

THE FLIGHT IN 1952 TO FETCH THE SECOND COELACANTH

by

Maj Genl D.M. Ralston (Retd)



*A very young Lt Duncan M Ralston,
navigator on the Coelacanth flight and
author of this article.*

Appendix A: The Route and Flying Times

Appendix B: Details: Douglas C47 Dakota

Appendix C: A Brief History of Dakota 6832

The story actually starts in December 1938 – this was 6 years before Dakota 6832 was even built and 14 years before the historic mission was flown.

Late in the afternoon of the 21st December 1938 Captain Hendrick Goosen, master of the steam trawler “Nerine” operating in Algoa Bay, spotted a strange fish in the net on the deck of his boat. *“I was watching while the men were dumping the ‘rubbish’ in case there were some specimens for the Aquarium and that is when I saw the strange fish’s tail sticking out and realised it was different from anything I had ever seen before. Just then I told the crew ‘not to damage that fish’.”*

“That fish” was sent to the East London Museum, where Miss Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, the then director of the Museum, realised that she had a very unusual fish. She immediately wrote a letter to Dr JLB Smith, a lecturer in chemistry at the Rhodes University College in Grahamstown, but also someone who had a great interest in ichthyology. Dr Smith was on holiday in Knysna at the time. After an exchange of letters with Miss Courtney-Lattimer, Dr Smith eventually returned to East London on the 8th of

February 1939 and positively identified the fish as a coelacanth. This was a sensational discovery as the coelacanth had been thought by scientists to be extinct for some 70-million years. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to preserve the fish and by the time Dr Smith was able to view the coelacanth, only the skull and skin remained.

Dr Smith was to become obsessed by his own admission with a passion to discover more coelacanths. His research led to a belief that the Mozambique Channel would be the best site for future discoveries of other specimens. Dr Smith launched many small expeditions after WW2 in an attempt to find more coelacanths. He also had leaflets printed in English, Portuguese and French for distribution along the East African coast and the islands in the Mozambique Channel. These leaflets promised a reward of one hundred pounds for each of the first two coelacanths caught and delivered to Professor Smith who, by now, headed the Department of Ichthyology at Rhodes University College.

The leaflets eventually bore fruit when, on the 22 December 1952; Professor Smith received a telegram from Captain Eric Hunt who operated a schooner in the Indian Ocean stating. “*Have five foot specimen coelacanth injected formalin here. Killed 20th advise Hunt Dzaoudzi*” Dzaoudzi turned out to be on small island called Pamanzi, one of the islands of the Comoros group in the Mozambique Channel. Captain Hunt and Professor Smith were acquaintances that had often discussed the possibility of finding coelacanths. Hunt had also distributed the leaflets in the Comoros Islands and had discussed the fish with the local inhabitants... Having full faith in Hunt’s judgement Smith immediately set about trying to find a way of getting to Dzaoudzi as quickly as possible, especially before any other scientists or interested parties found out and pre-empted him. To cut a long story short, after endless frustrations Smith came to the conclusion that the only way open to him was to contact the Prime Minister, Dr DF Malan. Having been warned by Dr Vernon Shearer MP that Smith would be phoning him, Dr Malan looked up the coelacanth in the book written by Smith called the “*Sea Fishes of Southern Africa*”. Smith had previously given this book to the Prime Minister who was also responsible for the recently established Council for Scientific and Industrial Research that provided Smith with most of his funds. Smith finally got through on the telephone to Dr Malan, who was on holiday at the time, on the evening of the 26th of December. After listening to Smith’s story, and being aware of the importance of procuring the second coelacanth, Dr Malan agreed to phone the Minister of Defence the next morning and to instruct him to allocate a suitable aircraft to fly Smith to fetch the coelacanth. That then is the background to the initiation of the flight and from this point on what follows becomes the story of the flight to fetch the coelacanth.

