



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 22 – 4th SEPTEMBER 2020

GREETINGS TO ALL:

Day 160 on the “Coronacoaster” ... and Spring Day for SA was ushered in with a blast of Antarctic cold! Coronavirus opens doors for Huey, the 'Spitfire of Helicopters'

US in the run-up for the “Plague Election”. Turbulence continues in Mali, Beijing continues clamp down in Hong Kong – more arrests of pro-Democracy activists continued chaos in Britain's quarantine regime, and August Bank Holiday brings a weekend of illegal “raves” - whatever next? Well, take your pick At home, the cold snap ushers in Load shedding Level 2, Bosasa bearing gifts for Dudu Myeni, Magashule on mute ... (Another) Eishkom coal to Majuba debacle. SOE parasites want fresh bailouts to weather the Covid-19 crisis! Rand weakens – and then strengthens (again) in response to ANC power struggle ... Comrades champion Nick Bester has been seriously injured in an attack while training outside Pretoria. Wednesday in the National Assembly: Of donkeys, tonkeys, murderers and 'egocentric' ministers ... we continue at Level 2, with relaxation of the ban on alcohol and tobacco sales, but with the overnight curfew remaining in place, as well as the requirement for strict social distancing and restriction on numbers attending any gathering at 50 ... Ekurhuleni police visit 102 pubs, only 9 compliant with Covid-19 regulations. What a surprise!

So, a cautious return towards “normality.” Holiday destinations and timeshares open for business, Kruger Park booked solid. We had hoped to be back at Wanderers by now, but, sadly, Silvasale at Wanderers has had to close.

SILVASALE AT WANDERERS:

Letter to Wanderers' Members: Covid-19 has claimed another victim as Pedro Silva has announced today that he has closed its doors. SilvaSale has provided Food and Banqueting (F&B) services at the Club for over sixteen years but six months without income and ongoing expenses has inflicted terminal damage to the business. We would like to acknowledge the contribution Pedro has made to the Club and to express our thanks to him and his family who were all involved in SilvaSale. The immediate impact of SilvaSale closing its doors is that we will not be able to reopen Chariots on 01 September as planned. We understand that this will disappoint many of you but we can assure you that we are already looking at a number of options for F&B that we believe will allow us to reopen Chariots shortly and provide members with excellent fare. We will keep you advised of the progress we make towards getting Chariots up and running. Regards, Colin Warner (Chairman, Wanderers Club)

THAT VOICE NOTE ... THE “VIRUS OF DECEPTION”

The voice note that spurred a rush to bottle stores across the country last week has blurred an already opaque line. It wasn't a media house that stirred up panic booze-buying, but rather an individual playing on the fear of many South Africans and taking advantage of the proliferation of messaging apps.

This underscores that the media is no longer the gatekeeper to information, and misinformation; the responsibility for separating fact from fiction falls on all of us.

The next time something like this crosses our path, the first question we should ask is: who benefits the most? It'll usually make the message clearer.

“Fake news, also known as junk news, pseudo-news, alternative facts, false news or hoax news, is a form of news consisting of deliberate disinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional news media or online social media. Digital news has brought back and increased the usage of fake news, or yellow journalism”.

STIRLING SURFACING:



An operation to recover a wartime bomber from the bottom of a lake near Amsterdam is beginning this week following a 10-year campaign by families. The BK716 Short Stirling bomber was shot down on March 29, 1943, on its way home from a raid over Berlin, and ditched in the Markermeer. It was based at RAF Downham Market in Norfolk. The remains of all seven crew – five British RAF airmen and two members of the Royal Canadian Air Force – are still believed to be in the water. The first pieces of wreckage were discovered in December 2008 when a boat stranded in the Markermeer pulled up a piece of landing gear with its anchor.

