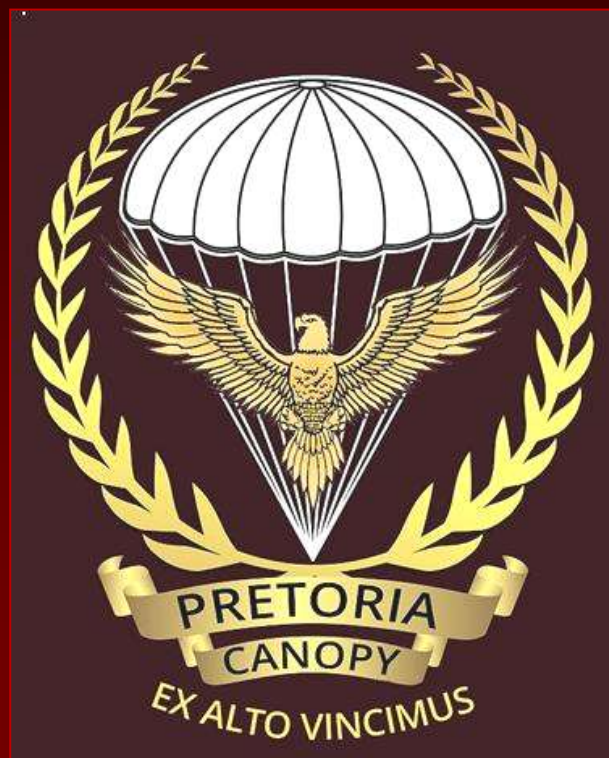


# BAT CHAT



## ARTICLES

### HEADGEAR AND DOG TAGS

### NUUS VANAF ORAL / NEWS FROM ALL OVER

### UIT DIE VERLEDE / FROM THE PAST

### XMAS MESSAGES



**PRETORIA CANOPY  
QUARTERLY  
NEWSLETTER**

**No 4/20**

## CANOPY KOMITEE

Voorsitter: Willoughby Brits

O/Voorsitter: Krige van Heerden

Sekretaris: Roche Vermaak

Tesourier: Wynand Erasmus

Kommunikasie: Chris Pohl

Regskonsultant: Wynand Fourie

Gasvryheid: Johan Le Roex



## INDEX / INHOUD

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## WOORD VAN DIE REDAKSIE



## WORD FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for all their efforts throughout the year. The success of PVO Pretoria Canopy is built on the efforts of our members and in this past year, we have enjoyed many successes. Thank you for the (dedication/loyalty/commitment/etc.) that each one of you has shown us. We've come through a year that was filled with both challenges and victories. How reassuring it's been to know that we can count on all of you regardless of what faces us. Please allow me to extend my personal and genuine appreciation to each and every one of you for your valuable contributions to PVO Pretoria Canopy. Working with you this past year has been a pleasure and we're proud to have you all with us.

We offer our best wishes and happiness to you and your families as we all look forward to a successful 2021. The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the grandest intention. Baie dankie aan ons Komitee vir al hul harde werk en tyd. Baie dankie vir almal se goeie gesindheid Baie dankie vir al jul kameraadskap. Elke man tel. Ons vir mekaar.

Ek wens almal 'n Geseende Jesus Fees en 'n Voorspoedige 2021. We wish you this season Laughs with treasured friends, Warmth of family, hearts of peace, Joy that never ends, May Christmas spirit fill your lives, Your home aglow with light. May your Christmas and New year be both merry and bright.

Willoughby Brits

## INDEMNITY

We know readers will smile about certain strange events they read or see in this newsletter. We also know readers will not hold the editorial board responsible for every statement! This newsletter is filled with very different personal opinions of military veterans who write mainly just on their own behalf. So, they say what they like.

## VRYWARING

Ons weet lesers sal glimlag oor sekere vreemde gebeure wat hulle in hierdie nuusbrief lees en sien. Ons weet ook lesers sal die redaksie nie vir elke uitspraak verantwoordelik hou nie! Hierdie nuusbrief is propvol uiteenlopende persoonlike menings van militêre veterane wat veral net namens hulleself skryf. So, hulle sê wat hulle wil.



## NEXT PTA CANOPY MEETINGS

28 JAN / 14 FEB / 14 MRT



**"Don't look at the size of your problems, look at the size of our God."**



## KERSBOODSKAP VAN DIE NASIONALE BESKERMHEER VAN DIE PVO



Dit is weereens vir my 'n voorreg om aan al die veterane van die PVO en hul families 'n Kersboodskap te stuur. Ek dink dat almal van ons na 'n rustige 2020 uitgesien het aan die begin van die jaar. Ongelukkig het 'n Virus die ganse mensdom

getref met ernstige gevolge op alle gebiede. Suid-Afrikaners het afgesien van lewensverlies, ernstige ekonomiese en finansiële probleme ondervind wat veral veroorsaak is deur die lang en aanhoudende Grendelregulasies wat tans nog aan die gang is. Die PVO het betreklik min lewens verloor as gevolg van die Virus en daarvoor moet ons ons Skepper bedank.

Nou is die jaar feitlik verby en Kersfees is om die draai. Wat bring Kersfees vir ons? Seker die feestelikhede en partytjies wat normaalweg met Kersfees geassosieer word. Die feit egter dat meeste van ons die geboorte van Jesus op 25 Desember elke jaar herdenk. Ons moet egter 'n paar vrae aan onself vra terwyl ons feesvier. Kan die viering ons nader aan God bring? Besef ons

dat dit dalk die laaste keer kan wees wat ons saam met ons geliefdes die voorreg het om Kersfees te vier? Op 12 April 1912 het 1500 mense gesterf nadat die Titanic gesink het. Was hulle gereed om te sterf? Is ons?

Die vyf Hoekpale van ons lewe is Geloof, Geluk, Hoop, Vreugde en Vrede. Mag ons almal poog om hierdie dinge te ervaar terwyl ons nog lewe. Mag U op 25 Desember 2020 'n wonderlike Kersfees beleef en mag 2021 baie goed vir U en U geliefdes wees.

Christmas is Love

Remember, Everytime we Love

Whenever we Share

Everytime we Give

It is Christmas.

So open your hearts to your fellow-men and by doing so you will experience the real Spirit of Christmas. Keep a chair open and share your Christmas meal with Jesus Christ!

I wish you and your loved ones a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2021.

Van/From Ronnie Claassen.





# Administration



## The PVO website

**www.parabat.org.za** is there to give you all the information you need on the organisation. Please visit it regularly. Any paratrooper who needs to know where his nearest PVO Canopy is, will be helped from this website. New members are welcome and existing members who are unsure of any of the benefits on offer can make enquiries there.

## PVO APP

Go onto the Android or Apple store, search for Parabat Veterans Organisation and download the PVO app on your mobile device. Paid-up PVO members have access to premium information and additional benefits.

**#Neem asseblief kennis dat die finansiële state beskikbaar is vir enige opbetaalde lede vir besigtiging en vrae. Ons het strukture en ouditeure in plek om verantwoording te doen vir elke sent wat ge-in of spandeer word.**

## THE PVO ENABLEMENT FUND

Essentially, the wellbeing of all Parabats and their families is our primary concern. Many of us are reaching the age where retirement and redundancy become threats to our continued welfare. Some of us have been suffering from the strain of wounds and disabilities sustained during our years as soldiers as well as suffered after our military service ended. Others have been made redundant by retrenchments or affirmative action.

All these people need help and support in their daily lives.

This support is not happening to any great degree and the PVO aims to, over time, rectify this.



The 2019 and 2020 Batchat printed book is available from Pretoria Canopy. A must in all Bats book collection.

## PVO APP MEMBER BENEFITS

Emergency/Panic button - Get Paratroopers in your vicinity to assist when you have an emergency.

Access to the Parabat Heritage Channel - News, Videos, sound clips, pictures and much more. An ever-growing repository with old and new media recordings

- PVO Projects - Status, news and updates
- Access to Employment opportunities
- PVO Enablement Fund

Die PVO beleid is om alle Parabats in te sluit -  
**"ELKE MAN TEL!"**

Ons is almal deel van 'n uitsonderlike groep "volunteers - with the guts to step out of the aircraft door".

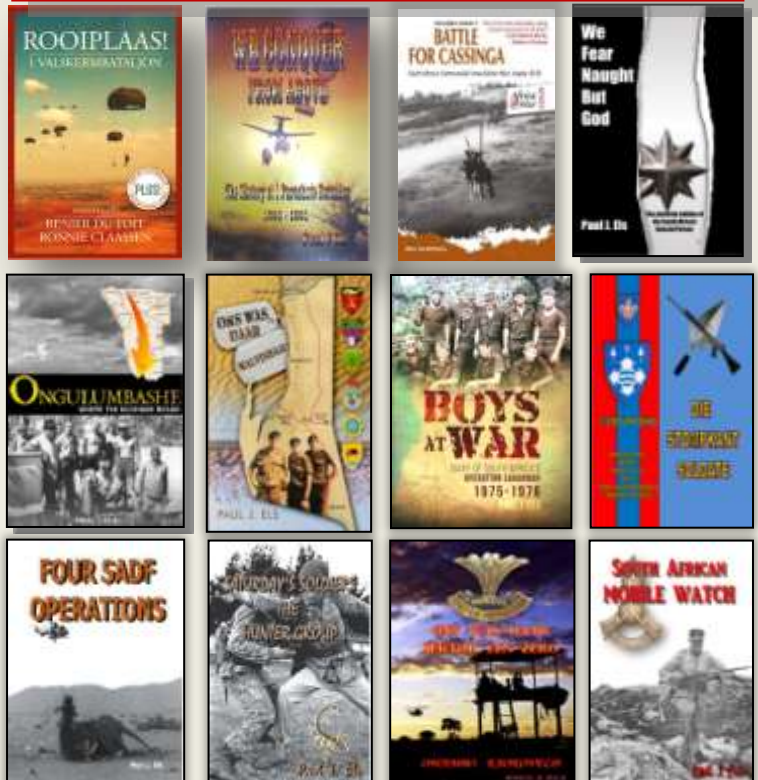
Alle Paratroopers word aangemoedig om die APP af te laai en benut.

Vir enige tegniese probleme kontak -

[Chris.Pohl@parabat.org.za](mailto:Chris.Pohl@parabat.org.za)

## Marked

Order from Pretoria Canopy a variety of books, CD's and DVD's

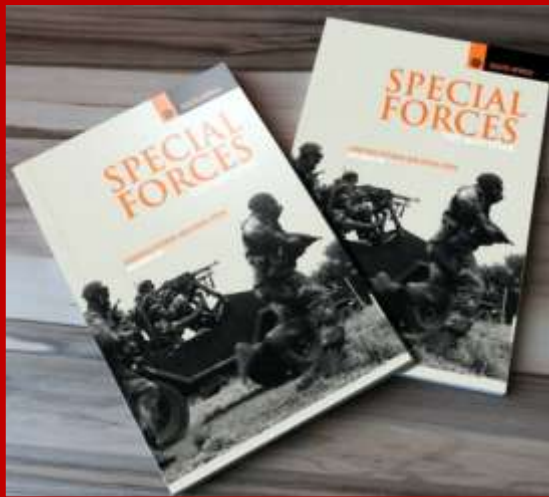


PelsA Boeke

Contact Paul J. Els for his books  
[paul@who-els.co.za](mailto:paul@who-els.co.za) or order from  
[epos@groep7.co.za](mailto:epos@groep7.co.za)

The book **We fear naught but God** on Special Forces is available @ R200 (Normal price R500) till end of Dec.

## BOOKS



### SOUTH AFRICAN SPECIAL FORCES: THE MEN SPEAK

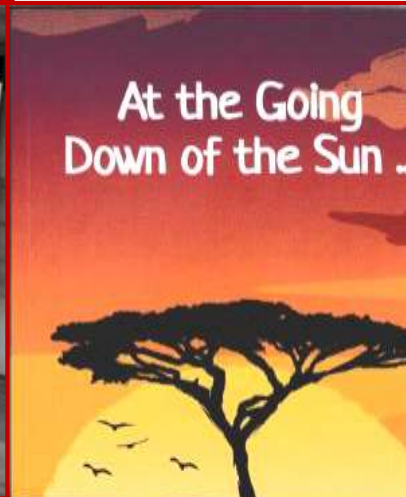
- Jonathan Pittaway & Douw Steyn -

True to the nature of Special Forces, the South African Recces started small but had a big impact. This iconic group went on to gain international renown as one of the world's finest, focusing on counter-insurgency, strategic reconnaissance, sabotage and direct action.

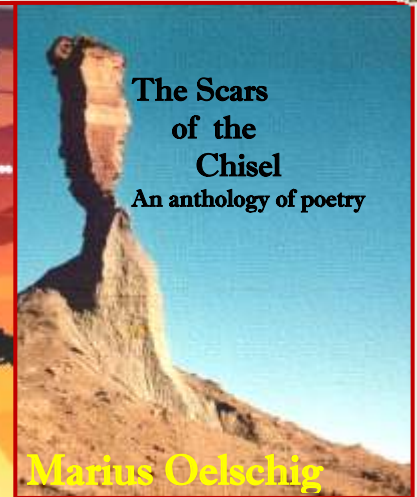
SPECIAL FORCES: THE MEN SPEAK provides a comprehensive account of the origins and history of this famous group as told by the men on the ground.

This unique historical record features:

- 10 chapters
- Covering WWII, 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s and Association
- 752 pages full-colour high quality litho print
- Over 1000 photographs
- Over 200 objects of militaria
- Over 200 documents
- Over 75 stories by servicemen
- Roll of Honour
- Honours and Awards
- Citations of all awards
- Nominal Roll including badge numbers
- Glossary
- A4, Hardcover.



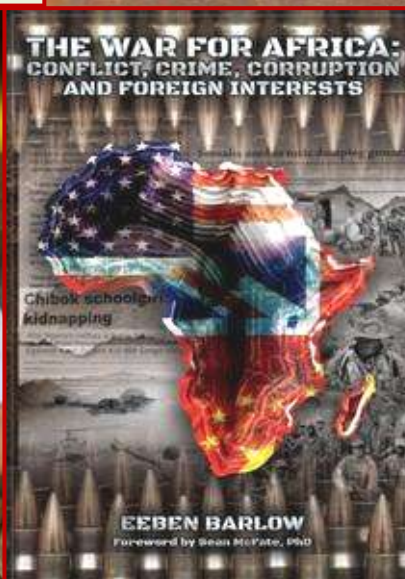
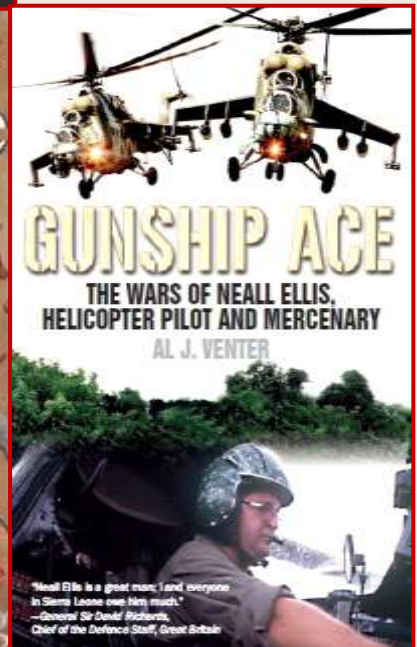
An anthology of  
short stories, essays and verse  
**Marius Oelschig**



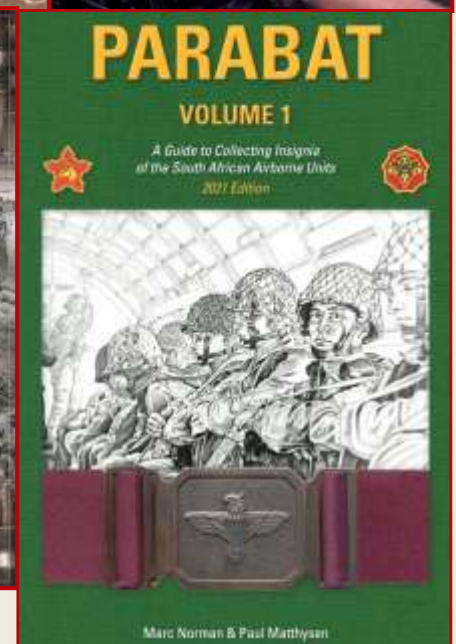
**The Scars  
of the  
Chisel**  
An anthology of poetry

**Marius Oelschig**

**Above:** Read page 7.  
**Below:** Who remember Neall Ellis?



Les Rudman attended the book  
launch of Eben Barlow's new  
book on the **13/11/2020**.





# LETTERS / MESSAGES

FROM ALL OVER

## BLAAUWHEIM GUEST HOUSE



Since we started Blaauwheim in 2008, we have faced and overcome many problems. We will do so again.

Covid 19 does strange things to people. I have had the words of a song in my head all day long. "I will survive" keeps on ringing in my ears. Thanks, Tina, because I then realized that you might be sending me a subliminal message about our recovery after this pandemic.

Blaauwheim 5\* Guest House was established in 2008, the year of the great international economic crash. We survived and flourished.

Then there was an outbreak of Ebola virus in Africa. Ignorant travellers cancelled their bookings, not realising that the outbreak happened much nearer to their countries of residence in Europe than to the Western Cape. We survived!

The following folly was the unabridged birth certificate fiasco. The stories we can tell because of some bureaucrats' ill-advised blunders, will make you cry. Blaauwheim once again survived.

The next obstacle was a curve ball Mother Nature herself launched at everyone in the Western Cape but especially the hospitality industry. We all suffered because of a terrible drought. Once more our politicians had to play the role of bogeymen. They coined the dreaded phrase "Day Zero". We overcame the shortage of water by drilling a borehole. Blaauwheim was blessed with enough water of exceptional quality. Disaster avoided. (Thankfully, after a good rainy season, our dams are now full.)

