



# IN-FORMATION

NEWSLETTER OF THE DURBAN BRANCH

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## NEWS AND EVENTS

### Chairman's Chatter

Dear fellow SAAFA Durban Branch member,

Greetings to you from this edition of "IN-FORMATION".

The year 2023 is disappearing with unseemly haste and many might say "Good Riddance". Many South Africans have had to survive an economically tough year and an almost daily bombardment of negative news. Fortunately the South African Air Force Association does offer a respite from the trouble in our land and, in fact, in the world, and engenders Camaraderie, Optimism, and Financial Support for those in need, coupled with the opportunity to speak with, and encourage, members of the South African Air Force who do amazing things on a shoestring budget.

Our Branch is exposed to all of the above and continues to strive and uphold the four pillars of our Association.

Our monthly lunches happen - continually supported by a core number of members who seldom miss a lunch. Lunches are held at the Mess at AFB Durban, alternatively if the Mess is not available, at the Durban Club in the CBD. We are spoilt by the Mess at the Base and guests often find it hard to believe that what we are served comes from a Military Mess. We are fortunate to have such a supportive staff at the Mess. Unfortunately access to the Base is somewhat challenging. The old airport site is now a road freight staging area and these "heavies" have made access a nightmare. One more bit of good news is that the bridge over the N2 has been repaired, after the flood damaged it, making for a shorter and more pleasant exit.

Distance is a huge factor when dealing with social gatherings of members of our Branch as we have members in Pennington in the south, others as far north as Zinkwazi, and a number reside in the Upper Highway area to the west. This constitutes an area of some 2 556 sq km. Breakfast groups created and expanded a few years ago assist with maintaining contact and fellowship. One is at the Harbour mouth in the CBD, another at Ballito and the third at Hillcrest. If you are not on the WhatsApp group in your area then please make contact with me, or a fellow committee member, and we will ensure you become connected. I am grateful to the group leaders who keep the breakfasts running regularly.

Congress 2023 was held in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth) and was a superb affair and the Chairman and his Congress Committee are to be congratulated. This is dealt with more fully hereunder.

Our Branch has been active at the various Memorial Services held, mainly in November, but also throughout the year. What was pleasing to see was how many schools in eThekweni honoured those who made the supreme sacrifice for their country and the world. We will, and must, remember the fallen.

It is that time of the year to be jolly and I and your Committee would like to wish our members, family and friends a Blessed Christmas and a great New Year. PLEASE BE CAREFUL OUT THERE!

*Rob Sinclair*

## The Sunset Call

Martha Becks, a longstanding Inactive Member of the SAAFA Durban Branch, was called to Higher Service since the last newsletter.

*We will remember her.*

## New Members

We have had a few new members join the SAAFA since our last newsletter. These members are:

- a. Roland Naicker.
- b. Colin Botha.
- c. Maxie Butler.
- d. Salmare Brits.
- e. Sipho Mkhize.
- f. Smiley Tsele.

What makes the above new members special is that they are all serving members at AFB Durban.

Also transferred in from the Lower South Coast Branch is Dirk de Villiers.

Welcome to the SAAFA Durban Branch, and we trust that you will feel right at home.



Warrant Officer Class 2 Sipho Mkhize (on the left) being congratulated by the Acting Officer Commanding AFB Durban, Lt Col Zungu

Sipho Mkhize was promoted to WOII in April 2023. Well done Sergeant Major!

## Transfers Out/Resignations

Gavin Foxcroft was transferred from the SAAFA Durban Branch to the SAAFA Outeniqua Branch. Judging by the Outeniqua Branch's Facebook posts, he seems to be right at home there. Gavin, we wish you both well.

Jaap du Preez is being transferred to the SAAFA Port Alfred Branch.

## Member's Accounts

We have had an excellent payment record regarding the Annual Levies for the past six years, so thank you to everyone!

We still have 5 members whose levies of R150 are still outstanding for 2023. If you know who you are, please settle this at your earliest convenience (Queen's, now King's, English for "quickly").

## **SAAFA DURBAN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

On 14 April 2023 the SAAFA Durban Branch held our Annual General Meeting.

The new committee is much the same, but Roland Naicker is now the SAAF/SAAFA Liaison after Neil Butler got transferred to the Bluff.

