

# **Different perspectives in researching Genealogy by Abrie de Swardt - Chairman of the Southern Cape Branch of the Genealogical Society of South Africa.**

## **Introduction.**

The family research enthusiast can follow various approaches, when they delve into family history.

Some use a story line, for example the story of a ring, inherited by the latest in the line of daughters. She has the same names as the original ancestor, coming from the early 1800's of the previous millennium.

A second approach may have history as departing point like the family-history of genl Jan Smuts, born in Riebeeck-West in the Western Cape, to eventually become Chancellor of Cambridge, Prime Minister of South Africa, and member of the British War Cabinet during both the first and second World Wars(1914-1919) and (1939-45). It can also be looked at from a political perspective, for instance the relationship between the Smuts and Malan-families, both from Riebeeck-West in the Western Cape, both becoming Prime Ministers of South-Africa.

The location and family connection is a third possibility. Prof. Christiaan Neethling Barnard, famous doctor and professor from Groote Schuur Hospital, and the University of Cape Town, fitted into the genealogy of the de Swardt-family from Gwayang, George.

In the fourth instance, it may have a church related bearing, for example the role that the de Swardt-family played in the Dutch Reformed Church in George from its establishment in 1813. Guillaume de Swardt (53 years) and his wife, Anna Sophia Weyers (39 years) were the first persons to be adopted in the church on 30 April 1813. Guillaume de Swardt was also elected on 9 May 1813 as deacon on the first Church Council of the 'Moederkerk' in George.

Another approach could be to embark on the research by searching for the original locations where ones family comes from. It was a great experience, even an adventure for me, to research the history of Alexander Munro from Mossel Bay. Alexander Munro came from Nairn, Scotland with the 93<sup>rd</sup> Scottish Highlander Regiment, in the Battle of Bloubergstrand in January 1806 resulting in the capitalization of the Dutch. It was awesome to visit Nairn in July 2014, to do research in the Nairn Museum, to discover that there are still Munro families in Nairn, to do research about the Munro-clan, dating back to the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Thus, genealogy can take one to many parts of the world, as can be clearly seen in the excellent article, written by Cheryl Vermaak, in *Familia*, Vol 52:4 of 2015, on her ancestors at War. She and her husband, Peet, well-known former Headmaster, and great rugby player and sport coach, visited Scotland, the Netherlands, Italy and England, in search of her family-history.

Lastly, family-history may also be looked from a sport perspective. In this article I will research, the bloodline, as Dr. Danie Craven called it, of Springbok rugby players, and the role different families played in the rich history of Springbok rugby since 1891, up to 2016.

## **Genealogy and Springbok rugby.**

### **Dr. Danie Craven, Doyen of World Rugby.**

It was my privilege to meet Dr. Danie Craven as a student, as a mentor, as the chairperson of the Stellenbosch University Rugby Club, and to serve with him for two years on the committee of the club (1972-74). I often listened to his talks and lectures at different sport conferences during the years 1970-1990. One of the interesting beliefs he had was the important role genealogy, or family history played in the history of Springbok rugby players. He talked about the bloodline of families, and the importance of natural skills in the player, as inherited from his father and mother, and perhaps going back to the ancestors for many years! He made a study of it, as he perceived it within his own family, the Cravens, and in many of his fellow Springboks.

Dr. Craven, one of the leading scrumhalves of international rugby during the period 1924-38, with his famous diving pass, closely related through his paternal grandfather, John Craven's mother, to the same family as Mark Sigden. Many an Irishman in Ireland declared him to be the best scrumhalf ever produced by the Irish<sup>1</sup>. Dr. Craven's grandmother, Catherina Helena Roos, belonged to the same family as the well-known Paul Roos, captain of the 1906-07 Springbok rugby team to Great Britain, and headmaster of Paul Roos Gymnasium in Stellenbosch. A close relation was WSD Craven, who captained the Combined London Counties against the 1912-13 Springboks at Twickenham. From the perspective of his family history, Dr. Craven believed he had the credentials to become a Springbok rugby player!

Dr. Craven, born as Daniel Hartman Craven on 11 October 1910, was the fifth of seven sons, and a daughter, of James Roos Craven (\*28/06/1882) and Catherina Helena Roos (\*23/09/1853). He was born on the farm Steeton in the district of Lindley in the Free State, the farm named by his paternal grandfather, John Craven(\*6/08/1837) after Steeton in Yorkshire, from hence he came during 1860 to the Cape, and established himself in the Free State. John Craven was married to Catherina Helena Roos on 28 May 1870. They had eight children, of which Dr. Craven's father, James Roos Craven, was the sixth child (\*28/06/1882)<sup>2 3</sup>. James Roos Craven fought on the side of the Boers against the British in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), and was on his way to Ceylon as a prisoner of War. Luckily, for him, peace was declared early in May 1902, and he could return to Lindley to assist his co-Free State farmers in re-building the land.

