CHAIRMAN’S CHRISTMAS CHATTER

Another busy year is coming to a close and our Festive Season is at hand.

It is a difficult time of the year for our elderly people. The cost of living is in an upward spiral which means more hardship for all of us.

We spare a special thought for those in bereavement after losing a loved one. We also wish those that are ill or in hospital a speedy recovery.

We as your Committee will do our best to try and maintain our commitment to our beneficiaries.

Our Golf Day was a resounding success and we made a substantial profit. The golfers all had a good time playing and the day ended with a prize-giving and sumptuous dinner. We thank our wonderful sponsors for their support.

Our WAAF contingent is also going from strength to strength and we can expect some food hampers to go to the needy again this year.

A big “Thank you” to my Vice-Chairman, Trevor Slade, and my ever-present Secretary, Carol, for their unwavering support.

The Committee and I wish you all good health, a Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Groete,
Hennie

HAND OVER OF OFFICE

By Stefaan Bouwer

On 28th September at 17h00, at Swartkop Air Force Base, Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano, after a six-year term as Chief of the South African Air Force, handed over command to Lt Gen Fabian Msimang. There were a number of invited guests, many members of the public and beautiful weather that all came together bringing about a memorable change of guard.

It was started off by the inspection of the parade and then a flypast of numerous formations of the Air Force aircraft. Gen. Gagiano presented his handover speech, followed by the handover of the sword of command. This was followed by the acceptance speech by Gen Msimang. Gen Gagiano is one of the longest serving South African Air Force Chiefs, having served two terms of three years each. No surprise therefore that he became well known during the period when the South African Air Force was in transition from the formidable pre-94 era, to a capable, but smaller Air Force that is still considered as a significant Air Force on the African continent. There is no arguing the fact that he was one of the most capable and popular Air Force Generals that we have ever seen, especially since he had to weather many financial and political storms.

To honour him a flypast was done by all the aircraft that he flew as a member of the South African Air Force, except the Sabre (no flying example in the country). The final air display was a tribute sunset display by Lt Col Blokkies Joubert in a Gripen C, going out with a bang with Lt Col Joubert shooting off flares.

The ceremony then moved to a hangar where drinks and food were served, and a great social event carried on till late Friday night.
AN AMAZING ESCAPE
By Ernest Wall (24 Squadron)

Ernest, our member in Peebles, Scotland, who we must thank for sending us Pound Sterling notes (enclosed with his letters which, miraculously always seem to reach us !!), has sent us this report of an event which occurred while he was serving with 24 Squadron SAAF:

The Squadron had been posted to Gambut near Tobruk towards the end of January 1944 as part of a plan to deceive the enemy into thinking the Allies were preparing for an invasion of Greece. The Germans accordingly heavily reinforced their aerial defences of Crete and other Greek Islands.

No 24 Squadron B26 Marauders were tasked to attack bases in Crete and Leron in particular, and during February and March losses were quite heavy during that period especially over Suda Bay seaplane base in Crete. An example of losses may be gathered when eight out of twelve Marauders were lost in two operations over Suda Bay.

After a brief spell in Nicosia, Cyprus to recuperate, operations were resumed. On one raid over Suda Bay on 3rd February 1944, the C.O. Lt. Col. Jack Robbs received a direct hit on his aircraft just aft of the bomb bay. A freak photograph was taken by a Wireless Operator operating a hand-held camera from a waist-hatch in another aircraft. A ‘freak’ because the photo appeared to show a whole B26 going down. In actual fact the tail section was upside down and some distance from the main body of the plane. Unbelievably, the C.O. and co-pilot baled out over mainland Crete and spent the rest of the war as prisoners. The remainder of the crew were sadly all killed.

Editors Note: Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of the photo that was taken.

BUOYS NOT BOMBS
by George Croote

Around 1941, I was at 41 Air School, stationed in East London. On this particular day I was on a patrol which received a message to proceed to a certain map reference to blow up a bomb.

The Patrol did this only to receive a sarcastic message from the Navy the next day. There was apparently a submarine at the site, and as a result of our operation, one minesweeper’s buoy was completely destroyed. Luckily, only the buoy and not the minesweeper!

Ed Note: George (93) now lives at Pioneer House but because he is in a wheelchair no longer attends our lunches as he used to do.

SAAFA GOLF DAY
4TH SEPTEMBER 2012

After much preparation and hard work the day of the Golf Tournament dawned bright and sunny – a great boon as in years past that day was the coldest of the year! We had booked 84 players and all except Solenta, who had sponsored the prize-giving dinner, turned out to play. We were very sad not to be able to have the Solenta players with us (hopefully, next year they will sponsor us again and this time be there with us?!). Medscheme again were our naming sponsor for which we thank them and they fielded two teams.

Because of our wonderful sponsors we made a profit of R59 000! Our thanks go to:

Diamond Sponsor (Naming rights) – Medscheme
Sapphire Sponsor (Supper) – Solenta
Ruby Sponsor (Holes) - Frank Tilley Consulting
- AVI
- IQ Business
- Absolute Aviation
Topaz Sponsor (4-Ball)
- Denel Aviation
- Isowell
- Master Power Tech.
- Springs Flying Club
- Mac Steel (Coll)
- HP Aviation
- Glenntec
- Stonehage
- Giel Venter Attorney
- SAAFA Pretoria

Larry Nestadt sponsored us enough to assist two elderly 4-balls who would not otherwise have played.

Our thanks go to Frank Tilley for his assistance, encouragement, and purchasing of the prizes as well as being the member at the Country Club and obtaining the course for us.

Thanks to Club Functions Organiser Lesley King, who, as always does us proud. A good day was had by all.

