

Dan and Kitty Morkel

Part II – Mainly about Kitty

My mother, Kitty (Catharina Elizabeth) Theron was born on the ides of March (15th) in 1899 in Langlaagte, a suburb Johannesburg. I tell more about her family and the Theron line in the story under “wives”. The Therons descended from French Huguenot Jacques Therond who came to South Africa in 1688 from Nimes, Languedoc. My mother was born as the Anglo Boer war (1899 to 1903) commenced and in the turmoil her birth certificate was lost which created problems for her throughout her life, particularly when applying for a passport.

My mother was the oldest of seven children of whom 6 grew to adulthood. The family line listing births show how they moved around. Kitty as the oldest was born in Johannesburg. The next two (Oom Andries and Oom Charles) were born in the diamond-digging town of Beaconsfield, near Kimberley in 1901 and 1903 respectively. By the time Tant Lenie (Magdalena Frida) was born in 1904, the family had moved back to Fordsburg, a suburb of



Kitty Morkel Late 1940s

Johannesburg. A son, Frederick Cornelius was born in Fordsburg in 1906 but died young. The youngest daughters, Elsa Johanna (Tant Tokkie) 1909, and Emmie Margaretha (Tant Emmie) 1912 were born in the Paarl, about 70 km from Cape Town in the wine country.

By 1909 my grandfather was the minister for a congregation in the Paarl, an historic town about 70 kms from Cape Town. It was for ‘coloured’ or racially mixed people and was separate from the white congregation in the town. My grandfather, Charl David Theron was formally known as a ‘missionary’ (*Eerwaarde*) as a lesser position compared to the ministers of the parent church – and no doubt also with a lesser salary. They had a fairly large backyard for vegetables, fruit trees and chickens, reducing the need for

cash for store bought items such as soap, tea and coffee and condiments. I remember my grandmother’s frugal habits including saving bits

of string, neatly rolled up in small bundles and placed in the string drawer.

After qualifying at a teachers college (in Paarl?) Kitty taught in primary school in Vryburg, a small town in the north of the then Cape Province, not far from the town of Mafeking. Her next assignment was at the Strand Primary School where she met my father Dan. Both played tennis and the tennis club remained an important part of their social life.

Kitty was a good sports woman, captaining the women’s teams in both tennis and golf at the Strand. She served as president of the Ladies Country Club Union for 1935/36. During this period she found time for part time teaching at the Loreto convent school adjoining the farm, going there on her bicycle. As mother of four boys she sewed the khaki shirts and pants we wore on the farm after school. Although we were comfortably off and the farm provided much of the food for the table, cash was scarce. The great depression of the early 1930’s was still having an effect

While Dad looked after the farm, Mum supervised the household with two servants (three when the children were very small), looked after the garden and chickens. All her life Kitty enjoyed her garden and grew beautiful flowers, with cactus dahlias as one of many favourite species. Dad was amused at her chicken farming enterprise. The chicken runs were constructed with farm labour, the feed (mainly oats, but also kitchen scraps) was produced on the farm, feeding the chickens and collecting eggs were our jobs as children, while the surplus eggs were sold in town (often delivered by the kids) with Mum collecting the money. A nice profitable business! (Reflecting back she amply did her share of work).

My parents had an active social life. Throughout their life they had a wide circle of friends and particularly as young married there were many dances and parties. – it was the heady days of the 1920s, before the depression.



**Kitty Morkel and her four sons. Late 1940s
André, Danie, Kitty, Charles, Hennie**

When Dad died suddenly of a severe stroke on 16th July 1945 Mum was devastated. Dan had been on a business visit to the Transvaal, a day and half journey by train to Johannesburg and Pretoria. I was doing homework after dinner when uncle John Dad's brother, phoned to say he was on his way to us. The phone call upset my mother because John almost never visited us (we went to them on Sunday afternoons). When he walked in the door my mother knew it was bad news.

