Bernadina (Dina) Abrahams – Dwarsvlei, Kapteinskloof
Born in 1942 on Sterkfontein.

In those days my mother was the midwife. She helped all the children into the world, me too. And my children. Ja. The doctor only helped two of them - the first two who were still very young. But she was present at the births of all the others. In those days the doctors came out on call. But not any more. Nowadays you go to hospital. An ambulance comes to fetch you. But in those days the doctor came out to the farm in his car. There he comes, with all his instruments in a big case.

Elizabeth (Betty) Abrahams – Kapteinskloof
Born in 1952 on Sterkfontein.

People loved dancing. Mostly "langarm" dancing (sakkie-sakkie), and then also the more modern forms of dancing that people still dance today. Nowadays people don’t really do the sakkie-sakkie any more. The dances were always held there in the old school building, and we paid a small contribution towards them.

Katrina Abrahams – Kerkgrond, Kapteinskloof
Born in 1952 on Banghoek.

Those days there was music … and it was the most beautiful music. And people couldn’t wait for Saturday nights, because then the musicians would play. The guitar, the piano-accordion, the mouth organ - we all enjoyed ourselves with that music. On New Year’s Eve everybody from the surrounding farms, we all gathered together. Some woman would say: “Listen here, everybody must get together at our place this evening.” And then everybody came. There was lots of cake and ginger beer. Around midnight till about one o’clock we’d finish off the cake and ginger beer. We also had wine, and we danced right into the early hours of the morning, ‘til about five. It was wonderful.

Frederick (Frikkie) Adams – Kapteinskloof
Born in 1960.

I grew up here, but then I went to work in Laaiplek. We worked in various places: sometimes out at sea, then back again in the factory. Later, I moved to the farm to come and help here. The boats would bring in the fish, and they would call you, the owner would. Then you have to get up at three o’clock and take the lorry. At Columbine, you have to go throw the fish onto the jetty, and from the jetty onto the lorry. Now when you get to Laaiplek, that fish must be offloaded. And then the women from Laaiplek came and cleaned the fish. Now if it’s mackerel, it gets filleted and if it’s maasbanker, it gets salted.

Maria (Ria) Adams – Piketberg
Born in Kapteinskloof.

Kapteinskloof is a lovely place, but farm life and farm work were difficult. Very difficult. The people had to move from farm to farm to find a job – sometimes only seasonal work, but the children had to eat every day. We moved to Piketberg, settled here, trying to find a better life for our children. And the children who studied did well. Yes, our own children and other Kapteinskloof children really became something in life – nurses, teachers, social workers, people with their own businesses, leaders in the community. Life has changed. For our children it’s for the better, but I sometimes really miss the quiet of the Kloof.
Barbara Barnard – Wagenpad  
Born in 1949 on Kromvlei.

My mother used to believe in “rooipoeier” (curcumin), “groen amara”, “lewensessens” (essence of life) and all those things. My husband had a very bad stomach. Oh dear, he really suffered! She had a little tin in the house, no, a little bottle it was, a little bottle. She would take a little bit of “groen amara”, a little bit of “rooipoeier” and a little bit of “lewensessens”, only a drop or two of everything on a spoonful of sugar, and then shove it into your mouth. Joos says he always saw the pearly gates when he had to drink that stuff. We won’t say it really helped, but we children had to drink it. When you were feeling off-colour, my mother believed in nothing but castor oil: you had to clean your stomach. We had to drink it regularly.

Josef (Joos) Barnard – Wagenpad  
Born in 1947 in Parow.

All the farmers believed in magic charms. They all visited a Muslim medicine-man – the same one. If your husband broke a leg, you’d be sure it’s Johann who’d bewitched him again. Then you’d go down to Cape Town and then the medicine-man says: “Right, something happened to him. Ja, that man broke a leg. Mevrou, he’ll break an arm next, or something else will happen to him.” They went to the medicine-man. They didn’t go to church. Very few of them went to church. Ja, the church was only for the rich people, but the medicine-man, ja ... And it’s strange: they believed in the Bible, but they definitely believed in magic.

Jacobus (Kowie) Brand – Banghoek  
Born in 1929 on Banghoek.

