

  
**7** *lying Spirit* **75**  
*November 2020*

## Message from the National President



**SAAFA**  
National President  
Mike Louw

The past few weeks have seen an upsurge in SAAFA activities countrywide. This is most pleasing, and I am sure a welcome return to a “new normal” for many. A few Branches have already hosted luncheons again and a number are planning end-of-year gatherings. At the National level we are well advanced with the arrangements to host our National Banquet and Awards Ceremony on Saturday, 7 November 2020. Understandably, there might be many individuals, particularly the elderly and those with co-morbidities, who might still feel vulnerable and thus not willing to take any chances by attending such events. However, it is up to the rest of us, those who are able, to ensure that the vulnerable are not left feeling neglected and on the outside. The hard Lockdown has provided us with innovative ways of keeping persons involved, albeit online, through WhatsApp calls (particularly video calls), Skype, Zoom, MS Teams, a phone call, or by just popping by whilst observing the necessary health and safety protocols.

And now, just when we might be getting used to Lockdown Alert Level 1 there is already talk and warnings that we might be moving to a stricter Lockdown Alert Level should the current spike in Covid-19 infections increase. I know very well that the readers of this newsletter are of senior stature and are fully aware of their responsibility towards themselves and others. Irrespective of any discomfort or hindrance factor, each one of us has a choice to make at this juncture; are we part of the problem or part of the solution? Now is the time for patience, persistence, and discipline, not the time to relax and pretend it is over. Each of us can personally make a positive contribution by considering how best to protect our families, our friends, and our communities. We should not become complacent in public and social settings, but to continue to observe the three fundamental non-pharmaceutical safety and preventative measures, that is to wear our facemasks, sanitise as often as possible, and to practice social distancing to the extent recommended.

### Content

National Office Bearers **P3**

Military Attaché and Advisor Corps **P4**

Branch News **P5**

Durban branch proposal for hosting SAAFA congress 2021 **P8**

The connection between Zonderwater Italian military cemetery and Castiglione South African cemetery **P9**

Remembrance Sunday **P13**

The Incredible Story of James Allen Ward nz **P15**

A Real Friend **P16**

True Story **P17**

Call back the past **P20**

Memorial Services 2020/21 **P21**

Editor's Desk **P21**

Banking details **P22**



Of late we have had several inquiries regarding SAAFA 75 regalia. Please consult our Website for a full catalogue of what merchandise is available, as well as the price list and order form. The catalogue shows a depiction of the SAAFA 75 logo and has a full list of the items that are available to be ordered. Please note that SAAFA NHQ does not keep a stock of any of these items, they are available on-demand only and may be ordered online. For ladies who may be interested in scarves, please make contact with our East Rand Branch who is marketing such, together with other unique SAAFA 75 regalia. Our Durban Branch is marketing SAAFA 75 facemasks which can be customised to one's personal preferences. These are of high quality and project very nicely with our SAAFA uniform and formal wear. The contact details of these Branches are also to be found on our Webpage.

As SAAFA we continue to support many beneficiaries both in cash and in-kind. To support this effort, we need to rely on the dedicated support of our SAAFA members at the Branch level in making donations in the form of cash or kind and for religiously paying their annual levies which are now again due early in the New Year. As SAAFA we continue with our attempts to make life a little easier for those less fortunate than ourselves. It is through giving that we too receive.

In closing, I wish you all well and trust that SAAFA will remain an integral part of your lives and from which you derive much enjoyment, along with the satisfaction and pride which comes from being of service to your fellow man.

God bless.

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



**SAAFA**  
**National President**  
**in**  
**COVID Regalia**



## NATIONAL OFFICE BEARERS

### **Bruce Harrison**

#### **Remembrance/Heritage**



Bruce Harrison was brought up and educated in Bulawayo, then Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. His education was at Hamilton High School and UCRN (University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland) His first employment was in the mining industry, as a small-worker, mining for tin near Kamativi.

Called up for National Service in the Royal Rhodesian Air Force in 1967, he was selected for Pilot training in 1968. Suspended from flying training on medical grounds, he was commissioned in the Admin Branch, where he served in various capacities notably in introducing Computer systems to the Air Force.

He was thereafter appointed Personal Staff Officer to the Commander, Air Force, then Air Marshal M J McLaren, and subsequently Air Marshal F W Mussell, and Honorary Air Force ADC to the President of Rhodesia.

In 1979 he was promoted Wing Commander and given the task of forming the Air Force Regiment, responsible for defense and security and Low-Level Anti-Aircraft Defence at all Air Force bases and detachments. He took early retirement in 1982 and emigrated to South Africa.

He is married to Sheilagh and they have four sons. He is currently the Vice President of RAFA (South Africa), Vice Chairman of SAAFA Johannesburg, Chairman of the Royal Air Force Officer's Club, Johannesburg, and past Chairman of the Refilwe Community Project, Lanseria.

### **Koos van Rensburg**

#### **Webmaster/Social Media**



Koos was a member of the infamous class 2/73 Pupil Pilots Course. During his colorful career in the SAAF, he served at 7 Sqn, CFS Dunnottar, CFS Langebaanweg, and 25 Sqn. In 1984 after 10 years' service Koos decided to enter the world of IT with the focus on computer programming.

Currently, with the nickname 'GGTA', he is the assistant Chief Ground School Instructor at 43 Air School, one of the biggest flying training institutions in the world situated near Port Alfred in the Eastern Cape.

Koos has been a SAAFA member since 1973. He was Vice-Chairman of the SAAFA Pretoria Branch before leaving for Port Alfred where he is a member. He has been seconded to the NEC where he oversees the SAAFA website. His portfolio includes the design of the website, the maintenance, and the mass communication of the organisation. He also designed and maintains the SAAFA database.

Koos has been awarded the Order of the SAAFA Bronze in 2012 and 2014 the Order of the SAAFA Silver.



## MILITARY ATTACHÉ AND ADVISOR CORPS



**As** has become sadly customary during the past nine Aunty Rona affected months, Diplomatic activities remain somewhere between extremely slow and dead stop.

**With** Diplomatic Missions having to comply with the Covid-19 regulations of their Governments in addition to our own, they are in most cases emerging from the darkness of lock-down rather more slowly than we are.

**HE** Ambassador Carlos Fernández-Arias, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain mailed “Día de la Hispanidad” greetings as the usual excellent reception was not able to take place. “Día de la Hispanidad” celebrates the first-ever step in globalisation when Spanish explorer Christopher Columbus first reached the Americas in 1492. Next year, with any luck, it will be sangria, paella, and good cheer again!

