



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

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info@rafoc.org

www.rafoc.org

President:	David MacKinnon-Little	
Vice Presidents:	Basil Hersov, Colin Francis, Geoff Quick, David Lake	
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 Ackroyd	Tel: 012 942 1111 Cell: 082 800 5845
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
Web Master:	Hanke Fourie	Tel: Cell: 082 553 0210
Bank Account:	Nedbank - Melrose Arch	Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 14 - 10th JULY 2020

GREETINGS TO ALL:

Last week brought the spectacle of massive flooding - of "Biblical proportions" - in China, followed now by reports of Swine Fever, Dengue Fever and Bubonic Plague. And speculation that China is approaching a "Stalingrad Moment" with Russia, while meantime crushing Hong Kong's special rights and freedoms...

And in UK, BBC's Jenny Hill, reporting on Covid precautions being taken by football teams in Germany, said that "Eintracht Frankfurt will be disinfecting their balls at half-time" which drew the twitter response "No wonder the infection rate is so high in the UK; we are only told to wash our hands..."

THOSE WERE THE DAYS...

In his days as Chairman of Safmarine Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris lived for a period in South Africa. After he finally stood down from the Board in 1960, he and his wife Jill continued to make trips to SA on Safmarine ships every two years or so to escape the English Winter in the Cape Summer. There was always one occasion on each of these visits when Harris could let his hair down: the Annual Dinner of the RAF Officers Club, held at the Mount Nelson and timed to coincide with his stay in Cape Town.. Invariably he and Jill were warmly welcomed and he would speak, at length and without notes, about the wartime days. One of the last letters he ever received came from the Secretary, Gordon Jefferys, telling him how much he and Jill had been missed that year as the Guests of Honour; many had been the tributes, formal and informal, from his "old lags".

OBITUARY:

ERIC HENDERSON: Another long-standing member of RAFOC, has answered the Sunset Call. We received the news of his passing after a long illness, from his wife Stella who wrote:

"It is with great sadness that I tell you of Eric's passing peacefully early on Thursday 25th June, 2020 at home. It was Eric's wish that he be cremated and not have a funeral. He suffered much during the last seven years with great fortitude and uncomplainingly. Nevertheless, his death came as a great shock. I will miss him and am grateful for all the wonderful times we had together over our eighteen years of marriage"

Eric and your Editor go back a long way in the Rhodesian Air Force – he became my boss in 1968 , and was a great mentor to me during my early career. He was also in those days a very keen Round Tabler and used to organise the annual Donkey Derby and other fundraisers. When he left the Air

Force, he went into the personnel business with Mike Daffy and they had a regular, and popular, Saturday morning broadcast on RBC. This was a novel concept, and probably the first time a personnel agency had taken to the airwaves in Rhodesia. In later years when he moved to Johannesburg, he was also in the personnel business with Chico Sales and I used to see him from time to time. We were instrumental in getting the first Rhodesian Air Force reunion together at the Inanda Club, which ended up with us being invited not to come back! It was Eric who introduced me to RAFOC and brought me as his guest to Lunch back in 1982. I also recollect attending, with Eric and many other RAFOC members, the Requiem Mass for AVM Harold Hawkins in St Theresa's Rosebank. Harold Hawkins was a Past Chairman of RAFOC. He had served in the RAAF during the Second World War, rose to Chief of the Air Staff of the Royal Rhodesian Air Force from 1965-69, and later served as the Rhodesian Diplomatic Representative in South Africa. We had not seen Eric at the Club functions for a good number of years due to his progressive illness. Our sincere condolences go to Stella in her loss. We salute his memory, and we will remember him!