Ja, those days they made money out of tobacco. You have to wet the tobacco leaves before you can open them, and then you put them carefully over your legs, and you rub them – like this. My mother would wear an apron, but I’d wear shorts ... And then the leaves are folded, and when they’re dry again, we start working them. And then, next morning you have to wet them again, because when the leaves are too dry, they can easily tear. And then they carefully start rolling it, the roll-tobacco. I can still see my uncle, as old as I am now, I see him sitting over there, twisting the tobacco.

Anna (Ansie) Burger – Somerdou, Kapteinskloof  
Born in 1941 on Modderfontein, near Aurora.

Oh, the medicines were wonderful! We actually ate the medicines. You know, they also mixed their little bottles of Dutch remedies. If you had stomachache or a headache or some other problem, they would mix up a concoction from their little bottles. And add essence. This was swallowed and, yes, it worked. My mother told me I had to take a spoonful of my own breast-milk and add some sweet oil for my children, the babies. I first had to make it warm and then they had to drink it for their stomachs. Sweet oil - I don’t know if one can still get sweet oil today.

Barend Burger – Somerdou, Kapteinskloof  
Born in 1931 on Somerdou.

I didn’t have much of a childhood. I went to school, and after I finished school – in those days you were only 16, 17 when you could get a driver’s licence. And it was easy those days. You just take your lorry, drive to the old lawyer, he gets into the lorry, and you drive and drive, and then he says: “No, it’s fine. There’s no problem. I’ll sommer give you a heavy-duty licence.” And from that day I’ve been transporting these oranges. My father also had to transport oranges, but he thought “Why should I drive the lorry, if you can do it”. I transported oranges day and night.
Eric Burger – Banghoek, Kapteinskloof
Born in 1930 on Banghoek.

My grandfather had a type of feudal system in place on Banghoek. He was the “landlord” and let out several places. Quite a number of them. One, two, three, four, five, six. And the people had to pay rent, some of them part of their harvest. Share-croppers, ja. They ran their own farming concerns. There were strangers and there were relatives. From Banghoek to Boskloof. The whole of Kapteinskloof was under tobacco. Banghoek was known for its fruit. Peaches, pears and prunes. Whatever could be dried, they dried. My grandmother told me that once a year, or once a season, I don’t know, they took the cart to Wellington ...

Patrick Carter – Wagenpad
Gebore 1954 in Kaapstad.

Vroëër jare was daar maar altyd luiperde en rooikatte in die Wagenpad-area. Die meeste is al uitgeroei. Maar dis ’n wonderlike stuk van die Sederberge, so hulle kan in die berge bly. Hulle hoef net een teerpad te kruis, dan’s hulle in die Piketberg-area. Hulle hinder ons nie met die beeste of grootwild nie. Hulle vang somtyds net ’n springboklammer of twee ...


Albert Coetzee – Weltevrede, Kapteinskloof
Born in 1946 at Weltevrede, Kapteinskloof.

The best times were on Sundays, when the old people were asleep. That was when we took down birds’ nests and swam in the river. During the week we had to go to school – and after school we had to work at home. In those days there weren’t water pumps and such things; water had to be carried to the house. There was a spring some distance from my parents’ house. In the afternoons you first had to fetch drinking water for the household, and then the flowers had to be watered. You had to collect firewood in the veld with the wheelbarrow. So you always had your little jobs when you got home after school.

Frans & Annemarie Coetzee – Keurbos, Kapteinskloof
Frans born in 1951 in Brandvlei, N. Cape;
Annemarie born in 1950 in Calvinia, N. Cape.

AC: It was a privilege to be able to bring up my children here. I think it is very different from the way people live in the city.

FC: In the mornings you come to have a quick breakfast at home, and the little ones are there. In the afternoons, again, you have lunch at home and the little ones are there. After knock-off time in the evenings all the fathers are probably at home. But if I had to go out somewhere in the car, the children would go too, almost the whole bunch of them.

AC: But it would be like that only up to their sixth year. But we were lucky: we still had a school on the farm.
Marc & Kerstin De La Rue – Kapteinskloof
Marc gebore 1971 in Mutare, Zimbabwe; Kerstin gebore 1972, in Neumarkt, Duitsland.

