



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB
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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 36 – 11th DECEMBER 2020

GREETINGS:

The week started off in tatters: Leaked matric exams: Cosas urged Malusi to deal with 'crooks' as it slams rewriting of paper... Ballito Rage Festival attendees to get tested for Covid-19 and self-isolate after some attendees and staff tested positive. ALL Rage events in SA for the next year now cancelled. Protesters this week at the SAPREF refinery in Durban want it closed... The ANC NEC meeting didn't start as planned on Sunday as President Ramaphosa was still busy with the AU – NEC was expected to debate the contentious issue of the party's resolution that corruption accused leaders should step aside, as it stumbles on the road to dealing with corruption. Judicial Conduct Tribunal starts examination of Western Cape Judge President John Hlope, who behaves predictably... SIU crack down on the National Lotteries, not before time... Arms deal corruption case against Jacob Zuma postponed (yet again) to 2021... Government dips into employees' Pension Fund to pay for bail-outs... Eleven people, including two cops, have been arrested after Gauteng police foiled a jewel robbery in Johannesburg. Another 5 criminals shot dead after a cash in transit heist. South Africa's 2nd ODI against world champions England, scheduled to take place at Newlands on Monday, was called off. Chinese health officials have reportedly begun vaccinating its more than 1.4 billion citizens with an emergency Covid-19 vaccine. And on a slightly happier note, Comair's new "Lift" took to SA skies, and this week also marked International Civil Aviation Day and Karl Jensen featured in an interview on Radio 702!

LOCKDOWN BITES:

Despite further relaxing of lockdown level 1 restrictions, 79% of South Africans continue to be financially impacted by Covid-19. This is up two percentage points from October but lower than the highest level (84%) experienced in June.

SHAKIN' START TO ROYAL TRAIN SEND-OFF:

The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge were serenaded by Shakin' Stevens as they boarded the royal train for a UK tour with the most festive of send-offs. The royal couple were delighted when the singer agreed to perform his classic hit "Merry Christmas Everyone" on the platform at Euston station in London. The Cambridges set off on a three-day journey to pay tribute to those who have gone "above

and beyond" this year, kicking off with a special tribute to the transport workers who have kept the country moving during the Covid pandemic.

THOSE PLAYING FIELDS OF ETON....

The genius of the British Establishment, its talent for keeping its people in power regardless of the social context, lies not in a commitment to a fixed set of cultural principles but its ability to move with the times and, by so doing, capture them. If the communists had won the Cold War, I've no doubt the school would have survived, and the Politburo would be stuffed with charming Old Etonians.

NAAFI CENTENARY:

That venerable institution, the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes rafmuseum.org (NAAFI) celebrates its centenary this month and to mark the occasion the British Forces Philatelic Service (BFPS) has produced a special commemorative cover, to be issued on December 9. It features the NAAFI centenary logo with a Royal Mail bespoke Personal Smiler® stamp bearing the current NAAFI corporate logo. The stamp will be cancelled by a BFPS special handstamp carrying the unique BFPS number 3232. The standard version of the cover costs £9, and the limited edition signed by the Managing Director of NAAFI is £18. All covers include an information insert telling the story of the organisation and are presented in a protective cellophane sleeve. The NAAFI was established by the British Government in December 1920 when the Expeditionary Force Canteens and the Navy and Army Canteen Board were combined to run the recreational establishments needed by the Armed Forces, and to sell goods to Servicemen and their families. Since then, the NAAFI has supported British Forces at home and abroad. The covers can be ordered from the BFPS online shop (bfps.org.uk) or by post by sending a cheque (payable to 'BFPS CIC') to: BFPS, The Old Post Office, Links Place, Elie, LEVEN, KY9 1AX. BFPS fundraises for Service charities through philately and is run by volunteers who are Armed Forces veterans.

DAMBUSTERS PILOTS:

