



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

BRYANSTON 2021

info@rafoc.org

www.rafoc.org

President:	David MacKinnon-Little	
Vice Presidents:	Basil Hersov, 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
	Hanke Fourie	Tel: Cell: 082 553 0210
Web Master:	Rob Tannahill	Cell: 082 806 6779
Almoner:		
Bank Account:	Nedbank - Melrose Arch	Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 154

17th MARCH 2023

GREETINGS:

TWTWTW: Bungling Phala Phala, rating de Ruyter, rampant Proteas, reshuffled Cabinet, recurrent loadshedding, "Rockstar" Ministers... Cyclone Freddie hits Mozambique and Malawi (again)... Patients told to leave Charlotte Maxeke Hospital amid NEHAWU strike... Nurse with panga attacks ambulance... NEHAWU strikers put to flight by Westbury residents... military nurses deployed to assist Gauteng hospitals... the big stayaway threatens next week Monday... students assault educators, damage property, commit arson... eThekweni Municipality spent R3.6 billion on (illegal) overtime pay in the last five years... Nelson Mandela Bay faces water cuts after substation explosion... Parliament to blame for unlawful SABC Board processes?... business-sponsored consultants to work on electricity plan... straws in the wind - fatalities from militant Islamist violence in Africa soar 50% in last year... Standup comedian Fikile Mbalula says "the ANC is not corrupt"... "Humble" Mkhwebane says she's the best Public Protector ever... "Ramaphosa ignores call to trim Cabinet (are we surprised?)... Tshwane Mayor resigns in disgrace... cost of diesel for backup putting cap on businesses' Capex plans... SA Taxi is broken – badly... "Beer into Bread" (See below)... SA wins Windies Test, but Blue Bulls chalk up 8 losses out of 10...

Silicon Valley Bank collapse sends stocks reeling... Entire US banking system downgraded after SVB chaos... Elon Musk to build Utopian community in Texas... German Jehovah's Witness mass shooter named as Philipp Fusz... China brokers deal for Iran and Saudi Arabia to resume diplomatic relations – Ah So!... Russian jet collides (collides???) with US drone over Black Sea...

BBC Head embattled by mutiny at BBC over Gary Lineker suspension... Scotland has become a deeply sinister country – (Och Aye!)... Lockdown Files: "being used to rewrite history"... PM warned of shutdown's "terrible" effects... was Sweden right about Covid all along?... Russian soldiers mutinying in face of "certain death"... Russia's best units pinned down in Bakhmut... Wagner units join Ukraine... Ukraine using opportunity to "kill as many Russians as possible and wear down its reserves"... Warsaw builds largest land army to counter Russia... Divers used chartered yacht to sabotage Nord Stream pipelines... England's "grim defeat" in "war of the boot" against France... "Everything, Everywhere, All at Once" sweeps Oscars... poll majority don't want Harry and Meghan to attend Coronation... Harry will attend, Meghan won't... Sussex children not invited... "Outrageous slurs have been made about Suella (Braverman) Some of her MP's say she's competent"...

RAF WEDGETAIL AHOY:



£83 million investment at RAF Lossiemouth creates more than 100 UK jobs.

The new cutting-edge surveillance fleet will be housed in infrastructure at the Scottish base sitting alongside the recently completed Atlantic Building, from which the UK's fleet of nine Poseidon MRA1 aircraft already operate. Creating 125 jobs in the local area, including seven new trainee positions, in engineering and construction. The investment will boost the local economy and supporting supply chain, reaffirming the UK Government's commitment to investing in Scotland. The move helps deliver on the Prime Minister's priority to grow the economy, creating better-paid jobs and opportunity right across the country. Subcontracted under the £83 million contract awarded to Boeing Defence UK (BDUK) by UK Ministry of Defence, the investment will enable the build of a new training facility and a second unit the size of an Olympic swimming pool where combined Poseidon and Wedgetail engineering will be delivered by serving RAF personnel. The facilities will be ready for the arrival of the first Wedgetail aircraft, marking a return to RAF Lossiemouth for 8 Sqn RAF, who will operate the aircraft, after an absence of 30 years. Capable of simultaneously tracking multiple airborne and maritime targets, the E-7 aircraft uses the information it gathers to improve situational awareness and direct assets such as fighter jets and warships. The aircraft has previously been used by the Royal Australian Air Force on operations against Daesh in Iraq and Syria. "The contract signing for the construction of the UK Wedgetail operating facility is a significant achievement, and I would like to thank everyone involved in making it happen. The facility is a critical enabler for the Wedgetail capability allowing the full potential of the aircraft to be realised. It will also play a significant role in providing industrial resilience to the local community and wider Scotland." *Air Commodore Hicks, Wedgetail Programme Lead, RAF*

DOGS OF WAR:



RAF Chinooks in Estonia have hosted Estonian working dogs for some flying familiarisation training.