But towards the end of the 2019/2020 tourism season the dreaded Covid 19 reached our shores and our guests had to rush out of the country to avoid lockdown here. All bookings beyond March

disappeared... Now we are seven months further down the year and things are looking bleak. However, we are confident that Blaauwheim will survive yet another time.

Guest house owners are resilient. They bounce back. But then they must be real guest house owners who are present, optimistic, dedicated and committed to excellence. Trip Advisor recognised Blaauwheim as an exceptional guest house and awarded us the 2020 "Travellers' Choice Best of the Best Award", only awarded to 25 Guest Houses on the African continent!

Suddenly the tune in my head changed! Still Tina Turner, but now it is "You're simply the best...!"

"I can see clearly now the rain has gone. I can see all obstacles in my way..." Thanks Johnny Nash and RIP.

To read more Blogs, please follow this link to our website: <https://www.blaauwheim.co.za/blog/>



Johan & Jo-Anne Blaauw.

FB 12/10/2020



### The Scars of the Chisel (see page 5 for books cover)

My nuwe boek ('n tweede digbundel) *The Scars of the Chisel* sal voor Kersfees in die VSA en Kanada beskikbaar wees. Dit word deur Amazon gedruk en versprei (print-on-demand) en sal ook in Australië en die VK beskikbaar wees. Die titel van die boek is woorde uit die eerste gedig in die bundel, *The Chisel of Time*, wat ek ter ere van gevalle kamerade in die RSA geskryf het.

Die tema van die boek is die letsels wat mens deur die loop van 'n lewe optel; grootword, oorlog, politiek en oudword ... en is ook 'n kommentaar oor huidige verwikkelinge soos die politiek in die RSA, die VSA en die wereld, en die Covid-19 saga. Vir meeste van die gedigte is daar notas wat die agtergrond vir die skryf daarvan voorlig/beskryf.

Van die gedigte het literere pryse hier in Kanada verower en een het in 2019 die nasionale eerste prys van die Poetry Institute of Canada gewen.

Die prys van die boek is slegs \$8 (plus-minus R135), maar die posgeld uit die VSA na die RSA is die groot finansiële struikelblok. Ek stuur vir julle twee van die gedigte; die openingsgedig en een wat handel oor kameraadskap onder die "bats", met bygaande notas. Gebruik dit gerus (sou julle wil) in die Batchat. (BI 42)

Uit die skadu van die Rockies,

Mo Oelschig 14/10/2020



## RONNIE CLAASSEN

The PVOs First Parabat and Patron leads from the front again.

Ronnie Claassen, our organisation's beloved patron and guide has again created a far-reaching initiative that will set the bar for all our members into the future.

In Ronnie's own words, "Every now and then the PVO and other factions of the Paratroop community are approached for help of one or other crisis.

So far the PVO and others have responded magnificently. As time goes by things will be getting more difficult and I think that it will be harder to get funds in the future. I have therefore decided to bequeath money in my will to the PVO which can be used to help parabats in the future. If we could all maybe leave 1 or 2 percent of our estates for this matter a healthy fund can be established. This will prevent scurrying around for money in the future. I must add that this amount that I bestowed will only be available after my Wife's death. I am sure that you and your Executive Committee can discuss this and make an appeal to all parabats. All the best. Regards, Ronnie."

This magnificent and generous gesture is an example to all Parabats as to how we should order our lives so that the legacy we have built may live on after us.

Ronnie, we hope that the PVO will have to wait many years before receiving anything from your or your wife estate.

Thank you for your confidence in the PVO to manage your donation. We will do our best to live up to the fine example you have set.

On behalf of the Parabat community and the PVO board.

A sincere and heartfelt thank you,  
Mike McWilliams.  
President  
Parabat Veteran Organisation

20/10/2020



Op die 29/10/2020, het Ronnie en Suzette hul "54ste" huweliksdag gevier. Veels geluk.

## GEM VILLAGE

### GEM Village: Gunners and Engineers Memorial Village in Irene

During the '70s more and more ex-servicemen of The Great War, WW2 and the Korean war, found themselves destitute and in want of care.

The Gunners association and the Sappers Foundation came together and planned a haven for old soldiers.

A piece of land, 4,2 HA in size, was donated by the Smuts Foundation. This land is situated next to the present day museum and is reached by tar road, Smuts Ave, branching from Nelmapius Drive, in Irene.

A favourable loan was obtained from Government and the infrastructure was put in place. Dwellings in the form of single units, double units and cottages were erected. In 1984 the first residents were welcomed. These were available for rent. Later on, larger cottages were built and made available for sale on a liferight basis. In time, a community hall and offices were added.

The area is secured by electric gates and electric fences. A bus service is available. The village is managed by a council assisted by full time staff. Preference is given to ex gunners, engineers and military veterans.

For more information, please look at the website or contact the village on **0828797692**.

We honour our comrades who were moved by kindness and wisdom to create an institution like GEM Village.

**Mauritz Lombard**  
(PVO Nomad member)  
Council Member: GEM Village

THE GUNNERS' AND ENGINEERS' MEMORIAL VILLAGE  
FOR MILITARY VETERANS  
DIE KANONNIERS EN SAPPEURS SE GEDENKDORP VIR  
MILITÊRE VETERANE



Tel: 012 867 1825

Email:  
gemvillage@irene@gmail.com

## ROLL CALL.

At our recent PVO Annual General Meeting, we resolved to run with Rod Murphy's excellent proposal of assembling a gallery of all the course photographs of the parachute training courses from 1961 till the present time.

It has not proven feasible to get someone to the hangar at 1 Para in Bloemfontein to take down each photo, de-frame it and scan or photograph it, reassemble it and rehang.

Instead, we make an appeal to our widespread community of Parabats to search for your precious course photograph, extract it from its frame and scan it and send it on to me.

I will select the best quality scan to include in the Roll Call section of the PVO website.

Please, when scanning your photo, use a definition of 300dpi minimum and make sure the names beneath the picture are clear and the scan covers the whole area of picture and names. It would be preferable to save the scan as a PDF file before sending it.

The email address to send your scan to is [mike.mcwilliams@parabat.org.za](mailto:mike.mcwilliams@parabat.org.za)

Yours enthusiastic participation in this vital archival effort will be greatly appreciated.

Below is the gratefully

Mike McWilliams.

President.

Parabat Veteran Organisation.

17/11/2020



## OP SAVANNAH 45<sup>th</sup> REUNION 2021

The 45<sup>th</sup> Remembrance Parade of Operation Savannah will be held at the Voortrekker-monument Pretoria on **Sunday 28 March** 10h30 for 11h00. The Parade will be held in front of the Savannah Memorial. All Veteran Organisations will be invited and may lay a wreath and display their Banner. Refreshments will be served after the Parade to all attending guests.

Please forward information of those attending. **Final date: 28 February 2021.**

[ereatrust@mweb.co.za](mailto:ereatrust@mweb.co.za)





# ARTICLES / REPORTS / SNIPPETS

FROM ALL OVER

## PARA STORIES: MY FIRST OP JUMP

By Russell Haydon Fulton



I remember my very first operational jump (early September 1977), and more than any of the 50-odd that I did during my life in uniform, but this one was as a very young and newly 'winged' RLI "ek sé" in Support Commando, 1 RLI. On completion of our basic static line parachute training course at the home of 1 South African Parachute Battalion in Tempe, Bloemfontein, we returned to Rhodesia after a less-than festive basic parachute training course.



PARA 7713. 25/07 – 12/08/1977

We had run with 50lb concrete blocks, nursed them as our 'wives' and jumped too many times with the insufferable buggers. I never quite managed to 'fall-in-love' with this particular 'wife' but, and suffice to say, that 'she' soon, just like a real-life wife, had the measure of me.

And so, 'half-qualified', we returned to the rarefied highveld air of Salisbury and continued with our 'wake-up-to-reality' conversion course at New Sarum. In the "Republic" we jumped 'clean fatigue' (sans webbing and weapon) from 1,000 feet and later at 800ft but....back in Rhodesia these former jump heights were to become a mere figment of our quite infertile 'parakadish' imaginations. In our man's army we did 'fun (training) jumps' from 1,000ft or 800ft but operational descents were generally from an altitude of +450 - 500ft.... only if the pilots of 3 Squadron, RhAF remembered to adjust their QNH (Query Nautical Height) settings before take-off that is.

That's another story for another day.

And so it was, another week of conversion jumps in our own webbing, wearing our weapons strapped to our sides and jumping at operational height, in-to water and at night...over and over again until those who could still walk at the end of the week were 'awarded' their parachute wings on the frost bitten New Sarum DZ (Drop Zone) on the final day.

With our newly acquired para wings stitched on to the shoulder of our right sleeves we were promptly dispatched to re-join our Commandos at the various FAF's (Forward Air Fields) dotted around the country where we were immediately assigned to para duties on fire force. As paras, our role was, principally, to form the 'sweep line' when we hit the deck and to move towards the target areas/s and engage our enemy. Heliborne troops were deployed as Stop Groups before the paras deployed and, whose function it was, to adopt 'cut-off' positions on likely gook escape routes from the target area. The sweep line (paras) would advance, engage, cull and/or flush the gooks from their coop and in the direction of our stop groups who would 'stop' them. It was a process of vertical envelopment that worked extremely well, and, with a good K-Car commander, the outcome of a fire force deployment was a generally good kill rate marked-up on the Commando chalk board at the end of the day and quite a few "chibulis" (Beers), courtesy of the 'Commando Fund', to save our insatiable appetite for the same.



Support Commando, 1RLI was based at Grand Reef airfield near Umtali until we were pre-positioned close to the Sabi/Lundi confluence for an external in to 'Porkers' (Mozambique). I was a machine gunner [FN MAG 58] and about to go on my first external operation and as a paratrooper. We plastered 'Black is Beautiful' camo cream all over our faces, arms and legs and then kitted-up. Our para harnesses were tensioned to eye-popping levels and we then staggered under our heavy kit (the usual first line fire force ammo [two joined belts of 100 rounds loaded on the gun] and five belts of

50 rounds plus spare barrel in my case, two water bottles plus two days dry rations) to the waiting Dakotas where we were loaded starboard side first

followed by port side. I must confess that, and despite having been involved in numerous contacts leading up to this little soiree, I was now more than a touch nervous as it was going to be my first op jump and in to 'Indian country' at that.

It is worthy of mention that the RLI had not, at this time, successfully enforced strict dress regulations for operational descents and the preferred attire in the RLI was generally T-shirts (usually sleeveless) khaki shorts, lightweight stitch-down boots or those insufferable 'Clandestine' canvas boots (they would have compromised you from five clicks away after wearing them for one week!) and face veils tied around the head or, none. Personalized webbing. Whilst far from what one would call a 'picture of military splendour' we were young, extremely well trained, brim-full of testosterone and more than capable of doing Rhodesia's bidding and we were always hungry for a scrap!

We were being deployed to attack a ZANLA staging camp roughly 35 km's from the Rhodesian/Pork border within Mozambique that went by the name Rio Wanezi. The attack was supported by a preparatory snot-squirt courtesy of 1 Squadron, Rhodesian Air Force (Hawker Hunters), followed by a jumbo fire-force deployment comprising two C47 (Dakotas), several Alouette III helicopters (7 Squadron) and K-Car armed with a 20 mm (High Explosive) Matra canon and commanded by the OC Support Commando, Major Nigel Henson OLM (this fine officer was one of a very select group of truly outstanding K-Car Commanders who was regarded with some deserved reverence by the men under his command).

En-route (mid-morning) to the target, we were welcomed in to 'Pork' airspace by some (thankfully) inaccurate fire from three different FRELIMO 12.7mm and 14.5mm anti-aircraft gun emplacements as we 'hedge-hopped' our way above the tree line of an otherwise dry and desolate landscape that was Manica/Gaza Province. This unexpected 'chatter' from unfriendly sorts on the ground caused a few of the ouens to reach hastily for their air-sickness bags. What was more unfortunate was the fact that, and being a 'para Dak', the aircraft rear portside door had been removed and prop wash filled the hold with wind and a strong smell of 'Avgas' exhaust fumes. That cocktail of sour beer, boiled eggs, pork sausages and whatever fare the lads had partaken of the night before and/or for breakfast combined quite effectively in to a spontaneous combustion of 'puke gas' that swirled through the hold and caused an unfortunate chain reaction. (A para Dak wasn't referred to as "The Vomit Comet" for nothing you know!) Fortunately for me I had a

pretty strong constitution but I cannot tell a lie, I may not have crotched myself but my eyes certainly watered....a lot actually!

It's a funny thing is 'Fear'. It takes on different forms for each one of us and, whilst I chuckled at the misfortune of my puking 'boets', I never openly mocked them as I had a different gut-gnawing taking place deep within me. I refute, absolutely, any suggestion that no-one was without an element of fear going in to battle. From a purely personal perspective, I found that it sharpened my senses and I became acutely aware of my surrounds, but I was always aware of the probability that I might return home in a body bag; it was a sobering thought. That's just the way it was. When the first shots were fired in anger, that fear would evaporate and be overtaken by unbridled aggression. If one of our own was wounded or KIA it went a step further unadulterated rage. It's what our NCO's trained us for and, simply, how it was meant to be.

Our target was sited no more than one 'click' (1 km) north of the Save (Sabi) River and the camp itself was located within a densely wooded thicket of trees (Acacia, the dreaded 'Hook-Thorn' and the occasional 'Adonsonia Digita', Baobab). A crescent shaped ridge provided protection from much of the western approach (from whence we would come calling) and stood (roughly) 50 ft above the camp; most certainly GTI (Ground of Tactical Importance) in this otherwise featureless terrain. Atop the ridge line was a battery of 12.7mm and 14.5mm anti-aircraft guns each supported by roughly three sections strength of ZANLA combatants (36 men) armed with the usual assortment of AK's, PPSh's, SKS's, PKM's, RPK's, PKM's and RPD's; an interesting welcoming party I think you'll agree.

When we were about seven minutes out, we were given the command by the Number 1 Dispatcher to "Stand Up", 'Hook Up"! This entailed hooking our static line snap hook and securing it to an overhead cable and securing the spring-steel safe clip before checking the bungees on the parachute of the man in front and placing his static line over his left shoulder. Once completed we were then commanded: "Tell off for Equipment Check". Starting with the starboard side of the aircraft we then called out '1 okay', '2 okay', '3 okay' and so on from the front to the rear of the aircraft and continued from rear to front on the port side. I was in call sign (C/S) 'Vulture 1' which was the first 4-man stick to leave the aircraft and the second man in that sequence. We were then given the command "Action Stations" which was the command to move tightly towards the door on the port side. With static line snap hook held between extended thumb and forefinger, static line

on the outside of the extended fingers of the left hand, we shuffled forward with left foot forward, leg bent at the knee and tucked behind that of the man in front so that we were like a tin of neatly packed Colcom Vienna Sausages.

On the command "Actions Stations" we moved forward in unison sliding the left foot forward across the floor and driving the right heel in behind the left as we shouted out "1-2, 1-2, 1-2" until the first para (Lt Simon 'Crispy' Willar) was at the door. The jump light was glowing red and then came the order "Stand in the Door"! On this command Simon shouted "1-2" and he was now facing squarely out of the aircraft, half-in and half-out in the slipstream and held firmly by his parachute harness by the number 2 & 3 dispatchers. The jump light turned green and Simon drove out the door on the command "GO" followed by a short, sharp slap to the leg! We moved forward swiftly and the aircraft 'vomited' its cargo of adrenalin charged young men in to prop-wash and down we fell as the 15ft static line released from its bungee ties until, at its full length, the outer pack tie broke and the olive-green nylon T-10D parachute canopy was deployed. At a jump height of 450-500 ft (150m) one didn't have much opportunity to take in the scenery (at 500 ft and at an average rate of descent of 23 ft/second you would be 'airborne' for all of 21.74 seconds); so we rapidly went through our para drills (look left, look right, look below, kick out of your seat strap and adopt a parachute position). Next, one focussed on a point directly below and between your feet where you 'hung' to assess the drift of the wind.

Up there, with canopy developed, it was deathly silent for a moment and then there was the gut wrenching 'crack & thump' of in-coming rifle and anti-aircraft fire that we were all too familiar with. This was accompanied by the unmistakable smell of fire, and lots of it too. The bastards were firing at us and we were helpless to respond in kind; our weapons bound securely to our right sides by our harness waistbands! What unadulterated delight it was for us watching the red and green tracer arcing their deathly way through the still morning sky and burning neat holes through our canopies as some rounds found their mark. In short shrift we were approaching the proverbial vertigo height (the height when one experiences what is referred to in para parlance as 'ground rush', when the ground seems to be suddenly rushing up to meet you. It is also the most dangerous time during a parachute descent as men sometimes straightened their legs to meet the ground with the result being telescopic or compound fractures.

The Hunter strike had silenced the anti-aircraft apron on the ridge line and their high

explosive incendiary rounds had set the bush alight creating a potent crosswind. I realised that I was drifting forward- left and at a disturbing speed towards a copse of tall trees. "Just awesome!" I thought fleetingly but there was another far more uncomfortable experience that awaited me. I was being carried off-line and descending over the copse when it became clear that I wouldn't clear the canopy of one of the 'mother-of-all hook thorn trees'; what else! My life had been filled with all manner of unsolicited surprises!! My parachute canopy started to collapse as I tucked my feet under my backside, hoping above hope, that I would clear the canopy but alas...what can I tell you....shit happens!

I swiftly forced my legs down, bent my knees, pulled my toes up and positioned my heels directly below my bum and then it happened. There was to be no perfect parachute landing for me as the hook thorns reached out to me in silent protest and buried their vicious barbs wherever they could find purchase. Yislike!.... I heard tearing and soon realised it wasn't my canopy making that dreadful sound but various parts of my anatomy being shredded! I ploughed through the canopy under the weight of my kit and gun and ended up suspended about 6 ft above terra firma. There was a hell-of-a 'party' taking place on the ground and I wasn't quite in the mood for attracting any hot lead whilst in suspended animation, so I pulled on the pair of my lift web quick releases and dropped quite unceremoniously to the ground in a heap of winded 'nyama'.

