

The Official National Newsletter of the SAAF Association



MESSAGE FROM THE NATIONAL PRESIDENT



Well, here we are, at the end of a year which for many of us can best be described as having been an annus horribilis, the Latin term for “a terrible year” that Queen Elizabeth famously brought into modern parlance at the end of 1992. The year 2020 was meant to have been an eventful year marked by many interesting and exciting events that were planned. However, besides the SAAFA 75

Birthday Cocktail Function on 26 January and the SAAFA National Banquet and Awards Evening held on 7 November, the year was rather eventless, other than facing the challenges brought about by the Covid pandemic.

The end of a year can be such an emotional time for many people. Whether it was a good year or not so good year, one gets a feeling for such as the year-end approaches. And with 2020 has been no exception, we perhaps find ourselves counting down the days to 2021. A new year with new possibilities, where the problems of 2020 can fade away. However, despite whatever happened over this past, we need to be thankful for the many blessings we encountered along the way, however big or small.

During the past year, 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. We cannot foresee what 2021 will have in store for us but my fervent hopes and prayers are that it will bring back some sort of normalcy and all the things that we miss about day to day life, like gatherings and feeling safe.

It is said that we should always end the day with a positive thought and I would think that the same can be said about the end of a year. No matter how hard things were and no matter how we feel about 2020, tomorrow and even next year are fresh opportunities to make it better, to put the past behind us, and to move forward into the new year with a renewed sense of purpose and excitement.

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Christmas normally inspires a lot of positive feelings. For many people, the true meaning of Christmas lies in its religious significance. Christmas can be the start of great things. The Christmas spirit is all about helping others. As we go dashing through the busy holiday season, we need to take time to appreciate the true blessings of Christmas: the moments with family, the companionship of friends, and the fellowship with all. Christmas is normally a time to renew connections with family and friends. However, as I am writing this message, I am acutely aware of the mainstream reports of a resurgence of the dreaded Covid-19 infections in particularly our western and southern coastal regions. A few of our Branches in those areas have had to scale down on their activities once again, in particular their hosting of social year-end events. Irrespective of how people choose to react to the threat, we need to respect and accept people for how they choose to define their own new normal. We need to stay safe but respect what others are doing as well. With the approaching festive season, I am also acutely aware that self-isolation and social distancing are probably harder for the many elderly and frail SAAFA members, as well as those living on their own. Fear for the future, together with the isolation that any form of lockdown brings can lead to anxiety or depression. It is at a times like these that we as SAAFA need to exercise real camaraderie, albeit from a physical distance, and in this regard being a beacon of hope can be a powerful source of reassurance to many of our elderly and frail members. Despite the current new threat, we need to be optimistic, to be hopeful, and to be thankful for what we have. 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.

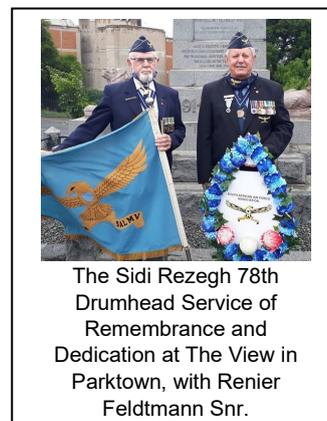
In closing, I wish to convey my best wishes for a blessed Christmas and a magnificent New Year. May the festive season bring only happiness and joy to you and your loved ones. I wish you and your loved one's peace, health, happiness, and prosperity in the coming New Year. May the spirit of love gently fill our hearts and homes.

God bless.

Mike Louw

National President: South African Air Force Association

The President attending services during November





At the start of the year, SAAFA had extensive plans underway nationally to celebrate our 75th Anniversary, all of which came to a grinding halt with the arrival of Covid-19 and the consequential “lock-down” which affected all of our lives, in some sad cases tragically. With the relaxation of restrictions to allow protocol-regulated gatherings, the Pretoria Branch, who would under ops-normal conditions have hosted Congress 75, decided to make up for the lost time and arrange a SAAFA 75 banquet.

Chairman Bill de Pinho took the initiative and arranged that we make use of Hangar 5 at AFB Swartkop, scheduled for 7 November. Preparations were well underway when the OC AFB Swartkop was compelled under a SANDF regulation dating back to March to reluctantly had to withdraw her approval for our use of the facility.

The situation seemed at that stage irretrievable, but we reckoned without the determination of Bill and his team comprising Carol Havenga, Etienne and Ignette Moolman, and the Saint George Hotel. Between the aforementioned, a truly splendid banquet was arranged in a matter of 5 days with, interestingly, better value and greater menu variety than would probably have been the case at 5 Hangar.

Ignette walked around with a checklist that would make a self-respecting Space Shuttle Commander weep; every conceivable base was covered. Etienne proposed that each of the 15 tables is dedicated to a SAAF and/or SAAFA hero, featuring such legends as Captain Edwin Swales VC, Sqn Ldr John Nettleton VC, Arthur Walker HCG + Bar, SM, Lt Gen D J Earp, and Col Rod Douglas and painstakingly researched all 15 personalities and had photos and biographies on each table. National Treasurer Carol was as always, her industrious self, ferrying banners and taking care of loose ends. She also, very importantly, paid the evening's dues before the night was out! Behind all this activity was Bill, who apart from preparing a meticulous script for his MC duties, kept overall control in his customary unassuming manner!

The evening was truly a splendid affair, the venue excellent, the company wonderful as only SAAF/SAAFA company can be which, combined with excellent Saint George fare and super levels of service ensured a wonderful evening was enjoyed by all. Very well done and sincere gratitude to the wonderful organising team, you all did SAAFA proud!



SAAF ASSOCIATION HONOURS AND AWARDS



2020

In a volunteer organisation such as the Association, all persons are worthy of recognition. The undermentioned honours and awards have been awarded and authorised by the National Executive Committee in accordance with the SAAF Association Constitution. The Awards Committee made recommendations to the National President for his approval in the following categories:

- Order of the South African Air Force Association (Gold, Silver or Bronze).
- South African Air Force Association Presidential Merit Award.
- Certificate of MERIT.

The following members received the various awards:

SAAF Association Certificate of Merit.

The SAAF Association Certificates of Merit is awarded to non-members of the Association and other organizations for meritorious service to the Association.