The dogs had the chance to explore a Chinook and experience a short flight to ensure they are comfortable with the noise and movement onboard. The crew from 18 Sqn, RAF Odiham, welcomed dogs from Estonian military and civilian forces. The dogs and their handlers practiced rapid embarkation and debarkation drills. It was a new experience for many of the handlers as well, who kept the dogs calm and attentive during the flight. The dogs displayed their exceptional discipline and enthusiasm. This sort of training in a new environment is important in case the dogs ever need to be transported quickly by helicopter. Having had the experience previously, they are more likely to respond well for a real-life, high-pressure scenario. The Chinooks are in Estonia supporting NATO forces as part of the enhanced Forward Presence Battlegroup. This follows the bilateral agreement between the Defence Ministers of Estonia and the UK. More usual taskings for the Chinooks has been transporting troops and carrying loads, both internally and underslung. The 13 dogs and 15 handlers were from: Estonia Rescue EOD, Estonian Prison Service, Estonian Military Police, Estonian Police and Border Guard K9 unit and the Northern Prefecture dog handlers and service dogs. Unfortunately, due to security reasons the Dogs were unavailable for comment, but they all had a great 'Tail' to tell on landing.

GUNNERS TRAIN UKRAINE:

RAF gunners have been in the frontline of training Ukrainian forces fighting on the frontline against the Russians. One year on from Putin's invasion that has left hundreds of thousands dead and millions of refugees, RAF News revisited 11 Sqn instructors who taught some of the troops and discovered the lessons the war has for Britain's own defence. Military chiefs believe teaching the Ukrainians to fight like a NATO army is the key to defeating the Russians. Defence Secretary Ben Wallace recently said Putin's forces operating under Soviet doctrine would struggle to counter western military tactics. But Brize Norton-based RAF Regiment personnel involved in training recruits on Operation Interflex say the students taught them some hard truths about warfighting at scale. WO Roger Hopper said: "We have forgotten vital lessons of the Cold War. We must implement what the Ukrainians have learnt with their blood and cross-examine how we equip, train, and manage risk." He said UK forces currently lacked the ability to sustain a high casualty rate and material loss, particularly ammunition, and would struggle to rapidly transform and adapt as President Volodymyr Zelensky's troops have. WO Hopper described teaching the rookies as an 'honour' and the 'highlight of his career' and said preparing people for a real war forced instructors to up their game. "When the troops under your command have a real sense of purpose their professionalism becomes more energised," he said. "Effective communication is key to initial rapport and is most important when communicating with people whose first language isn't English. My most memorable example is the reaction I got from our students, who said they thought that a Sgt Major like me only existed in films, not in real life. The result was whenever they saw me, they carried their weapons correctly with a genuine smile." He told how enterprising instructors built a model of Kyiv Cathedral and used toy tanks, strobe lights and bluetooth speakers to model the battlefield so students – some of whom survived the siege of Donetsk Airport – could discuss fighting in an urban environment and operating at night. He said a Russian trench system was eventually built to teach skills not learned in Britain for decades, but which are now a deadly daily reality for Ukrainian troops. Training team commander Fg Off Oz Iqbal was also struck by the dedication of the trainees. "We have been extremely impressed by their relentless drive for self-development and knowledge. They are fast learners and have been quick to adopt new and complex tactics," he said. "They are extremely proud of their heritage and are ambassadors of their nation. We have as much to learn from them as we are teaching." Former soldier Flt Lt Luke Mowbray, who served 10 years in the Army before transferring to the RAF Regiment, said the Ukrainians' experience and ability was varied. "Some had previous

combat experience with little formal training which added an interesting dynamic in teaching them British tactics and doctrine. One of the Ukrainian NCOs had experience fighting in Crimea, during which time he had been shot,” he said. “Some had no experience whatsoever. Some in my first platoon were screenwriters, sofa makers, accountants, or labourers, to name a few professions. Some spoke excellent English and were very articulate while others spoke no English at all. We need to stay the course with our help in supporting Ukraine, not only on behalf of the victims of war crimes and atrocities, but it is in our interests to show that acts of aggression will not continue unchecked or with impunity.” A/Sgt Adam Jones, who helped train up to 1,000 soldiers over a six-month period, said the experience fostered close relationships with many Gunners being invited over to celebrate once the invasion is over. He added: “It is a time to reflect on what we achieved as a force, but it is also a reminder that a lot of people have lost their lives and many more will until the invasion is stopped. Our support is more crucial than ever, once the winter is over and offensives begin again, we need to equip the Ukrainians as best we can.” Flt Lt Colin Arthur, who was responsible for overseeing all elements of the training programme, said: “I believe that the UK’s commitment has been vital in assisting the people of Ukraine in fighting the Russian invasion. We gave them the skills to return to their country to survive, fight and ultimately win the war. The first anniversary of the invasion fills me with pride and respect for people who, for 365 days, fought with honour and ultimately held off the surge of Russia, which a lot of the world expected would be a short-lived war.” (*RAF News*)

WARRANT OFFICER NORMAN JACKSON VC RAF:



Twenty-five-year-old RAF flight engineer Sgt. Norman Jackson had just completed his required 30-mission first tour in April 1944 when he agreed to fly one more mission in order to finish with his original seven-man Lancaster bomber crew. That decision led Jackson to perform, as his Victoria Cross citation put it, “an almost incredible feat.” On the night of April 26–27 Jackson’s aircraft was one of 215 Lancaster heavy bombers and 11 Mosquito fighter-bombers targeting ball-bearing works in the Bavarian city of Schweinfurt. Jackson’s crew dropped its payload on the target. But as the bomber turned for home, a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 fighter strafed it with cannon fire, sparking a fire on the starboard wing, between the fuselage and inboard engine and adjacent to a fuel tank. The plane’s internal fire extinguisher failed to put out the flames. Shrugging off shrapnel wounds to his right leg and shoulder, Jackson shoved a handheld extinguisher inside his jacket and resolved to fight the fire at the source. Gaining the captain’s permission, he snapped on his parachute, jettisoned the emergency hatch over the pilot’s head and climbed out onto the fuselage. As he emerged, his

parachute deployed, fortunately spilling back into the plane's cockpit. Gathering the chute, quick-thinking crewmates played out the rigging lines as Jackson inched back toward the starboard wing. The bomber was flying 200 mph at 22,000 feet in frigid air. Just then Flying Officer Fred Mifflin banked the Lancaster to avoid another fighter attack. Thrown off balance, Jackson fell heavily from the fuselage to the starboard wing, tumbling the extinguisher from his jacket to earth. As the sergeant held on to an air intake for dear life, the flames whipped up and severely burned his face and hands. He finally lost his grip. Flung backward into the bomber's slipstream, he dangled just behind the rear turret, twisting in the lines of his parachute, which were also smoldering. Realizing the fire was out of control, Mifflin made the difficult decision that Jackson stood a better chance of survival if let loose, and crewmen pushed the parachute from the cockpit hatch. Mifflin then gave the order to abandon ship. Of Jackson's six crewmates, four survived. Mifflin and the rear gunner went down with the Lancaster. Meanwhile, Jackson - his parachute two-thirds burned - was unable to control his descent and landed heavily in a field, breaking an ankle. His right eye was sealed shut from burns, and he could not use his hands. At daybreak he crawled on his knees to a nearby village and knocked on the first door he reached. While the German who answered reviled him as a "Churchill gangster," the man's two daughters took pity and tended his wounds. Jackson spent 10 months in a German hospital before being moved to a POW camp. He made two escape attempts, succeeding on the second in reaching a unit of Lt. Gen. George Patton's U.S. Third Army near Munich. But Jackson was not one to boast. His story only came to light after surviving crewmates, released from German captivity at war's end, shared their accounts. Jackson was duly promoted to warrant officer and awarded the Victoria Cross. "Had he succeeded in subduing the flames," his citation read in part, "there was little or no prospect of his regaining the cockpit." When he went to Buckingham Palace to receive his VC from King George VI, he was accompanied by Group Captain Leonard Cheshire who was also due to receive his on that day. Group Captain Cheshire insisted that, despite the difference in rank, they should approach the King together. Jackson remembers that Cheshire said to the King, "This chap stuck his neck out more than I did – he should get his VC first! Of course, the King had to keep to protocol, but I will never forget what Cheshire said." For the rest of his life the fire-fighting flight engineer suffered from permanently scarred hands, periodic depression and recurrent nightmares of his time out on the wing. Regardless, Jackson found work as a whisky salesman and raised seven children with his wife, Alma. "I was young and cocky," he recalled, "and thought I could do anything." His four surviving crewmen were grateful he had tried.

(January 2021 issue of Military History magazine)

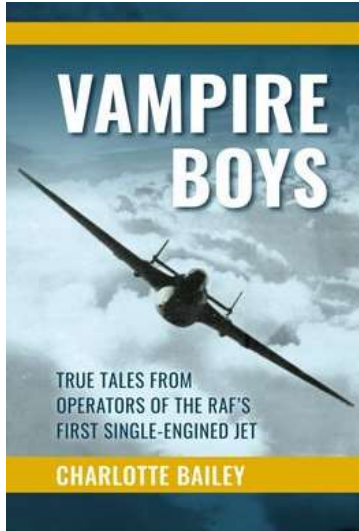
SANDF RECRUITING IMPERATIVE:

That South Africa needs a defence force is not in question. However, what is worrying to Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Defence (JSCD) is "a thin feeder system" with the potential to "paralyse" the SA National Defence Force (SANDF). At the same time, the lack of suitable recruits for the four services of the national defence force can diminish deployment capabilities, according to a Parliamentary Communication Services statement. The statement quotes Cyril Xaba, co-chair of the JSCD and co-chair of the Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans (PCDMV) as saying the JSCD is "cognisant of funding challenges" and wants "re-imagination" of alternative solutions. "The committee is supportive of enhancement of initiatives such as the Military Skills Development System (MSDS) and the University Reserve Training Programme (URTP) but is acutely aware of the funding challenges. The question that must worry us is how, within current budgetary constraints, do we ensure rejuvenation of skills in the SANDF and improve morale of our soldiers," is the verbatim quote the statement credits Xaba with. The committee, according to the statement, understands the reasons to reprioritise budgets and implement cost saving initiatives

such as MSDS intakes every alternative year. It adds there is concern continued implementation of these initiatives will adversely affect the military's capability to execute the defence mandate. (DefenceWeb)

