



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 35 – 4th DECEMBER 2020

GREETINGS:

This week ended with a bang – (another) explosion at the SAPREF Refinery in Durban. We marked Day 253 of the “Great Plague – and the “State of Disaster” continues, with an irony that seems to be lost on our noble leaders... Now over 80 trucks have been torched in the ongoing protest by SA Truckers against the employment of “foreign nationals.”... Comair takes to the skies again with half-price fares... SABC terminal turmoil continues - at the taxpayers’ expense. Again, no shortage of other fascinating stories: still trending in SA is the “Great Bushiri Escape”, now with extradition proceedings under way. Another arrest warrant for Zuma after his walkout from the Zondo Commission... Andile Lungisa’s early release from jail... The Judiciary in crisis around Judge President John Hlope (again!)... Ace Magashule – will he jump or be pushed? Sasol prepares to bank Lake Charles proceeds to reduce debt. “Covid 19 fatigue” sets in, but the threat of a return to Level 3 now realised in Nelson Mandela Bay. Cricket SA’s woes continue as Company Secretary is suspended and England gives SA cricket lessons... In UK, sadly, the retirement departure of the last ever Virgin Atlantic 747 G-VXLG “Ruby Tuesday” out of Manchester Airport on Thursday. Farewell to the Queen of the skies! And after the worst lockdown in 300 years, shops, gyms and pubs have reopened as England’s new tier system came into effect, with some retailers swamped in what has been called ‘Wild Wednesday’. As the national lockdown came to an end, shoppers were seen queuing outside stores in Oxford Street and Birmingham from as early as 5am in a bid to do some Christmas shopping. Covid vaccine approved for UK use... Europe “sniffy” about vaccine approval... Oh, and No Brexit deal is far more likely than anyone is prepared to admit. Elsewhere, China “recovers” without a vaccine? Trump vs Biden legal challenge rumbles on. And will vaccines be compulsory? Adolf Hitler wins vote in Namibia (Its true!)

MEMBERS GREETINGS:

Clive and Terry Mitchell recently reported an “Interesting day at the office” with a visit to Ballindalloch Distillery - in their retirement they have chosen the “better part” and settled in the North-East of Scotland within easy reach (Cycling distance) of many famous Distilleries - Our President, David Mackinnon-Little writes: “We will be back in Jhb from CT for Xmas, unfortunately not at the lunch. Please give my best wishes to everybody on Friday and wish all good luck for the year ahead – we will need it! Have a good lunch. Stay safe. DML”

Gen Derrick Page writes from the Cape: "My apologies are presented for the annual December Christmas Lunch next week Friday. I wish you all an excellent lunch filled with joyous festive camaraderie. Take Care, Stay Safe and Festive Greetings. Derrick"

RAFOC CHRISTMAS LUNCH:

We held our Ladies Christmas Lunch on Friday 4 December again at Rand Park Golf Club, a very congenial venue. Some 40 members and their Ladies congregated in the Jacaranda room, appropriately 'dressed' with Christmas decorations. The buffet lunch was Prawn and Avo starter followed by a choice of Turkey Roll or Hake accompanied by a great assortment of vegetables and salad, rounded off with a Cafe au Lait Brule. Scully and Sandra Levin were with us, and Scully signed his book "Punching Holes in the Sky" for a number of members. After lunch, Jon Adams gave us a brief and very interesting insight into the life and times of Squadron Leader Marmaduke Thomas St John "Pat" Pattle, DFC & Bar RAF, the South African "Ace of Aces" with a score of (at least) 41 enemy aircraft destroyed in North Africa and the Mediterranean, between August 1940 and April 1941, the highest score of any of the South African pilots in WW2. His early victories were while flying Gloster Gladiator biplanes and his later kills while flying Hurricanes. He was last seen battling Messerschmitt Bf 110 heavy fighters, when his Hurricane crashed into the sea off Athens during this dogfight and Pattle was killed on 21 April 1941, aged 26. A "natural" pilot, his approach to air combat was "You must be aggressive in the air but not to the extent of recklessness. Always be ready to take the initiative, but only when you have the enemy aircraft at a disadvantage. You must be ready to react instinctively in any situation and you can only do this if you are alert both physically and mentally. Good eyes and perfect co-ordination of hands and feet are essential. Flying an aeroplane in combat should be automatic. The mind must be free to think what to do; it must never be clouded with any thought on how it should be done." Proceedings closed with "Russell's Raffle" for a selection of wines and Ladies prizes, with Ian Grace the happy winner of the Scotch. The "stayers" lingered to enjoy the camaraderie and deal with the residual table wines....

