



IN-FORMATION

NEWSLETTER OF THE DURBAN BRANCH

Registered Non-Profit Organisation NPO 083 072
PO BOX 441, UMHLANGA ROCKS, 4320 TEL/FAX 031- 561-5806
e-Mail : boardman@webafrica.org.za

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NEWS AND EVENTS

Chairman's Chatter

The year 2011 seems to have flashed pass us. We were once again privileged to be able to make use of the Mess facilities at AFB Durban for all our lunches during the year. We ended the year with a most magnificent traditional Xmas lunch – what a feast it was, and all this for only R80 p/p. We thank Vissie and his staff for this wonderful meal. We also thank Gavin Farquhar for providing the Xmas crackers and GM Pharmaceuticals for the generous donation of the packs of “Herbal Green” (50 capsules per carton).

I trust that you all enjoyed the festive season and came through it well-refreshed to tackle 2012. I know of least that one of our members is keen to face the future – this member is your Vice Chairman Steve Bekker. Steve and his partner Linda went on a Xmas sea cruise on the Sinfonia liner – during the cruise Steve took this opportunity to propose to Linda – so, as they say in that well known TV advert “Give that man a Bells”.

We face an enormous task in 2012 in to enable us to sustain our Welfare programme. Members accounts for 2012 are attached, please settle promptly – moreover, please read the insert regarding our welfare commitments

We will endeavour to continue arranging interesting speakers/topics for our 2012 lunches and I hope that as many as possible of our members will be able to enjoy our camaraderie. We are indeed fortunate to be able to use the Mess facilities – you get a good meal for a realistic price, no steps to climb, booze at SAAF prices, and no car guards to tip – so please support us.

Please enjoy 2012 – John

Sponsor for Printing our Newsletter

We would be most grateful if someone would either sponsor the printing of our newsletter, or print it in-house. We issue our newsletter 4 times per annum. The average newsletter is 8 X A4 pages (printed back-to-back.) We print 75 copies per issue.

The Sunset Call

Since the publication of our previous newsletter it is with great sadness that we report that Sonny Barber, Alan Carr, Barry Clarke, Brian Cliff, Vera Lucke, Denne McCulloch, Sandy Morrison, Aubrey Short, and Denis Yeats have been called to Higher Service. Our thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families and friends.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them

New Members

We welcome Brendan Adams, Chris Berlyn, Roger Deare, Charmagne Goncalves, Steve Isaacson, Andy McLennan, Willie O'Driscoll, Harry Rice, Len Smart, Dave Stone and Digby Thomas to our Branch. We trust that you all will enjoy the camaraderie and we are looking forward to your meaningful participation in our activities.

We are pleased to announce that the Durban Branch now has its own Yak-52 Squadron. (Brendan, Roger & Willie). You will most likely see them in action at the 2012 Virginia Airshow

Membership Roll

During the past year 13 of our members were called to Higher Service – although we managed to recruit 14 new members over the same period our “active” membership is now down to 118 members. Another matter of concern is the average age of our members, which now stands at 75 !!! We not only need new members but also younger members.

We make an appeal to all our members to assist with the recruitment of new members – there must be many “Durbanites” that did their NSM training in the SAAF. Any person that served (or still serving) is eligible to join. Give us their name and we will do the rest !!

Welfare

We are still endeavouring to keep our welfare commitments – we are supporting eight “cases” which requires an absolute minimum of R5 500 that we pay out monthly. Most of our recipients’ only form of income is either an Old Age Pension or Social Grant. Also they are elderly and virtually have to eke out a living. Unfortunately we have almost depleted our reserves and are now faced with the cruel possibility of having to cease some of the payments – this would be a most disturbing task to inform our recipients of this situation. We have some members that are making regular contributions towards this cause but there is still a large shortfall.

A major fund-raising effort is the obvious solution – all suggestions welcome.

