

**A Branch of  
The Steyn Family.**

**Preamble**



I am not sure what caused me to wonder about my ancestors and then decide to try and document the Family Lineage but suffice to say it was interesting in the extreme, equally frustrating and a learning experience.

It also brought home to me that as a child I did not spend enough time (or any) talking to my Father and Mother about our ancestry and just took it for granted that somebody out there knew all there was to know and that it was merely a question of asking.

What I did know is that we had some sort of link to Swellendam and the Steyn families who were so strongly represented in that area. This was however, as proved later, tainted to a large extent in, for instance, the case of Miss Nita Steyn of Mayville.

As children we visited her with my parents a number of times and I for one was always told that she was my Aunt. This of course gave me the idea that she was the daughter of my father's brother whereas in fact she was the daughter of my Grandfather's brother. She also had a sister who I had never heard of until I started this project.

Not only did the discoveries about Nita give certain satisfaction but even greater was the fact that I found a cousin, Zita, whom I had never met nor heard of before even though we lived within an hour's drive of each other for many years. What a waste of valuable years during which much could have been achieved but also a lesson that you need to get to know your family at the very least to cousin or 2<sup>nd</sup> cousin level.

All in all I was nowhere near the true facts and in fact at the first attempt had a completely incorrect lineage plotted which sounded logically correct but was far off the mark. I think I have it right now and must acknowledge the sources of information I drew on;-

*Steyn Genealogy Research* by Jacques Steyn (Available at:  
[www.steyn.pro/genealogy/steyn/index.htm](http://www.steyn.pro/genealogy/steyn/index.htm) )

*Families van ou Swellendam – Deel 1 –Steyn* by Marena van Hemert

I also glanced through *Die Nasate van Andries Ferderik Willem Steyn & Elisabeth Margaretha Linde* by *J W (geb. Steyn) Jonker* but found little of use as their line diverged into the Hermanus (1711) line whereas ours followed the Jacobus (1723) line.

Finally much credit is given to Lorna Olivier of the Genealogical Institute of South Africa (GISA) who did a lot of research and helped clarify some of the mystery in the more recent years. Without her we would still be floundering.

These sources are good but unluckily did not address our branch of the family directly (Except for the work done by GISA) or cover the later years post 1900 and the missing link only revealed itself because, unlike myself, Cousin Zita knew the names of her (and our) Grandfather which made it possible to find the next link.

Also intriguing was the family crest, one of which is in the form of a brass plaque mounted on wood I have always had. The birds on the crest always fascinated me as they looked like ducks yet in the various bits of research I have been doing they are referred to as “birds” or in one instance “Crows”. The crest I have settled on and as appears herein is the only one more or less resembling the heraldic description in the work by Marena van Hemert.

To try and document other branches of the Steyn family will be a task of many years and I am happy that we have at least achieved the line through our parents and grand-parents to the first recorded Steyn in South Africa. I intend taking it to the present day, my family, after which I leave it to those who follow to take it further.

The Steyn family history has been subject to research since 1931 as evidenced by an article in “Die Huisgenoot” of 12<sup>th</sup> December 1931 written by John Muir, husband of Susanna C L Steyn. An extract from the article (Translated from Afrikaans) reads as follows;-

*No other family has played a larger role in the history and development of our country, and in fact, the most important events in the history of the Republic's (Swellendam, Orange Free State, Zuid Afrikaanse Republiek) could well be the history of this family. The family gave the country men who attained the highest levels to which the sons of the country can aspire.*

Muir refers here to Hermanus Steyn who was appointed President and National Magistrate of the Swellendam Republic after the civil uprising by the people of the area against the Dutch East India Company. He also refers to President SJP Kruger of the Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek whose mother was a Steyn. Further reference is made to President Marthinus Theunis Steyn of

the Orange Free State whose father was a wagon maker in Swellendam. (His father was the brother of our Great-Grandfather)

Reference is also made to other Steyn's such as Colin Fraser Steyn who was a legal practitioner and became a member of parliament and later minister of justice. Judge Theunis Steyn served as Administrator-General of South West Africa and his sons Theunis & Colin are prominent legal practitioners.

One needs to recognize these achievements and ensure they, together with the roots of the family are not just thrown in a drawer and forgotten.