VAMPIRE BOYS:

True Tales from Operators of the RAF's First Single-Engined Jet



WHEN HOLLYWOOD A-lister John Travolta was spotted in the small Norfolk town of Fakenham it caused quite a stir – not surprisingly. The Pulp Fiction and Saturday Night Fever star was in the area filming at Raynham Hangar Studios at the former RAF West Raynham airfield last spring. He was working on *The Shepherd*, the movie adaptation for Disney+, rumoured to be released this Christmas, of the novella of the same name by bestselling author Frederick Forsyth. It tells the story of an RAF Vampire pilot flying home solo on Christmas Eve in 1957, from RAF Celle in Germany to Lakenheath in Suffolk, who gets lost mid-flight over water and needs a miracle to land safely. The film also stars Ben Radcliffe (*Pandora*) as the pilot and Steven Mackintosh (*The Confessions of Frannie Langton*), with a script by Iain Softley (*Backbeat*, *Hackers*).

Forsyth, who won an RAF scholarship aged 16 and trained to be a Vampire pilot, has written the foreword to *Vampire Boys* by Charlotte Bailey (grubstreet.co.uk), which features first-hand accounts from operators, including himself, of the Air Force's first single-engined jet. After it entered operational service with the RAF in 1946, the de Havilland Vampire achieved a number of impressive records: it was the first fighter to exceed 500mph, the first to set a world altitude record of almost 60,000 feet, the first jet to take off and land from an aircraft carrier and the first jet to cross the Atlantic. George Cole flew five different marks of the Vampire in his flying career – the Mk.1, Mk.3, FB.5 and later on, while instructing, the FB.9 and T.11. He said: "The Vampire was a lovely little aircraft with a fantastic view out of the cockpit, the best I've ever known. Whichever variant you flew it was such a tiny aircraft that your bottom was almost scraping the runway. "Many years later, I was amazed to see an ex-Swiss FB.6 fitted with an ejection seat. I thought: how would you fit in there? Our emergency exit procedure was to jettison the canopy, roll inverted and simply fall out – or at least, that was the theory." As part of the RAF's commitment to Europe's defence during the Cold War's early years, several air stations were maintained by the British presence in Germany, including RAF Celle, which became home to three Vampire-equipped squadrons. In 1953 Mike Gallafent was posted to Celle as a member of 16 Sqn. The last Vampire retired from Celle in 1957. Mike said: "In summer 1953, when I first arrived at Celle, we were still the occupying power. We even had our own military currency, 'banknotes of the British Armed Forces' which we'd spend at the officers' club. He added: "In those days, most airlines were piston-powered, so we had a lot of free airspace we could fly through and even do aerobatics. At a time when political tensions were high, especially regarding Russia, maintaining a retaliatory airborne offensive capability was a must. We would sit parked at the end of the runway in a state of readiness, radio on, ready to go if any rogue aircraft came across the border." Author Charlotte Bailey explained: "As the National Service requirement neared its inevitable conclusion, Frederick Forsyth lied about his age and overcame a gruelling selection process before finally coming face-to-face with the Vampire at RAF Worksop. "However, the predictions of a pessimistic Warrant Officer would ring true as the excitement of the next nine months became tinged with tragedy." Forsyth was just 17 but told the RAF recruitment office he was 18.

One of 12 National Service volunteers out of thousands of conscripts, he went through rigorous tests and training to achieve the chance to fly a single-seater jet fighter – the Vampire Mk.9. He said: “We were bussed down to the flight ‘lines’ where were grouped the hangars and crew rooms. A seamy old Warrant Officer was our guide. He made plain on the bus that he would no more go airborne in one of those machines than sky-dive without a parachute.” The T.11 trainer version the young airmen had been using had an ejector seat – the FB.9 didn’t. The Warrant Officer told them: “Welcome to the de Havilland Vampire, gentlemen. You can fly in it or die in it.” Eight weeks before his 19th birthday Forsyth’s instructor, in the T.11, said it was time to switch to the Mk.9. Forsyth remembered: “Only later did I learn that no pupil had ever gone solo in a single-seat jet fighter at 18, nor ever would again.” Tragically, instructor and pupil Jonah Jones and Derek Brett died in an accident in a T.11 trainer with ejector seats. Forsyth said: “They simply flew into the Pennines. It was surmised later that they misread their altimeter, believing they were at 12,000ft while flying at 2,000ft, easy to do in thick cloud.” After Derek’s funeral, where Forsyth was one of the bearers, he and colleagues went back to RAF Worksop. He said: “We went down to the crew room, changed into overalls, walked out to the waiting Vampires, strapped in and flew again. It was the way we were.” The Vampire was retired from RAF service in 1966. One ex-RAF airframe, T.11 WZ507, remains airworthy and is operated by the Vampire Preservation Group, based at Coventry airport. Go to: vampireflight.co.uk for more details.