617 Sqn crews ran the gauntlet of one of the world's most sophisticated threat simulation systems during recent trials onboard HMS Queen Elizabeth. Experts from the US 266th Range Squadron deployed to Britain for the first time with their state-of-the-art kit to put F-35 aircrews through their paces. The Air National Guard unit uses digital and electronic signals to mimic multiple attacks by surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft artillery on 617 (Dambusters) Sqn and USMC Lightnings flying from the Royal Navy flagship. Sqn Ldr Rod Clark, A7 Training Enabler, said: "This was the first time these highly capable pieces of equipment and their operators had been deployed to the UK in support of this high profile Defence Exercise." The American outfit normally provides simulations of ground-based air defence threats using real world tactics at its Mountain Home range complex in Idaho. Earlier, RAF trainers teamed up with defence contractor Northrop Grumman to organise the transport of their kit and personnel more than 4,700 miles from America to RAF Brize Norton onboard a C-17 transporter. Sqn Ldr Clark added: "Due to Covid-19 restrictions the 266th personnel were required to isolate for 14 days on arrival into the UK. "They had tested negative for coronavirus before boarding the C-17 to ensure they were fit to travel and interact with RAF crews. A second C-17 arrived with the remaining equipment and personnel three days later." Following their lockdown, the team set off for Tain Air Weapons Range in Scotland. During the training, 266th operators were able to electronically queue on to the fast jets from other systems allowing them to target F-35s without highlighting their own position. They were in constant communication with exercise controllers ensuring the Lightnings were confronted with realistic threat alerts. Sqn Ldr Clark said: "The 266th were a potent threat and added another level of realism to a high tempo exercise." The RAF has already requested their support for the next phase of Carrier Strike Group training in 2021.

CHINOOK CREWS:

In the 40th Anniversary year of the Chinook in RAF service, Chinook crews were in the thick of the action as British and French paratroopers trained side by side on Salisbury Plain. An Odiham-based battlefield workhorse arrived at Knock Camp to pick up soldiers from 2e Régiment Etranger de Parachutistes as part of Exercise Wessex Storm. As reported in the last edition of RAF News, the manoeuvres marked the 10th anniversary of the Lancaster House accords which set up a long-term military partnership between the two nations that will continue beyond Brexit. The Combined Joint Expeditionary Force is now capable of deploying a 10,000-strong unit to combat-shared threats anywhere in the world, defence chiefs say. During the training 2 PARA soldiers provided range overwatch as French paratroopers fired an Anti-Tank 4 missile. Earlier UK and French troops were briefed on procedures for boarding and exiting the Chinook, before taking to the air to practice combat insertion and extraction techniques. (RAF News)

THE NEXT MAJOR CONFLICT COULD BE WON OR LOST IN SPACE:

This is according to Air chiefs bidding to combat the growing threat from Russia and China. The warning comes as UK and US defence chiefs ramp up efforts to gain a technological edge to safeguard commercial and military interests against a new generation of space-based weapons being tested by adversaries. 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 in space; that means protecting our critical interests and freedom of operations in space and being prepared to fight to defend those interests if it came to it." A strike on commercial satellites could cripple banking and transport services, wipe out the national grid and cause mayhem on the UK roads, bringing the UK to a standstill, military chiefs say. With military operations becoming increasingly dependent on space-based precision timing, GPS location and communications networks, strategic strikes in space could cripple traditional land, sea and air defences. Sir Mike added: "It's a grim picture. We have work to do to prepare for that worst case outcome. Space is a far from benign environment, with almost daily cyber-attacks and dubious sub-threshold activity". (RAF News)

THE SPACE ARMS RACE GATHERS PACE:

As it does, the UK is consolidating its military and technological links with the US and France and across the commercial sector. This year the RAF appointed its first Space Director, AVM Harv Smyth, and hopes to follow the US with its own Space Command. Britain became the first formal partner in the recent US-led operation Olympic Defender – a multi-national coalition formed to strengthen defences against hostile actors in space – and joined a space operations initiative to boost collaboration across the US, Canada, Australia, France and Germany. Gen Raymond added: "The United States does not go to war alone. We are focused on building security partnerships, just as our militaries have done in every other domain on the ground, in the air and at sea "The US Space Force and the RAF must continue to identify opportunities to improve integration. Our shared payloads, missiles systems and architectures build capacity over our adversaries, but we must consistently evolve and innovate together." UK Defence has also set up a commercial integration cell to coordinate government and commercial capability and this month held a 'Dragon's Den' style pitch day, awarding contracts to 10 tech start-up projects to boost capability. Air Chief Marshal Wigston said: "Every military operation from a land battle to the Carrier Strike Group is dependent on space. The UK Space Operations Centre is the UK Armed Forces' current operational level Command and Control organisation that provides space effects across all domains and monitors what our potential adversaries are up to. Space operations for the Royal Air Force are not conceptual or experimental; they are an essential element of the multi-domain integrated force of today." (RAF News)

