

The Sgian Dubh

Clan Morrison Society of North America

<https://clanmorrison.net/>

Morrison, Morison, Murison, Gilmore, Gilmour, Brieve, MacBrieve, Judge



Your tent is your stage for our story

We mix fact and fiction to tell the Morrison saga at the Virginia Games

By James Morrison

Shakespeare said “all the world’s a stage,” and that is exactly the way we think of our Morrison tent at the Virginia Scottish Games. We are the actors, the visitors the audience. The Morrison saga is our play. We know our lines, and we improvise because the Morrison story is a short one. If it were a historical play, it would open and

close in one act somewhere off Broadway. As a work of fiction, it would be a drama full of heroism, intrigue and romance – a long-running hit to sell-out crowds.

We all know the legend of Olaf the Black. In our play, he is the gallant Scottish nobleman of Viking heritage, who commands his doomed ship in a savage storm on the North Sea. He stands valiantly at the stern of his longboat, shouting orders to his crew in a desperate attempt to keep his vessel from sinking amid the crashing waves and howling winds off the rocky northern tip of the Isle of Lewis. His beautiful wife Lauon, a Kintyre noblewoman, cradles their infant son Gillemorrie in her arms and prays to God for salvation.



In the second act, the ship sinks. Drifting ashore clinging to wreckage from the boat, the family survives; but the marriage doesn't. The third act, of course, stars Gillemorrie as he establishes Clan Morrison, launching a legacy of artists, actors, scientists, philosophers with wit, wisdom and unfailing hospitality.

At the Virginia Games, we relate the Morrison story with fact and fiction. I tell visitors to our tent that every clan at the games has a story about its progenitor and ours involves our valiant Viking. I emphasize that the tale is mostly folklore but add that there was a real Olaf the Black with a wife named Lauon. The church did annul the marriage because Lauon was a cousin of Olaf's first wife. The clergy condemned the union as incestuous.

Then I talk about what we know historically about Clan Morrison. Our ancestors were hereditary briefs, or medieval lawyers, on the Isle of Lewis and Harris. They were noted musicians and poets. They made swords and other weapons at one point, and they were nearly wiped out when Scotland's King James VI issued letters of "fire and sword" in 1616 because of a clan feud with the MacLeods and the Macaulays. We talk about the two tartans and explain that a swatch of the Morrison red was discovered in an old Bible with the date of 1747 written near the fabric, making it one of the oldest tartans associated with a clan name. The date is poignant.

A year earlier, Bonnie Prince Charlie and his Jacobites failed in their uprising to regain the British crown. To punish the rebels, King George II tried to crush Highland culture, outlawing bagpipes, kilts and tartans. On Lewis, a fearless family of Morrisons defied the king and hid the red tartan in their home in hopes that their ancestors would someday find it. Workmen discovered the Bible when they tore down the house in the 1930s.

Props in a play, from John Wayne to a Viking boat

Clan Morrison Society
WILSON MORRISON, BUREAU CLERK, ETC.
American Section

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Date Sept 15, 1970

TO: THE HON. SECRETARY
 CLAN MORRISON SOCIETY

Dear Sir:

Please enroll me as a Life Member of the Clan Morrison Society, the amount of my Membership Subscription (\$15.00) being enclosed herewith.

Name	First	Middle	Last
	Michael	Michael	Morrison

Address	Street	Number	City	State	Zip
	5451 Magathon Street		Hollywood	California	90038

GENEALOGICAL DATA

Date of my birth May 26, 1907 Place of birth Winters, Iowa, USA

My father's name	First	Middle	Last
	Clyde		Morrison

My mother's name	First	Middle	Last (maiden)
	Mary		Drown

For ASSOCIATE Membership Only
 If father's name is not one of the forms of Morrison or Gilmore, list below the name and relationship, to YOU, of the person of such names with whom you have the closest connection, i. e., mother, husband, wife, step-parent, grand- or great-grandparent, etc.

Name of Relative _____
 Relationship to you _____

NOTE: This form, when signed by the applicant, to be addressed to either the Chairman or the Adjutant of the American Section, Clan Morrison Society.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Scroll No. 291 Issued on 9/15/70 by _____
 Mailed _____
 Remarks _____

Our two display tables are crowded with items, like props in a play, that help us tell the Morrison story. Adults who pass out tents are frequently attracted by the cutout of John Wayne. Children are drawn to the Viking boat and Frizbees, which we give away after explaining that a Morrison invented the famous flying disk.

