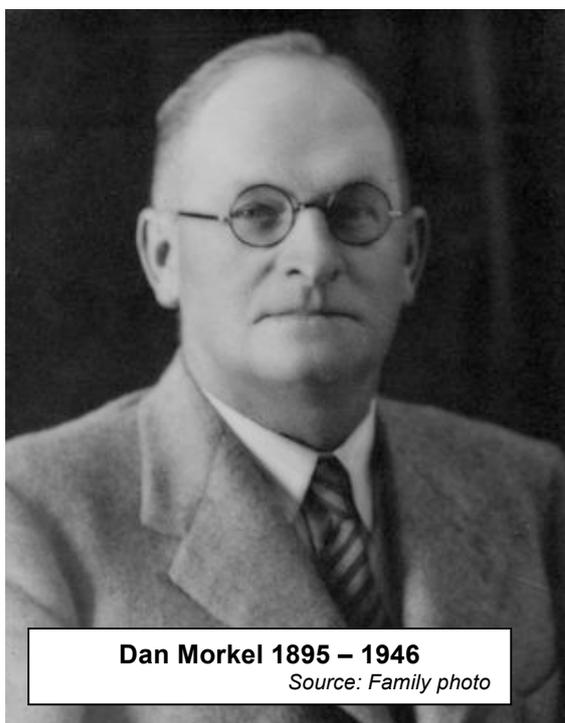


Dan and Kitty Morkel

Part I – Mainly about Dan

Hy het geleef om te dien

Daniel Johannes Morkel (Dan) * 30.9.1895 ~ 16.12.1895 † 16.7.1945 x 28.6.1924
Catharina Elizabeth Theron (Kitty) * 15.3.1899 † 10.7.1980



Dan Morkel 1895 – 1946
Source: Family photo

I was 12 years old in 1945 when my father died suddenly from a stroke while visiting Pretoria on business. My mother and our family were devastated and thrown into turmoil. More on this below, but it also means that much of what I know about him is from childhood memories and family stories.

Dan was born on the old family farm *Die Bos (The Bush or Onverwacht)* in 1895. He grew up with 6 sisters and one brother (Oom John) 13 years older than him. There were also four others, 3 who died young as babies and a brother who drowned at 16 at *Kogel Baai* on a family fishing expedition. My father would have been around 8 years at the time. He probably was not part of the trip which included trekking across a mountain to a secluded bay to catch spawning “harders” (mullet?) with nets carried into the surf.

During his childhood an aunt of his father Aunty de Jong (Esther Leonora Louw Morkel, e10) holidayed on the farm for several weeks each summer. She was very English and gave nicknames which stuck, to all the children – Esther became Essie, Johannes became John, Emmerentia - Dolly, Helena - Nelly, Alida – Alice and my father Daniel, became Dan. Only the youngest two daughters kept Afrikaans nicknames – Maria whom I knew as Tant Maraaitjie and Sophia Margaretha who was Tant Magriet. With an uncle and 6 aunts, we grew up in a large and scattered extended family with many cousins most of whom were considerably older than ourselves. Music lessons were part of growing up and most Aunts and cousins were good at the piano and other instruments. When young Dan arrived a bit early for one of his lessons he overheard the teacher - “my next pupil is young Dan Morkel – he has no talent whatsoever”. That was the end of his music education.

His early schooling was in Somerset West - there was a photo in our home of the donkey cart used by the kids to go to school, about 3 to 4 km away. Later he attended SACS (South African College School) in Cape Town. I am not sure whether it was to complete high school or whether he also attended a year or so of college at this school which was the precursor of Cape Town University. Here he also met a good friend John Hayward who

later farmed sheep for wool at his farm *Oorlogspoort* near Aberdeen in the Great Karoo (arid interior of the Cape Province). I have good memories of vacation visits to *Oorlogspoort* during the winter school break.



**Die Bos Family ca 1918.
Oupa Hennie Bos and Ouma Mijburgh sitting in the middle.
Oom John and my father Dan (circled right) standing at the back with sisters.**

Source: Family photo

There was almost a generational gap between my father and his older brother John who inherited *Die Bos*. Oom John tended to be conservative and continued with the old ways. Dan embraced the new technologies that were emerging and wanted to try new things. When my grandfather bought his first car, Dan rather than John was the family chauffeur. Shortly after they married, Dan and Kitty and brother John and his wife Nettie drove in grandfather's car over Sir Lowry's pass for a weekend trip to Grabouw. The roads were still quite primitive and at a spot Dan tried to accelerate up a tricky hill when John, sitting next to him applied the handbrake. The drive shaft broke and they were stranded miles from home. I suspect old fashioned horse carts brought the party and the damaged car home.

