



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 136 11th NOVEMBER 2022

GREETINGS:

What a difference a week makes... Hot on the heels of loadshedding, "things fall apart at Eskom"... another crop of "watershedding" across Joburg due to a failure of a major feed from Vereeniging to Zwartkoppies, whose pumps lift water onto the Witwatersrand... and the rains arrive with a vengeance – like 617 Squadron "Après nous le Deluge"... Msunduzi bursts its banks in PMB... French and German loans to SA for climate mitigation... what a bonus for the cadres!... Mkwebane legal team bales out as Mkwebane copping it from Parliamentary inquiry - excessive legal fees referred to Auditor General... Five Phala Phala hoops Ramaphosa must jump through... F W de Klerk's Nobel Peace Prize stolen... Public Service strike looms... export coal train derailed in KZN... Tanya Campbell reinstated as Ekuruleni mayor on EFF vote... Stellenbosch University copping it from Judge Kampepe Enquiry... SA Proteas out of T20, Proteas out of SA... Springboks out of airspeed, altitude and ideas as they go down to Ireland... Nedbank Million Dollar tees off... Rishi Sunak under increasing pressure... key aide departs... COP 27 contributors copping it for slow progress – main offenders absent"... We are on a highway to climate hell with our foot on the accelerator"... Ukrainian conflict hots up... Russia orders retreat from Kherson in a major reverse... Putin will not attend G20m Summit in Bali... Russia may be running out of missiles... Drones deal between Russia and Iran... Iran supplies missiles and anti-aircraft systems to Russia... German tank swaps with Ukraine... Spanish airports close airspace amid fears of out-of-control Chinese rocket... US mid-term elections in balance – possible gridlock... Zuckerberg says laying off Meta Staff "Hardest call"... England rout Pakistan and go through to T20 Final... actor Leslie Phillips shuffles off this mortal coil...

TYPHOONS 'TERRIFY' NORTHERN IRELAND:



A Ministry of Defence spokesman told the media that the four jets were RAF Typhoons which flew a sortie over NI lasting half an hour this week. They are staying at RAF Aldergrove for the weekend, he added. "Northern Ireland is officially classed as Low Flying Area 19," he added. "Going forward they will be doing such sorties as and when."

Up until now low flying RAF fighter jets are virtually unheard of across NI, particularly in light of local political sensitivities. However, it is understood that yesterday's sortie marks a new era when the RAF will carry out such sorties on a regular basis, just as with low flying areas in England. Fiona Lively saw and heard them in Loughbrickland. "Noise was unreal and the speed of them!" She added that she did not know who was most shocked - her or her dog - "terrified by the noise."

T38C TALON TAKES A TUMBLE:



Pilot ejects from US Air Force training jet before plane crashes in Mississippi. On 7 November the pilot of the T-38C Talon experienced an 'in-flight emergency' about 20 miles south of Columbus AFB before safely ejecting from the aircraft, according to a statement from base officials. The cause of the incident was under investigation as of Monday afternoon, officials said. The pilot was transported to a local hospital for evaluation, they said. Columbus Air Force Base is in eastern Mississippi about 150 miles northeast of the state's capital Jackson.

The pilot-training base falls under the Air Force's Air Education and Training Command and student-pilots assigned to the base's 14th Flying Training Wing fly the T-38, T-6A Texan II and the T-1A Jayhawk aircraft, according to the service. The T-38 is a twin-engine, high-altitude, supersonic jet trainer that the Air Force uses to train pilots to fly its front-line fighter and bomber aircraft including F-15, F-16, F-22 and F-35 fighters, A-10 attack jets and B-1 bombers. Air Force flight students have flown the T-38 since the 1960s. The service in 2019 announced the jet's replacement, the T-7A Red Hawk, would begin replacing the antiquated T-38 in 2023. Air Force officials have said the T-38 lacks the modern capabilities of the newest Air Force jets such as the F-35. Top service officials said such problems will be fixed with the more modern trainers being sent to flight schools. The service's T-38 fleets have been plagued by crashes in recent years. A student pilot was killed in November 2021 when two T-38s from Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas crashed into each other. Two Columbus AFB-based pilots, an American instructor and a Japanese student were killed in a T-38 crash earlier that year, when their jet crash landed at Montgomery Regional Airport in Alabama.