Over the next few weeks divers found several other pieces strewn over a large area, including a faded aluminium panel with its serial number. The operation, which is expected to take around six weeks, is being carried out by the Ministry of Defence, including bomb disposal experts and army and air force technicians, together with private contractor Leemans Speciaalwerken and Almere city council. (Sent in by Gordon Dyne)

Read more at DutchNews.nl: https://www.dutchnews.nl/news/2020/08/work-starts-on-recovering-british-bomber-from-bottom-of-dutch-lake/?utm_source=newsletter

LONELINESS OF THE LONG-DISTANCE SWIMMER:

A major search for someone trying to swim from Dover to Calais unaccompanied has ended after he was spotted by a passing vessel. Emergency services spent nearly eight hours searching for the male swimmer, who was eventually found just 500 metres off Dover. A helicopter and rescue teams were dispatched to the sea off Kent after the coastguard received a call from a member of the public saying a friend was trying to cross to France. The 27-mile stretch between Dover and Calais can be dangerous and is home to the world's busiest shipping lanes. The rescue operation started just after midday and continued until nearly 8pm on Sunday, when the swimmer was spotted by a passing vessel. When found, he was cold and tired but otherwise well, the coastguard confirmed. He has been brought to shore and will be checked over by ambulance staff. The incident was not related to migrant crossings, the PA news agency understands.

RAF OPERATION SHADER:

Operation Shader began six years ago on the 9 August 2014, when the Royal Air Force began a series of humanitarian air aid drops onto Mount Sinjar in Northern Iraq. The Air drops were ordered following the genocide of the Yazidi people and other ethnic minorities by Daesh in Northern Iraq, which had led to these people fleeing onto the mountainside to escape Daesh.

Following the conclusion of the aid drops, the operation quickly changed to become the UK element in the US lead coalition that began the campaign to destroy Daesh. The RAF C-130's carried out seven successful aid drops and delivered vital water, shelter and supplies to the Yazidi people trapped on the mountain. One of the aircrew that carried out the RAF air drops was Wing Commander Calvin Bailey, who back then was a Squadron Leader. Six years later and many of the aircraft operating on Op Shader have changed, mainly as a result of the successes achieved. One of the most notable changes however has seen the withdrawal of Tornados from RAF service, and their replacement by the Typhoon FGR4 aircraft. The Typhoons are now mainly conducting surveillance taskings with occasional air strikes as targets are identified.

Wing Commander Bailey is once again back serving on Op Shader exactly 6 years later, this time as the Commanding Officer of 903 Expeditionary Air Wing. Looking back at the aid missions he said: "We remain in situ at the request of the Government of Iraq but with circumstances significantly improved. The Daesh attempt to set up a so called Caliphate has been defeated and we are now supporting the Government of Iraq to rebuild and establish security across their entire country as they fight the terrorist insurgency that Daesh are now conducting."

NOOR INAYAT KHAN (GEORGE CROSS, MBE)

On 25 February 2019 it was announced that Noor Inayat Khan of the wartime SOE (Special Operations Executive) would be honoured with a blue plaque at her wartime London home at 4 Taverton Street in Bloomsbury - the house that she left on her final and fatal mission and the address that she etched onto her bowl while in prison so she could be identified. She is the first woman of South Asian descent to have a blue plaque honouring her in London. The plaque was unveiled at a virtual ceremony broadcast on English Heritage's Facebook page at 7pm on Friday 28th August 2020.)

Recruited November 1942 (F Section wireless operator) Circuit: CINEMA and PHONO: Codenames: Madeleine, wireless transmissions: Nurse

After joining the RAF as a wireless operator she came to the attention of the SOE talent spotters and was asked to attend an informal interview at a hotel near Trafalgar Square London, where she was asked whether she would be interested in becoming 'specially employed.' Although no indication was given as to what the job entailed, Noor wanted to do something more interesting and accepted the position. After completing her compulsory military training, she was sent to the SOE Wireless School at Thames Park and then to the finishing school at Beaulieu.

On the night of 16/17 June she boarded a Lysander at RAF Tangmere in Sussex, bound for a landing field near Angers in north-western France. With her was Diane Rowden, Cecily Lefort and Charles Skeeper. These SOE agents were later captured by the Gestapo, tortured, and executed. Another ominous twist to this flight is that among the members of the French Resistance who were illuminating the landing strip with torches was Henry Dericourt – a double agent working for the Gestapo. Through Dericourt the Gestapo were able to follow the movements of all the agents on this flight.

After making her way to Paris, Noor met the leader of the 'CINEMA' Circuit and within a few days she was introduced to his wireless operator, Gilbert Norman and the leader of the 'BRICKWORK' Circuit. Over a period of two months Noor sent 20 messages to London and maintained wireless security-keeping all transmissions times to a minimum and regularly changing her location.