I generally start talking about the Morrison story with the wooden Viking boat, which I bought online for about \$40. That gives me a chance to tell the Olaf story. With adults drawn to us by John Wayne, I tell them that his real name was Marion Michael Morrison and point out a copy of his 1970 application to the Clan Morrison Society of North America. I tell them I was lucky enough to have met his son, Michael, who told me that his father

never legally changed his name, that he was proud of his Morrison heritage and always carried a Clan Morrison coffee mug on his movie sets.

Some visitors are attracted to an antique basket-hilted sword that we display to represent the time that Morrisons were armorers to Clan MacLeod. The ceremonial sword was presented to a Scottish officer in 1911 and given to me by friends who inherited it. We have had a few Chinese visitors who were surprised to see a Chinese-language Bible on our table. I explain that Rev. Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China, translated the Bible into Chinese in 1813.

Peter Morrison, my co-covener at the Virginia games, created a poster with the famous quote about Clan Morrison from the *Carmina Gadelica*, a compendium of Highland legend and facts about Scottish clans written by Alexander Carmichael in the late 19th century. Peter displays the poster on an easel outside the tents.

Carmichael wrote that “Morrisons have been celebrated throughout the centuries for their wit, poetry, music, philosophy, medicine and science, for their independence of mind and sobriety of judgment, and for their benevolence of heart and unfailing hospitality.” I always urge visitors to read the poster, saying, “That tells you what a modest clan we are.”

Peter also came up with the idea of buying Frisbees printed with the Clan Morrison crest and the story of Walter Frederick Morrison, who invented what he originally called the Pluto Platter in the 1950s. Morrison sold the rights to his invention to the Wham-O toy company and died a wealthy man. His obituary in *The New York Times* in 2010 included this photo of him dressed whimsically as a mid-century version of a spaceman.



Morrison was a decorated World War II fighter pilot, who was shot down and captured by the Germans. He spent 48 days in a prisoner of war camp before Allied forces liberated it in 1945.

Interior design defines our tent

Our tents, tables, chairs and banners also make a statement. We have grown to four 10x10 pop-up tents at the Virginia Games. We started with one small tent and a modest display table more than 40 years ago. The conveners then were Charles Morrison, a retired geologist who helped map Antarctica, and Col. Robert Morrison, a retired Air Force spy-plane pilot who was simply known at the games as Col. Bob. Charlie’s wife Dorothy handstitched the 10-foot-long Morrison banner in the red modern tartan set on a green background. The banner has held up through more than four decades of summer games and winter parades.



We have two six-foot folding tables, and we rent two eight-foot tables from the Games each year. We drape them with white fitted polyester table cloths with lengths of the modern green Morrison tartan over the front two display tables. We use the other two as general purpose tables on the side or back of the tents. One year we used one of the side tables for a scotch tasting. We also hang flags from the sides to honor the United States, Scotland and Canada.

We tried regular table cloths, but they kept flying up in the wind. We tried many ways of securing them, including giant binder clips. My wife, a dedicated Amazon Prime shopper, found the fitted table cloths, and they have worked beautifully.

She also discovered a new generation pop-up tent with a vented, water-resistant top. We tried one last year, and were so pleased with it that we bought a second one. The price was about \$140, which was about what I paid nearly 30 years ago when I bought our first EZ-Up tent. The new one is lighter, comes in a roller bag and is much easier to set up. You can view a variety of the new line of tents by searching for “pop-up tent” on Amazon.

Among my favorite items on our display tables are bookends designed after the king and queen of the ancient Lewis chessmen. Although not strictly Morrison, the 12th century walrus ivory chess pieces were discovered in the bay of Uig on the Isle of Lewis in 1831. The original pieces are in the British Museum and the National Museum of Scotland. The bookends are made of resin and stand about six inches high. We use them to hold books on tartans and clans, which we keep to help people find their Scottish heritage.



The new tent with the air vent.

Editor’s note: *This is the first in what I hope will be an occasional feature called Tent Talk, but that depends on you. If you found this article interesting, please share your story. What do you do to make your tent special? Please email me a full story, or just notes, and photographs to jamesellismorrison@gmail.com*

From the Chairman:

Rebuilding Dun Eistein bridge remains in doubt



By Michael Morrison

Chairman Clan Morrison Society of North America

Twenty twenty-six is well underway, and I hope it's treating you well so far. Lately I have been receiving lots of update requests regarding the Dun Eistein bridge project. I wish I could give you better news.