I have not used the indexing system commonly used in constructing family tree's as I find it laborious and have opted instead for a common flow chart representation which clearly depicts relationships and generations without complex cross referencing. The flow chart can, however, easily be cross matched to the indexing system used by both van Hemert and Jacques Steyn in their research.

One of the confusing factors in plotting lineage is the use and repetition of family names. One becomes overwhelmed by the number of persons with the same name and it becomes important to distinguish them by date of birth/baptism. It is also interesting to note that in many cases, in one family unit a name may be used more than once or twice for siblings in the same family. One wonders if this is because the earlier child died or for some other reason.

*In closing the preamble it needs to be said that I will be taking this to the current day after which I will hand it to my siblings and my Son with the hope that they will take it further and ensure the ongoing maintenance into the future. I will also give a copy to Cousin Zita who will no doubt, wish it to be taken further in her branch of the family.*

## **The Early Years.**

It is not the intention of this record to delve into and discuss the origins of Douwe Gerbrandt Steyn (Acknowledged to be the Founding Father in South Africa) and his wife Maria Lozee as both Jacques Steyn<sup>1</sup> and Marena van Hemert<sup>2</sup> do this in great detail with many research based conclusions as well as some supposition which is always necessary in cases such as this.

Doubt clearly exists as to how Douwe Gerbrandt Steyn adopted the surname Steyn as it would appear that his original surname was either Gerbrandt/s and that “Steijn” or “Steyn” was adopted as a result of his craft as Stonemason (“Steen”). This train of thought is further confused by the fact that on his death he left properties in Holland to his son “Age (Aege) Douwez Stein”. It is also of interest that research into family’s in Leeuwarden, from where Douwe is said to have originated, no record of Steyn/Steijn/Stein appear. It is however possible that although it was not common for residents of that part of Holland to move from one area to another that this may be masking the true origins of Douwe. Is it really important? Only academically or for the purists and possibly one day someone will take this research further to establish that finer detail. We are happy to accept Douwe Gerbrandts Steyn as the founding father of our family in South Africa and that his antecedents are in Holland.

What this does illustrate is that Douwe must have been married whilst in Holland as a result of the son whom he left there and to whom he left his properties in that country.

The actual arrival date of Douwe in South Africa is also open to debate as it would appear that there is no record of his arrival but that the first documented record of his existence arises from his signature as a witness to a document signed on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1672. Also, in a register of the Dutch East India Company dated 1672 reference is made to Douwe as Master Stonemason/Builder. He was appointed to be in charge of the building of the new castle which was to replace the now disintegrating original fort. Further evidence arises from a report by Douwe dated 16<sup>th</sup> April 1682 in which he addresses issues related to the foundations of the fort.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.steyn.pro/genealogy/steyn/index.htm](http://www.steyn.pro/genealogy/steyn/index.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Families van ou Swellendam – Deel 1 – Steyn by Marena van Hemert

We now need to look at Maria Lozee who Douwe married in 1685 and it is recorded that at that stage Maria had a son, "Jacobus" who was already two years old at that time. Whether Douwe was the natural father or not is not known and becomes irrelevant as Douwe adopted Jacobus as his own who, in turn, at his wedding in 1706, recorded his name as Jacobus Steyn. This is in fact quite important as Jacobus is first in the line, after Douwe, and the person from whom our family descends.

Douwe and Maria had a further child, Anna, who was baptized in 1692 and so assumed to also have been born in that year. She later married Marthinus Prins.

Looking at Maria further it becomes more interesting as to her origins. Some strongly believe (for expedience sake?) that she was the daughter of an officer in the Cape garrison but this has not been substantiated. Others are of the belief that she was a slave girl in the employ of Douwe and that the "Lozee" part of her name comes from the dutch reference "slawe lozee" which was the term applied to the slave quarters. It would also tie in to the practice at that time of referring to a person's place of residence or origin when using their first name and to clarify who was being spoken of. Ie. "*Maria van Lozee*". Again it is not of great relevance and the reader is urged to spend some time reading the work produced by Jacques Steyn<sup>3</sup> in this regard. The most strongly put contrary view is found in the work by J W Jonker<sup>4</sup> but at the end of the day it is up to the reader to adopt the option they most favor or wish to have appear in their ancestry.

We hasten to add that in some research Maria is said to have been a prominent and influential member of the community who was highly regarded by all.