OBITUARIES

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT WILLIAM JOSEPH "BILL" EAMES BEM RAF: Many tributes have been paid to Bill Eames, one of the last surviving D-Day pilots, who has died aged 97. Born in Enniskillen, he was involved in the Allied plan to secure Pegasus Bridge and Operation Market Garden and during D-Day towed gliders to Ouistreham in Normandy. Despite being badly wounded by anti-aircraft fire during Operation Market Garden, he carried on and helped his crew members bring their bomber home but was hospitalised when he returned. He later resumed active duty, flying Stirlings with 196 Sqn. Northern Ireland's First Minister, Arlene Foster, tweeted that she was 'deeply saddened' to hear of the death of Mr Eames – whom she called her 'dear friend.' The US Consulate in Belfast paid tribute to Mr Eames, saying his 'heroism at the forefront of allied efforts in World War II will never be forgotten.' The former Flight Lieutenant was awarded the British Empire Medal in The Queen's New Year's Honours this year, 2020, for his services to the RAF Association and community work in County Fermanagh. RAFA's Ray Hall said: "Bill's quiet determination, guidance and selflessness was admired by all who met him. People who talked with Bill about his wartime memories were always struck by his modesty and humility. "Bill made a huge contribution to the work of our branch and to the wider Association, and he will be missed very much by all of us. (Irish Times)

BRIG GEN CHARLES "CHUCK" YEAGER USAF (RETD):



Chuck Yeager, the American pilot who became the first person to break the sound barrier and was later immortalised in *The Right Stuff*, has died at the age of 97. "It is [with] profound sorrow, I must tell you that my life love General Chuck Yeager passed just before 9pm ET," Victoria Yeager said in a tweet announcing his death on Monday night. She added: "An incredible life well lived, America's greatest pilot, and a legacy of strength, adventure, and patriotism will be remembered forever." A Second World War fighter ace known for his bluntness and courage, it was his exploits as a test pilot in the years after the war that earned him everlasting fame and paved the way for the successful space missions of the 1960s. Looking back on his achievements in his autobiography in 1985, Yeager wrote: "I haven't yet done everything, but by the time I'm finished, I won't have missed much. If I auger in (crash) tomorrow, it won't be with a frown on my face. I've had a ball." Although his lack of a college education meant he was not chosen for NASA's burgeoning astronaut program, he and many of his air force colleagues regarded pilots in Project Mercury as "spam in a can" who did not do any proper flying. They were, to Yeager and his cohort, mere passengers "throwing the right switches on instructions from the ground". His death-defying adventures nevertheless gained even greater legendary status thanks to his inclusion in Tom Wolfe's book, *The Right Stuff*, alongside astronauts such as John Glenn. It was then made into a critically acclaimed film of the same name in which Yeager was played by Sam Shepard. Tributes have poured in for Yeager, led by NASA administrator, Jim Bridenstine, who called his death a "tremendous loss" for Americans. "Today's passing of Gen Chuck Yeager is a tremendous loss to our nation," Bridenstine said in a statement. "Gen Yeager's pioneering and innovative spirit advanced America's abilities in the sky and set our nation's dreams

soaring into the jet age and the space age. He said, ‘You don’t concentrate on risks. You concentrate on results. No risk is too great to prevent the necessary job from getting done.’” (The Guardian)

DAWN LINDBERG



Theatre legend, Dawn Lindberg has died of a COVID-19 related illness. Des and Dawn Lindberg were icons and household names in South Africa, known and loved for their stage and screen performances. One of the most prominent theatrical personalities and a household name in South Africa, the 75-year-old icon was also the founder and CEO of the Naledi Theatre Awards – one of the biggest and most prestigious awards events in SA. Dawn Silver studied Fine Arts at Wits University, and in 1962 she met her husband and long-time partner in music and theatre, Des Lindberg, who was studying Law at the time. “He was like a gentle Viking,” she recalls, “Tall, with blond hair falling over his eyes and a guitar slung over his back.” By the mid-60s, Des Lindberg had already established himself as a fine folk singer and he achieved enormous success with an Afrikaans song, ‘Die Gezoem Van Die Bye’, which went to number one on the South African charts where it remained for 20 weeks. In 1965, Des and Dawn Lindberg were married; they then hit the road (literally) when they bought a caravan and toured South Africa and the then Rhodesia, visiting small towns and cities with their legendary show, Folk on Trek. Dawn would look back, saying, “There was no TV in those days, so to become known in the industry you had to go on the road and meet the people.”

WIDEBODY SOFTNESS AFFECTS BOEING 787, 777, 737 (MIDDLE AGE SPREAD?)

Boeing’s two key widebody programs are facing stronger headwinds from both internal and external sources, prompting the company to further trim its planned 787 output for 2021 and signal that 777X certification will continue to proceed slowly. Production of the 787, in the process of shifting to South Carolina, will fall to five aircraft per month by mid-2021, one fewer than the previously announced target, and a 50% reduction from current rates, CFO Greg Smith confirmed on Dec.4. “The winter months have been tough so far, and we’re seeing significant [COVID-19] case spikes around the globe. And as the cases rise and you’ve seen the protocols around travel change, the recovery has slowed and continues to be uneven” Smith said during the Credit Suisse Global Industrials Conference. “So as a result of that, we’ve made a modest adjustment to the 787 production rate.” Uncertainty surrounding the two widebody programs places more pressure on the 737 MAX family. Boeing recently received approval to begin delivering the aircraft again following the model’s 20-month grounding. Deliveries will start with the 450-plus models Boeing has in storage and mix in new-build aircraft.

