

FLYING SPIRIT

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Contents:

SAAFA Congress	1
Owen Jones Story	2
The where about of	5
Ghosts in the Sederberg	6
Gisborn Runway	6
Offending Someone	7
Pilot Rules	7
The Low Level Brigade	9

Contact us:

The Editors
 SAAFA NHQ
 P.O. Box 21223
 Valhalla
 0137
 Tel: 012 651 5921 or
 012 351 2116
 Fax: 086 218 4657
 Email: nationalhq@icon.co.za
 Website: www.saafa.co.za

Note:

The editors extend their thanks for all contributions received.

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SAAFA Congress 2013 Hosted by Pretoria Branch

(ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO SAAFA JOHANNESBURG)

The SAAFA Congress was held in May at the SAAF College in Pretoria. It was a jovial, yet business-like Congress where new resolutions were passed. There were only about 60 delegates so it was one of the smallest Congresses since 2004, but the camaraderie was the sort only found at SAAFA Congresses. Old friendships were renewed with gusto and new ones happily made. The ladies were treated to a visit to a gem factory and to Smuts House in Irene.

The new President Philip Weyers took over the office for a second term, which he said would be for only one year, from Neville Greyling who had been President for two years and Hugh Paine became Vice-President.



Outgoing President Neville Greyling handing over to new President Philip Weyers



Philip Weyers pinning the badge of office on new Vice President Maj Gen (Ret) Hugh Paine

A banquet was held in Hangar 5 at Swartkop which proved to be an ideal venue. The Memorial Service at Bays Hill was very moving when the opening of the service was performed by an Oryx of 17 Squadron helicopter flying the Air Force flag. After the Last Post had sounded, three Harvards and a Dakota did the traditional memorial flypast. The weather, although threatening at times, held out and a wonderful weekend was enjoyed by all present.



Left to Right: The new President Philip Weyers, Mike Louw, Carol van Rensburg and Leon du Plessis at the Bays Hill Memorial Service



Three Harvards doing the Memorial Flypast during the 2 minutes silence after the Last Post

The Remarkable Story of Owen Jones – (shortened version)

I was seven years old in 1934 when I saw an aeroplane for the first time way up in the sky. I decided there and then that I was going to be a pilot. When war was declared in September 1939, I knew that, if I played my cards right, this could be my gateway to the skies. At that time South Africa was a British Dominion. My Welsh father had died as a result of a mine accident in 1929 so, when I turned 15 in August 1942, I started working on my nursing sister mother to allow me to join the Air Force. I was in Standard 8 at school.

The Vice-Principal of Springs High was on 'holiday stand-by duty' and co-operated by giving me the required letter stating that I had passed, obligingly omitting to give my date of birth. It required no great feat of penmanship to alter my handwritten Baptism Certificate from 1927 to 1925. So, armed with these two documents plus the signed authorisation of my 'Parent or Guardian' (my mother), I went off to the recruiting office.

I passed the army medical exam and was then sent to the Central Medical Establishment (C.M.E.) at Voortrekkerhoogte (formerly known as Roberts Heights) to do a S.A.A.F. medical and pilot's aptitude test. These tests were spread over two days with the aptitude test following the medical, the psychological test being included as part of the aptitude test. In fact so many young men wanted to be pilots that only 3 of us out of a group of 27 actually passed as air pupils (the title changed to pupil pilot when flying training began). What happened to the other 24 I do not know. Although these tests took place in early January 1943, we only started the ground course training on the 1st of March.

My S.A.A.F. pilot logbook has a record of service and aircraft flown on the last two pages so, referring to these pages, I can give a rundown my career phases from it. The war was at a very critical stage in all respects but the authorities insisted that the highest standards were to be

maintained. Because I managed to qualify for my SAAF wings before I turned 17, it does not mean it was easy. On the contrary, it was damn difficult. Quite a few fell by the wayside in the process. It required guts, stamina and hard work regardless of age and obviously, ability.

On my actual 17th birthday (official minimum joining age for the SAAF), I had already been in the service for 18 months, had been a commissioned officer for 3 months, had 280 flying hours, 26 of which were on Kittyhawk single seat fighters and a further 42 hours on the Link Trainer. After 11 OTU we were posted to the Middle East and after a 4-day trip as passengers on a Dakota arrived in Cairo, Egypt, on 1 October 1944. From 22 October 1944 to 31 December 1944, we ferried Corsair MKIV's from Gibraltar to a Fleet Air Arm base at Coimbatore in Southern India to be used by the Royal Navy in the Pacific. The Corsair was a lovely aeroplane to fly.