It was mid morning of the 27th of December by the time that the Minister of Defence’ instructions had been passed to the South African Air Force. This started a flurry of activity to find out where on earth Dzaoudzi was and if it had a suitable landing field; to get diplomatic clearances for the flight from the Portuguese and French authorities; to find suitable maps and charts which involved getting the Government Printer to open his offices; to get financial authority and clearances to refuel the aircraft; to draw the money required for the flight, to assemble and brief the aircrew and determine the best route to follow; to service the aircraft and finally to plan the flight. The latter involved getting

meteorological information, finding out the radio frequencies to be used and air traffic control details, calculating flight times and headings and heights to be flown, swinging the aircraft's compass etc., etc. All these activities were very time consuming and involved many people at many levels and countless telephone calls and telegrams. The only information available on the airfield at Dzaoudzi was that the South African forces had built it during the invasion of Madagascar during WW2. There was no guarantee that the airfield was in fact serviceable. We may, therefore, have to fly to Madagascar from where a boat would have to be arranged to get to Dzaoudzi to fetch the fish. The decision would be delayed until more information was available.

In the middle of all this hustle and bustle and vitally involved, were the aircrew comprising Commandant (Lt Col) J.P.D Blaauw, the mission commander, Capt P. Letley the captain of the aircraft, Lt D.M Ralston, the navigator. Lt W.J Bergh, a newly qualified navigator under training, Corporal J.W.J van Niekerk, the Wireless Operator and Corporal F. Brink, the Flight Engineer.

What now follows is an account of my personal experience as the navigator on the flight supplemented by information taken from Prof Smith's book '*Old Fourlegs*', old newspaper cuttings and magazine articles and a yet to be published book by Robin Stobbs with the provisional title of '*Hunt the Dakotacanth*'. It was just on 12 o'clock on the 27th December that I received a phone call at Air Force Station Swartkop, where I was Orderly Officer, which informed me of the flight. From then on it was a fairly hectic rush to get everything organised. As most of the planning is the navigator's responsibility I finally got home at about 11 o'clock that night with my packing and finalising domestic arrangements with my wife still to do. I was back at AFS Swartkop at 2 o'clock in the morning to go through all the final checks and briefing before take off with the rest of the crew. Take off was at 3.30 in the morning. For convenience a summary of the route and flying times is given in Appendix A.

Landing in Durban after two hours ten minutes we were met by a smallish, slightly built and very intense person in the form of Prof Smith. He immediately inquired about how much water and food we had on board, and, in spite of assurances that we had adequate supplies, he insisted that we take extra water. This we were obliged to do, as we were under strict instructions to assist him in whatever way he requested. Take off was delayed by some forty minutes to fetch a suitable container from the nearby flying boat base at AFS Congella and to fill it with water.

We duly got airborne again at 0705 am and headed for the capital of Mozambique, Lourenzo Marques (now Maputo). Prof Smith was seated in the passenger cabin together with a small suitcase and a trunk that we later found to contain food, water and various pieces of equipment that Prof Smith considered was necessary for our survival under the most adverse conditions. Since it was a freighter aircraft, the seats comprised two rows of canvas seats along the sides of the cabin – certainly not the most comfortable of seating and very noisy due to the lack of insulation. However, Prof Smith settled himself down to read and make notes and I must say that, to his credit, we never had a single word of complaint from him

It should be borne in mind that Prof Smith and we, the aircrew, came from two vastly different worlds. Apart from serving with the South African Forces during WW1 in East Africa, where he became seriously ill, Prof Smith was an academic and had been one for many years. We, with the exception of Willem Bergh, were experienced aircrew who had flown on operations in WW2 in various theatres, and had flown up and down and all over Africa and were well aware of the risks and dangers involved and, in addition, were used to coping with them. Prof Smith had spent most of his time on *terra firma* and had no conception of flying. He was used to camping out rough in the field and hunting for fish from little boats, and, I think, had a very good idea of the dangers involved. Prof Smith was obsessed with acquiring the fish come what may, and, I am sure, would have asked us to fly to hell and back if he thought it necessary. We, on the other hand, were wondering what on earth we were doing flying to a remote little island in the Mozambique Channel on a wild goose chase after a fish that may or may not be a relic from the past, and, in addition, was probably very smelly by now. We were not even sure that the airfield at Dzaoudzi was serviceable, and, if it were not, we would have to return to Lumbo and rethink the whole situation. We simply were not used to such uncertainty and haphazard planning, but we had been given a task to do and there was no question that we would do everything we could to achieve success.