FLYPAST FOR DAME VERA LYNN:

Dame Vera, the Forces' Sweetheart whose songs helped to raise morale in World War Two, died last month aged 103. Her family will hold a private funeral service on Friday. A cortege bearing her body will pause in Ditchling, where she lived, to allow residents to pay their respects; and a Battle of Britain Memorial Flight flypast will go over the village. A spokeswoman for the family said the cortege would leave the family home at 11:40 BST and the flypast, consisting of a Spitfire and a Hurricane, would take place at noon. Dame Vera will be taken to Woodvale Crematorium in Brighton where servicemen and women will line the route outside the chapel, with a military bearer party to receive the coffin. A bugler from the Royal Marines will provide music inside the chapel. The service will be attended by a senior officer from the Ministry of Defence, the bugler, and a small family group. The family said a full memorial service would be held at a later date. The singer was best known for performing hits such as We'll Meet Again to troops on the front line. Dame Vera, who had sold more than a million records by the age of 22, was also remembered for singing The White Cliffs Of Dover, There'll Always Be An England, I'll Be Seeing You, Wishing, and If Only I Had Wings. The Queen echoed her WW2 anthem during a speech to Britons who were separated from families and friends during the coronavirus lockdown in April, telling the nation: "We will be with our friends again, we will be with our families again, we will meet again."

RAF CENTENARIAN VC:

Flight Lieutenant John Alexander Cruickshank VC, the RAF's last living recipient of the Victoria Cross, celebrated his 100th birthday on 20th May. To mark this, the RAF Association awarded John a certificate signed by Association President Sir Baz North. John has been a long-standing member of the Association, and is currently President of Aberdeen Branch. Born in Aberdeen in 1920, John started work with the Commercial Bank of Scotland in 1938. At the outbreak of war he was called for service with the Royal Artillery, but in early 1941 he applied for a transfer to the RAF. By July he had begun basic training, then spent time in Canada and the USA before being awarded his pilot wings in July 1942. He was commissioned as a Pilot Officer in the RAF Volunteer Reserve. John arrived in England in October 1942, and was posted to No 4 (Coastal) OTU at Invergordon for operational training and crewing. He joined 210 Squadron as a fully-qualified pilot in March 1943, on Consolidated Catalina flying boats. Promoted to Flight Lieutenant in July 1944, John Cruickshank was by now one of the most experienced, dependable and skilled aircraft captains in his squadron, having completed 24 operational sorties plus many non-operational flights. On 17th July 1944, John's Catalina flying boat took off with its 10-man crew. The sortie was being flown to provide anti-submarine cover for ships involved in Operation Mascot; an attempt by carrier-based aircraft to destroy the German battleship Tirpitz moored near Norway's North Cape. The events of that day, which saw John receive the highest award available to the armed forces for gallantry in action with the enemy, were recounted in *The London Gazette*: "This officer was the captain and pilot of a

Catalina flying boat which was recently engaged on an anti-submarine patrol over northern waters. When a U-boat was sighted on the surface, Flying Officer Cruickshank at once turned to the attack. In the face of fierce anti-aircraft fire he manoeuvred into position and ran in to release his depth charges. Unfortunately they failed to drop. Without hesitation, he climbed and turned to come in again. The Catalina was met by intense and accurate fire and was repeatedly hit. The navigator/bomb aimer was killed. The second pilot and two other members of the crew were injured. Flying Officer Cruickshank was struck in seventy-two places, receiving two serious wounds in the lungs and ten penetrating wounds in the lower limbs. His aircraft was badly damaged and filled with the fumes of exploding shells. But he did not falter. He pressed home his attack, and released the depth charges himself, straddling the submarine perfectly. The U-boat was sunk. By pressing home the second attack in his gravely wounded condition and continuing his exertions on the return journey with his strength failing all the time, he seriously prejudiced his chance of survival even if the aircraft safely reached its base. Throughout, he set an example of determination, fortitude and devotion to duty in keeping with the highest traditions of the Service”.

LAST OF THE FEW:

John Hemingway, who turns 101 in July, the only surviving pilot to fight in the Battle of Britain is "the lucky Irishman," his son has said, after his last fellow comrade died just a few hours before VE Day. Hemingway has become the last living fighter pilot of the group of men Winston Churchill called "The Few", a group of 3,000 fighter pilots who saved Britain from Nazi invasion when they defended the skies in the Battle of Britain against the Luftwaffe in 1940. It was announced on the morning of VE Day that Terry Clark, an air gunner with 219 Squadron, RAF had died the night before, aged 101. More than 500 RAF pilots and aircrew were killed in the Battle of Britain, which led Churchill to declare "Never was so much owed by so many to so few" in a speech that summer....