Garth Luden

Pretoria

SAAF Association Presidential Merit Award



The SAAF Association Presidential Merit Award is awarded to members of the Association for commendable service to the Association.

Deborah Bernberg	Port Elizabeth
Trevor Bernberg	Port Elizabeth
Amore' Freemantle	Port Elizabeth
Celeste Mentz	Pretoria
Robert Sinclair	Durban
Natasha van Wyk	Pretoria
Morney Versveld	Pretoria
Hennie van der Walt	Johannesburg

Order of the SAAF Association



Bronze.

Distinguished continuous service to the Association.

Paul Hoogendoorn	Port Elizabeth
Anna Rodgers	Port Alfred



Silver

. Long and Distinguished exceptional service to the Association.

Desire Cloete	Whale Coast
Gavin Farquhar	Durban
Carol Havenga	Pretoria
Ansie Lavis	Bloemfontein
Gavin Lavis	Bloemfontein
Clinton Wyness	Durban

Gold



Long and Distinguished meritorious service to the Association at a National level.

Francois van Zyl	Soutpansberg
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MILITARY ATTACHÉ AND ADVISOR CORPS



Despite the relaxation of South African regulations relating to Auntie Rona, the Diplomatic Corps have been rather reluctant to open their doors too quickly, often due to regulations their respective countries have applied.

During the past month, we have had the departure, sadly without any fanfare, of Lt Col Kazunori Yanagawa who ended his tour and returned to Japan. Also, Lt Col Hakan Sjoberg, the Swedish Attaché, returned home and his replacement, Commander (N) Shahin Olesen Eghraghi arrived to commence his three-year tour.

The Embassy of the Republic of Korea remembers each year the South Africans who gave their lives defending Korea against the Chinese and North Korean onslaught from the north. This year was no exception and the Ambassador, HE Jong Dae Park, and the Military Attaché, Col Byungchul Lee, hosted a small group of guests to the Korean “Turn Towards Busan” Day held at the excellent Milkplum Café at the National Botanical Gardens in Pretoria. SAAFA was represented by National President Mike Louw, SAAF/SAAFA Liaison Officer Lt Col Craig Stanton, and Philip Weyers. The assembled company were addressed excellently by Col Lee, Lt Gen Carlo Gagiano (SAAF Ret.), and Col Dirk Louw (SAAF Ret.), President of SAKWVA. At precisely 11:00B all present turned to face the direction of Busan in Korea and remember the Fallen to the strains of the “Last Post” followed by a one-minute silence.

Sincere thanks are due to the Ambassador, Col Lee, and Col Dirk Louw for again making it possible for SAAFA to be represented at this very significant act of remembrance.

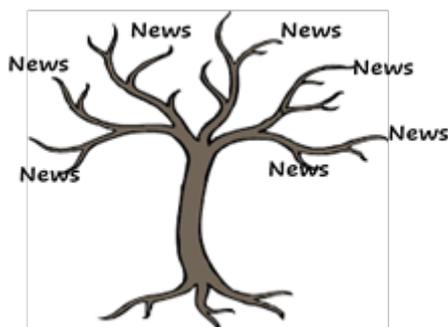


L to r: Mike Louw, National President SAAFA, Col Byungchul Lee, Philip Weyers, Col Dirk Louw, President SAKWVA



Col Byungchul Lee, DA Republic of Korea and Philip Weyers, all masked up





Branch

News



- ◆We have had a quiet month here in PE with little to no activity.
- ◆Colin Trader is in good spirits.
- ◆Trevor and I joined the annual S A Legion graveyard remembrance Poppy run.
- ◆Christmas lunch is booked for 9th December at the German Club PE.

SAAFA



- ◆There have been some smaller parades, that we have not attended, but will be attending the one in the City Centre on Sunday 8th.
- ◆Rose Basson, has had a hip replacement and is staying on her own in her house.
- ◆The branch is planning a memorial service in conjunction with the Base to be held on 11 November at the Wall.
- ◆We have had 2 Committee meetings (face to face) and our second lunch at the Good wood Club, the numbers have increased to 20 attendees.
- ◆Our Christmas lunch will be on Tuesday 8th December.
- ◆The normal edition of Aquila Capensis, our newsletter went out towards the end of October and positive comments were received. The final one for 2020 is due out at the end of November.

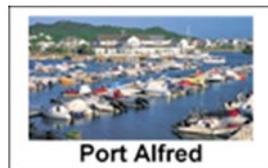
SAAFA



- ◆At the end of October 2020, there are officially 81 names listed on the Whale Coast Branch database. Of the 81 members, 72 members are classified as active members in terms of the SAAFA Constitution
- ◆Thus far 73 members have paid their membership dues for 2020, which represents an increase of 29 over the number paid in the previous year.
- ◆Eddie van Ravesteyn passed away on 28 October 2020.

- ◆Alice Deyzel was admitted to Hermanus Mediclinic for an emergency procedure. Fortunately, she has recovered and was discharged
- ◆Jules Moolman was admitted to The Hermanus Frail Care Center (known as SOFCA). He is in good hands and doing just fine,
- ◆Bruce was admitted to Hermanus Mediclinic and his condition is improving and it is expected that he will be discharged by Friday, 6 November 2020.
- ◆The Branch will launch its newsletter i.e. WHALE COAST FLIER soon. The first edition will be issued in Dec 2020/Jan 2021.

SAAFA



- ◆There has been a marked increase in infections in the area and the local medical practitioners have again warned that especially the elderly should be taking every precaution to prevent infection.
- ◆The process of populating the membership spreadsheet is underway and will be submitted with the next monthly report.
- ◆The Victory Cup Golf is hosted by the Royal Port Alfred Golf Club and the club informed us that it will next be held on Saturday 2 January 2021. The organisation for the day is thus going ahead and we hope it will herald the start of normal branch activities.

SAAFA



- ◆As far as is known, we have not lost any members during this period.
- ◆There is hope that the lunch routine will be resumed soon.
- ◆We wait until a comfortable lunch environment is assured by whatever rules exist when the time comes.
- ◆The newsletter is overdue.

SAAFA



- ◆The branch finances are sound.
- ◆There are currently no welfare cases at the branch.
- ◆Val Nell is well again.
- ◆Ollie Kehl was called to higher duty on 23 October 2020 due to a heart attack.