We landed at Lourenzo Marques just after 10 am and were met by the South African Vice-Consul and several Portuguese officials who helped us through the necessary formalities to obtain the clearances that were required. We also refuelled for the long haul to Lumbo near the island of Mozambique, where we landed at about half past three in the afternoon. On the way Prof Smith had opened his trunk and produced some fruit, biscuits, dried figs and cheese that he shared with us. I learned later that there were also several hundred cigarettes in the trunk for trading with the locals if necessary! He also asked if he could light his small primus stove to make us some coffee, which request was turned down because of the risk of fire on board – one of the worst nightmares for aircrew. He was rather miffed at being turned down and clearly thought that he knew better. He also shook us up a bit by saying that the fish might not be a proper coelacanth after all; he was merely “*going on Hunt’s briefest words*”. Some fifteen minutes later I went back to check on how he was getting on and was horrified to find him in the process of pumping up the primus stove prior to lighting it. He did not take kindly to being told in no uncertain terms to please stop what he was doing immediately.

I do not think our attempts at seeing the amusing side of fetching a smelly old fish went down too well with the Professor. He was clearly worried that there may be some opposition to him removing the fish, but was convinced in his own mind that it was his by virtue of all the time and effort he had put into searching for another specimen and publicising it. As he stated in his book ‘*Old Fourlegs*’, “*the fish was mine by every right*”. After all, in his opinion, the French were aware of the search for the coelacanth, but had done nothing about it.

The Airport Supervisor, other officials and the hotel manager met us at Lumbo. Attempts to find out about the state of the airfield at Dzaoudzi came to nothing in spite of

consulting with the Chief of the local radio station and the crew of an East African Airways aircraft. We went to the local hotel for refreshments after which a launch provided by the Port Captain took us for a short visit to the view the island five miles across the bay. The famous fortress of St. Sebastian built by the Portuguese many centuries ago impressed us. Then it was back to the hotel for a surprisingly good meal. We thoroughly enjoyed the prawns and fresh fish on offer. However, Peter Letley was later to be so put off by the smell of the coelacanth in the aircraft that he could never eat fish again. We spent an uncomfortably hot night in the hotel and were up again at 3.30 next morning getting airborne at 4.30 am for the flight to Dzaoudzi. Prof Smith, ever resourceful and opportunistic, had raided the pantry at the hotel and boarded with a carton of fruit.

The weather en route to Dzoaudzi was relatively fine with scattered medium sized fair weather cumulus. With a moderate wind and a few white horses it was easy to calculate the wind speed and direction by flying three headings sixty degrees, one twenty degrees and sixty degrees apart and measuring the drift on each leg. Since I had flown many hours over the sea on maritime reconnaissance during the war, I was able to teach Willem Bergh how to estimate wind speed and direction by using the wind lanes (faint lines visible on the surface of the sea) and the state of the sea as indicated by the white horses. In the absence of a radio beacon at Dzoaudzi we had to rely entirely on dead reckoning and our own calculations. However, our task was made easier by the fact that Pamanzi Island was directly behind the much larger Mayotte Island and the orographic clouds over the mountain peaks gave us a clear indication that we were dead on track. Arriving at Pamanzi with some heavy cloud about we soon identified the position of Dzaoudzi airfield and were confronted with the problem of ascertaining whether the airstrip was safe to land on. Two low level slow speed passes over the strip with wheels and flaps down confirmed that we could safely land in spite of a high hill at the end of the landing run. Soon after we had parked there was a brief, but rather heavy, shower of rain. A fact that we were to put to good uses a little later to speed up our departure from the island.

