



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

BRYANSTON 2021

info@rafoc.org

www.rafoc.org

President:	David MacKinnon-Little	
Vice Presidents:	David Lake, Geoff Quick, Basil Hersov	
Chairman:	Bruce Harrison	bruce@jbharrison.co.za Tel: 011 673 0291 Cell: 083 325 0025
Vice Chairman:	Jon Adams	vice-chairman@rafoc.org Tel: 011 678 7702 Cell: 082 450 0616
Hon. Secretary:	Colin Francis	Tel: 011 706 4554 Cell: 082 853 8368
Hon. Treasurer:	Jeff Earle	Tel: 011 616 3189 Cell: 083 652 1002
Committee Members:	Russell Swanborough	Tel: 011 884 2611 Cell: 083 263 2740
	Karl Jensen	Tel: 011 234 0598 Cell: 082 331 4652
	Jean-Michel Girard	Cell: 083 659 1067
	Geoff Fish	Tel: 012 667 2759 Cell: 083 660 9697
	Rob Tannahill	Tel: 011 888 6074 Cell: 082 806 6779
Bank Account:	Nedbank - Melrose Arch	Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2017

DECEMBER LADIES CHRISTMAS LUNCH:

This year ended on a high note, with the last formal function in the Vista Room attended by 105 Members, Ladies and Guests. The Christmas Spirit was well in evidence in the happy hubbub of greetings and conversation as the guests arrived. All credit to those from Pretoria and Midrand, including General Des and Bennie Barker, who battled horrendous traffic delays on the N1 South – the trip took an hour and a half! It was good to have Janis Evans and daughter Terry Barbour with us, on the anniversary of Rex's passing a year ago, as well as others back after various afflictions...Silvasale put up a splendid Christmas repast of Chicken Liver Parfait starter, followed by Rolled Turkey with all the trimmings and traditional Christmas pudding to round off, accompanied by delectable Goudini wines.

Our Guest Speaker **Anne Cabot-Alletzhauser** who heads up the Alexander Forbes Research Institute, gave an impromptu "cabaret" together with Geoff Fish, while being "wired for sound" with boom microphone and transmitter. Rene Clulow restored order and dignity – all to the hilarious delight of the audience. Anne's talk, "**The Hundred Year Life**" held the rapt attention of that audience, not only for her insights into retirement issues, but also for her candid and moving story of her journey after her own traumatic early widowhood. Anne kindly drew the raffle tickets after her talk, and thereafter was besieged by a number of guests in an informal Q&A session.

LONG LIVE OUR GRACIOUS QUEEN!

They're one of the most famous couples in the world, and last month Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip reached a remarkable milestone in their marriage – their platinum wedding anniversary on November 20, in a milestone no other monarch has achieved and will likely never surpass. This date saw them join a select group of devoted spouses to reach the landmark anniversary, with the Queen helping just 1,260 other couples celebrate their 70th wedding anniversary with a personal card from Buckingham Palace. It is another landmark for Her Majesty, who has already become the longest-reigning monarch in UK history at 65 years, and the longest-lived at 91. In their record-breaking lifetime of service, the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh will no doubt have lost count of the toasts raised to their achievements, health and happiness. Surely none, though, will mean more than seeing their children, grandchildren and closest friends raise a glass to them, in celebration of 70 years of the most successful marriage in British Royal history. They are already comfortably the longest-wed Royal couple, surpassing George III and Queen Charlotte by 13 years. The Queen, who once said "a long life can pass many milestones: my own is no exception", is understood to have been keen to mark the wedding anniversary privately, eschewing lavish public celebrations and speeches.

OBITUARIES

JOY LOFTHOUSE ATA, who has died aged 94, was the second last surviving “**ATTAGIRL**”. She signed up for the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) in 1943, aged 20, and flew 18 types of aircraft including Spitfires from factories to maintenance units, where they were fitted with gunnery and radios. She had no previous flying experience. She had never even driven a car. She left the ATA in September 1945 and never flew as a pilot again. In 2015 at the age of 92, she took to the air again in a dual control version of the Spitfire but professed to be "not as confident as I was when I used to fly them alone when I was young". She and the other Atta girls had been honoured with a commemorative badge in 2008. She told friends with a whimsical smile "For 60 years nobody asked me about my wartime job, but for the past 10, I've been dining out on it". In July 2016, when she was invited into the Royal Box at Wimbledon, Joy was told how fearless she must have been to have risked her life. She denied it: "We were young, we weren't frightened. Old age needs more courage than we ever had". RIP.