As of now, we are waiting on the property owners and the local community to decide whether or not the bridge is worth saving. In 2001 the Clan Morrison Society of North America raised \$50,000 to have the bridge built. It was agreed after the bridge was dedicated that the local community and the estate that the bridge sits on would provide custodial support. There was also a bank account opened with a meager amount to help with those costs.

A number of years ago the person with whom this deal was made, passed away. He neglected to pass on stewardship to the next person to take his place. As it stands now either the estate owner cannot afford or does not deem the bridge worth the estimated \$100,000 it will cost to rebuild it.

We have told the estate owners that we do not feel that it is our responsibility to build them a bridge a second time. We have urged them to approach the local community and to try to get the locals involved.

We are researching government grants but have expressed that we believe it would be better for optics if the local community approaches the government about grants. It is my opinion that it would not look great for a society based in America to care more about the bridge than the community and land owners whose property it sits on.

We are in a holding pattern until the estate either finds funding or decides to demolish. Also, we have decided to hold off on collecting charitable funds for the bridge restoration project. This is a rather dreary update on the matter but it's not yet the end of the story for the Dun Eistein bridge.

The connected world of Andrew Morrison

The reviews are in, and critics and scholars alike are praising Andrew Morrison's new book of poetry and prose.

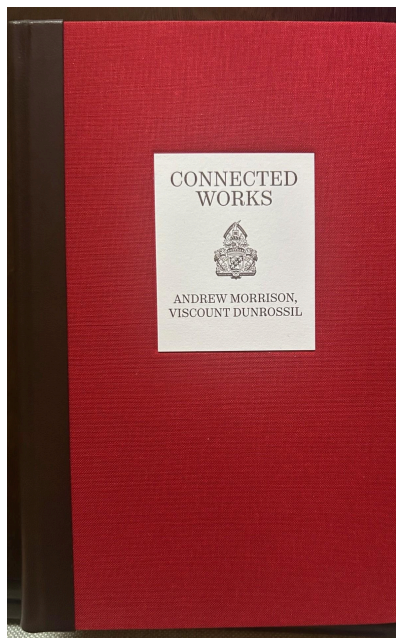
One critic saw an "old-world sensitivity" to his poems. Another review remarked on how he "elegantly weaves personal experiences ... into a "diverse and ambitious collection."

Andrew's book, *Connected Works*, reflects the journey of the London-born Scot with a classical education at Eton and Oxford who joined a merchant bank and ended up in San Antonio, Texas, where he married a Southern belle named Shell.

To many of us in the Clan Morrison Society of North America, Andrew is well known both by his hereditary title, the Viscount Dunrossil, and as Clan Morrison's chieftain for North America. He is a frequent honored guest at Scottish festivals throughout the United States. He is famous for his wit and humor, but few of us knew that he is also a serious poet.

The critics, however, have long recognized his talent. "There is an old-world sensitivity to these poems," wrote Alastair McIntosh, author of *Soil and Soul*, *Poacher's Pilgrimage* and a poetry collection, *Love and Revolution*.

"We voyage out from England's courtly shores, pausing by the poet's family roots in the furthest Hebrides, and are round and to-and-fro across the Great Atlantic to a New World..."



"Morrison elegantly weaves personal experiences, cultural reflections and philosophical inquiries together in this collection," according to Kirkus Reviews. "His nature descriptions are unique and evocative ... a diverse and ambitious collection."

Award-winning author James R. Dennis called *Connected Works* a "resplendent volume" that puts the reader "at the intersection of poetry and prose, at the junction of language and the unspeakable."

"We find ourselves exploring the richness of place (Scotland, in particular), faith, and poetry," he wrote. "One could not ask for a better tour guide."

The richness of language is central to many of Andrew's poems, as in the one called "Translation."

"Every year a language dies
and with it a way of looking at the world.
More than a species,
we have lost a universe ...
People say that poetry
is what gets lost in translation.
Plato said that poetry
is translation. Both are right."

Andrew, himself, lives at a junction of language and culture, born to a Scottish father and an English mother. He comes from a political family with a Scottish grandfather W.S. Morrison, known as “Shakes,” who served as speaker of the British House of Commons and later as governor-general of Australia. His father was a career diplomat who helped to smuggle law books to Nelson Mandela when he was a prisoner of the apartheid regime in South Africa. His father later served as governor of Bermuda. His mother, a history professor, was also a chairman of the Gloucestershire County Council in southwest England.

In a poetic touch, Andrew dedicated his book to his wife Shell, calling her the “real artist in the family.” “Her patience with this project has proven inexhaustible and her tireless attempts to civilize this particular barbarian are much appreciated.”