Neil Butler is thanked for the sterling job that he did in his tenure as the Liaison Officer.

The new committee is now as follows:

Rob Sinclair:	Chairman.
Gavin Farquhar:	Vice Chairman/Financials/Welfare.
John Boardman:	Honorary Treasurer/Membership
Clinton Wyness:	Media/PRO/Regalia.
John Bayne:	Branch Medical Liaison Officer.
Hugh Paine:	Co-opted member.
Steve Bekker:	Honorary Secretary.
WO Roland Naicker	SAAF/SAAFA Liaison.
Col Lenny Atchanna:	OC AFB Durban.

Rob has continued to be an excellent Chairman and the SAAFA Durban Branch is in excellent hands.

## **CONGRESS 2023**

Congress 2023 was held in the windy city of Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth) and I can do no more than recommend that you read the June 2023 Edition of the FLYING SPIRIT on the SAAFA website where an excellent synopsis of Congress 2023 is detailed. Nevertheless, the PE Branch presented a flawless Congress for which they must be congratulated.

The following members of the Durban and Pietermaritzburg Branches were presented with their respective awards:

- a. Morgan Holmes, Chairman of the SAAFA Pietermaritzburg Branch, was awarded the "Order of the SAAFA (Gold)" ((OSAAFA (G)) for his outstanding work and leadership as the Chairman of the SAAFA Pietermaritzburg Branch over many years.
- b. John Bayne was awarded the OSAAFA (Silver) for his outstanding work as the Branch Medical Liaison Officer and, in particular, getting the Military Pharmacies to obtain e-mail facilities as until now we could only fax them scripts, etc. This was a mammoth task!
- c. Rob Sinclair was awarded the OSAAFA (Bronze) for his excellent work as Vice Chairman of the SAAFA Durban Branch, and now as Chairman of the branch.
- d. Dawid Schoeman was awarded the "Presidential Medal Award" (PMA) and was recommended by the SAAFA Port Elizabeth Branch for his excellent contributions to their fundraising efforts over a number of years.

Below is wonderful incriminating evidence of these awards.

Morgan Holmes. Morgan could not be at Congress 2023, so he received his award at the SAAFA Pietermaritzburg Lunch in July 2023 from Hugh Paine, Immediate Past President of the SAAFA.

Coincidentally, there was a family wedding around the same time and Morgan's daughter, Janine, got relatives and friends to arrive early from all over the world for the wedding so that they could attend Morgan's special day, unbeknown to Morgan of course.



L to R: Hugh Paine, who presented Morgan with his OSAAFA (G), Morgan Holmes, and Rob Sinclair, Chairman of the SAAFA Durban Branch



John Bayne proudly displaying his certificate for his OSAAFA (S) and wearing the said Order to demonstrate that it fits. This award was presented to John by Hugh Paine.



Hugh Paine presenting a proud Dawid Schoeman with his PMA. The Chairman, Rob Sinclair, looks on anxiously to see whether any blood stains will be appearing on Dawid's shirt as Hugh pins on his PMA.

## **SAAFA COUNTRY VICE PRESIDENT FOR KZN for 2023/2024**

During Congress 2022 I had the honour of being appointed as the SAAFA Country Vice President for the KZN region again for 2023/2024.

I am humbled by this, and I thank NEC for entrusting me with this honour for another year.

## **ANNUAL DURBAN MILITARY SPRING BALL 2023**

The SAAFA Durban Branch hosted the Annual Durban Military Spring Ball 2023 for the third time in a row. Photo of Spring Ball below:



This great evening of friendship, camaraderie, and “a hoppin’ and a boppin” was held at the Royal Natal Yacht Club on Saturday 2 September 2023. A total of 53 members attended.

Gavin Farquhar sponsored the Social Vinegar (wine) for the tables, and the sherry was sponsored by Rob Sinclair. A “free evening” was won by Lea Everitt and she was refunded the R700 per couple charge for the evening. Congratulations!

The following photos were obtained on the Black Market, which demonstrates what a wonderful evening you missed if you were not there:



Bill and Natasha Williams



Pete and Pam Harvey, who never seem to age!



John and Margot Bayne



Linda and me. Linda braved the evening with her arm in a sling after her recent shoulder replacement operation.



Three of your SAAFA Durban Branch Committee members to whom you entrust your branch, trying to look normal – without success.