DJ RALLY:



Alf Long on a 1923 Indian. Photograph: James Hall Transport Museum Schlesinger Vase Trophy

Last weekend saw the running of the World-famous motorcycle race staged between Durban and Johannesburg, South Africa. The goal was to win the coveted Schlesinger Vase – a large silver trophy. First run in 1913 it quickly gained popularity and proved to be tough going. Sheer determination and courage of the riders prevailed. Initially there were no tarmac roads and many of the surfaces were rough and hard-going. It was only in the last years leading up to 1936 that some of the roads were tarred. Riders had to make regular stops to open and close farm gates along the way. It was also a flat-out race, not quite the sedate two-day timed regularity rally it is today. In those bygone days of motorcycling the race was a test of man and machine. The machines of the time could be unreliable and, on many occasions, had fence wire or bailing twine added along the way to “keep things together.” The “DJ” became a world-class event attracting riders and machines from around the world and it was a sad day indeed when the race was banned in 1936. Resurrected in 1970 it became a rally or regularity trial rather than a race. There were 90 entrants for this year’s rally, which finished at Benoni Northerns Athletic Club on Saturday afternoon. The great selection of bikes from 1910 to 1936 included classic Velocettes, Nortons, AJS, Triumph, BSA, Indians, Ariels, BMWs. And many of the riders were also “vintage and veteran”... A real trip down memory lane! (djrally.co.za)

SIBANYE-STILLWATER SHAFTED:

Mining really isn't a joke. If it's not a flood, then it's a shaft damaged during non-routine maintenance. Either way, Sibanye Stillwater has reported more challenges at the Stillwater operations in the US. Access to the deeper levels of the mine has been impacted by structural damage to the vertical shaft, leading to a suspension of production below 50 level for approximately 4 weeks. This will lead to a production impact of between 25,000 and 30,000 ounces for the year.

BEER INTO BREAD FOR THE NATION:

In one of a first-of-its-kind innovation, iconic South African brand Castle Lager, has used by-products of its beer brewing process to produce bread that is high in fibre, sustainable, and a source of protein. With a target to produce about 30 000 loaves to distribute to needy SA communities, the initiative dubbed "Bread of the Nation", forms part of the brand's Better World Programme. Castle Lager uses high-quality, locally grown grains to brew Mzansi's favourite beer, with the by-product being repurposed and made by a bakery, The Health Food Company. According to Castle Lager brand director Wendy Bedforth, *(good name!!)* for over 127 years, South African Breweries (SAB) and Castle Lager "have always represented the values of resilience and unity, bringing together South Africans through our favourite pastimes." Said Bedforth: "As a proudly SA brand, we are delighted to leverage our production process for the greater good that will fuel the everyday hard-working South African. "Bread of the Nation forms part of Castle Lager's rebranding campaign to bring Mzansi's favourite brew closer to our communities. "This campaign speaks to our commitment to using the power of our brand to reshape and rebuild a better South Africa." (And a few million more loaves would help, providing the ANC can't get near them...) *(extracts from the Citizen)*

CYCLONE FREDDY:

Spare a thought for the people of Mozambique and Malawi. The two Southern African countries are on the receiving end of a battering from Cyclone Freddy, which has left scores dead and a trail of destruction in its wake. Cyclone Freddy has become the longest-lived tropical cyclone on record and the first tropical cyclone to hit both Mozambique and Madagascar twice. *(Image by NASA 12 March)* By Tuesday, the death toll had passed 200 and would probably climb higher as Freddy petered out over the coming days.



MEMBERS WRITE:

Final extract from Philip Weyers "Letter from Down Under" (well not final, just his last letter.....)

"At any gathering or function of any note the MC and all speakers will recognise the "First Nation Leaders Past, Present and Future" (*Aboriginals and Torres Islanders*) on whose land they are. Aussies authorities are tripping over their own feet to 'gat-kruip' the Aboriginal people. And yet, 90 years ago Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families to be servants and those who appeared 'White' to be educated and integrated into 'white' society. Not much more than 120 years ago, Aussie men would on occasion head out to fire shots at a few 'Abo's' before repairing to the local for a beer. The majority of First Nation People were moved to the far north of QLD and NT years ago, where unemployment, crime and alcoholism are calamitous issues. The exercise of acknowledgement seems to me to be the woke idea of the labour government though I might be completely wrong which happens frequently, just ask my wife. Australia is often called a 'Nanny State' which I really didn't understand. Having now been exposed to, but mercifully not fallen foul of, certain of the laws and regulations of which there are seemingly thousands, I have now some understanding of why the reputation is at least partially valid. There seems to be a law or regulation governing pretty much every conceivable action or event and unlike in my Motherland, they are strictly policed and enforced. I've long been of the opinion that politicians are for the most part those who can't deal with a day job and have the ability to lie every few years to be re-elected. The same seems to hold true here and the Labour Party currently in power seem to be a bunch of very unimpressive whiners with a determination to be in control of as much as they possibly can.



'First Nations' acknowledgement in our nearby shopping mall

POSTSCRIPT

It occurs to me that it might seem I'm trying to compare Australia to my Motherland which is absolutely not the case. I love and miss South Africa far too much to ever do that. I will always consider myself a South African, an Anglicised Boerseun, with ancestry in South Africa dating back to the 1670's and will die so. My pride in being a Saffer will never change, ever. South Africans are my people, and I will always support the Bokke, the Proteas, the Bulls and the Titans, regardless. If, however, my typed and photographic meanderings illustrate what is possible when a government spends their income derived from taxes, on the taxpayers themselves and infrastructure, rather than stealing it then that is the overwhelming impression of so much of what I've seen and experienced has left with me."