Jacobus(1683), had 11 children of which Jacobus (1723)<sup>5</sup> is the branch from which our family stems. He is further identified as having farmed at Grootvadersbosch.

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<sup>3</sup> Steyn Genealogy Research by Jacques Steyn (Available at: [www.steyn.pro/genealogy/steyn/index.htm](http://www.steyn.pro/genealogy/steyn/index.htm))

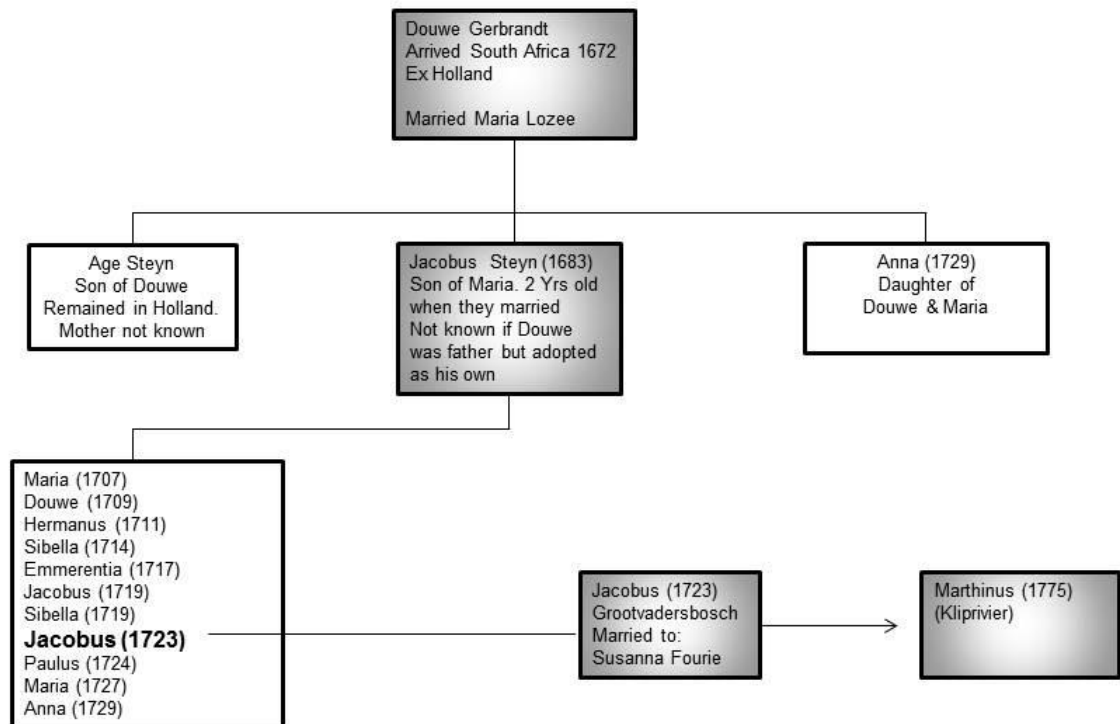
<sup>4</sup> Die Nasate van Andries Ferderik Willem Steyn & Elisabeth Margaretha Linde by J W (geb. Steyn) Jonker

<sup>5</sup> Page 6.

## The Early Years



### Steyn Family South African Roots



### Jacobus Steyn (1683)

As previously indicated his paternal line is not definite and his date of passing is equally unclear.

What is known is that he married Maria Potgieter (Marrietjie Pottgieter/Maria Hermanz Potgieter) on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1706.

