



Biography of Gus Kollner by Nols van Zyl

Gustav Heinrich Wilhelm Kollner was born on 25th August 1927. His immigrant German parents were vegetable farmers on the Cape Flats. Sadly, he was orphaned at an early age resulting in him spending his initial schooldays in a German orphanage. He attended the German St. Martini Schule in Queen Victoria street in Cape Town, before managing to be apprenticed as a boilermaker with the then S.A.R & H

He qualified and stayed in his trade for 44 years, progressing to a charge hand and eventually a technical Superintendent, Mechanical. Evident of Gus, how tougher life got, how harder he fought back and never gave up, he was a true example of “when the going gets tough, the tough gets going”.

Gus married his beloved wife Naomi in 1951 and they had three children, two girls, Christa, and Ingrid, and one son, Theo. He doted on his children and was the most adored “Oupa” to his four grandchildren.

In the words of his daughter Christa:

“Our family remembers him as a very fair and wise man who always took an interest in people and tried to give everybody a sporting chance. He took pride in the achievements of others and encouraged everyone to keep trying. He was a kind, compassionate and jovial man who dearly loved his family and life itself.

He was always optimistic and enthusiastic about ordinary daily activities. He loved his angling, gardening and braaiing in his wheelbarrow. Gus immensely enjoyed the company of his children and friends. He liked to entertain and pay Sunday afternoon visits to friends. We fondly remember him for the wonderful, interesting, and caring person that he was: **He was a big man with an even bigger heart.**”

“Gus Köllner was ‘n werklike inspirasie vir die hengelaars wat hom geken het. Deur die jare het hy altyd sy bes probeer om die klublede van al die verskillende klubs bymekaar te bring en goeie sportmanskap te bevorder. Die grootste eer van sy lewe het hom te beurt geval toe hy in 1975 verkies is as Springbok bestuurder van die span wat internasionaal teen Skotland oorsee gaan hengel het. Dit was die hoogtepunt van jare se toegewyde belangstelling, administratiewe werk op klubvlak as lid van Liesbeeck Park Hengelklub, Westelike Provinsie en SA Rots en Strand Hengel en sy betrokkenheid by al die hengelaars wat so hard probeer het. “

He was interested in competitive casting and he soon became a very keen and competent caster, resulting in him representing W.P. from 1957 to 1966. He joined the angling club of SAR&H, which later was renamed to Liesbeeck Park Angling Club. During the early Sixties he became the chairman of Liesbeeck Park Angling club and built it into the most successful club in W.P in the early seventies.

In 1972 the inevitable happened, Gus became Chairman of Western Province Rock and Surf (WPR&S). All the details were not quite clear nor made public, but it was said:

- “There was descension in the ranks”
- “There was no money in the coffers,”
- “W.P. was not regarded as one of the top provinces and has never won a national championship”.

Gus and his new management team were known as “Die Nuwe Besems”. So let us investigate as to how well the “new brooms “ swept during the period 1972 -1977.

- In 1972 W.P. win their first gold medal, this is followed by a second one in 1975 and a third in 1977.
- They have won 3 golds and now were acknowledged as the leading angling province in S.A
- They have another 3 Springboks in their ranks: Alwyn Conradie, Johan van Greunen and Robert Reich.
- They have inaugurated Boland as an autonomous sub association.
- Their tournament fund has grown substantially.
- They select and award colours to their first WP B side.

In 1974 when the South African Anglers Union decided to allow all 8 of their facets to become autonomous and form independent, self-governing national bodies, it was obvious that there could only be one candidate to fill “The Chair” of South African Rock and Surf Association (SARSA), and that man was **Gustav Kollner !!**

For Gus this was an all-consuming passion, he would leave no stone unturned to ensure that rock and surf angling improved and prospered for the next 16 years. He always left his personal goals and aspirations way behind that of SARSA.

His canny ability, commitment, and personal involvement in organising tournaments, resulted in 8 overseas teams visiting SA to compete in angling test series. They were: West Germany, Scotland, England, Denmark, France, Holland, Austria, and Ireland, and created the opportunity for 44 dedicated anglers to be rewarded with the highest honours, Springbok colours. In addition, there were 2 outgoing tours, one to Scotland in 1975, with Gus as Team Manager and the other to Spain in 1983.

What made all this incredibly special and significant, is when you consider that our country then, was in the cauldron of sports embargos. The 1977 Gleneagles Agreement pledged Commonwealth governments to discourage their citizens from competing against sportspeople from countries where sport was organised on a racial basis. Irrespective of this Gus formed solid relations and bonds with the European Federation of Sea Anglers (EFSA) and Confederation Internationale de la Peche Sportive (CIPS). Notwithstanding embargos he managed to attend the annual congress in Germany in 1980 (CIPS), 1981 & 1983 (EFSA) in Plymouth and Wales, respectively. Later he was to attend the EFSA conference in Norway but although officially invited, South Africa was barred from the meeting.

During these difficult years international competition could not be secured consistently but this did not deter Gus, he always had inspiring solutions for all disappointments. During the “gap” years he would organise a special tournament and invite the last selected Springbok team and a Presidents A and B team. The President teams were selected by the current S.A. selection committee and based on the same merit as Springbok selection. He designed a special **SARSA** badge called the “Meerbok” and it was a great inspiration and reward for those anglers who were knocking on the door at the time, to be awarded with a “**Meerbok**” tie and fish against the Springbok Team. The last of these tournaments were fished at Struisbaai in 1988. After 1990, in memory of Gus it was decided that this tournament would in future be fished annually and be called “The Gus Kollner Memorial Tournament”, or “The Gus “as it is known today, 30 years later.

Gus was a man of integrity and honesty and discipline was a cornerstone of his character. He was the only Chairman I ever knew and had the privilege to listen too many a time, who had a gavel on the table during meetings and did not hesitate to use it. Should a delegate dare to be unruly, made personal or derogatory remarks or interjected while another was speaking, he would call the meeting to order with his gavel, rule the person out of order and if required, order the disrespectful individual to leave the meeting.

With Gus it was either right or wrong, there were no grey areas. We all knew that, and Gus made sure we all understood that. The constitution was always sacrosanct and adhered to. There was no “your interpretation or my interpretation”, there was only one interpretation, that of Gus. I believe it was this sense of responsibility, respect and adherence to the constitution that inspired W.P and SARSA to the heights that they achieved. The South African Anglers Union bestowed him with their highest honour, their Honours Badge, W.P with Honorary life Presidency and Liesbeek Park with Honorary Life Membership.

In 1984, as a young upstart, when I took over the chair from Gus in W.P., he came up to me, congratulated me with his firm handshake, looked me straight in the eye and said: “Always remember, respect cannot be bought. You have to earn it!” Today, 36 years later, those words still echo in my mind. During that same year, at the Boland nationals, our team, W.P., lodged a dispute with Gus at lines up, regarding, what we believed to be an error with our scores for the day. The next morning at the Breakfast table he came over to me and said: “The scores are right, and W.P. must get their house in order.” End of dispute.

On Sunday, the 18th March 1990 and still serving as chairman of SARSA, an unexpected heart attack, sadly caused Gus to vacate “The Chair”.

He will always be missed and remembered by his family and every angler in S.A. that had the privilege and honour of meeting him.

He was the wise man that dug deep and made sure the foundations of WP and SARSA, was laid on rock.

**Rest in Peace.
“Oom Gus.”**

SARSA “Meerbok”