WANDERERS UPDATE:

The latest Wanderers Newsletter records that the soft opening of "Chariots" on Friday 27th November went well in spite of the deluge of rain and some teething problems and it was very encouraging to have such good attendance. The Club received mostly favourable reports about the décor, the food and the service and it can only grow from strength to strength. Our new caterer, Gavin and his staff worked tirelessly, and they offered a very pleasant atmosphere and experience.

BOAT RACE MOVED FROM LONDON OVER SAFETY CONCERNS:

Even the Boat Race is not exempt: Cambridge crews have home advantage for next year's Boat Race after organisers were forced to move the showpiece away from the River Thames. A three-mile stretch of the Great River Ouse between Ely and Littleport in Cambridgeshire has been chosen in part due to concerns over the safety of Hammersmith Bridge. The green West London landmark is almost halfway into the race and has been closed for 18 months because of structural problems.

GREEN MACHINES:

Green vehicles of a different kind have arrived at RAF Leeming and RAF Wittering as the Stations make a bold start on the road to lower emissions. All RAF Stations have Mechanical Transport (MT) Sections. Known as Station MT, these sections manage and maintain the fleet of vehicles used for routine defence business. The MT Sections at RAF Leeming and RAF Wittering have received six and five Peugeot e-208 electric vehicles respectively. The new cars are part of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle (ULEV) programme and are supplied under a 'white-fleet' contract. Flight Sergeant Darren Lewis manages RAF Wittering's vehicles and its military and civilian drivers, says: "This is absolutely the right thing for us to do, we need environmentally friendly

vehicles and these new electric cars are a great start". By 2023 the MoD's target is to have electric vehicles making up 25% of its white fleet. White fleet describes civilian vehicles; the cars, vans and lorries that would not ordinarily have a military role. So far, the new electric vehicles have proved to be a useful addition to the Stations' fleets and charging requirements aside, the electric cars can do everything required from a similar sized conventional vehicle.



Station Commander of RAF Wittering, Group Captain Jo Lincoln.

DEFENCE BONANZA:

UK Defence is set for the biggest funding lift since the end of the Cold War with a government budget boost of £16.5 billion to transform the Armed Forces. PM Boris Johnson announced the spending spree to counter the growing threat from Russia and China in space and the cyber realm. Among the projects to receive extra funding are a national Cyber Force and RAF Space Command, to safeguard military and commercial satellites from attack by adversaries. Senior Air chiefs this week warned the next major conflict could be won or lost in space and that a move away from traditional military war fighting is vital to protect the UK and its allies. Mr Johnson said: "I have taken this decision in the teeth of the pandemic because the defence of the realm must come first. "The international situation is more perilous and intensely competitive than at any time since the Cold War and Britain must be true to our history and stand alongside our allies. To achieve this, we need to upgrade our capabilities across the board. "This is our chance to end the era of retreat, transform our Armed Forces, bolster our global influence, unite and level up our country, pioneer new technology and defend our people and way of life." This latest funding commitment, combined with the government's manifesto pledge on defence spending, is expected to net the Forces an extra £24 billion over the next four years. Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, said: "We have to be ready to protect and if necessary, defend our critical national interests in space. "We see nations like China and Russia and others developing anti-satellite capabilities. "We must ensure the security and safety of the space domain. That means understanding what malign actors are doing and being prepared to fight to defend those interests if it came to it. (Simon Mander RAF News)

RAF TYPHOONS SCRAMBLED:



RAF Typhoon fast jets were scrambled on 28 November to intercept Russian military aircraft operating in international airspace near UK airspace. The Typhoons launched from RAF Lossiemouth on Saturday morning and were joined by an RAF Voyager from RAF Brize Norton, which provided air-to-air refueling for the Typhoons. Two Russian Tu-142 Bear F aircraft were intercepted. These aircraft are used in the roles of Anti-Submarine Warfare and Maritime Patrol.

