

# FLYPAPER NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2023



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## SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION PORT ELIZABETH BRANCH

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### NEWS FROM THE EDITORS

Congress 2023 is exactly a month away and the planning committee are hard at work with the finalities.

Our Branch AGM was held in March at the German Club in Loraine, followed by lunch.

We had an informal gathering in the form of a bring and braai at the SAAF Museum on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April, which was well attended, and thoroughly enjoyable. There will not be a formal luncheon in May, as we are hosting Congress 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup>. If you haven't already registered, you have until 15<sup>th</sup> May to do so. It promises to be a memorable event.

### SICK BAY.

Paul Hoogendoorn has been in hospital with a minor procedure, but I'm happy to report that he is recovering well, and is in good spirits.

We are pleased to report that Leonie Venter, wife of (WO1 Ret) Johan Venter, has made a remarkable recovery.

## Sunset Call

It is with great sadness that we record the calling to higher service of:-

**Andriaan (Andre) Theron (WO1 Ret)**

**Andre served at the SAAF Museum for four years prior to his retirement in 2018.**

**Digby Holdsworth**

**Ex 6 Squadron Pilot, Airforce Base Port Elizabeth.**

*At the going down of the sun,  
And in the morning,  
We will remember them.*



## Annual Membership

We thank all those who have paid their annual membership. For those still to pay the subs are R150, payments can be made by EFT into the following account, using your surname as the beneficiary reference.

**Account Holder: SAAFA PE Branch**

**Bank: Standard Bank SA**

**Branch: Walmer**

**Branch Code: 4310**

**Account Nr: 043641342 (Savings)**

A reminder again, that half of the annual subs go to SAAFA NEC in Pretoria as capitation fees, for the running of SAAFA NEC, and the upkeep of the Bayes Hill SA Air Force Memorial at Swartkops, Pretoria. This is a shared responsibility between SAAFA and the SAAF.

Regards

Sean/James/Claude

## **CHAIRMAN'S CHIRP APRIL 2023**

“It is time again for a Flypaper letter from you,” said James, so here we go. The task master has spoken!!!! I just love it when James, always with a smile, reminds me that my time for the Flypaper is now.

We have had a very exciting month since my last Flypaper, and, firstly, I wish to welcome our new members to the Port Elizabeth Branch, and of course, to their 1<sup>st</sup> Flypaper. Our new members are Vossie Vorster, all the way from Ireland, Ronnie Knott-Craig from Gauteng, and Neels Smit and Angela Millson. Welcome, to everyone.

Rob Carlisle and Sean Moorhouse organised a reunion for the folks who had previously served at Air Force Base Port Elizabeth, 6 and 16 Squadron, for the 18<sup>th</sup> of March. Fortunately, Port Elizabeth had perfect weather, and we were all entertained, firstly, at the Beach Hotel, then at Ziggy's bar at Pine Lodge Inn. The reunion had over 85 people attending, with 2 aircraft also doing an impressive flypast. The proceeds from the reunion, were donated to the SAAFA coffers, and Sean and Rob raised an amazing R5060.00 for the PE Branch funds. This came via a donation of R1000.00 from Mr Wayne Kennelly (returning overseas), R1000.00 from Mr Cesare Castignani from a T-shirt raffle, R2000.00 from the proceeds from mugs and caps, R500.00 from Mr Digby Holdsworth, and a combined donation of R560.00 from Mrs Debbie Bernberg and Mr Ronnie Knott-Craig. A special thank you to Rob and Sean for the decision to raise funds, and to all the donors as well. This goes a long way towards our beneficiaries' welfare.

Mr Vossie Vorster went one step further and had Sean record the reunion, as well as getting photos of the event. He then interviewed Sean and I, and this can now be viewed on YouTube: “Legacy Conversations- AFB PE 2023 Reunion with Vossie Vorster”.

Thank you Vossie for promoting the SAAFA PE Branch, and we appreciate the exposure that we get from your efforts.

## **CONGRESS**

The planning for Congress is in full swing, and by the time you read this letter, we will be finalising the last portion of the Congress planning. The last few months has seen a tremendous drive towards reaching our successful goal, and a lot of hard work has been

done. As I'm typing this letter to you, I'm also pondering how Congress would have been planned in the "olden days". No internet to quickly search for decanters, no cell phones to confirm the order has been received, no videos where we can see what the flower arrangements look like....and of course...no internet banking.

The planning for this Congress, in retrospect, is easy!!!!

