



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 10 – 12th JUNE 2020



Greetings to All:

Last week saw the 76th Anniversary of D-Day, the Operation Overlord invasion of Europe by Allied Forces in 1944. By the end of that “Longest Day”, some 150,000 Allied troops had landed on five Normandy beaches and three airborne drop zones. Commemoration was necessarily low-key in view of travel restrictions and social distancing. Celebrations in France were cancelled for the first time since 1945. Sadly, we also saw the spectacle of young people in Whitehall wilfully ignoring all the Coronavirus precautions and regulations, and abusing the very freedoms their forebears died for, around the Cenotaph which commemorates their sacrifice. Last week also saw some reassuring High Court verdicts, and a more relaxed atmosphere pervading the country as South Africa resumed the “Dop System” and the availability of illicit cigarettes drove sales, at R100 for a pack of 20, to new heights. Limited domestic flights resumed - only for business travellers with permits, so the “Dompas” system is also still

with us.... Internationally, the “fog of coronavirus” persists...

THE D-DAY VICTORIA CROSS:

Seventy-Six years ago, **Stan Hollis** was Company Sergeant Major of one of the first battalions to reach Gold Beach on D-Day. He was no stranger to combat. By 1944, he had fought at Dunkirk, El Alamein and the Battle for Primasole Bridge. Hollis was thirty-one years old on D-Day. He was in charge of three machine gun and three mortar teams. He was one of the most experienced men in his unit, and many younger soldiers looked up to him. It was at a house that overlooked the beach where Hollis performed the first of two heroic acts to win him the Victoria Cross. He advanced on a German Pill-Box and silenced it, then down a trench alone, captured a second fortification and all those in it. In all, he captured 30 Germans single-handed. Later that day, at around 11am, Hollis performed the second act of heroism which contributed to the D-Day Victoria Cross. Hollis took a Bren gun and advanced into the open, firing from the hip in plain sight to attract the attention of an enemy field gun team which was firing on them. Astoundingly, even though he was standing in sight of the enemy, Hollis was not hit.

The Victoria Cross recognises acts of extreme bravery carried out under direct enemy fire. Stan Hollis

was the only serviceman to be awarded the Victoria Cross on D-Day for his gallantry during the allied invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944.

(Sent in by Gordon Dyne, from the IWM "Stories that Deserve to be Heard")

THE KOREAN CONNECTION - 70TH ANNIVERSARY:

Last week's item on RAFOC history prompted a response from **Ivan Holshausen**: "Just to correct re Peter Henning - He was in the SAAF & got involved in a lot of things, but he never got to Korea" (Apologies! Ed) SAKWA (the South African Korean War Veterans Association) is active under the leadership of Col Dirk Louw (retd), no stranger to RAFOC. A further mail from Ivan brought news of a heart-warming gesture from South Korea. He writes: "Hi All, here is a letter that arrived yesterday with a parcel of 50 really super masks, hand sanitizer, chocolates & biscuits. The Koreans are unbelievable, but we saw that on our visits there. Wish our people here had even a fraction of the Korean capabilities!"

The letter reads:

"Dear Korean War Veterans, By sending this short letter from a country afar, we would like to give our kindest regards to you, our dearest friends whom we have never met but who are closest to our hearts. When you risked your life in a strange land filled with gunfire, the strange people you saved were our grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers or mothers. Since then 70 years have passed, and many things have changed for these long years. You were young and great, and now are generous grandfathers or grandmothers, while the Republic of Korea, once with nothing left but ashes of war, is now a pretty great country. However, what has never changed is that we all remember you and are grateful to you. We also still believe you still remember the Republic of Korea. When we support each other in one heart we can ride out any challenges. People around the world are suffering from and having difficulty due to the global pandemic of COVID-19 that was first identified at the end of last year. We are especially concerned about the well being of you who dedicated your youth to protecting the Republic of Korea. In this regard, we have prepared a token of appreciation. This can never match with the warm hands you extended to us, but we hope that this will help you overcome the current crisis. We believe that we will emerge from this unprecedented challenge and meet in good shape in the near future. We wish you and your families the very best of health in this challenging time. Thank you. The 70th Anniversary of the Korean War Commemorative Committee".

RAF "VOYAGER" RECORD BREAKER:

A new world record was set by the Voyager aircraft for the fastest ever flight between the UK and the Falkland Islands. The journey of 6834 nautical miles was completed in 15 hours and 9 minutes, breaking the previous record, which had been set in 1987 by an RAF VC-10 aircraft, by 36 minutes. Flights between the UK and the Falkland Islands are nothing new, they operate twice a week from RAF Brize Norton, known as The South Atlantic Airbridge (SAA) and are the crucial link between Britain and overseas territory. Normally the SAA flights stop off en-route to allow the aircraft to resupply, but this journey was the first direct flight between the UK and Falkland Islands in over 30 years. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the capability to fly direct to the Falkland Islands was developed to support the global effort to minimise the risks of the virus spreading, increase transport options and providing greater flexibility. Captain of the flight, Dave Hall, a former VC10 Pilot and now a sponsored reservist Voyager Pilot for No. 10 Squadron was the first to be greeted from the aircraft as it touched down back at RAF Brize Norton on Friday 5 June.

