

# FLYING SPIRIT



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The Official National Newsletter of the SAAF Association

## MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT

“While there is a very comprehensive report on Congress in this newsletter, it is important to acknowledge the hard work put in by a small branch, Soutpansberg, to present this major event in the far northern reaches of our country. Not only did it go off very well, quite a few of our members were exposed to a part of our country seldom travelled by many South Africans. It was very obvious that our presence in the area will produce many positive spinoffs for the branch in coming years. It was very good to see how many of our very loyal members received awards recognising their hard work and dedication to SAAFA.

I am very grateful that the current NEC members are willing to continue their service and I have no doubt that this strong team will continue to support the branches and steer national matters in the right direction. A special word of appreciation needs to go to Mike Louw, National Vice President for his support this past year. I would like to congratulate the Country Vice Presidents Bart Hauptfleisch, Arrie de Klerk and Daan Badenhorst on their appointments. These appointments are very special, not only do they recognise exceptional service to SAAFA, as National Executive Committee members they are able to project NEC’s presence into the various regions of our country. I’m also very glad to say that all our Patrons have graciously accepted to continue serving SAAFA in their special way for another year. I would like to wish the branches well in their endeavours for the coming year and look forward to the ongoing good relations in our efforts to pursue the objectives of SAAFA.

Now that we have returned from our very successful Annual Congress it is time to focus on our upcoming activities.”

*Hugh Paine*  
*National President*  
*South African Air Force Association*

## NATIONAL CONGRESS 2017

The National Congress 2017 was held at the Avoca Vale Country Hotel north of Louis Trichardt, and hosted by the Soutpansberg Branch under the Chairmanship of Francois van Zyl assisted by team members Helette van Zyl, Gerhard & Lynette Schoeman and Shaun van Tonder, over the period 16 to 19 May 2017.



**SAAFA Nation Congress was held at the Avoca Vale Country Hotel located in a scenic and picturesque surrounding in the foothills of the Soutpansberg Mountain Range near Louis Trichardt.**



With the entire group gathered together Francois asked Trevor Slade of the National Executive Committee to open with prayer.

At 18H00 the National President Hugh Paine conducted the chairpersons meeting while delegate spouses and other members socialised and interacted.

After a hearty breakfast on Day Two, members of congress proceeded with the daily activities.

Most of the delegates, and especially those from the coastal and country regions, attending congress made use of the bus and travelled from AFB Swartkop to Louis Trichardt.

As per normal on Day One the modus operandi was delegate registration, allocation of accommodation and a quick discussion on the program time schedules.



**Trevor Slade opening with prayer**

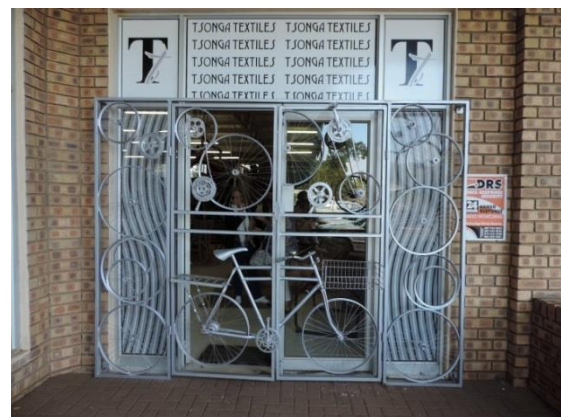
On completion of all the formalities members proceeded to have the group photo taken. Opening with scripture reading and prayer, Opening Ceremony, Act of Homage Ceremony



**L-R: Patron Lt Gen Willem Hechter (CAF ret), National President Maj Gen Hugh Paine (ret), National Vice President Col Mike Louw (ret).**

With the group photo dusted and done, delegates and spouses changed into more casual wear and the spouses prepared to go on the planned excursions arranged by the Branch.

After a scrumptious luncheon, delegates in more casual wear proceeded with Congress. The National President presented his annual report and acknowledged the status of the various branches and thanked all the chairpersons for their commitment and dedication towards SAAFA.