Next year’s Golf Day will be held at the Rocklands Course at JCC on 4th September 2013.
SAAFA GOLF DAY (Cont)

Tanya of Absolute Aviation manning the very popular watering hole which they sponsored.

Johan van Wyk with Jack Featherstone (93)

Mike Louw and Daan Retief, winners of the SAAFA Trophy with Chairman Hennie van der Walt and Secretary Carol van Rensburg

Renee van Schaik and Grant Hallowell of IQ Business with their 1st prize (a flip in a Tiger Moth donated by Jeff Earle of Placo)

WARSAW FLIGHTS COMMENORATION
8 SEPTEMBER 2012
(by Jean Urry)

An amazing shot of the huge Hercules C130 in the low-level flypast over the Katyn Memorial

Climate change is wreaking havoc with our weather, and early spring in Jo'burg was very cold. Saturday 8th September, Warsaw Flights Day, dawned grey and chilly, but luckily there was no rain about. The team was up bright and early, and everything went to plan – the result, a wonderful and moving service. Thank you to General Gagiano, General Page and the South African Air Force – your side of things was arranged with the usual Air Force precision.

We were honoured to have some dignitaries present - General Gagiano, the then Chief of the South African Air Force, Mrs Gagiano, General and Mrs Page, General and Mrs Earp, Myra and Spinny Sobczyk, Wing Commander and Mrs Mitchell, Emilio Coccia, representatives from Zonderwater, and many others from the SAAF, SAAFA, RAF and various military organisations. It was an honour to also have present the Polish Ambassador, the German Ambassador, the Director of the South African Museum of Military History and many members of the Polish community in South Africa and the Johannesburg public. Thank you all for your support.
WARSAW FLIGHTS (Cont)

The religious service was moving - it was conducted by no less than 5 priests. Bryan Jones, a veteran of the Warsaw Flights, Rev Don Watson, Bishop Stan Dziuba – the Catholic Bishop of KZN, Bishop Gill and Reverend Bogdan Wilkaniec. Thank you for your very wise words.

The Hercules C130 flypast left us all breathless – a chilling reminder of the dangerous missions carried out by the SAAF, RAF, RAAF and Polish crews in their Liberators in September 1944.

Our speakers did us proud – Andrzej Romanowicz as MC, Clive Mitchell who gave the keynote address and Bryan Jones who always manages to come up with the perfect speech for the occasion – Thank you so much.

We were very ably assisted by the Glensand scouts who carried and presented the many beautiful wreaths that were laid. Thanks must go as well to the Dziembowski brothers for so expertly doing the live Podcast for us – we received many positive comments from around the world. Thank you finally to Odoardo Bacchelli, Costa Qualy, Ian Andrew and Carol van Rensburg for your superb photos – we appreciate your support.

The reception was once again a wonderful party. Krystyna and her helpers cooked up a storm and we all enjoyed the Polish dancing. Sadly, we had to bid farewell to both General and Leone Gagiano and General and Heather Page – thank you for everything. We will miss you very much, but will definitely be seeing you all again soon.

The customary tot or 3 of very good Polish vodka did a lot to warm us up and we left the museum in very good spirits.

See you all next year and until we meet again may God hold you in the palm of his hand.
IN MEMORIAM
IVAN DAVIS
24 September 2012
Our condolences go to the family of Ivan Davis who joined SAAFA Cape Town in 1945, transferring to Johannesburg ten years later. He served in the SAAF during World War Two, joining up in 1941.

SAAFA JHB LUNCH 28TH SEPTEMBER

Only 45 people (the smallest turnout ever) were treated to a wonderfully moving and informative talk by ‘Lin Barratt who regaled us with a description of his experiences on his trip to China and South Korea. They even visited a POW-type camp which is now used for Christians who refuse to “recant”!

‘Lin and Rosemary had gone with their church to visit Missionaries over there and those who missed it really lost out as it was one of the best talks we have ever listened to.

Unfortunately ‘Lin caught a strange virus over there and is only now recovering from being really ill. We wish him well!

THREE SAA CAPTAINS AT LUNCH

Franklin (‘Lin) Barratt, Karl Jensen (who introduced ‘Lin as our speaker) and Hennie van der Walt (who thanked him and handed him his gift)

REMEMBER!

Please let us have your wartime stories and service records to keep on file. It is so distressing when we look for obituary reports and can find NO details for our members who have died.

For this edition we received many contributions but mainly for 23, 31 and 34 Squadrons and many interlinking stories featuring Celone Air Field –

Thank you, but what about all the other squadrons and stories? Keep them rolling in!!

DON’T WAIT TILL ITS TOO LATE! GET THOSE STORIES AND DETAILS TO OUR OFFICE

CELONE AIRFIELD ITALY
31 and 34 Squadrons, SAAF
By Martin Urry

31 and 34 squadrons were formed in April 1943, these were the two heavy bomber squadrons of the SAAF flying US-built Liberator B24 aircraft. After the first few months of training and their first operations in North Africa, the squadrons were transferred to the Celone airfield, part of the Foggia complex, some 20 miles inland from the Adriatic sea in Puglia, Italy, in March of 1944. From here they flew missions to the Ploesti oilfields in Rumania, they mined the Danube so as to restrict the flow of oil to Nazi Germany, and, in the most catastrophic missions, supplied the Polish Home Army during the Warsaw uprising in August and September 1944. The last combat operations were flown in late April 1945, and the airfield closed in October 1945.