SQUADRON LEADER GEOFFREY ROTHWELL DFC AND BAR RAF, who has died in New Zealand aged 97, completed 71 operations as a bomber pilot and was twice awarded the DFC. On their final operation on September 8 1944 Rothwell and his crew took off from RAF Tempsford in a Stirling of No 138 (Special Duties) Squadron. Their task was to drop two agents in the Alkmaar region. They were dropped successfully before Rothwell turned to the north and let down to 300 ft to begin his return journey. As they crossed the Dutch coast the Stirling hit a balloon cable, which wrenched one of the four engines away causing a fire, which quickly spread to the wing. Too low for the crew to bail out, Rothwell crash-landed on the sand dunes of Texel Island where the aircraft broke up killing three of the crew. Rothwell was catapulted through the canopy and lay unconscious for a time. He eventually located the other survivors, all had been injured, before seeking help. They were soon captured by the German garrison troops and spent the rest of the war as POW. With the post war RAF now lacking adventure, Geoff shifted to Malaya as a rubber planter to face a communist led uprising. The “emergency“ lasted nearly a decade. Finally Geoff retired to Northland where he met up with a fellow 75 Squadron flight commander and they launched a tourist venture. In 2005 his wife, Gabrielle, wrote a book about her husband’s life: “**The Man With Nine Lives**”

HELDERBERG: 30 YEARS ON:

Another sad anniversary in November.....South African Airways Flight 295 was a scheduled commercial flight from Taiwan to South Africa. On 28 November 1987, the aircraft, a Boeing 747 named **Helderberg**, experienced a catastrophic in-flight fire in the cargo area and crashed into the Indian Ocean east of Mauritius, killing all 140 passengers and 19 crew on board. An extensive salvage operation was mounted to try to recover the flight data recorders, one of which was recovered from a depth of 4,900 metres (16,100 ft) the deepest successful salvage operation ever conducted at the time. The aircraft involved, a Boeing 747-200B Combi, was delivered to SAA in 1980. The aircraft took off on 27 November 1987 from Taipei (Chiang Kai Shek International), on a flight to Johannesburg via Mauritius, with Captain Dawie Uys in command. The Boeing 747-200B Combi is a variant of the aircraft that permits the mixing of passengers and airfreight on the main deck according to load factors on any given route and Class B cargo compartment regulations. Flight 295 had 140 passengers and six pallets of cargo on the main deck. The master waybills stated that 47,000 kilograms (104,000 lb) of baggage and cargo were loaded on to the aircraft. A Taiwanese customs official performed a surprise inspection of some of the cargo; he did not find any cargo that could be characterised as suspicious. At some point during the flight, before midnight, a fire developed in the cargo section on the main deck; the fire was probably not extinguished before impact. The 'smoke evacuation' checklist calls for the aircraft to be depressurised, and for two of the cabin doors to be opened. A crew member might have gone into the cargo hold to try to fight the fire. A charred fire extinguisher was later recovered from the wreckage on which investigators found

molten metal. The official inquiry, headed by Judge Cecil Margo, was unable to determine the cause of the fire. The lack of a definitive conclusion led to conspiracy theories being advanced in the following years, and which continue to this day...

HOW GREEN WAS MY ISLAND:

Tourism minister Tokozile Xasa last month unveiled a R25 million solar-powered mini-grid plant on Robben Island, which she says is the first step in turning the world heritage site green. The minister unveiled the solar photovoltaic (PV) power plant on Thursday. The solar PV mini-grid has the capacity of generating 666.4 kilowatt peak of clean energy, reducing the island's reliance on the existing diesel generating system. The integrated system carries the entire daytime electricity load and prioritises solar PV energy generation, which is supported by an 828 kilowatt hour battery storage – enabling the use of solar energy on cloudy days and at night. "Today is the celebration of the exposition that reinforces a shared vision for the future of tourism," Xasa said. "This project is the first step in a longer term initiative of greening the island and discussions are already under way with the management of Robben Island Museum on the implementation of a range of additional energy-efficiency projects." The minister said the project now means Robben Island – once a prison to the late former president and struggle icon Nelson Mandela, along with other Rivonia trialists and other political prisoners – practices sustainable tourism.

