

Women behind the wheel

*Don't kill us!
Can you drive?
This is man's
work....* These
are some of
the things
passengers
say when they
see a woman
driving a bus.
Hassen Lorgat
asked two
women bus
drivers about
their work



Photo by Hassen Lorgat

Bus driving is hard work but that does not mean it's men's work

Jenny Solomon and Rachma Kubie were among the first women to be employed as bus drivers by the Johannesburg Municipality Transport Department. Some men bus drivers did not want women to join them. "What do you want here? You must go and cook at home!" was what some of them said.

Passengers also found it hard to accept. Jenny remembers the days when her bus ran empty "because passengers were not sure of us women drivers.

"When they eventually began to get into our buses they would say things like 'don't kill us', 'can you drive?' and 'this is a man's job'", says Jenny smiling.

Jenny laughs when Rachma describes how people behaved when they saw women bus drivers: "When I drove my bus down Fox Street many people were shocked to see a woman driver. But that was not the end of it, because my bus was followed by Jenny in her bus. You should have seen the shock on their faces - two women bus drivers in a row! That was too much for them!"

There is more laughter as Jenny tells of a conversation she had with an old blind woman who once boarded her bus:

Blind woman: "Is this the bus going to Forrest Hill?"

Driver (Jenny): Yes lady, this is the bus going to Forrest Hill.

Blind woman: Listen lady, I'm talking to the bus driver, not to you!

Jenny: But I am the bus driver.

Blind lady: Oh! ... are there women bus drivers now?

Although Jenny and Rachma laugh and joke about their job, bus driving is hard work. They work odd hours and long shifts. Their wages are not very good so they often work overtime to make ends meet. They get backache and problems with sleeping because of shift work. These late hours and the shift work affect family life. When Jenny got married her husband wanted her to leave work. She told him he married her as a bus driver and she would continue driving buses because she loved her job.

Rachma and her husband have a "first come first cook" policy - the one who gets home first does the cooking. Her husband also shares the work of cleaning the house.

"You should have seen the shock on their faces - two women bus drivers in a row!"

SPEAK asked Rachma and Jenny why they became bus drivers.

Jenny was working as a secretary, when she said jokingly to a friend who owned a driving school that she would like to get a code 11 licence because she wanted to become a bus driver. He said "why not?" and took her to the bus company to apply for the job. She started work as a bus driver in March 1982, becoming the second woman driver to work for the company.

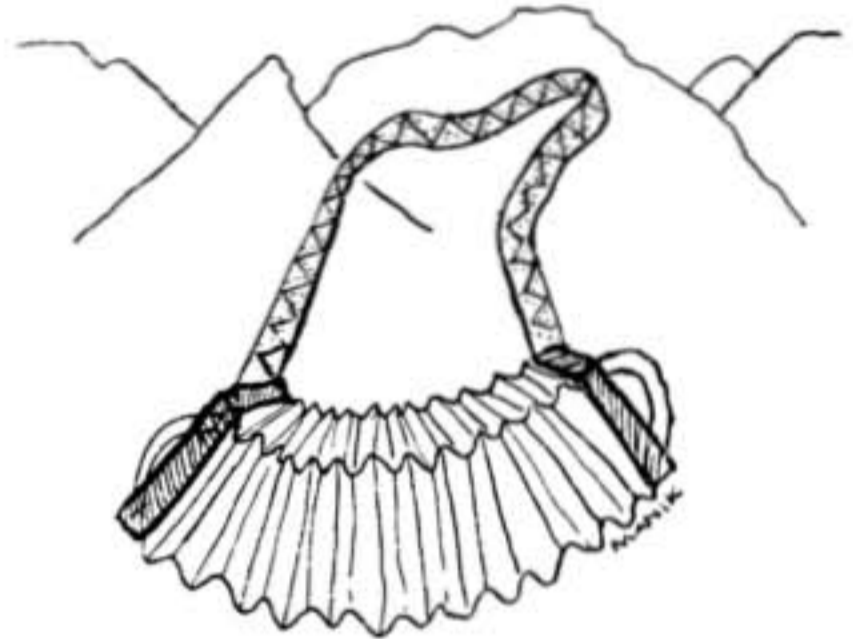
Rachma became a bus driver in February 1983. Before that she was a factory worker in a printing factory for 12 years. She became a bus driver because she wanted to do something different and challenging. The pay was also better.

