



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 2 – 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020

### Good Afternoon All:

There we were, weathering the lockdown, reasonably well. Then hopes were dashed – another 2 weeks! Serious concerns set in about the adequacy of beer and wine stocks.... Remember that you can call any Committee member if you need to chat or there are any problems where you need assistance. We will try to help - except for beer and wine!

### I LEARNT ABOUT FLYING FROM THAT!

An elderly and reluctant Frenchman was ejected from a French Air Force fighter during a retirement day jolly – and narrowly missed taking the pilot with him, an investigation report littered with unintentional howlers has revealed. The unnamed 64-year-old was éjecté from the two-seat Rafale-B from a height of 2,500ft in March last year after grabbing his ejection seat handle to steady himself, France's BEA-E aviation investigator concluded. Although the BEA's full report is in French, aviation news website Aerotime Hub translated and summarised its contents, revealing the full comedy of errors triggered by a group of enthusiastic colleagues hoping to give their workmate a send-off to remember. As he was an employee of a defence contractor, the pensioner's bosses had no difficulties asking the French Air Force to let him into the back seat of one of its Dassault Rafale fighter jets as a surprise retirement gift. Nonetheless, the unfortunate Frenchman had "never expressed a desire to carry out this type of flight and in particular on Rafale" which didn't stop his colleagues luring him to Saint-Dizier air base anyway. The flight itself was a routine military training sortie for three Rafale's, carried out in perfect weather. Our pensioner, heart pounding at "between 136 and 142 beats per minute" (as recorded by his smartwatch), underwent a quick medical exam from a doctor four hours before being shown by the pilot how to put on his safety gear. Unfortunately, no one properly checked him as he clambered into the cockpit – meaning "his [helmet] visor was up, his anti-g pants were not worn properly, his helmet and oxygen mask were both unattached, and his seat straps were not tight enough. "Nonetheless, a mechanic gave them both a cursory check, strapped a Go-Pro to an approved bulkhead mounting point so the hapless passenger's gurning would be preserved for all time, and nodded to the pilot to close the cockpit canopies. Things got worse when the pilot took off from north-eastern France's Saint-Dizier Robinson airbase. Rather than the gentle ascent at 10°-15° that airline passengers experience, the Frenchman at the Rafale's controls carried out a typical fighter jet departure and "climbed at 47°, generating a load factor of around +4G. Then, as he levelled off, he subjected his passenger to a negative load factor of about -0.6G". Forces exerted by Britain's most G-force-intensive roller coaster, Alton Towers' Rita, max out at +4.7G – or four times the normal force of gravity.

Our pensioner, loose in his straps, not really wanting to be there and totally unused to being flung around like a rag doll, reached out to grab something and hang on for dear life. He picked the worst possible handhold: the trigger handle for the ejection seat. After the customary loud “bang and whoosh” he ceased to be part of the jet's payload, with the force of the ejection tearing his unsecured helmet and mask from his face. The Rafale-B's command ejection system is meant to fire both seats if one of the crew pulls the handle. A very confused pilot, however, was still sitting in his newly canopy-free Rafale wondering what the hell had just happened. He returned to land, conscious all the time that the seat could fire at any moment without warning. Luckily, it didn't go off. Both the pilot, his reluctant (and probably now aviation-phobic) passenger and the aircraft all landed safely. "The passenger said he had a complete lack of knowledge of the aeronautical environment and its forces, having never flown on a military aircraft. The surprise effect associated with a lack of military aeronautical experience therefore resulted in creating and maintaining significant stress for the passenger throughout the morning," concluded a sympathetic BEA-E, which found that "the margins of decision left to the passenger to possibly refuse the flight are perceived as almost nonexistent." The French Air Force has enjoyed some unusual jet-related events in the near past, including the tale of a General caught using a training jet as a personal air taxi to his Provence mansion every weekend. ® (this story appeared in the Telegraph as well as on various Aviation websites.) *CELEBRATION*