On 24 June, the leader of the neighbouring 'PROSPER' Circuit was arrested along with other members of his team. As further arrests continued London believed the circuit had been infiltrated. In October, Khan was betrayed by a Frenchwoman and arrested by the Gestapo.

In November 1943, she was sent to Pforzheim prison in Germany where she was kept in chains and in solitary confinement. Despite repeated torture, she refused to reveal any information. In September 1944, Khan and three other female SOE agents were transferred to Dachau concentration camp where on 13 September they were shot.

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noor_Inayat_Khan

DOM JAN: FIRST SOLAR POWERED PARACHUTE JUMP:

Swiss explorer Raphaël Domjan (48) completed the world's first jump from a solar-powered aircraft after the plane soared to a height of nearly 1,524 meters. The two-seater aircraft was powered purely by solar energy, collected by 22 sq metres of solar cells spread across its 2 wings. He reached a speed of 150 kilometres per hour during his jump, landing near the project base in Payerne in Western Switzerland. In 2022, the team aims to carry out a high-altitude flight powered exclusively by solar energy, seeking to reach the stratosphere with an altitude of 20,000 meters. Domjan said "I think what we have done today is very important. Its showing young people that certain sporting activities, that are surreal, there are a lot of things that can be done. And we can continue doing them thanks to electricity, thanks to planes that do not emit greenhouse gas, that do not make a noise. We see that there is a trend today of aviation that emits greenhouse gases, it has an impact on the climate. We shall see that in the future we will do it without impact and that we can continue to dream. Planes have always made people dream, that's most important."

THE FIRST RE-DISCOVERY OF GOLD IN THE TRANSVAAL:

That important discovery was made by Pieter Jacob Marais, son of a wealthy Paarl family, well educated, enterprising and, although suffering from mild epilepsy, an intrepid adventurer. The Sand River Convention, granting independence to the Boer settlers north of the Vaal River, had been signed the previous year and Marais trekked north to try his luck in the new Boer republic. When he reached the village of Mooiriviersdorp (Potchefstroom) he made friends with the Liebenberg family and began panning for gold, working from their farm outside Potchefstroom, northwards along the upper Mooi River into the Gatsrand. He kept a daily diary throughout his travels and this, now lodged in the National Archives of South Africa, has allowed historians to track his prospecting trip from farm to farm with considerable accuracy. Ironically, he unknowingly traversed many places that later became significant in gold mining. He also met people who were to become part of the history of the region. As he crossed the Gatsrand, the richest gold reef in the world lay undiscovered thousands of metres below his feet, but the streams he panned in the dolomitic landscape yielded nothing. He then cut north-westward towards the Magaliesberg, passing Joseph de Beer's farm, Blaauwbank, unaware that on that farm the wonderfully named 'Nil Desperandum' syndicate would open a successful gold mine 20 years later. The following day he stopped at Thorndale, home of the famous elephant hunter, Henry Hartley, who would later guide geologist Karl Mauch to the ancient gold workings in Matabeleland and Tati and trigger the first gold rush in southern Africa. Poor Pieter Marais, it seems, had near misses wherever he went. Thorndale lies on the Magalies River and Marais panned for gold all along that river, past Hekpoort, the home of Commandant Gert Kruger, brother of the more famous Paul, and on to the confluence with the Crocodile River, now submerged below Hartbeespoort Dam. There he met Andries Pretorius's brothers, Bart and Piet, whose farm, Broederstroom, was named after them. Marais followed the Crocodile River upstream through Kalkheuvel, owned by Transvaal President Marthinus Wessel Pretorius, and on to the confluence of the Crocodile and Jukskei Rivers on the farm Vlakfontein. There, at last, his prospecting luck changed.

Two local farmers, Koos Botha and Tobias de Vlaming witnessed the moment on 7 October 1853, when Marais gently swirled the water in his prospecting pan to reveal a bright yellow band around the edge – the first gold ever panned in the Transvaal. Although we now know the historical significance of that event, Marais' diary simply states: "...found a few specs of gold in the River Crocodile."

(Article by Vincent Carruthers on the Heritage Portal)

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

This is the twenty-second 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 progressively as we move upwards and onwards....