Members Accounts

It is that time of the year again. Accounts are attached for your attention and payment. We have had to increase our annual subscriptions. We have to pay NEC a membership Levy of R30 per member (as per membership strength on 1 Jan 2012) before 31 March 2012. Please complete the form and post or e-mail it back to us and then transfer the applicable amount to our bank account. If it is within your means please assist by making a donation towards our Welfare programme. The banking details are given on the account. A Tax Certificate in terms of Section 18 (A) of the Income Tax Act can be issued (if requested by the member)

Please give your name as deposit reference.

Luncheons

Our monthly lunches for the next three months will be held on the dates as tabulated below. Time is 12h00 for 13h00 at the Combined Mess at the Air Force Base. The cost of the lunch is still R50p/p. (We might have to adjust this price if the Mess increases its price)

10 Feb. Speaker to be announced
9 Mar. No speaker - AGM
13 Apr. Speaker to be announced

Contact John Boardman at 031 561 5806 or 084 285 4494 or by e-mail at boardman@webafrica.org.za by the latest on the Monday preceding the luncheon to make a booking. Also, if you have booked and need to cancel your booking please do so as ***promptly as possible***. **NB** !This also applies to members on our “Regulars” list”

Annual General Meeting 2012 **NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN**

That the 67th Annual General Meeting of the Durban Branch of the SA Air Force Association will be held at 13h30 on Friday 9th March at the SAAF Mess AFB Durban.

The most important function will be for members to elect their Committee for 2012.

The present members are : (in alphabetic order)
 Steve Bekker, John Boardman, Gavin Farquhar, Alec Kitley, Iris Oldfield, and Clinton Wyness.

Although all these members have indicated that they are available for re-election, we need some “new blood” on the Committee. We urgently someone to co-ordinate our fund-raising effort.

If you require any info kindly contact John Boardman (contact details on newsletter masthead)

Congress 2012

Congress 2012 will take place in Cape Town, at AFB Ysterplaat over the period Thursday 10 May to Sunday 13 May. AFB Ysterplaat can only accommodate 16 members, preferably singles. Should there be a demand for this accommodation; members will be booked on a first come first serve basis. Most delegates will be accommodated at Aquarius Luxury Suites, situated in Downtown Blouberg. Initial costing for planning purposes is R955.00 per person living in at AFB Ysterplaat, R1500.00 pp living in at Aquarius and R630.00 for those living out. These rates include all expenses except drinks and the ladies excursions which are still being negotiated.

If you are interested in attending please contact John asp as we have to give preliminary figures to the Cape Town Branch before 15 Feb.

Stories / Anecdotes for Our Newsletters

We are always on the search for interesting stories to insert into our newsletters – if you have one, please let us have it. We also find that some articles elicit response, resulting on a further story. A case in point is the Stalag Luft 111 information from the Williamson War Diary which resulted in a further story from our Jack Spencer, a fellow internee of that infamous institution. – So please let the stories roll in

In this issue we have the following articles:

The Military Veterans’ Act	Page 3
The Mustang crash - 2011 Reno Air-show	Page 4
The Samora Machel crash.	Page 7

THE MILITARY VETERANS' ACT

Editorial Note . This act is now a reality – only time will tell if any of our Veterans will reap any benefits. We have been requested to disseminate the following to our members – we will keep you updated non developments..

“President Zuma signed the Military Veterans’ Act on the 2nd December 2011. It is envisaged that the Act will come into operation in 2012.

The first step will be to verify the existing Military Veterans database. In order to do this, teams from the Department of Military Veterans will visit all provinces as from the 23rd of January to update the details of all members already on the Military Veterans’ Database and members who are not yet registered will have the opportunity to submit their details in order for them to verify their bona-fides for possible future registration. We are not what their detailed programme is but will advise when the information becomes available.

Take note that registration on this database does not automatically qualify members for any benefits, registered members will still apply at relevant Departments and will be subjected to a means test.

For your information:

.The Department of Military Veterans will negotiate benefits with the relevant Government Departments who are going to make it available. The benefits as stipulated in Section 5 of the Act are not yet available. Official communication in this regard will be published once the benefits become available. Take note that a means test will be applied to determine which military veterans will qualify for benefits.