SAAFA



- ◆Our branch is financially sound.
- ◆We have 78 active members at present.

- ◆The lunch that was to be held at la Capannina on 30 October was cancelled.
- ◆The branch is continuing with arrangements for the Christmas lunch on 27 November at the Wilderness Hotel.
- ◆There is a memorial service for Koos van Stade on Sunday 8 November 2020 at 10H00 at the MOTH Shell hole.
- ◆7 November SAAFA 75th Banquet and Awards evening: SAAFA Outeniqua wishes all attendees a festive evening and our hearty congratulations go out to all members/recipients of awards.

SAAFA



- ◆Tickets continue to be sold for the SAAFA75 Bottle of Whiskey. The draw will take place at our Christmas Lunch on 27th November.
- ◆We still have 3 JHB Beneficiaries.
- ◆WAAFS has undertaken to pay a Christmas Gift of R1 000 each to our 3 Beneficiaries in December.
- ◆We held our first physical meeting on 22nd October.
- ◆Office still opens on weekdays.
- ◆We held an informal and celebratory “break the 8 months fast” Branch Lunch at the Indaba Hotel on Wednesday 28th October.
- ◆It was our first lunch since February, we had 29 to 31 attending, including Patrons Fabian Msimang and Basil Hersov and their wives Afrika and Antoinette.
- ◆We will be attending Parades and laying Wreaths at Parktown, Jeppe, and KES Boys High Schools as well as the 100th Anniversary Remembrance Day Service held in Johannesburg at the Cenotaph on the 8th November.
- ◆SKYLINE, SAAFA JHB’s Newsletter for December is being drafted now.

SAAFA



- ◆The Branch Meeting was held on 14 October 2020 at the SAAFA Offices Conference Room at Swartkop and was the first physical meeting since March 2020.
- ◆There have been some donations by individual members which has helped our cause even more for which we are grateful.
- ◆Once again the BEC is extremely grateful and humbled by the large and small donations that are made by members, which helps us in our efforts.
- ◆Battle of El Alamein [MOTH’S] Memorial Service on 18 October 2020 was attended by Reinier Feldtman where he placed a Cross on behalf of SAAFA.
- ◆The Branch monthly lunch did take place on 17 October 2020 at 10AD Lapa and was attended by a small group but was most welcoming after such a long period of not getting together.
- ◆Please note that the Pretoria Golf Day will NOT be taking place on 26 November 2020 as previously reported. It has been rescheduled for 26 March 2021.
- ◆A Family Day is planned for Saturday 28th November 2020 at 10AD Lapa.

SAAFA

SAAFA



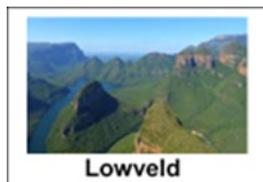
- ◆No one was called to Higher Service in October 2020.
- ◆Mike Impson, an Associate Member, resigned during October 2020.
- ◆No lunch was held in October 2020 due to the lockdown status of the country. We will only hold a Christmas Lunch on Friday 4 December 2020, all factors allowing.

SAAFA

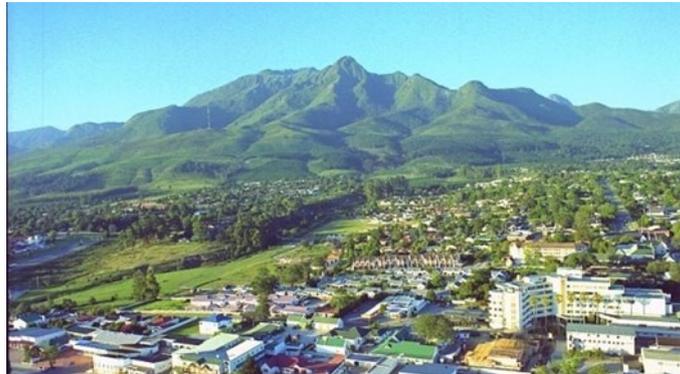


- ◆The Pietermaritzburg Branch held a lunch at the Victoria Country Club on Tuesday 27 October 2020. It was attended by 13 guests, of which 3 were visitors to the branch and the lunch.
- ◆The membership of the SAAFA Pietermaritzburg Branch remained at 10 members.
- ◆No parades or functions were attended during October 2020.

SAAFA



The SAAF Association Outeniqua Branch



George is the second-largest city in the Western Cape province of South Africa. The city is a popular holiday and conference centre and the administrative and commercial hub and the capital city of the Garden Route. The city is situated roughly halfway between Cape Town and Port Elizabeth on the Garden Route. It is situated on a 10-kilometre plateau between the Outeniqua Mountains to the north and the Indian Ocean to the south.

The Outeniqua Mountains, named after the Outeniqua Khoikhoi who lived there, is a mountain range that runs a parallel to the southern coast of South Africa and forms a continuous range with the Langeberg to the west and the Tsitsikamma Mountains to the east

The Beginning

The South African Air Force Association's Outeniqua branch was founded at Knysna in December 1984 with Fred Bell as the chairman. Lt Gen Bob Rogers, patron of the SAAFA and later local branch member was present. The branch usually met at the Knysna Yacht Club, with members coming from as far afield as Still Bay in the west and the Craggs in the east.



Not having a "base" and members scattered over the Southern Cape countryside, lunches were held at various venues along the coast. Initially, the cost was R5.50, which some members found exorbitant. The favourite venues were the Knysna Golf Club and Yacht Club, Sedgfield Arms, Mossel Bay Golf Course, La Capannina in George, Kafe Serife and Searle's Village Restaurant in Great Brak River.

Historical Highlights and its members

The branch hosted the 1988 SAAFA Congress at the Wilderness Hotel.

One of the early members was Ian Henderson, whose father had won the Victoria Cross in Rhodesia in 1896. Jim Williams DFC had been OC of the squadron which took part in the Warsaw airlift. He was a co-founder of the SAAFA and later a member of the Outeniqua branch. He died at Plettenberg Bay in October 1991, aged 85 years.



The branch hosted the 1995 50th SAAFA Congress at the Wilderness George, with the Minister of Defence, Joe Modise, being present.

In 1997, the Bergh family figured prominently in the branch's history. Ian Bergh joined the SAAF in 1944 and served in the RAF from 1947. He married Alice (Molly) Scott in 1952. He was a navigator on flying boats before re-joining the SAAF and retired as a colonel in 1986. Ian became chairman of the branch in 2000. Daughter, Carol McCreedy, has served as branch secretary and treasurer on and off since then.