Ons gastehuis is een van die oudste oorspronklike opstalle van hierdie omgewing. Oom Appel en oom Tienie Brand het in die huis gewoon en hulle suster, tant Fietjie Coetzee (Sophie), het in die [teenswoordige] kothuis gewoon. Toe, in 1988, het die dramaturg Pieter Fourie begin om die huise te restoureer. Deur sy liefde en passie vir ou argitektuur kon hy daarin slaag om die Sandveld-karakter van die opstal te behou. Toe ons in 2002 hierdie klein juweel ontdek, was dit liefde met die eerste oogopslag en het ons dit ons huis gemaak. Ons boer op baie klein skaal, maar meestal geniet ons ons perde, honde en ander diere, asook die eenvoudige leefwyse wat hierdie plek bied. Die witgekalkte mure straal stilte en rustigheid uit – beide kenmerke wat ons baie na aan die hart lê.

Lucille Domberg – Piketberg
Born in 1957 in Piketberg.

As you came into the house, you got the smell of apples or pears ... and the dung floors. They all had pigs, so you could buy pork from them. Those women knew how to work with pork and how to salt it to preserve it. Those were the days before electricity. There weren’t any fridges. Everybody had a beautiful vegetable garden. Dahlias with large heads, pumpkins and green beans. Everyone had their own little vegetable garden. The farm people on the mountain always had fruit in their houses, and they would exchange that fruit for old clothes. So that’s why, when you walked in, you always got the smell of fruit, a lovely clean smell.

Dolf Faro – Bokloof, Kapteinskloof
Born in 1945 at Groenfontein.

I worked on different farms. Ja, those days we worked by the month. I also did some odd jobs ... watering, working with the tobacco – cigarette tobacco, and with the grapes - white grapes for wine. Oranges too – valencias and navels. They always used to plant cabbages, beetroot and potatoes here. I also cut buchu, up in the mountain. The Sandveld is full of “rooibeenjakkalse” (red-legged jackals). And the “bakoorjakkals” (bat-eared fox), that ash-coloured one, is also very common in the Sandveld. And the aardvark. Aardvark meat was the best.

John (Jonkies) Goliath – Môrewag, Wagenpad
Born in 1954 on Winkelshoek.

Winkelshoek ... I grew up there, I went to school there. At the age of eleven I started to work there. I also got married there. My mother worked in the kitchen. She always had a smile on her face. She could bake like a professional, ja. Griddlecakes and oven cakes. Pot-bread. And nobody could beat her when it came to slaughtering chickens. My father, again, loved nature and the garden. That’s why I love gardening so much. Not a lazy man, my father. An active man. So, later I became a gardener. I only used compost or kraal manure. My favourite is gardening, gardening, gardening. I love a garden. Flowers and vegetables. We had it all.
Gert & June Heyns – Kapteinskloof
Gert gebore in 1931 op die plaas Kapteinskloof, oorlede in 2014; June gebore in 1941 in Kaapstad.

Gert se pa was oom Klaas Winkel. Gert se ma, Lenie, was die suster van Frans Coetzee se oupa. Oom Klaas het vir ’n Joodse smous gewerk en toe die winkel van hom gekoop, saam met ’n klomp skuld op die boeke. Klaas het die mense gehelp om byvoorbeeld pensioene te kry, en hy was ook betrokke by die Kerkgrondskaal. In die skoolvakansies moes Gert hard werk op die plaas. In 1962 het Gert en June die plaas geërfd. In die 1950s het twee ander Heyns-families net onderkant Boskloof geboer. Op Dwarsvlei was dit oom Dirk en tant Helie Heyns; op Asoorsepos was dit tant Hannie en oom Hennie Heyns.

Daniel & Elizabeth (Bettie) Julius – Kapteinskloof and Goedverwacht
Daniel born in 1933 at Goedverwacht; Bettie born in 1943 in Kapteinskloof.

BJ: The farm workers all lived on the farms. Then, as times became more expensive, the people went out to look for a better future. Better salaries. That’s how Kapteinskloof has died.
DJ: Many people went to Atlantis.
BJ: Yes, and to Atlantis and Vredenburg and Velddrif. And down to the Cape, and Piketberg. Everybody just left Kapteinskloof. It’s a very beautiful place.
DJ: But it’s dead quiet now.
BJ: But how do they put it? “The farmers no longer farm the way they used to.” They cut down on their farming. There’s no longer work for the people. Now they just leave. Go for other jobs ... There’s no longer a place to return to.