He met his wife, Maria Susanna Hartman (\*02/02/1882) four days younger than himself, at Lindley, where her parents, originally from Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape, established themselves in the 1880's. She worked as a teacher during the Anglo-Boer War in the concentration camps near Kroonstad. Afterwards she qualified as a teacher at the Bloemfontein Teachers College, soon to be teaching at Lindley. She married James Roos Craven on 18 April 1906 in Uitenhage, the home of the Hartman-family. After their marriage, the couple returned to the farm Steeton in the district of Lindley, to start farming.

From the farm Steeton, in the district of Lindley in the Free State, Dr. Craven went to Stellenbosch, played for Western Province from the age of twenty, and South Africa in sixteen tests from 1931-1938. He captained the Boks in four tests (one against the All Blacks in 1937 in New Zealand and three against the British Lions in 1938). He became Springbok coach after

the Second World War in 1949, and president of the South African Rugby Union from 1956 until his death in 1993. He was twice president of the International Rugby Union (now World Rugby), and was a household name in his time in every rugby playing country in the world, globally known as Mister Rugby! He was an outstanding academic at Stellenbosch University, teaching Physical Education and Human Movement Studies. He was an excellent student, with three doctoral degrees, in Physiology, Psychology and Anthropology. After retiring from the academy as Head of the Department of Physical Education, he became Director of Sport at the University of Stellenbosch.

This great South African, who served rugby for more than sixty seasons, was named by Edward Griffiths and Stephen Nell in their excellent book "The Springbok Captains" (latest edition 2015) "the Grandest Oak."<sup>4</sup> The famous Stellenbosch coach and national selector, Mr Mark (Oubaas) Markotter, was the first to discover and develop the potential and talents of Dr. Craven at Stellenbosch, and played a great role in exploiting his leadership and character. He was indeed The "greatest oak" in a town of oak trees, and today his statue with his dog, "Bliksem" Bliksem was also his best man at his second marriage in 1975, at his favoured Coetzenburg sport grounds, and stadium named after him, is a living memory for all of us.

### **The Versfeld Brothers**

Dr. Craven's theory of the role of genealogy in producing Springbok rugby players, started with the Versfeld brothers in 1891, when the first South African team, later called the "Springboks" were elected to play against the touring British team of W.E MacLagan. Two of the four Versfeld brothers, Charles, also known as Hasie, and Marthinus, played against the British visitors. Marthinus Versfeld played in all three tests in 1891, while his other brothers, John and Loftus, also played provincial rugby. Loftus did much to establish rugby north of the Vaal, and the "Loftus Versfeld Stadium in Pretoria, headquarters of the Blue Bulls, is named after him."<sup>5</sup>

### **Morkel Brothers and Family**

The Morkel's of Somerset-West produced in the period 1903-28 altogether ten members for Springbok rugby teams! These famous family members were: DFT (Dougie) Morkel, match winning kicker(1906-13) in nine tests; WH (Boy) Morkel rated best all-round forward of his time in the world and captain of South Africa against the 1921 All Blacks; Gerhard and Jackie Morkel, brothers in the 1912/13 Springbok team to Great Britain; Pieter Morkel, famous fullback (1912-21); Royal and Harry Morkel, members of the 1921 Springbok team to New Zealand; PK Morkel, wing of South Africa in the fourth test against New Zealand in 1928. The other two were AO Morkel (1903-06) and WS (Sammie) Morkel (1906).

The origin of the Morkel family dates back to 1691, when Philip Morkel arrived in the Cape as a gunner on board the "Oosterstyn" of the Dutch East Indian Company. Philip and his brother, Willem, joined the company after leaving Hamburg at the insistence of their father, who did not want his sons to be conscripted into German military service. Willem never married, but Philip (\*27/02/1677) was married twice. He went back to the Netherlands soon, but returned to the

Cape as a constable on the "Noordbeck" in 1709, became a citizen on 25/02/1709, and started farming on "Onverwacht", which became a top farm in the Hottentots-Holland/Somerset-West area. After his second marriage, on 17 September 1713, with Catharina Pasman, many of his descendants married into the Myburgh-family, and they prospered on historic farms, such as "Onverwacht", 'Rome'," Broadland", "Morning Star" and "Oaklands," until today well-known in the wine and fruit industry of the Western Cape.