The Celone airfield was located 3.5km northeast of a farm called San Nicola d’Arpi on the banks of the Celone River and formed part of the Foggia Airfield Complex. It was likely built by the Italian Air force, in the summer of 1943 it was in use by the Luftwaffe. The airfield was taken by the Allies in September/October 1943, and construction of a new PSP runway by the United States Army Corps of Engineers began almost immediately.

In July of this year Jean and I had the opportunity to holiday in Puglia, and we determined to see if we could find the Celone Airfield. We searched the Internet for references to Celone and found a site ‘Abandoned & little-know airfields of Italy’, including this September 1943 map assessing the airfield for Allied use.

From Neil Orpin’s book - Airlift to Warsaw - we had this picture of 31 squadron’s headquarters as sketched by Albert Plane. An anecdote is that the day after the sketch was made the pigeons appeared on the mess table in a pie).
From Google Earth we were able to locate the Celone river and, in particular, the bends in the river just south of the airfield, including the reference to Masseria Cantone, or Massa Cantone on Albert Plane’s sketch. We set out from our base at Vieste on the eastern shore of the Gargano and visited Padre Pio’s sanctuary at San Giovanni Rotondo. Lawrence Isemonger, in his book The Men who went to Warsaw, describes his visit here in June 1945. From here we drove down to the plain below and could immediately see how this was chosen as an area to be used as an airbase, an extensive flat area in stark contrast to the rest of Italy. We drove under the A14 motorway, took the next turning right onto a small side road, and we crossed the Celone river. This looked very much like many of the South African streams, more of a donga than a river. We again drove under the A14 and came to a small dirt road on the right which we figured had to be the way to Masseria Cantone. The buildings up ahead were immediately identified by both Jean and I from Albert Plane’s sketch, in total ruin, but still very much recognisable, including some pigeons.

We spent about half an hour looking to see if there were any signs of 31 squadron on the walls but to no avail, the building is derelict. We drove on to the buildings that were the Shops but could not recognise anything, and then on to the edge of the landing area to see if there was anything left of the PSP runway, only to find this a ploughed field. We felt good as we headed back to Vieste, mission accomplished, having identified where The Men who went to Warsaw had congregated and planned their missions, and that the building is still there, but a bit sad to see the state that it is in.

11 SQUADRON SAAF IN ITALY

Does anyone have contact details for two pilots who flew with 11 Squadron in Italy in Kittyhawks?

They are Lt. Ray Harvey and Capt. TA van Reenen. They were shot down and survived.

Please contact Carol (011 616 7406, or info@jhb.saafa.co.za) if you have any information on these two or any others who flew in this squadron.

IN MEMORIAM

GEORGE VAN DER MEULEN
2nd OCTOBER 2012

Our condolences go to Jean van der Meulen and family on the loss of their loved one. George served in the SAAF during World War II and became a member of SAAFA Johannesburg in 1965. He was well known at lunches up until a few years ago when he could no longer attend. He will be sadly missed.

We will remember him
ALPINE 44
14TH OCTOBER 2012
(Article by Jean Urry)

“Plan B” the model of the Bays Hill monument made by Ital Zurich which set the scene for a very intimate and different service to the one usually held at Bays Hill

The changeable weather persisted for more than a month and in the week leading up to 14 October, the date set for the Alpine 44 service, we were all on tenterhooks once more. Rain was forecast for almost every day of that week but in the end our ceremony was a huge success.

Thanks must go once more to the South Africa Air Force – what splendid people to work with. Brig. General Derrick Page, Colonel Ital Zurich and the other members of SAAF were absolute stars. Ital set up 2 venues for us – “Plan A” at the monument and “Plan B” in Hangar 8. We ended up using plan B and it worked wonderfully – the hangar walls were draped with camouflage netting and the ceiling covered by a beautiful green parachute.

Despite the inclement weather more than 100 guests arrived. We were honoured to have with us the new Chief of the Air Force, General Msimang and Mrs Msimang – welcome to our ceremony – it was wonderful to meet you and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Also with us were General and Mrs Earp, General and Mrs Page, Col and Mrs Zurich, Cols Joe and Sue Palmer, Brig Gen Neville Greyling, Philip Weyers, Mike Russell and Anne Inwood, Bruce and Sheilagh Harrison, many members of SAAF, SAAFA JHB (including Chairman Hennie van der Walt and his wife) and Pretoria and RAF, members from the Brownrigg and Urry families who lost loved ones during the Alpine flights and many friends. Your continued support is much appreciated. It was once more a great pleasure and honour to welcome Emilio and Delia Coccia, Artura Costello, other members of Zonderwater, the Alpini, the Corale Valli Alpine (Francesca, your choir always sings so beautifully) and the Carabinieri. Thanks must go as well to Bryan, Olive, Darryl and Sylvia Jones for supporting us and to Andrzej and Krystyna Romanowicz and Tom Kuhn from the Warsaw Flights. All of you above are part of the Alpine 44 family and we have become such good friends.

Don Watson, Brig.Gen Derrick Page, Heather Page, Martin Urry, Jean Urry and Ital Zurich in the Hartbeespub after the service

Thank you Don Watson for your very inspiring sermon and thank you Corale Valli Alpine for your beautiful singing – Che voci!!! (what voices!!)

The reception was once again at the Hartbees club and worked well – we served Beef Stroganoff, ordered from the mess kitchen, and the Corale Valli Alpine serenaded us as we munched wonderful Polish cakes made by Krystyna (thanks so much) and had a shot or two of homemade “Urry” Limoncello.

Sadly, we had to bid farewell to Brig. General Derrick Page and his wife Heather and to Colonel Zurich and his wife Antoinette. We will really miss you all – thank you for your splendid support.

A few days after our service, we received some very sad news – Barbara Brownrigg, one of our founder members, passed away – we will miss you Barbara.