Magdalena (Tassie) Koordom – Kapteinskloof
Born in 1960 on Somerdou farm.

That church school down below - not the one higher up, the one down below – it had a dung floor, and every Friday we had to smear dung on that floor. And when we were at the school higher up, every Friday we had to wash the windows and scrub the floor - it was a wooden floor. The one lower down had a dung floor, and we had to smear it with dung, cow dung. The boys fetched the dung and water, and we girls had to smear it ... There were lots of people in the kloof. But nowadays there’s hardly anybody left. Hardly anybody ... Everybody had his own nickname. Everybody knew everybody. We weren’t strangers. We all knew one another. That’s how it was, those days.

Amos Lambrechts – Kapteinskloof
Born in 1930 on Kapteinskloof.

The Depression – those were hard times. My father always said if you had one pound in your pocket, you were a rich man. You had to work just so that you could live and eat. I was still very young when I’d come from school up there at Keurbos, and it would be hot and cold and everything. And it wasn’t only me who had to walk barefoot. It wasn’t only me who got cold. Perhaps we were among those who were still better off. There were many people who lived here in the Kloof, who had no property and who lived on our land.
Hannah & Hennie Lambrechts – Groenfontein
Hannah born in 1952 in Wellington; Hennie died in 2013.

The kitchen was very nice. There was a wood stove. My mother used to boil water on it for us to bath in a tin bath. On Saturday afternoons we were scrubbed from head to toe; in winter time, in front of the fire. And we were clean. In front of the house there was an oak tree. They say all the Sunday afternoon visitors eventually caused the tree to die. Everybody gathered there, and everybody sat under the tree, flat on the ground. They would sit and chat for hours. Here at our place, years later, people also came to visit on Sunday afternoons … they’d sit and chat. All Hennie’s cousins. They’d sit and chat.

Jakobus (JJ) Lambrechts – Groenfontein
Born in 1938 on Groenfontein.

We knew the whole area ... we knew each rock’s name. Like, for instance, there was one called “Kroon se Kop” (Kroon’s head). Pa said that once a horse – the horse’s name was Kroon – fell off the cliff. Then there were rocks we called “Driestreep-klippe” (Three-striped rocks). And all the springs had names. And then there were “Rooikrans” (Red Krantz) and “Witkrans” (White Krantz). Rooikrans was where the baboons slept. Just below the Bushman paintings you got “Spoelkloof” (Wash Kloof), and then you got “Populierskloof” (Poplars Kloof) and “Tweede Bynesklip” (Second Bees’ Nest Rock), there was always a swarm of bees there, so they called it Tweede Bynesklip.

Dina Pistoor – Môrewag, Wagenpad
Born on Gras-en-Dal farm, near Winkelshoek.

My grandparents worked at Winkelshoek. Their graves are also at Winkelshoek. That’s the reason why we came to Winkelshoek. The old man didn’t do much there, he only did some watering, looked after the cows and their calves and so on. Here at Winkelshoek they planted many sweet potatoes, but nowadays they don’t plant that kind of thing – sweet potatoes, pumpkins and squashes – any more. Now it’s only watermelons and spanspek (sweet melon). The “soutvis” (salted fish) used to come from the Bay down below. There aren’t big “soutvis” any more, you only get those little bokkoms. I always buy a bunch of bokkoms down at Eendekuil.

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Smith – Keurbos, Kapteinskloof
Born in 1939 in Kapteinskloof.

For three or four weeks we would study hard for our confirmation in the church. Then we would be accepted as members of the congregation. You now belong to the church. You also have to pay a small contribution. If you want to become a member of the church, you must do so when you turn eighteen ... If there are enough children, they can do it here in Kapteinskloof. But if there are too few children, they have to go to Wittewater. In my time it was here, because there were a good number of us who wanted to be confirmed. Those days it was a lot, but nowadays not any more.

Sanna Swarts – Bokloof, Kapteinskloof
Born in 1952 at Ondertuin, Somerdou.