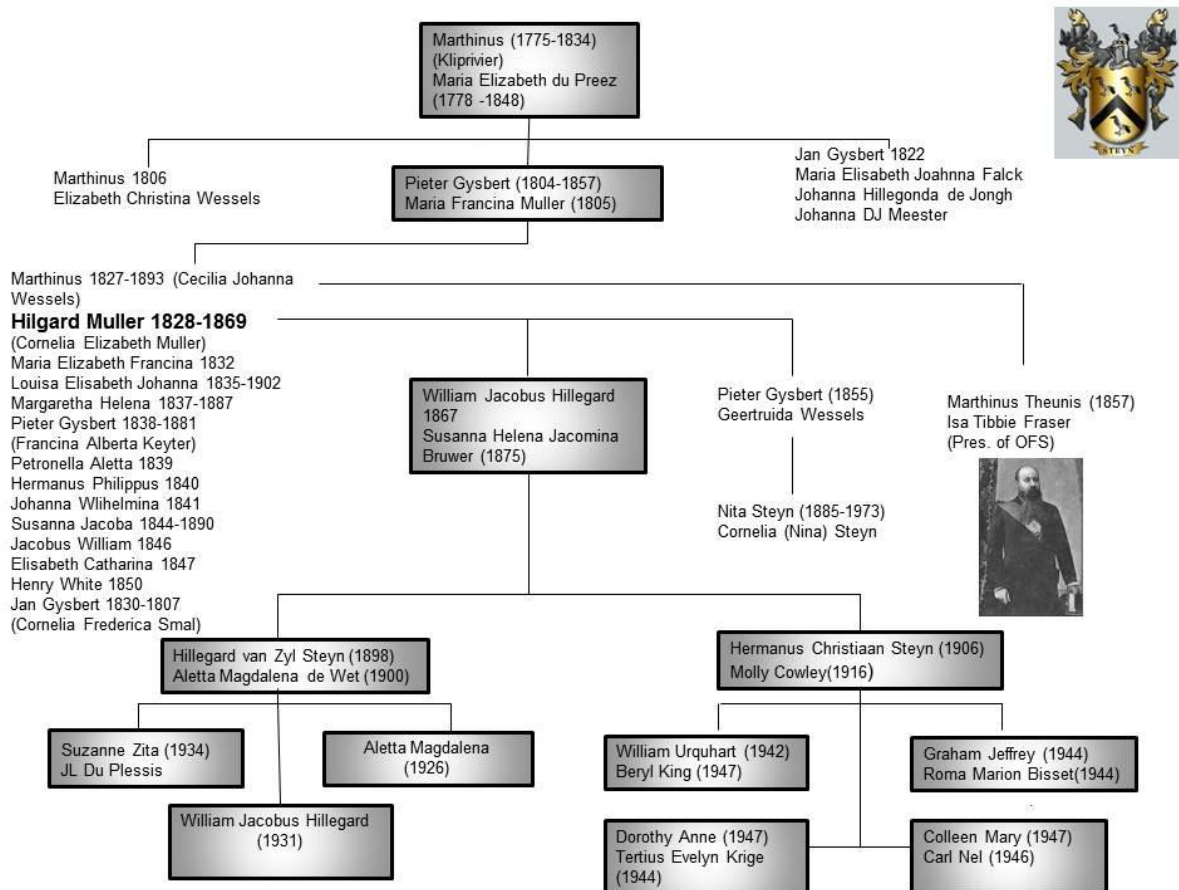
Their children depicted in the illustration above originate from two lists, one of unknown origin and one by de Villiers<sup>6</sup>. This also illustrates a typical situation of siblings having the same name where one has died young.

<sup>6</sup> De Villiers CC & C Pama. Genealogies of old South African Families. Revised Edition. AA Balkema 1981

## Jacobus Steyn (1723/04/25 – 1801/12/30)

Jacobus married Susanna Fourie on 1755/02/09. They farmed at Grootvadersbosch. The exact location of Grootvadersbosch is not known but it is thought to be near Heidelberg in the Western Cape and that it is today a guest farm in the hands of the Moodie family who purchased it in 1818. One would need to do some research into the title deeds to find out if this assumption is correct.

Jacobus & Maria had 14 children, 9 boys and 5 girls. Of the boys, **Marthinus** (1775/04/16 – 1834/10/17) is the line we follow in respect of our family.



### **Marthinus Steyn ( 1775/04/16 – 1834/10/17)<sup>7</sup>**

There is some conflict between the work done by Jacques Steyn and Marena van Hemert as to Marthinus. Jacques Steyn has Marthinus baptized on 16 April 1775 and as having died on 17 October 1834. Marena van Hemert quotes his birth date as 17 January 1774 (date of death the same) and whilst it is quite possible to have a gap in excess of a year between the birth and date of baptism it is unusual.

Further conflict occurs in that van Hemert puts Marthinus' place of birth as his father's farm Krombeksrivier near Riversdale whereas Jacques Steyn indicates that Krombeksrivier was the farm belonging to the du Preez family, the daughter of which, Maria Elisabeth, married Marthinus on 7 October 1798.