## **CHANGE OF COMMAND**

A new Officer Commanding of the Red Arrows, responsible for the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team formally takes up the role today, 1st April 2020. Wing Commander David Montenegro is in charge of the entire 130-strong team, comprising RAF regular and reserve personnel, working alongside civil service colleagues and others. He succeeds Wg. Cdr. Andrew Keith, who has been the OC Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team (OC RAFAT), since September 2017. A former frontline Tornado pilot, Wg. Cdr. Montenegro said: “I feel incredibly fortunate to be given the opportunity to command an RAF squadron that reaches out to all spectrums of society. Previous generations of RAF personnel have helped build and shape the Red Arrows into a globally recognisable brand – it is a great privilege to continue to develop this squadron's rich aviation heritage in the coming years.” It is a return to the Red Arrows for Wg. Cdr. Montenegro, having been a team pilot between 2009 and 2011 and then the Team Leader from 2015 until 2017. During this three-season stint as Red 1, he led the nine-ship display during a huge global tour representing the UK and showcasing the RAF across the Middle East and Asia, including visits to Singapore, Malaysia and performing in China for the first time in the team's history. After leaving the Red Arrows, Wg Cdr Montenegro worked in the Typhoon Force Headquarters at RAF Coningsby, before being selected to complete a Masters degree in defence and military studies at the Australian War College, Canberra.

## **EASTER SUNDAY IN ABU DHABI – HAPPY GROUNDHOG DAY!**

Dear All,

We trust that wherever you are on our crazy little planet that you and yours are healthy, safe and as isolated as all y'all can be, I'm sure you are like SMac and I in thinking how did we get here and isn't it strange? Thank God for..... our friends and family, the internet..... and alcohol! I think most will agree that 2 or perhaps all 3 have helped keep our sanity, sorry kids!

How are you all doing & feeling about how the world is 'coping' with the pandemic? As the world goes mad and we wait for a COVID vaccine, we are happily holed up in our place of tranquility in Abu Dhabi. Here in the UAE there are very few shortages, everything is generally orderly albeit on lock down in the evenings / nighttime; people are generally pleasant and there is a national leadership that gets on, working for the greater good. It is called a 'directed democracy'. Yes, they are not questioned and held to account in the same way as in the West, but they really ARE doing an excellent job to protect everyone in the UAE, not just Emiratis. We like it here!

Now for Mr Grumpy.....Both SMac and I are both particularly unimpressed with the western press and their continual bitching and moaning. I sometimes think that they are NOT part of the solution and have become a much great part of the problem. I cannot help but feel the greatest of frustration

as I watch and listen from a distance, the constant tormented, bitching diatribe that is published daily in our liberal democracies; demonising our leadership and constantly questioning why, why, why, instead of HOW CAN WE HELP in this time of crisis. Sometimes, our democracy does not feel or look very democratic – they (the press) are certainly not representing our views. Also, I cannot help but feel disdain for the very small (but overly reported) minority of unpleasant, selfish people – unfortunately stirring the wrath of the media to then publish even more unhelpful stories.

Anyway, rant over..... back to Mr Happy.....We were due to retire on 3 August having departed the UAE sometime in May /June. That is now on hold until restrictions on travel have become clearer; any retirement events are likely to slip to the right, but we will keep you apprised in the coming months. We are content to remain here as the sun shines and we very much enjoy the UAE. The UK is almost certain to be later coming out of any travel restrictions so getting back to the UK may, ironically, become the limiting factor in any moves! Furthermore, any possible job opportunities here in the UAE are also on hold until there is greater clarity; either later in 2020 or perhaps in early 2021. That said, we are very fortunate that we have the opportunity to simply.... retire!

Well everyone, you have our news – as in, there is no solid plan anymore, we await for developments and hope for the best.....no real difference for any military family, wherever you are around the world!

Keep smiling, keep well and keep in touch.

Cookie and Smac

## WHAT IS “WOKE” CULTURE?

Bearing in mind Cookie’s comments about the Western media, Urban Dictionary’s definition of “woke” is: “The act of being very pretentious about how much you care about a social issue.” “This idea of purity and you’re never compromised and you’re always politically ‘woke’ and all that stuff. You should get over that quickly. The world is messy, there are ambiguities. People who do really good stuff have flaws. People who you are fighting may love their kids. And share certain things with you.” (Former President Obama addressing an Obama Foundation function in 2019) The reality is that wokeness, a derivative of postmodernism, is not funny. It is destroying everything that is healthy.

Wokeness is perpetual victimhood.

Wokeness is perpetual grievance.

If you aren’t aggrieved by something, then you must find something about which to be aggrieved. And you’re always the victim of some imaginary power struggle.

It is the infinite dissection of traditions and norms with no end goal other than the annihilation of Western values .....