Dan grew up surrounded with Rugby enthusiasts. His older brother John was the first captain of the Somerset West team which a few years later would achieve national and international recognition as the best in the country. The team practised on a paddock at *Rome*, a neighbouring Morkel farm and many of the players were regular visitors at *Die Bos* where an added attraction would have his several older sisters. (I tell about the antics of the group dubbed the Tangle foot Squad by my grandmother, in another story – Vanities, Fables and Foibles Pt II). Dan eventually played at the centre position for the Somerset West first team, until he left to farm in the Orange Free State.



SOMERSET-WES SE O.14 SKOOLSPAN VAN 1909.

(Interessante foto uit die reemryke rugbyverlede van Somerset-Wes).

Agter (v.l.n.r.): Dan Morkel, Raymond Theron, Royal Morkel, Eric Deneys, Isak Bosman en Mudoch Dormehl.
 Sittende: Johnnie Brink, Willie Pienaar, Roderick Rosenow, Marnie Kennedy en Henry Morkel.
 Voor: Die tweeling-broers, Eddie en Eunie Stuart. (Twee spelers makeer). (Dan Morkel, Royal Morkel, Isak Bosman en Johnnie Brink is reeds oorlede; laasgenoemde het in die Eerste Wêreldoorlog gesneuwel).

Dan Morkel – Under 14yrs Rugby Team

There are also two other Morkels in the photo – Royal and Henry who both became Springboks

Source: *Jubilee ed, Somerset West Rugby Football Club*

The farming venture at Brandfort in the Orange Free State did not work out and Dan sold the farm. His brother-in-law, Rocco de Villiers (married to his sister Tant Essie) who was an attorney, handled the property transfer. He “invested” the money in postage stamps and lost most of it. Dan returned home and started farming on the portion of the farm close to the Strand that was purchased back by his father.

This part of the old farm, then named *The Lodge* was viewed as too small, exposed to the winds (westerly gales with rain in winter and dry southeasterly gales in summer) and with variable soils to be viable. Dan managed to make the farm pay, mainly concentrating on milk production.

Dan was a good tennis player and he met my mother, Kitty (Catherina) Theron who was teaching at the Strand primary school, at tennis. The Tennis Club formed an important part of Dan and Kitty’s life. Many trophies were displayed in our lounge. We grew up on the fringes of impromptu Saturday evening parties where tennis players were all invited to the farm after their matches. Dan was a charming host and he had a way of getting his guests to serve the drinks. Having grown up as a child with four sisters and servants, it was natural for him to be served. The location of the Strand as a holiday resort town ensured the success of the annual Boxing Day mixed doubles tournament and a five-day Boland tournament that commenced each year on New Year’s day. Much of the leadership and initiative for these tournaments came from Dan and Kitty and that tradition was carried on by my brother Charles and at the time of writing now by his son Charl. The league in which they competed consisted of the country towns surrounding Cape Town and for many years Dan and Kitty

featured in the championship teams. It was generally accepted that the country teams could not compete successfully in the city league where they also played on Sundays. The Boland country tennis courts were closed on Sundays.



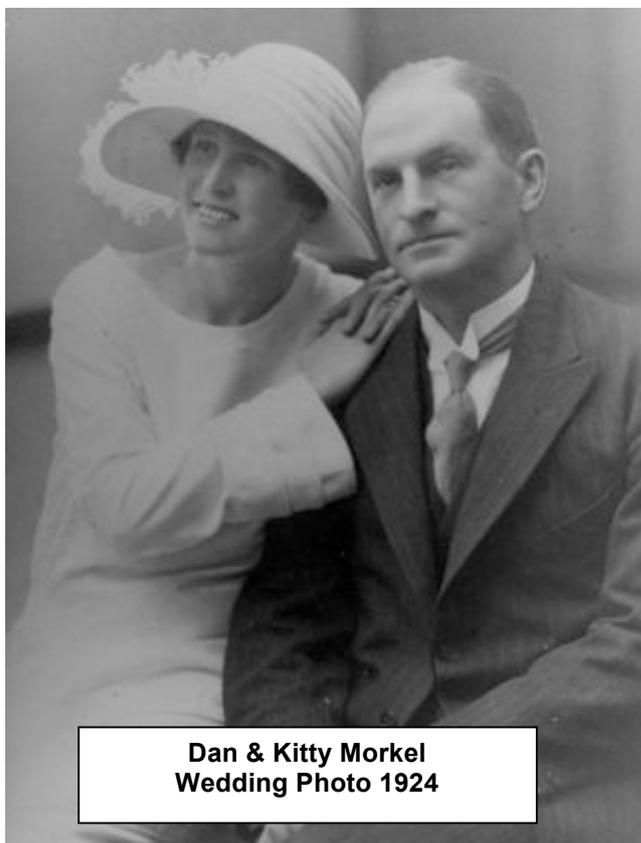
**Strand Tennis Club Photo for 1936-37. Winners of several trophies
My parents Kitty and Dan Morkel circled, sitting in the middle
My mother's youngest sister, Tant Emmie standing just to the right behind Dan**