Our lives were in turmoil. The extended range of family and friends were enormously supportive with and many sympathisers visiting and offering condolences. After the funeral came the reality of life going on. Kitty knew little of the affairs of running the farm but that was what she had to do. She employed a farm foreman who could oversee the production of crops while the dairy side – looking after the cows and milking continued with the Xhosa contract team. She did a heroic job continuing the farm business but the guiding hand of my father was missing and the farm went backwards until brother Danie with degrees in agriculture and veterinary science took over.

Over the years Kitty re-built her life in the community. She continued an active role in the tennis club and politics, stepping into a few of the roles my father left vacant. While Dan was alive, some members of parliament visited the Farm on Sundays while in session and became good friends of the family. Daan and Hilda Viljoen were particularly supportive and through these connections Kitty was appointed to the Board of Censors. About three times a week she would travel to Cape Town (about an hour's drive) to view movies for screening. She continued with this for many years and it gave her a special interest in life and new friends in the City.

When brother Danie married and settled on the farm, Kitty moved to a house owned by brother Charles in the Strand. When he married, she moved to a ground floor apartment in a small block of four. The apartment was well located in a quiet spot close to the beach but sheltered from the strong winds for which the Strand was known. Her apartment opened on to a small patio and garden, which gave her much joy. When her sons and their families visited, the grandchildren could spill out into the garden and go to the nearby beach and Kitty enjoyed sitting on the patio for morning tea or for drinks at dusk. Barbara and I and our children visited during summer vacations and the children fondly remembered the times they had at *Ouma* Kitty, visiting the Strand, relatives, the farm and the beach.



Ouma Kitty with Philip at his baptism 1969

Mum was faithfully served by Dorie, who started as a young girl servant in the house on the farm and stayed with her for most of her life. Dorie was an excellent cook and looked after Kitty and her guests. Sadly Dorie became ill and died in hospital roughly at the time Kitty also had to move because of old age to a home for the aged.

Kitty travelled to the UK and Europe several times, when it was still quite novel to do so. The journey by mailship took about 11 days from Cape Town to Southampton and on subsequent journeys she preferred to travel by freighter ships. Cargo ships were allowed to carry a small number of passengers (about 14, I seem to remember). She felt the service was friendlier and better and there were usually enough bridge players on board for regular rubbers of the card game. While I studied in Boston, she came to visit and we travelled around the US for several weeks, covering more than 8,000 miles.

After being a widow for 18 years, Kitty married Bernie (Barend) Boucher who had lost his wife in a car accident a few years earlier. They married on 26 May 1963, the day after my own marriage to Barbara, wanting to attend our marriage ceremony as Mrs Morkel. Unbeknown to each other we booked honeymoon arrangements in the same locations – Lorenzo Marques (now Maputo) in Moçambique and the Kruger Game Park. Fortunately the schedules were complementary in that Barbara and I went to Moçambique first and then to the Game reserve while Kitty and Bernie did it the other way around. Bernie died in the early 1970s and Kitty was widow for the second time.

She visited us in Pretoria almost every year and we spent our Christmas holidays regularly at the Strand. We all fitted in somehow into her apartment, helped by the living room spilling out onto a small garden. Our older kids at least had some knowledge of Ouma Kitty.



Ouma Kitty reading to Charl. Duneraig December 1976

After we moved to Australia Kitty visited us in Perth over Christmas 1976. We had moved into the Duneraig house in Kinloch Place, but our furniture had not yet arrived. We were camping out in the house with patio and loaned furniture. We enjoyed having her with us and seeing us settle in the new environment. We have a lovely photo of her reading a story to our youngest, Charl, then 2 years old. Ouma Kitty was then 77 years old and age was starting to slow her down. Back in the Strand she stayed in an old age home, fortunately close to brothers Charles and Danie and their families. However she missed her apartment with its garden and her independence and died peacefully in 1980. I had visited her a few months before to say goodbye and was not able to make the long journey for the funeral.

Ouma Kitty was a remarkable lady who had an active life with a positive outlook in spite of losing her husband so early on. She was an active leader in the community, was in the first tennis team until her sixties, travelled extensively and cherished her extensive family with four sons, four daughters-in-law and 15 grandchildren. We fondly remember her.