Among the new members was H O Meyer 'Tenk' Odendaal DFC & Bar, SM and American DFC. The latter had been shot down in Yugoslavia, met with partisans then walked 1,000 km to re-join his squadron. He served in Korea and then became a chief instructor on Vampires at Langebaanweg. His eldest son was killed in an Impala flying accident. He retired to Glentana in 1979 and died in October 2001.

Jim Lambert became chairman of the branch in 1998 and was ably assisted by his wife, Suzie. Jim had served in Italy during WWII as a young spitfire pilot. The founder member, Fred Bell, died in June 2001.

Jim and Molly Aimer were stalwarts of the branch, he serving as treasurer for nine years while she was constantly involved in the administration.



Bob Kershaw was awarded the DSO in 1940 for rescuing Captain Jack Frost from an Italian airfield after the latter had been shot down. Bob's face was then used on a wartime postage stamp. He died at Knysna in 1998. A Bob Kershaw Memorial Fund was established to assist widows. A flagpole was donated by the branch to the George MOTH Shellhole.

Jack Krause was awarded a Gold Medal by the NEC for 40 years' service in November 2004. In October 2005, the SAAF Association had its 60th Birthday and the Outeniqua branch was 21 years old, so celebrating its coming of age was held at the Far Hills Country Hotel, George.



Alan Quinton 'AQ' De Wet DFC had joined the SAAF in 1940 and flown in 5 Squadron in Italy, ending up flying Mustangs. His logbook can be seen on Google. He was an active member of the Outeniqua branch when he died in 2006.

In 2010 the chairman, Al Colesky, presented the Chairman's Merit Award to the following: Abe de Kock, Peter Searle, Gordon Rivas, Roger Best, Ola Grinaker and Riana Appel.



Johann (Chappie) Flemington took to the air in 2011 from George Airport in a Cessna 172 on his 100th birthday. He had joined the SAAF in 1941 and after a forced landing in Algeria was taken, prisoner. He joined the SAAFA in 1958 and was awarded a certificate by the Outeniqua branch in 2008. Chappie was a popular member of the association before he died in September 2013, aged 101.

The SAAFA National Congress was held in George at Pine Lodge from 8 to 11 May 2008. At the time, the Outeniqua branch had 122 members. The chairman, Al Colesky had been born in Natal and served in the RAF for ten years before transferring to the SAAF in 1970. When he retired, he was honorary colonel of 111 Squadron. Al died in April 2011, aged 73 years. At the time present member Bennie Weideman was mentioned in despatches by the NEC for his stewardship of medical matters. A Golf Day was held at Simola on April Fool's Day which raised R18,000 for the branch. Ola Grinaker was awarded the NEC's Bronze award.



Peter Ivor 'Monster' Wilkins had been born in Zululand. He qualified as a pilot in 1964, then concentrated on helicopters and served in the Border War. Monster was to earn 13 medals, including the Air Force Cross, the SM, and the US Legion of Merit. He attained the rank of brigadier general before retiring to George in 2000. He wrote 'Chopper Pilot' about his experiences, was a member of the Outeniqua branch and died in September 2015.

Dirk Ackerman is a prominent member of the branch. He joined the Citizen Force as Ops Sergeant for 104 Squadron in 1979. He earned his wings three years later and in 1990 was president of the SAAFA. In 1993 he was appointed Honorary Colonel of 41 Squadron when he was awarded the Order of Meritorious Service Silver by the State President.



The National Congress of 2016 was held at Simola Country Club, Knysna, which

proved to be a popular venue. The branch chairman was Ola Grinaker who had been awarded the Honoris Crux as a helicopter pilot in 1978. His enthusiasm largely led to the overall success of Congress.



Ola was succeeded by Hartog (aka Horace) Blok, who had been

a member of the crew of a Shackleton which had crash-landed in the Saharan Desert in July 1994 while en-route to England. His caring nature did much to swell numbers at the monthly lunches.



Abraham (Abe) de Kock had piloted B-26 Marauders of 12 Squadron in the Western Desert when 19 years old. His son, Andre, was to be awarded the Honoris Crux while serving

on the Border in 1976. Abe farmed near Sasolburg and came to George in 2006 where he became a stalwart member of the branch. Abe was deputed to read the 'Airmen's Grace' at lunches. A rendition translated into Afrikaans by Paul Nesor was a favourite prayer. Abe died aged 95, in July 2020.

Wendy van Schalkwyk, the eldest daughter of Jim Scott DFC, also of 12 Squadron, became a member of the branch in 2018. Another worthy daughter of a SAAF veteran was Major (Army) Riana Appel, nee Pienaar, who served on the branch committee for a few years.

(Written by Ian Uys, DWD)