SCRAMBLE, SCRAMBLE:

On Friday 3rd July Typhoon fighter aircraft from RAF Lossiemouth were scrambled to monitor Russian long-range aircraft flying in international airspace north of Scotland. On this occasion, the Russian aircraft however turned away as they approached the UK Flight Information Region (FIR), north of the Scottish coast and as such no interception was needed. To support the Typhoons, a Voyager aircraft from RAF Brize Norton was also launched to conduct Air to Air Refuelling. This is standard procedure and allows the Typhoons to extend their time in the air. The monitoring of Russian military activity ensures the safe passage for all other aircraft, including civilian transatlantic airliners that are under UK civilian air traffic control. Scrambles such as this one therefore result when Russian aircraft fly towards the UK FIR, the part of International airspace that is controlled by the UK for the benefit of all. The Russian aircraft was monitored throughout their flight by the National Air and Space Operations Centre at RAF High Wycombe and the Air Surveillance and Control System at RAF Boulmer. Activity was coordinated closely with NATO allies, including the NATO Combined Air Operations Centre at Uedem in Germany. On this occasion the Voyager allocated to this task, was “**Vespina**” the VIP configured aircraft recently returned to service. This Voyager has now re-joined the rotation of tanker aircraft that are held on standby to support the UK’s Quick Reaction Alert mission as conducted by the RAF.

B747 A TRIBUTE TO JOE SUTTER:

Sad news, and the end of an era. **Boeing** is pulling the plug on its B747, with the last B747-8 to roll out of a Seattle area factory in about two years. Most of us have either flown in a B747, piloted one, worked on/in one, sold one, bought one, or have models of various versions ranging from the first RA001 [Boeing’s prototype], -100, -200, -300, -400, -8, and -81 plus freighter versions. Without the dogged persistence of its Chief Designer/Engineer, Joe Sutter, this beauty would not have seen the light of day. This magnificent aircraft is a great tribute to Joe!. (Sent in by Bruce Prescott)

BOEING, BOEING...

Boeing began a series of long-delayed flight tests of its redesigned 737 MAX with regulators at the controls on Monday 29th June, hoping to win approval and rebuild its reputation after fatal crashes that toppled its leaders and grounded the jet worldwide. Pilots from the US FAA and Boeing landed at around 2:15 pm local time at King County International Airport, also known as Boeing Field, after a round trip to eastern Washington that included a high-speed system test and other manoeuvres over about three hours. Boeing did not publicize Monday's take off, saying the FAA was leading the 737 MAX testing process. The business-as-usual atmosphere at Boeing Field illustrated a shift in Boeing's communications strategy on the 737 MAX since last year when it strained its relationship with the Federal Aviation Administration by issuing public statements that predicted the timeline for the jet's return. The crisis has cost Boeing billions of dollars, slashed production and hobbled its supply chain, with criminal and congressional investigations still playing out. In December, Boeing fired Chief Executive Dennis Muilenburg after scrutiny into the jet's design and development tarnished its reputation with airlines and regulators.

SAAF DRAKENSBERG RESCUE:

15 Squadron, the only SA Air Force (SAAF) helicopter unit in KwaZulu-Natal, literally came to the rescue earlier this week. A Mountain Club of SA (MCSA) request for assistance saw an Oryx medium transport helicopter from the lone flying unit at AFB Durban, formerly Durban International Airport, despatched with the Drakensberg in its sights. Reports indicated a MCSA member sustained injuries to shoulders and ribs during an exercise. He could not be moved due to his injuries and air force assistance was called in. The difficult terrain saw the rescue performed as a hoisting exercise with three MCSA members doing the "groundwork" the injured mountain club man was, according to Major Mpho Mathebula, "delivered" to Grey's Hospital in Pietermaritzburg for further medical attention.

