



## **Biography of Henri de Villiers Melville by Nols van Zyl**

**Henri de Villiers Melville** was born on 18th November 1938, he attended primary school in Humansdorp and high school at Grey College in Port Elizabeth.

### **Henri the scholar and the athlete:**

He represented Grey College at Rugby, Athletics, Swimming, Cricket and Shooting. Some of his sporting achievements at school included being selected for the Grey Rugby 1<sup>st</sup> XV in Standard 8 as tighthead prop and playing for this team unbroken for three years until he matriculated. At the University of Cape Town, he represented Southern Universities at Athletics and Rugby. In 1959 he moved back to Port Elizabeth where he worked for General Motors and met and married Dorothy Young during 1961. Shortly thereafter, he returned to Humansdorp and started a business called Humansdorp Furnishers.

### **Henri the Person:**

He was a man of deep Christian faith and motivated by this belief he was always dedicated to serve and offer as much as possible to the community, the church, and the sport of angling.

He served in various roles (mainly Treasurer) in the Humansdorp Methodist Church for most of his adult life and when speaking about his angling achievements he always acknowledged that his angling skills were a God given talent.

He was first elected as the Humansdorp Town Councillor at the age of 28 in 1966, appointed as Deputy Mayor in 1975 and Mayor of Humansdorp in 1979, a position he also held for many years thereafter. In 1994, the Cape Province Municipal Association designated him as an *Alderman*, in recognition for his then unbroken service of 28 years as a Town Councillor.

He joined Cape St Francis Angling club in 1962 and in 1967 became chairman, a position he held for more than 40 years. He served as President of Eastern Province for many years and also of the South African Shore Angling Association (SASAA) for 15 years.

He was instrumental in the introduction of the Masters and Grandmasters divisions, which today form an integral part of interprovincial and international tournaments.

### Henri the Caster:

He was a member of the EP Casting team in 1958, after which the popularity of the sport faded. Typical Henri, he rejuvenated it in 1970, together with several members of the EP Rock and Surf Angling team. He captained EP and gained Springbok colours in 1973 where he competed in Scarborough, England at the World Championships. One of his records was in the 142-gram event where he cast 185.93m.

### Henri the Angler:

He joined Cape St Francis Angling club in 1962. He fished for Eastern Province in the Senior, Masters and Grandmasters divisions from 1964 until 2014 and captained sides for 22 years. He was placed in the top 8 in the inter-provincials 7 times and was the SA champion in 1984. He represented South Africa on four occasions. In 1975 as angler, 1980 and 1985 as angler and captain and in 1992 as team manager. He won many awards and medals at most national championships. In 2004, the Angling magazine *Tight Lines* brought out a series of articles entitled *The Legends of South African Shore Angling* and Henri was profiled as the 1st Angling Legend in the January issue.

When one reads Henri's 2010 self-written booklet titled "Angling Anecdotes" it provides a recording of his social and competitive angling career, where readers will discover some interesting facts about him, as well as his personal opinion on some controversial subjects.

### Opinion on Conservation:

"Regulations change at a rapid rate. What is legal today you can get arrested for tomorrow. The impression that rock and surf anglers can damage the fish population is rather farfetched". Just imagine a conversation between him and Dr Vincent Taylor, wow!!

### Opinion on Tackle

"As I got older and stronger, I went to 13ft 6inch fibreglass rods and Penn 49A reels with 0.80 Atlas nylon, for catching Crackers, Poenskop and Yellowtail.

### Opinion on Power Angling:

"Some anglers do not agree but it depends on your confidence in your tackle, especially your knots. Most anglers do not play their fish hard enough! Their drags are set far too soft."

### **How much Power? Maximum Power!!**

Henri was undoubtedly a “POWER Angler” In his younger days he cut his baby angling teeth on Crackers, Poenskop and Yellowtail. Any angler who has battled and successfully landed any one of these 3 species will attest to the fact that they are fearsome and extremely “hard and dirty street fighters”! There is only rule and that is that, there is no rules!

What took place during the S.A. National Championship in Durban in 1969 confirmed this without a doubt. Henri hooked a Honeycomb Ray of 90Kg on Umkomaas beach. These rays are adjudged, by competitive anglers, to be the hardest fighting specimen of them all! Most anglers would sweat on this one for a minimum of at least 2 hours. Not Henri, he totally dominated and landed the ray within 47 minutes! The first one of its size ever landed in less than hour. So fierce was the pressure he exerted on the ray, that it bent the spindle of his no. 5 Tatler and he had to change reels to continue fishing for the remainder of the day.

### **How competitive, determined, and tough was Henri De Villiers Melville?**

During the 1984 Angling Week, Henri landed a massive Ragged Tooth Shark and things went terribly wrong during the process of removing the hook. The “Ragbag” bit Henri on his calf and he had to be rushed to hospital, where nearly a hundred stiches had to be inserted to repair the lacerated “tree trunk”. Two weeks later was the S.A, Championships at Struisbaai and guess, irrespective of injury, who pitched up and out fished all to become 1984 S.A. Champion Angler, none other than Henri!

### **How many big “Poensies” did Henri really catch??**

Have a look

1955 – 45 and 47 lbs ,  
1956 – 49 and 43 lbs ,  
1958 – 52, 51 and 44 lbs,  
1959 – 63, 60, 58, and 46 lbs.  
1961 – 49, 44 and 41 lbs.  
1963 – 52, 46, 42, and 40 lbs.  
1964 –57, 55, 49 and 46 lbs.  
1965 – 55, 52, 51, 47, and 44 lbs.  
1966 – 55 and 45 lbs.  
1967 – 52 lbs.  
1968 – 58, 58, 52 and 42.  
1969 – 61, 40 and 66 lbs.  
1971 – 40, 49 and 44 lbs

We were all saddened when, on the 20 February 2017 Henri left this Earth, for a place with his Heavenly Father. In the words of his Daughter:

**“He was a large presence, a giant of a man who achieved much in his life, in many different spheres. He had the softest most generous and loving of hearts and his was a life well lived”**

We shall always remember Henri De Villiers Melville

**R.I.P**

**Edited & Final script - Nols van Zyl**