

March 2023 - Pretoria

# The Flying Spirit

The Official National Newsletter of the SAAF Association

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**“ Let’s make SAAFA Great Again “**

## Message from the National President.



It has been a few months since our End of Year edition of the Flying Spirit and our esteemed Editor, Roelf Rossouw, has been pressing me for a message from the National President for this latest edition. In the interim, Roelf has also introduced a flyer, known as the Flying Spirit Snippets, to communicate matters of importance more quickly and more regularly. I wish to thank him for his initiatives in this regard.

As we all know, the SAAF Association was formed to perpetuate a tradition of comradeship, knowing no distinction of race, language, gender, or creed, which was developed over the years among members of the South African Air Force.

Much of our efforts are directed at maintaining and fostering friendship, comradeship and good fellowship among all members and persons eligible for membership, to render assistance to members in need, to perpetuate the memory of those who have given their lives in the service of their country, to support the safeguarding of the Heritage of the South African Air Force and to promote interest and competence in aviation. I can proudly state that the SAAF Association is continuing to live up to these ideals and objectives as envisioned by its forefathers and founders so many years ago.

During the last three years we may have learned that things do not always turn out the way we planned or the way we think it should have. Things inevitably can go wrong that cannot be fixed or put back together the way they were before. Some broken things stay broken but with the resolve of our SAAFA National Executive Committee and our various Branch Executive Committees, we have succeeded in getting through the bad times and we look forward to the future for better times.

### Benevolence

Benevolence is a fancy word for good attentions towards living beings, including oneself. This goodwill is present in warmth, friendliness, compassion and love. The benevolent heart leans toward



No matter how hard things were and no matter how we feel about the Covid era, tomorrow and even next year are fresh opportunities to make it better, to put the past behind us and to move forward into the future with a renewed sense of purpose and excitement.

It is that time of the year when your National Executive Committee (NEC) and respective Branch Executive Committees (BECs) are preparing for Congress and the Annual General Meeting (AGM) which this year is being held at the Pine Lodge Inn in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), over the period 25-28 May 2023. Much time and effort will be put in to preparing Portfolio and Branch Reports which are to be presented at Congress. In order to remain compliant with the statutory requirements of our registrations as both a Non Profit Organisation (NPO) and a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO), Congress will, inter alia, be dealing with the following business in terms of our Constitution:

- To confirm the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting and Special General Meetings held during the year.
- To receive and consider the Annual Report and Annual Accounts of the Association together with the Auditor's report thereon.
- To elect members of the National Executive Committee for the ensuing year as well as Auditors.
- To consider any matter referred to it by the National Executive Committee or by a Branch.

- To consider and deal with any general business.

Once the reports have been considered and accepted, NEC will commence on preparing, completion and submission of the statutory reports which have to be submitted to the Department of Social Development (DSD) and the South African Revenue Service (SARS). But of course, Congress is not just about all work and no play and we thus look forward to opportunities of enjoying camaraderie of the highest order.

The National Banquet at Congress will also be an occasion to publicly give recognition to those who have gone beyond the call of duty in serving the needs of others through their active participation in the activities of our Association at various levels. Without such member participation and contributions we would cease to exemplify the spirit for which we are so well known.

In the months preceding Congress, there are a number of other events in which SAAFA will be an active participant, these being the following:

- The Elders' Flight is planned for 22 April 2023 at the Brakpan Airfield. SAAFA is an active participant with the Organising Committee that is hosting this event. The event is intended to honour military veterans by returning them to the skies, preferably in aircraft that they once flew themselves many years ago, as well as to provide an opportunity for the less fortunate elderly persons who have never experienced the thrill of flight.