Simon Willar, my troop, and more importantly, my stick commander, was shouting out to me to check if I was okay. Winded and bleeding a tad, I gave him the thumbs up, removed my para harness and cocked my gun before running over to join him and the rest of our call sign. When I got to where he was waiting he gave me one of his sardonic smiles, a quick once over and said "Jesus Fulton.....you look like you've been sleeping with a f\*\*\*\*\* crocodile!". He winked, reached over and gave my arm a reassuring squeeze before getting us on our feet and skirmishing towards 'gook central'. We fully expected a good joust but there was not much of that! (Simon Willar was a man made of exactly the right stuff, the son of a former high-ranking Rhodesian military commander and he was as tough as they came. He had hand-picked me as his gunner when Colour Sergeant "Mad Jock" McKelvie SCR had gone on leave and I remained his gunner for the rest of my service with the Commando). I owe Simon so much and for many things too; mostly for keeping me alive and against the most unlikely odds but for also supporting my request to attend the next regular officer selection

board early in the coming year. I was commissioned on 9 February 1979 and, I hope, justified the trust he had placed in me?

Our 'hosts' had evidently decided to forego the anticipated reception we had expected and had, in the main, taken long 'arse-splitting' strides and at great speed in to the middle distance and we were left to clear-up pockets of resistance within the camp and around the general target area. As dusk approached, we were dispatched to strategic ambush sites and defensive positions; our position being central on the ridge line. Late that night we heard the sound of armour clanking along in the distance; an unnerving sound in the bush that was only ever bettered by the sound of a hungry male lion. The next morning, we were told to hold our position and assume OP (Observation Point) work in the event that our 'hosts' in-astutely decided to return. By midday it was hot as all buggery (comfortably in the low 40's centigrade) and we had soon exhausted the two water bottles we carried. Well now....it was nigh on 24 hours since we jumped into this God forsaken piece of 'Porta' real estate!

I remember sitting on that desolate ridge, completely devoid of shade, in obscenely suppressing heat, sweating profusely and watching a commercial jet flying at c 38,000ft through the perfectly clear azure blue sky and wondering what the passengers were sipping upon. I had visions of tall, frosted glasses of lemonade with crushed ice and thick slices of fresh lemon. What a ridiculously gormless thought! I cussed all the innocent passengers and then myself realising that all that was available back in the real world was a sip from a pretty warm saline trip! Don't try that a home folks, if you have ever swilled on the juice from a can of hot Cashel Valley mixed vegetable juice you probably won't want to try it again! I can assure you that the taste of a saline drip is a touch 'miffer' but not entirely dissimilar in my book. Within the hour, whilst I sat picking out broken-off hook thorns from here, there and every bloody where, I heard Lt Willar say that a Dak was en route to do a water drop. It was music to our ears. Sure enough, we spotted the Dak approaching swiftly from the west at low altitude and then it climbed momentarily before it released its raffia chutes with suspended wooden crates of water, in black plastic bags.

I am no pilot nor am I a parachute re-supplier or dispatcher, but I could have told you that that drop height was way too low, but the crates were dispatched anyway and crashed in to the floor of the gook camp in a rainbow of watery mist and to a loud chorus from everywhere of "F\*\*\*\*\*g idiots!!" And so, there we sat, our bodies slow broiling like langoustines in the Portuguese sunshine as we

gazed in hopeful wonder to our south where the sun mirrored itself off the cool depths of the Save River. A decision was taken to send a water party down to the river with as many water bottles as could be carried but it was a risky endeavour as there was little doubt our movements were being monitored from the riverine cover along the southern bank. Any commander with even a smidgen of tactical savvy would have set likely water collection points as DF-SOS targets. The collection party did their business with stealth and returned safely and without incident; perhaps our ZANLA and FRELIMO mates were enjoying a 'siesta'.... clever buggers! We each received a water bottle and that was it. Our rations, now depleted, we partook of various and varied Scandinavian canned produce and seriously kuk Chinese cigarettes that had been cached in the camp complex...Norwegian pilchards in tomato sauce, fruit chunks from Denmark and so on. It was *lekker* and waste not, want not! A pox on those liberal minded fools in Scandinavia who 'pitied' our murdering foe!

We were relieved from our position on the ridge by a band of less-than exuberant brothers who entered what was now not dissimilar to a baker's oven with the grill turned on high for good measure. Sunburnt and decidedly bemused, we were tasked with recovering the various caches of arms and ammunition to areas cleared for uplift by 7 Squadron. They ferried tons of the stuff in cargo nets suspended below the choppers across the border and returned over-and-over again. With late afternoon approaching we were told to prepare for uplift and return to Rhodesia; heliborne troops first! Of course, right! As dusk approached, we para types received the inevitable news that we would have to 'hold the fort' for another night and await uplift the next morning. Same old shit, different day on the army pay roll.

That night we were revved from across the river by small arms and 82 mm mortar fire, the latter falling safely to our north and causing more bush fires. A Tank, or tanks could be heard creaking to our east and only a few kilometres distant but that's as close as they dared to venture but it was close enough for us too. We had kept back a handful of RPG7's so it would have been interesting if the armour had ventured any closer to our position. A RPG7, in the right hands, could make your eyes do more than just water; a quite outstanding infantry close support weapon and far better than anything that we Rhodies had in our arsenal, no question about that.

The next morning the choppers arrived, we emplaned and were delighted to see the arse-end of Mozambique. It was to be the first of many forays into Indian country for me; other stories for

another time. It wasn't all beers and skittles you know!

**Footnote:** The men of the Rhodesian Light Infantry made more operational parachute descents than any other military unit in military history. Where an Allied paratrooper of the Second World War would be considered a "veteran" after one operational jump, towards the end of our war, an RLI paratrooper would make as many as three operational jumps in a single day, each in a different location, and each preceding a successful contact with the enemy. Between 1976 and 1980, over 14,000 jumps were recorded by the Rhodesian Security Forces as a whole.



The world record for operational jumps by an individual soldier is held by Corporal Des Archer of 1 Commando, RLI, who made 73 operational jumps between 1977 and the end of the war. Just extraordinary stuff and, dare I say it, a record that will never be broken.

**Read next pg on Des.**



**SOUTH AFRICAN AND RHODESIAN BATS IN 1972**

"Left to Right Standing Garth Barret (Rhodesian SAS), Derek de Kock (Rhodesian Air Force PJI), Rich Carrol (Rhodesian Air Force Safety Equipment Worker who packed all my parachutes at this event, I never packed parachutes in those days I just unpacked them), Iain Bowen (Rhodesian Air Force PJI), Pat Smith (South African), Kevin Potgieter (SA), Johnny Kieser (SA), SA Chief of the Army dressed in collar and tie, Lt Genl W.P. Louw (South African). Left to Right Kneeling Frank Hales (Rhodesian Air Force PJI), Sege Edelson (SA), John Pearson (Rhodesian Army), Jakkals de Jager (SA), Ollie Holthausen (SA). I apologize for any errors which may have occurred in this chapter but 45 years has dimmed my memory a little." **Derek de Kock.**

<http://highabovefarbeyond.blogspot.com/2017/12/>



Commander,  
combined operations  
General Peter Walls



**DES ARCHER**

**Des Archer**, the greatest paratrooper in the history of the world. Des has more combat/operational parachute jumps than any other paratrooper in the history of the world. I served with Des and made a couple of combat jumps with him in 1 Commando, RLI! "The world record for operational jumps by an individual soldier is held by Corporal Des Archer of 1 Commando, RLI, who made 73 operational jumps between 1977 and the end of the war."

**Carl Henderson 09/09/2019**



RLI



RLI

# SA PARATROOPERS IN THE RHODESIAN BUSH WAR

Genl McGill Alexander



## First Deployment (Operation CHINAMAN) Sep-Dec 1967

The first SAP Company to be sent to Rhodesia at the beginning of Sep 1967, operated under command of the Rhodesian Army, not the Rhodesian BSAP. The SAP had no experience of military operations or of COINOPS. The SAP requested help from SA Army. Eighteen SA Army personnel deployed with the SAP Company to advise and guide them.

Seven of them were paratroopers:

Maj M.J. du Plessis (Coy 2IC); Field cornet Frank Bestbier (Platoon Cmdr); WO2 S.A. de Beer (CSM); WO 2 Lionel Slade (Medic); S/Sgt Telly Smit (CQMS); Sgt M.J. Potgieter and Sgt P.W. van Heerden (Section Leaders).

Both Bestbier and Smit had successfully completed the Rhodesian SAS selection course a few months before deploying.

All soldiers were sworn in as policemen and entire coy wore Rhodesian camo uniform.

Coy included an Armoured Troop of four Saracen APCs with the Coy HQ at Victoria Falls.

Bestbier's platoon was based at Kazangula.

SAP Coy was responsible for Zambezi Front (Zambian border) between Kazangula and Vic Falls as well as entire Wankie (Hwange) National Park.

No insurgent activity during the deployment.

Very problematic co-operation between SA Army and SAP. Latter refused to apply proper section and platoon battle drills, poor standard of bush craft and lax patrol discipline. Policemen did not think like soldiers and were unaccustomed to operating in disciplined groups. Du Plessis recommended that the SA Army never again deploy with them. His recommendation was accepted. Du Plessis returned from the deployment early to take over command of 1 Para Bn early in December 1967. Du Plessis later became the first OC 44 Para Bde. Retired as a major general.

Bestbier the only SA Army officer to have commanded:

A platoon (SAP); A parachute Coy (A & B Coys, 1 Para Bn); 2IC of Bravo Gp (forerunner of 32 Bn) under Col Jan Breytenbach during Op Savannah; A mechanized battalion (1 SAI); A Mech Bn Gp (Battle Gp Juliet during Op REINDEER – forerunner of 61 Mech); A Para Bde (44 Para Bde); An Armored Division. (8 Armd Div)

He was also the SA Army's Director of Operations and retired as a brigadier.

## Attachment to Rhodesian Fire Forces (September/October 1977)

Maj Anton van Graan and Capt Fred Burger of 1 Para Bn attached to Rhodesian forces for six weeks to study Fire Force (FF) techniques, Van Graan with RLI at Cheredzi. Carried out seven operations with RLI as a rifleman. Four were parachute ops and two of those inside Mozambique. Spent a week deployed as an OP in Honde Valley.

Burger attached to Para Trg School in Salisbury for three weeks, then deployed with RLI at Mtoko and Grand Reefs. Did three operations as rifleman, two by helicopter and one by parachute.

Introduced various aspects of FF at 1 Para Bn.

## First SA Paratrooper Force Deployed in Rhodesia (Op DITSEM) 23-27 July 1979

A five-day FF operation in the area north of the Madimbo Corridor, involved a company from 3 Parachute Battalion, two sticks of Rhodesian paratroopers and various specialists such as trackers and signallers. Aircraft provided by the South African Air Force.

No further details available in archives.

## Fire Force Deployments (Operation BOWLER) September 1979 – March 1980

Known as Operation BOWLER by the South Africans and Operation BALLAST by the Rhodesians, the deployment of SADF fire forces in Rhodesia continued for six months.

Each FF had: Three or four SAAF Pumas; One SAAF Paradak (later withdrawn as superfluous); One SAAF Cessna; Two RhAF Alouette III Gunships; One RhAF Alouette Command Car and one RhAF Armed Lynx.

FF Yankee was under op command of Rh Army 4 Bde (HQ in Fort Victoria) and FF Zulu was under op command Rh Army 1 Bde (HQ in Bulawayo).

### D Coy, 1 Para Bn (19 Sep – 15 Oct 79):

- 26-day (4-week) deployment
- Under op comd Rh Army 4 Bde
- Known as Bravo Force
- Wanezi, near Chiredzi
- Several para drops done on FF ops
- Established unbroken record of 36 "kills" in one day for SA FFs
- Coy Cmdr: Capt David Blaauw, LWM

### F Coy 1 Para Bn (15 Oct – 29 Nov 79)

- 44-day (six-week) deployment
- Under op Comd Rh Army 4 Bde, then 1 Bde
- Renamed FF Zulu

- Wanezi/Mkwasine/Liebig 7/ Palm River Ranch
- Coy Cmdr: Capt Piet “Graspol” Nel (later OC 44 Para Bde).

#### G Coy, 1 Para Bn (12 – 26 Nov 79)

- Two-week deployment
- FF Yankee
- Rutenga/Mabalauta
- Coy Cmdr: Capt Jan Bierman.

#### A Coy, 3 Para Bn (12 Nov – Dec 79)

- Four-week deployment
- Triangle/Buffalo Range/Wanezi
- FF Yankee
- Coy Cmdr: Capt Dolf du Plessis.

#### C Coy, 3 Para Bn (Dec 79 – 26 Jan 80)

- Four-week deployment
- Mkwaseni
- FF Yankee
- Coy Cmdr: Capt “Pip” du Plessis

#### E Coy, 1 Para Bn (29 Nov 79 – 16 Jan 80)

- 48-day (7-week) deployment
- FF Zulu
- Insindi Ranch
- Capt Kobus Human/ Capt/Maj Leon Groenewald.

#### F Coy, 1 Para Bn (16 Jan 80 – 8 Mar 80)

- 50-day (7-week) deployment
- FF Zulu
- Insindi Ranch
- Coy Cmdr: Capt Piet “Graspol” Nel.

#### G Coy, 1 Para Bn (25 Jan – 7 Mar 80)

- 41-day (6-week) deployment
- FF Yankee
- Mkwaseni
- Coy Cmdr: Capt Kobus Human.

#### Pathfinders (22 Oct 79 – 8 Mar 80)

- Pathf PI of 1 Para Bn deployed as OPs for FF ops
- Joined by a few CF pathfs at one stage
- Mostly providing OPs for both SA FFs and sometimes for Rhod FFs
- Pathf elements rotated
- Cmdr’s: Lt Kobus Hoon / Lt Dries Velthuizen / 2Lt Paul Troll.

#### **Combined Rhodesian/SADF Search & Destroy (Operation STORING)**

- Known as Op UNION by the Rhodesians
- Took place across the Limpopo

- Purpose: to dominate area across border to keep insurgents away from SA farms
- FF at Madimbo.

#### First deployment: A Coy, 2 Para Bn (23-28 Sep 79)

- Coy Cmdr: Capt Willie Jooste
- Provided FF and OPs
- Wore Rhodesian camo
- Joint FF HQ with Maj Don Price, RLI
- Combined with RAR for OPs all along border on Rhodesian side
- FF only had Alouette III heli’s (no Pumas)
- Killed some insurgents, but very limited success.

#### Second Deployment: A & G Coys, 1 Para Bn (3 – 10 Nov 79)

- Operation Cmdr: Col George Kruys
- Cmdr Para Coys: Maj Chris le Roux (2IC 1 Para Bn)
  - A Coy Cmdr: Lt Vion Hattingh
  - G Coy Cmdr: Capt Jan Bierman
- All wore Rhodesian camo uniforms
- Rhodesian unit unknown, possibly RR
- G Coy and half of A Coy crossed Limpopo, linked with Rhodesians and formed extended stop line
- Other half of A Coy under Vion Hattingh parachuted into Rhodesia from Dakota at first light & commenced sweep towards stop line
- Subsequently carried out patrols and laid ambushes inside Rhodesia
- Some insurgents killed and wounded.

#### **Summary**

Approximately 1000 SADF paratroopers participated in Rhodesian War, with no deaths, about ten wounded and about 15 lightly injured in accidents.

Five Coys participated from 1 Para Bn; with one coy participated from 2 Para Bn, Three Coys participated from 3 Para Bn, a Pathfinders participated.

Over four-month period (12 Nov 79 – 8 Mar 80), the paratroopers simultaneously manned three FFs (one in Owamboland, two in Rhodesia) and fought against three insurgent movements (SWAPO, ZIPRA and ZANLA) on two different fronts (SWA/Angola and Rhodesia). Unique achievement.



# RHODESIË ONTPLOOIING



## G & A KOMPANIE, 1 VALSKERMBATALJON: OPS (16 OKT 79 – 01 DES 79)

Deur Jan Bierman (2020)

A en G Kompanie was in Bloemfontein gestasioneer op Renoldskop, De Brug agv nie voldoende akkomodasie in die Basis in Tempe. A Kompanie was besig met eie opleiding onder leiding van Lt Vion Hatting en Lt Nick van den Berg (2IB) met /SSers Jan Landman as KSM. G Kompanie was nuut gestig met Kapt Bierman as Komp Bev en Sers Pietersen as KSM en besig met integrasie opleiding om almal op dieselfde standaard en bladsy te kry. G Komp het was oa besig met TEIN opleiding.

Op maandag 8 Okt 79 word Kapt Bierman na die 1 Valsk Bn HK ontbied. Hy word om 15:00 verwittig dat hy die aand per trein na Pretoria vertrek om Kmdt Archie Moore by D Opl in Pretoria te ontmoet. Dinsdag oggend (9 Okt 79) op die Pta stasie haal 'n drywer hom en neem hom na D Ops kantore waar Kmdt Moore hom kortliks inlig en verwys om by Kol G Kruys (Kmdmt N Tvl, SSO Ops) te rapporteer vir detail opdragte. Kol Kruys ontvang my met vriendelikheid, ons drink eers koffie waarna hy my in detail voorlig. Toe hy klaar is vra hy of ek enige vrae het. Ek versoek om 'n lugverkenning te gaan doen indien moontlik nog daardie middag. Hy reel alles en om 14:00 vlieg ek na Madimbo met 'n kudu vliegtuig verken Mabilique omgewing en land op Madimbo. Daar word geskakel met die Basis Bevelvoerder en van sy staf veral die log element bevelvoerder. Reelings word getref dat as ons (A & G Kompanie) nie die dag (Ma/Di 15/16 Oktober 1979 met 'n oefen sprong op Mabilique kan inspring nie, ons op Madimbo sal land en dat die Log afdeling ons met voertuie na Mabilique sal vervoer. Ons vlieg ongeveer 17:00 en land op Pietersburg vir brandstof aanvulling. Ons eet langs die vliegtuig op die aanloopbaan want die vlieënier het vir ons ete gereel. (Ek was vrek honger want het net beskuit en koffie op die trein en koffie by Kol Kruys gehad vir die dag.