Thanks again to you all you for being part of our family, thank you Blanche Aitken for taking the photos – they are lovely - and until we meet again, take care of yourselves.

CONGRATULATIONS!
60 YEARS OF MARRIAGE

Rev. Bryan and Olive Jones

We congratulate Olive and Bryan on being together for 60 years. Bryan is the only living survivor of the Warsaw Flights raid on the fateful night when so many were lost. It was as he lay injured in Warsaw that he received his calling to be a Minister. They regularly attend our lunches.
From 1 April these forces combined to form the March 1918 with the support of RNAS squadrons. Available to meet the German offensive of 21 aircraft were deployed in France and in the trenches. In the final days of the RFC, over 1200 aircraft were deployed in France and in the trenches. By the end of the war the loss rate was 1 in 4 for those who were killed, a similar figure to that of the infantry losses. The dangers to aircrew increased markedly and through accidents. As air armament developed, the risk of injury to aircrew was therefore largely through accidents. The RFC had experimented before the war with the arming of the German Air Service. The RFC had only 113 aircraft in military service compared to 263 in the French Army Air Service. Nevertheless, in April 1912 the Royal Flying Corps was formed as part of the Active Citizen Force. In August 1912, the Commandant-General of the Citizen Force, Brig Gen Beyers, was sent to Europe by General Smuts to observe and report on the use of aircraft in military operations. Beyers was so impressed by what he saw that when he returned to the Union he strongly recommended setting up a school of aviation. The Government subsequently contracted Mr. Cecil Compton Paterson to provide flying training to a select group of ten aviators at his flying school near Kimberley. In April 1914, six of the pupils were appointed as probationary lieutenants in the Active Citizen Force and sent to England to undergo further training at the Central Flying School at Upavon where five of them eventually qualified. On the outbreak of war in August 1914, the South Africans were granted permission to join the newly formed Royal Flying Corps and they were to participate in the first aerial reconnaissance and artillery spotting missions over France during the closing months of 1914. Best known amongst the South African pilots in the RFC in WW1 was Capt Andrew W. Beauchamp-Proctor the first South African Pilot to win the Victoria Cross and who also won the DSO, MC and Bar, DFC, Croix De Guerre and Legion of Honour. Despite the strict economies and retrenchments to which the Union Defence Force was subject in the immediate post-war years, 1 February 1920 saw the establishment of the South African Air Force with Col Pierre van Ryneveld appointed Director Air Services. The establishment of the South African Air Force was greatly facilitated by what came to be known as the “Imperial Gift”. Essentially, the British Government gave the South African Air Force 113 aircraft (amazingly, the same number of Royal Air Force as an independent armed service. From small beginnings the air services had grown and by the end of the war the RAF had a total of 290,000 men, 99 Squadrons and 1800 aircraft in France and a further 34 squadrons overseas. In addition there were 55 Home Establishment squadrons and 199 training squadrons, with a total inventory of some 22,544 aircraft and 385 000 personnel. As Mary Hopkins would say “those were the days my friends!” For those of you that are interested, today the RAF has 827 aircraft and is downsizing to 33, 500 personnel. Nevertheless, that still makes us the largest air force in the EU and we retain some potent capabilities. You will all be aware of the impact that the Smuts Reports of 1917 had on the formation of the RAF, and in fact on the creation of independent air forces world-wide, and I do not intend to dwell any further on those. Instead, I will now focus on the parallel development of the SAAF. Although military aviation was still in its infancy at the time that the Union Defence Force was formed, the South African Defence Act (1912) made provision for the establishment of the South African Aviation Corps as part of the Active Citizen Force. 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The SAAF to be awarded all four floating trophies Tiro Tsotetsi, is the first person in the history of the RAF offer the SAAF a place on the RAF Commissioning Course at RAF Cranwell; the first time for a number of years that such a place has been offered. In 2006, the RAF has provided an exchange officer flying the Hawk at RAF Valley. This will see a significant sterling job for both the SAAF and the RAF. In addition, he visited Air Command for briefs on logistics, engineering, military aviation regulation and airworthiness. Again, it was a successful visit and Maj Gen Pelser established a number of friendships within the senior echelons of the RAF. It is hoped that Air Vice-Marshall Julian Young, the RAFs Chief Engineer, will visit South Africa early next year. Last month, Air-Vice Marshal Phil Osborn, the RAF’s AOC 2 Gp responsible for Air Transport, Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, Reconnaissance and Support to Operations represented the Chief of the Air Staff at AAD. His visit was well received and he formally said farewell to Lt Gen Gagiano on CAS’s behalf and welcomed Lt Gen Msimang to his new position as CAF. On that note, Lt Gen Msimang has this week accepted an invitation from CAS to visit the UK in Feb. That visit should further cement our strong relationship for the foreseeable future. As a final note I should add that my post as the Deputy Defence Adviser which used to be rotational between the RAF and the RN is now tied to the RAF which will ensure that appropriate effort is applied to our ‘special’ relationship.