Men drivers are now used to working with women drivers. There are more women bus drivers now but it is still mainly a man's job. Of the 520 bus drivers who work for the company, only 11 are women.

Asked what they like most about their jobs, Rachma and Jenny say they love meeting new people. ◉

WIN!

Khathazile Gasa's book "The Concertina - Khathazile Follows Her Heart"

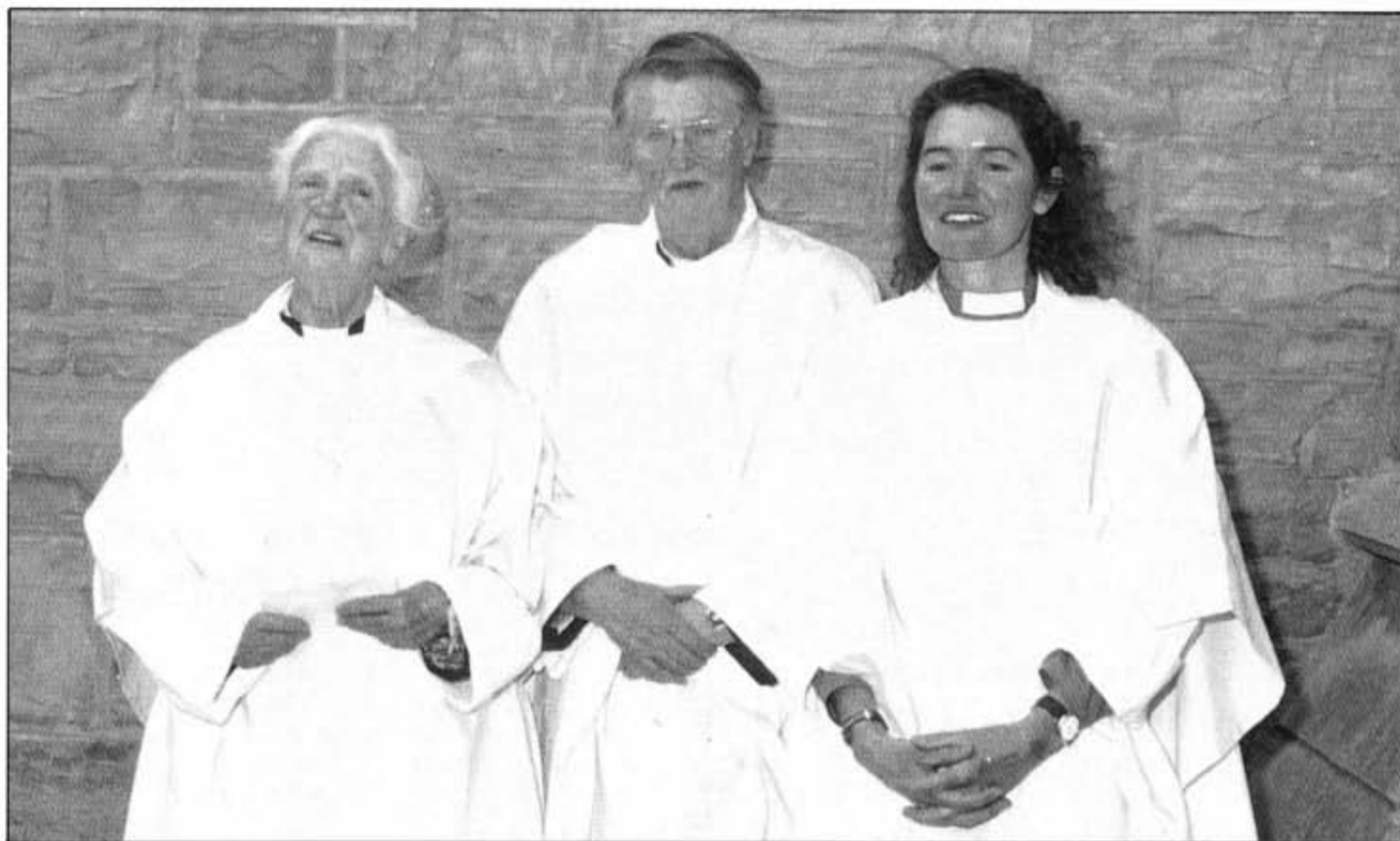


Grandmother Khathazile Gasa tells stories. Born in the shadow of the Drakensberg mountains, she tells of her different experiences - life, love, families and being forced to move. The book is written in easy English, and has lots of photographs.

Five SPEAK readers will each win a copy of Gasa's book. Send us a postcard with your name and address to: 'The Concertina' Book Lucky Draw, SPEAK Magazine, PO Box 261363, Excom, 2023, Johannesburg, South Africa. Your entry could be one of the lucky ones.

This competition is only open to people living in southern Africa. No employee or relative of an employee of SPEAK may enter this competition. The winner will be announced in the February 1993 issue of SPEAK. Please make sure your entry reaches us by 1 December 1992. If you want to buy a copy of the book, send R10.00 to Working Life Distributors, 68 Manor Drive, Durban 4001, South Africa. Cheques and postal orders should be made out to: Working Life Distributors. The price includes registered mail postage. ◉

WOMEN PRIESTS



... AT LAST

South Africa's first Anglican women priests were ordained in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, in September this year. Professor Nancy Charton, Dr Bride Dickson and Su Groves were ordained by the Bishop of Grahamstown, the Right Reverend Russell.

Bishop Russell said it was a "rich and special day for all."

The decision that women could be ordained as priests was made by 79% of those

who attended the Triennial Synod of the Anglican Church Province in South Africa. The synod was held in Swaziland in August this year. However, the decision is not forced on all the country's dioceses. It is left up to

individual bishops to decide whether or not to allow women priests in their diocese.

There was a moment of tension in the Cathedral of St Michael and St George when Bishop Russell asked if anyone