The SAAF Association Outeniqua Branch Chairmen

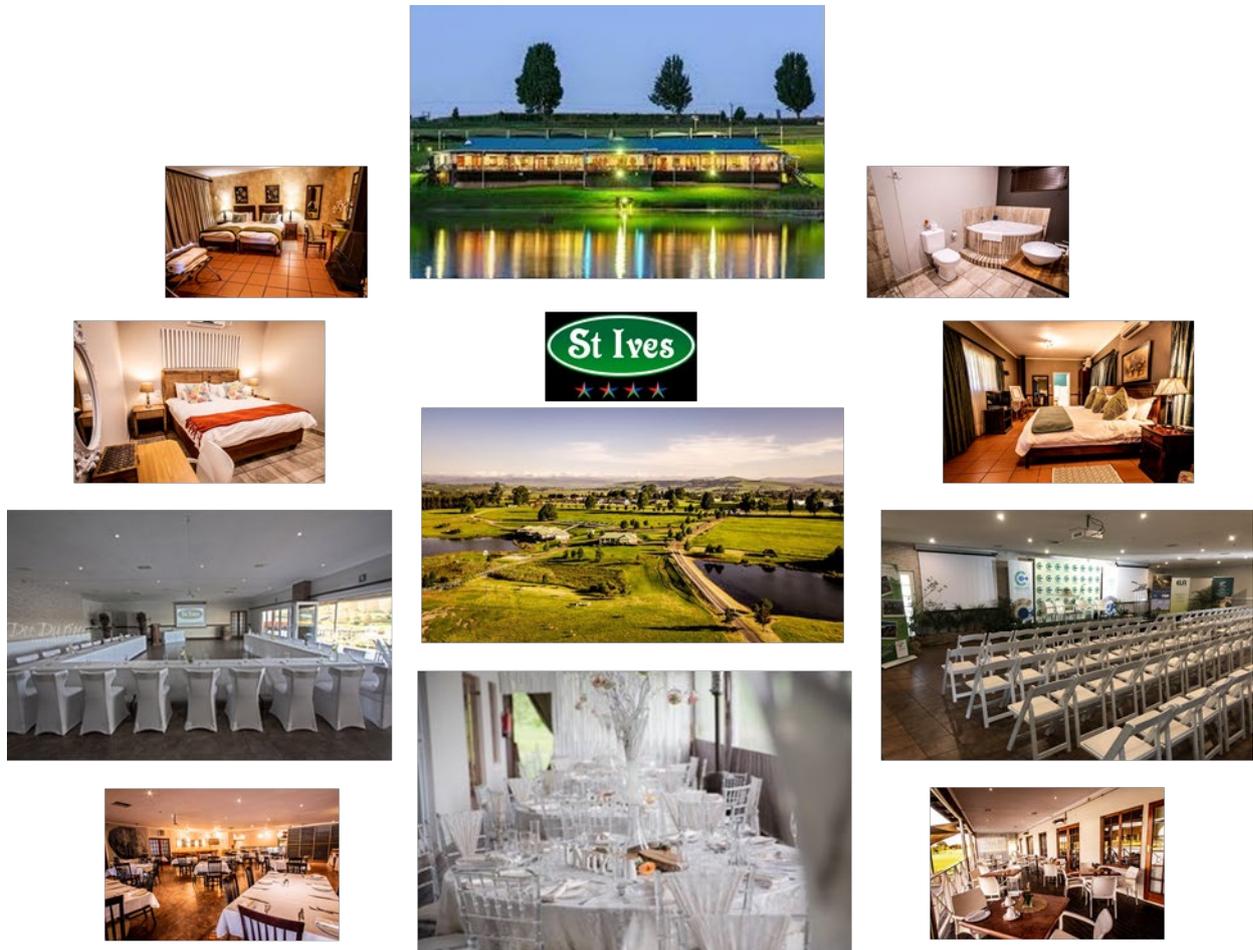
- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| 1984 Fred Bell | 2000 Ian Bergh |
| 1989 Jack Burton | 2002 Paul Nesor |
| 1992 Fred Bell | 2007 Al Colesky |
| 1994 Hugh Faragher-Thomas | 2011 Peter Searle |
| 1997 Des Thompson | 2014 Ola Grinaker |
| 1998 Jim Lambert | 2016 Hartog Blok |

The Outeniqua branch has kept alive the comradeship and ideals of the SAAF Association in the Southern Cape for the past 34 years and hopefully will continue to do so in the years ahead.



The beautiful Outeniqua mountains

DURBAN BRANCH PROPOSAL FOR HOSTING SAAFA CONGRESS 2021



St Ives Lodge and Venue

Set on a 140-hectare former royal hunting reserve that has a lake and roaming wild animals, this laid-back family-run lodge is less than 1 km from the R103 highway and 6 km from the Nelson Mandela Capture Site tourist attraction.

Relaxed rooms include tea and coffeemaking facilities, desks, and flat-screen TVs, as well as sitting areas. Upgraded rooms have pull-out sofas, and family rooms sleep up to 4. Amenities include an outdoor pool, a casual restaurant/bar with a deck overlooking the lake, and a playground. Activities such as hiking, bird-watching and fishing are available.

Free Wi-Fi
Free parking
Outdoor pool
Air-conditioned
Laundry service



SAAF Member Wins International Aviation Award



Society of Experimental Test Pilots

The Society of Experimental Test Pilots is an international organisation that seeks to promote air safety and contributes to aeronautical advancement by promoting sound aeronautical design and development; interchanging ideas, thoughts, and suggestions of the members, assisting in the professional development of experimental pilots, and providing scholarships and aid to members and the families of deceased members.

Herman R. Salmon Technical Publications Award

The Herman R. Salmon Technical Publications Award recognizes the most outstanding technical paper published in *Cockpit* magazine, a quarterly journal of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots. The award was established in 1971 and renamed in 1981 to honor the memory of test pilot Herman R. "Fish" Salmon who was killed in an aircraft accident.

The Society lists five criteria for nominations to this award:¹

1. Originality and/or ingenuity of the article.
2. The interest of subject material to the membership.
3. Contribution to flight testing.
4. Contribution to the exchange of information between test pilots that would not otherwise be generally available.
5. Organization of material and clarity of presentation.

There have been 48 Recipients of this award, from 1971 to the present, there was no award in 1981.

“The Society of Experimental Test Pilots is proud to announce the Award Winner from the Virtual Symposium and the 2020 Fellow Class



Maj Gen Desmond Barker, SAAF (Ret) (M)

Herman R. Salmon Technical Publications Award (Sponsored by Symbolic Displays)

For the **Best** Technical Paper published in *Cockpit* during the Past Year is

Awarded to **MAJ GEN DES BARKER**

For his publication on

“Flight Test Report: Focke Wulf Piaggio P149D-Turbo Prop”

(M) member — Experimental test pilot not less than one year or manned space vehicle pilot



CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914



On December 7, 1914, Pope Benedict XV suggested a temporary hiatus from the war for the celebration of Christmas. The warring countries refused to create any official cease-fire, but on Christmas, the soldiers in the trenches declared their own unofficial truce.

The Christmas Truce occurred on and around Christmas Day 1914 when the sounds of rifles firing and shells exploding faded in many places along the Western Front during World War I in favour of holiday celebrations. During the unofficial ceasefire, soldiers on both sides of the conflict emerged from the trenches and shared gestures of goodwill.

Starting on Christmas Eve, many German and British troops fighting in World War I sang Christmas carols to each other across the lines, and at certain points, the Allied soldiers even heard brass bands joining the Germans in their joyous singing.