*SAAFA Congress  
The Port Elizabeth  
Branch will host the  
78<sup>th</sup> Congress and  
Banquet.  
25 – 28<sup>th</sup> May 2023*



- On 1 May 2023 the second Pro Patria Military Fair will again be hosted at the Voortrekker Monument Amphitheatre in Pretoria. The Pro Patria Military Fair's main objective is to educate the public and promote awareness about South African Military Heritage and the Defence environment. As was the case last year, the three SAAFA Gauteng Branches will again partner-up and ensure that the SAAFA is well represented and visible at the Fair. The SAAF Museum Spitfire Restoration Project will also be participating, and we are hopeful that we will be partnered with them on site.
- The SAAF Museum Airshow is also making a welcome return on 6 May 2023 after a hiatus of three years. Traditionally the SAAFA Pretoria Branch has made use of this opportunity to raise much needed funds in support of their benevolence projects.
- As is customary, the annual Air Force Memorial Service, which is co-hosted by the SA Air Force and SAAFA, will be held on Sunday, 21 May 2023, at the Air Force Memorial at Bays Hill. As a point of interest, Bays Hill (sometimes also referred to as Bays' Hill) derived its name from the Bay horses that were used by a British Occupation Unit that were encamped there during the Anglo-Boer War. Often the name is misspelled as Bay's Hill.

The PIAGGIO P-166S ALBATROSS  
Some talk about the 'pig' others called it the 'trossie' but by whatever name it is known there is no doubt that the P-166S is a bit of an odd bird, with high gull-wings and backward-facing 'pusher' propellers

The foregoing gives a clear indication of the varied activities in which the SAAFA participates throughout the Country.

It is my earnest wish, that in the year ahead, SAAFA will remain an Association that provides **Assistance** where required, is active in **Remembering** those who did not return, is able to **Support** our SAAF as and when required, and that we carry out these, our SAAFA objectives, while engaging in meaningful **Camaraderie**; enjoying one another's company, which is the platform on which all else is based.

Let us then continue to truly live out the values of our Association in being a source of comfort and strength to those most vulnerable among us, and to continue to maintain and foster friendship, comradeship, and good fellowship among all members. Let us continue to bear one another's burdens during the challenging and unknown times that still lie ahead.

God bless.

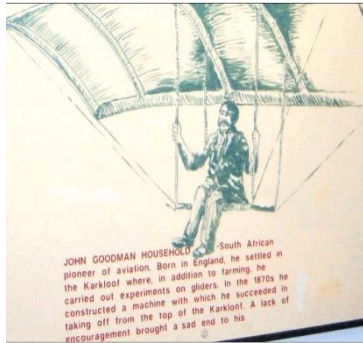
*Mike Louw*

**National President:  
South African Air Force Association**



## Tribute to SA's father of Aviation.

Whether it's just a folk tale or true, the story about a local farmer in the Midlands, building an aircraft and flying it when the Wright brothers were still at school, is quite an amazing story!



John Goodman Household was born in England on December 9, 1845. His parents emigrated to a farm in Karkloof, near Howick. He was said to be a dreamer and clever inventor who wondered, like several other aviation pioneers, whether man would ever be capable of flying safely through the air in a powered aircraft. In 1871, at the age of 26, he envisioned his own flying machine and began his research by shooting large birds, weighing them, measuring their wings, and calculating the area of wingspan needed to carry his weight.

Household's parents encouraged their inventive son when he designed and built a mechanical sawmill on their timber farm, De Magtenburg, but they were not so keen on his interest in flying. His religious mother believed God did not intend humans to fly like birds. Satisfied that his mathematical calculations were correct, Household constructed his craft from oiled silk stretched over a light bamboo frame. It had enormous wings with a seat similar to a swing suspended below by four ropes. The inventor planned to control the direction of his flight by tilting the seat left or right – a rudimentary steering system.

On the day of the first flight in 1875, his brother Gordon and a few farm labourers helped Goodman carry the glider to the edge of an 80m cliff on the farm. Placing himself on the swinging seat, Household gave the order to launch – and South Africa's first brief flight got underway. It is reported that the glider covered just over a kilometre above the tall gum trees in the valley before coming to a shuddering halt on rising ground. Encouraged by this success, Household urged his ground crew to carry the glider to the top of the cliff again



During the second disastrous flight, the craft soared for a while before crashing into a yellowwood tree. Household broke a leg and was carried back to the farmhouse to face the wrath of his mother, who made him promise never to attempt to fly again.

What was left of the glider was packed away in a barn and, no doubt, the strange contraption was inspected by visitors who helped to spread the story of South Africa's, and arguably the world's, first flight.