DAKOTA ROADHOUSE: THE WAY IT WAS...



Many aircraft worldwide have been acquired by restaurant/cafe/disco/roadhouse owners (or even Sandton companies) as attractions once their flying days were over. These have enabled many aircraft to linger on and in some cases later be acquired for museum display. The Short Sunderland at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford is such a case. However, it is much more unusual for such aircraft to be returned to flying status. This did however take place with an aircraft in South Africa.

Many older residents of Johannesburg will remember the Dakota Roadhouse, which was established soon after World War II in Main Reef Road, Langlaagte. For many years, this roadhouse had a real live Douglas Dakota mounted on the roof. Many people confuse this aircraft with the Vickers Viking S-DKH on the roof of Vic's Viking Garage at Deland (now replaced by the Shackleton 1723) and still others confuse the location with the roadhouse at Uncle Charlie's, some distance from either site. But how did a Dakota end up on top of a roadhouse and where is it today. The answer to the first question is straightforward but its whereabouts today...? Read on! The South African Air Force received a total of 84 Dakotas from the US via the UK Government as part of the lend-lease contract between the UK and the USA during WWII. Further Dakotas were acquired post war, both new acquisitions and lend-lease aircraft re-acquired. Of the original 84, 58 were supplied directly to South Africa, with the balance coming from the surviving aircraft of 28 Sqn who brought their aircraft back from North Africa. Those of 44 Sqn were all returned to the Royal Air Force for onward disposal. The locally based Dakotas during WWII were all used by 5 Wing which fell under No 4 Group SAAF and were primarily used on the Shuttle Service, which operated between South Africa and Cairo with links further on as the occasion demanded. 5 Wing was formed as No 1 Bomber Transport Brigade on June 1, 1940 and was redesignated 5 Wing on February 4, 1941. Early in the war it operated ex SAA Junkers Ju 52/3ms, Lodestars and a variety of other types but received Dakotas from June 25, 1943 which partially replaced the earlier types. The SAAF used two Dakota variants, the C-47A Dakota Mk.3 with Pratt & Whitney R-1830-92 engines and the C-47B Dakota Mk.4 with the R-1830-90C motors with two-stage supercharger allowing an increase in all-up weight from 29 300lb to 30 000lb. Our future "roadhouse" aeroplane was one of the latter and was officially designated a C-47B-5-DK (the suffix indicated it being built by Douglas Oklahoma plant) and was built on Contract No AC-40652 which included 305 aircraft for the UK government of which five were replaced by other models capable of towing gliders and 10 were diverted to South Africa. #6845 suffered an in-flight fire due to an unsecured fuel tank filler cap and was subjected to a Board of Survey on March 12, 1946 which recorded the total time flown as 1843 hours. The aircraft was transferred to 15 Air Depot for disposal on March 19 and struck off SAAF charge on August 7. While repairable the SAAF just had too many Dakotas available for peacetime use. The board recommended also that in future, fuel filler caps were to be painted red with arrows to be marked on the cap and on the wing which would coincide when the filler cap was locked closed. The hull of the luckless #6845 was sold, allegedly for £120 and its new owner moved it to Johannesburg where with the camouflage removed and a civil type "cheat line" painted down to window line it was re-erected on top of a new roadhouse building and the Dakota Roadhouse was in business. This continued until the mid-1950s until a customer showed up at the roadhouse who showed an interest in purchasing the old Dakota. It is not clear who this was, but the SAAF had acquired at this time 60 Harvards from the USA which had been overhauled by Volitan Aviation of Pacoima, California, which was a division of Calair International. The purchaser may have been from this company as a deal was struck and the aircraft was purchased by Calair International, dismantled and shipped to the USA, where it was registered as N123S. The aircraft went to Volitan for repair. Date is not known but was about 1956-7. The roadhouse continued to operate but now without the Dakota.