Many years ago, an Englishman, Scotsman, Irishman and Welshman were all captured whilst fighting for the Crown in a farflung foreign land. Sentenced to death by firing squad by their captors they were all given the graduation for the SAAF’s Basic Flying Training Course. Lt Tsotetsi comes from Vosloorus, in the East Rand and I think that the obvious quality of the individual that the SAAF has sent to Cranwell speaks volumes for our relationship. Given his performance so far, Lt Tsotetsi is obviously an individual to watch for the future. Another offer for training at the RAFC Cranwell in 2013 has already been made and we are currently awaiting details of the SAAF nomination. Last year we arranged for the then Maj Gen Msimang, Chief Director Air Policy and Plans, to visit the UK to see for himself how the UK Air Cadet Organisation is organised and functions. It is an aspiration of the SAAF to develop a similar youth organisation in RSA and the UK model appears to offer a good starting point. He was shown all aspects of the operation including a visit to an Air Cadet Camp and he was impressed by what he saw. Consequently, we are currently engaged in trying to arrange a summer camp in South Africa for an ATC Sqn from a school in the UK for July next year. We have also assisted the SAAF Corporate Communications team by arranging a visit to show them how we conduct our business. Key leadership engagement is on the increase at the moment. I have already covered Gen Msimang’s visit to the UK last year. This year, Maj Gen Pelser, Chief Director Force Development and Support, represented CAF at a Global Air Chiefs’ Conference, organised by CAS, and also attended the Royal International Air Tattoo at Fairford and the Farnborough Air Show. In addition, he visited Air Command for briefs on logistics, engineering, military aviation regulation and airworthiness. Again, it was a successful visit and Maj Gen Pelser established a number of friendships within the senior echelons of the RAF. It is hoped that Air Vice-Marshall Julian Young, the RAFs Chief Engineer, will visit South Africa early next year. Last month, Air-Vice Marshal Phil Osborn, the RAF’s AOC 2 Gp responsible for Air Transport, Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition, Reconnaissance and Support to Operations represented the Chief of the Air Staff at AAD. His visit was well received and he formally said farewell to Lt Gen Gagiano on CAS’s behalf and welcomed Lt Gen Msimang to his new position as CAF. On that note, Lt Gen Msimang has this week accepted an invitation from CAS to visit the UK in Feb. That visit should further cement our strong relationship for the foreseeable future. As a final note I should add that my post as the Deputy Defence Adviser which used to be rotational between the RAF and the RN is now tied to the RAF which will ensure that appropriate effort is applied to our ‘special’ relationship.

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customary last request. The Scotsman asked to hear a rendition of Flower of Scotland played by a pipe band and accompanied by Scottish country dancers as this would provide great memories of his homeland. In similar vein the Irishman asked to hear Danny Boy sung in the manner of Daniel O’Donnell accompanied by dancers from Riverdance and the Welshman asked to hear Men of Harlech sung by the Treorchy Welsh Male Voice Choir. The Englishman said simply ‘I’d like to be shot first’!

Moving away from the RAF and SAAF but staying with aviation, some of you may be aware of a link developing between the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators and the RAFOC Johannesburg. On 8 May this year I was privileged to attend the inaugural dinner at the ‘Big House’ at Doornkloof and watched as the present Master of the Guild, Air Marshal Cliff Spink presented a memorial scroll to Lt Gen Gagiano. The evening was particularly special for me as in 1991 then Gp Capt Spink had been my Base Cdr at Dha rain during the first Gulf War. I am sure that this developing link will further cement the relationship between the aviation communities in the UK and South Africa.

Finally, many of you will be aware that this week saw the launch of the annual Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. In the past few weeks the SANDF lost 3 members whilst deployed on peace support operations and yesterday the UK lost another 2 personnel in Afghanistan. With that in mind, I would like to ask you to join me in a toast to the ‘Fallen in Conflict’. **We will Remember them.**
IN MEMORY OF 3 LOVELY LADIES (Cont)

BARBARA BROWNRIGG
16th October 2012

Barbara was heavily involved with the Alpine 44 club from its inception. She and Glenn have also always supported Warsaw Flights Committee and have been a part of SA Air Force Association Johannesburg Branch as Associate Members since 2002. In 2009 they both received the Presidential Merit Award for service to the Association. They have been faithful and loyal in their assistance to Beneficiaries and have been regular attendees for years at our monthly lunches and Memorial Services.

A feminine and artistic lady, Barbara’s funeral was made memorable by the display of her beautiful paintings and by the obvious love and affection of her whole family. She will be sadly missed by all.

Fly with the Angels!

EILEEN ROUGH
17th November 2012

Eileen served SAAFA as Secretary for 35 years and many tributes have been received from people whose lives she touched, including the SA Korean War Veterans Association. She was so much a part of SAAFA that it is hard to imagine the Association without her. We have missed her in the last two years when she became too frail to attend all the lunches (at which she still helped to take in the money), and the various functions she loved to share in. For her services to SAAFA in 2005, she was awarded the SAAFA Order (Bronze).

We gave her a farewell at the Rand Club when she retired in June 2004 and she was quite overwhelmed by this gesture.

Fly safe Eileen,
We loved you and will miss you forever!

Editors Note:
Eileen as I remember her in later years before she fell several times eventually breaking her hip on 2nd September, the day after she turned 91. Sadly, she never recovered from the Anaesthetic which she had to have as they pinned the hip.

IN MEMORIAM

Our condolences go to the R.A.F. Association on the death of Iris Boome, long-time member who was buried on Friday 26th October 2012.

REST IN PEACE

Major Gen G.D (Jos) Reynolds, Squadron leader who died on 3rd October, in his 98th year (he was born on 1st July 1915). We received a picture of him with Winston Churchill which, unfortunately was in the wrong format to print. He lived his last 30 years in Kwa Zulu Natal.

Our condolences go to his son Roy.
FAREWELL ON 2ND OCTOBER TO YET ANOTHER AIRMAN – HAROLD THEUNISSEN

THEUNISSEN  542812V Lieutenant (Observer) Harold Holden
34 Squadron South African Air Force

Harold Theunissen, the son of Albert and Winifred Theunissen was born in Johannesburg on 4 December 1923 and resided in Bezuidenhout Valley in Johannesburg. After completing his National Senior Certificate, he went to work for the City Council of Johannesburg. On 7 September 1942 aged 19, he volunteered for full-time war service and enlisted in the South African Air Force to undergo pilot training whereupon he was posted to 75 Air School at Lyttelton.