The Congress will take place from 25<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> May. The price for the delegates is R3000.00, which includes accommodation at the Pine Lodge Inn, as well as all the meals for the duration of Congress. The Ladies' outing, for two days, is an additional R300.00. If you wish to attend the Congress, but prefer to sleep at home, then the cost is only R1115.00, with all the above included. If you only wish to attend the banquet evening, then the cost is only R390.00 per person. This is a bow tie and black suit evening, and we are expecting a fantastic evening.

The ladies' outing will take place on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May after breakfast. The excursion will be to the Sacramento (Schoenmakerskop), for a talk about the raising of the Sacramento cannons, from Mr Gerry Van Niekerk, who was part of the salvage team who discovered the sunken ship. After that the Ladies go to Threesome winery for a wine tour with a snack platter and some wine tasting.

On the Saturday 27<sup>th</sup>, again after breakfast, the ladies depart to SANCOB where the penguins will be fed, and hopefully a visiting gannet, knowing the feeding times, finds his way to the food table. After that the whole Congress meets up for a visit to the world-renowned SAAF Museum for a guided tour. This is a definitely "Must See" event. The gala evening then commences at about 18:30.

The Congress registration form is copied below.

The registration date will be extended, but please try to join us at Congress, it will be fantastic to see a massive Port Elizabeth representation.

## CONGRESS 2023 REGISTRATION

Congress Coordinator (NEC): Mike Louw Cell: 0825117217

email: [mjvlouw@gmail.com](mailto:mjvlouw@gmail.com)

Congress Coordinator (Branch): Trevor Bernberg Cell: 0729131340

email: [thebernbergs@mweb.co.za](mailto:thebernbergs@mweb.co.za)

Congress Dates: 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023 to 28<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Please complete this form fully using block letters and tick the blocks where required. It is also important to use a black pen to ensure legibility.

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### PERSONAL PARTICULARS

Surname:

Initials:

First Name:

ID Nr:

Branch:

Cell Nr:

Email:

Accompanied by spouse/partner

YES

NO

### PERSONAL PARTICULARS OF SPOUSE/PARTNER

Surname:

Initials:

First Name:

Branch:

Cell Nr:

### ACCOMMODATION (LIVING-IN)

Pine Lodge Resort	Delegate R 3000.00	Spouse/ Partner R 3000.00	
Spouse's Excursion	R 300.00		

**Total R** \_\_\_\_\_

Costs include accommodation for 3 nights with breakfast, three evening functions, Friday, and Saturday lunches.

### CONGRESS DELEGATE (LIVING-OUT)

Conference including 3 evening functions	Delegate R1115.00	Spouse R 1115.00	R
Conference + Gala Dinner	R 800.00	R 800.00	R
Spouse's excursion	R 300.00		

**Total R** \_\_\_\_\_

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

Special Dietary Requirements (Allergies. etc)	
Physical Assistance Required	

**TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS**

Please indicate mode of transport

Private Vehicle	ETA
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Airline		
ETA		
Flight Nr		
Shuttle Required	YES	NO

**PAYMENT**

I hereby acknowledge that an amount of R\_\_\_\_\_ is due by me and has been settled by Electronic Transfer (EFT) deposited into the following account.

Account Holder: SAAFA PE Branch  
 Bank: Standard Bank SA  
 Branch: Walmer  
 Branch Code: 4310  
 Account Nr: 043641342 (Savings)

**Please use your name and surname as reference**

**NB Please attach a copy of the payment receipt to facilitate tracking.**

Our monthly German Club formal lunch will not take place in May because of the Congress, but we certainly hope to see you at the Pine Lodge Inn for Congress.

Best wishes,

Trevor

0729131340

**BIRTHDAY WISHES FOR MAY/JUNE 2023**

*8<sup>th</sup> May Margaret Nightingale*  
*17<sup>th</sup> May Johan Venter*  
*29<sup>th</sup> May Vaughn Murphy*  
*9<sup>th</sup> June Rudi Nelson*  
*11<sup>th</sup> June Rod Southey*  
*19<sup>th</sup> June Peter Bowden*  
*27<sup>th</sup> June Sean Moorhouse*

**We wish you all a very happy birthday and may the year ahead be filled with joy and good health.**

**THE OPS BOARD FOR 2022**

The following are proposed dates for memorial parades for the rest of 2023. It is important to keep alive the memory of those who paid the supreme sacrifice in the air, on land and on the seas in service of our country. As our fellow associations always support our Battle of Britain Memorial each year, let's all make the effort to support our fellow veteran associations by attending as many parades as possible.