FLYING OFF THE SHELVES:

Making headlines in the past month has been veteran journalist and author Jacques Pauw's new book, **The President's Keepers** – Those keeping Zuma in Power and out of Prison, which has been flying off the shelves at book stores. The CEO of NB Publishers Eloise Wessels said 20,000 copies of the book were printed but orders were increasing and another 10,000 would be printed. "The fact it has found such resonance with South Africans – especially with readers buying the book – goes to show how deeply concerned the public is with how our country has become a gangster state," Wessels told The Times.

Among some of Pauw's explosive claims include allegations that President Jacob Zuma earned R1 million a month from Royal Security – a company owned by Durban businessman and well known ANC-supporter Roy Moodley – after he was elected as the country's president for at least four months. The book also claims that ANC presidential candidate Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma's campaign was being funded by cigarette manufacturer Adriano Mazzotti, who is said to be a self-confessed smuggler, fraudster and money launderer. Cry, the beloved country!

FLYING AT THE EDGE: by Squadron Leader Tony Doyle AFC RAF:

20 years of Front-line and Display Flying in the Cold War Era: Pen and Sword 2010. Reviewed by Geoff Quick.

This autobiography covers the author's flying career in the RAF from the early 50's until the 70's. Following a wartime childhood he joined the RAF via gliding in the ATC and getting a Flying Scholarship on Tiger Moths. He writes informatively about the handling characteristics of all the types he flew, really getting you "into the cockpit." After leaving the RAF for a short interlude in the late 50's he rejoined and then followed an unusual second flying career, starting with Vampires and the early Jet Provosts at Central Flying School (CFS) at Little Rissington as an Instructor during which time which he started to win Aerobatic Competitions. He then instructed on Meteors before moving back to CFS as a Staff Instructor, also joining the Red Pelicans Jet Provost formation team. Then on to the early days of the Gnat at RAF Valley, also being the Gnat display pilot, before converting on to the Lightning at Coltishall where he also was solo display pilot in the mid 60's. He also tracks the

changing ethos of the RAF over the time of his service. He describes U.K. air defence in the 60's as a "farce", which must have gone down wonderfully well with the scrabbling middle ranker careerists coming up in the Lightning world. You can sense the tension building up in him, not helped by an ejection and personal issues, necessitating a rest, before finishing up as flight commander on the Lightning OCU at RAF Coltishall and a final ground tour on the ranges in Wales. A bonus postscript is an account of his time in Oman, instructing on the Strikemaster. Throughout the book he is forthright

with his opinions about the aircraft, personnel and issues he encountered in the RAF. You might not totally agree with all of the sentiments he expresses but his is a fascinating story.

PLAY IT AGAIN, SAM:

Another milestone - Bogart and Bergman: The film **Casablanca** is 75 years old this year and, over time, it has become one of the best loved films ever. Turned into a film script out of a run-of-the-mill play, "Everybody Comes to Rick's", the entire project was completed in just 11 months – a phenomenally quick pace for filmmaking. Despite the speed of its creation, the American Film Institute (AFI) now ranks it as the third-best flick of all time. Except for a few scenes set in and around other parts of Casablanca, such as the French Prefect of police's office, or in a rival café/casino, and in those crucial flashbacks to better days in Paris until the German army rolled in, the film takes place almost entirely inside the confines of Rick's Café. This is how it goes until those climactic, final moments at the airport. (the film was made entirely on the Warner Brothers studio back lot with no effort to depict a more expansive setting for the drama's action to play out).

NEXT FUNCTION:

JANUARY ORDINARY LUNCH - this will be on **Friday 12 January 2018, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers**, - please note this is the **SECOND** Friday due to the Holidays.

We plan another **Aviation Quiz**, a popular and entertaining start to the New Year. **Capt Karl Jensen** is already in the throes of preparing another "Alzheimer's Test"....

NB NB Lunch Fees now: **R200 pp**. This is the first increase for some time. If paying EFT please use your "**Name + Lunch**" as "reference" NEDBANK Melrose Arch, Branch 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

All bookings please to bookings@rafoc.org or if you do not have access to e-mail:

Rob Tannahill	Tel: 011 888 6074	Cell: 082 806 6779
Colin Francis	Tel: 011 706 4554	Cell: 082 853 8368
Jon Adams	Tel: 011 678 7702	Cell: 082 45 00 616

Look forward to seeing you there!

Bruce