Hunt and a few French officials met us on the airfield. The Professor ignored everyone but Hunt and insisted on being taken directly to view the fish that was still on the boat. After assuring the Professor that it was indeed a coelacanth, Hunt, however, said that, for his sake, it was essential to first meet the Governor at his residence. By this time the Professor was obviously seething with impatience and had no time for all the food and beverages laid out on a table at the Governor's residence. After greeting and thanking the Governor for his hospitality, Prof Smith insisted on first seeing the fish saying that we would return later to enjoy the refreshments. Down at the harbour Hunt pointed to a box near the mast of his ship. After a moment of gazing at the fish Prof Smith knelt down caressing the fish with tears streaming down his face. The fish was taken out of the box for further inspection and to enable some photographs to be taken. While the fish was being replaced in the box prior to being taken to the airfield, we returned to the Governor's residence where we enjoyed the spread of food and beverages. Unfortunately, being on duty, we could only have a taste of the vintage bottle of famous brandy especially opened for the occasion. We would have enjoyed a longer stay, but Jan Blaauw, who had a smattering of French, heard one of the Governor's aides telling him

that there was still no answer from France. At this Jan Blaauw, suspecting that the French government may insist on keeping the coelacanth and after a brief talk with Prof Smith, insisted that we would have to leave quickly to avoid a cyclone in the Channel. He pointed out that the showers we were experiencing were probably a forerunner of the approaching cyclone. Prof Smith made a short speech expressing his gratitude to the Governor for his assistance and hospitality and justifying his claim on the fish.



(Left to Right) E Breton (Fisheries officer at Mayotte Island), Capt Eric Hunt (Skipper of the schooner that landed the Coelacanth), Prof JLB Smith, Cmdt Jan Blaauw (Mission Commander), Capt Peter Letley (Captain of the flight), Lt DM Ralston (Navigator), Cpl JW van Niekerk (Wireless Operator), Cpl F Brink (Flight Engineer), Lt Willem Bergh (Navigator under training).

At the airstrip the fish was quickly checked and loaded into the aircraft. After some three hours on the island we got airborne en-rout for Lumbo; a normal short take-off technique was used followed by a low level turn to seaward to avoid the hill at the end of the runway. Prof Smith was clearly worried about the weather as we were in the middle of the cyclone season. In his book he makes much of the bad weather and heavy clouds, the cumulus clouds had indeed increased in size and density, but there were no signs of any cyclone. We flew at altitudes of between 1 500 to 2 000 feet which he somehow translates into 15 000 feet in his book; at that altitude we would have needed oxygen which we did not have on board. He also mistook our periodic alterations in heading to measure the wind speed and direction as evasive action to avoid storms. After a time the smell of the fish began to permeate the whole aircraft and would remain with us for the rest of the flight.

On the way to Lumbo Prof Smith came up to the cockpit and it was then that Peter Letley handed him a slip stating that “*Managed to intercept a message stating that a squadron of French fighter planes left Diego Suarez with orders to intercept us and to compel us to return to Madagascar*”. Poor Prof Smith nearly had a heart attack and, after asking some questions, stated that he refused to go back and was prepared to take a chance that the French would not shoot us down. It was only when Peter Letley and Jan Blaauw burst out laughing that he realised that they were pulling his leg. He was not very impressed and returned to the passenger cabin where he got into his sleeping bag and lay on the floor next to his precious box. The weather deteriorated as we neared Lumbo so, in order to avoid any confusion about the location of Lumbo, we turned twenty degrees to port twenty minutes before our Estimated Time of Arrival. Thus when we reached the coast we knew for certain that Lumbo was to the North of us as it indeed proved to be and we duly landed there just after noon.