Those days people’s parents moved from place to place. They’d go to the farm, and then they’d move back into the Kloof again. The place where I was born is near Somerdou. There are a lot of blue gum trees there, and the old ruin is still standing. Here I worked in a vineyard, and on Baas Gert’s farm I picked oranges. Ja, I also planted sweet potatoes there in Banghoek. Now and then I feel like working like that again, just two or three days, but now I’m retired. I like farm life. Ja, I like the silence. Ja, there were many people here. Some have died and some have moved away.
Hendrik (Tot) Van Wyk – Môrewag, Wagenpad
Born on Kromvlei, Moutonshoek.

That yellow house up there, where they’re busy working, that used to be the shop. Those days, the valley was full of people. It was full of people.
Up there, just below Keurbos, there are two houses, and people lived there. They are also old buildings but people lived there, too. And up there, near the dam, there’s also an old building, and people lived there. And more to this side there are two houses in the mountain, and there also people lived. The houses were full. One year we came to harvest peas, and all the houses here were full of people. There are also a number of springs. There’s one here, among the bushes but you can’t reach it because it’s too overgrown. They still want to clear it.

Hermanus (Maans) van Zyl – ’t Voetpad
Gebore in 1943 op ’t Voetpad.

Daar was só baie kinders ... mens kon nie ’n lewe maak net uit hierdie plaaswerk nie. Om te boer was te beperk. So, ons het skoolgegaan en ons matriek gekry. En so het ons ’n kantoor-joppie gekry. Op die ou end was dit net my pa en sy broer, en my oupa en my ouma. Hulle was die enigstes wat agtergebly het. Al die kinders het ander werke gekry. Hulle wóú bly, maar my oupa was die eienaar van die plek, en dis moeilik vir kinders om in so’n ding in te kom. Die eienaarskap van ’n plek is altyd die probleem.

Marthinus van Zyl – ’t Voetpad
Gebore 1940 op ’t Voetpad.

Wynmaak – dit was ’n helse werk. Die sweet en als loop in die wyn in, en dit was die krag. Die mense van ver in die kontrei het hiernatoe gekom en in die tussentyd, het ons begin om witblits te stook. Dan, elke Saterdagaand, was dit soos ’n inry: karre net waar jy kyk. Die mense koop wyn vir hulle werkers om te drink. Daai dae was daar ’n dopstelsel. En hulle het met hulle waens hiernatoe gekom om dit te kry, en elkeen wat ’n klomp wyn gekoop het, kon ’n gelling witblits ook kry.
‘Smouse’ (peddlers) and Farm Stores

The smous cart came right up to the kitchen and then we could buy our stuff. Everything. Even material for making clothes. They didn’t have ready-made clothes on the cart. Perhaps you’d ask: “Do you have a pair of trousers in the shop?” Then the man would say: “Yes, I’ll bring it.” We bought material. Sugar and sweets and everything that you could find in a shop. Then he’d open the cart on both sides. And then you’d look to see what you wanted. Then you’d trade for groceries. You’d give him eggs and butter, and the hides of slaughtered animals, and chickens - you’re mos now trading. Then they’d take it along. Heaven alone knows what they did with the stuff ... The smous came from Veldrif. But there were different drivers. This one was the Besters’ shop; the other two came from Aurora. They travelled from farm to farm. And it was wonderful for us. And we could buy on the book. Then, at a certain time in the year, we would pay it off.

Ansie Burger

Ja, if you were still young, you could go along in the smous lorry. But once you were at school, you wouldn’t be allowed to any more. Our Chev lorry had a running board down the side, on which you could stand. Ma and Pa would sit in the cab with the little baby and you would stand on the running board, and you’d jump off to open the gate, and then you’d run and jump onto it again. When you got to the tarred road, you’d get inside again. My parents had two smous chests. Ja, a smous chest: on one side were the groceries, and on the other the materials. It would open like this: the bottom one was level - that was Ma’s counter. And then Pa would stand on the lorry, and on the top of the lorry there was a steel trunk in which they had the sugar, the flour, the rice and that type of thing. And then we had a scale, shaped like a bowl. It had a round hole in front, and then you’d put in the stuff from behind. Then you had iron weights - a pound weight, a five-pound weight, whatever, one pound and two pounds – and then you’d weigh the stuff and put it in brown paper bags.

Barbara Barnard

And when the smous cart came, the shop on wheels ... I was - we all were - very excited. It would be parked in front of our door. Then we’d buy ourselves sweets, and mother-in-law would buy their food. Flour, sugar, beans, even a piece of tobacco roll would be measured off. Ja.