CHEERS FOR NOW...

Your Committee has made an executive decision to change the date of the next Annual Dinner to **Lunch on SATURDAY 1st APRIL – 12:30 for 13:00 at Wanderers**. There are several reasons for this, but the main ones are:

Firstly - that there is a conflict with another association meeting, which several of our members would be going to.

Secondly - it is the actual birthday of the RAF, which was formed on 1st April 1918, and so it's appropriate to celebrate on this day.

Thirdly – traffic is much less of an issue on Saturday, and daylight avoids the hazards of our roads after dark...

Dress code has also been relaxed but do please wear your Club Tie with jacket. Ladies are free to wear smart casual clothes.

For those that have booked and paid already, if it's not convenient for you to attend on Saturday we will refund your remittance.

Please book, or confirm, so that we can arrange with Wanderers the numbers that will need to be fed and watered. Cost will remain at R250 pp and EFT to our account, please. Menu will be notified in the week before but suffice it to say it will be a three-course lunch with wine on the table.

Again, we apologise for the late change, but it does make sense and we hope that a few that find a Friday difficult will be able to attend this once-off Saturday bash. Next year we will keep under review whether we can return to an evening function with the normal regalia and trappings that make it a special occasion. We look forward to seeing you at this, our Annual Birthday celebration on 1 April 2023. Book at bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

Over the past decade there has been a growing interest, bordering on enthusiasm, for electric vehicles. Is the American motorist on the cusp of replacing gasoline-powered cars with electric versions? Will gasoline stations be superseded by fast charging stations? Will the transportation sector of the future be electrified? These questions are at the core of the energy and transport debates. Governments have enacted subsidy programs, supported the installation of a charging infrastructure, and are starting to develop regulatory initiatives to support and manage an electric vehicle fleet. In fact, some governments - including the United Kingdom and France - have announced that they will not permit the sale of new fossil-fuelled automobiles after 2040.

1. The car manufacturers that were initially sceptical about electric vehicles are now committing billions of dollars to their production. By 2022 there will be 127 different fully battery-electric car models available for purchase in the United States.

2. Is this euphoria justified by the state of the technology and by economic and financial realities? Six years ago, a Harvard paper attempted to address this question.

3. Its conclusion was that under most business-as-usual scenarios, efficient fossil-fuelled automobiles would continue to have a cost advantage over electric vehicles. At the time, the future of electric vehicles depended largely on a combination of high government subsidies, extremely high gasoline prices (over \$4.50 per gallon), and dramatic improvements in battery technology.

Today, the outlook is more positive, but several of the same unresolved questions remain. Will battery powered electric vehicles be competitive with conventional gasoline-fuelled vehicles in the next five to ten years? Will a cost-effective charging infrastructure emerge? What are the economic and financial challenges that must be overcome? (*Harvard Report: "Charging the Future"*)[written 2016]

MATT

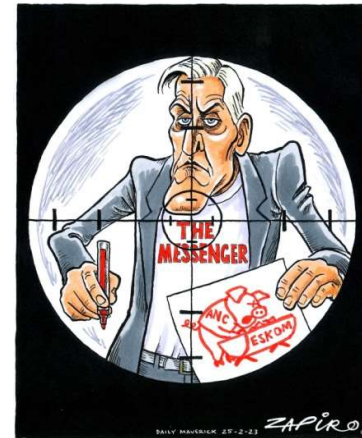


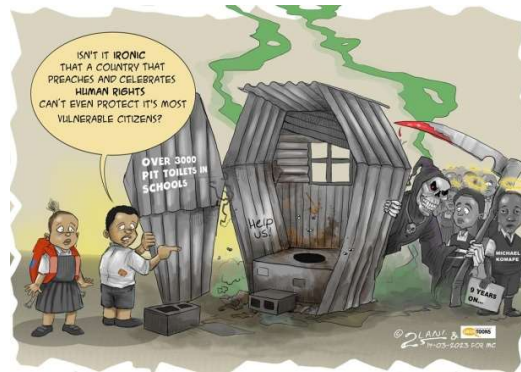
*'For balance, we could get
Suella Braverman to
present Goal Of The Month'*

MATT



*'Your son is falling behind
in Sex Education. He could
only name 47 of the 100
different genders.'*