After refuelling at Lumbo, we were in the air again before 1 pm arriving at Lourenzo Marques at around twenty past six in the evening. Prof Smith spent most of the flight wrapped up in his sleeping bag next his beloved fish. After a twenty minute stop to refuel we were in the air again arriving in Durban at about a quarter past nine having had to circle the airfield while the trailing aerial was dealt with which had initially refused to retract. Once the aircraft had been parked we opened the door to let Prof Smith out where a large crowd and a battery of flash bulbs greeted him. We had to wait while he gave interviews to the news media and made a speech. Understandably all we wanted was a drink, some food, a shower and bed. I think the Professor was even more exhausted, but in spite of this he refused to let the coelacanth out of his sight or let anyone see it. The coelacanth was duly taken to the Natal Command Officer’s Mess where it spent the night next to his bed – by this time I think the Professor had become immune to the smell!

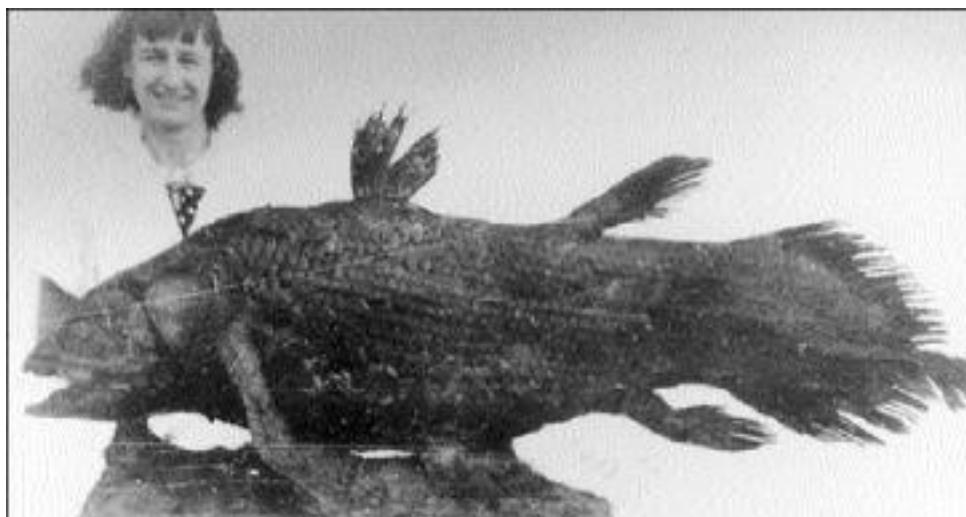
Prof Smith had somehow managed to contact the Chief of the Air Force late that evening and had obtained permission to fly to Cape Town to show the fish to the Prime Minister, Dr Malan, and also to stop at Grahamstown on the way to pick up his wife and son. At that stage ladies were not allowed on SA Air Force aircraft so he achieved the impossible, but by then we were getting used to him getting his own way. We were not very impressed when we were told late in the evening that we would be going to Cape Town via Grahamstown in the morning. We had hoped to drop the Professor off in Grahamstown and return to Pretoria, and now we were faced with another day away from home in the middle of the Christmas break.

Another short sleep and we were up again at three o’clock in the morning for take-off to Grahamstown at 4.50 am. As Grahamstown airport had no radio beacon and due to low cloud, we had to go out to sea and carry out a low level approach to touch down on the airfield at 7.05 am. We were given some welcome coffee and food before taking off again with Mrs Smith and young William, a rather large eleven or twelve year old, on board. Once airborne, William delighted in running up and down the length of the passenger cabin disturbing the trim of the aircraft until Jan Blaauw sent a message back to tell him to stop, otherwise he would be thrown out of the aircraft. Fifty years later, on a

flight to re-enact our arrival in Grahamstown with the fish, I reminded a much larger and older William that he would suffer a similar fate if he did not remain seated during the flight. This he took in a good spirit.

