara Hogan who had been sentenced to ten years for ANC work. She was released shortly before Mandela in 1990 and they met at the SABC studios where they were interviewed by the BBC. They later worked together in the ANC.

It was on the plane journey en route to Mandela's first trip to England that this new love would bloom. He admits that he "may have incited Madiba" to ask her on the trip adding that he "may already have had other ideas" – but the two spent the long flight talking and talking. "That's how it started, you know?" he said in 2009. "One thing led to another and it's 20 years, hey? Next year."

**1951 - 1952**  
Headed the South African delegation to the World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin; worked at the headquarters of the World Federation of Democratic Youth for nine months in Budapest

**1952**  
Accused in trial of leaders of Defiance Campaign; received 9 months suspended sentence

**1953**  
Became secretary of Youth Action Committee of ANC Youth League and Indian Youth Congress. Elected to executive of World Federation of Democratic Youth

**1954**  
Banned from gatherings and ordered to resign from 39 organisations

**1954 - 1956**  
Active in organising Congress of the People where the Freedom Charter was drafted. Secretary of Central Indian High School Parents Association - a private school established to combat the Group Areas Act.

**1956**  
Arrested with 155 others in Treason Trial. Was among the 30 accused who were acquitted in 1961



Sylvia Neame

Early portrait of Sylvia Neame

Kathy, Eddie, Barbara and Laloo