**While** most Diplomatic Missions are enduring a slow re-emergence, some are being possibly more practical and have rejoined the South African mainstream. All Covid protocols were observed (to twist the often-used cop-out expression!).

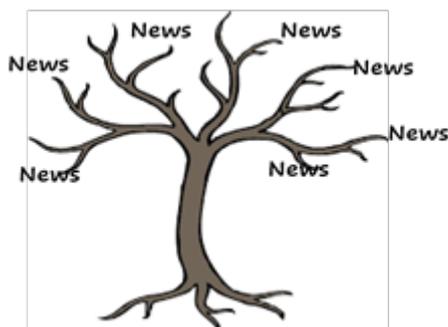
**A** SAAF/SAAF/Diplomatic day on the Pretoria Golf Club course was arranged and very graciously hosted by SAAF/SAAF Liaison Officer, Lt Col Craig Stanton, which was a great success, thoroughly enjoyable, and afforded some fine interaction. Golfers (in most cases the term loosely applied) included Brig Gen Kevin Moonsamy, Col Jeff C H Lin (RoCAF), multi-talented Chopper-Jock Col Dave Keijer, C-130 Master Jock Lt Col Clint Hawtrey, Lt Col Conrad Feyt, and of course Lt Col Craig Stanton. It was an excellent day of great camaraderie and demonstrated again that Air Forces the world over are all members of the same superior military aviation club!



Back L to R: Lt Col Clint Hawtrey; Col Dave Keijer; Philip Weyers; Brig Gen Kevin Moonsamy; Lt Col Conrad Feyt; WO1 Jacques Greyvenstein; WO1 Basie Greeff

Front L to R: Lt Col Craig Stanton; Gavin Stanton; Col Jeff Lin (RoCAF); Hannes Gelderblom.





Branch

News

### SAAFA



- ☐ Aubrey Miles will be honoured at the Christmas lunch, which should take place on 21st November.
- ☐ No parades or functions were attended in the past month.
- ☐ The newsletter is overdue.

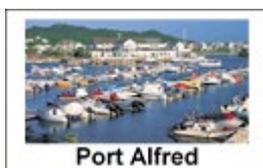
### SAAFA



- ☐ The branch's first official meeting after Covid 19 Protocol to level 1 will take place the 27 November 2020.
- ☐ The official opening of the Pierre A. De V. Wright Aviation Awareness Centre AFB Hoedspruit will take place on the 30th & 31st October 2020.
- ☐ The handing over of the Patron floating trophy from Patron Lt Col S. Lownie to the newly appointed Patron Lt Col C. Steyn will also be taken place on the same evening as the grand opening.

S. Lownie to the newly appointed Patron Lt Col C. Steyn will also be taken place on the same evening as the grand opening.

### SAAFA



- ☐ There are a few members who are not faring very well: Val Human, Deleste van der Meulen, and Lorna Els.
- ☐ The Branch continues paying its beneficiaries the full amount, despite the loss of income.
- ☐ The Branch is receiving some generous donations.

☐ All planning for future Branch events, including SAAF 75 and the Memorial Service, which continue to be held in abeyance until the situation around the Covid 19 is cleared up.

### SAAFA



- ☐ We have 77 members at present, taking into account the loss of Oom Abe and Koos van Staden (RIP).
- ☐ The branch intends holding a luncheon at la Capannina on 30 October and also a Christmas lunch on 27 November at the Wilderness Hotel.

☐ The memorial service for Oom Abe de Kock was Saturday 17 October at 11H00 at the MOTH Shell hole.

☐ We have a very uncomplicated branch.

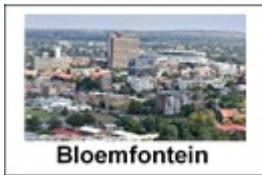
### SAAFA



- ☐ The exercise to update the Whale Coast Branch database was completed in September 2020.
- ☐ Thus far 71 members have paid their membership dues for 2020, which represents an increase of 27 over the number paid in the previous year.

- ☐ The program presented on 8 September 2020, for the 100th birthday of Michael Welchman was successful.
- ☐ The Chairperson assisted a member to obtain authorisation from AMHU WC, for an emergency at the Mediclinic Hermanus.
- ☐ The annual memorial service and wreath-laying ceremony were held on Saturday, 26 September 2020, to pay tribute to the crew of Puma 164 and 14 soldiers from the Rhodesian Light Infantry and Engineering Corps, who lost their lives.
- ☐ Christo Stroebel attended the service and laid a wreath on behalf of the SAAFA Whale Coast Branch and request of members of the South African Air Force (SAAF) helicopter fraternity.
- ☐ A suitable venue and date will be determined to present a luncheon towards the end of October – and will be the first one again since the start of the Covid-19 lockdown.

#### **SAAFA**



- ☐ Val Nell is in bed with Pneumonia.
- ☐ Freda Garzouzie's husband, John, is receiving dialysis and is at home with the family.
- ☐ No luncheons have been planned for October due to the Lockdown.

#### **SAAFA**



- ☐ WO1(Ret) Andy Brown passed away on 28 Sep 20.
- ☐ We also remember Wing Commander David Herriot from the RAF.
- ☐ The Rossouw family is celebrating the arrival of their third grandchild (a little boy) born on 18 September 2020.
- ☐ There have been some donations by individual members which

has helped our cause even more for which we are grateful.

- ☐ We welcome aboard Brig Gen Kevin Richards (Dir HR Strat Plan) and we also have two new applications from Lt Col Lynette Plomp and Philile Buthelezi.
- ☐ The Lunches for Love contributions continued during September which is sincerely appreciated.
- ☐ With the moving down to Level 1 of Lockdown, we are planning a luncheon for October and at a venue still to be determined.
- ☐ We are pleased to announce that the SAAFA Pretoria Golf Day will be taking place on Thursday 26 March 2021.
- ☐ There is also a possibility for a Banquet / Formal Dinner, and this is under discussion with our members involved in managing these events.

#### **SAAFA**



- ☐ It is increasingly likely that we will only hold a Christmas Lunch on Friday 4 December 2020, all factors allowing, to close off this interesting/crazy/scary (choose appropriate adjective, as applicable to you, yourself) year of 2020.
- ☐ No parades or functions were attended in September 2020.

#### **SAAFA**



- ☐ The Pietermaritzburg Branch held a lunch at the Victoria Country Club on Tuesday 2 September 2020. It was attended by 12 guests, of which 2 were visitors to the branch and the lunch.
- ☐ The membership of the SAAFA Pietermaritzburg Branch remained at 10 members.