MEMBERS NEWS:

Dr John Ledger survived a frightening experience which he shares in a Newsletter to friends and family: "I collapsed with a stroke on Friday 21 October. Today is Monday 7 November. Lots of well-wishers have been in touch, but it is hard to reply to everyone, so I thought I would do a newsletter for sharing widely.

What happened? Here are some versions. I was completely out of the picture for about ten days...

31 OCT 22 – e-mail to Ryan Enslin

Dear Ryan,

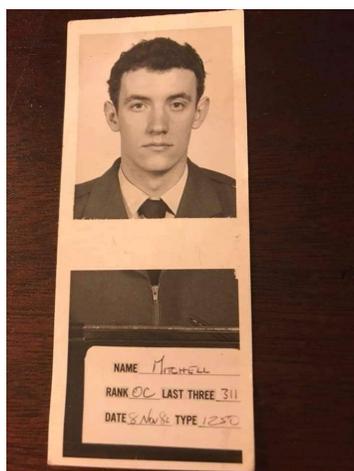
I have finally got back from the Dark Side. I had a good day yesterday and I have a better one today, finally with access to my laptop and communication with the world again after ten days. I have no doubt that you saved my life by transporting me in your car and following up all options from a position of strength. Left in the hands of an ambulance crew without hospital admission papers, I would most likely have died waiting in [Casualty at Casualty at Baragwanath](#). As it was, I was virtually

DOA when you got me to the Milpark, and they managed to pull me back from the brink. I have been getting world-class care at the Donald Gordon. The doctors seem to think I will pull through with the necessary interventions. I am eating well (last two days), and now need to concentrate on physio and exercise to get mobile again. Thanks also to Terry-Lee for alerting Amy to my situation, and to Des for connecting up your inverter. You have indeed been friends when I really needed a helping hand. If you ever need help from me, you must never hesitate to ask.

Regards

John"

Ed: John was due in surgery this week. I have sent him our best wishes for a speedy and complete recovery. If anyone would like the full Newsletter, please let us know...



Wing Commander Clive Mitchell (Retd) on attestation into the RAF 40 years ago this month. Previously, the last CO of 617 (Canberra) Sqn and thereafter the Deputy Defence Advisor to the British High Commission in Pretoria, when he and Terry regularly attended RAFOC functions. Posted from SA to British Embassy in USA prior to retirement near Lossiemouth in the North-East of Scotland.

CHEERS FOR NOW:

These Ramblings were commenced in the congenial surrounding of the KZN North Coast, but completed back in the Johannesburg "cyclone of news"... we elected not to drop into Nkandla for a cup of tea, but resorted to Ballito instead...

Our next Members lunch will be on Armistice Day, this Friday 11 November, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers... we will lay wreaths at 12h45 at the Wall of Remembrance before lunch. Our speaker will be our Vice-Chairman Jon Adams on the history and significance of the Poppy, the Unknown Soldier and Armistice Day. The presentation will be up-loaded to our web page.

As normal, limited wine will be available on the table. Price remains R250 per head and we request you to pay by EFT to our account - Nedbank - Melrose Arch - Br: 19 66 05 - Account 19 66 278 063. Use your name and "November Lunch" as reference, please... Please also note that we are committed to pay for the number of meals booked. Look forward to seeing as many as possible... Looking further forward, we confirm that Prof Anne Samson, noted author and historian, is due to be with us in December at the Ladies' Christmas lunch. Mindful that Word Editor now checks for "sensitive Geopolitical references" we stay this week in the safer waters of history with the Dakota Roadhouse and the SAAF's considerable involvement in the epic of the Dunedin Star on the Skeleton Coast...

TAILPIECE:

A Shining Example!

When my son graduated from high school, he had to give a speech. He began by reading from his prepared text. "I want to talk about my mother and the wonderful influence she has had on my life," he told the audience. "She is a shining example of parenthood, and I love her more than words could ever do justice." At this point he seemed to struggle for words. After a pause he looked up with a grin and said, "It's really hard to read my mom's handwriting."