While in training, he was accidentally struck by an armoured car and suffered a broken leg that put his flying career on hold and saw him spend the following six months in hospital. After being released from hospital, he continued with his Ground School training at 75 Air School until transferred to 2 Air School (Elementary Flying Training) at Randfontein on 18 December 1943. Unable to go solo, his flying training was terminated on 20 January 1944 and he was re-mustered as a Pupil Observer on 20 January 1944 after which, he was transferred to 48 Air School (Air Observer School Type B) at Queenstown. He excelled in his studies and on 10 June 1944 he was transferred to 44 Air School (Navigation and Bombing) at Grahamstown. He met Agnes Gladys Lowe (born Browning) at the Victory Club and they were married on 15 July 1944.

He received his Observer Wing and was Commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the South African Air Force on 14 October 1944. On 29 December 1944, Harold was transferred to the Middle East and departed from Zwartkop Air Station by air for Cairo. On 6 January 1945, he was transferred to the Royal Air Force Station at Shandur for conversion onto aircraft type and on completion of training, he moved to the Advanced Transit Centre in Bari, Italy and from there, was posted to 34 Squadron SAAF who were flying the Liberator Mk VI heavy bombers and operating out of Celone Airfield, one of the Foggia Group of Airfields.

On 14 April 1945, Harold was promoted to the substantive rank of Lieutenant. He flew his first familiarization flight in a Liberator on 1 May 1945. The remainder of May saw the 34 Sqn Liberators delivering supplies to the British 8th Army at Udine and other bases in Northern Italy and ferrying passengers between Italy and Cairo West in Egypt. June and July of 1945 was much the same with the ferrying of troops and supplies escalating. Flights in July included ferry flights to the United Kingdom and Athens in Greece. Harold flew his last mission as an Observer on 14 August 1945 before being transferred to the SAAF Base Depot on 3 October 1945 and then to 4 Group for rotation back to the Union. Granted North Return Service leave from 5 December 1945 to 4 January 1946, he remained with 4 Group until released from full time war service on 26 February 1946. Throughout his training and operational flying career, Harold flew 131.50 hours on the Avro Anson, 119.55 on the AC-47 Dakota, 172.30 hours on the Liberator Mk VI and 51.15 hours on the Martin B26 Marauder.

Lorraine was born while he was away and would be 6 months old before she met her father. After the war, Harold, Gladys and Lorraine went to live at 39 Wolfgang Avenue, Norwood Johannesburg. He continued to work for the Johannesburg City Council and to supplement their income, he repaired and rebuilt old cars for resale. He prided himself on being able to fix anything and was also an avid woodworker and a member of the local association.

Many of his wonderful works of art grace homes throughout the world. Three years later, Fae was born and soon the family moved to Roosevelt Park where Graeme was born. When he received the Manager’s job at Hillman Bros, the whole family moved to Krugersdorp where Harold became an active member of Round Table and the Camera Club.

He later started his own business and would spend each week traveling in the country making many close friends along the way. During 1977, Gladys passed away and after meeting Pat and her daughter Mandy, they bought a house in Parkwood where they lived together for more than 35 years and in recent years ran his business from home. Harold had a very special relationship with the family business-Woodoc and he and Pat attended their get together in the Cape religiously each year. They also had many overseas adventures including trips to Australia, New Zealand, India, China, South America, USA, the UK and Europe. He was a Freemason and served as Master for both the South African and
FAREWELL HAROLD THEUNISSEN (Cont)
Scottish Constitution lodges as well as acting as Treasurer for more than 25 years. After winding down his business, he continued an active life on his computer that proved to be a life line given his increasing lack of mobility.

Harold had 8 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren who reside both here in South Africa, Australia, Holland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. Although Harold had many friends, his closest friend was probably Tom-Tom, his cross Pomeranian followed by his brother Brian.

On 2 October 2012, Harold Holden Theunissen, an ordinary young man who in his generation, did extraordinary things in times of great hardship and self-sacrifice, answered the Sunset Call at the age of 89 and went to meet his crew mates. This very gallant, intelligent and humble gentleman with a quick wit and great sense of humour will be missed and our most sincere condolences go out to his family.

WE WILL REMEMBER HIM
Ed Note: Another very interesting story sent to us by his family! Harold was visited and telephoned often by Dee Palmer of the WAAFS

120 CLUB WINNERS

August - 1st Rex Evans, 2nd Trevor Sussman, 3rd Jane Mayer, Attendance Jeff Earle
September - 1st Des van Schalkwyk, 2nd Leon du Plessis, 3rd John Durrant, Attendance Bryan Jones
October - 1st Maren Booysen, 2nd Karl Jensen, 3rd Chris van Tonder, Attendance Harry Hoffe
November - 1st Anthony Niemeyer, 2nd Margaret Kester, 3rd Grant Lotter, Attendance Ian Andrew
December - 1st Tom Borrill, 2nd Margaret Eckersley, 3rd Roy Chapman, Attendance Bruce Harrison

PLEASE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT US IN 2013!

YOU ARE VERY WELCOME TO TAKE MORE THAN ONE NUMBER!! WE HOPE YOU WILL!! Remember the 120 is for the PRICE IN RANDS FOR THE YEAR, not the number of members! It’s a fun way to raise much needed funds and we thank you for your generosity.

Thank you again to SO many of you who donate your prizes to SAAFA each month!!