*Members are urged **not to respond to false sms’s and e-mails promising huge amounts of money or pension** (military pensions, veteran’s pensions etc) to be paid out. This is false information and should be ignored.*

If you wish to enquire about the criteria of who qualifies for a Military Pension, or a Special Pension kindly contact the Government Employees Pension Fund – enquiries@gepf.co.za or 0807723646.

Enquiries regarding War Veterans’ Grant for members who served in the 2nd World War should be directed to the SASSA Office closest to your place of residence. Their contact details can be obtained from www.sassa.gov.za Trusting that this information will be of assistance to you”

EXISTING GRANTS FOR PEOPLE AGED 60 AND OVER

The State provides social assistance to older persons. Over the years the qualifying criteria has substantially increased. Below are the current eligibility criteria:

- Must be a South African citizen / permanent resident.
- Must reside in South Africa.
- Must be 60 years or older.
- Must not be maintained or cared for in a State Institution.
- Must not be in receipt of another social grant.
- Must have a 13 digit bar coded Identity Document.

A single person must not have assets of more than R752 4000 (married persons assets of R1 504 000), and must not earn an income of more than R44 880 per year (married person R89 760).

The amount of the grant is R1140 per month for persons between 60 and 75, and R1160 for persons over 75.

The South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) pays the grant through one of the following methods:

- Cash at a specific pay point on a particular day, or
- Electronic deposit into your Bank (or Post Office) account.

All applications can be made at your nearest SASSA Office.

For more information phone 031-360 5103



THE 2011 RENO AIR RACE – NEVADA USA

(The 2011 Reno Air Race was marred by the tragic event on 16 Sep when a P51 Mustang plunged into the spectator area killing at least 11 spectators and injuring scores of others. SAAFA Members Dave Bruce, Roger Deare, Duncan Gillespie, Stuart Low & Willie O'Driscoll attended this event and were seated mere 20 metres from the point of impact. Stuart gave us a very interesting talk on this event at our October lunch and this is a summary of his presentation.)

The Reno Air Races are billed as the world's fastest motorsport with good reason. Where else can aviation and race fans get to see some of the best flying in the world, marked by the snarl of big round engines as well as the song of the Rolls-Royce Merlin? The Reno Air Races are long-standing competitions going back at least 30 years. The unlimited class, which is the premier event, features essentially any propeller-driven aircraft regardless of power and speed. It is dominated by modified World War II fighter planes, mostly P-51 Mustangs and F8-F Bearcats, with an occasional P-47 Thunderbolt. These aircraft are souped up and reach speeds in excess of 500 MPH around a closed pylon course. Practically any modification compatible with safety is permitted. Spectators are allowed access to the aircraft parking/servicing area and it is an amazing sight to see the incredible modifications that have been done.

The aircraft involved in the crash was a heavily-modified P-51 Mustang named Galloping Ghost. It had competed for years and once dominated the race. The last few years it has not won. The owner and pilot, 74-year-old Jimmy Leeward, was determined to win again and had reworked Ghost, upgraded the power and made some structural changes to reduce drag. These modifications included removing the water and oil radiators from the belly and replacing them with a boil-off cooling system. The wing span had been reduced by a total of 10 feet and the horizontal tail was also reduced in span. Based on available information it would appear that Leeward had not had sufficient time to do a complete flight test programme after these latest modifications.

The crash sequence started as the aircraft rounded the last pylon when it suddenly pitched upward and started to roll to the right and went over the spectator area. It continued with this pitching moment ending up with diving down towards the spectators. It crashed into the box seating area in front of the grandstands. Most of the spectators in the box seats never saw it coming because it came in from behind them. Stuart was seated right under the final trajectory of the aircraft and he mentioned that at one stage he thought that the aircraft would crash into him. He said that he realised that it would be futile to run due to the rapid descent of the aircraft. Luckily for Stuart & party the aircraft continued with its pitching moment and crashed only about 20 metres from them – luckily there was no fire-ball, otherwise the devastation would have been much greater. As it was Stuart & company were covered in debris. They were faced with a scene of horrific carnage. Frantic first-aid activities followed.