Ek was ingeboek in die Manhattan Hotel in Pta naby die stasie. Met my aankoms daar vind ek 'n boodskap dat my pa in 'n kliniek in Pta is vir mediese toetse. Woensdag was Krugerdag (10 Okt 79) en ek besoek hom die oggend en middag. Na ete die aand gaan sit ek in my kamer met die ontsaglike taak om logistieke behoeftes op te stel vir beide A en G Kompanie vir die opleidings fase asook die ontplooiings fases daarna. Die behoeftes moet insluit stig van n basis, kombuis gerei, rantsoene, ammunisie vir opleiding en die Opse asook 1ste lyn reserwe. Ek het geen

hulpmiddel by my en vind dit eintlik 'n "tall" order maar daar is nie 'n keuse of uitweg nie. Om 03:30 gaan slaap ek met lyste wat ek voel die werk sal doen.

Donderdagoggend is dit ek en Log Ops (Maj Dirk van Niekerk loggie ook Valskerm gekwalifiseer). Ons ken mekaar en ek oorhandig die lyste aan hom. Ek vra dat hy moet help en byvoeg as hy sien ek het iets vergeet. Nou is dit weer terug Bloemfontein toe om waarskuwings orders uit te reik aan beide kompanies en weer terug met die drywers wat ons voorrade per pad na Mabilique moet neem vanaf Pretoria. Ek is gelukkig en kan 'n geleentheid kry met n Cesna wat Bloemfontein toe vlieg. Ons sou tussen 12:00 en 14:00 gevlieg het. Ek reel met beide Komps se staf vir Waarskuwings Order 16:00 by die Bataljon HK en met my vrou dat ek net vinnig by die woonstel sal verby kom om te eet oppad stasie toe. Daar is 'n vertraging want hulle wag vir die Vlossie en daar is 'n persoon wat saam vlieg Bloem toe. Ons vlieg laat en my senuwees is op want tyd is nie aan my kant nie. By die HK aangekom stuur ek die voertuig met die drywers stasie toe dat hulle betyds is. EK gee vinnig Waarskuwings Orders met ons mag wat op 15/16 Okt 79 vanaf Bloemspruit invlieg na Mabilique vir 'n oefensprong, opleiding en Opse in Rhodesië. Ek jaag en ry selfs oor n paar rooi robotte om net betyds by die stasie aan te kom toe die fluitjie blaas vir die trein om te vertrek. Ek hardloop en die drywers gryp my en trek die trein in. My aandete is "history".

Vrydagoggend 12 Oktober 79 kom ek en die drywers in Pretoria aan. Ons word deur Log Ops (Maj Dirk van Niekerk se manne) afgehaal op die stasie. Ek en Kapt Dirk hou vergadering oorhandig aan hom die drywers, gee telefonies terugvoer aan Kol Kruys en is weer aangewese om per geleentheid of per vliegtuig of indien nie anders per trein terug te gaan Bloemfontein toe.

Daar word orders gegee en die kompanies berei voor om Dinsdag 16 Oktober 79 per lug na Mabilique te ontplooi. Gedurende die naweek het onderhoude lede in Pretoria gehelp om ons voorrade te laai saam met die drywers.

Ons vlieg die oggend vroeg vanaf Bloemspruit met volle uitrusting, rantsoene vir 2 dae en eerste lyn ammu. Kan nie meer onthou of dit die Maandag of Dinsdag was nie. Ons vlieg hoë hoogte en by Pietersburg daal ons na "boom" hoogte. Ons maak gereed om te spring maar die

weer en wind is baie sleg. Ons is meer in die lug in die vliegtuig en druk nulle op sy vloer soos die vliegtuig stamp. Ons kan nie bekostig om enige verliese met ons sprong te hê nie aangesien elke man nodig is vir die operasies wat voorlê. Ons kry stop drop aangesien die risiko te groot was vir die springers en ons land op Madimbo. Dankie plan B tree in werking. Die troepe word op die verste punt vanaf die basis afgelaai en moet daar wag. EK stap oor na die Basis Bevelvoerder en die loggies word getaak om ons te vervoer.

Op Mabilique is dit nat want dit reën af en toe. Die kompanies word verantwoordeliksgebied toegeken en nou moet ons wag vir ons konvooi. Intussen word daar gewerk aan die waterpomp en pype na die enkel gebou daar.



**Bo:** Dit is koud en die weer speel nie saam nie. / Hier is van die staflede besig met 'n stoei wedstryd om die pype aan mekaar te kry. / Regs. Die potte was nie skoon nie maar was vinnig bruikbaar skoon gemaak

Dit is vrydagoggend 19 Oktober 79 en hier kom ons eerste voertuie aan. Wat 'n verligting en almal help gretig om af te laai. Die 250 man kombuis



Hier lê n paar manne in die sinkbaddens en afkoel.

Gepraat van nat en dit was nat en jy kan nêrens heen. Die troepe lê maar in hulle bivvies. Daar is geen geluid van die konvooi nie en ons wag maar in spanning. Almal was voorgelig om hulle 48 rantsoen spaarsaam te gebruik en dat dit moontlik met nog 48 uur verleng moet hou. Die konvooi is krities maar ons het geen koms met hulle nie.



moet ssm operasioneel gekry word en kos verskaf aan die troepe. Die basis kry gestalte soos wat die voertuie aankom. Sommige van die toerusting moes ook eers behoorlik geskrop en skoon gemaak word alvorens ons dit kon gebruik word.

Die weer het ook opgeklaar en die hitte was erg. Die somer temperatuur daar is gemiddeld tussen 32 – 43 grade Celsius. Wanneer dit warm is en daar was 'n afdydjie het van die instruksies dit wel deeglik gebruik.

Daar word opleidings programme opgestel en hard met opleiding begin. Daar word skakeling gedoen met Messina Sub-Militêre-Gebied en inligting word opgedateer. Ek beweeg in die nag 02:00 oor die grens in 'n gemerkte voertuig en gaan deur sonder enige stop of vraë. Ek besoek Kapt Charlie Farndell van 1 Independence Company, 1 RAR by Crusader Basis net oos van die grenspos aan die Rhodesië kant van die grens.

Hier word inligting uitgeruil, beplanning gedoen vir die gesamentlike / integrasie opleiding en die daaropvolgende gebiedsoperasie (Ops Storing II). Daar word 'n Kommando vlieënier met sy vliegtuig aangevra om in die daarop volgende week 'n verkenningsvlug te doen met myself, Vion Hatting en Nic van den Berg noord van die gebied wat vir die gebiedsoperasie geïdentifiseer is.

Die volgende week besoek ons weer die basis vir ons lugverkenning. 'n Vlieënier land op die aanloopbaan langs die basis. Toe ons opstyg rattle die vliegtuig vir 'n vale en voel dit of hy uitmekaar gaan val. Die vlieënier kyk ons net so met ons groot oe en se 'Don't worry she is safe and I fly her for many years'. Ons identifiseer 'n pad Oos – Wes parallel met die rivier maar etlike kilometers in as 'n stoplyn waarop 'n dekrag valskerm manne kan gooi met valskerms om enige vlug van vyand in daardie rigting af te sny. Die

veemag sal vanaf die krokodil rivier noordwaarts vee tot by die stopper groep.

Daar word gereël dat die Rhodesiese Kompanie ook in die vroeë oggend ure oor die brug geneem sal word in bruin nutria oorpakke en boshoeë. Die oorpakke en boshoeë is gereël via die Log kanaal en so word die operasie weer uitgevoer waar die een nag om 02:00 die voertuie oor is om die volgende nag die lede dieselfde tyd oor te bring. Gumbu myn (Nie meer aktief nie) is die gesamentlike opleidings en samesmeltings gebied geïdentifiseer. Daar word gereël met Kapt Charlie Farndell om aan almal die inligtings en terrein voorligting te gee aangesien dit sy verantwoordelike gebied is en hy dit goed ken.

Maj Chris le Roux sluit van Bloemfontein by ons aan en deel ons mee dat hy die Ops Bevelvoerder vir die Operasie is en dat Kapt Bierman nou die Basis Bevelvoerder is.

Daar is drie groepe wat die krokodil rivier op verskillende plekke moet oorsteek vir die operasie. Op D-1 met laastelig (03 Nov 79) stap die veemag oor die riviere 'n vorm langs die rivier op en OP's beweeg in posisies by hulle verskillende plekke



**Links: Hier stap die Veemag/OP's laatmiddag D-1 deur die Krokodilrivier om anderkant op te stel vir D dag. /**

**Regs: Die hui van Kapt Charlie Farndell in sy "RSA drag" met sy voorligting. Maj Le Roux sit links van die operasie seilstoel. / Hier sit A & G Kompanie asook die 1 Independence Coy, 1 RAR geïntegreer.**



Gesamentlike opleiding is gedoen in patrollie formasies, onmiddellike handelings drills, helikopter drills en OP's in detail asook radio prosedures.

om te [redacted] die oggend van D-dag [redacted] (79) spring die eers [redacted] na die tweede groep op die stoplyn (Pad). Die inligting verskaf was baie belowend maar was nie korrek nie.

Daar is 2 x AK47 gewere, 'n stokgranaat, borswebbing en ammunisie gevind. Die operasie was eintlik 'n anti-klimaks vir die troepe.



Gedurende hierdie tydperk is daar 'n aantal verliese:

- a. 1 x Enkelligamente geskeur tydens landing in stoppergroep en landing in doringboom. Afgevoer na 1 Mil Hosp, Pta (G Komp).
- 4 x Uitputting (A Komp).

- b. 3 x Uitputting (G Komp).

Min water was 'n groot probleem vir die troepe.

Beide Kompanies word onttrek terug na Mabilique na die Op wat eindig op 09 Nov 79. Ons onttrek toe na Madimbo basis.

### MADIMBO BASIS (10 – 11 NOV 79)

G Kompanie kry twee dae rus om klere te was en laag te lê.



Hier was ek klere. / Hier sit Maj Le Roux ("Zapata")



A Kompanie word gelig vanaf Madimbo op 10/11 No 79 terug na Bloemfontein waar hulle 7 dae pas

kry en dan na Sektor 10, Oshakati vertrek vir verdere grensdiens.

### FIRE FORCE OPERASIES

G Kompanie bly agter en verskuif na Madimbo waar hulle opleiding ontvang van twee 2 RAR offisiere oor die tydperk 12 – 14 November 79. Kapt Bierman is die "Fire Force" Bevelvoerder en voer G Komp soos normaal aan. Maj Le Roux word nou die Basis Bevelvoerder. 'n

Persoon wat meer as sy kant gebring het om ons operasies te ondersteun was Maj Dirk van Niekerk van D Ops (Log Ops). Ek het verskeie addisionele behoeftes vir hom deurgestuur wat in ongelooflike tyd bevredig is so is die "Fire Force" Bevelvoerder tipe kaartsak een voorbeeld.

### RUTENGA (15 – 18 NOV 79)

G Komp ontplooi 15 – 18 Nov 79 by Rutenga. Gedurende hierdie tyd reën dit geweldig en geen uitroepe vind plaas nie. Op 18 Nov 79 word die reaksie mag uitgeroep maar niks word gevind.

Dit is warm en rus gedurende die warmste ure van die dag is belangrik want dan rus die vyand ook en energie moet gespaar word vir kontakte.



Links: Hier sit ek onder die "boom" en rus. / Daar word gerus in die hitte



### MABALAUTA (19 – 25 NOV 79)

G Komp herontplooi na Mabalauta oor die tydperk 19 – 25 Nov 79 en sluit by Taakmag Zulu aan onder bevel van Kmdt Roland de Vries. Hier is weereens gemengde welslaë. Ons word uitgestuur na 'n plek waar 60 vyandelikes hulle wil oorgee volgens 'n gevangene. Niks word gevind. G Komp word nou gebruik om "POVOS aan te keer en terug te neem na PV's (Protected Villages") Verskeie is opgespoor en gevange geneem en terug na PV's geneem.

Ons word uitgeroep na 'n kontak wat op 'n OP plaasgevind het. Die gebied word gevee en 1 x vyand wat gesneuwel het word gevind met 1 x PPSH en 1 x SKS geweer. 'n Groot offensief word geloods op 'n vyandelike basis wat volgens 'n gevangene op 19 Nov 79 nog beman was. Die basis word opgespoor maar geen tekens van die vyand nie. Is 'n geruime tyd reeds ontruim.

### RUTENGA (26 – 30 NOV 79)

Maj Le Roux vertrek op 27 Nov 79 terug Bloemfontein toe. Kol Jan Breytenbach sluit by ons aan met 'n 44 Valskerm Brigade Kompanie.

Reaksiemag word aan Kol Breytenbach hulle oorhandig en op 30 Nov 79 word G Komp met twee Dakota vliegtuie vanaf Rutenga na Madimbo uitgevlieg.

### Madimbo (1 Des 79)

Saterdag 1 Desember 1979. Die MP skud die Komp en ons word om ongeveer 08:10 terug gevlieg Bloemfontein toe.

### Renoldskop, De Brug Opleidings Gebied, Bloemfontein.

Gedurende die volgende week (3 Des 79) kry G Kompanie 7 dae pas en vertrek huis toe vir 'n blaas kans.



### MABALAUTA THE VALLEY OF THE ANTS

In mid 1978, then a Signal instructor at the Army Gymnasium, I was detached to 5 Reconnaissance Commando (5 RC) for service with them in Mabalauta, Rhodesia. We were stationed next to the airfield in Mabalauta from where members of SAS D Squadron were deployed into Mozambique. I was responsible for all communication to the front and rear back to Salisbury/Pretoria. It was my first learning phase with the Recces and after my second deployment with them, I was transferred to 5 RC as the first ever signaller NCO to Special Forces.

The December of 1978 I moved to Durban and a month later to Dukuduku in Zululand.

In September 1980 the OC called me in on a Friday afternoon and informed me that I was on the basic para course that starting the Monday in early September.

**Photo right top**, is me in Mabalauta. Second photo is me and a Dr King as escorts for an American hunter to shoot an elephant with the local Parks Board. **Below**: Recce's shooting practice in the river next to Mabalauta. On the left Mozambique.

**Dukubat**





## COMBAT TRACKERS (ANGOLA)

Parabat General Heitor Almendra has always been a visionary, an officer committed to modernize the Parabat troops, without fear of taking risks and always an enthusiast to experience valences that brought added value, it was like this during the African Wars and it would remain even after the 25 April 1974 coup, when the rebuilding of Parabat troops in 1975 began by sending their officers and sergeants abroad to modernize and bring new knowledge.

Retreating a few years back, at the end of 1968, its the then Major Almendra, together with Captain (Pilot) Caldas, invited to make a military visit to South Rhodesia. During his visit, Almendra comes across the 2nd independent Coy of combat trackers of the Rhodesian Armed Forces, basically the trackers were small groups of "Counter Infiltration" that read on the ground (and beyond!), if there had been infiltration of enemies, they read on the ground how long ago they had passed, and how many elements they were, immediately starting their pursuit.

Showing a lot of enthusiasm and curiosity, and believing that it would be useful for the type of War, which Portugal faced in its African territories.

He is invited again in January 1969 to travel to Rhodesia to attend a Tracker Internship course.

On his return to BCP 21 he submits several proposals, for the formation of Parabat trackers, receiving all the support and interest of the Parabat units and the Air Force.

Thus in 1970, Captain Parabat Loureiro Costa and Sergeant Parabat António "Cerejo" Fernandes are sent to Rhodesia and successfully attend the Combat Trackers Course at the School of Infantry - Gwelo.

After qualifying they start to administer two courses at the Parabat Hunter Battalion 21 (BCP 21)

INSTRUCTORS COURSE / MONITOR TRACKERS

TRACKING COURSE

Lasting four weeks, and similar to the Rhodesian course, IT had the following instruction chapters:

- 1 week of theoretical classes (at the barracks)
- 3 weeks of practical classes (nearby the barracks of BCP 21)
- 1 week of "real practice" (Quinta das Arcas - Quitexe).

Being this specialty exclusive to Portuguese Parabat troops, and due to the success of it, it is in mid-1972 open to the three branches of the armed forces, and courses are given by Parabat instructors to the Portuguese Army Commandos, the Portuguese Marines, the Portuguese Navy, and the local forces of Angola (FLECHAS, GE). It

was decided by the military chiefs, that any soldier deployed to overseas service with this specialty, was entitled to a extra monthly grant of 400 escudos (1972).

About 10 combat courses were given up to April 1974, always organized by Parabat troops.

In mid-1972, the Special Centre for Counter Infiltration (CECI) is implemented in AM 33 Toto, with mixed units of AL-III Helicopters and Parabat trackers, later transformed into the Tactical Unit of Counter-Infiltration (ICU), There were never any tracker companies, but rather groups of Parabat Trackers at most 40 men.

"We managed to install that unit in Toto in early 72. There was a great opposition from the army, which did not want that unit to interfere with the operating areas of sectors and wanted to depend on their respective commandos. But it couldn't be done because it was special operations undertaken by people who dominated this new counter-infiltration technique.

Intelligence was collected by the CECIs and the units that were in the grid and that was not simple, because they wanted to harvest the fruit of their effort, they wanted the results for themselves. Because of this we were sometimes supplied with the intelligence late. (General Almendra) "SALTO DE RÃ" (Frog Jump) Military tactic designed and executed by the Parabat Hunter Battalion 21:

"In this type of operation, Tracker employment is essential, as it is them who detect the movement of enemy columns.

In each "frog jump" the passage to guerrillas is shorten, which will allow the fresh combat groups to make contact and engage the enemy'.