Phone Carol if you want to book (011 616 7406)

ALAN BATES
For some time now the newsletters sent to Alan Bates in Cheam England have not reached him. Anne Storm (Alpine 44 family) who lives in Wiltshire investigated and was told by David James (Warsaw Flights Club) that it is possible that Alan is suffering from Dementia, as he forgot to come to the last reunion of the Warsaw Club in England, held in London some time ago in his honour. If anyone has any information about Alan’s state of health or whereabouts, please could they contact Carol (011 6126 7406)

MAJ. MONICA THEUNISSEN
As promised in the July newsletter, here is a picture of Monica, as she was during the War in the desert and also her “mention in despatches”

SAAFA JOHANNESBURG LUNCHES at Old Edwardians

Last Friday of each month
Lunch Price for 2013 - R90 (NO INCREASE)
ALL WELCOME!
1st Lunch of the year:
Friday 25th January 2013

Editor’s Note: I apologise for the pictures being so small but it was the best I could do
NAME AND ADDRESS ON LIRA NOTE  
SPARKS SEARCH FOR LOCAL SOLDIER  
provided by Christel de Witt (who is researching 31 and 34 Squadron history)

While researching her father's career as an Air Corporal in World War Two, Christel de Wit stumbled across an old cigarette tin. It contained two lira notes on which were written two addresses in her father's hand.

One was of M McConnell of Brackney, Ballymartin, County Down. Christel, who lives in Nairobi, Kenya, is now on a mission to trace him.

She believes he was friends with her father, Christoffel Frederick de Wit – called Chris by his wartime friends – who was born and lived most of his adult life in South Africa. Her father passed away in 1998 and it was only last year that she decided she wanted to learn more about his wartime experiences.

The son of a farmer, he went to cape Town to enlist at the South African Air Force on 23 February 1941 at the age of 21.

He enrolled in ground crew, training as an air mechanic and before long rose to the rank of Air Corporal maintaining and preparing aircraft such as Liberators for battle.

The Union of South Africa had already joined World War II in 1939 as a member of the Allied Forces and he was assigned to a SAAF Coastal Squadron patrolling the South African waters against German and Japanese submarines as well as providing aircraft escort for Allied Troop carriers.

In January 1944 he was drafted into the heavy bomber squadron of SAAF and became part of the famous 31 Squadron.

In June that year the squadron was attached to the Mediterranean Allied Air Force and was based at the Celone Airfield at Foggia, Italy.

Christel thinks that the mystery man on the lira note may have worked at the Greencastle airfield near Kilkeel where US Army Air Force and Royal Air Force trained replacement crews for bombers and air gunners on Liberators (American Bombers).

On the other lira note was written the name and address of an Englishman, M Davies of Manchester.

Christel believes these two names were written at the same time as her father bade goodbye to his two friends. She would love to know who they were and what their ranks were, she also thinks these addresses were written in late 1945 before they left Italy for Egypt after the war had ended. It is possible that the two were stationed at the RAF Centre Shalufa in Egypt where her father spent three months before he finally got his seat on a Dakota to take him home.

She also feels that it was not so common for ground crew to mix with aircrew, as they were kept apart because aircrew lost or killed could greatly affect the morale of those on the ground. She therefore thinks that her father is not likely to have known RAF aircrew so well that he would have kept their addresses all those years.

In August 1944, 31 Squadron was instructed to fly over German held territory in Warsaw, Poland to drop supply loads to the Polish Resistance Army.

Nearly a hundred men lost their lives in the dangerous mission, known as the Warsaw Air Bridge and it is also possible that McConnell joined 31 Squadron as replacement crew.

Christel has already traced and met a few of his colleagues from 31 Squadron and would very much like to meet McConnell, granted he is still alive and willing. She is looking for a man now between 87 and 92 years of age. She would also love to meet his family and scan a photo to see if he is one of the unidentified men in her father’s albums.

Editors note: If anyone knew McConnell and Davies or any of their relatives please contact Christel at: mofo@connect.co.ke

REMEMBER OUR NEW FEE STRUCTURE

Life Membership fee: R100
Annual Membership fee R50 per year
Associate Membership fee R50 per year

Memorial fees R50 per year
(ALL MEMBERS ARE ASKED TO PAY THESE FEES YEARLY)

A SALUTE TO WORLD WAR II VETERANS – EL ALAMEIN COMMEMORATION DAY 21 OCTOBER 2012

This very moving service was organised by Selwyn Rogoff of Jewish Ex-Services League at the Ditsong Military Museum on Sunday 21st October, at which Godfrey Giles handed out medals to the many veterans present. There was a wreath-laying ceremony and the Welsh Male Choir entertained those present, including many SAAFA JHB members.
NOVEMBER – THE MONTH OF REMEMBRANCE

“They shall not grow old as we grow old -
At the setting of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them....”

ZONDERWATER - 4TH NOVEMBER 2012

(photo by Girolamo Photography
(Girolamo Florio 084-963 9270)

The choirs singing in front of the memorial, facing the cemetery.

Every year on the first Sunday of November, a memorial service is held in front of the three-arched memorial with the three crosses symbolising the Crucifixion. A Mass was said for those of the 101 000 Italians who were prisoners of war between 1942 and 1946. Many of those returned and settled in the then Union of South Africa forming the nucleus of the Italian Community here. They worked on bridges, roads (notably the Bainskloof and Du Toitskloof passes), as well as producing sculptures such as the Women and child at the Voortrekker Monument. Music was provided by the Air Force band and the Corale Valli Alpini and the Coro Guiseppe Verdi sang.