It's totally OK to talk to yourself and perfectly OK for you to answer yourself.
But it's totally sad when you have to repeat yourself because you weren't listening...

I drink beer because I don't like to keep things bottled up...

Dischem has withdrawn Grand-Pa powders from its shelves... It's too white, and it works...

A Bus loaded with Politicians was driving down a road close to Oom Jan's farm when suddenly the bus ran off the road and went straight into Oom Jan's farm. It was a terrible accident... Oom Jan then got off his tractor to go investigate the horrific event. After some consideration Oom Jan saw no choice but to dig a large hole and bury all the Politicians. A few days later the local police department came out and saw the damaged bus and asked Oom Jan what happened to the Politicians that were on the bus? Oom Jan told them that he had buried them. "Oh my" says the Police officer and asked Oom Jan "Were they all dead? Oom Jan answered: "Well some of them said they weren't dead but, you know, you never can trust a POLITICIAN"

MATT



'He's OK with fireworks, but the rugby makes him terribly nervous'

MATT



'And have you changed sex since we last paid you?'

Great sign Spotted in QLD....



Chippy the squirrel moments before being beaten to death by a set of bagpipes.



DUNEDIN STAR: A SOUTH AFRICAN EPIC:

On 9 November 1942, Dunedin Star left Liverpool for Egypt via Saldanha Bay, Cape Town and Aden. Its cargo was munitions and supplies for the British Eighth Army in the Middle East, and it was carrying 85 crew and 21 fare-paying passengers.



The skeleton Coast of Namibia and what remains of the Dunedin Star

Dunedin Star left Liverpool with Convoy ON 145, which convoy was bound for New York. In the North Atlantic Dunedin Star detached and headed for South Africa. However, at 22:30 hrs. on 29 November off the Skeleton Coast of South West Africa it struck an underwater obstacle, presumed by the subsequent South African Court of Inquiry to be the poorly charted Clan Alpine Shoal. Its wireless operator sent a distress signal, which was received ashore at Walvis Bay. Dunedin Star began rapidly taking on water and its pumps were unable to cope. Its master, Captain RB Lee, chose to beach the ship for the safety of its passengers, crew, and valuable cargo. In a heavy sea it grounded 550 yards (500 m) offshore, about 50 miles (80 km) south of the Cunene River mouth on the border with Portuguese Angola. Captain Lee feared the heavy sea could break up the ship. Therefore, he had the crew lower its motorboat and start putting people ashore. The boat completed two trips, putting ashore a total of 63 people including eight women, three babies and a number of elderly men. Then the rough sea disabled the boat, and it was stranded on the beach. They were left with no shelter and only the boat's water and food rations to sustain them. Another 42 people, including Captain Lee, were left aboard the beached ship. A South African Railways and