Jacques Steyn also locates Krombeksrivier near Heidelberg and not Riversdale as per van Hemert.

In general terms however the research is similar in result and one could rather follow the conclusions by van Hemert as she identifies the du Preez family farm as Zeekoegat near Riversdale where Maria Elisabeth's father had a wagon making business.

Marthinus was a wagon maker and blacksmith and conducted this business from Bellevue South-West of Swellendam and lived at his farm Kliprivier which he purchased in 1815. He made various alterations to the homestead which was built by his cousin Johannes in 1812 and in 1833 added the well-known front gable to the homestead.

Marthinus died at Kliprivier and was buried in Swellendam. After his death Maria married Jacobus Meyer on 24 April 1837. She died on 11 December 1848 after a long illness.

### **Pieter Gysbert Steyn (1804/10/13 – 1857/03/18)**

Pieter Gysbert was born at Krombeksrivier which adds credence to the research by van Hemert that Krombeksrivier was in fact a Steyn family farm and not one owned by the du Preez family.

The names "Pieter Gysbert" originated in the du Preez family and subsequently were taken up by later Steyn's.

Pieter Gysbert, as with his father was a wagon maker and blacksmith. He purchased the Drostdy in Swellendam from Daniel de Bruyn in 1855 and

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<sup>7</sup> See Page 7 for the illustrative chart

went to live there. His descendents continued living there until 1939 when Alice Marsephine Fullard (Born Steyn) sold it to the Union Government.

Pieter Gysbert married Maria Francina Muller on 5.2.1826. She was born on 22.8.1805. 14 Children resulted from this marriage including Hillegard Muller (1828-1869) who was also a wagon maker at Swellendam. (Also sometimes recorded as Hilgard)

### **Hillegard Muller Steyn (19.9.1828 – 14.7.1869)**

Hillegard married Cornelia Elizabeth Muller (10.1.1835 – 4.7.1920) on 6.10.1851. His brother Jan Gysbert was one of Pieter Gysbert's offspring who also lived in the Drostdy.

This union resulted in 9 children, 3 daughters and 6 sons. We have not researched their lineage and have concentrated on William Jacobus Hillegard (1.11.1867) who is our grandfather.

*{Hillegard's eldest son Pieter Gysbert (5.10.1855) married Geertruida Wessels who purchased "Mayville" from one Hodges. They lived in Mayville where they raised two daughters Nita and Cornelia (Nina). Nita inherited Mayville and lived there until her death when she left it to the Drostdy.}*

### **William Jacobus Hillegard (1.11.1867)**

There is some debate as to whether he was William or Willem as, as per the baptism certificate of Hermanus Christiaan Steyn he is recorded as Willem whereas per the baptism certificate of Hillegard van Zyl Steyn (brother of Hermanus Christiaan) he is recorded as William.

He was married to Susanna Helena Jacomina Bruwer (1875) daughter of Jacobus Stefanus Bruwer and Johanna Petronella Marais. Susanna's mother dies in 1877 when Susanna was 3 years old and her father passed away in 1884 when she was 9 years old. *She was then adopted by Hermanus Christiaan van Zyl and his wife Susanna Jacomina Marais who died in 1908 at which stage he remarried to Cornelia Aletta Sophia de Villiers. He died on 13.4.1921.*

*No firm record of the adoption of Susanna Helena Jacomina Bruwer could be found but minutes of a meeting (presumed to concern the estate of H C van Zyl) refers to H van Zyl Steyn (Hillegard?) and his brother Hermanus Christiaan Steyn as the sons of Susanna Helena Jacomina Steyn (Bruwer) as the adopted daughter of the deceased. It is therefore concluded that HC van Zyl was seen to be the maternal Grandfather (through adoption) of the children of William Jacobus Hillegard and Susanna Helena Jacomina.*

*There is no record of children being born to Hermanus Christiaan van Zyl and Susanna Jacomina Marais or his 2<sup>nd</sup> wife Cornelia Aletta Sophia de Villiers thus it is assumed that his estate would have devolved to Susanna Helena Jacomina Bruwer mother of Hillegard and Hermanus and would give added credence to the understanding that William Jacobus Hillegard and Susanna Helena Jacomina lived on the “Bruwer” family farm outside Robertson where both Hillegard van Zyl and his brother Hermanus Christiaan went to school.*

This largely explains the origins of a “van Zyl” family bible currently in the possession of William Urquhart which was given to him by his father Hermanus Christiaan and which is annotated on the inside by the signature of HC van Zyl, the date July 1904 and the name “Goedemoed”. It also clarifies some confusion in the whereby some thought our paternal Grandmother was a Bruwer and others had it that she was a van Zyl. In fact both were correct!