#### **SAAFA**



- ☐ Al Rae passed away in August.
- ☐ Chairman's Challenge: There has been a good initial response to the Chairman's appeal for SAAFA 75 donations and this is ongoing.
- ☐ Donations have been received to date and I thank Secretary Carol van Rensburg for her keen touting ability in garnering donations.

- ☐ We thank those who donate their 120 Club Winnings to the WAAFS.
- ☐ We are aiming for a meeting on Thursday 15th October.
- ☐ We are endeavouring to hold a celebratory Branch Lunch at the Indaba Hotel towards the end of October.
- ☐ SKYLINE, SAAFA JHB's Newsletter for September is going out to members.

**SAAFA**



- ☐ Our membership has gone thru some ups and downs with some of the older folk not renewing their membership and some others who have given no reason why they are resigning.

- ☐ The committee was invited to the Ysterplaat Heritage Day event.

☐ We put our gazebo up and it was manned by various committee members. We were able to recruit some new members and a fair amount of memorabilia was also sold.

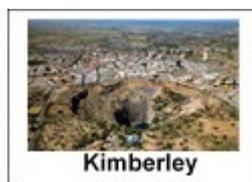
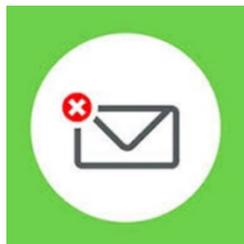
☐ We still have our Centurion Fund money coming in and we have postponed the mid-year draw to a double draw in December at our Christmas lunch, so there will be 2 draws for the R1000, 2 for the R700, and 2 for the R300.

☐ The branch is planning a memorial service in conjunction with the Base to be held on 11 November at the Wall.

☐ We have reinstated our Committee meetings face to face and our first lunch at the Italian Club, the numbers were not great as some of the older folk as still hesitant to go out.

☐ Two special Editions of our newsletter went out during the lockdown period to stay in contact with members and the next one is due out shortly and the final one for the year in late November.

**SAAFA**



## DURBAN BRANCH PROPOSAL FOR HOSTING SAAFA CONGRESS 2021



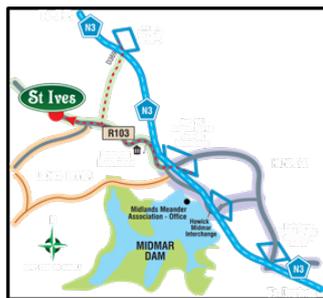
**K**wa Zulu Natal is geographically well-positioned for hosting the annual SAAFA Congress. Not only is it well served by air and road links, but the distance from many of the Branches also is not excessive. When identifying a suitable venue for Congress 2021 it was felt that it was important not to attempt to compete with the high worth tourist market. To this end, it was decided to explore the Midlands Meander area where the seasonal variances could be exploited, while still accessing a high-quality venue in an extremely attractive environment.

It is also intended that Congress should be a mid-week event to avoid competing with the weekend tourist activities and to be able to access the lower cost mid-week airline tickets. The venue that was identified was St Ives Lodge and Venue that specialises in conferences and weddings.



**St Ives Lodge and Venue**

St Ives is situated on a 140-hectare estate with a free-roaming game and several fishing dams. The main complex consists of the reception, main conference room, restaurant, and bar overlooking a large dam. Close by is the chapel and the less formal Boma restaurant. While St Ives can only accommodate 46 people, arrangements are in place to accommodate the overflow at a neighbouring facility at the same rates.



St Ives is situated in the Midlands Meander 13 km from Howick and directly opposite the extremely popular Piggly Wiggly, which is a cluster of shops and eateries. The distances from some of the various centres are as follows:

King Shaka International Airport	138 km (1 1/2 hrs)
Johannesburg	460 km
Pretoria	520 km
Bloemfontein	530 km

It is planned that an arrangement would be made to transport delegates from the airport to the venue. As the distances are not excessive, several delegates would likely use their cars and use the opportunity to holiday in the region.



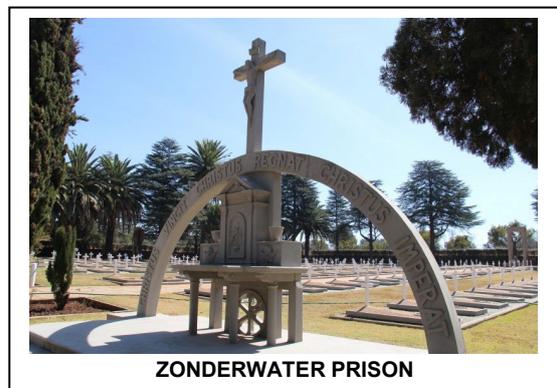
# WHAT IS THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ZONDERWATER ITALIAN MILITARY CEMETERY AND CASTIGLIONE SOUTH AFRICAN CEMETERY?

(Commonwealth War Graves Commission)

The land, Castiglione dei Pepoli in the Province of Bologna, was donated by the Italian government to South Africa for a cemetery for South African soldiers at Castiglione Dei Pepoli in Italy. In turn, the land near Cullinan of the Zonderwater Italian Military Cemetery was donated to the Italian government.



**CASTIGLIONE SOUTH AFRICAN CEMETERY**



**ZONDERWATER PRISON**

## Castiglione South African cemetery Italy

**Castiglione dei Pepoli** is a town in the Province of Bologna about 60 kilometers north of Florence and about 60 kilometers south of Bologna. It is situated in a mountainous country near the highest point of the road connecting Prato and Bologna.



On 3 September 1943, the Allies invaded the Italian mainland, the invasion coinciding with an armistice made with the Italians who then re-entered the war on the Allied side.

Following the fall of Rome to the Allies in June 1944, the German retreat became ordered and successive stands were made on a series of defensive lines. In the northern

Apennine mountains the last of these, the Gothic Line, was breached by the Allies during the Autumn campaign and the front inched forward as far as Ravenna in the Adriatic sector, but with divisions transferred to support the new offensive in France, and the Germans dug into several key defensive positions, the advance stalled as winter set in.

Castiglione South African Cemetery was started in October 1944 by the 6th South African Armoured Division, which had entered Castiglione at the end of September and remained in the neighborhood until the following April. Many of the burials were made direct from the battlefields of the Apennines, where during that winter South

African troops held positions some 8 kilometers north of Castiglione.