L to R: Steve Bekker, Clinton Wyness, and Rob Sinclair



Our wonderful musicians for the evening



Side effects of the music – dancing!



The Gunner's Association's Table



A lovely photo of the suckers, I mean volunteers, from the Armour and Gunners' Associations who offered to host the 2024 Annual Durban Military Spring Ball 2024. Wonderful Gents, and we look forward to a splendid evening!

L to R: Pat Acutt, Alan Thompson, and Craig Nel

## **VISIT TO THE CONTROL TOWER AT THE KING SHAKA INTL AIRPORT ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2023**

A wonderful afternoon was spent visiting the Air Traffic Control Tower at the King Shaka International Airport on 15 September 2023.

We were warmly welcomed and briefed by Zaid Sayed, after he was introduced by Kevin 'o Brien (a previous, and the first, Air Space Manager at the Control Tower).

We were not allowed to take photos of any equipment.



Of interest, the centre of the tower was constructed first, and then the control tower was constructed on the ground around the tower and, when completed, was hoisted up into position. According to Kevin 'o Brien, who was the Boss at the time of construction, it is kept in place with Prestik and some other stuff and is therefore completely safe!

Also of interest, the elevator goes up to just below the control tower and then one has to climb some stairs to get into the control room. The reason for this is to achieve an unobstructed 360 deg view of the aviation activities outside.



Kevin 'o Brien on the right, listening while Zaid was briefing us all.



Everyone paying attention to the briefing!

Afterward the visit we perambulated off to Umdloti where we enjoyed lunch. It was a great day. Thanks to Kevin 'o Brien for organizing this special day.

## **THE SAAFA DURBAN BRANCH CHRISTMAS LUNCH 2023**

The SAAFA Durban Branch hosted our Christmas Lunch at AFB Durban on Friday 1 December 2023 which was attended by 23 members and guests.

It was lovely to see a number of members of the SAAFA Pietermaritzburg Branch attending, including their esteemed Chairman, Morgan Holmes.

An amount of R2 450,00 was raised for our Welfare Fund from the auction of books and DVDs donated by Pat and Diana Budd. The Mess excelled in their hospitality and the food and décor were commendable.

Below is some evidence of said lunch:



George Jacobs, Kevin 'o Brien, and Steve Bekker



Leah-Ann Sinclair chatting to the ladies from the SAAFA Pietermaritzburg Branch



Elita Lingenfelder, Linda Bekker and Cecile Smit



Rob Sinclair auctioning books donated by Pat and Diana Budd. This auction raised R2 450,00 for the SAAFA Durban Branch Welfare Fund. Well done, Rob, and auction participants!



The superb Mess staff who provided an outstanding lunch!



A wonderful bottle of Honey Mead donated by Hugh Paine as a prize for the draw.

This, as always, was a wonderful occasion which was enjoyed by all.

Thank you to the staff of the AFB Durban Mess for the wonderful lunch and extra décor. You are real stars!!!

### **THE LATE LT GEN BOB ROGERS (FORMER CHIEF OF THE AIR FORCE)**

The following article was obtained from the Farmers' Weekly, who granted permission us to use this article:

# Pilot, strategist and leader par excellence

Lieutenant-General Robert Rogers, DSO, DFC & Bar, Royal Air Force; SSA, SM, MMM, South African Air Force, is the most highly decorated military man in South Africa. Graham Jooste tells his remarkable story.

**R**obert Harry Doherty Rogers was born in Warden in the then Orange Free State on 7 November 1921. From an early age, he was interested in weaponry and became a very good shot; this earned him his Springbok colours when he represented South Africa in an international contest after matriculating at Maritzburg College.

Rogers enrolled as a medical student at the University of Witwatersrand, but in 1940, shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War, he left his studies to join the South African Air Force (SAAF) as a gunner. After qualifying, he volunteered to train as a pilot and was sent to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) for further training. Both South Africa and Southern Rhodesia had been chosen to establish training facilities for future British and Commonwealth pilots.

## THE BULLET BLASTED THROUGH THE COCKPIT, REMOVING ONE OF HIS FINGERS

In October 1941, Rogers was assigned to 208 Squadron, Royal Air Force (RAF) in Egypt, where he flew Hurricanes and Spitfires. During a dogfight with Messerschmitt Bf 109s near Benghazi, he was shot down, but managed to crash-land safely and escape back to Allied lines.