The flight to Cape Town was uneventful where we landed at around 10.30 am. On the way, when Prof Smith again came up to the cockpit, Peter Letley showed him a message stating that Dr Malan no longer wished to see the fish and wishing him a safe return to Grahamstown. Poor Prof Smith looked absolutely devastated until he saw the grins on the faces of the crew and realised that his leg was being pulled again. He states in his book that he could cheerfully have committed murder and I believe him. In retrospect I think we were rather unkind to him, as he did not share our sense of humour. After landing at Air Force Station Ysterplaat the coelacanth was unloaded and, together with Prof Smith, was taken off under guard to the Malans holiday home at the Strand. We, the aircrew, had the rest of the day free. We learned later that the coelacanth had been named *Malani anjouanea* in honour of Dr Malan, who had authorised the flight, and to commemorate the island of Anjouan where it had been found.

We took off for Grahamstown at 8.30 am on the 31st of December with Prof Smith, his family and the coelacanth on board landing there at 11.45 IS. There was a lot of low cloud on the return flight that again meant a low level approach to the airfield from the sea. The Mayor and quite a large crowd met us on the airfield. In a short ceremony Prof Smith presented each of the four officers with a copy of his *Sea Fishes of Southern Africa*, each copy inscribed with one of our names and the following “*With my compliments, in memory of the coelacanth flight to Pamanzi, Comores, 29th to 31st December, 1952*”. The two non commissioned officers were each given a memento, a fifty-pound note each if I remember correctly. We also each received a scale from the coelacanth. We managed to get away at 12.15 pm for a two and three quarter hour flight to our home base at AFS Swartkop. That night there was a ball at the Officer’s Mess that we, the officers in spite of being somewhat jaded, were obliged to attend.



Miss Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer with a mounted model of the Coelacanth.

As a member of the SA Air Force I am proud of the role we were able to play in fetching the second coelacanth from the Comoros. It was indeed a major achievement for a South African scientist to have rediscovered a fish thought to have been extinct for millions of years. It was an even greater achievement for Prof Smith to have launched a search in an area that he had identified that led to the successful discovery of the second specimen. That we were able to bring this second coelacanth back to South Africa is an event that should take its place in both the annals of scientific achievement by a South African scientist and in the annals of the SA Air Force.

It is pleasing to note that many more coelacanths have subsequently been found in the Comoros and then, later on, along the East African coast, in Indonesia and, more recently, off Sordwana Bay in Natal. Unfortunately, as it lives in deep water, it is killed on being brought to the surface. Tragically, it is also breeds very slowly, so if it is over exploited, it may be brought to the brink of extinction. It is hoped that the Governments concerned will, like the SA Government, make every effort to ensure that this does not happen.

For the record the details of the 1952 flight, as recorded in my Navigator's Logbook, are given in Appendix A.

Appendix A to
The Flight to
Fetch the
Coelacanth

ROUTE AND FLYING TIMES

DATE	TAKE-OFF	ROUTE	FLIGHT TIME
28-12-52	03h30	Swartkop, Pretoria- Durban	2hrs 10mins
	07h05	Durban- Lourenzo Marques (Maputo)	2hrs 00mins
	10h10	Lourenzo Marques- Lumbo	5hrs 25mins
29-12-52	04h35	Lumbo- Dzaoudzi, Pamanzi, Comores	2hrs 40 mins
	09h45	Dzaoudzi-Lumbo	2hrs 40mins
	12h50	Lumbo- Lourenzo Marques	5hrs 30mins
30-12-52	18h45	Lourenzo Marques- Durban	2hrs 20mins
	04h50	Durban- Grahamstown	2hrs 15mins
	07h40	Grahamstown-Ysterplaat (Cape Town)	3hrs 20mins
31-12-52	08h30	Ysterplaat- Grahamstown	3hrs 20mins
	12h15	Grahamstown- Swartkop	2hrs 45mins
Flying Time outward bound Swartkop-Dzaoudzi			12hrs 15mins
Flying times inward bound Dzaoudzi- Cape Town-Swartkop			21hrs 50mins
Total Flying Time			34hrs 05 mins
Total Distance Flown (approx)			4 000 nm (7 000km)

DETAILS: DOUGLAS C47 DAKOTA

DIMENSIONS

WINGSPAN	28.96 m (98 ft)
HEIGHT	5.16 M (16 ft 11 in)
LENGTH	19.66 m (64 ft)

POWERPLANT (DAKOTA MK 1V)

2 X PRATT & WHITNEY R1830-90B 882 KW (1 200 HP)

Fourteen cylinder radial piston (two banks
of seven cylinders each)

PROPELLER

Three bladed Hamilton Standard.

