



Biography of Don Currie

SPRINGBOK ANGLING CAPTAIN

Donald Richard Currie was born on the 25 June 1915 on the family farm in Scheepers Nek near Vryheid, Kwa-Zulu Natal. He was the second child of William and Jean Currie after their first son died of pneumonia, aged 3. He had a younger sister and brother. The family lost the farm and prized herd of Friesland cattle during the Rinderpest in 1921. His father bought another farm in the Melmoth area in 1922. Disaster struck again in 1923, when a cyclone brought 3 weeks of heavy rain, destroying their home and farm. By this time, Don was in school and attended Merchiston in Pietermaritzburg. His parents then moved to Winkelspruit on the upper Kwa-Zulu Natal South Coast where his father farmed sugar cane in the Warner Beach area.

In 1926 tragedy struck again when the family lost everything, as a fire raged from Illovo through to Rossburgh. The family then moved to Escombe in Kwa-Zulu Natal, where Don attended Escombe Primary School. He completed Standards 4 and 5 in one year and was granted a scholarship to attend Glenwood High School. In 1928 his father died from Meningitis, leaving the family destitute. When Don was in Std. 8, his mother suggested he leave school to find a job to help support the family and enable his sister and brother to complete their schooling. Although it was the time of the Great Depression, he managed to find odd jobs as a 14-year-old and through hard work and diligence, finally ended up as a clerk with the South African Railways.

When the Second World War broke out Don joined the Signallers in 1939 and after basic training, he joined the Artillery Anti-Tank Division and achieved the rank as Bombardier. He fought in Libya, North Africa where he was wounded and captured by the Germans, in 1942. He spent four years in a POW camp, first in Italy and later in Weinzberg, Germany.

In 1945 he was released and spent six months in England before being repatriated to South Africa. He began working at W. Dunn and Co. Ltd and soon controlled the sales and did the majority of the buying. This is where he met Doreen, his wife to be. They were married on 29 November 1946 and had three children, **Malcolm, Ursula and Paul**.

Don left Dunns and started an agency business, where he managed to build up enough capital to start a small clothing factory in 1952. He named his business Matchless Manufacturers. His range consisted of handkerchiefs, stoles and scarves as well as shrouds for an undertaker friend. He soon realised that the African trade offered great potential, so he made samples of boys' shirts, trousers and shorts in khaki fabric and travelled to Northern Zululand where he offered his merchandise to all the trading stores in the various towns. His products were very well received with orders from all the traders. The business expanded rapidly and clothing was sold throughout Southern Africa including what was then Basutoland (Lesotho), Bechuanaland (Botswana) and Swaziland. New divisions were added in upper and lower price ranges, to include men's and boys' trousers and shirts, school wear, ladies' dresses, workwear, and uniforms for the government and mines.

Don learnt to fish off the Durban South Pier after he joined the Hiawatha Angling Club when he was a young man. Every Sunday he and a couple friends left home at 6.00am, would walk from where he lived in Ayott Avenue, Glenwood, to the Indian Market and buy 3d worth of Ginger Shrimps to catch Karanteen. Then walk on to the Durban Post Office to catch a tram to the Point (also 3d), where he would get a ferry across Durban Bay to the Bluff for 6d. At the whale slip he would get chunks of whale meat - it was usually his job, as a youngster, to get enough for all those fishing for sharks on the South Pier. If there were no sharks to be caught, they would fish for edibles, which would be shared out amongst those who had not caught fish. In 1953 he joined the Benders Angling Club and was soon recognised as a leader when he was promoted to Club Captain and then President.

He was selected to represent Natal in his first Inter Provincial competition in 1958 which was held in Cape Town and fished in several other Inter Provincials both as Captain and later as Manager.

In **1972** he was named as the **Captain of the first Springbok Rock and Surf Angling Team**. The competition was held in South West Africa (Namibia) where they fished against Germany. The Springboks won convincingly, and the German Anglers were severely sunburnt during their time in South West Africa.

Rock and Surf angling was not his only attribute, he proved to be a very versatile angler. He believed the lessons learnt as a youngster enabled him success all over the world, whether it be in the sea or fresh water. (Salmon in Scotland and Vancouver, Tarpon in Angola, Bluefin Tuna in Prince Edward Island, the biggest of which weighed in at 1060lbs, Marlin in Mauritius, Seychelles, Great Barrier Reef the heaviest being 871lbs and the Maldives for pelagic fish). He was also a member of the Natal Deep Sea Rod and Reel Club and in 1976 he was selected to fish in the South African Deep Sea Angling Championships off Durban.

He served on the Natal Coast Anglers' Union Committee for many years and in 1961 was awarded his Honours Badge for his services and dedication to the Union and angling in Natal. In 1972 he was elected as President of the Natal Coast Anglers' Union which he held for two years as per the Union constitution and was re-elected for a second two year term in 1976. In 1993 he was made an Hon. Life President of the Union. He held the position as patron of the Zululand Angling League.

Don was very **conservation conscious** and realised that the Shad stocks were dwindling, so in the 1970's together with the Natal Coast Anglers' Union Committee and the Oceanographic Research Institute (O.R.I.), he was instrumental in introducing the **"Shad Ban"** which at the time was very controversial. The legislation still stands today, and it is illegal to catch Shad in Kwa-Zulu Natal during the months of October and November. His conservation efforts were recognised by the **Natal Parks Board, when he was made an Hon. Member of the Board**, a position he held for many years.

Although Don had semi-retired to George and later Knysna he never forgot his angling roots and would regularly enquire after Benders' Angling Club, or assisted when visiting Natal teams were in his area.

Don was a loving and dedicated husband, father and grandfather and sadly passed away just short of his 93rd birthday.

Acknowledgements:

Malcolm Currie

Ursula Blamey

Paul Currie

**From Left to Right: Gordon Ledingham, Kallie van Zyl and Don Currie,
1st Springbok Captain.**