Connected Works can be ordered through thetwig.com, a San Antonio bookshop, for \$30. Andrew’s next book, *The Making of a Scottish Chief: Shakes and the Morrisons of Ruchdi* is due out in April.

Scottish Cooking with Kay



The late Kay Shaw Nelson, whose ancestors included Morrisons and MacLeods, spent her career traveling the world for the CIA, gathering intelligence and collecting recipes, especially Scottish dishes. Her book, “The Art of Scottish-American Cooking,” includes everything from appetizers to aperitifs. She borrowed dishes from well-known chefs to obscure backwoods diners from Texas to Quebec. Here is Mrs. Nelson’s recipe for a traditional hearty cock-a-leekie soup – with a little encouragement from Sir Walter Scott.

“Come, my lords and lieges, let us all to dinner, for the cock-a-leekie is a cooling.” – from Scott’s *The Fortunes of Nigel*

Ingredients: A five-pound whole chicken; five quarts of water; 12 leeks using the white parts and two inches of green stems washed and cut into quarter-inch lengths; four sprigs of parsley; one bay leaf; one-half teaspoon of dried thyme; a tablespoon of salt; one-half teaspoon of black pepper; one-half cup of barley and one-half cup of chopped fresh parsley.

Preparation: Put the chicken and water into a large pot and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Skim off the top. Add the rest of the ingredients and reduce the heat to medium-low. Cook slowly for two and one-half hours until the chicken is tender. Remove chicken, discard skin and bones and cut into bite-sized pieces. Return the chicken to the pot. Reheat and serve garnished with chopped parsley.



Winter Membership Report

Life USA	375
Annual USA	70
Life Foreign	15
Annual Foreign	5

Total Membership 465

New Members

Lorelei Morrison Bryan	Colonial Heights, VA
Robert Barton Gilmore, Jr.	Peoria, AZ Life Member
Robert James Gilmore, Jr.	Stafford, VA
Stuart W. McGregor	Tuscaloosa, AL
John Duncan Morrison	Westborough, MA
Seitheach Asleifarson Wilson	Henderson, NV

Deceased Members

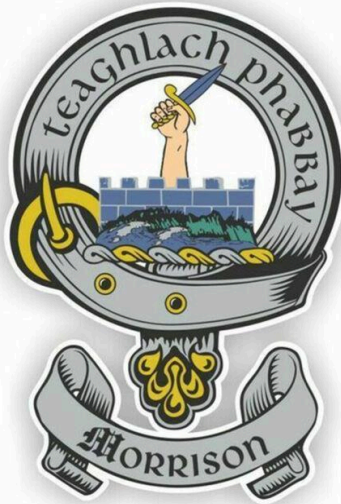
Jayne Morrison Dockham	Rye, NH (Life Member, 2023)
Peggy Morrison Love	Charlotte, NC
Raymond Edward Morrison	Independence, MO

The Following Members Generously Donated to the Society

David Gilmore	Show Low, AZ
Donald Morrion	Jamison, PA
Robert Smith	Spruce Grove, Alberta, Canada

Annual Dues

If you are an annual member, your yearly \$15 renewal fee was due on January 31. If you have not paid, please go to this website <https://clanmorrison.net/annual-membership-renewal>. You can also mail renewal checks to: Clan Morrison Society of North America, William J. Broome, Webmaster/Membership, P. O.Box973 Locust Grove, VA 22508-0973.



CMSNA Executive Leadership

The Chief of Clan Morrison: R. Alasdair Morrison of Ruchi

Chairman:

Michael S. Morrison

Vice Chairman:

Vacant

Treasurer:

(Michael S. Morrison, acting)

Membership:

William Broome

Secretary:

Rachel Morrison

Historian:

Edmund Potter, PhD

Chaplain:

Vacant

Newsletter Editor:

James Morrison

Scholarship Director:

Robert S. Morrison

Past Chieftain:

Anne M. Morrison

Webmaster:

William Broome

Past Chairmen: Anne Morrison, Chris Gillmore, Arthur Morrison, Edwin F. Holcombe Jr., Jim Morrison, Gerald B. Morrison, Jeffrey Moore, David H. Blain, David R. Gilmour

Members at Large: William Broome, Arthur Morrison, Buddy Morrison

Chairman's Advisory Committee: Edwin Holcombe Jr., Jim Morrison, Robert "Bob" Morrison, David R. Gilmour, Chris Gillmore, Jennifer Wolcott