The majority of those buried in this cemetery were South Africans, the remainder belonging mostly to the 24th Guards Brigade, which was under command of the 6th South African Armoured Division. In the cemetery there is a memorial building originally erected by South African troops, which contains two tablets unveiled by Field-Marshal Smuts; they bear the inscription in English and Afrikaans:

TO SAVE MANKIND YOURSELVES YOU  
SCORNE TO SAVE

OM DIE MENSDOM TE DIEN HET JUL  
VEILIGHEID VERSMAAD

The cemetery contains 502 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War.

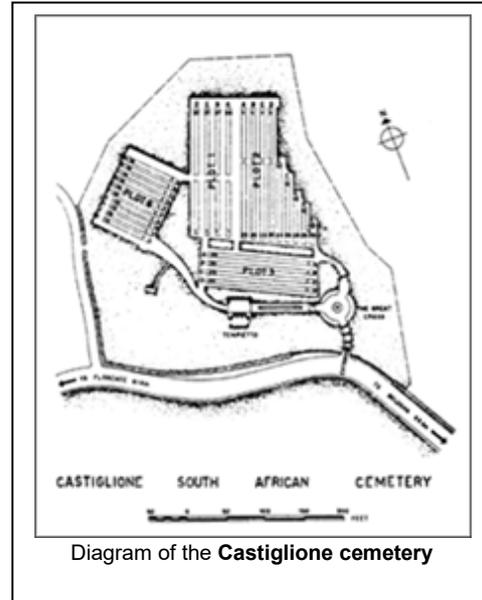


Diagram of the **Castiglione cemetery**

## Zonderwater Italian Cemetery South Africa

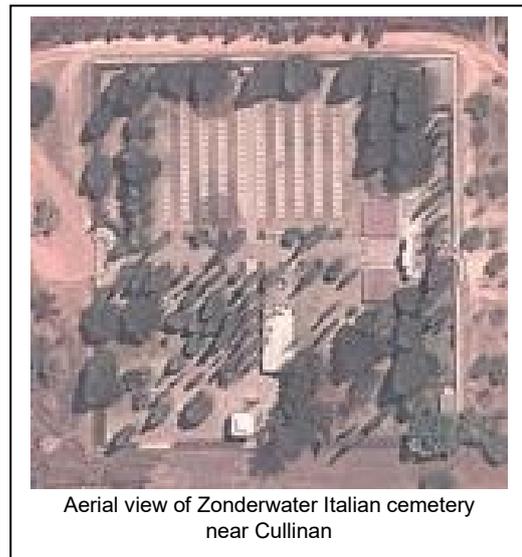
(Extracts from Country Life magazine Written by Sue Adams October 19, 2015)

**Cullinan** is a small town in the Gauteng province of South Africa. It is located 30 km east of the city of Pretoria along the diamond route and is heavily reliant on tourism and the mine that dominates the skyline. The town is named after diamond magnate Sir Thomas Cullinan.

In a little corner of Zonderwater Prison, the memories of many thousands of Italian prisoners of war are cherished and kept safe. It is just a pocket-sized museum, a single room, but it holds the stories of more than 100 000 Italians taken prisoner in World War II. Here are books painstakingly handmade, as well as delicate, carved cigarette boxes of inlaid wood, tiny sculptures made with bread dough, the prototype for a fencing sword that was behind Italy's Olympic gold medals, and sculptures and paintings that depict great sadness and joy.

Once the largest prisoner of war camp created by the Allies, Zonderwater was set up in 1941 during World War II, specifically

for Italian soldiers captured on Africa's Northern and Eastern Fronts. At its biggest, the camp held a total of 86 000 men at one time in eight separate blocks.



Aerial view of Zonderwater Italian cemetery near Cullinan

# The History of Zonderwater

(Extracts from Country Life magazine Written by Sue Adams October 19, 2015  
And Zonderwater: a concentration camp in South Africa: [www.zonderwater.co](http://www.zonderwater.co).)

The history of Zonderwater goes back long before World War II to a critical time when a 12-year-old boy by the name of Hendrik Frederik Prinsloo and his mother were interned here in a British concentration camp in the early 1900s during the Anglo-Boer War. The horror of that time imprinted on Hendrik and, many years later, when Prime Minister Jan Smuts needed someone to run



the enormous Zonderwater, it was an inspired choice indeed for Smuts to ask Colonel Prinsloo not to go off to fight in North Africa but rather to run the camp. "I need a man with a heart and wisdom,"

said Jan Smuts, and the thousands of Italians that passed through this camp will tell you that was exactly what they got.

Italy entered the war in 1940 on the German side and many Italian troops were sent to protect the Italian colonies of Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland. When the Allies overran the Italian armies in Libya and Abyssinia,



more than 60 000 prisoners were taken and it was decided to ship them to Durban, then rail them to Pretoria and put them in a small tented

camp next door to a Union Defence Force training camp near Cullinan.

Zonderwater (South Africa), the biggest detention camp built by the Allies during World War II. The camp, built 43 km from Pretoria, hosted, from April 1941 to January 1947, more than 100,000 Italian soldiers captured by the British on the North and East Africa fronts.

The Zonderwater human adventure starts from the tent city of 1941, transformed in 1943 into that huge and permanent built-up area



formed by red bricks and wooden constructions then bound to become almost a legend: 14 blocks, each of



them made up, normally, by 4 camps (they were 44 in total). Each camp hosted 2,000 men; therefore,

a block could accommodate 8,000 prisoners. Overall, Zonderwater had a total capacity of 112,000 men.

It was a great human event: over there, in the red bricks town it was necessary, to avoid surrender, to invent one's own world, forcing oneself out of dejection and apathy, keeping mind and muscles fit. That is where the will to get organized, to promote initiatives, to create from nothing all start. What miracle arose from it?

Language schools, primary schools for illiterate and technical/vocational school with specific textbooks; libraries, literature, and literature awards, a camp magazine, theatre plays (17 active theatres) musical activity, handicraft, sports, and recreational activity, (16 football fields with running tracks and stands, 80 areas for playing bowls, 16 fencing fields, 6 tennis courses, boxing and Graeco-Roman wrestling rings, basketball and volleyball fields, etc). Finally: religious assistance.

Undoubtedly, various elements helped in the achievement of such a miracle: first, the appointment of a South African commander like Col. Prinsloo, an officer gifted with extreme competence and humanity. In the second place the concrete support by associations like YMCA and the moral and material assistance of both the International and the Italian Red Cross. Moreover, the presence in South Africa of an always active

and helpful background represented by the local large and wealthy Italian community (Zonderwater was a little more than 40 km far from Pretoria and slightly farther away from Johannesburg. Also, the countrymen from Cape Town actively cooperated within the Assistance Committees for the Italian pows which were timely formed and gave their generous contribution).

