



TALE DRAGGER



SOUTH AFRICAN AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION – PORT ALFRED JULY 2023

Welcome to the July edition of Tale Dragger, the official newsletter of the South African Air Force Association (SAAFA), Port Alfred Branch. As we soar through the skies of imagination and honor the legacy of the South African Air Force, we invite you to embark on a captivating journey filled with stories, achievements, and a deep appreciation for the men and women who have dedicated their lives to serving our nation.

Tale Dragger is dedicated to celebrating the rich heritage and inspiring stories that define the South African Air Force. Through the pages of this newsletter, we pay tribute to the bravery, skill, and unwavering commitment of our servicemen and women, past and present. It is a testament to their sacrifices and achievements that have shaped our nation's aviation history



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Congress 2023 – Port Elizabeth

What a fabulous congress. Our hosts, PE Branch did an amazing job. PE entertained us with professional masters of ceremony, photographers, cameramen and, a special air show with a Harvard, Alouette II and the BK 117 helicopters.

Port Alfred was represented by its chairman, Koos van Rensburg, Jakes & Annelie Jacobs (for Anton & Christa), John & Annetjie Rogers and Ivan & Heather Erasmus.

Koos delivered our branch report with emphasis on our Reach-out program to recruit new members from 43 Air School. In addition, he proudly bragged about our past Victory Cup Golf event through which we raised over R41,000.

Posing with our team is Bill de Pinho (on the right) our Branch Representative at the National Executive Committee. Bill is also Chairman, Pretoria Branch and a serving Colonel in the SAAF.

Membership

Our PA Branch boasts with 86 members of which 49 are active members whom have paid their annual levy and attend our monthly meetings regularly. We will keep up our efforts to 're-activate' those that are considered non-active. We do understand that most of these non-active members are quite aged and therefore find it difficult to participate actively.

Heritage: Pupil Pilots Course 2/73

During mid 1973, following extreme competition (over 1300 applicants), 32 students (pupils) were selected to be trained as pilots for the SA Air Force. This group known as PP Course 2/73 started their training at Central Flying School (CFS) Dunnotar during September 1973. The group was a mixture of young, straight out of school kids and oldies with lots of life experience (i.e. Koos van Rensburg was only 18 whilst Billy Fourie was 25).

Then, an addition group of students joined the course. These guys had first completed and received their various military degrees from the Military academy at Saldanha before embarking on the flying training part of their careers.

From the beginning, 2/73 became known as a bunch of naughty guys. Firstly, they insisted on having their own pupe's pub instead of the standard Officer's Mess. After lots of moaning and bitching and causing the OC of the base head-aches, they achieved their goal and build their own bar counter and re-fitted the 'Ladies Bar'. Following a serious 'uitkak parade', Chief instructor, Commandant Jan Guyt once said he didn't expect less from the group as they were the first he had selected. Being such a naughty bunch made him proud.



During June 1974 the group was informed that the academy boys would be transferred to AFS Langebaan for Impala training whilst remainder would continue their training at Dunnotar and complete their wings training on Harvard T6 aircraft. Then, the group got together to take a group picture showing all together.

June 1974



During September 1974 these guys received their wings from Lt Genl Verster (Chief of SAAF) and Lt Genl Bob Rogers (new CAF). Half of the course was sent to Saldanha for 'Officer's Training' whilst the other half started squadron flying following a short officer's training course at SAAF College.

Then, about one year later, during end of 1975 these guys from 2/73 found themselves the youngest newly qualified operational squadron pilots (take about one year to become operational). This, off course was the start of "The Border War". The first two pilots to be shot down, Keith Williamson and Eric Thompson lost their lives during November 1975. They became known as members of 'The Ebo Four' who's remains were returned to South Africa early 2013. Both were members of 2/73 and both only 20 years old when they were killed in action. Although the first, they were not the last.

Another member, Paul Velleman received the Honoris Crux (bravery) medal, not once but twice before making the supreme sacrifice in northern Mozambique. The Angolan War claimed a few more, some by accident, some by the war effort and some....., well some more.

During September 2013 the surviving members of 2/73 had their 40th reunion at AFB Ysterplaat where the Officer Commanding, Colonel Christo Stroebel was a 2/73 member (one of three serving members).

Posing in the same spots they occupied 40 years ago, the surviving members of 2/73 are:

(Front) Renè du Toit, Koos van Rensburg, Hein Gillan, Les Rhind, Stef Malherbe, Eric Fisher and Pierre Lourens.

(Standing) Billy Fourie, Hartog Blok, Heinz Katske, Harry Anderson, Theuns Meyer, Pieter Greef, Leon Engelke, Anton van Rooyen, Renè van Heerden and Alwyn Vink.

(On the wings) Peter Thompson and Christo Stroebel.

September 2013



Welfare of Members

Update on Rodney Keet: He is waiting for a back operation at a state hospital, and as his condition is not life threatening, he remains on a low priority and has no idea when he will, if ever, receive treatment. His is in constant severe pain, and this is impacting his general health, which is constantly deteriorating.

As always, I can be reached at 082 537 9033 if you know of anyone who is not well and needs to be mentioned and supported by our group. – Annetjie Rogers.

Birthdays

We would like to wish the following members a very happy birthday and everything of the very best for the coming year.

July

Rodney Keet (5th), Peter Metcalf (11th), Roy Wilkins (7th), Val Human (20th)

August

Carol du Sautoy (10th), Gordon Goff (23rd), Anton Knoetze (26th), Margaret Lello (24th), Frank Pascoe (16th), Stanley Webber (23rd)

September

Dirk de Vos (28th), Alan Gunn (21st), Gavin Kendall (16th). Phillipie Looock (14th), Frans Nel (5th), Penny Shultz (8th)

Next Meeting

The next meeting and lunch will be held on Monday 7th August at 12:30 for 13:00 at the Royal St Andrews Hotel.

Please advise by email at pa@saafa.co.za if you are attending or apologising by no later than 26 July 2023.



HONOURS

During Congress 2023, not one, but two of our members were awarded the Order of the SAAF Association (Silver) for their outstanding and exemplary contribution to SAAFA, They are Tim Cockbaine (#064) and Annetjie Rogers (#067). Fortunately, Annetjie was present at Congress and as such received her medal from our National President, Mike Louw.

We congratulate them both Tim and Annetjie. Well deserved.



From the editor:

If you have some stories to share, please pen them down and forward them to the editor by email to pa@saafa.co.za

