

protection specialist, Jacques's not happen.

## M&G founder member gets achiever award

**B**arbara Ludman, super editor, coach, novelist and a founder member of this newspaper, has won a Vodacom Lifetime Achiever award for her "invaluable contribution to South African journalism".

"That's Barbara with three 'a's" she says crisply when I call her to do this write up. And I, who have known her for 20 years, feel like a sloppy intern and guiltily assume I've been spelling her name wrong all along. But it is just Ludman doing what she does best — being a professional perfectionist who leaves nothing to chance.

Anyone whose skills have benefited from Ludman's extraordinary editing powers, the instrument of



**Barbara Ludman**

which was her infamous red pen before 'track changes' took over, has a 'no pain, no gain' Ludman story.

Mondli Makhanya, now editor of the *Sunday Times* but once a humble intern at the *Weekly Mail* (the *Mail & Guardian's* first title), recalls: "She swore a lot, ran gallons of red ink through printouts of your stories and then, after all that, had the gall to call you 'my darling'. The thing about Barbara was that once she had run that red pen through your copy you would never ever make the same mistake again: you just did not want to see so much blood on your story."

Makhanya, who has since recov-

ered, adds: "A finer editor you will never find ... I still feel her lingering over my shoulder when I write."

Ferial Haffajee, the *M&G's* editor who was also once a Ludman initiate, agrees.

"Whenever I write her voice still rings in my ears. I know how to write because of her; I know how to edit because of her ... her empowering style helps writers develop their own voice."

Ludman, an American by birth, moved to South Africa in 1976 shortly before the Soweto uprising which she used as the vehicle for her first novel for teenagers, the *Day of the Kugel* — now prescribed setwork

reading in South African schools.

She's been hailed as a "trainer" and as a "mentor", but she prefers "coach".

"You find what people are good at and work with it," she says. "Everybody's good at something."

Ludman, who says she is "honoured and humbled" by this accolade, continues to coach reporters, edit and write. Presently she is working on a collection of short stories about "aliens — people out of place". Her next ambition is to write a TV soap. "*7de Laan* is my favourite, I don't understand Afrikaans, but I love the sub-titles." Knowing Ludman, she probably edits them.

— Charlotte Bauer