Source: Charl Morkel saved the photo when the clubhouse was demolished.

Apart from Tennis, Dan and Kitty led an active social life and were natural leaders in the community. As a seaside resort town, there were many summer holidaymakers but the permanent community was fairly small – around 3 to 5 thousand in the 1930s/1940s. Kitty had a profile in the South African Who's Who (at a time when such directories had meaning), as the President of the Boland Women's Golf Association. Dan was a council member of the Stellenbosch Regional Council and the Western Province Dairy Farmers Board. He was active in politics and stood as the candidate for the National Party for the national parliament election in 1943. Five years later in 1948 the National Party won that seat and the election, but that was 3 years after his death.

Dan's strengths were clearly in leadership and community affairs. As a farmer he was more of a strategist and leader than a practical farmer, but he turned what most thought was an uneconomic unit into a viable business by concentrating on milk production for the nearby Strand. This was complemented with general farming of vegetables (onions, tomatoes,

cabbage, cauliflowers and potatoes) and table grapes rather than the standard concentration on wine production of the other large farms in the district. For the general farm, coloured labourers who lived on the farm were used. For the milk production that required taking care of the cows 365 days of the year and three daily milkings starting around 4:30 am, Dan contracted with a Xhosa tribe. These were reliable black men from a village about 400 kms away. The contract was with their headman who organised and supervised work schedules and they were generally left alone to get on with their work.



**Dan & Kitty Morkel
Wedding Photo 1924**

The farm adjoined the town of The Strand and this proximity was an advantage for shopping and schooling for the children but also created problems in running the farming business. A large coloured township bordered the farm and pilfering of ripening crops was rife. The town with bottle shops were close by and alcoholism among the labourers was a problem. There were several times that we had phone calls, often on Sunday mornings, that our cows or horses were roaming the streets of the town because gates were left open on the way back to the farm from Saturday night revelries. My paternal grandmother talked about the farm being *al te na* (all too near) to the town, and Dan and Kitty decided that *Altena*, would be a better name than the somewhat formal *The Lodge*.

However, Dan was distracted from being a full time farmer with all his community and sporting activities. Brother Hennie tells how one of the old farm labourers *ou Andries*, related how his job was to wake Dan from his afternoon siestas in time to be out and about if my grandfather rode in unexpectedly on his white horse from the neighbouring old family farm, *Die Bos*.

A major water pipeline from the Steenbras dam (in the mountains behind the village of Gordons Bay) to Cape Town went under the farm. On one occasion a harvesting machine (drawn in those days by horses) was left in the oats field directly above the pipeline. That very night the pipeline burst destroying the harvester in the process. Farming had its ups and downs.

Dan and Kitty had active and inquisitive minds. Dan was keen on geography and what was happening in the world. We grew up with the monthly issues of the National Geographic magazine at a time when such subscriptions in far away South Africa would have been rare. As a child I devoured the Arthur Mee's Children's Encyclopedia - these sources were in English and although we spoke Afrikaans at home, we were encouraged to read widely in English.

Dan and Kitty took an active interest in our education. At the end of each year they invited all the teachers to the farm for a party as thanks for our education. Many of our teachers were friends of our parents and several were members of the tennis club. One, *Vaatjie du*

Toit was a keen traveller and author and came back from his travels to the US (during the war time) laden with photos, clippings and stories from what at that time was a marvellous and remote country to us. Dan admired the technology and inventions of the US and was keen that all four children would study in the US. Hennie and Charles would study medicine at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Danie agriculture at University of California at Davis and I would study Chemistry in Boston. In the end I was the only who studied in the US, and at MIT in Boston.