Further, the work carried out by the Mutual Assistance Fund within the pows themselves with fraternal solidarity. Lastly, the building of the huge hospital (3000 beds) almost exclusively assigned to our medical officers and those of the Carolina Health House.



There was a shortage of South African doctors at the time as many were away fighting, so the Italian doctors in the camp were given refresher courses by local medical schools. There seemed to be much sharing of medical expertise between the South Africans and Italians. One Italian doctor was a world expert on skin diseases, and he lectured to the South Africans.

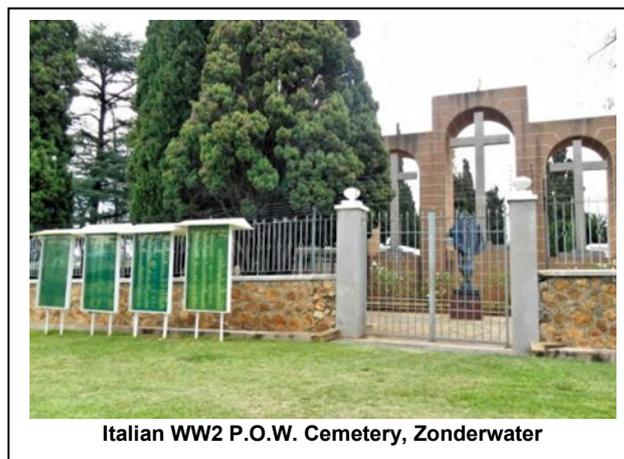


The relationship between the POWs and the South African military seems to have been one of huge respect and camaraderie. Italian artisans carved rugby trophies for Colonel Prinsloo to award at sports days, and every year a two-week exhibition was held at which the Italians could display and sell their handiwork, from paintings and carved cigarette boxes to silver or pewter jewelry and beautiful leather-bound books. Half of these proceeds went towards the needs of the POWs.

Such was the trust and growth of relationships that many prisoners were sent to work on projects such as road building and assisted on farms. Italian prisoners planted 53 000 peach trees on the farm Olivedale, now a suburb in Johannesburg north. The POWs played a major role in building the Du Toitskloof and Outeniqua passes, and many of the old stone bridges across South Africa are the work of Italian stonemasons.

The Zonderwater POW camp only closed in 1947 as there was a shortage of transport after the war. (Imagine having to stay in prison for up to 18 months after the war ends?) However, many Italians chose to return to South Africa, and have created a thriving Italian community here.

**252** ex pows rest in the "Tre Archi" (Three Arches) cemetery where an inscription on the big central cross base says: "Morti in prigionia/Vinti nella carne/Invitti nello spirito/L'Italia lontana/Vi benedice in eterno/ MCMXLIII" (Dead in captivity/Defeated in flesh/Undefeated in spirit/ Faraway Italy/Blesses you forever/MCMLIII)



Italian WW2 P.O.W. Cemetery, Zonderwater

# Remembrance Sunday



## Background

Remembrance Sunday is held as a day "to commemorate the contribution of British and Commonwealth military and civilian servicemen and women in the two World Wars and later conflicts". It is held at 11 am on the second Sunday in November (the Sunday nearest to 11 November, Armistice Day, the anniversary of the end of hostilities in the First World War in 1918).

It is marked by ceremonies at local war memorials in most cities, towns, and villages, attended by civic dignitaries, ex-servicemen and -women, members of local armed forces regular and reserve units. Wreaths of remembrance poppies are laid on the memorials and two minutes' silence is held at 11 am. Church bells are usually rung half-muffled, creating a somber effect. The service is held for about two hours.

### History

The focus of remembrance for the dead of the First World War originally fell on Armistice Day itself, commencing in 1919. As well as the National Service in London, events were staged at town and village war memorials, often featuring processions of civic dignitaries and veterans.

The first UK commemoration of the end of World War 1 at Buckingham Palace, with King George V hosting a "Banquet in Honour of The President of the French Republic". A two-minute silence was observed at 11 am on 11 November 1919. While the initial, spontaneous public reaction when the Armistice was signed on 11 November 1918



Buckingham Palace

was jubilation and celebration, the 1919 banquet was criticised for being too celebratory.

The following year, Armistice Day in 1920, the funeral of Unknown Soldier took place at the London Cenotaph and a two-minute silence was observed throughout the nation. Buses halted, electricity was cut to tram lines, and even trading on the London Stock Exchange halted.

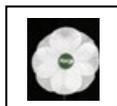


London Cenotaph

Starting in 1921, the Royal British Legion began selling Remembrance Poppies to raise funds for ex-servicemen. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the character of the remembrance events became politicised.

While for some, Armistice Day was a day for recognising the horrors of war, never to be repeated; for others, the day symbolised the honour of military service.

In 1923 a Christian Pacifist MP was elected to parliament. In the middle 1930s, the Peace Pledge Union gained wide support. Pacifism gained great publicity from a 1933 student debate in the Oxford University



that voted for a resolution that 'this House will in no circumstances fight for King and Country'. The first White Poppy was sold by the Co-operative Women's Guild in 1933.

During the Second World War, the commemorations were moved to the Sunday preceding 11 November as an emergency measure to avoid disruption of the production of vital war materials.

In May 1945, just before VE Day, the new government began consultation with the churches and the British Legion on the future of remembrance. Armistice Day in 1945 fell on a Sunday, avoiding the need to change the wartime practice. Some thought that to continue with the 11 November would focus more on the First World War and downplay the importance of the Second. Other dates suggested were 8 May (VE Day), 6 June (D-Day), 15 August (VJ Day), 3 September (the



declaration of war), and even 15 June (the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215). The Archbishop of Westminster proposed that the second Sunday in November should be named Remembrance Sunday in commemoration of both World Wars, a suggestion which was

endorsed by the Home Office in January 1946. In June of that year, the prime minister, Clement Attlee, announced in the House of Commons that "the Government felt that this view would commend itself to all quarters of the country. I am glad to say that it has now found general acceptance here and has been approved by The King."