Basically, as the Trackers found guerrillas movements, parabat fighting groups were deployed and trackers dropped by helicopter kms further ahead, and after further tracking a new fighting group was put in place, sticking the MPLA groups in real traps and constant pressure, resulting in whole groups of guerrillas being caught.

Very successful operations were carried out by parabat company combat groups and always supported by helicopter gunships.

Operations of this scale were also carried out, with combined combat groups of parabat companies and Commando companies.

The first Tracker operation.

"Lt Col Almada, at the controls of his helicopter gunship over the area has full view of the action, which takes place for the first time with Parabat trackers, headed by the squirt and fire hunger Sergeant Major Antonio "Cerejo" Fernandes with

the helicopter above telling him constantly to track and follow the enemy movements.

It's a persistent and almost fierce pursuit, in which Tracker Sergeant Major Antonio Fernandes, an inexhaustible source of energy, looks for traces in the terrain, inside the forest and in the various crossing places of rivers.

The intrepid Fernandes and his men, with rifles fire ready, look in every direction.

A cunning smile surpasses Fernandes's face when he finally finds the first tracks of footprints left on the ground by a group of guerrillas moving northwest. A Parabat Combat Group is dropped there right away.

Later news confirms that the MPLA squadron and its carriers had given up the infiltration through that border with the Republic of Zaire.

The echoes of the success of the operation, however, come further.

Up to the Commander-in-Chief General Costa Gomes In the debriefing carried out with the military engaged in that operation he radiantly, says:

Well done to you! It was brilliant! This was operation I would have liked to personally have commanded. From today the access light to my office will always be green for you "

Photo 1- Tracker in operation (photo taken from the 35th anniversary magazine of the Parabat troops).

Photo 2-Sergeant António "Cerejo" Fernandes, considered by many the "Master" of the Trackers being awarded the military value medal with palm, he would also be promoted to officer by distinction in combat, he died few months ago with the rank of Parabat Lt Colonel.

Small snippet of the military valour medal commendation:

"It should also be noted, his performance during operation "Coca" in which, in addition to identifying with mastery and dexterity the enemy's trail, he commanded his combat group with tactical sense, inflicting massive guerrilla losses and seizing valuable enemy weapons,

all while at serious risk of his own life, he did not hesitate to jump off the helicopter alone and throw himself out in the open pursuit of the enemy group commander, who he imprisoned ".

Note: We can't forget all the valuable Trackers who served with the Parabats, the name of all who served on the Tracker's teams are not known to the author of this text due to lack of records available:

Captain Loureiro Costa

Sergeant Rocha Cruz

Sergeant Morgado

Sergeant Nogueira

Sergeant Pedro Rasgado

Sergeant Sofio

**(Sources consulted:**

Magazine 35 years of Parabat Troops by Miguel Machado and Sucena Carmo.

'The last Warriors of the Empire' by Erasmus.

The Paras in the War by Joaquim Mensurado.

Parabats in Combat 1961/1975 by Nuno Mira Vaz).

**Pedro Castanheira**

(FB: Forgotten Heroes / The Portuguese contribution to the defence of Africa.)



## 7 MEDICAL BATTALION



Non medical members, cycle qualified (with wreath); MO (Medical Officer); Psychologist; OECP (Ops Medic Blic).



## RED INDIAN PARABAT



The man you're looking at is 2nd Lt. Billy Walkabout, a Cherokee of the Blue Holly Clan.

Walkabout served as an Army Ranger in Vietnam, in the Company F, 58th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division. Walkabout (then Specialist Four) distinguished himself on 20 November 1968 during a long range reconnaissance patrol southwest of Hue.

After successfully ambushing an enemy squad on a jungle trail, the friendly patrol radioed for immediate helicopter extraction. When the extraction helicopters arrived and the lead man began moving toward the pick-up zone, he was seriously wounded by hostile automatic weapons fire. Sergeant Walkabout quickly rose to his feet and delivered steady suppressive fire on the attackers while other team members pulled the wounded man back to their ranks. Sergeant Walkabout then administered first aid to the soldier in preparation for medical evacuation. As the man was being loaded onto the evacuation helicopter, enemy elements again attacked the team.

Maneuvering under heavy fire, Sergeant Walkabout positioned himself where the enemy were concentrating their assault and placed continuous rifle fire on the adversary. A command-detonated mine ripped through the friendly team, instantly killing three men and wounding all the others. Although stunned and wounded by the blast, Sergeant Walkabout rushed from man to man administering first aid, bandaging one soldier's severe chest wound and reviving another



soldier by heart massage. He then coordinated gunship and tactical air strikes on the enemy's positions. When evacuation helicopters arrived again, he worked single-handedly under fire to board his disabled comrades. Only when the casualties had been evacuated and friendly reinforcements had arrived, did he allow himself to be extracted.

This is one of his many actions. His bravery earned him 1 Distinguished Service Cross, 5 Silver Stars, 10 Bronze Stars (5 with V Device) and 6 Purple hearts; making him one of the most decorated Native American soldier of the Vietnam War; retiring as a 2nd Lt.

He died in 2007 at the age of 57 due to Agent Orange. **(Internet)**



## HOW SA PARATROOPS DESTROYED A REBEL GROUP AND DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IT !

Two parachute assaults, both in May 1978, some 1 500 kms apart led to the destruction of an African independence movement, the Front de liberation nationale congolaise, (FLNC) or National Front for the Liberation of Congo, without the attackers knowing about it.

The group was led by Nathaniel Mbumba, a former member of the so-called "Katangese Gendarmes", an armed group that had supported Moise Tshombe's secessionist Katanga movement in 1960. After they were defeated by UN forces in 1963, many fled to Angola in 1967, where they were unpopular, seen as "sell-outs" to the Colonial powers.

Some reports say the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) rebels confined

them to barracks, others that they fought the Portuguese. Both may be true.

After Angolan independence in 1975, the MPLA got them to join in its fight against the other independence movements, so they were now seen as "revolutionary heroes" and received Soviet weapons and Eastern Bloc training. They even were reported to have "political commissars" with them, an unavoidable part of Eastern Bloc military doctrine.

The FLNC's demise is a story of two airborne attacks and two narratives which were important during the Cold War. The first was the South African Defence Force's (SADF's) attack on Cassinga, in southern Angola on 4 May 1978, the second was a joint French-Belgian attack on Zaire's mining town of Kolwezi two weeks later.

The FLNC committed atrocities in Kolwezi, which were well covered by international media, and this meant a face-saving move was needed by the Angolan/Cuban/Soviet side. This would cost the FLNC its existence.

In early May 1978, the SADF's intelligence believed Cassinga was the key forward base for People's Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN – the military wing of the South West Africa People's Organisation) guerrillas to infiltrate South West Africa (now Namibia). The airborne attack on Cassinga was part of three strikes against PLAN targets inside Angola codenamed Operation Reindeer. Two of them were relatively close to the SWA/Namibia border. These were carried out by mechanised infantry against Target Bravo ("Vietnam Base" at Chetequera and Dombondola) while 32 Battalion attacked Target Charlie (bases near the border). Target Alpha was aimed at what the SADF believed to be the PLAN command centre at Cassinga, codenamed "Moscow Base" by the PLAN. Incidentally, the mechanised infantry attack saw the first use of the Ratel Infantry Fighting Vehicle.

Cassinga was first hit by SAAF Buccaneer and Canberra bombers, then some 370 South African "Parabats" dropped onto the town in two waves and while serious errors occurred during the jump, they were able to form up and advance onto the objective. Cuban mechanised forces based at nearby Techamute counter-attacked, but were kept away from the base by the Anti-Tank Platoon and SAAF aircraft. Having fought against PLAN guerrillas using heavy machine guns and anti-aircraft cannon in the ground role, the paratroopers were extracted by helicopter the same day.

The other event was the French-Belgian parachute attack on the town of Kolwezi on 19 and 20 May. The French Operation Bonite-Léopard jointly with the Belgian Operation Red Bean took place when Zairean leader Joseph-Désiré Mobutu called for assistance after some 3-4 000 FLNC rebels (also referred to as "Tigers") invaded Katanga (Shaba) Province from Zambia, which they reached from Angola wearing civilian clothes. They then changed into military fatigues and crossed Zaire's southern border heading straight for the key mining and transportation hub of Kolwezi.

They had control of the town within a short time and on the 16th, Zairean paratroops made a failed attempt to eject them. Following this, however, the FLNC captured thousands of European contractors (mainly French and Belgian) and many more local people. These they held hostage.

Mobutu then turned to other African nations, as well as the former colonial power, Belgium, as well as France.

The French were the first off the mark, sending in the 2nd Foreign Legion Parachute Regiment in two waves. US aircraft flew the Legionnaires from Calvi on the island of Corsica to the Zairean capital Kinshasa on the night of 17/18 May. The next day, the first wave of the Legionnaires (381 men and their equipment) were dropped from five Zairean C-130s and a French C-160 Transall. On the 20th, another 281 Legionnaires and their equipment were dropped on the town. These were followed by Belgian Para commandos days later, who reached the town from Kolwezi airport.

The French concentrated on clearing the town and rescuing hostages, while the Belgians worked on creating a safe corridor to get people to the airport for medical attention or back to Europe.

It was then that journalists were allowed into the town and witnessed massacred bodies of both European contract workers and local people. Some 170 Europeans and 700 Africans had been killed (exact numbers are unavailable).

What linked this to the wider context of the Cold War were claims to the media by survivors that they had seen Cuban advisors among the FLNC fighters. US President Jimmy Carter accused Cuba of playing a "behind-the-scenes" role in the invasion which was followed by a vehement denial by Cuba's Fidel Castro. (Declassified CIA documents show the Agency was fully aware of Cuban and East German training of the FLNC and the documents name the towns where the training took place, including Luacano, Chicapa and others. These are near the Angolan-Zairean border.)

A senior Cuban official complained to Angola's president, Agostinho Neto that while the "brutal attack by the racists" had gained Angola international sympathy, being seen as a launching pad for aggression against its neighbour eroded it. He added: "The Katangans have given a great gift to the imperialists."

Following the SADF assault on Cassinga, Angola's MPLA initially broadcast that their troops had shot down a Mirage but lost 16 soldiers with 64 wounded. SWAPO also initially claimed a victory. Speaking at an international conference in Switzerland, spokesman Peter Katjavivi said PLAN had killed 40 South African paratroopers and shot down three aircraft. In a subsequent publication, SWAPO had PLAN accounting for 102 paratroopers and three SAAF Mirages.

But as the accounts of the well-documented FLNC massacres became known, as well as the alleged Angola-Cuban links, the SWAPO story

changed dramatically. SWAPO's next publication spoke of "cold-blooded murder of innocent and unarmed refugees" and "a murderous and destructive attack against defenceless Namibian refugees", and the term "massacre" began being used, with claims of nerve gas and a substance likely referring to napalm being made.

In the midst of this and subsequent claims and counter-claims, it is impossible to know how many PLAN soldiers were actually killed, and how many non-combatants died. The lower counts are between 300 and 600 SWAPO fighters and 350 to 465 non-combatants. Most of the civilians appear to have died in the bombing before the paratrooper drop. Cuba also lost some 150 men and numerous armoured vehicles in the SAAF counterattack. The SADF lost four paratroopers and 11 wounded.

So despite the embarrassment suffered by Cuba, Angola and the Communist Bloc generally as a result of the FLNC's behaviour, they had been handed a gift with the attack on Cassinga, which perhaps they had not seen quite as clearly until the Kolwezi atrocities.

After 20 May, the Soviet and East German sources spoke of human rights violations with a

vengeance, and while even a former MK operative at Cassinga said it had been a major blow to SWAPO's supply and organisation, it was a public relations disaster for South Africa.

Still, the FLNC would also pay a price. Hardly two months later, the superpowers pressured Angola and Zaire to agree to a peace deal in which neither would back rebel movements against the other. The FLNC were repatriated to Zaire, with Mbumba imprisoned by Mobutu. Zaire also closed FNLA, FLEC and UNITA bases. Both would live on to fight again, but the FNLA and FLNC were finished.

One has to wonder if the South African "Parabats" or the Foreign Legionnaires had any idea that their parachute descents would ultimately cause the demise of two African liberation movements?

**Written by Chris Szabo -  
16th Sep 2020**

[https://www.defenceweb.co.za/military-history/how-sa-paratroops-destroyed-a-rebel-group-and-didnt-even-know-it/?fbclid=IwAR2kFMNkapfE\\_jXF3FNt27sR8ZuxkfLhO20\\_kyfzySFp-Xf1UrkR2BqcZuw](https://www.defenceweb.co.za/military-history/how-sa-paratroops-destroyed-a-rebel-group-and-didnt-even-know-it/?fbclid=IwAR2kFMNkapfE_jXF3FNt27sR8ZuxkfLhO20_kyfzySFp-Xf1UrkR2BqcZuw)



## **HANGAR TRAINING 1979 – A LANGUAGE PROBLEM A GRUELLING TWO WEEKS**

**Graeme A. Jurisch. A Company 1979/80.**

It was 19h10 and already dark when I finally sat on my bed in a somewhat subdued bungalow to inspect my blistered feet after our 4<sup>th</sup> day of the infamous two week Parabat PT course. The body was sore and aching all over from the multitude of punishment, strain and exertion it was subjected to during this huge personal challenge I had accepted to try and achieve the status of becoming a South African airborne soldier. The facial expressions on the young men still remaining on the course was sombre, as each was fighting their own mental battle with the will to carry on and somehow justify this exceptional physical demand on the body and mind.

The Battalion had split the troops remaining after basics into two separate groups, as the hangar had limited capacity to successfully accommodate the basic parachuting training of the troops.

On one of the beds within ear-shot was an English speaking soldier who had already passed the PT course two weeks ago and was now busy with his second week of the three week jumping course.

As he was about to leave our bungalow, I asked him what the hangar training was like and whether it was as much fun as it seemed to be, as we sprinted past the hangar to take on the dreaded parachute pack house. With an enormous smile on his face, he said that it was unbelievably fun and almost like an adult jungle gym, with loads of excitement on each of the different training apparatus and that the adrenalin rush when exiting the door of the plane was indescribable. He then said, "You must try get into the stick with the American Sergeant, as all the instruction is done in English"!

### **Not for the faint heart-hearted**

Motivated to look forward to the jumping phase of our Parabat training, the rest of the PT course seemed to fly by without too many physical problems, as the mental attitude was positive and confident while the mind entered zombie mode. A good example was our second Thursday after lunch: we were assembled on the parade ground and instructed to fetch a telephone pole with just two troops to a pole. On returning to the parade ground, the team leader of the PT course (standing proud with his arms folded and thumbs

stuck under the armpits) said that our last event before tomorrow's final tests would be to complete 21 kilometre with the poles and be back at the Battalion within two and a half hours. Failing to do so would result in being dropped from the course and embarrassingly returned to our previous Units. He then asked if anyone would rather throw-in the towel immediately and spare ourselves the hassle of giving up along the run. Three troops then stepped forward and stood by the team leader. He again asked everyone assembled in front of him whether they would like to give-up now rather than during the run. No one moved this time. He slowly looked around into the tired faces which stood before him for a few seconds, which seemed like minutes, and then he turned to the one instructor.

"Take these three troops names, and ensure they are RTU'd. The rest of you: take the poles back and prepare yourselves for tomorrow's final tests."

Make no bones about it, those two weeks are extremely tough, both physically and mentally, with additional demands to test your personal endurance. It was definitely not for the faint-hearted.

### Hangar training at last

Monday morning, excited, we stood wide-eyed in front of the Hangar with our neatly washed smocks, ready for the exhilarating second phase of our training to qualify for the prestigious wings and to wear the iconic maroon beret. On so many occasions during the past 10 weeks of our basic training, I had wondered if this day would ever arrive, the day I could join the true soldiers who had earned the right to wear the elite maroon beret in our battalion.

But first, I had to get through the next three weeks of uncharted discipline, and I met it with apprehension mixed with a healthy dose of fear factor.

We were instructed to sit on the thick mats that lined the cold concrete floor of the Hangar. The Officer in charge of the training greeted us in a friendly manner and welcomed us to this unique training facility. The Sergeant Major, in charge of the actual training and instruction, was then introduced with a long list of unbelievable achievements: the number of static line jumps and free-fall jumps he had undertaken, and the number of troops trained under his watchful eye. He ran through the training programme and the instruction goals for the next week, and then he asked for 10 volunteers to join the American instructor who will be conducting the training in English. I had already seen Sergeant Pessara proudly riding up to the hangar on his motorbike every morning while we were being drilled by our instructors on the parade ground during basics. In a flash I got up and

sprinted to the area indicated by Sergeant Major Kieser. As I sat in a row behind the American, I wondered whether the old adage "never volunteer for anything" would come back to haunt me.

The Hangar training was fun and exciting, with a change in apparatus every hour, moving between slides, mat rolls, hook up, two step, equipment checks, exit drills, flight drills, mock up and the dreaded block and tackle, which was the last test before the actual first jump.

One day, during flight and emergency drills, while strapped into a badly-fitted harness, Sgt Pessara would call "parachute to front" and while hanging in the harness we had to perform the spread eagle position, then "wall to the left" or "trees to the right", and execute the emergency drill accordingly. With my mind increasingly on the harness, which by now was squeezing my crown jewels to an unbearable and uncomfortable level, inevitably I heard 'back left' when he demanded an emergency drill to the back right. Without warning, he gripped my harness and jumped up with his face two inches from mine, and he swore at me in his best American accent. I heard very little, and remember only in that moment that his breath needed refreshing and his two left side molars had fillings. After that episode, I ensured the harness fitted me perfectly before allowing the chair to be removed, and avoided any more harness malfunctions while hanging under your own weight.

### First flight

I recall the Wednesday morning we learnt how to stand in a line and pass the chutes and reserves to pack into the trailer behind the Bedford trucks before we headed off on the start /stop route through Bloemfontein city centre to Bloemspuit airport. This was to be our designated test flight or, as it is also known, the 'test fright', since this happened to be the first encounter of some troops' with an aeroplane, quite aside from their first time flying in one.