It is also noted in the death notice of H C van Zyl’s first wife her place of death is given as “her home in Goedemoed” She passed away on 10/3/1908

It would appear that William Jacobus and his wife Susanna Helena lived/farmed on the van Zyl farm Goedemoed outside Robertson. Interestingly this farm was purchased by the Bruwer family in 1927 at a sale in execution conducted by the Dutch Reformed Church and may well confirm the comment by Hermanus Christiaan to his son William Urquhart that his father had lost the farm during the depression. (Whilst the name of the farm has been changed to Bon Courage it is still in the Bruwer family)

### **HERMANUS CHRISTIAAN (27.5.1906 – 24.11.1977)**



Hermanus Christiaan in the early 1960's

Hermanus Christiaan was born in Robertson and did his schooling there. It is assumed that he started work for The Standard Bank of SA in Robertson as photographs show him as part of the Robertson Rugby Team after he had left school. He was subsequently transferred to the Eloff Street Branch (Johannesburg) of Standard Bank where he met Molly Cowley (6.9.1916 – 6.6.1989). They married on the 24<sup>th</sup> August 1940 in the Troyeville Baptist Church in Johannesburg.

From there they were transferred by the Bank to Bethlehem, Smithfield, Riviersonderend, Cradock, back to Riviersonderend and eventually to Simonstown where he retired as the Branch Manager. After this he spent his remaining years working in the paymasters office of the South Africa Navy in Simonstown.

Hermanus Christiaan was a keen sportsman having played both rugby and cricket at local level as well as Golf where he boasted a single digit Handicap. He was a keen hunter and was known to have the ability to bring down a running buck at up to 200 yards with one shot.

His wife Molly was the daughter of William Cowley and Mary Urquhart and was born in Johannesburg. (He later became a Baptist Minister in the Port Alfred area)



Molly, photographed in the early 1960's

She too started work with Standard Bank but due to Bank policy regarding family members being employed in close proximity to each other she stopped work when Hermanus Christiaan was transferred to Bethlehem.

Molly was a keen Ballerina and in later years started and ran a successful Ballet School in Bredasdorp and Caledon in the Western Cape giving those in the smaller communities the opportunity actively participate in this art form. Her periodic Ballet Performances in these towns were invariably sold out.



Molly (Centre) with her parents, sisters and brothers.  
Assumed to have been photographed Circa 1940.

Hermanus Christiaan and Molly had 4 children, William Urquhart(1942), Graham Jeffrey(1944), Colleen Mary and Dorothy Anne(Twins – 1947). All were born while they were resident in Smithfield.



William, Dorothy, Colleen & Graham  
Photographed in 2010

## **Graham Jeffrey (1/11/1944 - )**



Graham photographed in 1997

Graham was born in Smithfield in the Orange Free State as were all his siblings. He completed his schooling at Bredasdorp High School in 1962 having represented his school at Rugby, Tennis and Athletics. Athletics was his preferred sport.

Having matriculated and being due to enter SA Army in terms of conscription laws at that time he joined The Standard Bank of SA in Riviersonderend where he was based until entering the Army in June 1963.

During his time in the SA Army he underwent training in Field Intelligence, a discipline he enjoyed, at the SA Military College in Voortrekkerhoogte (it was during this time that he met Roma Marion whom he later married).

The SA Army, while he was based in Grahamstown at the 6 SAI Battalion, offered him the opportunity to join the Permanent Force with the intention that he would be based at the Military Academy at Saldanha Bay whilst studying for a BMil degree. For various reasons he did not take this up and on discharge returned to work for The Standard Bank serving in the capacity of relief officer at a variety of branches before the Bank transferred him to Johannesburg in 1965.

In 1968 he left Standard Bank and took up a position with NCR (then known as the National Cash Register Company) where he, in addition to other skills was first taught computer operating and programming at mainframe level. During this time he also did the National Diploma in Organisation & Methods. (more commonly referred to as Process Management today).