### South Africa

In South Africa, Remembrance Day is not a public holiday. Commemoration ceremonies are usually held on the nearest Sunday, at



Cenotaph in Cape Town

which the "Last Post" is played by a bugler followed by the observation of a two-minute silence. Ceremonies to mark the event in South Africa are held at the Cenotaph in Cape Town, and in Pretoria at the Voortrekker Monument cenotaph and the

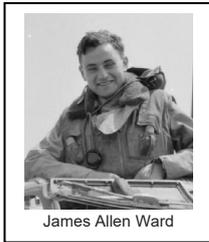
War Memorial at the Union Buildings. Many high schools hold Remembrance Day services to honour the past pupils who died in the two World Wars and the Border war. Also, the South African Legion of Military Veterans holds a street collection on the nearest Saturday to gather funds to assist in welfare work among military veterans.



War Memorial Union Buildings



# The Incredible Story of James Allen Ward nz



James Allen Ward

James Allen Ward was born on 14 June 1919 in Wanganui, New Zealand, to English immigrants, Percy, and Ada Ward. He was educated at Wanganui

Technical College and after graduation, trained as a teacher in Wellington. Having qualified in 1939, he had just accepted a teaching position at Castlecliff School in Wanganui when the Second World War broke out. Ward immediately volunteered for the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF).

Ward qualified as a pilot on 18 January 1941 and was promoted to sergeant shortly thereafter. At the end of the month, he departed for England aboard the troopship Aorangi, to commence service with the Royal Air Force (RAF). On arrival, he was selected for training on heavy bombers and posted to 20 Bomber Operational Training Unit RAF, in Scotland. Upon completion of his courses at Lossiemouth in mid-1941, Ward was posted to No. 75 Squadron. According to Hugh Kimpton, a fellow New Zealander at Lossiemouth, only one place was available at the squadron at the time. Ward was selected as a result of winning a coin toss between Kimpton and him.

The sixth and final mission Ward flew with Widdowson took place on 7 July; a raid on Münster. On the return flight, while over the Zuider Zee on the Dutch coast, Ward's Wellington was attacked by a German Bf 110-night fighter. The attack opened a fuel tank in the starboard wing and caused a fire around the rear of the starboard engine. After initial attempts to put out the flames using fire extinguishers directed through a hole made in the fuselage of the Wellington failed, Widdowson ordered the crew to bail out. However, Ward proposed that he climb

out and try and smother the fire using an engine cover. He crawled out through the



astrodome on the top of the fuselage, secured by a rope. Making his way down the side and along the wing of the aircraft, he kicked or

tore holes in the fuselage's covering fabric with a fire axe to give himself hand-and foot-holes.

He soon reached the engine and attempted to smother the flames with a canvas cover. With the fire out, he stuffed the cover into the hole from which fuel from a petrol line, damaged in the night fighter attack, had leaked, and exacerbated the fire. Ward, now exhausted, gingerly made his way back to the astrodome with the navigator, Sergeant Joe Lawson of the RNZAF, keeping tension on the rope tethered to Ward and assisting him back into the aircraft. Although the cover shortly blew away by the slipstream, the remnants of the fire had burnt itself out and the plane was now safe. Instead of the crew having to bail out, the aircraft made an



Shown are the holes Ward made by Ward

emergency landing, without flaps or brakes, at Newmarket. The Wellington ran into a hedge and fence at the end of the runway and was written off.

Ward described his experience out on the wing of the aircraft, exposed to the slipstream, as "...being in a terrific gale only worse than any gale I've ever known". To recognise Ward's courage, the commander of 75 Squadron, Wing Commander C. Kay, recommended him for the Victoria Cross (VC). Instituted in 1856, the VC was the highest gallantry award that could be bestowed on military personnel of the British Empire. Kay also recommended Widdowson for the Distinguished Flying Cross and Sergeant Allan Box for the Distinguished Flying Medal. Box, a New Zealander, was the tail gunner of Ward's aircraft and had shot down the night fighter. The awards for Widdowson and Box were immediately approved while Ward's VC was announced on 5 August.

Unbeknown to Ward, an official at the Air Ministry had suggested to the New Zealand government that he be returned to New Zealand. It was appreciated that Ward's profile as a result of the VC award would be useful for propaganda and recruitment purposes. He could also have served as an instructor with one of the home-based RNZAF

squadrons. On 15 September 1941, the day of Ward's death, Group Captain Hugh Saunders, the Chief of Air Staff of the RNZAF, approved the proposal to return him to New Zealand.

Ward's body was recovered from the wreckage of his aircraft and buried by the



Ward's grave

Germans in a civilian cemetery. Initially reported in the United Kingdom and New Zealand as missing, presumed dead, at one stage Ward was believed to be a prisoner of war in Germany. Confirmation of his death was officially reported in August 1942 by the International Red Cross. After the war

and following official identification, his remains were reinterred in the Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery Ohlsdorf in Hamburg.

## A Real Friend



day and another from RAAF No 3 Sqn, all four survived.

Lt Mc Robert had the misfortune to land in territory held by the Axis and would have been taken prisoner were it not for the actions of Lt Liebenberg strafing the approaching Axis troops intent on their

Lt Henrik Liebenberg on right with the flying helmet of No1 SAAF Squadron stands smiling next to his Squadron mate Lt Melville McRobert who had just been shot out of the sky by German air ace Lt Marseille on the 24th September 1941. Three pilots from No1 SAAF Sqn were shot down that

prisoner. Then landing his Hurricane fighter next to where McRobert was lying injured. He discarded his parachute and sat in the cockpit of his Hurricane with Mc Robert perched on his lap. Liebenberg worked the rudder foot controls and McRobert did the rest.

Returning safely to the base they were warmly welcomed and congratulated by their comrades, but the CO of the Squadron made no report as this sort of action was to be discouraged as it put two pilots at risk as opposed to one. Therefore, Lt Liebenberg got no recognition for his actions that day apart from the pats on the back from his brother officers. Still don't know why McRobert looks so glum in the photo, maybe just maybe he had to stand the drinks bill in the bar next time they went to town!

A History of the Mediterranean Air War, 1940-1945: Volume One: North Africa  
By Christopher Shores, Giovanni Massimello, Russell Guest

## TRUE STORY



### His Parachute Got Stuck on the Plane's Wheel and He Was Suspended in Mid-air with Little Chance of Survival—Then Another Plane Came to His Rescue

Almost 80 years after it unfolded in the sky over San Diego, a nearly impossible rescue mission remains one of the most daring feats in aeronautical history.

It began like any other May morning in California. The sky was blue, the sun hot. A slight breeze riffled the glistening waters of San Diego Bay. At the naval airbase on North-Island, all was calm.