Take care – keep safe in these troubled times, and remember that all this, too, shall pass ... We had hoped to be back at Wanderers for the Battle of Britain lunch, but the sad demise of SilvaSale and continuing restrictions precluded that. We'll keep you posted on developments at Wanderers... So, let's hear from you...Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

Dear Lord, I pray for Wisdom to understand my man; Love to forgive him; And Patience for his moods. Because, Lord, if I pray for strength, I'll beat him to death ... AMEN

I woke up this morning determined to drink less, eat right and exercise ... but that was 6 hours ago when I was younger and full of hope ...

Forty years ago, if you used critical thinking and deductive reasoning whilst analysing factual evidence, you were considered intelligent. Today, the same attributes make you a conspiracy theorist.

Musings of an unknown Helicopter Pilot ...

(It's long and complicated because that's the way helicopter pilots think ...)

Anything that screws its way into the sky and flies according to unnatural principles, is a helicopter.

You never want to sneak up behind an old high-time helicopter pilot and clap your hands. He will instantly dive for cover and most likely whimper ... then get up smack you.

There are no old helicopters lying around airports like you see old Airplanes. There is a reason for this. Come to think of it, there are not many old high-time helicopter pilots hanging around airports either, so the first issue is problematic.

You can always tell a helicopter pilot in anything moving, a train, an airplane, a car or a boat. They never smile, they are always listening to the machine and they always hear something they think is not right.

Helicopter pilots fly in a mode of intensity, actually more like "spring loaded", while waiting for pieces of their ship to fall off.

Flying a helicopter at any altitude over 500 feet is considered reckless and should be avoided.

Flying a helicopter at any altitude or condition that precludes a landing in less than 20 seconds is considered outright foolhardy.

Remember in a helicopter you have about 1 second to lower the collective in an engine failure before it becomes unrecoverable. Once you've failed this manoeuvre the machine flies about as well as a 20 case Coke machine.

Even a perfectly executed autorotation only gives you a glide ratio slightly better than that of a brick. 180-degree auto rotations are a violent and aerobatic manoeuvre in my opinion and should be avoided.

When your wings are leading, lagging, flapping, precessing and moving faster than your fuselage there's something unnatural going on. Is this the way men were meant to fly?

While hovering, if you start to sink a bit, you pull up on the collective while twisting the throttle, push with your left foot (more torque) and move the stick left (more translating tendency) to hold your spot. If you now need to stop rising, you do the opposite in that order. Sometimes in wind you do this many times each second. Don't you think that's a strange way to fly?

For Helicopters: You never want to feel a sinking feeling in your gut (low "g" pushover) while flying a two bladed under slung teetering rotor system. You are about to do a snap-roll to the right and crash. For that matter, any remotely aerobatic manoeuvre should be avoided in a Huey. Don't push your luck. It will run out soon enough anyway.

If everything is working fine on your helicopter, consider yourself temporarily lucky. Something is about to break.

Way back while I was flying Huey gunships in Vietnam, Harry Reasoner wrote the following about helicopter pilots: "The thing is, helicopters are different from planes. An airplane by its nature wants to fly, and if not interfered with too strongly by unusual events or by a deliberately incompetent pilot, it will fly. A helicopter does not want to fly. It is maintained in the air by a variety of forces and controls working in opposition to each other, and if there is any disturbance in this delicate balance the helicopter stops flying; immediately and disastrously.

There is no such thing as a gliding helicopter. "This is why being a helicopter pilot is so different from being an airplane pilot, and why in generality, airplane pilots are open, clear-eyed, buoyant extroverts and helicopter pilots are brooding introspective anticipators of trouble. They know if something bad has not happened it is about to. "Having said all this, I will also tell you that flying in a helicopter is one of the most satisfying and exhilarating experiences I have ever enjoyed. What I miss most is skimming over the trees at 100 knots + in a light observation helicopter. And remember the fighter pilot's prayer:

"Lord I pray for the eyes of an eagle, the heart of a lion and the balls of a combat helicopter pilot." Many years later I know that it was sometimes anything but fun, but now it is something to brag about for those of us who survived the experience.

Basic Helicopter Flying Rules:

1. Try to stay in the middle of the air.
2. Do not go near the edges of it.
3. The edges of the air can be recognized by the appearance of ground, buildings, sea, trees and interstellar space. It is much more difficult to fly there.

By: Unknown (Sent in by one of our helicopter pilot colleagues)

MATT



'He'll have grown into it by the time he goes back'

MATT



'We're in danger of missing our target, so we need to test you for coronavirus 32,000 times'