RAF 6 SQUADRON IN LITHUANIA INTERCEPT:

Royal Air Force Typhoon fighter jets deployed to Lithuania have intercepted Russian aircraft off the Baltic coast for the second time recently. The Typhoons launched on the afternoon of 4th Jun 2020 to intercept a Russian Il-20 COOT A and two Russian Su-27 Flanker B aircraft operating over the Baltic Sea. This was the detachment's second launch in support of Baltic Air Policing within a 48-hour window. The Typhoon aircraft were able to approach the Russian formation and identify it as an ISR aircraft escorted by two fighters. A Typhoon pilot from 6 Squadron, attached to 135 Expeditionary Air Wing, was conducting Quick Reaction Alert duty when the scramble was called. He said:

“This mission was more complex, as there were more aircraft to manage of different types and flying at different speeds. We are always ready to react in support of the NATO mission.” This intercept is part of the routine NATO Air Policing mission that has been conducted to police the skies since 2004. The RAF contribution to NATO deployments supports efforts to reassure our Allies and demonstrates the UK’s wider commitment to the security of the region.

OBITUARIES:

AIR COMMODORE PETER TAYLOR AFC RAF, who has died aged 82, was a Cold War fighter pilot. Early in his career flying Hunters he was a member of the Blue Diamonds aerobatic team before a tour on No. 8 Squadron based in Aden. He saw action along the Yemeni border and flew strikes against dissident targets during the final British withdrawal from Aden in November 1967. After conversion to the Harrier he joined No. 4 Squadron in Germany. He was forced to eject after a bird strike and was astonished when the Harrier flew away and climbed to 20,000 feet before crashing. He commanded No.1 Squadron and saw service in Belize and was the Station Commander at RAF Bruggen with four Jaguar squadrons. He retired in 1987 and worked for British Aerospace before organising the Farnborough Air Show during his time with SBAC.

AIR VICE-MARSHAL DAVID RICHARD HAWKINS CB MBE LVO DL RAF who has died aged 81, rose from being a National Service gunner in the RAF Regiment (the corps charged with the defence of airfields and protecting RAF assets) to becoming its head as Commandant General, and then became the Yeoman Usher of the Black Rod in the Palace of Westminster and Gentleman Usher to the Queen. Tall, smart and with an imposing manner, Hawkins had two spells – including command in 1974 – with the Queen’s Colour Squadron (QCS), the custodian of the Queen’s Colour for the RAF in the United Kingdom. Manned exclusively by officers and men of the RAF Regiment, it provides the sole escort to the Colour when it performs its numerous public duties. Following retirement from the RAF, he was appointed Director of Military and Government Affairs for WDSL Aerospace Ltd, and he took on a similar post with Coltraco Ultrasonics Ltd in 2014, as well as being a member of Safe Waste and Power consultants. Hawkins was also a Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Greater London between 1994 and 2012. As a Yeoman Usher of the Black Rod, Hawkins was known not to be one who shirked his duties; in 1995, Hawkins sent a typed letter to Sir Geoffrey Howe instructing him to cease ongoing proceedings in the House of Lords that were being filmed in relation to a debate on the single European currency. The conference was in some unspecified way breaking the *rules of the house* and attending film crews were warned that they would have their media passes revoked if they broadcast the footage of the event. He was elevated to a Lieutenant in the Royal Victorian Order in 2007.

“RATE OF CLIMB” UPDATE:

Rick Peacock-Edwards has given an update on the South African availability of his autobiography in the email below.

“Dear All, I need to give you an update re obtaining copies of my autobiography ‘Rate of Climb’. It would seem that Amazon is not currently delivering to SA. My publisher, Grub Street, does have an agent in SA, Intersoft Publishing, contact person Cheryl. There has been contact between my publisher and Cheryl and also between Cheryl and some of my old school mates from Michaelhouse in SA. It also transpires that, until my publisher got it unlocked, the agent in SA had put a temporary stop on shipments from the UK when the current COVID 19 crisis erupted. To cut a long story short, books are now on the way to the SA agent, by sea. My guess is that they will be available in SA from end June/July. There is also one other option, as follows. If sufficient numbers want personally signed copies, plus comments as necessary, then there is the possibility of sending these out to SA by courier. If there is interest, and we can gauge a rough idea re numbers, then the publisher will obtain a quote, with timescale for delivery etc. So there it is, I suggest that someone calls the agent to discuss and, also, if there is interest in signed copies then just let me know possible numbers etc and

I will obtain a quote. I will be passing on the same information to the old boys club at Michaelhouse. Best Regards, Rick.”

Gordon Dyne has kindly offered to coordinate RAFOC members’ orders with the local agent Intersoft. Contact him by e-mail Crazyaviator@dyneamic.co.za or cell 082 444 6947.