André T. Morkel

Family Line for Catharina Elizabeth Morkel (née Theron)

- a1 Jacques THERON(D)** Nimes, Languedoc * 15.5.1668.. Arrive at the Cape of Good Hope on the ship Oosterland. + Drakenstein (Paarl) 2.12.1739 x **1697 Marie Jeanne DES PRES** (du Preez) of Béthune * 1675 d.o. Hercules de Pres of Kortryk, French refugee and Cecilia d'Atis.
- b4 Pierre (Pieter) THERON** * 10.8. 1709 ~ Drakenstein 22.9.1709, + 3.6.1778 x Paarl 19.4.1732 Anna PRETORIUS d.o. Lodewyk Pretorius and Maria Rossouw xx **29.1.1741 Anna DU PLESSIS** d.o. Jean Louis du Plessis and Madeleine Rossouw.
- c5 Jan THERON** ~ 29.12.1741 + 1814 x **6.5.1770 Maria Justina RYKVOET** ~ 24.11.1748 d.o. Carel Christoffel Rykvoet and Johanna van Ellewee xx 1.5.1774 Hester Magdalena DE VILLIERS ~ 2.10.1759, + 1780 d.o. Pieter de Villiers and Magdalena Gertruida du Plessis xxx 11.12.1781 Geertruy Magdalena DU PLESSIS ~ 7.11.1762 (she xx Paarl 29.8.1813 Carel de Vogel) d.o. Charl du Plessis and Geertruy Boeiens.
- d1 Pieter Carel THERON** ~ 20.6.1771, Teacher + Rietvlei, district Sneeuberg Graaff Reinet 23.8.1841 x Cape Town 14.8.1798 **Aletta Catharina STEENBERG** ~ 10.10.1779 d.o. Jan Joost Steenberg (Steinberg) and Aletta Catharina Ferryn.
- e1 Pieter Andreas THERON** * 22.7.1799 ~ Tulbagh 11.8.1799, Farmer, Rietvlei, Graaf Reinet 17.5.1843 x Somerset East 22.10.1826 **Hester Jacoba Maria BURGER** ~ 30.3.1807, + Graaf Reinet 31.3.1884, d.o. Barend Bartholomeus Burger and Rachel Dippenaar.
- f1 Pieter Andries THERON** * 29.8.1826 ~ Graaff Reinet 4.2.1827 + 17.11.1895 x Graaff Reinet 18.9.1848 **Magdalena Elizabeth NIEWOUDT**.
- g10 Charl David THERON (my maternal grandfather)** * 10.10.1869 ~ Graaff Reinet 19.12.1869, missionary + Paarl 10.10.1918 x Cape Town, **Frida Magdalena STAHL** * Hamburg, Germany 15.5.1872 + Strand 16.4.1954, d.o. Frederick Stahl.
- h1 Catharina Elizabeth (my mother)** * Langlaagte (Johannesburg) 15.3.1899 ~ Langlaagte 9.4.1899 + 10.7.1980 x 28.6.1924 **Daniel Johannes MORKEL (my father)** xx 26.5.1976 Barend Bouwer.
 - h2 Andreas Johannes (Oom Andries) * Beaconsfield (Kimberley) 21.11.1901
 - h3 Charl David (Oom Charles) * Beaconsfield (Kimberley) 15.1.1903
 - h4 Magdalena Frida (Tant Lenie) * Johannesburg 13.8.1904 ~ Fordsburg (Johannesburg) 9.9.1906
 - h5 Frederick Cornelius (died young – I never knew him) Johannesburg 5.8.1906 ~ Fordsburg + 9.9.1906.
 - h6 Elsa Johanna (Tant Tokkie) * Paarl 29.12 1909 ~ Paarl 23.2.1910
 - h7 Emmie Margaretha (Tant Emmie) 8 Paarl 20.11.1912 ~ Paarl 5.1.1913.

Source: Dr Chris Theron. Upington, South Africa. 2002. *Private communication.*

die oorledene 'n testament nagelaat? Ja.
 te Kaapstad
 die 24^{de} dag van Julie 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



**My mother Kitty and myself in Cape Town.
ca 1938 – I would have been about 5 years and Kitty
about 39.**