## CAPTAIN TOM MOORE (NOT WOKE)

A 99-year-old Second World War army veteran who set out to collect £1,000 for the NHS has raised over £4.8 million. Tom Moore aims to complete 100 laps of his Bedfordshire garden before his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on April 30. Several hundred thousand people have donated to his fundraising page. He began raising funds to thank the “magnificent” NHS staff who helped him with treatment for cancer and a broken hip. Mr Moore, who walks with a frame and is completing his challenge in ten-lap chunks, wrote on Twitter: “When I started this journey last Monday, my target was £1,000 for our incredible NHS. No words left... just thank you. “Thanks each and every one of you - we are in awe of you, but especially our frontline staff who need this now more than ever.” Speaking to the BBC, he added: “It seems almost like fairy land to think that we started off at £1,000 to a sum of money that’s not believable is it? I never imagined anything like this, but I’m so pleased, and I hope it just goes on because the services I got from all these doctors and nurses was absolutely outstanding. And they’re such nice people too.” Ellie Orton, chief executive of NHS Charities Together, said: “I think I absolutely join the rest of the country in being truly inspired and profoundly humbled by Captain Tom and what he has achieved.

Sent in by Clive King: full story and pics at:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/41820bd0-7e7d-11ea-b437-a2f12268f8d1?shareToken=3a48d4eb5072289eacece21f44c6a37f>

## Helicopters – The choice of some!

After I left the Royal Air Force in 1974, I went to the USA and took my civilian licences at a school in Hammonton, New Jersey. After I achieved those, I took employment as a Fixed Base Operator (FBO) in Madisonville, Tennessee, just South of Knoxville, with the Smoky Mountains rising to around 11,000 feet a few kilometres to the East. My functions were: Airport Manager, petrol pumper, aircraft pusher, charter pilot and flight instructor. This gave me a three-year visa to stay in the USA.

One day in 1975 an Army King Air 200 landed and out got a number of Army staff with a 2 Star General as the senior officer. I greeted them, and it turned out they were looking for a location to do high-altitude testing for their Utility Tactical Transport Aircraft System (UTTAS) evaluations to replace the Huey UH-1. Obviously, the Smoky Mountains fitted the role they required. Luckily for us they chose our airport and we had space for them to land with six Helicopters (2 Huey's, 2 each Boeing and Sikorsky) and some fixed wing types.

Some month or so later they arrived with great noise and some 50 or so support staff.



The Boeing Vertol 179 YUH-61-A is in the rear and the Sikorsky S-70 YUH-60-A in the foreground.

I got to chat to a lot of the pilots as well as the General.

After three days of flight testing, it was done and they all left like a scene from Mash the TV series.

You know which won and is now called the 'Blackhawk.'

The day they were clearing up the camp, the General came over to me and asked what type of aircraft was in the back of our hangar. It was one that I had assisted in building with Johnny-Paul, a really nice part time policeman [*Munroe County was a dry county and after he found out I was drinking let me have the hooch in the town centre on the celebration of the Bi-Centennial which was against the law, but as an Englishman he felt he could do that as they won the War*] and the aircraft was a Cassutt F1 racer designed in 1951 by ex-TWA captain Tom Cassutt.



It's a very small machine designed for the pylon races at Reno with speed and agility built in.

Wingspan 4.53 m

Length 5.07 m

Well the General didn't believe that 'this thing' could fly. The RAF took the challenge and got the machine out into the sunshine. Pre-flight done and all OK I squeezed into the cockpit and started up. With all the temperatures in the green, I took off to show the General it really did fly, and fast. Doing a couple of passes (like the P-51 Mustang in the last 'Ramblings') I went towards the mountains and disappeared into a small riverbed that took me out of sight. At full speed I came out of the dip and crossed the runway at head height with Army guys hitting the ground in a face down position.

After I landed the General came up saluted me and with a big smile on his face said, "Jon we needed guys like you in Naam."

It was good to have been involved in the UTTAS selection process, even if it was only providing them a base for an operation.

The RAF held its head high and the US Army, heads low.

*Contributed by Jon Adams*

## **TAILPIECE**

Two older women were outside their nursing home, having a smoke, when it started to rain. Ruth pulled out a condom, cut off the end, slipped it over her cigarette, and continued smoking.

"What's that?" asked Gilda.

"A condom," Ruth replied. "This way my cigarette doesn't get wet."

"Where did you get it?"

"You can get them at any drugstore," Ruth said.

The next day, Gilda hobbled herself into the local drugstore and announced to the pharmacist that she wanted a box of condoms. The guy, obviously embarrassed, looked at her strangely – she was, after all, over 80 years old – but very delicately asked what brand she preferred.

"Doesn't matter, son," Gilda answered, "as long as it fits a Camel." 🤔🤔🤔

Thanks to those who sent in contributions. Until next week – keep the sunny side up and please send your contributions in, we are going to do 'RAMBLINGS' for a few more weeks!

The Committee