That day I realised two very important facts. First, it doesn't matter how early you start in the morning, you will always have to wait for your turn to jump. Second, being instructed and trained in English was totally inappropriate in the South Africa Parachute Battalion at that time.

At the airport, the senior instructors, all Afrikaans, shouted out instructions and commands which were all understandable. Then we entered the plane, and everything they shouted was unfamiliar and unrecognisable. Starting with the clapping of hands when taking off, which was new to us, followed by "*maak gereed vir aksie*", "*staan op haak op*", "*gaan uitrusting na*", "*verklaar*" and "*staan in die deur*".

## First jump

The big day finally arrived for us to do our first jump. This was what we volunteered for. This was the reward for enduring the 10 weeks of basic training in this elite unit, the reward for the will to push the body and mind to complete the brutal PT course. It seemed a life-time ago that I had passed selection from my initial call up unit in Potchefstroom and, unbeknown to my parents, took the train to Bloemfontein.

Anticipation and excitement was high and the butterflies occupying my stomach was a sign to curb the nerves and alert all the senses. Thinking back, the day was a blur of activity, from loading parachutes into trailers, fitting chutes, recording personal and chute details, waiting for our allocated load without a nerve-calming smoke, boarding the Dakota, the take-off, and watching troops disappearing out of the door and the plane banked to begin the long approach for the next four man stick.

Then it was my turn. I was number three in the stick. My heart started racing, but I was trying to stay composed when the despatchers shouted: *“maak gereed vir aksie”*.

We all repeated his instruction then *“staan op haak op”* we all repeated bravely just as the Dakota hit some air turbulence. My legs were rubber trying to counter the planes movement and the weight of the chute on my back. The real skill came with attempting to attach the hook onto the side cable and fitting the safety-pin into the minute hole, while trying not to bash into the other troops still seated in the plane.

As things settled down, we repeated the command from the despatchers: *‘gaan uitrusting na’*. While trying to balance myself and holding the strop of jumper number two in front of me, we checked our own equipment first, shouting out aloud ‘helmet, reserve chute, quick release box, leg straps’, then moving to number two’s kit, six elastic bands, strop free and cleared to the left. *“Verklaar”*, ‘four okay’ slap, ‘three okay’ slap, ‘two okay’ slap, ‘one okay stick okay’.

As we were the first stick of four jumpers instructed in English, and while conducting the equipment check, I noticed the strange facial expressions of the jumpers still seated whose training had been instructed in Afrikaans. (*Watse fokken k&k praat hierdie souties nou?* comes to mind).

*“Maak gereed vir aksie”* and one-two, one-two, one-two we shuffled closer to the noisy door.

Only then did I notice Sergeant Pessara standing at the door ready to dispatch us.

“Stand in the door” One-Two. The green light came on. “One go” and he disappeared while we one-two shuffle stepped closer. “Stand in the

door” and I slid jumper two’s strop forward. “Two go” and he disappeared while I one-two shuffle stepped closer.

“Stand in the door” and I one-two stepped, placed my left hand on the door frame and my right hand over my chest covering the emergency chute. In that split second all my senses came alive, with the smell of fuel, wind whistling past the helmet strap, dry plain landscape stretched out below and the sharp taste of adrenaline.

“Three go” and I saw green paint and rivets passing six inches in front of my face, then wind noise as the chute stretched out in front pulling me along. These moments are forever burnt into my memory. Then there was an unbelievable calmness as my training drills instinctively took over.

I looked up at the canopy and saw that I had 50% twisted lines, so I began to pull the lines apart and kicked vigorously, which seemed like ages until the beauty of the parachute finally opened above me in all its glory. Then, before I could continue with any drills, this voice from out of nowhere shouted, *“Nommer drie, kom in valskerm houding onmiddelik, en maak fokken reg vir landing”*. I immediately obeyed the voice by putting my chin against my chest and my feet together, looked down just as the ground rushed up towards me, and fortunately with a fair amount of luck, I executed a perfect front left landing and roll.

I lay there on the ploughed land for just a moment, looking up into the blue sky, taking in all that had happened in the past few minutes, and wondering at the amazing transition between two totally different worlds: the noisy metal box in the sky to the quiet safe earth below.

I rolled up the chute, forced it into the carry-bag, threw it over my shoulder and ran to the gathering point where Sergeant Major Kieser and his fellow instructors were having coffee. We had to wait for the remaining troops to perform their first jump before we were transported back to the unit for lunch.

What amazed me was to watch each jumper exit the plane and instinctively conduct his drills in the air before preparing for the landing. All the jumping activities from exit to landing were closely observed by the four instructors on the ground, using special binoculars to evaluate the performance of each paratrooper.

## A second chance

After lunch we were all instructed to sit on the mats again where Sergeant Major Kieser read out the names of all the jumpers with good performances (about 10), followed by the names of the troops with bad performances (about 20), and this included me. He said that we needed a

good performance in the next jump to cancel out the bad one we had just had, or we are at risk of falling off the course.

Fortunately I was number one in the stick for the jump the following day, and able to take-in the fuel smell, noisy wind and observe the beauty of the countryside below in full calmness, before being dispatched out the door to enjoy the wonderful excitement I so longed for.

### **From mock-up to reality**

That afternoon we learnt to pack our own personal kit by using the infamous marble we had previously used during the PT course. The packed kit is hooked onto the 'D' ring of the harness located just under the Reserve chute and is released once all the parachute drills have been completed and with no fellow paratroopers below. The legs are drawn backwards, the hooks are released, the kit drops, and dangles below attached by the 20 foot rope.

This all sounds good and well, except that there is a difference between the mock-up training and the actual jump from a C130/C160 with 60 fellow paratroopers all kitted to the hilt trying to 'stand up, fold up the seats, hook up to the overhead wire and inserting the hooks safety pin'. All this while the plane is affected by turbulence, despatches are shouting out instructions above the noise of the engines and the aroma of last night's supper cuts the atmosphere like a knife. That's the reason we are different, disciplined, hardy and deserving of every cent of the allocated jumping allowance.

### **Mixed emotions and a life lesson**

The following day will always remain in my memory for it exposed me to numerous simultaneous emotions which I've never had to deal with before, ranging from embarrassment, humour, dislike and realisation. It was a lesson that we are all different and come from vastly different backgrounds, yet all had similar goals and ambitions while doing our compulsory military training.

Sergeant Pessara marched our stick of 10 to the mock-up which is located on the Aapkas field, each carrying main and reserve dummy chutes as well as our personal kit laden with the 32 kg marble. We lined up inside the mock-up, practicing the drills over and over, with each jumper rotating positions in the stick to ensure all were familiar with the responsibility each position held.

The drill process with position rotation had taken close to forty minutes and we were tired and uncomfortable holding onto the extra kit. Finally we had reached the tenth and last position. The commands were "get ready for action", then "stand up hook up", then "check equipment", and we all

went through the motions of shouting out what we are busy checking and when we finished, we waited for the last and second last jumper to turn around, and for jumper nine to shout out what he was checking on jumper ten's chute.

We stood, waiting for jumper nine's voice to shout out the equipment checks, but all was quiet. Just then, the bell rang from the hangar, indicating that the session was over, and we could depart to the canteen and enjoy a much-needed lunch to boost our energy levels. By now, we all realised that something was wrong. There was paratrooper Crofts, an extremely quiet guy of medium height and a refined physique of pure muscle, sinew and strength, trying to verbalise the chute checks, but unable to because of his serious stutter, which was unbeknown to all of us.

Initially we all thought this was quite humorous, as he tried desperately to say the drill commands required by the instructor, so critically important to the training requirement. Sgt Pessara, with a smirk on his face, made us stand in our stick formation, hanging onto our kit, while Crofts with obvious embarrassment tried to complete the chute check drills. After what seemed an age, I was starting to take strain holding my heavy kit with one hand, while my other hand extended above my head holding the strop. At that point, I started to dislike Crofts intensely and wondered why I was so unfortunate to be in the army at the same time as him. The discomfort and dislike of the other stick members was tangible, and totally focused on Crofts subjecting us to unbelievable torture while the other troops were enjoying lunch and relaxation.

Somehow Crofts finally managed to say the important drill words, and we were relieved of the kit for a brief second before we were marched back to the hangar, where we were able to offload our heavy kit and proceed in double time down to the canteen. As the last troops into the canteen, what was left of the available rations was mostly inedible, except for the bread and jam. Man, we disliked Crofts and barely acknowledged his presence. But that night, while sitting in the bungalow and chatting over the day's events with Tullis and Cheeseman, two other paratroopers in my 'English stick', we realised the tragedy of the occasion, and our dislike of Crofts quickly became re-directed towards Sergeant Pessara, who without a doubt could have shortened that episode if he really wanted to.

Crofts qualified to be an exceptional soldier in our sister 'Golf' company and I heard that he and at the time, Sergeant Pieterse (RIP), were instrumental in stopping a Russian BTR with a grenade launcher.

### Not a natural jumper?

On the last Thursday afternoon of the basic parachute training course in May 1979, SM Kieser read out the names of all the paratroopers who would be participating in the hangar demonstration during our 'Glamour Day' for the parents. He then said that a new pathfinder course which included free-fall would be introduced at the unit and the person required and most suitable must be very athletic and a natural jumper who had good performances during their first jump. Well, that ruled me out immediately, as I was counting fuselage rivets on my introduction to this wonderful and exciting world in the sky.

And then one day, while travelling back to our base camp at Reynoldskop in De Brug, after a

Wednesday sports day, and accompanied by the noisy rattles and diff whine of the over-used and abused Bedford army trucks, I was chatting to a fellow paratrooper about my first jump experience. I told him about my terrible exit, all the twisted lines I had, and the timeous instruction from the voice below. He suddenly gripped my arm and said: "Shit, was it you that was kicked on the ass as you were exiting the plane by that fucking American instructor? I always wondered what your jump was like. Sergeant Passara had this wide arrogant smile on his face after all four of you had disappeared out the door."





## SA PATHFINDERS

### SAFFA: South African Falling Fossil Army Pathfinder Parachute Group South Africa

Although we aren't 'Bats', but rather former SADF, SAP and SA Railways Police, and/or British Forces or Police, everyone in our group had the same goal, namely to learn the use of military round parachutes, and to use them to jump on the same DZ's that the Paras jumped on in 1944/45. This was in order to honour South African soldiers who participated in these operations.

The three main operations were Operation Overlord, the successful invasion on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944 by Allied Forces of Normandy, Operation Market Garden, the daring airborne operation to secure the River Rhine crossings and advance into northern Germany conducted from 17<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> September 1944, and lastly Operation Varsity, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1945 - a successful airborne forces operation involving more than 16,000 paratroopers and several thousand aircraft, it was the largest airborne operation in history to be conducted on a single day and in one location.

Our aim in the first instance was to carry out our training week at the end of March 2020 where we would qualify and attain our Dutch Army B Wings. This was to be followed by the completion of a commemorative jump from a WWII era C47 over the Op Varsity DZ in honour of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that event. The best-laid plans of mice and men come to naught when faced with a deadly virus from the Far East, and our plans were dashed with a national Lockdown preventing any hope of going to Holland.

In 2019 two of our number, Russell Mattushek (ex-SADF Medical Corps), and Steve Moritz (5 SAI and Durban Light Infantry), completed the jump course and participated in the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Arnhem, putting South African "boots on the ground" in honour of South Africa's first paratrooper, Captain David McCombe.

I quote:

#### ***"The Battle of Arnhem***

*David McCombe had never served in the short-lived Paratroop Company. Nevertheless, he remained in demand as a paratrooper. Whether this was due to his special skill as a radio signals officer, or his unquestionable thoroughness as a staff officer, or simply because he had connections in high places, can only be surmised. According to his widow, he was 'recalled' to Britain because of his specialist knowledge. Whatever the reason, McCombe underwent a medical examination at Mobile Air Force (MAF)*

*Depot on 24 March 1944 and on 4 April he emplaned at Swartkop Air Station: destination - Cairo. He arrived there three days later and on 14 April was seconded to the British Army for duty with Headquarters, Airborne Forces. At the same time, he was transferred from the SAAF to the General Service Corps (Volunteer). He had already signed the General Service Oath nearly a year earlier, on 3 May 1943.*

*McCombe soon found himself back in England and on 20 April he was granted paratroop pay of 2/6 per day. No doubt he expected to participate in the D-Day Landings, but that was not to be. By 22 June 1944, with the 6th British Airborne Division having jumped into France ahead of the amphibious landings on 6 June, McCombe had been posted to the 1st British Airborne Division, which had been left behind.*

*He reported to the Divisional Commander, Maj-Gen Roy Urquhart, to take up his appointment as GS03 (Air) at Divisional Headquarters.(36) There he was involved in the planning of airborne operations. Some, such as Operation COMET, never came off. Early in September 1944, however, the real thing occurred: the hurried planning of Operation MARKET-GARDEN, the ill-fated 'Bridge too far'.*

*An officer, thought to be Captain David McCombe, inside the Hartenstein Hotel, Oosterbeek, which housed the Headquarters, 1st Airborne Division, during the Battle of Arnhem*

*On 17 September, McCombe parachuted with the first wave of the division onto a dropping zone near Arnhem in Holland. He was subsequently involved in some of the heaviest fighting in and around the Divisional Headquarters at the Hartenstein Hotel in Oosterbeek. The division was cut off by the Germans when the British link-up force was unable to break through to them. The Allies' bold plan of laying an 'airborne carpet' of three divisions, two American and one British, across the rivers and canals of Holland to enable an armoured force to roll over into Germany, had been thwarted.*



(Photo by courtesy of Mrs Doris McCombe).

*After nine days of almost continuous combat, the division had effectively been annihilated. Only some 2 000 remnants of the 10 000 who had landed succeeded in escaping across the Rhine River to rejoin the Allies. McCombe was one of these. (37) However, he had been injured in the jaw during the fighting, although it did not appear to have been a very serious injury at the time. Four days later, David McCombe was flown back to England where he was immediately hospitalised for treatment of his lacerated chin. His one compensation was the award, on 1 October 1944, of an increment of 2/6 per day on completion of three years in the rank of captain. Six weeks later, he was granted a ration allowance of 2/- per day and a lodging allowance of 3/- per day. This would indicate that he had been discharged from hospital on 18 November and had to find his own billet."*

Following their exploits and tales of derring do, what began as a "bit of a dare" in November 2019 whilst attending the Cenotaph Parade with my fellow Legionnaires of the South African Legion, soon grew arms and legs.

In 2019 at the 75th Anniversary of Operation Market Garden, two of our number, Russell Mattushek and Steve Moritz, had undertaken to join Pathfinder at Teuge, Netherlands, where they earned their Dutch B Wings and participated in the commemorative or "Glory" jump to commemorate this momentous occasion. On their return to the UK news of their exploits aroused the attention of several other members of the SA Legion, and whilst enjoying a "shoulder rub" with fellow Legionnaires following the Cenotaph Parade, it was decided that a South African contingent would attend Course 1 of 2020, then destined to take

place at the end of March, following which it was planned to carry out a commemorative jump over the Rhine in honour of the 75th Anniversary of Op Varsity.

Covid however, that nasty bug initially named after a Mexican beer (not really, but you get my meaning), had other ideas, and after being unleashed on the World in December, began to rapidly spread causing confusion and panic. We thought out plans were safe and carried on regardless, booking ferries and accommodation, and jumping through all the hoops (and there were many) necessary in order to participate in the Basic Round Parachute Course at Teuge.

Come March, and the bug had destroyed any chance of continuing with our plans as the UK went into Lockdown. This caused a bit of consternation as we scrambled for new course dates, constantly badgering poor Roy to come up with a new plan, which he did, setting new course dates for the end of June. This thing about a plan however, as anyone in the military will tell you, is that it seldom survives contact with the enemy, in this case the dreaded bug which continued to cause consternation and destruction as it ravaged the known World.

Finally, having endured two postponements to the course, Course 1 of 2020 was rescheduled for the 6th to 11th September, with Course 2 of 2020 set to follow on the week after. I initially selected Course 2, but soon found out my compatriots had different ideas, so in order to appease them I switched to Course 1. Very pleased I did as well as things turned out.

Due to travel restrictions which would result in any attendees from the UK having to quarantine for two weeks after their return, of the initial large number of those who had expressed a desire to do the course, only Kevin 'Tokalosh' Brown and I made it, with the rest crying off due to work and other commitments. Retirement had already brought a benefit in that I was able to commit to the course and quarantine afterwards with no issues. So, having booked my accommodation at Camping de Weeltenkamp which is located next to Teuge Airport (bunkbed accommodation was unavailable to students due to Covid) I rebooked my ferry for the second time, loaded my trusty Volvo to the roof with gear, and set off on the long journey to Harwich from when I travelled on the overnight ferry to the Hook of Holland.

Arriving in the Netherlands on a stunning sunny morning I took in the local surrounds before setting off for Teuge, my final destination. Driving on the right or "wrong side of the road" proved a little nerve-wracking but after under two hours, I pulled up at Camping de Weeltenkamp, marvelling

at the number of leisure skydivers pirouetting in the sky above the airfield. A flicker of excitement, and also trepidation flashed through me, as I mused that soon, in the next day or two, I too would be jumping out of a perfectly good aeroplane hopefully guided down to earth gently by my mushroom-shaped canopy. Little did I know! They don't labour on about Parachute Landing Fall for nothing when being taught the basics!

I arrived early and had time to settle into the very basic but appropriately named Trekkershut at Camping de Weeltenkamp. This turned out to be a miniature caravan with basic cooking facilities, a bed, and not much else, but it was somewhere to sleep and was clean so all good.

Meeting up with Kevin who was booked into a camping spot opposite me, I watched with amusement as he set up his one-man tent which was to be his home for the next week. I wasn't so badly off in the trekkershut after all!