14<sup>th</sup> May Third Generation Parade (Comrades Shell Hole)

4<sup>th</sup> June Sea Cadet Sunday

16<sup>th</sup> July Delville Wood Memorial Parade

17<sup>th</sup> September Battle of Britain Memorial Service (St Pauls Anglican Church)

27<sup>th</sup> September Grey High School Retreat Ceremony

12th October Grey High School Heritage March

20th/21st October NOASA Trafalgar Dinner / El Alamein Dinner

22nd October Trafalgar Remembrance Church Service

4<sup>th</sup> November SA Legion PE Annual Poppy Graveyard Visit

10<sup>th</sup> November Grey High School Parade

11th November SA Legion “Tin Shake”

12th November Civic Remembrance Day Parade

2<sup>nd</sup> December PAG (Comrades) Asscn. Umzintzani Parade.

**The above OPS Board details are correct at the time of going to press, with exception of the ceremonial parades where there could be a change of time or venue. Full details of each parade will be published in advance as they come to hand.**

## **Flying Ace of the Karoo**

*This is an extract from Karoo Roads I – Tales from South Africa’s Heartland, by Chris Marais and Julienne du Toit. With kind acknowledgement to The Daily Maverick.*



One of the greatest fighter pilots of World War 2 was a son of the Karoo. His story reads like a Shakespeare battle tragedy, replete with glory, loss and splendid isolation.

I'm sitting on a long stoep swirling Cremora into coffee, savouring the pre-dawn inky-blue blackness of the big sky, in the gritty nub of the Hard Man's Karoo.

It's a symphony of quiet but when you listen, really listen, you can break it up into little sound parts: there's the percussive tonk-tonk of the wind pump on the farmstead, bottom-noted by the rustle of the early winter wind through the poplar trees on the nearby water course. A hidden lark on its morning breakfast run provides a high, sweet whistle solo. For the rest, silence rules.

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### *Contrails in a clear Karoo sky*

Here, literally in the middle of a stony nowhere, I see traces of jet planes in the sky, first a contrail streak then another one, and then a third. The Johannesburg-Cape Town air run is picking up. It's blissful to be a distant bystander anchored in the Karoo, surrounded by bossies and rocks and little critters that lurk and hunt. And, of course, sheep. Never forget the sheep.

This, I reckon, is probably how the Karoo's greatest aerial ace, its finest warrior-export, must have felt not that long ago as he sat right here drinking coffee, gazing up at the heavens which were once his battleground.

On the bench nearby lies a thick folder of cuttings, print-outs and general papers detailing, from all manner of sources, the life and times of one Khaki Hugo. Or, if you're looking at him from a British standpoint, Dutch Hugo.

I am staying on Canariesfontein Guest Farm in the Carnarvon-Loxton area of the Northern Cape. This is where Petrus Hendrik Hugo, who went across "the pond" to Britain to fight for the Allies in World War 2 and became one of their top fighter pilots, spent the last period of his vivid, textured life.



## *A top fighter pilot*

In an interview given many decades ago, he recalls:

“My first squadron was No. 615, AAF, and I stayed with them from 16 December 1939 to 26 November 1941. Winston Churchill was our Honorary Air Commodore and he came to see us at our base in France, Vitry-en-Artois, and later, regularly, at Kenley and Manston.

“Initially we flew Gloster Gladiators but in early May 1940 received Hurricanes.

“A great friend of mine, Bill Fowler, and I rebuilt a derelict, abandoned Morane 138E Parasol Monoplane with a Gnome Rhone rotary engine. We had a lot of fun giving attractive French girls joy rides off the beach at Wissant. Sadly, we had to abandon it when we evacuated France.”

He's referring to the hasty mass exodus of Allied forces, 224,585 British and 112,546 French and Belgian troops, from the beach at Dunkirk a scant six weeks later. While German fighter planes bombed and strafed the men on the sand, almost anything that could float came across the English Channel to rescue them.

Then Paris fell, France capitulated and the Battle of Britain was on. Again, Dutch Hugo was in the thick of it.



## *A battle diary*

One of his combat reports after downing a Messerschmitt 109, dated 27 July 1940, states:

“Dense smoke and liquid poured from the German pilot’s machine. Although my engine stopped I dived after him. Fortunately my engine restarted. The pilot pulled out of his dive at about 6,000 feet and then started to dive again. I was hot on his tail and at about 3,000 feet opened fire. He continued to dive and landed in the water. Within a minute the aircraft had sunk, and I saw the pilot swimming about in the middle of a big patch of air bubbles which had been caused by the sinking of his machine. I sent back a message asking for a launch to be sent out to the German airman’s rescue and gave his position. I then flew to base.”