There has been much speculation on the cause of the accident. However, out of the usual cloud of superficial media reporting, and speculation, some facts have begun to emerge. An onboard video camera was running in the cockpit of Galloping Ghost during the race, and other videos have been examined.

It would seem as if the primary cause of the crash was due to the Galloping Ghost having a CG too close to the aft limit which resulted in pitch instability. There are instructions on the P-51 regarding no combat missions with the aft fuel tank full resulting in an aft CG problem. A pilot in a following aircraft and could not believe how much trouble Leeward was having in keeping the Ghost in a stable pattern around the course. The video of the entire last lap shows that as Leeward was coming around the last pylon at about 480 mph, he hit turbulence which pitched his left wing down, he corrected with hard right rudder and aileron. However, just as the aircraft was straightening out, he hit a second mountain of turbulence which caused the tail to 'dig in' resulting in a 10+ G climb rendering Leeward unconscious instantly and also resulted in the tail wheel extending. (broken tail wheel support structure was found on the course). As the Ghost shot upward the LH elevator trim tab broke loose - this can be heard on the tape, so the trim tab did not cause the accident.

Cockpit camera film that was salvaged from the wreck shows Leeward slumped over to the right in the cockpit. As a result, the Ghost climbed up and to the right, rolled over on her back and then headed for the box seats. The pilot was not in control of the aircraft beginning shortly after the onset of the climb. Unfortunately, he could do nothing to avoid the crowd – the aircraft merely completed an uncontrolled climb-to-inverted and continued straight down under full power. Had the pilot been conscious or able to manipulate the controls at any time during the final seconds, first instinct – ingrained through decades of training and experience – would be to reduce power – this didn't happen.

It will be interesting to see the official findings of the accident investigation, and we hope that this accident does not have a negative effect on future Reno races. There have been fatalities at previous Reno races, but this is the first one where spectators have been killed.

Some photos taken at this event are on the next pages.



Roger Deare, Stuart Low, Duncan Gillespie, Dave Bruce & Willie O'Driscoll
(All wearing their SAAFA hats)

The Mustang impacted about 20 metres straight in front of them



A photo taken from the North towards the area where Stuart & Co were seated.
It passed right over their heads !!
Note - no pilot visible in cockpit !!



Impact into the crowd - Luckily no fire-ball !!



Rescue and clearing-up operations

Editors Note : After the presentation Stuart and his team showed us some other photos of the scenes of devastation – these are definitely not suitable for publishing, moreover we are grateful that our members returned back to the RSA as passengers and not as air-freight !! Our thanks to Stuart for an excellent talk.

THE SAMORA MACHEL AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT

On 19 October 1986, the Mozambican presidential aircraft, a Tupolev TU 134A-3 was returning from Zambia after the Lusaka Summit. President Samora Machel and twenty-four others died when the aircraft crashed in the mountainous terrain near Mbuzini near Komatipoort. The crash site is in the little triangle where the borders of Swaziland and Mozambique meet the South African border in the Lebombo Mountains.

The South African government established the Margo Commission, chaired by Judge Cecil Margo, to investigate the accident. As negative international opinion was escalating around the matter it was decided to appoint three international members of high standing to the commission. They were:

US astronaut Frank Borman, Geoffrey Wilkinson, former head of the British Department for Transport's Air Accidents Investigation Branch and Sir Edward Eveleigh, former chief justice of the British court of appeal.

The Margo commission's findings were based mainly on the flight recorders, testimony by South African officials and the technical report submitted by the SA investigation team. The Soviet investigation team refused to take part in any public testimony and the Mozambican team also withdrew at the last moment. The flight recorders gave excellent results, the cockpit voice recorder especially revealing much about the interactions between crew members.