At 18:00 hours, Sunday, 6th September, Kevin and I presented ourselves at the Nationaal Parachutisten Centrum based at Teuge Airport. I learned later that this was where the exiled Dutch Monarch had returned to Dutch soil following the liberation of his country in 1944. Entering the centre we were greeted by the sight of numerous skydivers coming and going, and several others in period and modern military uniform. This was looking promising! Roy greeted us in the bar downstairs and we were introduced to Pieter and Herve who would be assisting with our training. Prior to the course we had heard much about the indomitable Jump Instructor and Jumpmaster, Ian Marshall, however he had been unable to attend the course, so we were very much in Roy's tender hands.

We were soon ushered upstairs to the classroom, where Roy introduced himself properly and regaled us with tales of derring-do. Amongst other things, we were instructed never to start a story without first mentioning "No shit! There I was! Thought I was gonna die!" We all laughed when he said that, but in the back of all our minds there was a little niggle, most of us being virgins to parachuting and in particular military round parachuting, that we may indeed be experiencing that feeling very soon!

We met Simon Woerlee, a retired Dutch army officer who runs the centre, and who was ultimately responsible for our sorry backsides as we committed to the absolutely insane idea of jumping out of an aircraft with a flimsy bit of cloth to save us from creating a very deep furrow in the earth when we landed. Good old Terra Firma. I remembered my Dad saying he hated heights, and as far as he was concerned feet firmly planted on

Terra Firma was his preference, in fact, the more firmer, the less terror as far as he was concerned! I was beginning to think he was right whilst sat there listening to what could go wrong if we didn't pay attention!

A couple of beers were downed afterwards, but not too many as Monday was a big day! We were supposed, weather and wind speed permitting, to get our first jump in during the afternoon. We needed to complete three jumps successfully to qualify for our Pathfinder Proficiency Wings, and a further two successful jumps to attain the lofty heights of being awarded the Dutch B Wings. It all seemed a little unreal, and there was a bit of false bravado on display no doubt covering up what most of us felt but didn't admit.

Monday came, and we proceeded to get taught about packing parachutes, as well as being taught the basics of the Parachute Landing Fall (PLF). Was this really necessary? Weren't our trusty chutes going to deposit us nice and gently on the ground? The more we practised PLF, the less keen I became to actually put it to the test! As it turned out the wind was not playing along, so no jumping on Monday. Not for use at least, what with our hardly steerable military chutes! This despite skydivers floating gently to earth all around us. There is a real buzz about the place, and this helps to push any last minute fears to the back of one's mind and focus on the real prize – The Dutch B Wings!

Tuesday dawned and still the weather wasn't great! To the untrained eye it looked fine, but Simon and his team of gurus had some magic machinery which told them otherwise, so more ground training ensued. As it turned out this proved to be a blessing, as we learned how to deal with low speed malfunctions and how to exit the plane properly so as not to cause them in the first place. I'm not sure I paid enough attention to the exit procedures though as when the jumping finally commenced, I became somewhat of an expert on dealing with low speed malfunctions, but more about that later! Oh, and did I mention Wendy's Woods? Not yet? Ok, well there is a large stand of woods covering several acres at the far side of the runway. You guessed it! These 30m (100 foot) high trees bordered the dropzone! We were told about Wendy's Woods, and how we did NOT want to land in them! We were also told that we should not look at Wendy's Woods whilst descending, as where you look you are likely to land, despite your best efforts! We even went for a short drive to the other side of the airfield so we could go for a wee walk in said woods, just to hammer the point home that we did NOT want to land there! And joy of joys! In the middle of these woods is Wendy's

Pond! This is a depression filled with water, at the base of which was some very evil smelling mud! Who knows what had decayed in there but it did not smell good! We certainly didn't want to land in Wendy's Pond! This gave cause for much speculation about how Wendy had managed, not once, not twice, but THREE TIMES to unerringly aim for these formidable woods, hanging up on trees on two occasions, and experiencing the muddy delights of the pond on the third!

Back to the course! Day three dawned, and was blown out yet again, not to mention rained out, so together with our new-found friends we descended upon the sleepy town of Oosterbeek, which in September turns maroon, with Pegasus flags and Union Jacks flying everywhere as the locals honour those brave paratroopers who tried to free them from occupation. This beautiful little town proved very welcoming, especially when we arrived in a genuine 1944 Willy's Jeep, top down and no windscreen despite the threatening weather! Our visit was a very poignant one indeed, as we visited the Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein', the now restored Hartenstein Hotel which served as the headquarters of the British 1st Airborne Division in September 1944. Paying our respects there, we went on to Ginkel Heath or Ginkelse Heide, the main drop zone for the Para's as well as the main landing site for the gliderborne forces. There is a very moving sculpture there honouring the airborne forces who landed there, and was well worth the visit as well as being very thought-provoking. One has to marvel at the sheer bravery of those men who jumped into the unknown in an attempt to form a bridgehead at Arnhem. Our visit was cut short by the rain, and we raced back towards Teuge at 50mph, our faces and eyes taking a beating from the pelting rain.

Before setting off on our pilgrimages however, we had done a marathon of parachute packing! The abbreviation PLF now took on a new meaning, "pack like f\*\*k", as we packed enough parachutes for the entire course and club jumpers to be able to do three back-to-back jumps without needing to pack another chute in-between! Scuttlebutt had it that Thursday was to be THE DAY! We were going to attempt to complete all five of our qualifying jumps in a single day! Wednesday night we again enjoyed a few beers, but kept the consumption down as we would need our wits about us the next day!

Finally THE DAY dawned, and we mustered at the skydiving centre to see what the gods had in store for us. Weather was perfect. Wind was non-existent, and everything was GO, GO, GO! We kitted up and stood breathlessly in a line whilst final checks were carried out by the PJI's. After a photo opportunity which displayed many excited

faces, trepidation hidden by the now ubiquitous face masks, we waddled off to where the aircraft, a Cessna 208, was waiting with propellers spinning! Too late to back out now, and any rate we had waited so long for this moment that not a single one of us had any second thoughts! Yet!

We clambered aboard and were scrunched up against each other, back to chest, so tightly it was a struggle to breathe! I think there were 14 jumpers in that first chalk! In that small plane, kitted with bulky parachutes! The facemasks did not make breathing any easier, and as the adrenaline and breathing rate inevitably increased, the overall effect was one of "How soon can I get outa here" rather than not wanting to exit! The runway and airport building flashed by and finally with a wrench we were in the air, climbing steeply and banking so as to attain the magic 2000 feet which was to be our initial jump height. I say initial because after levelling and holding the aircraft in a tail up position so static-line jumpers could safely exit, altitude was rapidly lost so that the last jumper was exiting at about 1500 feet. After this the aircraft would once again circle and climb, bringing the next stick above the DZ at the desired 2000 feet. I was in the last stick, and shuffled towards the gaping door on my backside, static line firmly held in my left hand to avoid it fouling on anything. Feet over the edge and a brief look down – Oh shit! I wish I hadn't done that! 2000 feet looks a long way down! Still, not time to dwell on this before the jumpmaster shouted "Go", accompanied by a helpful shove on the back just in case you had second thoughts! "One thousand and one, one thousand and two, one thousand and three, one thou..." as I felt the break line snap and begin to deploy my chute! I was still in the exit position, legs together slightly bent, arms folded across my reserve protecting the pull handle, chin down, and now time to look up! "Check Canopy"! Yes! A beautiful sight as my canopy deployed perfectly above me! A quick 360 to orientate myself, and time to aim for the DZ – Wendy's Woods were behind me so I was good there. Just had to avoid overshooting the DZ and landing in water filled ditches (with more evil smelling mud) and electrified barbed wire fences! What a sense of humour the Dutch farmers have! All good though but here comes the ground, somewhat faster than anticipated! So THIS is why they laboured the PLF! Time to face into the wind, legs together, slightly bent, chin hard on chest and feel which way the wind is going to make you fall! Accept the landing and I was down before I knew it, executing (in my mind anyway) a perfect PLF. It probably wasn't but I got down without getting hurt and managed to avoid the woods, ditches and barbed wire, so all good!

En route to the RVP I noticed one of our number, Simon, lying awkwardly, and struggling to get up. Ditching my chute I ran across to him, noticing he was favouring his back. On establishing the nature of his injury, I shouted one of the instructors, Mike, to call for an ambulance. He did that and then took over from me and stayed with Simon whilst I continued to the RVP.

Jump 2 was even more nerve-wracking, as the jumpmaster did not shout go or slap me on the back. He merely smiled at me and said "In your own time sir!" Now I had to make the conscious decision to jump which was even more scary, but after a fraction's hesitation off I went! After a count of four I looked up to see my risers were twisted! The drills we were taught on the ground kicked in, and after what felt like ages, but was in fact only seconds, they untwisted and all was good. This time I landed on the DZ and was well pleased with myself when I heard a fellow meat bomb shouting "INCOMING" from somewhere above me. I glanced up to see Kevin making a beeline for me, so had to move rather sharply to avoid getting scrunched! Kev turned away at the last moment and I breathed a sigh of relief as he PLF'd a few feet away from me!

The rest of the day was a blur! Two down and three to go! We got the next jump in before grabbing a bite to eat, and then it was all hands to the pump, or rather chutes, as we had no more packed chutes left but still two jumps to do! The last two jumps were done in double-time, as the pilot and jumpmaster sweated to get us all airborne, not once, but twice, inside an hour and all before the airport shut at 20:00 hours! On the second last jump Dougie managed to hang himself up in the tallest tree in a row and deploy his reserve chute as he hit it! That took serious skills!

Glyn landed badly and twisted his ankle, and I managed to land in a field of saplings! All in a day's work! When the last man exited the plane on the final jump of the day, the Cessna went into a nosedive in order to land before 20:00 – I'm told he landed with a minute to spare, saving a costly diversion to another airport! As we jumped the sun was just setting, and the sight was amazing! I didn't have as much time to enjoy it as I would have liked though, as Parachute #13, whose risers had twisted on my earlier jump, decided to play havoc again this time by twisting not the risers, but the lines almost all the way to the now very strangely shaped parachute canopy! Some major kicking and counter-twisting sorted it out though (thanks for those drills Roy and Pieter), and I was able to enjoy arguably the most superb sunset I have ever seen as I floated to earth. Perfect landing on the DZ this time, and back to the centre with a stupid grin on my face! Funny that – All those who made it thus far had that same insane grin on their faces! Was going to take a week to wipe off at least!

Course 2 went ahead the next week, but sadly the weather conspired not to allow any jumps. Glad I moved to Course 1!

Thanks to all at Pathfinder who made the course possible, and to Roy in particular who hung in there, grimly determined to get "boots on Dutch soil"! Well, this was achieved and now I can't wait for April 2021 to do it all again, but this time as a qualified club jumper!

For more information please look on or contact me:

<http://www.pathfindergroupuk.com/>

**Frans Bedford-Visser 08/10/2020**  
**fbedford\_visser@hotmail.com**



Frans and Glyn Redgrave after there third jump..



**Left (A)** First jump at 2,000 feet - Frans Bedford-Visser. / **(B)** Kevin 'Tokalosh' Brown – his first jump with SADF "browns" and slangvel". Above: Group Photo. **Left below:** Airborne monument at Drop Zone Y (Ginkelse Heide), the place where Brigadier-General Hackett's 4th Brigade and the 1st British Airborne Division landed on 18th September 1944. In the foreground is Glyn Redgrave's original and recently restored 1944 Willy's Jeep with which we toured the DZ's and battlegrounds. / **Below middle:** Harness drills. Left to right - Michal Prochniewicz, Roy Mobsby, Piotr Zaremba, Piotr Grabowski, Rien van Oort, Glyn Redgrave. / **Below right:** Rather cramped conditions inside, even after the first couple of sticks had jumped.



Oosterbeek at the memorial to the British and Polish Airborne soldiers who fought against overwhelming odds to open the way into Germany. The memorial is at the Hartenstein Villa which was the headquarters of the British Airborne Division during the Battle of Arnhem (1944). From left to right – (Rear) Tomasz Spych, Glyn Redgrave, Piotr Zaremba, Michal Prochniewicz, (Front) Piotr Grabowski, Marek Drewa, Frans Bedford-Visser.

## The Story of the 2,4km run

The infamous 'two-comma-fô' or 'one-comma-five' or 'one-and-a-half', you name it, conjures up bitter-sweet memories of our times within SAW & Seuns where much emphasis was placed on physical fitness especially in the combat units. So, where did it come from? Apparently one Kenneth H Cooper is to blame for this routine which was on many occasions used as a 'tool' for an 'oppie' by our *korporaals*. I was a borderline case, hiding within the 'grey' masses not drawing to much attention from the *korporaals* who were always on the lookout for someone to blame in order to get to the whole platoon. We had some outstanding athletes who would finish well below nine minutes and then come back to help the stragglers. Hats off to those boys! Of course there were those who just couldn't do it to save themselves (and the rest of us) from an 'oppie' or two! What memories have you got to tell? - Ed

### Cooper 1.5 mile / 2.4 km Run Test

The Cooper 2.4 km (1.5 mile) run test is a simple running test of aerobic fitness was designed by Kenneth H Cooper in 1968 for the US Military. The original format was to test how far a person could run in 12 minutes and later this was changed to a timed distance. The run evaluates the condition of the person as generally the idea is to run the distance at a steady pace.

By adopting a pre-determined distance a route could be marked out and it was then easy to measure large groups of people such as a military unit or squad. The table below provides an indication as to the expected results, taking into account that the table is the measurement applicable to a flat athletics track or similar.

### SADF

For the SADF the standard dress code for the 2.4km run was long brown trousers, military boots, rifle with an empty magazine, skeleton webbing/battle jacket and helmet/bush hat. The norm was to at least beat the 12 minute barrier.

As far as flat tracks go, a quick impromptu Facebook survey indicates that in general the routes were a mix of flat and up/down but the majority indicated a mixed route.

The table below indicates the original Cooper ratings.

| Rating    | Males       | Females     |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| Very poor | > 16:01     | > 19:01     |
| Poor      | 16:00-14:01 | 19:00-18:31 |
| Fair      | 14:00-12:01 | 18:30-15:55 |
| Good      | 12:00-10:46 | 15:54-13:31 |
| Excellent | 10:45-9:45  | 13:30-12:30 |
| Superior  | < 9:44      | < 12:29     |



There are six components of wellness: proper weight and diet, proper exercise, breaking the smoking habit, control of alcohol, stress management and periodic exams.

— Kenneth H. Cooper —

Table 8.2 Percentile Ranks for 1.5-Mile Run/Walk Time (min:s)

| Age (y)    | 20-29 |       | 30-39 |       | 40-49 |       | 50-59 |       | 60-69 |       |
|------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Percentile | Men   | Women | Men   | Women | Men   | Women | Men   | Women | Men   | Women |
| 90         | 9:34  | 10:59 | 9:52  | 11:43 | 10:09 | 12:25 | 11:09 | 13:58 | 12:10 | 15:32 |
| 80         | 10:08 | 11:56 | 10:38 | 12:53 | 11:09 | 13:38 | 12:08 | 15:14 | 13:25 | 16:46 |
| 70         | 10:49 | 12:51 | 11:09 | 13:41 | 11:52 | 14:33 | 12:53 | 16:26 | 14:33 | 18:05 |
| 60         | 11:27 | 13:25 | 11:49 | 14:33 | 12:25 | 15:17 | 13:53 | 17:19 | 15:20 | 18:52 |
| 50         | 11:58 | 14:15 | 12:25 | 15:14 | 13:05 | 16:13 | 14:33 | 18:05 | 16:19 | 20:08 |
| 40         | 12:29 | 15:05 | 12:53 | 15:56 | 13:50 | 17:11 | 15:14 | 19:10 | 17:19 | 20:55 |
| 30         | 13:08 | 15:56 | 13:46 | 16:46 | 14:33 | 18:26 | 16:16 | 20:17 | 18:39 | 22:34 |
| 20         | 13:58 | 17:11 | 14:33 | 18:18 | 15:32 | 19:43 | 17:30 | 21:57 | 20:13 | 23:55 |
| 10         | 15:14 | 18:39 | 15:56 | 20:13 | 17:04 | 21:52 | 19:24 | 23:55 | 23:27 | 26:32 |

Adapted, by permission, from Cooper Institute, *Physical fitness assessment and norms for adults and law enforcement* (Dallas, TX: The Cooper Institute). For more information: [www.cooperinstitute.org](http://www.cooperinstitute.org).





# MILITARY HEADGEAR



## MILITARY HEADGEAR

Introduction. The military have worn headgear since the beginning of time. It was considered to be an integral part of body armour to protect the head.

The origins of the military salute stem from the wearing of helmets with visors by knights of old. The raising of the visor to show ones face to indicate that the person is a friend or ally.

Embellishments were added to the helmet in the form of feather plumes in different colours to show the wearers allegiance to a more senior person such as a commander or monarch.

Headgear became more ornate and was used to display emblems that indicated that the wearer belonged to a specific unit. The introduction of such badges is still in place today. Different styles of headgear were developed and adopted. These include shakos, kepis and berets as well as field caps and peaked caps of various sizes and colours.

Such headgear was and still is made from different materials including metal, leather and cloth.

Modern day headgear is designed for combat, ceremonial duties or for everyday wear. Everyday headgear always displays a badge that shows the wearers regiment. The cap badge is one of the most important elements to be displayed as it encourages loyalty and pride in the regiment and the work that the person does.



By At van Wyk

## HISTORY

The first home produced steel helmet used by the South African Defence Force, on first glance it would seem the helmet resembles that used by Japanese forces during the Second World War, but it was in fact modelled on and closely derived from the French M51 OTAN helmet.

The chinstrap system was unique to the SADF issued from 1963, it was replaced when the SADF began to adopt composite fibre\* helmets from 1983.



**STEEL HELMET** During the 80's the South African Defence Force approached a company SAPHI (South African Pith Hemet Industry) to investigate and manufacture composite helmets for the SADF. At that stage South Africa faced sanctions and it was difficult to procure aramid fibre materials (Kevlar/Twaron/Ballistic Nylon) and equipment to manufacture helmets.