Walter Osipoff

At 9:45 a.m., Walter Osipoff, a sandy-haired 23-year-old Marine second lieutenant from Akron, Ohio, boarded a DC-2 transport for a routine parachute jump. Lt. Bill Lowrey, a 34-year-old Navy test pilot from New

Orleans, was already putting his observation plane through its paces. And John McCants, a husky 41-year-old aviation chief machinist's mate from Jordan, Montana, was checking out the aircraft that he was scheduled to fly later. Before the sun was high in the noonday sky, these three men would be linked forever in one of history's most spectacular mid-air rescues.

Osipoff was a seasoned parachutist, former collegiate wrestling, and gymnastics star. He had joined the National Guard and then the Marines in 1938. He had already made more than 20 jumps by May 15, 1941. That morning, his DC-2 took off and headed for Kearney Mesa, where Osipoff would supervise practice jumps by 12 of his men. Three separate canvas cylinders, containing

ammunition and rifles were also to be parachuted overboard as part of the exercise

That morning, his DC-2 took off and headed for Kearney Mesa, where Osipoff would supervise practice jumps by 12 of his men. Three separate canvas cylinders, containing ammunition and rifles, were also to be parachuted overboard as part of the exercise.

Nine of the men had already jumped when Osipoff, standing a few inches from the plane's door, started to toss out the last cargo container. Somehow the automatic-release cord of his backpack parachute became looped over the cylinder, and his chute was suddenly ripped open. He tried to grab hold of the quickly billowing silk, but the next thing he knew he had been jerked from the plane, sucked out with such force that the impact of his body ripped a 2.5-foot gash in the DC-2's aluminium fuselage.

Instead of flowing free, Osipoff's open parachute now wrapped itself around the plane's tail wheel. The chute's chest strap and one leg strap had broken; only the second leg strap was still holding, and it had slipped down to Osipoff's ankle. One by one, 24 of the 28 lines between his precariously attached harness and the parachute snapped. He was now hanging some 12 feet below and 15 feet behind the tail of the plane. Four parachute shroud lines twisted around his left leg were all that kept him from being pitched to the earth.

Dangling there upside down, Osipoff had enough presence of mind to not try to

release his emergency parachute. With the plane pulling him one way and the emergency chute pulling him another, he realised that he would be torn in half. Conscious all the while, he knew that he was hanging by one leg, spinning, and bouncing and he was aware that his ribs hurt. He did not know then that two ribs and three vertebrae had been fractured.

Inside the plane, the DC-2 crew struggled to pull Osipoff to safety, but they could not reach him. The aircraft was starting to run low on fuel, but an emergency landing with Osipoff dragging behind would certainly smash him to death. And pilot Harold Johnson had no radio contact with the ground. To attract attention below, Johnson eased the transport down to 300 feet and started circling North Island. A few people at the base noticed the plane coming by every few minutes, but they assumed that it was towing some sort of target.

Meanwhile, Bill Lowrey had landed his plane and was walking toward his office when he glanced upward. He and John McCants, who was working nearby, saw at the same time the figure dangling from the plane. As the DC-2 circled once again, Lowrey yelled to McCants, "There's a man hanging on that line. Do you suppose we can get him?" McCants answered grimly, "We can try."

Lowrey shouted to his mechanics to get his plane ready for take-off. It was a SOC-1, a two-seat, open-cockpit observation plane, less than 27 feet long. Recalled Lowrey afterward, "I didn't even know how much fuel it had." Turning to McCants, he said, "Let's go!"

Lowrey and McCants had never flown together before, but the two men seemed to take it for granted that they were going to attempt the impossible. "There was only one decision to be made," Lowrey later said quietly, "and that was to go get him. How we did not know. We had no time to plan." Nor was there time to get through to their commanding officer and request permission for the flight. Lowrey simply told the tower, "Give me a green light. I'm taking off." At the last moment, a Marine ran out to the plane

with a hunting knife—for cutting Osipoff loose—and dumped it in McCants's lap.

As the SOC-1 roared aloft, all activity around San Diego seemed to stop. Civilians crowded rooftops, children stopped playing at recess, and the men of North Island strained their eyes upward. With murmured prayers and pounding hearts, the watchers agonised through every move in the impossible mission.

Within minutes, Lowrey and McCants were under the transport, flying at 300 feet. They made five approaches, but the air proved too bumpy to try for a rescue. Since radio communication between the two planes was impossible, Lowrey hand-signaled Johnson to head out over the Pacific, where the air would be smoother, and they climbed to 3,000 feet. Johnson held his plane on a straight course and reduced speed to that of the smaller plane—100 miles an hour.

Lowrey flew back and away from Osipoff, but level with him. McCants, who was in the open seat in the back of Lowrey, saw that Osipoff was hanging by one foot and that blood was dripping from his helmet. Lowrey edged the plane closer with such precision that his maneuvers jibed with the swings of Osipoff's inert body. His timing had to be exact so that Osipoff did not smash into the SOC-1's propeller.

Finally, Lowrey slipped his upper left wing under Osipoff's shroud lines, and McCants, standing upright in the rear cockpit with the plane still going 100 miles an hour 3,000 feet above the sea lunged for Osipoff. He grabbed him at the waist, and Osipoff flung his arms around McCants's shoulders in a death grip.

McCants pulled Osipoff into the plane, but since it was only a two-seater, the next problem was where to put him. As Lowrey eased the SOC-1 forward to get some slack in the chute lines, McCants managed to stretch Osipoff's body across the top of the fuselage, with Osipoff's head in his lap. Because McCants was using both hands to hold Osipoff in a vise, there was no way for him to cut the cords that still attached Osipoff to the DC-2. Lowrey then nosed his plane



Courtesy National Archives (Photo No. 127-N-522950) Lt. Col. John J. Capolino, a Philadelphia artist, painted this scene of Osipoff's rescue in the 1940s. It belongs to the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Virginia.

inch by inch closer to the transport and, with incredible precision, used his propeller to cut the shroud lines. After hanging for 33 minutes between life and death, Osipoff was finally free.

Lowrey had flown so close to the transport that he'd nicked a 12-inch gash in its tail. But now the parachute, abruptly detached along with the shroud lines, drifted downward and wrapped itself around Lowrey's rudder. That meant that Lowrey had to fly the SOC-1 without being able to control it properly and with most of Osipoff's body still on the outside. Yet, five minutes later, Lowrey somehow managed to touch down at North Island, and the little plane rolled to a stop. Osipoff finally lost consciousness but not before he heard sailors applauding the landing. Later, after lunch, Lowrey and McCants went back to their usual duties.

Three weeks later, both men were flown to Washington, DC, where Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox awarded them the Distinguished Flying Cross for executing "one of the most brilliant and daring rescues in naval history."