He was thereafter posted to 225 Squadron, RAF, a tactical reconnaissance outfit which took part in operations over Egypt and Libya, and, later, Sicily, Italy and the Balkans.

In August 1942, while returning from a mission, Rogers's flight was jumped by four Bf 109s. A bullet penetrated his cockpit and

shot away one of his fingers, but despite the pain, he managed to return to base successfully. For his superb flying and bravery he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) and thereafter promoted to squadron leader.

At that stage, the Hurricane was being used as a fighter-bomber to harass enemy convoys and lines of communication.

On one occasion, Rogers ordered his squadron not to bomb a large column of stragglers and retreating enemy troops, saying that they were beaten and presented no threat.

He now took part in Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa, which included US troops. By now, 225 Squadron was flying Spitfires. The main role of the squadron was to fly tactical reconnaissance missions to gather information as well as conduct ground attacks and pathfinder sorties.

So valuable was the information that Rogers brought in, and so highly thought of were his suggestions, that he was

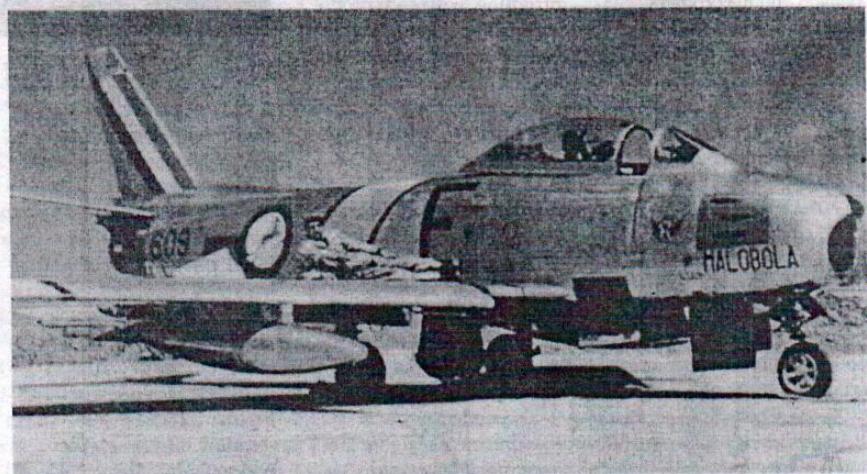


Bob Rogers rose to become chief of the South African Air Force.  
PHOTOS: THE OBSERVATION POST; SA NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MILITARY HISTORY

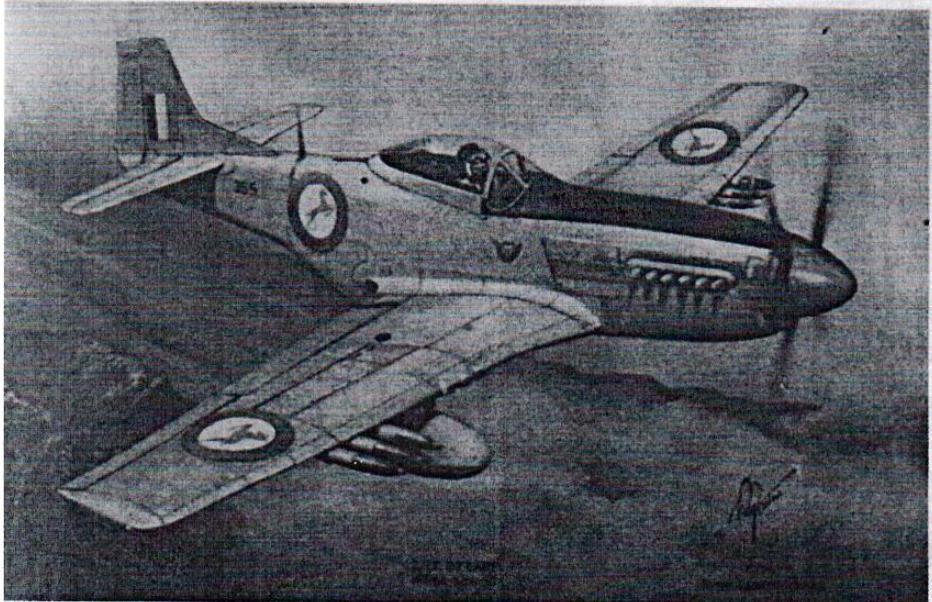
awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and promoted to wing commander. His squadron took part in the attacks on the Italian-held islands of Pantelleria and Lampedusa with great success.