By abandoning his experiments, Household allowed the German Otto Lilienthal to make the first "official" glider flight in 1896. Eight years later, in 1904, Orville and Wilbur Wright made the first powered Flight in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

Household died in Pietermaritzburg in 1906 at the age of 61, two years after the Wright brothers' success, and he was no doubt delighted to read before his death that man had finally conquered the air.



In 1995, the Lions River Heritage Society, the South African Air Force Association (SAAFA), and other donors recognized Household's feat by erecting a commemorative monument on the district road between Karkloof and Curry's Post, 23km from Howick. In recent years it became hidden by overgrown grass and weeds. To compound the problem, there were no directional signs to lead visitors to the spot where aviation history was made.



Early in 2015, Arnold (aka Arrie) de Klerk, right, a former pilot in the South African Air Force and SAA, who had retired to Howick in 2004, saw a letter in a local newspaper complaining about the lack of signage to the monument.

He was Country Vice President of SAAFA in KNZ at the time and, after locating the fenced John Goodman Household commemorative plaques and memorial in a section of the Karkloof Forest owned by Sappi, he resolved to restore it with the help of SAAFA members.

His appeals for funding brought responses from the SAAFA National Executive committee and contributions were made by Branches in Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Johannesburg, and Port Alfred. Sappi also made a donation.

SAAFA members cleared the weeds and long grass and attractive directional signs were put up on both ends of the D293 district road between Karkloof and Curry's Post.

A rededication ceremony, attended by about 50 people, was held on November 7, 2015.



Unveiling the monument at the time, the then National President of SAAFA, Major-General (ret) Hugh Paine, left, declared: "The father of aviation in South Africa flew his glider in 1875 when the Wright brothers

were still at school, so his visionary exploits are worthy of recognition. He made a major contribution to our Country's heritage."



The Editor extends his thanks for all contributions received.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the editor or the SAAFA National Executive.

The editor reserves the right to amend or reject any editorial matter submitted for publication.

## The JEWISH Contribution to South African



### Military History and other interesting Facts.

Lt Col William "Bill" Bergman, an Associate Member of the SAAFA Johannesburg Branch, has written a fascinating history of the contribution made by Jewish men and women in South African Military history. His interesting talk at our Branch lunch a couple of years ago held everyone's rapt attention especially when he referred to himself as a "Boerejood"!

"He explores the scarcely told stories of the first Jewish soldiers who arrived in South Africa with Jan van Riebeeck in 1696. Among many points of historical interest, his book chronicles tales from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Anglo-Boer Wars, and abroad to the South African Jewish soldiers who fought in World Wars 1 and 2, and for establishing the State of Israel.

Illuminating, deeply researched, and written by a highly decorated veteran who served as an Electrical Engineer in the SA Defence Force and SA National Defence Force for 25 years, this book is a testament to an untold history.

Bill, a retired permanent force officer, has received commendations for his military service, including the prestigious Military Merit Medal (MMM). He was the National Secretary of the South African Jewish Ex-Service League and other military associations".

Here is the good news! Bill is selling his book at only R200 each of which R100 will be going to charity (including SAAFA).

Please order your books from Bill at +27 64 683 3613.

Email: [billbergman24@gmail.com](mailto:billbergman24@gmail.com)

He will Invoice you and mail you a copy.

### **Trevor Slade**

NEC Benevolence Portfolio.  
Phone 083 391 1215.

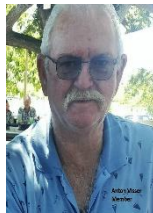




## SAAFA Branch News.



It is with great pleasure that we announce the new Chairperson of the SAAFA Cape Town Branch, Nick Havenga. Nick was elected as Branch Chairperson on 14 March 2023 when the Branch conducted its 76<sup>th</sup> AGM at AFB Ysterplaat. Kevin Sampson, the outgoing Chairman, will be remaining on the Branch Executive as Branch Vice Chairman.



Seen here is Carol Havenga - Treasurer, Nick Havenga with Dave Pearce - Member, Kevin Sampson Vice Chairman, and Anton Visser - Member.

The Secretarial position is currently

vacant.

We wish them success and happiness in everything they do! May God keep them grounded in gratitude and bring them to new heights of success and prosperity.