The well-known sir Abe Bailey planned to send a team, consisting just of Morkel's, to the British Isles in 1913/14, but the first World War starting in 1914, put paid to his plans. At that stage 22 Morkel's played senior rugby all over the country <sup>6</sup>

### **Luyt Brothers**

The well-known rugby writer, Chris Greyvenstein, wrote in "Springbok Saga (1988 edition) that the 1912/13 Springbok tour to the British Islands was nearly like a family affair!<sup>7</sup> The team included the three Luyt brothers, namely Freddie (halfback), John (forward) and Richard (centre). They played outstanding rugby for the South African College (UCT) and were also good cricketers. Gerhard and Jackie Morkel, closely related to Boy and Dougie Morkel went along on the 1912/13 tour. Also part of the tour we find Willie Krige, the brother of the famous Japie Krige. Wally Mills and Louis Louw were first cousins. Jan Stegman was the brother of the well-known Jan Stegman, famous 1906 Springbok.<sup>8</sup> From this tour party and its family relationships, Dr. Craven concluded that genes certainly play a role!

### **Walker Family**

Alf Walker(Springbok 1921-24) and brother of Henry Walker(Springbok (1910) lived to see his son, Harry Newton Walker, receive his Springbok colours against the Wallabies in 1953 and also played against the All Blacks in the first two test of the 1956 tour in New Zealand.

### **Du Plessis Family**

Nic du Plessis', who played against the 1921 All Blacks and the 1924 British Lions, nephew, Felix du Plessis, led the Springboks in three of the four tests against the All Blacks in 1948. His son, Morné, captained South Africa in 15 of the 22 tests he played for his country between, 1975 and 1980. He was the manager of South Africa team that won the 1995 World Cup, and is still widely recognized for his leadership role in various facets of South African sport.

Three other Du Plessis brothers not related to Nic, Felix and Morné, Carel, Willie and Michael, represent the University of Stellenbosch, Western Province and South Africa in the 1980-86 period, and played a great role in South African rugby. Carel (wing), Willie (center) and Michael (center) and fly half were stars in Western Province teams during the 1980's, and in the 2016. Jean-Luc du Plessis, son of Carel, started to play for Western Province and the Stormers, and showed the talent of the family!

## **Osler brothers**

Bennie Osler, and his brother Stanley, both played for South Africa against the 1928 All Blacks. Bennie captained South Africa in five of the 17 tests he played between 1924 and 1933, and was the rugby general, and fly half, of his time, as was Naas Botha in the eighties of the previous century!

Bennie, born as Benjamin Lourens Osler on 23 November 1901, studied Law at the University of Cape Town, made his debut for Western Province at 20 years, and played the first of 17 consecutive tests for South Africa against the 1924 team from the British Islands. His younger brother, Stanley, a talented player was injured in the 1928 series against the All Blacks and stopped playing rugby.

When a journalist asked the famous coach and selector, Oubaas Markotter, who of the two brothers he preferred in his team, he remarked; "If I wanted to play rugby, I would select Stanley, but if I wanted to win, I would play Bennie!"<sup>9</sup>

## **Louw Brothers**

The famous Louw brothers of the Paarl/Wellington, namely Matthys Michael (Boy) Louw and Fanie (SC) were two of a family of 10 brothers and 4 sisters. Boy and his brother Fanie played for South Africa during 1928-38. One of his ten brothers died at a young age, but the other nine all played senior rugby! Four of the brothers played provincial rugby.

Boy Louw became a legend in his lifetime for his outstanding performances on the field. He added flair to the game, had enormous strength as a forward, and was a hard, relentless competitor. He played eighteen tests for South Africa, and was known for his interesting remarks on the field. He once remarked to his fellow players at a sloppy lineout "Why you stand so crooked? Can't you stand in a straight stripe?"<sup>10</sup> His brother, Fanie, played twelve tests for his country after his first selection as Springbok in 1931 and his last test in 1938.

## **Fry Brothers**

The famous 1951/52 Springbok team to the British Islands, that beat Scotland 44-0 at Murrayfield, included the two Fry brothers, Dennis, at fly-half, and Stephen, a loose-forward. Stephen played 13 tests for South Africa, and captained the country in four tests against the 1955 British Lions.

## **Bekker Family**

The Bekker-family of Dordrecht in the Eastern Cape produced three sons as Springbok rugby players, namely Dolf Bekker, a wing against the Wallabies in 1953, Jaap, a prop against the All Blacks in New Zealand in 1956, and in 15 tests between 1952 and 1956, and Martiens, a prop against Scotland in 1960. The fourth brother, Daan played provincial rugby for Northern Transvaal, and represented South Africa as a boxer in the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome. Their sister, Connie, represented South Africa as a Springbok in athletics (shot put) against the touring German team in 1959. The four Bekker brothers played in 160 games for the Blue Bulls! What a great family, and a clear genealogical blood line of sport breeding! <sup>11</sup>

In the last Springbok tour to New Zealand before isolation in 1981, Hennie Bekker, big lock-forward from Stellenbosch and Western Province, represented South Africa in two tests against the All Blacks. His son Andries, also played for Western Province and South Africa, and presently still plays representative rugby in Japan.