THE BLUE TRAIN PREPARES FOR TRAVEL IN THE COVID-19 ERA:

As the nation enters Level 3 Lockdown and restrictions start easing for various sectors, The Blue Train has started preparing for operation in the era of COVID-19. In March 2020, the luxury train announced a suspension of its services in accordance with the South African government’s national lockdown. This suspension was extended to 30th June 2020 after the government’s Adjusted Risk Strategy for Economic Activity in April 2020. “This is an uncertain time and it requires us all to be cautious as we anticipate a return to economic activity. Resuming operations is dependent on further pronouncements from the government of South Africa, but in the meantime, we will get The Blue Train ready for operation in a COVID-19 era. Several health and safety precautions will be put in place to ensure that when we resume travel, The Blue Train is COVID-19-fit. Our service offering is a flagship South African tourism experience and our drive is to ensure that when travel and tourism activities resume, The Blue Train will be ready to afford our guests the perfect experience of South Africa’s finest luxury rail experience,” said Vincent Monyake, Executive Manager at The Blue Train. Good news at one level - Meantime, a recent report on current SA Rail services says: “The limitations of the rail services supplied, means however that the vast majority of industrial freight transport demand can only be done by road. This is in stark contrast to the rest of the world where integrated private freight rail and multimodal services are an important part of the logistics options for almost all commodities. The pressures of competition have resulted in highly efficient coordinating systems, standardisation, modal integration, flexible scheduling, and the development of a wide range of equipment to support multimodal transport.”

LITTLE FALLS CENTENARY:

Another Centenary is that of an historic Johannesburg landmark. There is no document to give an exact date, but the hill sign at Little Falls was built in the 1920s in accordance to the fashion of the time, to display signs to the new-fangled flying machines that were becoming popular after World War I. The sign was built above the already popular swimming resort of Little Falls, on the site of the Geldenhuys, and later the Struben, homestead. After the Struben brothers, Fred and Harry, discovered gold near Little Falls, the word spread and the following year, in 1886, George Harrison discovered the Main Reef at Langlaagte. As the mines grew, Little Falls became first a welcome bath after a hard days mining and then a picnic resort. Beginning in the 1920s the area developed into a flower farm, with the warm North slope of the Wits hills and plentiful water supply that never dried up. The owners built a dam wall across the falls pool, to make a swimming pool, and built cabins alongside the kloof. Later the area would be sold to the Roodepoort Maraisburg Municipality. A fee was charged to enter the grounds. The area then passed into the hands of Johannesburg City Parks.

With the advent of home swimming pools, Little Falls was almost forgotten, and is in a sad state today. Another sign was built on the nearby hill, overlooking Strubens Valley, and said "Strubensvallei" in Afrikaans. The stream at Strubens Valley was dammed and became a second picnic area, but was never as popular as Little Falls. The dam was bulldozed in the 1950s to make way for a new tar road through the Kloof, which today is the major thoroughfare of Christiaan De Wet road.



CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

This is the 10th weekly Newssheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (*preferably nothing on the antics of Ministers (various) or NCCC!*) that will help us all to keep in contact through the lockdown. Take care – and remember that 230 000 of our fellow citizens have been charged with breaches of the lockdown regulations... a masterful demonstration of the "maintenance of law and order!" So, let's hear from you.... Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

DRIVE-THRU ATM MACHINE - "Social Distancing" has led to the introduction of more "drive-thru" services, and made us more aware of the proximity and actions of others in our immediate airspace. A new sign in a local Bank Lobby reads: 'Please note that this Bank is installing new Drive-through ATM machines enabling customers to withdraw cash without leaving their vehicles. Customers using this new facility are requested to use the procedures outlined below when accessing their accounts. After much careful research, "MALE & FEMALE" procedures have been developed. You may find these helpful. Please follow the appropriate steps "

MALE PROCEDURE:

1. Drive up to the cash machine.
2. Put down your car window.
3. Insert card into machine and enter PIN.
4. Enter amount of cash required and withdraw.
5. Retrieve card, cash and receipt.
6. Put window up.
7. Drive off.

FEMALE PROCEDURE:

1. Drive up to cash machine.
2. Reverse the required amount to align car window with the machine.
3. Set parking brake, put the window down.
4. Find handbag, remove all contents on to passenger seat to locate card.
5. Tell person on cell phone you will call them back and hang up.
6. Attempt to insert card into machine.
7. Open car door to allow easier access to machine due to excessive distance from the car.
8. Insert card. If necessary, re-insert card the right way.
9. Dig through handbag to find diary with your PIN written on the inside back page.
10. Enter PIN.
11. Press cancel and re-enter correct PIN.
12. Enter amount of cash required.
13. Check makeup in rear view mirror.
14. Retrieve cash and receipt.
15. Empty handbag again to locate wallet and place cash inside.
16. Write debit amount in check register and place receipt in back of check book.
17. Re-check makeup.
18. Drive forward 2 feet.
19. Reverse back to cash machine.
20. Retrieve card.
21. Re-empty handbag, locate card holder, and place card into the slot provided!
22. Give dirty look to irate male driver waiting behind you.
23. Restart stalled engine and pull off.
24. Re-dial person on cell phone.
25. Drive for 2 to 3 miles. Optionally, Release Parking Brake....

MATT



'My golf ball remained socially distanced from the flag and hole at all times'