In 1972 he went back to banking and took up a Position with Barclays Bank in their O & M Department but found this to be totally bureaucratic and restrictive and left there for Nedbank (The Netherlands Bank of South Africa) in August 1974 where he stayed until retirement in 2003.

During his time in Nedbank he occupied various positions amongst which, Manager, O & M; Executive Assistant, National Division(Retail Banking); Assistant General Manager, Human Resources; Assistant General Manager, Services Division; Assistant General Manager, Process Management; Assistant General Manager, Interbank Affairs and National Payment Systems.

In the last mentioned position he served on the Strategy Committee commissioned by the SA Reserve Bank to define and implement a risk averse and robust National Payment System (NPS) which would rival any other such system in the world and would conform to the various Basel protocols and Bank for International Settlements requirements.

During that time he also served as Chairman of the Sub-Committee to the NPS Strategy Committee responsible for drafting of the NPS Act. which was subsequently promulgated in 1995.

During his time at Nedbank he served on various industry bodies amongst others as Board Member at both The Payments Association of South Africa(PASA) and the Banking Services Company of South Africa (Bankserv).

He married Roma Marion (Bisset) on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1968. On 17<sup>th</sup> June 1971 she gave birth to their only child David Andrew Steyn.

He met Roma Marion (more commonly referred to as Marion) while he was in the SA Army based in Pretoria. Other than work Graham remained interested in sport generally but became reasonably serious about road cycling and eventually established the Germiston Wheelers Cycle Club in 1985 which he Chaired for 5 years and which still today is recognized as one of the more active and stronger Cycling Clubs in the country. During this time he also served as a member of the Pedal Power Association and was a Committee member of the Southern Transvaal Cycling Association. In 1989 he changed to Mountain Biking as a result of the dangers associated with road cycling. He eventually, in 2004 gave up cycling as a result of back problems and took up golf as an aid to back mobility.

One of his main interests throughout his life has been photography and has had a number of acceptancers in Salon's locally and in England.

He involved himself in various community activities, often participating in the organization and establishment of required associations such as the Golden Pond Home Owners Association which he established and then chaired for 5 years.

Maybe the best summary is given by his Granddaughter Kirsten at the age of 8 in a school assignment requiring a description of a relative!

He is a very smart, very funny person. He is the only Steyn who has had the guts to research the family-tree. Sometimes he gets a little grumpy <sup>with his</sup> except then he just eats it away. <sup>bit</sup> He gives very good presents for birthdays and Christmas <sup>very</sup> except I think my granny chooses them. Every night at six o'clock he turns on the news and you can't get hold of him for an hour. I love my granpa!

### Final Draft My Grandpa Grayem

Grayem Herpet Steyn. That's him. That's my grandpa. My grandpa is a tall, half-bald, golf-hand, retired, old man. He has a square face and a crooked smile - and don't forget that little bump on his large nose that he balances his thick, steel-rimmed glasses on.

He has a tall, broad frame and you will never in a million years find him wearing shorts. He never wears a jacket since he lives in Durban where it is very hot. When he has been sitting still for a long time he limps a little but tries not to let it show.

He is a very smart, very funny person. He is the only Steyn in the family who has the guts to research the family-tree. Sometimes he gets a little grumpy but then he just eats it away.

In 2007 Graham & Marion retired to KwaZulu Natal but maintain close contact with their son, his wife and their daughters Kirsten & Shannon all of whom are living in Gauteng.

**Roma Marion Steyn (Nee Bisset) (27/02/1944 - )**

Roma Marion Bisset was the only child of Donovan Bisset (12/4/1908 – 18/7/1983) and Constance Gertrude Mary Bisset (Nee Smith)(2/05/1909 – 17/08/2002). She completed her schooling at Athlone Girls High in Johannesburg 1962.

Marion was employed as a bookkeeper by the Chamber of Mines until such time as the birth of their son at which time she gave up work busying herself thereafter with social groups, crafts, bible studies and other activities of interest to her.

She is well qualified as a pianist and has a love of good music and the arts especially ballet and theatre.

One of her main interests for many years has been flower arranging which she did for own pleasure, weddings, other events and the church.

In more recent times her attention has never been far from her Granddaughters and their well being.



Graham & Marion in 2009 at a social function