Osipoff spent the next six months in the hospital. The following January completely recovered and was newly promoted to first lieutenant; he went back to parachute jumping. The morning he was to make his first jump after the accident, he was cool and laconic, as usual. His friends, though, were nervous. One after another, they went up to reassure him. Each volunteered to jump first so he could follow.

Osipoff grinned and shook his head. "The hell with that!" he said as he fastened his parachute. "I know damn well I'm going to make it." And he did.



# Call back the past

From  
SAAFA Newsletter Update No 115  
December 2001

## Oops!

We've heard of slow computers, but a whole year. To bring UPDATE 114 up to speed, simply take a black ballpoint pen and where it says 2000 at the top of Page 1 between "September" in two of the official languages, change it to 2001.

## Pass those contraband diamonds again, please

Two items published in UPDATE had interesting sequels. The fiddler who lost his violon during a spree in the sergeant's mess had space in a Sunday newspaper.

The other, concerning a call from an ex-RAF policeman with a remarkable story. We noted his phone number on a piece of paper for an interview. It must have been the grocery list because we have a very strange item in the store cupboard and no trace of the phone number. If the caller is still holding on, we'd like to hear from him.

## Appointment

On Friday, October 26, at the monthly luncheon of the SAAF Association Johannesburg Branch, National President Derrick Page announced the appointment of Col Ronald F Haywood SSA MMM JCD as Patron of the South African Air Force Association.

## Durban

The branch is largely preoccupied with organising Congress 2002. Chairman Harry Okfield, who would like to be in the thick of things, has not been enjoying good health.

## What's new

The enforced lateness of the previous issue of UPDATE, an outbreak of "nothing to report" reflected in NEC minutes and in-between period for branch newsletters has necessitated a curtailment of this feature.

## Lower South Coast

Doug Meaker has remarried.

## Lowveld

After their AGM in late October, the highlight for the Hoedspruit members has been their invitation to the SAAF Rugby Championships finals. Something a South African rugby team can win.

## Outeniqua

Going along steadily.

## Pietermaritzburg

Chairman **Eddie Combes** puts on a brave face, but circumstances can be trying down there in the Hollow. Newsletter 4/2001 reports four deaths, a number on the sick list, "due to the age of our members, no doubt", and a subs/levy collection "enough to drive one round the bend". Insufficient is what he is saying.

## Kimberley

"Oiling the hanger doors at the Pioneer Museum" may sound like a novel expression for propping up the bar, but it's serious business round the diamond mines – we think.

## From a different branch

"...all is going well, Vladimir Petrov passed away.





## Memorial Services 2020/21

### NOVEMBER 2020

1	09H30	Italian Prisoners of War Memorial Service	Italian Cemetery	Zonderwater
8	11h00	Remembrance Sunday Memorial Service	Union Buildings	Pretoria
8	11h00	Remembrance Sunday Memorial Service		Johannesburg
11	17h30	Cornwall Hill Service	Cornwall Hill	Pretoria

### DECEMBER 2020

6	09h00	SAMHS Veterans Ass Memorial Service	1 Mil	Pretoria
---	-------	-------------------------------------	-------	----------



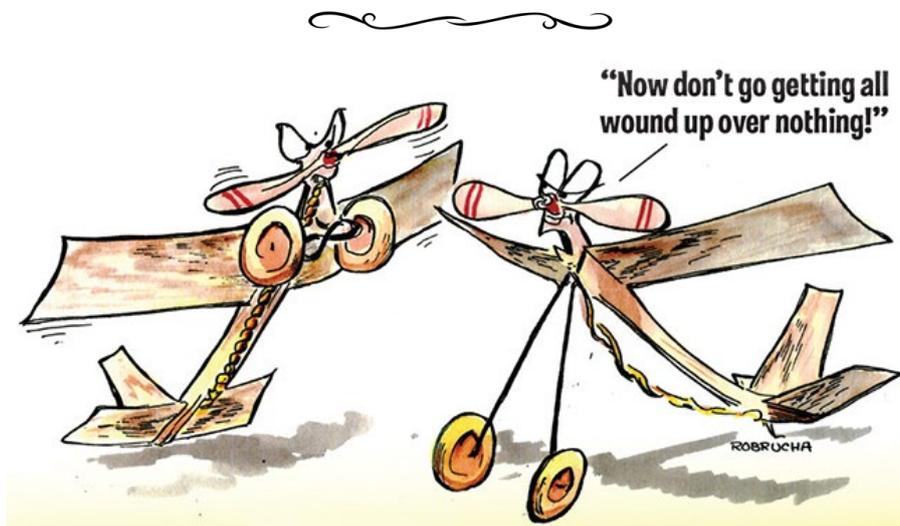
enjoyable with friends!

It has been such a pleasure to meet up with friends again in person after months and multiple levels of lockdown! The new normal of social distancing and mask-wearing is much more

Now is the time to catch up from where we left off, time to fill up the coffers and support fellow SAAFA members in need. Understandably all of us took a knock during this time but let us continue to contribute as before. Remember every small action can greatly impact someone in need and turn their frowns upside-down. I urge you to keep this in mind with the upcoming festive season.

Reporting all the branch news has been fantastic and I am sure many have noticed our Branch News section has been filling up! Thank you to the writes of this section, it is unbelievable valuable information to our friends near and far, as always keep that news coming!

With familiar favourites for the festive season already playing in-stores, the tune of Jingle Bells serves me a reminder every time to complete the December issue of Flying Spirit. Till next time, be safe out there, your life is precious.



Thank  
you 

Marianne  
Philip  
Des  
Johann  
Jaap  
Christel



- **Account Name:** The South African Air Force Association
- **Bank:** ABSA
- **Branch:** Mall@Reds
- **Code:** 632005
- **Account Number:** 16 6016 7699
- **Ref:** Your name and Surname

**Disclaimer:** Articles in the Flying Spirit Newsletter are printed on the understanding that, unless stated, they are the original works of the contributors or authors. The editor reserves the right to reject, edit abbreviate, rewrite or re-arrange, any item submitted for publication. The view of contributing authors is not necessarily those of the SAAFA, the editor or publisher of the Flying Spirit Newsletter.

## SAAFA 75 & Regalia



Please contact our secretary at Head Office to get the latest prices for SAAFA Regalia and/or SAAFA 75 Items on offer to members (Tel: 012 651 5921 or 012 351 2116)  
(Email: [nationalhq@saafa.co.za](mailto:nationalhq@saafa.co.za))