



SAAF Association Port Alfred News

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TALE DRAGGER

September 2018

NEXT MEETING AND LUNCH—AT THE SKI BOAT CLUB ON 3rd September 12.00 FOR 12.30

We look forward to seeing you. Please contact either Hugh on 046 624 1589 or Lyn on 046 604 0493 for your bookings or apologies.

The caterer requires numbers on the Friday before the lunch so please advise by 12 noon on 31st August. Please also advise of dietary requirements. e.g. if you do not eat fish etc.

WELFARE OF MEMBERS

Sick Bay: Denzil Goosen, Rev. James Hoyle, Glen Mogg, Gwyneth Reid,

We hope that your health improves day by day and we are praying that you have a speedy recovery.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY WISHES FOR SEPTEMBER

5th Franz Nel; 14th Flippie Loock; 16th Bob Duggan and Gavin Kendall; 18th Jacobus Nel; 21st Alan Gunn; 28th Dirk De Vos;

Happy Birthday to all of you. We hope that the sun shines brightly on your special day.

ABOUT GROWING OLD... (Some more)

I don't know how I got over the hill without getting to the top.

Being young is beautiful, but being old is comfortable.

Eventually you will reach a point when you stop lying about your age and start bragging about it.

THE GRUMMAN S-2 TRACKER



When the Second World War came to an end and the world entered the Cold War, Grumman's Tracker and its derivatives played a vital role in defending and supplying naval forces around the world.

Throughout its existence, the Grumman Aerospace Corporation has been known for its naval combat aircraft. The company was formed in 1930 and built numerous highly successful aircraft which primarily saw service with the US Navy, during the early 1940s. Shortly after the end of the Second World War in 1945, Grumman Guardian completed its maiden flight. This aircraft was as a result of a US Navy anti-submarine warfare (ASW) requirement and was intended to replace the wartime Grumman Avenger torpedo bomber. Unable to fit all the required equipment into a single airframe, which would be small enough for carrier operations, Grumman developed two complementary Guardians. One had a radome and detection equipment and served as the "hunter" or "guppy," whilst the other carried a torpedo or depth charges and served as the "killer" or "scrapper." Operating in pairs, Guardians provided an effective interim ASW solution, whilst the Navy awaited the development of a more effective twin-engined aircraft, which would be able to carry out both functions of the Guardians with a single airframe.

At last, on 4 December 1952, Grumman's Model 89 took to the skies. Designated by the US Navy as the S-2 Tracker, the new

aircraft was powered by two Wright Cyclone air-cooled radial engines, each providing more than 1500 hp. Its fuselage had space for a crew of four, and a variety of equipment, including a search radar in a retractable ventral radome, as well as a weapons' bay. The Tracker was equipped with electronic counter-measures (ECM) and a retractable magnetic anomaly detector (MAD) boom in its tail. It was able to carry almost 2200 Kg of weapons, consisting of torpedoes, nuclear depth charges, rockets and bombs in its weapons' bay and with its under-wing hardpoints. Sonobuoys, explosives and smoke dispersers were carried in the engine nacelles. In addition to its folding wings, arrestor hook and rugged tricycle landing gear, the Tracker had a short take-off and landing performance, making it ideal for carrier operations. Ultimately, Grumman built 1200 Trackers, whilst De Havilland Canada built about 100 examples of the aircraft type.

In addition to serving with the US Navy, S-2 Trackers saw service in Canada, Argentina, Brazil and many other countries in the world. Argentine Trackers, for example, saw extensive use in the Falklands War of 1982. These aircraft were later converted to Turbo Trackers, powered by Garret turboprop engines. With the introduction of the Lockheed S-3 Viking and other modern ASW and maritime patrol aircraft, the US Navy began phasing out their Trackers. This created opportunities for civilian operators to operate a rugged, capable aircraft in challenging conditions. Canadian based Conair, for example, is one the largest aerial fire-fighting aircraft operators in the world. In the 1970's and 80's it converted surplus Canadian and American Trackers into Firecats and turboprop-powered Turbo Firecats. These aircraft have seen a tremendous amount of firebombing service in Canada, whilst several Turbo Firecats remain in service in France today.