Sunday midday meals were sumptuous – usually roast leg of lamb, roast potatoes, yellow rice and vegetable dishes followed by desserts. We often had guests at these dinners and a visitor from England exclaimed that in South Africa, that every day was like Sunday and every Sunday was like Christmas. England at the time was in war time austerity and rationing. Being active in politics, several members of parliament enjoyed my parent's hospitality when they attended sessions in Cape Town. A Sunday excursion to the Strand at the seaside, some 50 kms away from Cape Town was a welcome diversion for them.



Dan, Kitty and sons ca 1939

In his last years Dan suffered from high blood pressure and had to stop playing tennis. He acquired a lawn bowls set but did not take this up seriously. During the Easter weekend of 1945 our family and several friends went camping on our newly acquired farm truck. A coastal road along the mountainous coast south of the Strand (Steenbras to Hangklip and beyond) was constructed during the war and with the end of the war in sight, selected permits were given to travel on this road. On the morning most of the party went hiking along a mountain path. As a 12 year old, I accompanied my father Dan along the rockpools. He spotted abalone but with his high blood pressure I had to bend down and pry them off the rocks.

A few months later in July Dan travelled to Johannesburg and Pretoria as part of a delegation of milk producers to attend a conference and establish relationships with government. While visiting the Secretary of

Agriculture in Pretoria he fell ill and died a few hours later having suffered a massive stroke. I remember my mother worrying when she received a phone call from uncle John (my father's oldest brother) asking if he could come over. He had to convey the terrible news and our family was plunged into grief.

As well known leader his funeral was large and well attended. There were several eulogies. The main speaker spoke about his dedication to family, friends and the community and ended his eulogy with *hy het geleef om te dien* – he lived to serve. This was engraved on his tombstone - a fitting tribute for a great man



Tombstone of Dan and Kitty Morkel. Somerset West graveyard.

Photo: André R. Morkel

Family Tree for Dan Morkel

- a1 Philip Morkel *27.2.1677 (Date uncertain) xx 17.11 1713 Catharina Pasman ~ 17.8.1691 † 29.3.1764 *Onverwacht*.
- b3 Willem Morkel ~25.12.1718 † 1788 *Onverwacht* xx 22.7.1759 Helena Catharina Malan *Morgenster* ~ 11.3.1736 † 27.10.1825
- c6 Daniel Johannes Morkel ~ 2.9.1764 † 15.8.1825 *Onverwacht* xx 6.9.1793 Maria Dorothea Louw ~17.12.1775 † 1801
- d7 Hendrik Johannes Morkel *1798 ~23.1799 † 14.2.1859 *Onverwacht* x 10.6.1821 Catharina Jacoba Theunissen *Vergelegen* ~ 18.9.1803 † Dec 1831
- e1 Daniel Johannes Morkel * 15.7.1822 ~ 25.8.1822 † 12.8.1879 *Onverwacht/Die Bos* x Emmerentia Elizabeth Malan *4.6.1822 † 25.9.1902
- f4 Hendrik Johannes Louw Morkel * 6.5.1854 ~25.6.1854 † 6.5.1926 *Onverwacht/Die Bos* x 28.5.1878 Helena Catharina Philippina Mijburgh (Parel Vallei) * 22.3.1860 † 21.11.1940.
- g9 Daniel Johannes Morkel * 30.9.1895 *Onverwach/Die Bos* ~ 16.12.1895 † 16.7.1945 *Altena* x 28.6.1924 Catharina Elizabeth Theron * 15.3.1899 † 10.7.1980

...meer dan 2000 ...
e een testament nagelaten? Ja.
Somerset West de 14de dag van Mei 1926.
Handtekening D. J. Morkel
Seun - teenwoordig by sterfplaas.

Signature: Daniel Johannes Morkel, 14 May 1926

...meer dan 2000 ...
die oorledene 'n testament nagelaat? Ja.
te Kampstad
die 24^{de} dag van Juli 1945 (Handtekening) C. E. Morkel.
Nagelate eggenote.
nie teenwoordig by dood nie
(Vermeld in watter hoedanigheid en of asdan op of by die sterfplek.)

Signature: Catharina Elizabeth Morkel (née Theron) 24 July 1945