

DR EDNA LOUISE SAFFY (1935-2010) was a native of Jacksonville and one of its most noteworthy citizens. Her early life here and experiences at West Riverside, John Gorrie, Robert E. Lee High School and at the University of Florida instilled in her a strong awareness of social injustice and sense of fairness. Seeing the role of women both in her own third-generation Syrian-American household and others, and --- following her father's death --- seeing the treatment of her mother and her women friends in the workplace made a strong impression on her, as did the treatment of women at the University, herself included. After her counsellor there denied that women even had the option of being doctors or lawyers, but could only be nurses or teachers, she dropped out in frustration, but later returned to take up the torch for equality.

A pivotal moment in her decision to be an activist for human rights occurred with Martin Luther King's first march on Washington, DC. Edna wanted to be there, but friends told her that it would be too dangerous for a white woman alone. As she watched the march on television, she swore that never again would she let anyone dissuade her from doing what she knew to be right --- and she never did. Edna worked tirelessly for equality for all races, religions, sexes, and sexual preferences. She was a founder of the National Organization for Women [NOW] both in Jacksonville and in Gainesville, worked for women's reproductive rights and defended the Planned Parenthood clinics. Most impressively, she organized a march in Tallahassee with thousands of participants, including Marlo Thomas, Alan Alda, and Betty Friedan, in support of The Equal Rights Amendment.

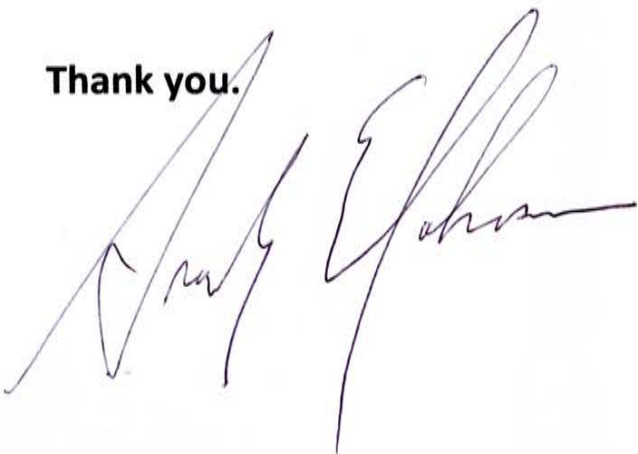
Although she was an activist when it was called for, and even made Richard Nixon's Enemies List for it, Edna also knew how to work within the system to institute change. She was elected to the Student Senate at UF and got the legal decision which led to the integration of the Florida Blue Key. She was appointed to attend International Women's Year in Mexico City and in Indianapolis. She served as a leader of the Florida League of Women Voters. She was also a founder of the Jacksonville Women's Network. She worked local, state, and national elections, and was a representative to nearly every Democratic Convention from Carter to Clinton. When the JSO stated that a black candidate could not get elected in Jacksonville, she called Nat Glover to offer her skills as communicator and image-maker, working with him in front of the television cameras to help him become the first African American sheriff in Florida since the end of Reconstruction. She also worked on the campaign to help Alvin Brown become Jacksonville's first African American mayor.

In addition to political and judicial campaigns, Edna served as an educator and mentor to thousands of students during her career, and was recognized with the Lifetime Achievement EVE Award, among others. That this legacy should be lost to oblivion seemed unthinkable, so piggy-backing onto the scholarship that Edna had begun to coordinate with the UNF Library before her death, I decided that UNF should be home to the Saffy Collection.

The EDNA SAFFY COLLECTION consists of photographs, speeches, letters, notes, videotapes and ephemera, mostly from the Seventies through The Millennium, the period of her most active political career. It provides a glimpse into those times and a reminder of how far we have come (and may have to go again, as our personal rights are currently being chipped away.) In time, I hope also to add additional photos, notes, speeches and objects as I mine the boxes that remain in my attic and garage.

UNF was chosen to house this collection and for the related scholarship because it is a state university and because it is here in Jacksonville. It is funded both by contributions previously made and eventually by a provisional grant in my will. Ultimately, I would hope someone might undertake a biography of this remarkable Jacksonville icon, but if not, at least I know that this knowledge is preserved and that her example is not lost to future generations.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andy Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.