



Spanner in the Works

Patricia Fahrenfort

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Pat Fahrenfort knows about hard work. Her background meant factory floors from age fifteen in a country where jobs were still advertised for “Fair-Skinned Coloureds”. But young Pat had other plans. Whether she was in overalls gluing spines to books in an assembly line, or in high heels dancing as a cabaret artist, she was determined to set her own course, and put herself through university.

Involving herself in the struggle for democracy, Pat moves from faculty officer at the University of the Western Cape to being part of the country’s first post-apartheid administration – the Constitutional Assembly set up to deliberate and write South Africa’s new Constitution. Later she is appointed to a deputy directorship in the Ministry of Labour.

Spanner in the Works provides a unique view of the triumphs and challenges leading up to democratisation. Resisting harassment and discrimination throughout her career, and describing her frustrations in working for the new government, Pat’s story is an unflinchingly frank account of one woman’s resolve to speak truth to power, irrespective of where she discovers it.

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