On my very first operation I collected a piece of the locomotive I had just strafed, in the starboard wing. It caused the 'ammo' to explode bulging the top of the wing and putting the machine guns out of action. On another occasion I hit a tree with the starboard wing tip while strafing a motor vehicle. Bryan Chiazzari, one of three South Africans, also hit a tree while strafing a troop carrying motor transport. He managed to keep the aircraft straight after losing half the port wing. He flew back to Campo Marino and executed a perfect landing at 190 m.p.h. (below that speed the aircraft was uncontrollable).

Winston Thomson, another South African, had a miraculous bale-out escape from his aircraft after being hit and burning while strafing Zagreb main airfield. He was taken prisoner. Some replacement pilots were shot down within days of joining the squadron. Three of the pilots who were shot down managed to bale out but hit the ground before their parachutes could open fully. We killed a lot of gunners protecting trains and locomotives. On my fourth operational sortie we damaged or destroyed no less than ten locomotives as well as the trains they were pulling, (four aircraft in our flight) also 10 motor transports. I will say this for the German forces, they threw everything they could at us right to the very end.

I was later posted to 5 Squadron SAAF, also on Mustangs, where I managed to get a ferry flight on a Spitfire Mk IX. We were based at Udeni in Northern Italy on garrison duty (in case of a conflict involving the Soviet Republic). In March 1946 I returned to South Africa and was released on 16 September 1946, but remaining on the Special Reserve of Officers in the SAAF.

I was married on 23 October 1948, 2 months after my 21st Birthday and my wife was nearly widowed 3 months later when I misjudged the height when giving Baragwanath a 'beat-up' in a Spitfire. If the undercarriage had been extended, I think the wheels would have touched the ground at 480 mph. The Spitfire was verging on a high speed stall during the pull-out.

At the end of 1949 I got a job flying and servicing a Beechcraft Bonanza for a British company flying mainly to Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, where they had big construction jobs going. I also did charter flying for Baragwanath Flying Services which I had been doing while working as a trainee engineer. In November 1951, I was accepted as a First Officer in SAA. I was the first purely single engine trained pilot accepted post war in SAA and did my twin conversion on a Lockheed Lodestar. Thereafter as First Officer flying the following

aircraft: Lodestar, Dakota, Skymaster, Constellation and DC-7B. In 1960 I was promoted to captain and flew Dakota, Skymaster, Viscount, Boeing 727, Boeing 707 and finally the Boeing 747.

I retired from S.A.A. at age 50 at the end of August 1977. On retirement I had 17 156 flying hours.

Along with most Air Force pilots, I encountered my fair share of 'Close Calls' but no 'Prangs'. I had one 'Prang' of my own on a primitive airstrip while single engine charter flying, nobody injured but the aeroplane was badly broken (My fault entirely).

I was privileged to command S.A.A.'s inaugural 747 flight into both Amsterdam and Madrid. I look back on my flying career with great affection, scary parts included.

Thinking back on all the flying I did, my all-time favourite aircraft was the North American P-51 Mustang.

Famous, or infamous, people met or known:

Sailor Malan; Douglas Bader; Field Marshal Montgomery; many politicians and, as a pilot with SAA met many national leaders, sportsmen and women, actors etc.

Invited astronaut Neil Armstrong to come and join us in the cockpit where we had a long talk to him. That was on a flight from Johannesburg to Luanda on a Boeing 747-200 on 19 December 1972.



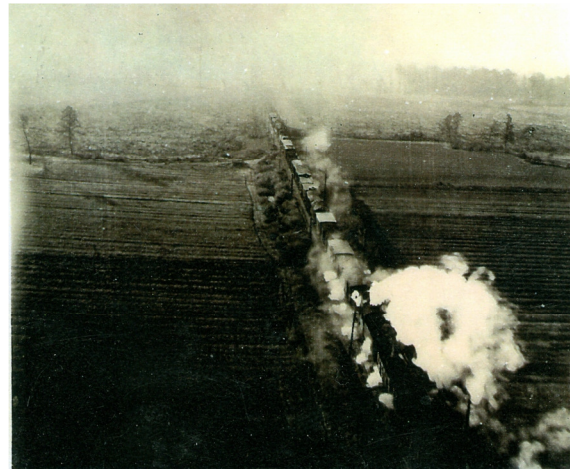
Owen in a new Corsair KD 333. It had only flown 1 hour when he took off from Gibraltar flight to Coimbatore in India.