### **Burger Family.**

Schalk Burger represented South Africa in 1984 against England in two tests, and against the New Zealand Cavaliers in four tests in 1986. His son, Schalk Junior became one of the heroes of the professional era in South African rugby, playing for the Springbok since 2003, and being part of the Springbok World Cup winning team in 2007. In 2016 Schalk (junior) is still playing for the Stormers and was part of the 2011 and 2015 World Cup team.

### **Cockrell Family**

Two brothers of the Cockrell family of Cape Town, and Western Province played Springbok rugby, both as hookers. Charlie was on the 1969-70 Springbok tour to Great Britain, and played three tests. His younger brother, Robert played 11 tests and 25 matches for the Springboks between 1974 and 1981.

### **Botha Brothers**

The 1981 Springbok tour two Australasia included two brothers, Naas and Darius. Darius, a wing, played only one test, but his elder brother, Naas, played in 28 tests and 40 matches for South Africa between 1980 and 1992.

Naas Botha was described by Dr. Danie Craven as a genius on the rugby field, and was captain of Northern Transvaal and South Africa. He captained South Africa in nine tests between 1986 and 1992. He led Northern Transvaal in several Currie Cup winning appearances. Altogether five out of six seasons from his debut in 1977, to his departure to play for the Dallas Cowboys in 1982. He returned to South African rugby in March 1985, and was immediately in the heart of the game again. It was, as the well-known former 'Sunday Times columnist wrote on occasion, "When Naas runs on the field in that no 10 jersey, it is pure electricity." In his first season back in 1985, he set a new Currie Cup record by scoring 188 points in 10 matches. He became South Africa's player of the Year in 1985.

Botha captained South Africa in 1992 in matches against Australia and New Zealand, and on the 1992 tour to England and France. Today, in 2016 Naas Botha is still a leading personality in South African rugby, serving as match analyst for Super Sport Television.

### **Du Preez Family 2016**

The latest of the genealogy lines, in 2016 on the South African rugby scene, is the Du Preez-family. Robert du Preez (father) of Robert (Junior), Daniel and Jean-Luc, played for Western Transvaal 1982-1987, Northern Transvaal (1988-1991) and Natal 1992-1997. He played for South Africa in 1992-1993. All three of Robert's sons, play Super 18 rugby in 2016, Robert (Junior) for the Stormers, and the twins, Daniel and Jean-Luc, for the Sharks. All three boys represented South Africa at the

Junior World Ruby Championships. Robert (Senior) is presently, in 2016, manager/coach of the Sharks.

### **Conclusion.**

There are several more examples of brothers and father-son relationships in South African rugby, like for example Gysie and Ruan Pienaar (father and son), the Wessels brothers from the Free State as Springbok hookers in the 1950's, Louis and Uli Schmidt (father and son), and Moaner and Wicus van Heerden (father and son), to name a few.

These examples clearly show that:

- Families play a great role in the history of Springbok rugby, and show that talent and sport potential may indeed be inherited along family lines.
- From the first introduction of South African rugby to the world stage in 1891, to the present post-apartheid stage in South African history, over 125 years of rugby history, great players were born and bred in families. Some of the greatest players in South African rugby history played as brothers, or played as a father-son for their respective provinces and for their country.<sup>12</sup>
- It is interesting to note how genealogy forms part and parcel, as shown in this contribution, of the role of family in sport, to bring families' together, and respect the value of the family in sport performance.

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<sup>1</sup> Partridge, Ted.: A Life in Rugby. Southern Book Publishers, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1991. Booyens, Bun. Danie Craven. S.A Rugbyraad, 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Parker, A.C. The Springboks 1891-1970. Cassell and Company. 1<sup>st</sup> Ed 1970.

<sup>3</sup> Griffiths, E. and Nell, S.: The Springbok Captains. Jonathan Ball Publishers. Revised Edition, 2015. Greyvenstein, Chris: Springbok Saga. Printpak Books 1988.

<sup>4</sup> Griffiths, E. and Nell, S.: The Springbok Captains. Jonathan Ball Publishers. Revised Edition

<sup>5</sup> Greyvenstein, Chris: Springbok Saga. Printpak Books 1988.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> van Lill, D. Van Lill's Sports Trivia. Zebra Press, 2005

<sup>10</sup> Greyvenstein, Chris: Springbok Saga. Printpak Books 1988.

<sup>11</sup> S.A Athletics Annual, Johannesburg 1960.

<sup>12</sup> SA Ruby Annual 2005