The next big mission was Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily by American and British forces. Rogers saw action over Salerno and, later in the year, was active in photo reconnaissance missions over Yugoslavia before moving onto the Italian west coast to take part in the advance on Rome. He was awarded a bar to his DSO.

In December 1943, Rogers was transferred back to No. 40 Squadron of the SAAF with the rank of lieutenant-



An F-86 Sabre of the SAAF in Korea. Note the silhouette of a leaping springbok in the roundel on the fuselage.



**TOP:** The P-51 Mustang was highly effective in a ground-attack role.  
**ABOVE:** No. 2 Squadron took delivery of Sabres in January 1953.

colonel. There was much mirth in the family, as his father, a captain in the army, had to salute his son! While leading the squadron, Rogers saw action over the Baltic Sea and Poland. For this, he was awarded the Polish Flying Cross for gallantry during the latter part of the war.

After the war, Rogers accepted a permanent commission in the SAAF with the rank of captain. He set up a training schedule for future pilots and served as aide-de-camp to the governor-general of the Union of South Africa.

#### FLYING CHEETAHS

In 1950, war broke out in Korea and South Africa announced its intention to place a volunteer squadron at the disposal of the United Nations to fight

Fighter-Bomber Wing and flew their first mission from Pyongyang in North Korea. The SAAF flew with the distinctive springbok in the centre of a roundel, an insignia introduced when No. 2 Squadron was sent to Korea.

The squadron's roles were close air support against enemy positions to 'soften them up' for ground attacks, interdiction of the enemy's logistic and communication lines, the provision of protective cover for rescue operations, reconnaissance flights, and, to a lesser extent, interception of enemy aircraft.

During the southward advance of the communist forces, Rogers and the squadron attacked enemy vehicles and supplies daily in near-zero temperatures. They were forced to evacuate their

against North Korea's communist regime, who had invaded South Korea. Later in the year, No. 2 squadron, the 'Flying Cheetahs', sailed for Yokohama in Japan and then on to Tokyo, where they completed their conversion to P-51 Mustangs supplied by the US Air Force (USAF).

The Flying Cheetahs served as one of the four squadrons of the USAF 18th

into a combat zone. It marked the entry of the SAAF into the new era of jet warfare.

The squadron flew a total of 2 032 sorties in the Sabres and only four aircraft were lost out of 25 supplied. During the war, Rogers was awarded the DFC and the Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster of the US Armed Forces, the Korean Chungmu Decoration with Gold Star, and the Korean Military Merit Award.

#### LATER CAREER

Rogers went on to hold a number of command and staff posts in the SAAF, including officer commanding 12 Squadron and 24 Squadron. At the end of 1974 he was appointed acting chief of the SAAF. The following year he was promoted to lieutenant-general and became the chief of the SAAF until his retirement in 1979. Ten years later, he became a Member of Parliament for the Democratic Party.

Rogers died in Cape Town in 2000 at the age of 78. During his career, he was awarded an astonishing 22 decorations from Britain, Poland, the US, Korea and South Africa.

- Sources: Korea Joongang Daily, 'No. 225 Squadron RAF', SA Legion 22 January 2016.
- Graham Foote is an author and historical researcher. Email him at [farmersweekly@caxton.co.za](mailto:farmersweekly@caxton.co.za). Subject line: Great tales. FW

## WELFARE

We have some very generous members in our branch who make huge donations when paying

their annual subs or making a monthly contribution. The SAAFA Durban Branch Committee is grateful to these generous members.

However, we now have an extra welfare recipient to assist financially and, for the first time since 2013, we have had to use investment capital to meet our welfare commitments.

If you have any money that looks like it is looking for a good home where it will be welcomed and put to good use, please consider donating to the Welfare Fund.

## **CONCLUSION**

On behalf of Rob Sinclair and the SAAFA Durban Branch committee, I wish you only well until we meet again.

Finest SAAFA greetings,

**Steve Bekker**  
**SAAFA Durban Branch: Newsletter Editor**

*Disclaimer: The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official views of the SA Air Force Association*