REAPER AND PROTECTOR:

RAF Personnel selected to fly and operate the Reaper Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) will now benefit from an improved training system which also paves the way for the arrival of the new Protector RG Mk1. Future Reaper pilots and operators will now spend six weeks at the General Atomics Aeronautical Systems, Inc. (GA-ASI) Flight Test and Training Centre in North Dakota undergoing ground school and learning basic aircraft operations. This training will initially run in parallel to training undertaken at Holloman AFB in New Mexico, home to the largest RPA training establishment in the world. Students will then progress to Creech AFB where they will join 39 Squadron at the Nevada base to undergo the more advanced training. The squadron has absorbed the 54 Squadron Reaper Training Flight which previously taught the UK specific aspects of operating Reaper including rules of engagement and UK safety procedures. At the conclusion of their Combat Ready work up training personnel can fly operational sorties without supervision. A similar training system will be used for the new Protector RPAS which will enter RAF service in the early-2020s. Protector will be deployed in wide-ranging Intelligence, Surveillance, Targeting and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) operations where its ability to fly consistently for up to 40 hours, will offer vastly improved armed ISTAR capability. It would also be available, if requested, to support civilian agencies in the UK, for example in search and rescue or disaster response missions.

C130 RUNWAY EXCURSION:

A South African Air Force (SAAF) C-130BZ Hercules ended up off the runway after landing at Air Force Base (AFB) Ysterplaat on Sunday morning 5th July. The 28 Squadron aircraft, believed to be Serial 405, had just landed in a northerly direction at the Cape Town airbase and was turning around at the end of the runway in order to taxi to the apron. During the turn, the nose wheel went off the runway, its main wheels creating furrows parallel to the runway. Rain during the previous few days resulted in the ground becoming soft and the wheels sank into the soil. Luckily, the cargo aircraft was not damaged. Two Rosenbauer fire engines were used to pull the aircraft back onto the runway. It

was reported that the aircraft subsequently took off from AFB Ysterplaat at 18h00 for its return flight to AFB Waterkloof. It was carrying PT6 engines for the C-47TPs at Ysterplaat's 35 Squadron. After 57 years in service, 2020 is turning into a torrid year for the Hercules in the SAAF. Hercules 403 ran off a wet runway in the DRC in January this year, causing it to catch fire, resulting in the aircraft being the first Hercules to be written off in SAAF service due to an accident. Then in April, whilst Denel was readying Hercules 405 for service back into the SAAF after major servicing, the nose wheel retracted during engine start-up, resulting in the nose of the aircraft settling onto the ground. It appeared that no damage was caused as the aircraft re-entered service a short time later.

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

This is the fourteenth 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. Thanks again to all those who have contributed! We will use contributions in successive editions...

Take care – keep safe in these troubled times, and remember that all this, too, shall pass... So, let's hear from you...Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

To me, as I get older, "drink responsibly" means don't spill it.

Age 60 might be the new 40, but 9:00pm is the new midnight.

It's the start of a brand-new day, and I'm off like a herd of turtles.

The older I get, the earlier it gets late.

When I say, "The other day," I could be referring to any time between yesterday and 15 years ago.

I remember being able to get up without making sound effects.

I had my patience tested. I'm negative.....

Remember, if you lose a sock in the dryer, it comes back as a Tupperware lid that doesn't fit any of your containers.

If you're sitting in public and a stranger takes the seat next to you, just stare straight ahead and say, "Did you bring the money?"

When you ask me what I am doing today, and I say "nothing," it does not mean I am free. It means I am doing nothing.

I finally got eight hours of sleep. It took me three days, but whatever.....

I run like the winded.

I hate it when a couple argues in public, I miss the beginning and don't know whose side I'm on.

When someone asks what I did over the weekend, I squint and ask, "Why, what did you hear?"

I don't remember much from last night, but the fact that I needed sunglasses to open the fridge this morning tells me it was awesome.

When you do squats, are your knees supposed to sound like a goat chewing on an aluminium can stuffed with celery?

I don't mean to interrupt people. I just randomly remember things and get really excited.

When I ask for directions, please don't use words like "east."

Don't bother walking a mile in my shoes - that would be boring. Spend 30 seconds in my head - that'll freak you right out.

Sometimes, someone unexpected comes into your life out of nowhere, makes your heart race, and changes you forever. We call those people cops.

My luck is like a bald guy who just won a comb.

Thought for the week: Husbands are the best people to share secrets with - because they aren't even listening.

MATT



*'Eye of newt, spleen of rat
and leg of toad. Look, I'm
just following the science'*

MATT



*'Mr Sunak, we've identified
some unusual activity.
Please check and confirm
the following payments:
green jobs £3bn, arts £1.5bn,
small firms £15bn,
furlough £88bn...'*