At the first light of dawn on Christmas Day, some German soldiers emerged from their trenches and approached the Allied lines across no-man's-land, calling out "Merry Christmas" in their enemies' native tongues. At first, the Allied soldiers feared it was a trick, but seeing the Germans unarmed they climbed out of their trenches and shook hands with the enemy soldiers. The men

exchanged presents of cigarettes and plum puddings and sang carols and songs. Some Germans lit Christmas trees around their trenches, and there was even a documented case of soldiers from opposing sides playing a good-natured game of soccer. German Lieutenant Kurt Zehmisch recalled: "How marvellously wonderful, yet how strange it was. The English officers felt the same way about it. Thus Christmas, the celebration of Love, managed to bring mortal enemies together as friends for a time."

Some soldiers used this short-lived ceasefire for a more somber task: the retrieval of the bodies of fellow combatants who had fallen within the no-man's land between the lines.

The so-called Christmas Truce of 1914 came only five months after the outbreak of war in Europe and was one of the last examples of the outdated notion of chivalry between enemies in warfare. It was never repeated—future attempts at holiday ceasefires were quashed by officers' threats of disciplinary action—but it served as heartening proof, however brief, that beneath the brutal clash of weapons, the soldiers' essential humanity endured.

During World War I, the soldiers on the Western Front did not expect to celebrate on the battlefield, but even a world war could not destroy the Christmas spirit.



History of Christmas Trees

The history of Christmas trees goes back to the symbolic use of evergreens in ancient Egypt and Rome and continues with the German tradition of candlelit Christmas trees first brought to America in the 1800s. Discover the history of the Christmas tree, from the earliest winter solstice celebrations to Queen Victoria's decorating habits

How Did Christmas Trees Start?

Long before the advent of Christianity, plants, and trees that remained green all year had a special meaning for people in the winter. Just as people today decorate their homes during the festive season with pine, spruce, and fir trees, ancient peoples hung evergreen boughs over their doors and windows. In many countries, it was believed that evergreens would keep away witches, ghosts, evil spirits, and illness.

In the Northern hemisphere, the shortest day and longest night of the year fall on December 21 or December 22 and is called the winter solstice. Many ancient people believed that the sun was a god and that winter came every year because the sun god had become sick and weak. They celebrated the solstice because it meant that at last, the sun god would begin to get well. Evergreen boughs reminded them of all the green plants that would grow again when the sun god was strong and summer would return.

The ancient Egyptians worshipped a god called Ra, who had the head of a hawk and wore the sun as a blazing disk in his crown. At the solstice, when Ra began to recover from his illness, the Egyptians filled their homes with green palm rushes, which symbolized for them the triumph of life over death.

Early Romans marked the solstice with a feast called Saturnalia in honor of Saturn, the god of agriculture. The Romans knew that the solstice meant that soon, farms and orchards would be green and fruitful. To mark the occasion, they decorated their homes and temples with evergreen boughs.

In Northern Europe, the mysterious Druids, the priests of the ancient Celts, also

decorated their temples with evergreen boughs as a symbol of everlasting life. The fierce Vikings in Scandinavia thought that evergreens were the special plant of the sun god, Balder.

Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition as we now know it in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Some built Christmas pyramids of wood and decorated them with evergreens and candles if wood was scarce.

The tree was traditionally decorated with "roses made of coloured paper, apples, wafers, tinsel. Today, there is a wide variety of traditional and modern ornaments, such as garlands, baubles, tinsel, and candy canes.

Christmas Trees Around the World



Canada

German settlers migrated to Canada from the United States in the 1700s. They brought with them many of the things associated with Christmas we cherish today—Advent calendars, gingerbread houses, cookies—and Christmas trees. When Queen Victoria's German husband, Prince Albert, put up a Christmas tree at Windsor Castle in 1848, the Christmas tree became a tradition throughout England, the United States, and Canada.



Mexico

In most Mexican homes the principal holiday adornment is el Nacimiento (Nativity scene).

However, a decorated Christmas tree may be incorporated in the Nacimiento or set up elsewhere in the home. As the purchase of a natural pine represents a luxury commodity to most Mexican families, the typical arbolito (little tree) is often an artificial one, a bare branch cut from a copal tree (*Bursera microphylla*) or some type of shrub collected from the countryside.



Great Britain

The Norway spruce is the traditional species used to decorate homes in Britain. The Norway spruce was a native species in the British Isles before the last Ice Age and was reintroduced here before the 1500s.



Greenland

Christmas trees are imported, as no trees live this far north. They are decorated with candles and bright ornaments.



Guatemala

The Christmas tree has joined the "Nacimiento" (Nativity scene) as a popular ornament because of the large German population in Guatemala. Gifts are left under the tree on Christmas morning for the children. Parents and adults do not exchange gifts until New Year's Day.



Brazil

Although Christmas falls during the summer in Brazil, sometimes pine trees are decorated with little pieces of cotton that represent falling snow.



Ireland

Christmas trees are bought anytime in December and decorated with coloured lights, tinsel, and baubles. Some people favour the angel on top of the tree, others the star. The house is decorated with garlands,

candles, holly, and ivy. Wreaths and mistletoe are hung on the door.



Sweden

Most people buy Christmas trees well before Christmas Eve, but it's not common to take the tree inside and decorate it until just a few days before. Evergreen trees are decorated with stars, sunbursts, and snowflakes made from straw. Other decorations include colourful wooden animals and straw centerpieces.



Norway

Nowadays Norwegians often take a trip to the woods to select a Christmas tree, a trip that their grandfathers probably did not make. The Christmas tree was not introduced into Norway from Germany until the latter half of the 19th century; to the country districts, it came even later. When Christmas Eve arrives, there is the decorating of the tree, usually done by the parents behind the closed doors of the living room, while the children wait with excitement outside. A Norwegian ritual known as "circling the Christmas tree" follows, where everyone joins hands to form a ring around the tree and then walk around it singing carols. Afterward, gifts are distributed.



Ukraine

Celebrated on December 25th by Catholics and on January 7th by Orthodox Christians, Christmas is the most popular holiday in Ukraine. During the Christmas season, which also includes New Year's Day, people decorate fir trees and have parties.



Spain

A popular Christmas custom is Catalonia, a lucky strike game. A tree trunk is filled with goodies and children hit at the trunk trying to knock out the hazelnuts, almonds, toffee, and other treats.