The commission concluded that:

"the aircraft was airworthy and fully serviced, there is no evidence of sabotage or outside interference, and the cause of the accident was that the flight crew failed to follow procedural requirements for an instrument let-down approach, and that the crew also ignored the Ground Warning Proximity alarm."

The Margo report was accepted by the International Civil Aviation Organization.

The Soviet delegation issued a minority report saying that their expertise and experience had been undermined by the South Africans. They advanced the theory of complicity of South African security forces and that the aircraft had been intentionally diverted by a false navigational beacon signal. The Soviet report focused on the 37 degrees' right turn that led the aircraft into the hills of Mbuzini. It rejected the finding of the Margo Commission, saying that the crew had read the ground proximity warning as false since they believed themselves to be in flat terrain as they approached landing.

There also have been various other rumours/stories regarding this accident. We found a translation of an article that appeared in the newspaper Zambeze published in Maputo, on 28 August 2008. We have been unable to verify its source, however, it makes very interesting reading – it is titled

THE ACCIDENT AT MBUZINI

by Luís Brito Dias

I read with great interest the statements of Mr Sérgio Vieira with respect to the accident at Mbuzini (O Pais, 15 August 2008), a subject of extraordinary interest to me as I was employed as a pilot for DETA/LAM (Mozambique Airlines) for 17 years. At the moment I am employed as a pilot in the Far East as a Captain flying Boeing 747-400 type aircraft. It is obvious that Mr Sérgio Vieira is lying shamelessly for, at the time of the accident, he was the Minister of Security and therefore responsible for what happened.

All the pilots that flew for Mozambique Airlines at the time know perfectly well that the accident at Mbuzini was due to negligence and carelessness on the part of the flying crew. Besides, after the accident, Mr Sergio Vieira sent a message to all the Mozambique Airlines (LAM) pilots, as a very clear threat, to "remain silent and not to open their mouth." That was why no LAM Captain was appointed to participate in the Commission of Enquiry. The sole pilot was a LAM co-pilot, who had been in the Air Force and was a member of Frelimo and therefore "easily controllable". This co-pilot began to see the disgusting nature of the Commission of Enquiry and arranged to be removed quickly as his conscience would not allow him to participate in the corruption of the truth.

The Soviet pilots, besides having little experience, flew very seldom. The pilot's licences that were presented to the enquiry were false. They were issued posthumously.

At the time I was co-pilot of a DC-10 of the Mozambique Airlines. During a flight from Lisbon to Maputo the Captain and I demonstrated to Mariano Matsinhe and another Frelimo Minister that was on board, what had really happened. They were our guests in the cockpit. We even made the turn or the change from the initial course as well as the incorrect manipulation of the navigation instruments' selectors to show them what had happened on the night of the Mbuzini accident.

Besides not having taken sufficient reserve fuel what happened was that, out of the 5 crew members in the cockpit, 3 were occupied in dividing up and drinking the leftover alcoholic beverages until 6 minutes before the final impact. Only the co-pilot and the navigator were "taking care" of the flight. All this was recorded on the CVR (Cockpit Voice Recorder). The Captain only realised that they were lost 3 minutes before the final impact. The confusion was

so great that they paid no attention to the audio alarm (GPWS or Ground Proximity Warning Signal) that the aircraft was about to hit the ground without being in the configuration for landing. They broke many basic "golden rules" of flying, but the most critical was that, having arrived at the "safe altitude" published for Maputo as 3000 feet, they continued to descend without having visual contact with the ground or, alternatively, having the correct electronic indications of the Maputo navigation equipment. In this case the ILS (Instrument Landing System) or the VOR (VHF Omni-directional Range beacon) of Maputo. What ensued was that, instead of selecting the ILS for Maputo (110.3), they mistakenly selected the VOR of Matsapa (112.3) and they changed course for the Radial 045 of Matsapa instead of being on Radial 045 of the VOR of Maputo. The navigator of the Tupolev made the mistake, for, in the Russian system, the navigators select the radio guidance systems and not the pilots. He had already selected the VOR for Maputo (112.7), but in changing the frequency for the ILS of Maputo (110.3), which is a radio guidance system for approaching the runway and not a route navigation beacon, he committed the fatal error.