It is essential that their movements are carefully monitored when operating close to UK airspace. Russian military aircraft operating within the UK Flight Information Region can act as a hazard to other air users, especially in this case as this was busy airspace over the North Sea. Often these

aircraft do not squawk, which involves transmitting a code to identify the aircraft's intentions, position, and altitude, or talk to UK air traffic controllers, causing other civilian airliners in the area to be re-routed to prevent aircraft from flying too close. To deter this unprofessional activity and mitigate the risks associated with Russian military aircraft flying in this busy international airspace, the RAF Typhoons shadowed the two Russian Bears and closely monitored their movements. Other NATO allies also launched their Quick Reaction Alert assets to assist in monitoring the Russian aircraft. Controllers from RAF Scampton coordinated the mission, liaising with NATO partners at the Combined Air Operations Centre in Uedem, Germany.

USAF B-52 BOMBER PREPARING TO FLY INTO 2050 - AND INTO HISTORY:

When the United States Air Force (USAF) launched its legendary Boeing-built B-52 bomber in the 1950's, it's likely no one envisioned that the aircraft would still be flying today – nor that the USAF would decide to continue its operations until at least the 2050's. But that's the current plan for the 76 B-52H aircraft still in operation, the most recent of which were built in the 1960's. The B-52 Stratofortress – a long-range, subsonic, jet-powered strategic bomber – has played a key role in deterring enemy aggression from the Cold War and Vietnam War to Desert Storm and the global war on terror. Now as the current fleet surpasses 50 years of service, the USAF recently decided to re-engine the B-52 as part of the Commercial Engine Replacement Program (CERP). Doing so will outfit these legendary aircraft with modern commercial off-the-shelf, in-production jet engines that will: extend the life of the aircraft and its efficiency - Not a bad birthday present for this tireless warbird!



Collins Aerospace has been part of the B-52 since the first version took flight in the 1950's. Rohr Aircraft Corporation, one of Collins' heritage companies, produced parts of the plane's propulsion system for what was then Boeing's cutting-edge new bomber: the B-52. As the B-52 advanced from the first "A" model to the current "H" model that started flying in the 1960's, Collins Aerospace expanded its manufacturing innovations to modify the original parts to accommodate increased electrical power generation and engine thrust.

Over the years, the company supplied not just the nacelles and struts, but also the fuel pod tanks and aft fuselage structure. "We've been on every B-52 variant to date, producing 5,952 nacelles and 2,976 struts over the years," said Marc Duvall, president, Aerostructures, Collins Aerospace. "We understand nacelles and how to efficiently and accurately manufacture them to the Boeing and Air Force standards and schedules. And beyond manufacturing, Collins has the service and repair network to keep these components flying as the B-52 mission extends toward its centennial celebration." (Via Bruce Prescott)

RICHARD PAPE:

Last week we recorded the epic "Cape to Cape" journey made down through Africa by this airman. Another of his obituaries makes very interesting reading: "What do you do if you survive World War II after jumping out of a Stirling Bomber, plotting daring escapes with Douglas Bader, putting up with several interrogations by the Gestapo, and succeed in getting back to Blighty, only to then discover after its all over that you just can't settle down to life's ordinary rut, like all the rest? Bombastic, arrogant, argumentative, single-minded, incredibly determined, Richard Pape had many of the right qualities – the sort that had got him out of Nazi concentration camps and home. Nobody