Owen Jones poses with a P-51 Mustang



Supermarine Spitfire IX



Two of Owen's Mustang gun camera pics taken strafing trains in Yugoslavia in 1945

The where about of?

Lower South Coast Branch:

We at the Lower South Coast Branch of the SAAFA have received an enquiry as to the whereabouts of a relative. The person being enquired about is Whiteley, Brian, Alexander. He was born in 1928 and should be about 85/86 years old. He trained and served in the SAAF. He later flew in the RAF. He left the RAF and became an airline pilot. The last known airline he flew for was Air Botswana. The person doing the enquiry also suspects he trained at 22Sqn. Any information as to his whereabouts would be greatly appreciated. If he has met the sunset call please advise.

Replies can be sent direct to the person doing the enquiry. He is David Nielsen. His contact details are: Cell: 082 040 7770. Email: davidzpost@gmail.com

"Air Commodore Graham Pitchfork, RAF makes the following request:

He has written a new book about air/sea rescue during the last war. There is an article in it about the remarkable experiences of Lt. Roy Veitch DFC who was shot down three times in as many weeks in the north Adriatic. Each time he was rescued after the drop of an airborne

lifeboat to him. He is looking for a photograph of Lt.Veitch.

If you can remember Lt.Veitch or where we might contact his relatives? He flew Mustangs with 260 Squadron. Maybe someone, a relative perhaps, has a group photo of 260 Squadron.

Please advise Philip Weyers at pjweyers@gmail.com should you be able to assist Air Commodore Pitchfork, for which many thanks."

How Many Ghosts can you Spot on this Picture?

Use your imagination and see how many ghosts you can spot on this picture. The photo was taken in the Sederberg area by an ex SAAF candidate officer during his Phase 2 officers training at the Military Academy Saldanha.



The Runway with a Railway Crossing

Gisborne Airport is a small regional airport that is located on the western outskirts of Gisborne, the East Coast of the North Island of New Zealand. The airport is one of the very few airports in the world that has a railway line intersecting the runway. The Gisborne airport which covers a land of 160 hectares has three grass runways and one main runway that is intersected by the Palmerston North - Gisborne Railway Line. The Wynyard Airport, on Tasmania's north-western

coast, also had a railway crossing on the runway but declining rail traffic forced the closure of rail traffic in early 2005, and thus the Wynyard airport rail crossing is no more operational.

At Gisborne, on the other hand, the rail route functions actively and so does the airport everyday between 6:30 in the morning and 8:30 at night. After that, the runway is sealed off till morning. The railway tracks splits the runway almost in the middle and very often trains or aircraft are stopped until one of them moves on. It is a very challenging task for the airport authorities to manage landing at the intersecting runway along the operational rail route which has scheduled departures and arrivals itself.



The train has right of way

Something to Offend Everyone

What is the difference between a Harley and a Hoover? The position of the dirt bag.

Why is divorce so expensive? Because it's worth it.

What's the difference between a girlfriend and wife? 20 Kgs

What's the difference between an Australian zoo and an English zoo? An Australian zoo has a description of the animal on the front of the cage along with a recipe.

What's the difference between a northern USA fairy tale and a southern USA fairy tale? A Northern fairy tale begins 'Once upon a time.' A southern fairy tale begins 'Y'all ain't gonna believe this sh...'

Pilot versus Co-pilot Rules

- The Pilot always makes the rules
- The rules are subject to change at any time without prior notification
- No co-pilot can possibly know all the rules.
- If the pilot suspects the co-pilot knows all the rules, he must immediate change some or all the rules.
- The pilot is never wrong.
- If the pilot is wrong, it is due to a misunderstanding which was a direct result of something the co-pilot did or said wrong.
- The co-pilot must apologise immediately for causing such misunderstanding.

- The pilot may change his mind at any time.
- The co-pilot must never change his mind without the express written consent of the pilot.
- The pilot has every right to be angry or upset at any time.
- The co-pilot must remain calm at all times unless the pilot wants him to be angry and/or upset.
- The co-pilot must be able to mind read all times.
- The pilot is ready when he is ready.
- The co-pilot must be ready at all times.
- The only things a co-pilot needs to say is:
 - Nice landing sir.
 - I'll buy the first round.
 - I'll take the fat chick

The co-pilot who does not abide the rules is grounded.

Meet the Low Level Brigade

Still remember these times? Maybe you were the pilot or knew him. Till next time, happy reading and thank you for the contributions. Keep them rolling in.