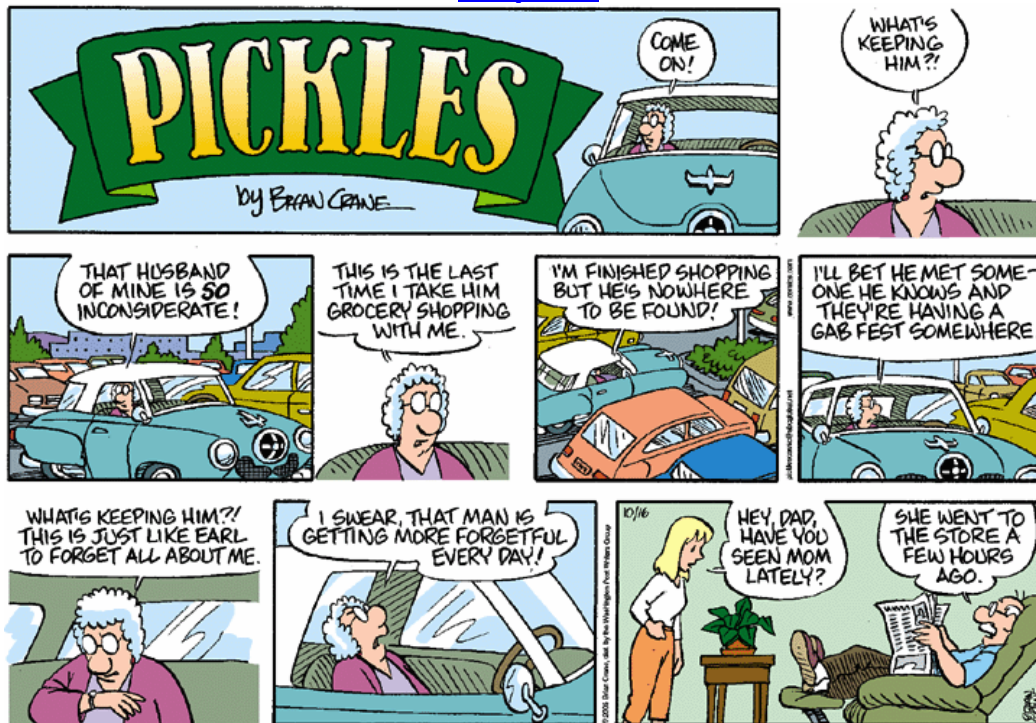
The knobs for selecting decimal points are independent of the knobs for selecting numbers in hundreds. In other words, firstly he had to change from 112 to 110 and after that from 0.7 to 0.3 with a separate and independent knob. What happened was that he left the 112 and only changed the 0.7 to 0.3, which happened to coincide with the frequency of the VOR of Matsapa. It was this incorrect manipulation of the systems that led the crew to make a course change. As they were "distracted" in the cockpit no one verified the change of frequency. One of the basic rules is that, whenever something is changed in the cockpit, this action has to be verified and accepted by the other pilot. None of this was done.

These were the immediate causes of the accident, but there were other factors that also contributed, such as crew fatigue, the lack of reserve fuel, the lengthy inactivity of the crew, a lack of verification of the flight simulator flight training, etc. An aviation accident never occurs in isolation. It is always the accumulation of events that ends in tragedy. I do not want to be arrogant, but my experience of 31 years in aviation as well as participation in aeronautical accident investigations gives me the liberty to speak on these matters.

Despite the many investigations on the part of the new South African authorities, whether at the level of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission or by the police mandated by President Thabo Mbeki more than two years ago, no vestige of an attempt by the South African authorities of the former regime to interfere in this flight has been found. The conspiracy theories therefore are circulated by untruthful so-called internal experts, which is very suspicious and without content. The facts speak for themselves

Are there still some doubting Thomas's amongst us ??

Tailpiece



Disclaimer

The views expressed in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official views of the SA Air Force Association.