had any reason why the ceremony should not go ahead - but no-one stood up. Friends and relatives joined the ceremony, helping the newly-ordained women priests put on their priestly clothes.

The Dean of

Three women were recently ordained as South Africa's first Anglican women priests. Nicola Coningsby went to the event and spoke to one of the history-makers, Professor Nancy Charton

Grahamstown, the Very Reverend Anthony Mdletshe, said in his sermon the church was standing between the dying, old order and the new, emerging order. He quoted the American civil rights leader, Martin Luther King, saying: "what we see today is a foretaste of things to come."

Newly-ordained Professor Nancy Charton said: "Jesus came to proclaim the Kingdom 2000 years ago. It's taken 1700 years to accept slavery wasn't part of the Christian dispensation and it's taken 2000 years to realise women are full human beings." She said the decision would make more women want to join the ministry. "Some women have held back because they did not want to accept second-class citizenship in the church. I accepted it seven years ago in obedience to Christ."

A big problem has been tradition. "Traditionally, people with authority are men. It's a culture shock for some men and women to accept women as people with authority ... Jesus didn't take notice of tradition. He invited Mary to sit at his feet and learn the law when only men could be scholars."

This was the second time Charton, who is a retired Head of the Rhodes Political Science Department, makes history. She was the first woman deacon in the Anglican Church in South Africa in 1985. Her parish is in Grahamstown. She has three children and seven grandchildren.

When asked what, as a woman priest, she would be



Photo by ECNA

"It's taken 2000 years to realise women are full human beings". Nancy Charton, newly-ordained priest

able to bring to the church that is different to what male priests could bring, she said: "Women

have gifts which are different but go together well with the gifts of men. The church hasn't recognised their gifts, only letting them make tea and do housekeeping duties. In particular, women have the gift of caring and the Church hasn't recognised this gift."