could tell him anything, least of all the word No. He fell out with his navigator on the run up through Norway – hardly a surprise – who was so angry he stepped into the nearest car showroom, a Renault dealership, bought a Renault Dauphine, and announced that he would race Pape to Cape Town. When Pape's second co-driver became seriously ill at Gibraltar Pape knew that crossing the Sahara alone and at the height of summer was against the regulations and that he would not get a permit from the French. He needed another co-driver, so he walked into the RAF Sergeants mess, regaled them with his wartime escape stories.... after all, having written two best sellers, "Arm Me Audacity", and "Boldness Be My Friend", Pape was something of a celebrity. He persuaded – remarkably – a young RAF flight sergeant to go AWOL and accompany him. "But I will get court-martialed if we are caught." Ah, says Pape, if the Nazis can't catch me... They made the Sahara crossing, but not without provoking a massive search that would end in their arrest and further delays. In Nigeria, the rains were heavy, and the roads flooded. At one of many road-blocks, Pape was told it was impossible to continue. "Ah, but I must," he insisted... and produced a visiting card, which he had the foresight to print in England before setting out, and now the visionary initiative was to produce dividends. It showed that Richard Pape was a Nigerian Health Inspector, and he had a hospital to inspect. "It's only just down this road." Policemen were not going to stop the flying Pape. Bullshit, persistence, dogged determination, all saw him through... and so the car arrived in Cape Town.

FATHER OF SA AVIATION:



Another notable aviator who made epic overland motor trips was John Weston (M. J. L. Weston, D.Sc., F.R.G.S., F.R.S.A., A.I.E.E) who is regarded as the father of aviation in South Africa. A man of many parts, Weston was born in an ox wagon near Fort Marshall in KwaZulu-Natal on 17 June 1873. As a young man he travelled widely and trained as an engineer in Belgium. He then worked for various engineering companies – from America to Russia. Weston returned to South Africa in 1907 where he first lived near Hoopstad in the Free State and in

1909 settled at Brandfort. During this time he built his first aeroplane. Its Panhard engine was, however, underpowered and he took it to France in 1910, where it was modified and fitted with a revolutionary seven-cylinder rotary air-cooled Gnome type engine. Weston also qualified as a pilot in France. The following year he returned to South Africa and on 18 June 1911, gave a flying demonstration in his Weston-Farman aeroplane at Kimberley. In the same year Weston founded the Aeronautical Society of South Africa. Weston also had a love of travel and encouraged this in his children. While in the US, between 1919 and 1921, Weston purchased a Detroit-manufactured "Commerce" one tonne truck with a Continental N engine. The truck was shipped to England where Weston converted it into a motor home which could sleep five. Weston painted the vehicle yellow with black trim and called it "Suid Afrika", essentially a large wooden structure on the rear chassis of the truck. Windows were placed at the front of the living quarters and in the sides of the lantern roof. The vehicle could be hoisted upright onto a ship's deck. A sign on the side read, "Our mansion: 7 by 14 feet, Our field: the world, Our family: mankind." and surrounding this, in a circle, "Round the World." Weston and his family took a tour of 18 weeks in the Suid Afrika from England to Greece. The Westons lived in Athens for two years then in May 1924, returned in the Suid Afrika to England and from there to South Africa. In 1925, Weston made extensive travels through

southern Africa. In 1926, the family attempted to return to England, overland. In 1927, Weston found the motor home was not suitable for the trip and returned to Cape Town. (The house in Brandfort was sold in April 1928.) The "Prairie Schooner" was a second motor home built by Weston. It had a removable living area with a canvas cover and was water-proofed for river crossings. In 1931 - 1932, Weston travelled from Cape Agulhas, the southernmost point of Africa, to Belgrade, Bulgaria (and to England and back). Weston used the Prairie Schooner for the remainder of his life. Sadly, in July 1950 John Weston and his wife were murdered by intruders on their farm, Admiralty Estates, near Bergville in KZN. Their house survives just a stone's throw from the ATKV Drakensville Resort, which was previously the construction village for Eskom's Tugela-Vaal pumped storage scheme. In 1975, the Prairie Schooner featured in the International Veteran and Vintage Car Rally from Durban to Cape Town. It was later donated to the Winterton Museum, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, by Weston's son in law, Carl Rein Weston. The motor home remains on display as an exhibit of the Winterton Museum. (Pictured)

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

This is the thirty-fifth weekly Newssheet (feels like 35 years!!) - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (preferably not 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 and continue to do so! We will use contributions progressively as we move upwards and onwards.... RPE and Scully Levin's books still available – Christmas presents?