Italy

In Italy, the presepio (manger or crib) represents in miniature the Holy Family in the stable and is the center of Christmas for families. Guests kneel before it and musicians sing before it. The presepio figures are usually hand-carved and unbelievably detailed in features and dress. The scene is often set out in the shape of a triangle. It provides the base of a pyramid-like structure called the ceppo. This is a wooden frame arranged to make a pyramid several feet high. Several tiers of thin shelves are supported by this frame. It is entirely decorated with coloured paper, gilt pine cones, and miniature coloured pennants. Small candles are fastened to the tapering sides. A star or small doll is hung at the apex of the triangular sides. The shelves above the manger scene have small gifts of fruit, candy, and presents. The ceppo is in the old Tree of Light tradition which became the Christmas tree in other countries. Some houses even have a ceppo for each child in the family.



Germany

Many Christmas traditions practiced around the world today started in Germany. It has long been thought that Martin Luther began the tradition of bringing a fir tree into the home. According to one legend, late one evening, Martin Luther was walking home through the woods and noticed how beautifully the stars shone through the trees. He wanted to share the beauty with his wife, so he cut down a fir tree and took it home. Once inside, he placed small, lighted candles on the branches and said that it would be a symbol of the beautiful Christmas sky. The Christmas tree was born. Another legend says that in the early 16th century, people in Germany combined two customs that had been practiced in different countries around the globe. The Paradise tree (a fir tree decorated with apples) represented the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. The Christmas Light, a small, pyramid-like frame, usually decorated with glass balls, tinsel, and a candle on top, was a symbol of

the birth of Christ as the Light of the World. Changing the tree's apples to tinsel balls and cookies and combining this new tree with the light placed on top, the Germans created the tree that many of us know today. Modern Tannenbaum (Christmas trees) are traditionally decorated in secret with lights, tinsel, and ornaments by parents and then lit and revealed on Christmas Eve with cookies, nuts, and gifts under its branches.



South Africa

Christmas is a summer holiday in South Africa. The traditional Christmas tree has never had much of a grip here since the pines, firs, and cedars of Europe and America are not native to sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, most South Africans use fake Christmas trees.



Saudi Arabia

Christian Americans, Europeans, Indians, Filipinos, and others living here have to celebrate Christmas privately in their homes. Christmas lights are generally not tolerated. Most families place their Christmas trees somewhere inconspicuous.



Philippines

Fresh pine trees are too expensive for many Filipinos, so handmade trees in an array of colours and sizes are often used. Star lanterns, or parol, appear everywhere in December. They are made from bamboo sticks, covered with brightly coloured rice paper or cellophane, and usually feature a tassel on each point. There is usually one in every window, each representing the Star of Bethlehem.



China

Of the small percentage of Chinese who do celebrate Christmas, most erect artificial trees decorated with spangles and paper chains, flowers, and lanterns. Christmas trees are called "trees of light."



Japan

For most of the Japanese who celebrate Christmas, it's purely a secular holiday devoted to the love of their children. Christmas trees are decorated with small toys, dolls, paper ornaments, gold paper fans and lanterns, and wind chimes. Miniature candles are also put among the tree branches. One of the most popular ornaments is the origami swan. Japanese children have exchanged thousands of folded paper "birds of peace" with young people all over the world as a pledge that war must not happen again.



Poland

In Poland, there is a folk tradition dating back to an old pre-Christian pagan custom of suspending a branch of fir, spruce, or pine from the ceiling, called *podłaźniczka*, during the time of the Koliada winter festival. The branches were decorated with apples, nuts, acorns, and stars made of straw. In more recent times, the decorations also included coloured paper cut-outs wafers, cookies, and Christmas baubles. According to old pagan beliefs, the branch's powers were linked to good harvest and prosperity. Beginning in the mid-19th century, the tradition overtime was almost completely replaced by the German practice of decorating a Christmas tree. The custom was partly revived in the 1970s and continues in some homes.



Russia

In Russia, the Christmas tree was banned after the October Revolution but then reinstated as *New-year spruce* in 1935. It became a fully secular icon of the New Year holiday, for example, the crowning star was regarded not as a symbol of Bethlehem Star, but as the Red star. Decorations, such as figurines of airplanes, bicycles, space rockets, cosmonauts, and characters of Russian fairy tales, were produced. This tradition persists after the fall of the USSR, with the New Year holiday outweighing the Christmas (7 January) for a wide majority of Russian people



Georgia

Georgians have their own traditional Christmas tree called Chichilaki, made from dried up hazelnut or walnut branches that are shaped to form a small coniferous tree. They believe that Chichilaki resembles the famous beard of St. Basil the Great, because Eastern Orthodox Church commemorates St. Basil on 1 January.

Article Title History of Christmas Trees
Author History.com Editors
Website Name: HISTORY URL
<https://www.history.com/topics/christmas/history-of-christmas-trees>
and From Wikipedia,

The giving of Christmas trees has also often been associated with the end of hostilities. After the signing of the Armistice in 1918, the city of Manchester sent a tree, and £500 to buy chocolate and cakes, for the children of the much-bombarded town of Lille in northern France. In some cases the trees represent special commemorative gifts, such as in Trafalgar Square in London, where the City of Oslo, Norway presents a tree to the people of London as a token of appreciation for the British support of Norwegian resistance during the Second World War; in Boston, where the tree is a gift from the province of Nova Scotia, in thanks for rapid deployment of supplies and rescuers to the 1917 ammunition ship explosion that levelled the city of Halifax. Norway also annually gifts a Christmas tree to Washington, D.C. as a symbol of friendship between Norway and the US and as an expression of gratitude from Norway for the help received from the US during World War II.



Call back the past

From
SAAFA Newsletter Update No 118
December 2002

Durban – Mystery minute:
“No security problems had been encountered at the October luncheon.”

That’s a relief for anyone expecting otherwise. The branch does all the right things, such as attending commemorations and maintaining excellent connections with the AFB. Yet there’s a trace of anxiety about the declining attendance at lunches. The right thing again: they’re taking steps to find out again.

Feast your eyes on this notice

Our National Banquet is again upon us and will be held at the Rand Club, on Friday 28th February 2003. Johannesburg should have had booking forms with their branch newsletter.

The cost of R175,00 will include wine and port at the table. A cash bar is available for pre-dinner drinks and any extra drinks or wine on the table. The bar will naturally be open until at least midnight.