Harbours tug, the 328 GRT Sir Charles Elliot, left Walvis Bay and headed north to reach the wreck. The 197 GRT minesweeper HMSAS Nerine, a converted civilian vessel, left Walvis Bay at 14:00 hrs. on 30 November laden with emergency supplies packed into Carley floats to take ashore to the survivors on the beach. The Norwegian 6,465 GRT cargo ship Temeraire and Manchester Liners' 6,048 GRT cargo steamship Manchester Division also diverted to help. Meanwhile, at Windhoek a land rescue convoy, led by Captain JWB Smith of the South African Police, set out to reach those survivors who were ashore. The ships reached Dunedin Star on 1 or 2 December. Nerine launched some of its supply-laden Carley floats to reach the shore party, but the strong current swept them away. It moved closer to the shore, launched its remaining floats and returned to Walvis Bay. Temeraire launched its motorboat and took 10 men off Dunedin Star, but the boat shipped a lot of water which stopped its motor. The Norwegian boatmen then rowed for an hour and a half to Manchester Division, which took the 10 survivors aboard. The Norwegians were now so exhausted that Temeraire had to take them and their boat back aboard. The next day Sir Charles Elliot arrived. Temeraire again lowered its motorboat, which in four trips rescued the remaining 32 men from Dunedin Star and transferred them all to Sir Charles Elliot. In the heavy sea the tug then struggled to get alongside Manchester Division to transfer all of the rescued men except Captain Lee and his Chief and Second Engineers, who were taken aboard Nerine. On 3 December, Sir Charles Elliot left to return to Walvis Bay, but about 06:00 hrs. the next morning it grounded just north of Rocky Point. Most of its crew managed to swim ashore through the strong current, but First Officer Angus McIntyre and deckhand Mathias Korabseb did not survive. The Court of Enquiry found Captain Lee culpable for the loss of his ship. Blue Star Line dismissed him, and he turned to be a publican in England. In 1943 or 1944, Blue Star re-engaged him as the master of one of the merchant ships for one of the Allied landings in Europe. After this contract, Blue Star did not offer him another ship. He later emigrated to India, where he died shortly after his arrival. Six of *Dunedin Star's* crew including an assistant engineer went on to serve on Melbourne Star, and were killed when it sank in the North Atlantic on 2 April 1943. Dunedin Star's chief electrician went on to serve on the landing ship Empire Javelin, and was killed when it sank in the English Channel on 28 December 1944. Some of *Dunedin Star's* cargo was salvaged in 1951. Some remains are visible to this day on the beach, among them a section of decking from the bow or of the stern.

SAAF LOCKHEED VENTURA INTERVENTION:



At 14:00 hrs. on 3 December, a South African Air Force Lockheed Ventura coastal patrol aircraft was sent from Cape Town to drop supplies on the beach for the survivors. At about 16:20 hrs. the pilot, Captain Immins Naude, found the beach. His crew dropped the supplies, but most were destroyed on impact. Naude landed on a nearby flat piece of land with the intention of rescuing some of the remaining survivors on the beach. Unfortunately, the landing strip was a salt pan which was disguised by the sand.

The next day it was discovered that the Ventura's undercarriage had sunk through the crusted surface of the salt, damaging the aircraft and leaving it stuck in the sand. Three other SAAF Venturas flew supply missions to drop water, food and other emergency supplies. They often flew several flights a day to the survivors on the beach. At times they also dropped supplies to Captain Smith's land convoy on the way from Windhoek to the beach. On 8 December Captain Smith's land convoy reached Rocky Point and Sir Charles Elliot's survivors and took them to a makeshift landing strip. There Lt Col PS Joubert landed a Ventura and picked up the tug's surviving crew. In Walvis Bay, Nerine refuelled and loaded new supplies, and on 7 December headed north again. It reached the Dunedin Star two days later and launched its lifeboat, which unsuccessfully tried to fire

a line ashore by rocket. Instead, Nerine's radio operator, Denis Scully, swam ashore with a rope tied about his waist. That day 14 crew, two women and two children were taken off the beach and transferred to Nerine. On 10 December eight more of the survivors from the beach were transferred to the minesweeper. Captain Smith's convoy then reached the beach and rescued those survivors who had not been transferred by lifeboat to Nerine. Smith's 11 trucks got back to Windhoek on 23 December, where the survivors stayed before continuing overland by train. They reached Cape Town on 28 December. Captain Smith was dubbed "Pump" Smith because it turned out that there was only one manual pump available to reinflate the tyres of the vehicles after they had been deflated to negotiate sand dunes. On 17 January 1943, Captain Naude left Windhoek leading an overland convoy to recover the Ventura. After on-site repairs and a four-day digging effort, he finally got the plane airborne on 29 January. However, after only 43 minutes' flying time the aircraft developed engine trouble and ditched in the sea about 200 yards offshore near Rocky Point. Naude and his two fellow aircrew members survived the crash and managed to swim ashore. Their returning land convoy rescued them on 1 February. All of Dunedin Star's passengers, crew and DEMS gunners survived, thanks to the courage and resource of many rescuers by sea, air, and land. But it was at a high cost: one Ventura aircraft, the tug Sir Charles Elliot and two of the tug's crew were killed.



RIP LESLIE PHILLIPS