Charton said she felt sorry for those who had opposed the ordination of women. "I have experienced pain and rejection for 16 years but I haven't left the church or made a song and dance about it. I know the pain they are experiencing and I pray for them," she said. ☉

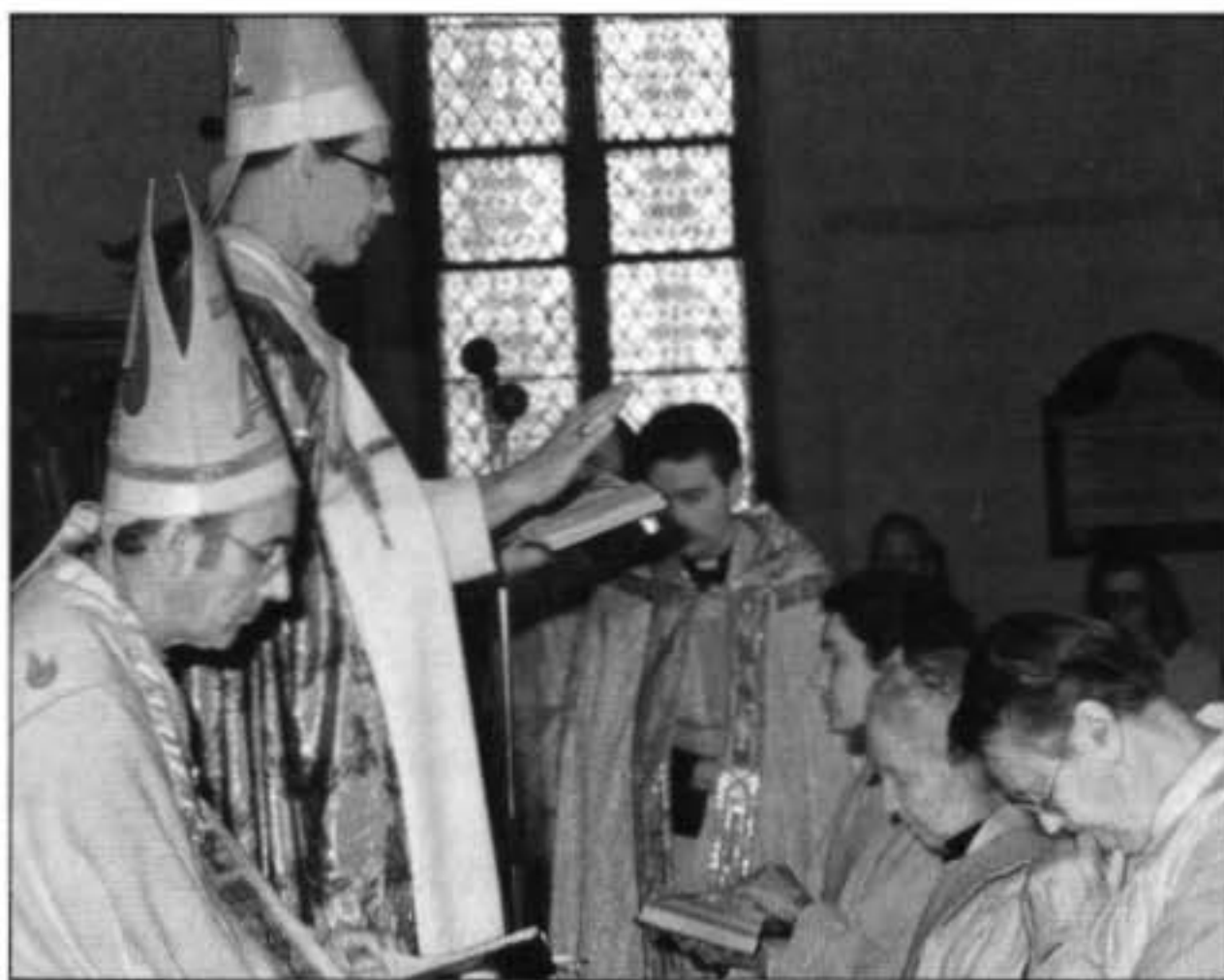


Photo by ECNA

History is made. South Africa's first three women Anglican priests are ordained. From right to left: Dr Bride Dickson, Professor Nancy Charton and Su Grove