In the meantime in Gauteng, the SAAFA East Rand BEC was unanimously re-elected. Vice Chairman - Dave Tayler, Secretary - Marjorie Malan, Chairman - Roelf Rossouw, Treasurer - Mac McCloskey.

The Welfare position is currently vacant.

Heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to this awesome team, keep doing your great work. Co-opted members will be appointed by the Committee in the near future.

Pilots start with a bag full of luck and an empty bag of experience!

The trick is to fill the bag of experience before you empty the bag of luck!



Courtesy of Dave Knoesen





## Pioneers of Aviation Museum – Kimberley.

The Pioneers of Aviation museum lies on the site of the first flying school in South Africa, just 4km off the N8 outside Kimberley – the city now regarded as the 'cradle of aviation'. Back in 1913, they trained pilots here, pilots of the South African Aviation Corps, who later went on to become the South African Air Force. The museum houses a life-size replica of the Compton-Paterson biplane used to train these pilots, amongst whom was Anna Maria Bocciarelli, the African continent's first female Pilot.



Kimberley's first flight took place in June 1911 when John Weston established a record of eight and a half minutes in the air in his Weston-Farman biplane, the first plane built in South Africa. Other people were also getting into the air at this time – the first airmail flight, and a series of demonstrations by Cecil Compton Paterson, Captain Guy Livingstone, and Bok Driver, that combined to make flying a popular nation.

And so the John Weston Aviation Company was formed, whose main aim it was to travel to centers around the country demonstrating, and offering, flights to the general public, pre-empting what they feared might be serious attempts by individuals to try and fly themselves.

The memorial museum, the reconstructed hangar, and a replica of the biplane are collectively a national monument commemorating the role early aviators played in founding the South African Air Force.



As if taking off over the clouds in early autumn, this Impala Mk1 spreads its wings in the Memorable Order of Tin Hats' (MOTH) Garden of Remembrance in Kimberley. The aircraft was presented by the South African Air Force in recognition of the contribution made by Kimberley to aviation. Combine a visit with a trip to Magersfontein, the Battlefield Museum where General PA Cronje and his Boer troops defeated the British on their way to relieve the siege of Kimberley.

## Christo Du Toit

Chairman – SAAFA Kimberley

The reconstructed replica of the Weston-Farman biplane.



## RAF fighter plane discovered in the Sahara Desert.

A Second World War plane crashed by a British pilot in the Sahara before he walked off to his death has been found frozen in time 70 years later. Unseen and untouched, the Kittyhawk P-40 has been described as an aviation 'time capsule' after it was found almost perfectly preserved in the sands of the western desert in Egypt. After coming down in June 1942, the pilot is thought to



have survived the crash and initially used his parachute for shelter before making a desperate and futile attempt to reach civilization by walking out of the desert. The final resting place of the Kittyhawk P-40. Aside from the damage it sustained during impact, the aircraft appears to have been almost perfectly preserved in the sands of the Sahara. The single-seater aircraft was found by a Polish oil company worker exploring a remote region of the western desert in Egypt. The RAF airman - believed to have been Flight Sergeant Dennis Copping, 24 - was never seen again. Despite the crash impact, most of the aircraft's cockpit instruments are intact. Its guns and ammunition were also still intact before being seized by the Egyptian military for safety reasons.



There are also signs of the makeshift camp made by the pilot alongside the fuselage. No human remains have been found but it is thought the pilot's decomposed body may lie anywhere within a 20-mile radius of the plane.

The RAF Museum at Hendon, north London, has been made aware of the discovery and plans are underway to recover the aircraft and display it in the future. A search will also be launched in the slim hope of finding the lost airman.



The defence attaché at the British embassy in Cairo is due to visit the scene in order to officially confirm its discovery and serial number.



Equipment and controls from the plane were found scattered around the craft at the crash site. The plane is still in very good condition.



Most of the plane's cockpit instruments were untouched and it still had its guns and ammunition. Historians are now urging the British government to step in and have the scene declared as a war grave so it can be protected before locals began stripping parts and instruments for souvenirs and scrap.

