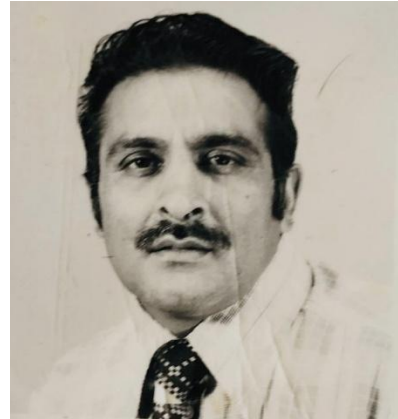


PEGGY BALTON

(Sadna Balton)

Facebook Post - Edited

My mum, Peggy Renuka Balton (née Sunker), made her entry into this world on the 20 April 1937. The parts of my mum's life that we did not have the privilege of sharing with her was weaved into stories that became a part of our identity.



My mum grew up on Goods Street in Sophiatown. While I did not see her childhood home because it was destroyed by the apartheid government, her stories have created vivid pictures in my mind. Mum described a home filled with people, not just her siblings, but friends and cousins. Some of her cousins like Uncle Frank had a wonderful presence in her life and other cousins brought their fair share of drama.

Mum described a home filled with people of all races and religions. I think that contributed to who she is today and perhaps who we are as well. She told us stories of how she, her sisters and female cousins could not sit on their front stoep without one of her brothers or male cousins. They also had to be chaperoned wherever they went.

Mum started working at a very early age at a factory. She describes this as hard work but also a place where she met other strong women who helped mould her.

The story I loved listening to the most is how my dad (Ishwarlal) would visit my mum's house and she and her cousins were not sure who he was visiting because he would just sit there quietly. But this changed quickly when mum received a wedding proposal, and he threatened to abduct her if she got her married to anyone else.

After they got married, they were forcibly removed in 1960 from Sophiatown to the Military Camp in Lenz. My mum described how their belongings were loaded onto a truck in the middle of the night. Before moving to Lenasia they lived in the Military

Camp for a while. They literally lived in stables, which were converted to 'houses' and used communal bathrooms.

In 1962, my parents moved to Camelia Avenue in Greyville, where most of my Mum's siblings lived. They built a strong community around them where the women protected one another and developed a strong sense of activism.

Our family then moved to "Rainbow Valley", Extension 1, Lenasia, where I was born. My mum was always present, because my dad worked long hours as a waiter. Mum was everything. She cooked, cleaned, fixed things - it wasn't unusual to find her on a ladder fixing things or chopping wood in the back yard. Mum's strength was and still is something I aspire towards.



My favourite time would be when mum had a fire going in the cold stove in the kitchen and we would be gathered sharing stories about our day. She listened with intent, and we could talk. She showed an interest in our lives; what we were learning and knew the names of all our friends.

Another favourite memory is watching my mum, dad, gran, uncles and aunts play "fafi", which was a form of betting on Chinese numbers. They based their bets on their dreams. So, when they gathered, there was detailed sharing and interpretations of dreams that led to whether they put their money on "dooie vrou - number 12 or klein meisie - number 19". We did not go to nursery school, so we were schooled by whatever was happening around us and it was a damn rich upbringing.

Later when Sharmaine and Neeshan started the Lenasia Youth League (LYL) our home became a meeting point for activists, our garage became a printing press and

my mum became a counsellor to many of the young activists, who were going through heartbreaks. Our home also hosted house parties to raise funds for the LYL.

My mum stood with us as we developed and defined our own identities as activists. I'm sure it was hard for her, especially when my brother was arrested, but she stood steadfast with the support of women like Aunty Joan. My mum fought with us about some of our political activities but when we were arrested, she stood her ground against the police.

Mum has defined every stage of our lives with her remarkable presence. She continues to fill our hearts with love, which has been her greatest gift to her children and grandchildren. We are who we are today because she of her tenacity, strength, remarkable wit and love.