The Silver Lions led by Arnie Menenghelli (SAAFA JHB member of Italian origin), did a spectacular flypast in their Harvards and while the graves were blessed by the priest, assisted by Arturo Costella (member of Johannesburg Branch), an Air Force Allouette flew over scattering rose petals.

Honoured guests included the representative of the Chief of the Air Force, retired Chiefs of the Air Force and Patrons of SAAFA, Denis Earp and Carlo Gagiano and their wives, as well as Ambassadors and representatives of the South African and Italian governments, President of Zonderwater Bloc (and SAFFA JHB Member) Emilio Coccia, Alpine 44 family and Warsaw flights committee.

It was a very moving service and many of those present then visited the beautiful museum and tiny chapel and lit candles for those who had perished.

MEMORIAL SERVICES IN NOVEMBER

SAAFA members attended and laid wreaths at the following venues:

ST. JOHN’S COLLEGE Houghton on 7th November
Denis Mayer laid a wreath, assisted by son Richard

PARKTOWN BOYS – 4TH November
Vice-Chairman Trevor Slade laid a wreath at his old school Parktown’s Memorial Service

Trevor shown here with the standard which he carried at the Armistice Service at the Cenotaph on Sunday 11th November

JEPE BOYS – 9TH November

Laurie Kay with the wreath he laid at the memorial service at Jeppe Boys High. The services at Jeppe started in the 1950’s. He remembers in 1956 as a schoolboy he was on parade at the service and collapsed waking up in Sick Bay. Laurie is a SAAFA JHB Member and another of our Senior SAA Captains. He flew the jumbo over Ellis Park during the World Cup in 1995.

KING EDWARDS – 11TH November

Chairman Hennie and past-Chairman ‘Lin Barratt (former pupil at King Edwards) shown at the memorial at King Edward VII School, where Hennie laid the wreath, obtained by Woolfie Tobiansky, who was the Sergeant Bugler at the 1939 service held at the school
ARMISTICE DAY AT THE CENOTAPH IN CENTRAL JOHANNESBURG

Sunday 11th November

Several SAAFA members attended the service and the Chairman laid the wreath. Somewhat sadly, the service this year focused heavily on the struggle for democracy rather than on the fallen in the two Great Wars, Korea and the Border Wars.

Thank you to Lotti Stern who donated us the book: "Per Noctem per Diem" the story of 24 Squadron, in which her late husband Edgar, served. The book will be kept in the new Boardroom at Astra House, Johannesburg.

WAAF REPORT

By Di Johnston

We thank all the members who responded so generously to our call for groceries, money etc to make up hampers for Christmas for our Seniors and Beneficiaries. These were packed on the 1st December and were delivered the following week.

We celebrated “Christmas in July” by giving our beneficiaries “Christmassy” groceries and special electric hot water bottles which were very gratefully received. Sadly we lost our Patron Eileen Rough in October.

As usual beneficiaries and seniors were taken by us to the Seniors Christmas Lunch at St. Martins-in-the-Veld on 5th December. A splendid feast plus a gift, were enjoyed by all present. We all wish SAAFA Members a Blessed Christmas and health and happiness in 2013.

The performance of Dirty Dancing at Monte Casino Teatro organised by Carol was once again very well supported – 126 people attended and enjoyed it immensely. A small amount added to each ticket helped swell funds.

Thank you to all of you and we look forward to your support at productions for which we will book during 2013.

TWO MORE INSERTS IN THE NEWSLETTER

‘Accounts’ for 2013 subscriptions and hoped for donations from all members (Life and Other)

SAAFA JHB CHRISTMAS LUNCH

30TH NOVEMBER 2012

A good lunch was had by all 123 who attended. We will feature some pictures in the March newsletter as there is really no room left in this one! Thanks to all who donated prizes for the ‘BIG raffle’ and those who gave groceries or money for the Beneficiaries hampers.

See you all at the lunches in 2013 – 1st Lunch on 25th January 2013!

BRITISH AIRWAYS/COMAIR

NEW RAFFLE WINNER:

DAVID TAYLER (East Rand Branch)

This raffle was drawn at the Christmas Lunch

AIRMAN’S GRACE

Some time ago, Chairman Hennie wrote to the Amateur Poet’s Society and asked them to produce an Afrikaans equivalent of our English version of the Airman’s Grace which we say at lunches and other functions.

He received 27 replies, 3 of which were approved by NEC for use at functions where it would be appropriate to use Afrikaans.

The one below is the most popular and we print it for your interest and use if desired:

"Vlieënier se Tafelgebed
deur: ‘Ana Niem’

O Heer van blou assur en storm-weer,
U wat die mens besiel, te swip na hoër sfeer,
vreesloos vaardig, bo wolke -hemele te sweef
sonder sorg en angs, daár Genade te beleef...
Sy oë deel met arende die uitsig van U lig,
in arms van die wind gedra, hoog, hoog op te vlug,
waar hy opgewonde deur U wolke gly,
die ruimte kloof – aan U gebonde… vry!
Vader, waar ons in eendrag hier vergader,
elke vlieënier lojaal en trots op sy eskader,
vul ons erkenlik nou U eer en dank vir gawes –
waar U die liggaam voed en laaf met hierdie maal,
U ons siele vlerke gee, ons gees laat asemhaal…

AMEN"

THREE INSERTS IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

1. Notice of AGM – SAAFA Johannesburg to be held on 29th March 2013 during the monthly lunch at Old Edwardians.
2. Banquet at Rand Club on Friday 22nd February 2013 – please complete your forms and return to Carol (money to be deposited into SAAFA JHB Banking Account – details on form)
3. 120 Club – Tickets R120 – please participate in 2013