OPINION PIECE: MR FIXIT

The children are right. We watch them glued to phones and online games, but they are graphically exposed to our increasingly backward evolution as a species. What they see in the Tik-Tok, YouTube world is how we humans have traded the ethical and moral foundations of religion, animist or humanist philosophy for artifice and show. We have eschewed the deeply humbling and peace building ideas of “love your neighbour as yourself”, karma, doing good deeds or ubuntu for the narcissistic display of what and who we possess on endless selfies, Insta Stories and posts. To be is to have. Own. Buy. Tell. Share. Click. And sell. This crazy culture of consumerism and amassing of wealth at all cost is what the political elite and their rich business friends have bought into lock, stock and barrel. It's what underpins our downfall from a country that had so much going for it in 1994 to the wreck we have become. It's evident in the cocky driver weaving recklessly at breakneck speed through a traffic jam, flipping the bird at all and sundry, giving a damn about pedestrians or children crossing his path. It's in the rude Karen screaming at a waitress because she didn't get exactly what she wanted. It's in the oncologist charging hundreds of thousands for experimental cancer treatment that eventually poisons a patient. It's in the obstetrician forcing pregnant women to have caesarean sections because natural births take time, and you can earn more from many caesarean sections in a day. It's in the NEHAWU strikers who, in their demand for more wages, trashed hospitals, whipped nurses who wanted to work and gave a damn if patients they are meant to care for were starving and dying in hospital corridors. It's in the absolute tone deafness of our President and the political elite in our governing party, and the musical chairs coalition smashing and bashing opposition. The ego, individual desires and ambitions of this lot come before us, the people they are meant to serve first and foremost. And we the people are in deep, deep trouble. We are probably even more racially polarised than we were during the dying days of apartheid. The tension between haves and have-nots is reaching boiling point. There is violence at our hospitals, on University Campuses, it spews onto the streets and into neighbourhoods. So many are deprived

of basic needs like food. So many unemployed. Students left out of opportunities are taking their frustrations out on the administrations, not the government. Is this what Nietzsche was alluding to when he said, "God is dead." And what British singer Sting followed up with when he sang "An actor plays his part." Is this what we have before us? The triumph of self-realisation, ego and aggrandisement over compassion, care, community and the greater good? The kind of selfish individualism that leads to social implosion? On Monday night, our President, who is safely protected from the shouts and screams of the people, announced at last, after months of deliberation and consultation as is his manner, that he is reshuffling his Cabinet. By all accounts, he looked as bored by this non-event as the rest of us. His solution to his overly bloated, inept Cabinet was to surround himself with worshippers who no doubt praise this Emperor President for his beautiful billionaire's clothes of Ankole cattle, buffalo, friends in high places, vision and wisdom while the rest of us can see that he is definitely, totally kaalgat, bereft of any ideas or most importantly, bereft of action to fix what's broken. His solution to our most pressing problem of powerlessness was the appointment of his close aide, the former mayor of Tshwane, Sputla Kgosientsho Ramokgopa as minister of electricity. My colleague Ray Mahlaka tried to speak to the President's chosen Mr Fixit, who is tasked with fixing our energy crisis, but he was let down by a no-show and a phone that was switched off. The same Mr Fixit, when he was mayor of Tshwane, was not very kind to journalist colleagues when they started writing critically about what turned out to be a very dodgy prepaid electricity meter deal with a company called PEU under his watch. Acting Pretoria News editor Kenny Mudzuli, who a metro reporter when the PEU story broke, wrote in 2017 how Ramokgopa lashed out at reporters and editors who questioned him even when the North Gauteng High Court found the deal to be unconstitutional. Mudzuli wrote: "Bear in mind that prior to PEU – ranked among the greatest financial disasters to hit a post-apartheid South African local government – Ramokgopa was already on the ropes, and tended to lash at anyone he believed was overly critical of his administration. Our editor (the late Val Bojes) had experienced it, and so had I as the metro reporter at the time." There you go. A sign of a highly qualified ego in overdrive, someone who does not take kindly to criticism. Fortunately, good journalists have many ways of digging for the information they need so Ray has a front-page story that will probably tell you more about the electricity minister than an interview with him would do. Ray and our Tshwane reporter, Peter Mothiba, did their analyses through research and interviews with a range of people in business, the Presidency, City of Tshwane councilors and community members. Go get a copy of this week's DM168 (*Daily Maverick*) to read Ray's and Peter's stories so you can decide for yourself whether you think our President's Mr Fixit can deliver on our country's most pressing need since he relinquished the Tshwane mayoral chains. Send your thoughts on this and other morbid symptoms of our social condition to heather@dailymaverick.co.za

Yours in defence of truth, Heather

AROUND THE WORLD EPIC 1942... PART 7:



Natal, Brazil. 4352 miles to go.

It was Jim Hendricksen and John Steers who were in the pilot seats when they finally sighted the coast of Brazil. It was 9am and they'd been airborne for about 20 hours. "Land Ho!" shouted Steers. "Looks like some sort of island!" As the others raced up to the flight deck Steers reached for the charts they'd taken from Leopoldville. "Bingo!" He shouted with a smile, "They're the Fernando de Noronha Islands!" Brown, arriving in the cockpit, took the map from him and measured the distance to Natal. "Head 240 degrees," he confirmed, "and 200 miles and we'll have Natal in our sights." Swede Rothe leant back in his chair, crossed his arms behind his head and smiled. "According to my fuel curve we ought to hit the water at Natal with just under two hours reserve. Give that man a cigar!" Ford and Mack appeared from below where they'd been eating breakfast. The others filled them in as they took over the controls. Three hours later the California Clipper landed in Natal. She had been in the air for 23 hours and 35 minutes. It was a new world record for a Boeing 314. As the crew disembarked at Natal the Pan American station manager handed them all a beer. Bob Ford swigged his down in one single gulp. "Best damn beer I ever had," he remarked with satisfaction. Johnny Mack laughed and did the same.