PERFORMANCE FIGURES

MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF MASS	14 060 kg (31 000 lb)
EMPTY MASS	7 700 kg (25 200 lb)
OVERLOAD LIMIT	14969 kg (33 000 lb)
MAXIMUM SPEED	346 km/h (190 kts /215 mph)
MAXIMUM RANGE	2760 KM (1510 NM)
RATE OF CLIMB	400 FT/MN at 105 Knots
SERVICE CEILING	7000 m (23 000 ft)
FUEL CONSUMPTION	300 Lb/Hr Per Engine

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DAKOTA 6832

Dakota 6832, the *Flying Fish Cart*, first flew in 1944 at the Douglas Aircraft Corporation factory in Oklahoma City, USA. Purchased by Britain under the lease lend scheme she was flown to South Africa in February 1944 and was retired from service in 1992. Initially employed as a no frills transport/freighter aircraft she was later used as a maritime reconnaissance aircraft. Her one brief moment of glory came with the flight to Dzaoudzi airfield on the island of Pamanzi in the Comoros to fetch the second coelacanth ever identified. If only for this reason it is important that she should be preserved for posterity. In addition, as she is only one of two Dakotas remaining on the SA Air Force's inventory, and in view of the special role that this type of aircraft played in the history of the Air Force, every effort should be made to keep her in a fit state to be viewed by the public. It is important to note that in the 1970s and 1980s the SA Air Force was the largest operator of Dakota aircraft in the world.

Dakota 6832 was spared being converted to a Turbo Propeller version at the special request of some of her 1952 aircrew. They felt that her historical significance warranted her being restored to her 1952 colour scheme and preserved and displayed in the SA Air Force Museum to commemorate that historic 1952 flight. It was at this stage that plans for her eventual restoration were made and a start was made to restore her to her 1952 condition. As it turned out 6832 did not get the restoration she deserved. She became a victim of a lack of funds and more important operational priorities. She was tucked away in a hangar at Cape Town International Airport and, whilst not completely forgotten, no active restoration work was done on her. It is an unfortunate fact that an aircraft not flown or regularly serviced deteriorates rapidly. And so it was with 6832, she now needs major restoration. She was eventually relocated to AFB Ysterplaat when the Air Force Base at the airport was closed down. A plan was made to get her restored to flying condition to fly to Grahamstown in 2002 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the flight to the Comoros. However, once again a lack of finances put paid to any significant work being done on her.

Now the "Grubby Rubbies", a team of highly dedicated volunteers, led by Warrant Officer Kevin Furness (retd), a veteran Dakota expert, is working hard on Saturdays to restore 6832 to a condition that would enable her to be part of a display commemorating the 1952 flight at the SA Air Force Museum at AFB Ysterplaat. Some considerable progress has already been made, but the project still lacks adequate financial resources and is under resourced. The Air Force is able to give some support, but this is limited by financial constraints and a shortage of skilled technicians. The project has the support of the SAAF Museum Aviation Heritage Foundation that, at this stage, lacks the necessary

status to be very effective. Eventually it is hoped to restore 6832 to a flying condition of serviceability, but this is going to be very expensive. Available funds are likely to run out in May 2006, which would mean that further restoration work on 6832 would have to be stopped. An effort is being made to get a major sponsor involved in the project, but to date not one has been forthcoming. However, at this stage, any financial help or help in kind would be most welcome.

A trust account has been established with the Aviation Foundation Trust, from where the finances for this restoration project is managed.

For further information or donations, please contact any of the below:

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