Hannah Lambrechts

Gert Heyns’s father did the pedlar rounds. And there was some of just about everything on the lorry; everything they could load onto the lorry. They covered the area here behind the mountain, and further down into the Sandveld, you know, visited people on the farms. At the back there was a wire cage in which there were chickens and whatnot else: chickens, turkeys, ducks, muskovy-ducks, whatever. And another thing - things like hides (sheepskins and goatskins) were hanging at the back.

Amos Lambrechts

Klaas Heyns, who later had the shop, was the first smous. He travelled far and wide. He had two Visser brothers who worked for him and who drove the smous lorry. Later they opened their own shop at Suurfontein, and from there they went to Aurora where they each had their own shop ... And on the lorry? Oh man, there was everything, everything, everything! Even baths, ja, tin baths ... The shop has been closed for many years now. The stuff my parents bought, such as coffee and sugar, they traded for hides and eggs. When I was small - this is now after the war – most stuff such as hides, eggs and butter, was traded because cash was scarce.

Albert Coetzee

There was a little shop. The shop was here by Gert Heyns. With everything. Everything. We went to that little shop. There you could buy on the book.

Katrina Abrahams

FA: That shop had everything from A to Z. Everything.
TK: Sweets, cheese, sugar, flour ... clothes.
FA: Clothes. They had everything. And there were petrol pumps. People came to fill up there with a hand-pump. Ja, that one.

Frikkie Adams & Tassie Koordom

Each farm had a little farm shop. That’s the thing. Where your worker’s money would remain. In that shop. You’re paid today, next Friday you’re paid again, but you only bought here. Ja.

John Goliath
School and Church Ground, Kapteinskloof

It was Moravian property. And I’m a member of the Moravian church. I got my appointment with them so I had to - it was my duty to lead the church services. Every week. The minister came around only once a month. He came for special occasions like when someone got married or if someone wanted to christen their baby, or for a funeral. I also buried many people myself, children and grown-ups, too. Ja.

When I started at the school in ’58, there were, let’s say, 100 children. At the beginning it was the most. Ja. They became fewer, and fewer ... Then the children went to Wittewater. And then the school closed its doors. I retired in ’93, and the school closed its doors two or three years after ’93.

In the upper building there were two classrooms. In the corrugated-iron building below there were also two classrooms with a curtain in the middle. The classrooms were: Grades A and B and 1, and then 2, 3, 4 and 5 together. I taught 2, 3, 4 and 5. I taught all the subjects. You had to divide them into groups, they formed groups and groups. You could never sit down. There was no time to sit. The day when I retired, in 1993, I took my chair home with me. Because my chair, which I got in 1958, was still brand-new - I’d never sat on it!

The community was only farm labourers. Their children all came to school there. Some of the children who were at school there before and during the years I taught there, made a success of their lives.

Daniel Julius, former headmaster

I finished school here in Kapteinskloof. Every morning we had to walk a long way to school here from Sterkfontein. In winter it was very cold. Those days we didn’t know about catching a bus. We also didn’t have the shoes and socks children have today. Those years were barefoot years.

Betty Abrahams

Many of us sat in one desk on which we had to write. We were a whole bunch sitting next to one another in rows. Rows and rows. Boys on this side and girls on the other side. Ja, that’s the way it was. And all ages mixed together. You didn’t have to be a specific age – it was mixed ages.

Tassie Koordom

We had many festivals. People came from the Cape by bus for the Children’s Festival. And all the surrounding farms came here. Stories were told to the children in the church. The service started with a sermon, and in the afternoon it was a love feast for the children. They were served tea and buns. Small choirs sang. And then stories in the afternoon. Any story. Jackal and Wolf, and Sannie and Grietjie. Any little story to make a child happy for that day. They actually used to look forward to that day. Because that was the day when many of the little boys got a new pair of shorts or a new shirt, and the girls a new dress. It really was a beautiful festival.

It is very interesting to work with these little children. Actually it was very stressful, but it was good. I enjoyed it. Ja. Ag, one misses those times. You long for those days. When it’s quiet, I still hear those little children’s voices. It’s actually a – I don’t know how to put it – such a sense of loss, of absence.

Katrina Abrahams, former teacher