Heading home

After Natal, the last two legs of the flight home passed quickly. The crew were on Pan Am territory now, far from the chaos of war. The departure from Natal had been uneventful, although their jury-rigged attempt at a new exhaust cowl for engine one had blown off on take-off. Not that it really mattered, Ford thought. They had filled California with fuel she couldn't stand, run her hotter than she was rated and flown her farther than any Boeing had ever been without maintenance before. She hadn't let them down. She was a tough old bird, and he couldn't help but be proud of her. As they finally approached the east coast of the US, Ford looked around the cabin — at Mack, Swede, Poindexter, Brown and the rest — and in that moment realised what they'd all done. He could see from their faces that all any of them cared about now was finally getting home to their families. In a few days though, he suspected (and hoped), that for each of them it would finally sink in. By flying from San Francisco to Auckland, and then from Auckland to New York, the California Clipper and her crew had become the first commercial plane to circumnavigate the world. With America now at war, Ford realised, it was entirely possible that few people would ever hear about that. The California Clipper was a precious military asset now, her location and actions fiercely guarded secrets. Her crew would know though, and that was all that mattered. "Coming up on New York Skipper," said a subdued Johnny Mack from the seat next to Ford. "Bout time we said hello don't you think?"

California's Captain turned to Poindexter, who Ford had figured damn well deserved to have the radio desk for the final approach. Poindexter beamed and gave Ford the thumbs up. The channel was open, and Ford began to speak. "LAGUARDIA TOWER, LAGUARDIA TOWER. OVER." And then, for the first time in the entire journey, Captain Robert Ford of the California Clipper found himself lost for words. "Skipper?" prompted Johnny Mack, quietly. Then it came to him, and Ford smiled. "LAGUARDIA TOWER, LAGUARDIA TOWER. THIS IS PAN AMERICAN CLIPPER NC18602 INBOUND FROM AUCKLAND NEW ZEALAND. DUE TO ARRIVE PAN AMERICAN MARINE TERMINAL LAGUARDIA IN SEVEN MINUTES. OVER." And somewhere, out there in the distance, a coffee mug shattered...

Author's Notes

Hard as it may be to believe, everything you have read in this series of articles is true. The library, the fuel problems, the submarine, the exploding engine, the incredible take-off from the Congo River — all of it. Ford was right to suspect that the incredible achievement of the California Clipper would largely go unnoticed. In peacetime it would have been front-page news across the country — not least because Trippe, ever the publicist, would have wanted to take full advantage of the opportunity to have Pan American front and centre in the news. But America had just been jolted into war. It was focused on military heroes now, not civilian ones. Over the next few years Ford and his crew would be split up, doing their own bit for their country in various flying roles. Pan American would commemorate their achievement by renaming the California Clipper to the Pacific Clipper, but even that clue to its remarkable achievement was short-lived. The aircraft was retired in 1946, when the golden age of the Clipper came to an end. Ford and the majority of the California's crew survived much longer, but they rarely spoke about what they had achieved.

Technical Specifications

A

giant aircraft for its day, the B-314 weighed over 40 tons and had a wingspan 3/4 that of a Boeing 747-100.

- Length: 106'
- Wingspan: 152'
- Max Gross Takeoff Weight: 82,500 lb B-314, 84,000 lb B-314A
- Engines: Four Wright GR-2600 Twin Cyclone, 14-cylinder radial engines (1,500 hp B-314, 1,600 hp B-314A)
- Propellers: Hamilton-Standard 3-blade, full-feathering constant speed (variable pitch), 14' diameter
- Fuel capacity: 4,246 gallons B-314, 5,446 gallons B-314A
- Crew: 10
- Maximum Speed: 199 mph
- Cruising Speed: 183 mph
- Service Ceiling: 13,400 ft B-314, 19,600 ft B-314A
- Range: 3,500 miles B-314, 5,200 miles B-314A

B-314 wing catwalk, allowing access to the engines during flight.



- Among the technical innovations pioneered by the B-314 were the fully feathering propellers insisted upon by Pan Am Chief Engineer Andre Priester. An important safety feature which would be incorporated in virtually all subsequent variable-pitch propellers, the full-feathering props also allowed mechanics to take advantage of the B-314's unparalleled in-flight engine access made possible by the wing's thick chord. The 314's wing was thick enough to allow access through a walkway to the engines in flight, where the fully-feathering props made it possible for a mechanic to perform repairs in flight. Between June 1939 and June 1941, 431 in-flight engine repairs were performed by B-314 engineers.
- Over the course of their careers, the B-314's operated by Pan American made approximately 5,000 ocean crossings and flew more than 12.5 million miles, and each of Pan Am's Boeing clippers accumulated more than 18,000 flight hours. During World War II alone, B-314's carried more than 84,000 passengers, almost all of whom were on journeys of importance to the war effort.