The Committee wishes all members and their families everything of the best for Christmas!

Take care – we've made it so far - keep safe in these troubled times, use your PPE, and remember that all this, too, shall pass...

We'll keep you posted on further developments at Wanderers as negotiations progress. So, let's hear from you...Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

Wife: "Suppose you hit the jackpot of 1 million in a lottery and the same day someone kidnaps me and demands a ransom of 1 million. What would you do? Husband: "I doubt I can hit the Jackpot twice in one day!"

"Where's your husband?" "He's in the garden". "I didn't see him?" "You need to dig a little..."

You know you're getting old when "Friends with Benefits" means having someone who can drive at night...

A man goes to the Optician for his annual eye test. The Optician puts a contraption on his face and asks him what he can see. "I see empty airports and empty football grounds", he says. "I see closed theatres, closed pubs, closed restaurants." "That's perfect", says the Optician. "You've got 2020 vision..."

In time, some will realise that the vaccine was not created for this virus. – This virus was created for the vaccine. The vaccine should be tested on politicians first, as they are expendable. If they survive, the vaccine is safe. If they don't, the country is safe.

If you ever feel useless just remember that someone is a lifeguard at the Olympics swimming event.

How much should you spend on a bottle of wine? I don't know...about half an hour?

Mrs Cohen is walking down Collins Avenue in Miami Beach, dragging two large plastic garbage bags behind her. One of the bags is ripped, and every once in a while, a \$20 bill falls out onto the sidewalk. A policeman notices this stops her. "Ma'am, there are \$20 bills falling out of that bag." "Oy vey!" says Mrs. Cohen. "I better go back and see if I can find dem. Tanks for telling me, Officer." "Well, now, not so fast," says the cop. "Where did you get all that money? You didn't steal it, did you?" Oh, no, no. I would never do such a ting." says Mrs. Cohen. "You see, my back yard, it backs

up right next to the golf course. A lot of golfers, they come and pish through a hole in mein fence, right into my flower garden. It used to get me all fertumult. It kills mine nice flowers, you know. So, then I tink , 'why not make the best of it?' So, now, I stand behind the hole in the fence, real quiet, vid my hedge clippers. Every time some guy sticks his shmeckle through my fence, I surprise him, grab hold of it, and say, 'O.K., mister, give me \$20 or off it comes!' "Well, that seems fair enough," says the cop, laughing." Good luck! And, by the way, what's in the other bag?" he asks. "Vell, you know how it is," says Mrs. Cohen, "not everybody pays."

Pandemic (HYSTERIC) laughter - If you see me leaving this group, please add me again. It's just that I'm so desperate to go out!

Never thought my hands would one day consume more alcohol than my liver...ever!

Quarantine seems like a Netflix series: just when you think it's over, they release the next season.

I'm starting to like this mask thing. I went to the supermarket yesterday and two people that I owe money to didn't recognize me.

Those complaining 2020 didn't have enough holidays, what now?

I need to social distance myself from my fridge; I tested positive for excess weight!

I'm not planning on adding 2020 to my age. I didn't even use it!

We want to publicly apologize to the year 2019 for all the bad things we said about it.

To all the ladies who were praying for their husbands to spend more time with them, how are you doing?

My washing machine only accepts pyjamas these days. I put in a pair of jeans and a message popped up : "Stay Home "

MATT



'The EU insists on a level playing field. One of their negotiators has developed Covid, so now one of us must catch it'

MATT



'I'm the Ghost of Lockdown Restrictions Yet to Come'