Historian Andy Saunders, from Hastings, East Sussex, said: 'The aviation historical world is hugely excited about this discovery. 'This plane has been lying in the same spot where it crashed 70 years ago. It hasn't been hidden or buried in the sand, it has just sat there. 'It is quite an incredible time capsule, the aviation equivalent of a Tutankhamen Tomb.



It is hundreds of miles from anywhere and there is no reason why anyone would go there. 'It would appear the pilot got into trouble and just brought it down in the middle of the desert. He must have survived the crash because one photo shows a parachute around the frame of the plane and my guess is the poor bloke used it to shelter from the sun. Second World War weaponry, the machine gun on the wing of the crashed plane.

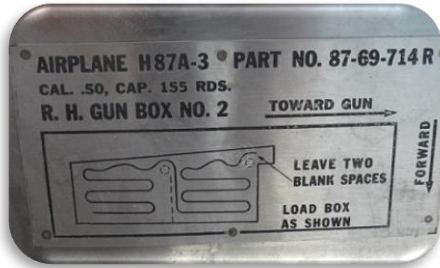


The Kittyhawk's magazine of bullets was also found in the wreckage. The radio and batteries were discovered outside of the plane. It looks like he tried to get it working. If he died at the side of the plane his remains would have been found. 'Once he had crashed there nobody was going to come and get him. It is more likely he tried to walk out of the desert but ended up walking to his death.



Ft Sgt Copping was the son of a dentist and came from Southend, Essex. In 1942 he was a member of the RAF's 260 Squadron, a fighter unit based in Egypt during the North Africa campaign. Things are happening very slowly with the recovery, mainly because we are in the hands of the Egyptian authorities.

The MoD needs to act and get the plane out of there as soon as possible rather than embarking upon a great deal of hand-wringing and meetings to discuss its future.. The RAF Museum at Hendon, north London, has been made aware of the discovery and plans are underway to recover the aircraft for exhibition in the future.



The Kittyhawk's factory stamp and gun loading instruction panel. Flight Sergeant Dennis



Copping's parachute was part of what is believed to be a makeshift camp alongside the fuselage. The crash site is about 200 miles from the nearest town. By June of that year, the Allies were retreating from 'Desert Fox' Erwin Rommel and his German forces. On June 28 Sgt Ft Copping and another airman were tasked with flying two damaged Kittyhawk P-40 planes from one British airbase in northern Egypt to another for repair.

During the short flight Ft Sgt Copping lost his bearings, went off course, and was never seen again. Military historians say they are 99 percent sure the Kittyhawk found in the desert was the one flown by Ft Sgt Copping, based on identification numbers and letters on the plane. It was documented at the time that there was a fault with its front landing



gear which would not retract and the photographic evidence suggests the aircraft had its front wheel down when it crashed. According to experts, a plane making a controlled crash landing in the desert wouldn't have its landing gear down and would belly-flop on the sand. There is also flak damage in the fuselage, which is also consistent with documented evidence of Ft Sgt Copping's plane. Ft Sgt Copping's name appears on the El Alamein war memorial. It is not thought that there are any immediate family members of his left in the

UK. Captain Paul Collins, the British Defence Attaché to Egypt, confirmed there will be a search carried out of the area around the plane in the hope of finding his remains. He said: 'The pilot isn't in the plane but there is evidence to suggest he got out. 'It is likely he walked away and was clearly lost.

We are talking about a 100 square kilometre area and it is extremely unlikely that we will find any remains. 'The scene is close to a smuggling line from Sudan and Libya. We will need to go there with the Egyptian army because it is a dangerous area.' Ian Thirsk, head of collections at the RAF Museum, said they are working with the MoD to make efforts to recover the plane.

## Final Approach and Shut Down.

That's all for now, Folks! Remember, Confucius once said, Life is a waste of time, Time is a waste of Life, Get waste all the time and you will have the time of your life. Brakes off, Burners in! Keep those wings level and watch your airspeed!

Happy landings...

**National Executive – Office Bearers**

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Dirk Ackerman

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Koos van Rensburg  
Flying Spirit  
Roelf Rossouw

**The Editor**

Let's be honest! It's always better to be down here wishing you were up there than up there wishing you were down here.

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***\* Let's make SAAFA Great Again \****