WW 2 SPITFIRE PILOT MARY ELLIS DIES



One of the last living female World War Two pilots, Mary Ellis has died aged 101 at her home on the Isle of Wight.

While she was commonly known as the last surviving female pilot from the war, in fact there are three others – Eleanor Wadsworth, who lives in Bury St Edmunds, Nancy Stratford in the US and Jaye Edwards in Canada.

Born Mary Wilkins to a farming family in Leafield, Oxfordshire, she grew up close to RAF bases at Bicester and Port Meadow.

“I was interested in aeroplanes from almost the year dot” she said.

As a child, her father paid a flying circus to take her on a pleasure flight in a de Havilland 60 Moth. “I think that sealed my fate forever” she later recalled.

Her teenage “passion for the skies” led to flying lessons at Witney airfield.

When war broke out, a flying licence and that experience made her a suitable candidate for the ATA, which allowed qualified women to join as pilots in 1940.

The idea had a mixed reception.

The Aeroplane magazine fumed in a 1940 editorial: “Women anxious to serve their country should take on work more befitting their sex instead of encroaching on a man’s occupation.”

Another editor wrote: “The menace is the woman who thinks she ought to be flying in a high-speed bomber when she really has not

the intelligence to scrub the floor of a hospital properly.”

Against this background and despite her mother’s misgivings, she applied to the ATA and was “readily accepted” in 1941.

She was soon flying “fast and furious aeroplanes and bombers all over the country”, as aircraft production and casualties rose.

The work was “exhilarating and sometimes very dangerous” she recalled. Pilots often flew unfamiliar aircraft guided by the “Ferry Pilot’s Notes”, which gave landing instructions.

“We’d say to each other, Oh look what I’ve got”. And that was terribly exciting. Sometimes frightening as well because the aeroplanes were all different. You’d get out of a Tiger Moth into a Wellington Bomber and then into a Spitfire.”

Based at an all-women’s ATA pool in Hamble, Hampshire, she recalled that she had flown about a 1000 aircraft during the war including 76 different types.

Mary Ellis came close to death on several occasions.

She was shot at over Bournemouth, possible by friendly fire, and had a near-miss as she landed in fog at the same time as another Spitfire coming in the opposite direction.

She also survived a crash-landing when the undercarriage on her Spitfire jammed, causing the engine to overheat.

“I just knew that I had to do something before the engine blew up. One didn’t get excited or anything else. It’s just a part of the job of coping with an aeroplane.”

When the ATA was disbanded in 1945, Mary was seconded to the RAF, where she became one of the first women to fly Britain’s first jet fighter, the Gloster Meteor.

She went on to become manager of Sandown Airport on the Isle of Wight in the 1950s and 1960s, hiring a former ATA colleague, Vera Strodl, as chief flying instructor.

Mary married Don Ellis, a fellow pilot, in 1961.

She continued to live in the marital home beside the runway at Sandown after his death in 2009.

At the age of 101, she was still driving daily to the local shops.



WE ARE HAVING A VARIETY SHOW ON 1ST SEPTEMBER AT THE DON POWIS HALL, SETTLERS PARK

MATINEE: 3PM: EVENING AT 7 PM

TICKETS: R50

EATS AND DRINKS: "BRING AND SHARE"

As this is a fund-raiser to enable us to support smaller struggling charities in town (one is feeding 3000 hungry people-and we all know how food prices have escalated.) please join us for some fun and entertainment.

Donations in lieu will also be most appreciated.

My time is up and so I am going to say "goodbye for now." Please take care and stay safe and warm. We look forward to seeing you at our next lunch on 3rd September.

Editor: Lyn

The Editors extend their thanks for all contributions received. Opinions expressed in this Newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the Editors or SAAFA National Executive. The Editors reserve the right to amend or reject any editorial matter submitted for publication.