Just about everything in this file I’ve collected over time reads like it comes from a stirring adventure novel, something Wilbur Smith would feast on for new book material. Or a documovie with lots of actual World War 2 file footage, of the Battle of Britain in particular.

Imagine being a 24-year-old Karoo boy in the thick of war, with 22 aerial kills under your belt. Each of those kills means you potentially stopped a German airplane from destroying British life and property. Imagine the adrenalin rush after adrenalin rush of flying five battle sorties in one day, landing, cleaning up an old wound, reloading, refuelling, downing a quick cup of tea and taking off again, on the lookout for what the *Boys’ Own* comics used to call “The Hun”.

Petrus Hendrik Hugo was born on 20 December 1917, and grew up on Pampoenpoort Farm near [Victoria West](#). Even as a boy hunting springbok in the semi-desert of the Northern Cape, he showed great promise as a deadly shot. He loved to tinker with machines and harboured aerial ambitions. Being a fighter pilot was an apex aspiration for a young man looking for adventure.

Europe was bubbling with Nazi madness and war was imminent. Hugo studied aeronautical engineering in Johannesburg and then, in 1938, went to Britain for Royal Air Force training. His instructors said he was “an exceptional pilot, an excellent marksman and suitable for posting to a fighter squadron”.

And even though Peter Hugo was nicknamed “Khaki” back home (either for choosing to train in Britain or for his sun-reddened complexion which, friends said, gave him the look of an Englishman), over in the UK they called him “Dutch” because of his clear South African accent.

It is not known what his doomed German foes called him in the heat of battle. Probably some expletive with the word “Englander” attached to it.

### *Home town buys him a Spitfire*

The sun is starting to warm up the stoep and I’m on my second cup of coffee, completely lost in what I always called Dad’s War – because my late father was a navigator on a bomber in North Africa, shot down and locked up in an Italian POW camp for a while.

I pick up an interesting snippet about Group Captain Hugo’s home connection from Eric Rosenthal’s slim but priceless town book called *One Hundred Years of Victoria West*.

Back in those WW2 days, the people of Victoria West established a Petrus Hugo Spitfire Fund and raised 4,000 pounds towards an aircraft for their local hero, which was then dubbed “Karoo”.

Unfortunately, Hugo was later shot down over the English Channel. He was rescued and soon back in the thick of things. However, there is a Spitfire called “Karoo” lying somewhere on the seabed off Dover.

His eventual medal tally tells much of his war story:

The triple-barred DFC, 1939-1945 Star (with Battle of Britain Bar), Air Crew Europe Star (with France and Germany Bar), Africa Star (with North Africa 1942-43 Bar), Italy Star, Defence and War Medals, American Distinguished Flying Cross and French Republic Croix de Guerre 1939-45.

I don’t know if other warriors have ever been awarded such medals by three countries – there can’t be that many. These medals, along with several pieces of shrapnel and a German bullet removed from Hugo himself, were auctioned off in London for 125,000 pounds in 2010. After WW2 a grateful British government named Hugo Gardens in the London borough of Havering after him.

### *Sorrow in Tanzania*

Group Captain Hugo was also awarded a farm in Tanganyika (later Tanzania), on the western slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro. This is where he and his wife Angela and their three daughters lived for two decades.

But 1971 was a sorrow-filled year for the flier-turned-farmer. First, his beloved Angela died. Then in September Petrus Hugo and his three children were summarily evicted from the farm by the new government – they were given two weeks to pack up and leave. The Hugo clan sailed from Mombasa to Durban and then returned to his family in the Karoo. One of his prized possessions, a Cessna 182, had to be smuggled out of the country by a friend.

And so, for the better part of 15 years, the celebrated warrior came to live and farm at Canariesfontein, here in the middle of this stony nowhere.

A distant relative, Michael Muller, now owns the property and has turned it into a guest farm. He remembers visiting “Oom Khaki” as a boy on the odd occasion.

“I got the sense that Oom Khaki was less fascinated by sheep than he was by machinery,” he tells me. “He loved installing new wind pumps, and he repaired them all himself.”

Group Captain Hugo drove an old bakkie and lived “like a hermit” until his death in 1986. Later, I follow Muller’s directions to Bo-Pampoenpoort, Hugo’s childhood farm where he lies buried in the family graveyard.

The inscription on his flat gravestone simply reads:

“Here lies a hero.” And that’s all. But that’s enough.

*For an insider’s view on life in the Dry Country, [get the three-book special](#) of Karoo Roads I, Karoo Roads II and Karoo Roads III for only R800, including courier costs in South Africa. For more details, contact Julie at [julie@karoospace.co.za](mailto:julie@karoospace.co.za)*

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