2002

2003 Congress

It was reported at the Nov NEC meeting that congress dates are set for 8-11 May 2003. Air Transport is at this stage a 50/50 chance and members that wish to attend and make use of Air Transport, should arrange alternative transport in case Air Transport is cancelled.

Extracts from Nat President 2003

(A time of renewal: use it with thought)

In my (Derrick Page) personal contact with our Patrons, Past Presidents and Vice-presidents, Branch Chairman and the rank and file of our Association. I have discussed our dwindling numbers, better interactive communication, re-recruiting lost members, a future SAAFA website coupling all branches via e-mail, our funds, levies, and subscriptions, and in particular our newsletter, Update.

This is a time of renewal. Use it with wisdom and thought. Enjoy the camaraderie of family and friends.

National Secretary moves on after her courageous fight

The LAUGHTER is stilled, the memories and affection linger on. Five years ago, UPDATE wrote: “Joan Wood-Ward took her leave of the SAAF Association as a national figure by rolling the (1997) Cape Town Congress in the aisles with a couple of wicked stories. It was a signal to the masses that although ill-health and failing eyesight made it impossible for her to continue her demanding job as National Executive Secretary, this trouper was not yielding to battering.

UPDATE’s headline then was ‘A courageous trooper her final bow’. Sadly, that courageous trouper has now indeed bowed out; Joan died earlier this year.

Logical laws

Any law with more than fifty words contains at least one loophole.

A “government subsidy” is getting just some money back.

Education is the process of moving from cocksure to thoughtful uncertainty.





Memorial Services 2020/21

DECEMBER 2020

6	09h00	SAMHS Veterans Ass Memorial Service	1 Mil	Pretoria
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You know that feeling you get when you realise there are only so many days left till the end of the year? A sense of elation but also vast bewilderment. That's how I feel as I sit and write this: my final note for 2020. It feels as though I'm about to finish the last episode of my favourite soapy on TV.

2020 presented many challenges to us as a publication, but we responded to these challenges with calm and clarity. Our response to COVID-19 was to create a collective information package where members of the SAAFA community could share their information and branch experiences of how the pandemic affected them and above all else maintain unity amongst ourselves.

In the last moments that I have this platform in 2020, all I want to say is: thank you. Thank you to each one of you for all the support to make the Flying Spirit a success. As a collective with this much spirit 2021 can only be a prosperous year for all of us.



Pandemic Laughter

If you see me leaving this group, please add me again. It's just that I'm so desperate to go out!

Could someone tell me if the second quarantine would be with the same family or we get to exchange?

Never in my wildest dreams have I imagined myself entering a bank, wearing a mask, and asking for money.

I'm not planning on adding 2020 to my age. I didn't even use it!

Never thought my hands would one day consume more alcohol than my liver ever!

We want to publicly apologize to the year 2019 for all the bad things we said about it.

Quarantine seems like a Netflix series: just when you think it's over, they release the next season.

To all the ladies who were praying for their husbands to spend more time with them, how are you doing?

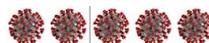
I'm starting to like this mask thing. I went to the supermarket yesterday and two people that I owe money to didn't recognise me.

My washing machine only accepts pyjamas these days. I put in a pair of jeans and a message popped up: "Stay Home!"

Those complaining 2020 didn't have enough holidays, what now?!

I feel like a teenager all year long: no money in the wallet, hair long and out of control, thinking what to do with my life, and grounded at home.

I need to social distance myself from the fridge; I tested positive for excess weight.





A retelling of the 19th-century story, especially for aviators.

'Twas the night before Christmas, and out on the ramp,
Not an airplane was stirring, not even a Champ.
The aircraft were fastened to tie downs with care,
In hopes that — come morning — they all would be there. The fuel trucks were nestled, all
snug in their spots,
With gusts from two-forty at 39 knots.
I slumped at the fuel desk, now finally caught up,
And settled down comfortably, resting my butt. When the radio lit up with noise and with
chatter,
I turned up the scanner to see what was the matter.
A voice clearly heard over static and snow,
Called for clearance to land at the airport below. He barked his transmission so lively and
quick,
I'd have sworn that the call sign he used was "St. Nick."
I ran to the panel to turn up the lights,
The better to welcome this magical flight. He called his position, no room for denial,
"St. Nicholas One, turnin' left onto final."
And what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a Rutan-built sleigh, with eight Rotax Reindeer! With vectors to final, down the
glideslope he came,
As he passed all fixes, he called them by name:
"Now Ringo! Now Tolga! Now Trini and Bacun!
On Comet! On Cupid!" What pills was he takin'? While controllers were sittin', and scratchin'
their heads,
They phoned to my office, and I heard it with dread,
The message they left was both urgent and dour:
"When Santa pulls in, have him please call the tower. "He landed like silk, with the sled
runners sparking,
Then I heard, "Left at Charlie," and "Taxi to parking."
He slowed to a taxi, turned off of three-oh,
And stopped on the ramp with a "Ho, ho-ho-ho..." He stepped out of the sleigh, but before he
could talk,
I ran out to meet him with my best set of chocks.
His red helmet and goggles were covered with frost,
And his beard was all blackened from Reindeer exhaust. His breath smelled like
peppermint, gone slightly stale,
And he puffed on a pipe, but he didn't inhale.
His cheeks were all rosy and jiggled like jelly,
His boots were as black as a crop-dusters' belly. He was chubby and plump, in his suit of
bright red,
And he asked me to "fill it, with hundred low-lead."
He came dashing in from the snow-covered pump,
I knew he was anxious for drainin' the sump. I spoke not a word, but went straight to my
work,

And I filled up the sleigh, but I spilled like a jerk.
He came out of the restroom, and sighed in relief,
Then he picked up a phone for a Flight Service brief. And I thought as he silently scribed in
his log,
These reindeer could land in an eighth-mile fog.
He completed his pre-flight, from the front to the rear,
Then he put on his headset, and I heard him yell, "Clear!" And laying a finger on his push-to-
talk,
He called up the tower for clearance and squawk.
"Take taxiway Charlie, the southbound direction,
Turn right three-two-zero at pilot's discretion" He sped down the runway, the best of the
best,
"Your traffic's a Grumman, inbound from the west."
Then I heard him proclaim, as he climbed thru the night,
"Merry Christmas to all! I have traffic in sight."