Patron, Lt Gen Willem Hechter (CAF ret), trying very hard not to sound like an alarmist, gave a short talk on the 2015 Defence Review as presented to Parliament by Roelf Meyer and stated that Meyer had also expressed concern over the state of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). "The reality is that if we can't fund what is required, we have to scale down the defence force completely, and make it a unit that can take care of our internal stability when required." Meyer further warned that with increased demands on the military, the government will have to prioritise. He also said South Africa can't have a big defence force without spending accordingly.



**Dave Jackson from the Pretoria Branch**

Excellent feedback was received from portfolio holders of the National Executing Committee.

The various Branch Chairpersons then presented

their respective reports for the year.

An enormously successful banquet was held with the Master of Ceremonies Mike Louw keeping the guests in fits of laughter during the evening's program.



**Jeff Earl representing Johannesburg & Middle East branches**



**Members of the Pretoria Branch at the Banquet**

The National President, Hugh Paine then proceeded to present to members various SAAFA Order's, SAAFA Merit Medals and SAAFA Merit certificates.

To all the members that received these prestigious Orders, Medals and certificates, congratulations, well done and well deserved.



**Carol Havenga receiving her Presidential Merit Award**



**Marianne Mostert receiving her Certificate of Merit Award**

Congress and the evening ended on a high note. Congratulations to Soutpansberg for hosting such a successful event.

The main dignitaries of the evening were, SAAFA National President Maj Gen Hugh Paine (ret), Patron Lt Gen Willem Hechter (CAF ret) and Brig Gen Andre Barends Officer Commanding AFB Makhado



**L-R: Hugh Paine, Willem Hechter & Andre Barends**

We look forward to next year, when Kevin Sampson & John Bayley-Brown of the Cape Town branch will host congress over period 24 to 26 May 2018 in Gordons Bay.



L-R: John Bayley-Brown & Kevin Sampson

## THE POLISH CROSS

On 7 November 2016 SAAFA member Jean Urry had the honour to be presented the Polish Gold Cross of Merit by HE the Polish Ambassador Ms Anna Raduchowska-Brochwicz on behalf of the President of Poland in very well deserved recognition of the many years that Jean has devoted to honouring our SAAF crews who flew and were lost during the Warsaw relief flights. How good it is to see recognition being given when none is sought, a wonderful and selfless lady!



## YE OLDE CESSNA 185: A LEGEND

I found this story on cyberspace. It was related by Knoppies Coetzer and really shows what man (Piet (P.F.) van der Merwe) and machine, when acting in unison, can do.

*In die 1960s en vroeë 1970s was die aanloopbaan 08/26 op Grootfontein 8,400 vt lank (dieselfde as Waterkloof in daardie tye). Piet van der Merwe, vader van 'n latere Mej. SA, Suzette van der Merwe, doen gedurende daardie tyd 'n bostoer op Rundu as Cessna 185 vlnr.*

*Die kroeg op Rundu raak uit bier uit en natuurlik is die pongos te stadig om 'n Bedford te reel, toe reel die SAAF maar 'n Cessna 185 om op Grootfontein bier te gaan haal.*

*Piet is die vlieënier en hy kom op Grootfontein aan in die Cessna waarvan al die sitplekke (behalwe die vlnr s'n natuurlik) uitgehaal is. SAWI se bier trok staan gereed by die laaiblad en hulle laai daai Cessna dat sy wielietjies al hoe verder uitmekaar uit gaan.*

*Die kaste blikkies bier is tot teen die dak en Piet kan omtrent nie eers regs uit sien nie.*

*Hy skakel aan en sukkel nogal om te taxi en moet baie meer krag oopmaak as gewoonlik.*

*Hy lyn op op aanloopbaan 26 en maak vol krag oop teen die remme. Toe hy die remme los verander slegs die uitdrukkink op sy gesig, want daar is geen teken van die normale versnelling nie.*

*Hy begin uiteidelik beweeg en hy pluk die Cessna by die 7,500 voet merker van die grond af en hy gaan bo-oor die sekerheids omheining, daardie tyd net 5 voet hoog, met omtrent 2 voet om te spaar.*