FAA ON COVID VACCINE:

The FAA says it hasn't yet determined whether pilots will be able to get vaccinated against COVID-19 and keep their medicals. In a statement issued to AVweb late Sunday, the agency said it's waiting for the outcome of an FDA committee meeting on an emergency approval for a vaccine developed by Pfizer. The meeting is scheduled for Dec. 8-10 in Washington. "The FAA is closely monitoring the active vaccine trials and awaiting the outcome of the Vaccines and Related Biological Products Advisory Committee's scheduled meeting next week..." the agency said in an email to AVweb. "While the agency has made no final decisions, we are prepared to evaluate the use of each vaccine by medical certificate holders as soon as an emergency-use authorization is issued." Meanwhile, the Air Line Pilots Association is telling its members to not take part in clinical trials for vaccines because they'll lose their medicals, perhaps for a long time since no trial COVID-19 vaccine has full FDA approval, the FAA considers participation in COVID-19 vaccine trials medically disqualifying for pilots for an indefinite period," ALPA said in a brief article on the effects of the pandemic. "ALPA representatives are working with the FAA to better define a policy as the science evolves." The FAA declined to comment on ALPA's assertions. The union is also warning its Canadian members not to roll up their sleeves for science. "In Canada, the director of Civil Aviation Medicine stated that participation in medical trials isn't considered compatible with aviation medical certification," the article said. (www.avweb.com)

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Nine months later, this is the thirty-sixth weekly Newssheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest 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....

The Committee again 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:

The other day my wife asked me to pass her lipstick, but I accidentally gave her a glue stick... She still isn't talking to me.

Sure, you can get your wife jewellery or an expensive handbag or perfume for Christmas. But she will never forget the Christmas you got her a mop. Never!

For those of my generation who do not and cannot comprehend why Facebook exists:

I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook while applying the same principles. Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passers by what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, what I will do later and with whom. I give them pictures of my family, my dog, and of me taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving round town, having lunch, and doing what anybody and everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations, give them the "thumbs up" and tell them I like them. And it works just like Facebook. I already have four people following me: two police officers, a private investigator, and a psychiatrist.

"THE RULES"

We always hear 'the rules' from the female side.... Now here are the rules from the male side... These are our rules! Please note... These are all numbered '1' - ON PURPOSE!

1. Men are NOT mind readers.
1. Learn to work the toilet seat. You're a big girl. If it's up, put it down. We need it up, you need it down. You don't hear us complaining about you leaving it down.
1. Sunday sports: It's like the full moon, or the changing of the tides. Let it be.
1. Crying is blackmail.
1. Ask for what you want. Let us be clear on this one: Subtle hints do not work! Strong hints do not work! Obvious hints do not work! Just say it
1. Yes and No are perfectly acceptable answers to almost every question. Come to us with a problem only if you want help solving it. That's what we do. Sympathy is what your girlfriends are for.
1. Anything we said 6 months ago is inadmissible in an argument. In fact, all comments become null and void after 7 Days.
1. If you think you're fat, you probably are. Don't ask us.
1. If something we said can be interpreted two ways and one of the ways makes you sad or angry, we meant the other one
1. You can either ask us to do something - Or tell us how you want it done. NOT both. If you already know best how to do it, just do it yourself.
1. Whenever possible, please say whatever you have to say during commercials.
1. Christopher Columbus did NOT need directions and neither do we.
1. ALL men see in only 16 colours, like Windows default settings. Peach, for example, is a fruit, not a colour. Pumpkin is also a fruit. We have no idea what mauve is.
1. If it itches, it will be scratched. We do that.
1. If we ask what is wrong and you say 'nothing,' we will act like nothing's wrong. We know you are lying, but it is just not worth the hassle.
1. If you ask a question you want an answer to it, expect an answer you don't want to hear.
1. When we have to go somewhere, absolutely anything you wear is fine... Really.
1. Don't ask us what we're thinking about unless you are prepared to discuss such topics as baseball or motor sports.
1. You have enough clothes.
1. You have too many shoes.
1. I am in shape. Round IS a shape!

Thank you for reading this. Yes, I know, I have to sleep on the couch tonight. But did you know men really don't mind that? It's like camping...



MATT

MATT



'Only two more sleeps till
the next Brexit deadlock'



*I'm a little, old, vulnerable
grandmother. Any chance
you could get me the
Pfizer vaccine?*