

Regret to advise that **Lawrence Milner**, a member of RAFOC since 2009 and of SAAFA since 2005, passed away last week on Monday 14 May 2021, of pancreatic cancer, after a short stay in hospital and Intercare Step-Down. This news has been delayed by the need to inform and consult his family in the UK. His son Anthony and daughter Alexandra were not able to get to UK to see their father due to Covid restrictions, although they were able to video conference with him during his final illness. Neither was Lawrence spared to see his granddaughter, expected by Alexandra, in 6 weeks time. Son Anthony kindly provided the Obituary below: most of us knew Lawrence as a military historian of note, and an amateur aviation photographer, but did not know about his earlier life and career:

“Harold Lawrence Milner (Better known as Harry, Larry or Lawrence depending on who you ask) was born in Pretoria, South Africa on 13 January 1933. His father was a doctor and travelled frequently, and this led to the family travelling to the United States where Lawrence spent nearly 2 years during the early 1940's. The journey to the Eastern Seaboard of the US during war time was not without its danger, in fact, the ship in which the family travelled across the Atlantic was later sunk by German U-boats on its return journey after dropping them off. He and his family returned to South Africa after about a 2-year stay. With the war now over the return journey was far less eventful.

Lawrence then went on to attend Pretoria Boys High as a boarder at Solomon House where he matriculated in 1951. He then went on to develop his keen interest in music and began to learn how to play the Double Bass, which he played both as a jazz musician as well as learning to play classical music. He left South Africa in 1955 and travelled by ship to the UK in order to earn a living as a professional musician, which he did successfully. He became a British Citizen and would spend the next 25 years living in the UK and travelling the Continent.

He travelled around Europe during the late 1950's and throughout the 1960's and 1970's playing for a number of bands both classically as well as in Jazz bands. He also would perform (as a civilian) in many military bands and was stationed on American bases in Germany, performing with both British and American military bands. During this time Lawrence also developed a great interest in photography. He read that an ideal place to practice your skills as a photographer in a dynamic environment was to visit airshows. This would offer the opportunity to photograph static aircraft on the ground or moving targets in the air. What started off as simply a way to practice and hone his photography skills soon developed into a love for aviation which would stay with him for the rest of his life. Lawrence married Janet in 1978 and they had 2 children. Throughout the 1970's he ran a successful interior decorating and furnishing business with offices in London and Johannesburg. In 1982 the family moved back to South Africa, initially to Cape Town where Lawrence's parents had a flat in Muizenberg. After living in Tokai (just a few miles from Muizenberg) for a year, the family moved back to Johannesburg, where both his children went to school, and eventually left South Africa for UK themselves at around the turn of the 21st century.

In 2005 what began as a short piece of writing to accompany a photograph of a small aircraft that he had supplied to an aviation magazine became more than 15 years of deep research into the Second World War, the pilots and the politics of the

time. As part of his research he became a member of The South African Air Force Association in 2005 and later, in 2009, he joined The Royal Air Force Officers' Club. He was a regular attendee at SAAF Airshows and Parades, and the monthly RAFOC and SAAFA lunches until these were rudely interrupted by the Covid pandemic. Most of us will remember deep and lengthy discussions with Lawrence on aspects and personalities of aviation history. His wife Janet died suddenly in May 2008 after a short illness, a loss which affected Lawrence deeply for the rest of his life. He continued his research and at the time of his death was busy with the draft of his book: his research papers and drafts will go to the SAAF Museum.

Throughout his life, Lawrence also kept close ties with his former school Pretoria Boys High, being an active member of the school's Old Boys Association, and never missed a reunion dinner as well as visiting the school up until the Covid restrictions of 2020/21 made the dinners and school events more restricted. He also continued to be an active musician, until the orchestras and bands were also disrupted by Covid, but still enjoyed playing and listening to his extensive collection of jazz and classical music.

Lawrence passed away in his sleep in the early hours of Monday 14th June 2021 after suffering from a short illness, he was 88 years old. He will be missed by his children and grandchildren.”,

Lawrence will also be missed by his fellow musicians, his friends and neighbours in Blairgowrie where he had lived for the last 40 years, his devoted domestic staff who had cared for him, and his RAFOC and SAAFA Colleagues. There will be a private cremation service and a Memorial Service will be held at a time yet to be decided in the future when Covid restrictions are lifted and the family can attend. We salute his memory, and we will remember him!