*Toe hy uiteindelik genoeg spoed kry om te draai, draai hy links! Almal weet tog dat hy moes regs draai Rundu toe.*

*Hy maak die wydste kringvlug wat ons nog gesien het en land terug op aanloopbaan 26. Hy taxi in na waar die biertrouk nog steeds staan, stop en seg vir die troep om twee kaste bier af te laai. Hulle laai toe twee af en daar gaan Piet weer.*

*Die keer styg hy op by die 7,000 voet merker van aanloopbaan 26. Toe hy genoeg hoogte het, draai hy wragtig weer links. Hy doen 'n minder wye kringvlug, land op aanloopbaan 26, taxi terug na die bier trouk, wink die troep nader en seg: "Laai een kas terug"!*

## **SILVER FALCONS TURN 50!**

*Extracted from defenceWeb and written by Kim Helfrich, Monday, 29 May 2017*

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the SA Air Force's (SAAF) aerobatic team – the Silver Falcons – and it will be marked by a reunion of former and current members of the team at AFB Langebaanweg on November 24 – the exact date of the first display 50 years ago.

The event is, according to SAAF director: corporate staff services, Brigadier General Hilton Smith, a closed one but the airborne arm of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF) has not forgotten the massive public interest generated by the Silver Falcons over the years.

“Langebaanweg is planning an airshow in December and the Silver Falcons will use it to publicly mark and celebrate the 50th anniversary,” he said. According to him the airshow is still in the planning stages and no firm date has yet been set, but defenceWeb is informed December 8 is the most likely date.

In its 50 years of existence the Silver Falcons have had 79 different teams with some legendary local military aviation names who have been part of the Falcon experience.

A name that readily springs to mind is Commandant Chris Prins, number one in team one that did its first display at the opening of the then Atlas Aircraft Corporation on November 24, 1967. The Falcons or as they have affectionately become known in Afrikaans “Die Valkies” flew all silver Aermacchi MB-326 Impala Mk1s.

Before the Falcons there was the Bumbling Bees, founded in 1953 to represent and promote the SAAF flying formation aerobatics in the De Havilland Vampire. This team was disbanded in 1958 and reinstated in 1966 flying the “Imp”, at that time the SAAF's jet trainer.

This was to be the ride for the Falcons until 1999 when the team moved into the cockpits of the PC-7 Mk11 it still flies.

defenceWeb has gone through the no-longer updated Silver Falcons website, which used to be part of the official SAAF website, and come across names representing some of the best to have worn the blue uniform. A good number of them went on to higher office in the air force and many have also been contributors of note to the benefit of military aviation and safety in South Africa.

## TAIL PIECE - THE DASTARDLY DRONE



I also found this on cyberspace and although it was written a bit “tongue in cheek” it is good for a read anyway.

**“A London-based drone enthusiast is to sue Heathrow airport for flying a passenger jet right through his toy.”<sup>1</sup>**

Simon Williams, 35, said the drone was his pride and joy, and the best eight-hundred pounds he’d ever spent, until a British Airways

Airbus A320 flew directly through it, reducing it to worthless garbage.

He told us, “I was just flying my drone like I always do, not filming anything I shouldn’t or looking in bedroom windows or anything, just normal drone stuff, you know.

“Then all of a sudden this airliner arrives out of nowhere and flies right into me. No indication, it didn’t try to avoid me and I’m pretty sure it was going **way** too fast.

“It didn’t even stop afterwards to swap insurance details. Its pilots like that the give the rest of us sky users a bad reputation.”

Williams explained he’s sought compensation from British Airways, but they refused to accept the blame or name the pilot. He went on, “They said that as a large organisation, their planes are used by lots of pilots, so they can’t be 100% sure who was flying at the time.

“They don’t seem to care that I’m going to lose my no claims discount. The bastards!”

However aviation consultant Jacob Matthews told us, “The only people who fly drones in public areas are voyeuristic nonjobs.

“Remember that weird kid at school who built his own remote control car and made the noises himself whilst he drove it? This is just him, but with better technology.”

*Please send any contributions to the Editor:*

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<sup>1</sup> News Thump: - Monday 18 April 2016.