**STANDARD GROUND TROOPER HELMET** With the assistance of ARMSCOR, SAPHI managed to procure Helmet Presses and a Laser cutting machines from Italy to start the manufacturing process in Rosslyn, Pretoria. All Aramid materials (Kevlar) were procured by the SADF and supplied to SAPHI to start the manufacturing process. SAPHI first manufactured the Standard Composite Helmet based on the American PASGT (Personal Armour System for Ground Troops) helmet. All steel helmets were replaced by the new composite helmets and issued to SADF ground troops.



**PARATROOPER HELMET** The next project was to replace the steel paratrooper helmet with a new designed composite helmet for Parachute Battalion. ARMSCOR ordered and supplied Parachute Battalion with some Israeli Orlite OR201 helmets for evaluation purposes. The helmets were manufactured from ballistic nylon material that did not meet the ballistic specifications (V50 426m/s) of the SADF, however the design of the helmet was acceptable for the SADF. The helmet design was "copied" and the ballistic material replaced with Aramid Fibre material to comply with SADF specifications.



Israeli Orlite Helmet.



## SPECIAL FORCES HELMET

The Special Forces helmets were developed by SAPHI in conjunction with Lt Col Frans van Dyk for both 1 Recce and 4 Recce. The harness of the helmet consist of high density foam instead of the tradition harness.(see photo) The ballistic protection were also upgraded to defeat a 9 mm projectile according to N.I.J Level II body armour specification.

Two colours of helmets covers were manufactured grey for 4 Recce and Olive green for 1 Recce.

This helmet was so popular that the Polish Special Task force purchase 5 000 helmets in 1995. The Polish Police only upgraded the ballistic specification of the helmet to defeat both 9 mm and .357.



Special Forces helmet. / Special Forces helmet with OG cover (1 & 5 RC). / Special Forces helmet with grey cover. (4 RC).

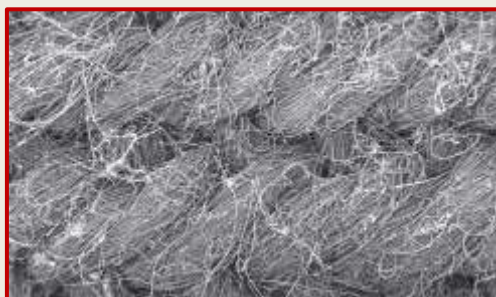
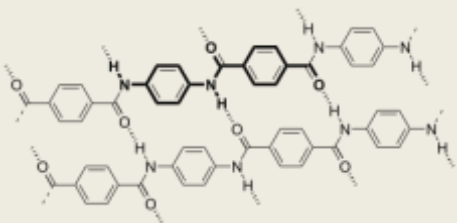
## MATERIALS FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF BALLISTIC HELMETS

### Composite Aramid Fibre ( Kevlar/Twaron)

Aramid fibres are a class of heat-resistant and strong synthetic fibres. They are used in aerospace and military applications, for ballistic-rated body armour fabric and ballistic composites, in marine cordage, marine hull reinforcement, and as an asbestos substitute. The name is a portmanteau of "aromatic polyamide".

The chain molecules in the fibres are highly oriented along the fibre axis. As a result, a higher proportion of the chemical bond contributes more to fibre strength than in many other synthetic fibres. Aramides have a very high melting point (>500 C).

Common aramid brand names include Kevlar, Nomex, and Twaron.

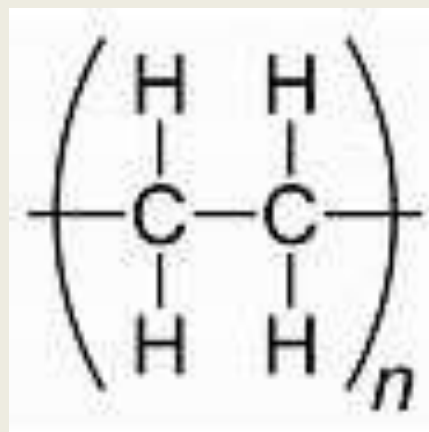


Structure of Twaron and Kevlar, both para-aramid. / Woven Aramid Fibre (Kevlar/Twaron).

## SPECTRA AND DYNEEMA – UHWPE (ULTRA-HIGH MOLECULAR WEIGHT POLYETHYLENE FIBRE)

A manufactured fibre made from ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene, this material is one of the world's strongest and lightest fibres. The material is kilogram for kilogram 10 times stronger than steel.

UHWPE are high performance, non-woven, ripstop, composite laminates. It is laid out in opposing grid orientations sandwiched between thin layers of polyester film, and melded together in a high-pressure autoclave.



Dyneema/Spectra material. / Polyethelene structure.



Ballistic Testing Range for Helmets and Body Armour.

### TESTING RANGE EQUIPMENT AND REQUIREMENTS FOR TESTING OF HELMETS

- Chronograph to measure velocity of projectiles.
- Test barrel to fire projectiles.
- Reloading equipment.
- Mounting for helmet.
- Witness plates to determine penetration or partial penetrations.
- Indoor temperature controlled shooting range.

## INTERNATIONAL BALLISTIC STANDARDS

The V50 test is the internationally recognised standard for assessing the fragmentation resistance of personal protection. The fragmentation test is conducted using Fragment Simulating Projectiles (FSPs) which are available in a range of weights, the SADF specification is a 17gr (1.1gr) Stanag 2929 fragment and must comply to a V50 of 426 m/s. The test is conducted by firing FSPs at the armour at increasing velocities until an average velocity of penetrating and non-penetrating projectiles is obtained.

The higher the ballistic speed, measured in metres per second, the higher the rating of material, shown as V50 000m/s. The V50 (Velocity 50% or mean velocity) is the average of the velocities recorded for six fair impacts consisting of the three lowest velocities for complete penetration and the three highest velocities for partial penetration, provided the spread is not greater than 40 metre/second. (STANAG 2920)



By At van Wyk. OCT 2020.



This is one of the first helmets that was made for the Bats. **Note:** Col Breytenbachs signature on the one and dayglow on the other.

We plan an article for the next issue on the SADF Bullet proof jackets.





1944 dated para helmet is in a collection. It has a couple of names in side the cradle. The first one being a British Para R. Davis, C Coy with what appears to be a force number (difficult to read) - 23233888. It also has another name of a South African para's name Veldkornet M. Oelschig.



Die helm het Kpl J.C. "Cousin" Ackerman gebruik toe hy saam met die SAW span in die VK as instrukteur opgelei was. Hy het die helm teruggebring (soos al die ander instrukteurs) en dit tydens sy daaropvolgende spronge in die RSA gebruik. Hy was toevallig my instrukteur op springkursus in 1962. Toe hy "bedank" het, het Cousin die helm vir my "gegee" ... maar moes ek daarvoor teken by die KM-stoor. Ek het die helm dwarsdeur my loopbaan gebruik. Toe ons in (ongeveer) 2010 begin voorberei het vir ons trek Kanada toe, het ek my rooi "jumpers" (springstewels) aan 'n medic, 'n AO wat springgekwalfiseerd was en wat by die SAW se kleiteikenskietklub in Pretoria behoort het, "oorhandig".

Mo Oelshig



In Cassinga with helmets.



## A red helmet that spelt 'afk'k'

One piece of kit all the SADF veterans will instantly recognise – and it will send instant shivers down their collective spines. The infamous 'Rooi Dolby' or 'Rooi Staaldak' was a bright red helmet and it meant the member wearing it was in deep trouble.

This headgear was usually a M1963 SADF steel helmet, known as a 'staaldak' painted red or the helmet's plastic detachable 'inner' called a 'dolby' or 'dooibie' also painted red. It was issued to anyone whose behaviour or actions were deemed undisciplined in the old South African Defence Force (SADF) system and they were 'Confined to Barracks' (CB) or given 'CB Drills'.



CB drills was a sort of mini prison sentence, the member been confined to the barracks perimeter and not allowed to leave the base. Whilst confined they were subject to intense military drills and exercises designed to break anyones spirit.



# DOG TAGS

## A Brief History of the Dog Tag



During the Civil War, the inability of the military to identify battlefield casualties created the need for a soldier identification method.

According to the U.S. Army Quartermaster Foundation, prior to the Battle of Mine Run in northern Virginia 1863, Genl George Meade's troops wrote their names and unit designations on paper tags and pinned them to their clothing. At the same time, other soldiers created prototype identification tags out of pieces of wood, perforating one end so that they could be worn on a string around their necks.

Between 1862 and 1913, while the military considered a number of options for identifying soldier remains on the battlefield, individual soldiers continued to utilize makeshift identification methods. In 1906, a circular aluminium disc was presented. By 1913, identification tags were made mandatory by the military.

The circular tags, hand stamped with name, rank, serial number, unit, and religion were used during World War I.

Dog tags, name tapes and memorabilia are displayed at the top of Mount Suribachi in Iwo To, formerly known as Iwo Jima, Japan, Dec. 17, 2014.

By World War I, soldiers wore two tags. "One tag remained with the body, tied around the legs or ankles or feet," Luther Hanson, curator at the U.S. Army Quartermaster Museum, told The New York Times in a 2013 interview.

Around World War II, the circular tag was replaced by the more oval shape used by the military today. Resemblance to dog collar tags led to the designation of "dog tag." The tags used during World War II were stamped by a machine and had a rectangular shape with round ends and a notch on one side.

A gruesome rumour circulated that the notch was put in the tag so that the tag could be placed

in a dead soldier's mouth hold it open to prevent the body from gaseous bloating. However, the real reason for the notch was that the stamping machine required it to hold the tag in place during embossing.

The point of the tag ultimately is to be left around the neck of a casualty, staying with the remains at all times.

According the Library of Congress, during the Vietnam War, "changes were made to the information on dog tags. The dog tags went from the earlier eight digits with their prefix to the current nine-digit Social Security number. You could have both stamped on your tag if you wanted; but, from this point on, the Social Security number was the main identifying number."

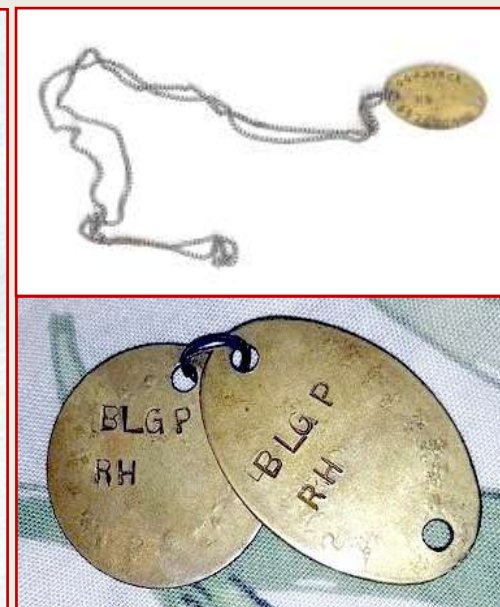
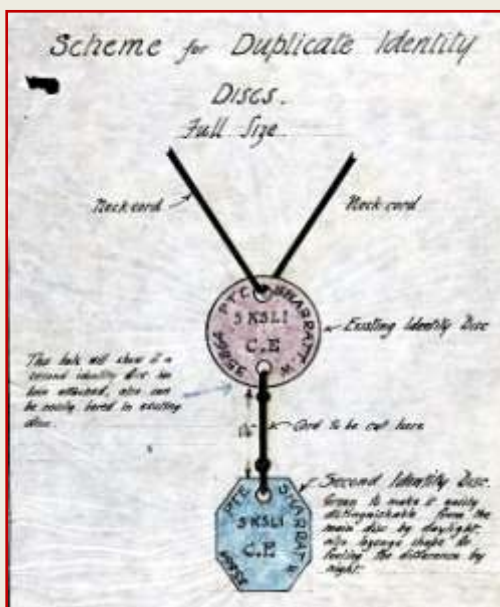
Additionally, tags worn by the Marine Corps had a variety of additions including the size of their gas mask. A number of religions were added and full names were spelled out as well.

Current dog tags still utilize a two-tag system, with one on a long chain around the neck and one interlinked by a smaller chain. The point of this method is to have one that remains around the neck and another for the toe for the coroner's purposes.

**Related: Why the woobie is the greatest military invention ever fielded.**

Though the dog tag has remained largely unchanged since the Vietnam War, the Army is currently developing and testing several new dog tags known by various names including the soldier data tag, individually carried record, meditag, and the personal information carrier.

The new dog tags will contain microchip or USB technology, which will hold a soldier's medical and dental records, reported The New York Times. **(Internet.)**



## ANOTHER MEMORY

223 years ago

(The following story was told by a member many years ago, when we were doing a promotion course at Infantry School, Oudtshoorn. (**Eugene de Haast**).

The member and others were busy with HALO and all was going well. During one jump this member (for reasons known only to him) landed on the roof of one of the stores hangars. The gentleman in question now had the problem of getting down to ground level. Unbeknown to him two Cape Corps troops were taking a nap inside the hangar. The noise of him landing on the roof woke them up and they ran outside to find out whom or what was so inconsiderate as to disturb their daily activity.

Seeing the two troops standing outside looking up at him, the member (forgetting that he was still wearing helmet, goggles, mask, etc) shouted at them for help to get off the roof. The two troops gave this noisy, mumbling apparition one look and one shouted: "O hemel, help, die Marsmannetjie het geland!"

With that they both made a very hasty about turn and made off in triple quick time, leaving the helpless and furious member to his own demise.



On **22 October 1797** the first parachute jump was done in Parys, Frans. This brave dare devil was Andre'-Jacques Garnerin.

Few people know the name JEEP comes from the acronym "Just Enough Essential Pieces".



## DIE TRADISIE VAN KROKODIL EET!



Op 2 Augustus 1991 het die bevelvoerder van 44 Valskerm Brigade met sy stawwe en bevelvoerders by Mabyeni Koppie in die Mabiligwe omgewing vir 'n spanbou sessie ontplooi. Verskeie aspekte rondom die sessie het problematies ontwikkel. Geharde valskerm soldate het onverklaarbaar siek geword, gefierde bosvegters het verdwaal, verkeerde roetes is gevolg, die sein en logistieke bevelvoerders en die kapelaan het vermis geraak, en die senior staffid vir personeel het gras ontdek toe hy water soek! Die hoofkwartierbevelvoerder het na 'n reddingspoging op sy kamerade 'n nag in 'n boom deurgebring, terwyl die een infanteriebevelvoerder ook met 'n reddingspoging, verder in een nag geloop het as ooit tevore.

Die meeste van hierdie drama het in die nag afgespeel onder 'n donkermaan en konfrontasies met seekoeie, vlakvarke, leeus en buffels was aan die order van die dag (nag). Die lugmag skakeloffisier het bewys dat sedert die ontwikkeling van die vliegkuns hy enige RV betyds met 'n V8 Landrover kan bereik!

'n Gebeurlikheid wat 'n besondere indruk en blywende herinneringe aan die besondere spanbou sessie gelaat het, was die aanskoue van paring deur krokodille in die natuur. Dit is iets wat selde deur mense aanskou word.

Die krokodille was deurentyd tydens die spanbou 'n besprekingpunt. Daar is daar en dan besluit dat valskermssoldate vir niks op aarde band is nie – behalwe vir 'n krokodil! Daar is 'n resoluë geneem dat konfrontasies met krokodille te alle koste vermy moet word, maar wanneer 'n konfrontasie wel ontstaan moet daar verseker word dat die krokodil deeglik oorwin en geheel en al vernietig moet word, sodat dit nie kan voortplant nie! Die mees praktiese metode van vernietiging, is om dit op te eet.

Ter herinnering aan hierdie ervaringe, seer voete en lywe is die tradisie gevestig dat so dikwels as wat die Brigade Bevelvoerder met sy stawwe en bevelvoerders 'n formele ete hou, hy die voorbeeld sal stel en in oefening bly om krokodil te eet!

Die Bevelvoerder mag geselekteerde gaste versoek om hom te help om die krokodil te eet. Hierdie voorreg is 'n vergunning wat die gas se onherroeplike verbintenisse met 44 Valskerm Brigade verewig. (**Onbekend**).



## MATES IN MAROON BERETS

*Oh, they know when you're not handling the pace  
And they'll tell you that you're slacking, to your face.  
But they'll always have your back,  
They'll even help you lug your pack -  
That's the norm, when paratroopers are your mates.*

*They'll drink with you until you hit the floor  
Then they're at your side as you "Stand in the door!"  
They'll support you in a fight  
When no back-up is in sight;  
And they'll fight all day – then still come back for more.*

*So, they brought you out when you were shot to hell,  
When they could have left you there, where you fell.  
That's the paratroopers' creed;  
You can trust them in your need  
And it will be so - until the last farewell.*

*Now, I've seen some hairy action in my day  
And, by chance, have always come away  
With no bullets through my hide,  
But with gratitude and pride  
For the brotherhood of men of the maroon beret.*

**Copyright 1989 Marius Oelschig**



## THEY WEAR THE MAROON BERET

How do you know that someone went to Grey College in South Africa? He'll tell you! Well, this is *my* chance. Yes, I was educated at Grey, the finest boys' school in the land. It was there that we were taught the value of team sports in the promotion of cohesion, *esprit de corps*, friendship and trust.

The hardship and danger, even the hunger and exhaustion, that was the shared experience of hundreds of thousands of young South African men during their National Service, also led to lifelong friendships and a strong feeling of solidarity between such men – from 1967 to 1993.

Completed one year at the Naval Gymnasium before joining the Permanent Force as a member of 1 Parachute Battalion in 1962 and maintained my cultural affiliation with my SA Army "mother unit" until retirement ... 36 years later.

The infantry, the gunners, the sappers, the troopers, the sailors and the pilots will all tell you the same thing; that *their* branch, corps, regiment or unit of the service was, and is, the bravest and the best. Good on them all!

In my book, South Africa's airborne forces, especially 1 Parachute Battalion in Bloemfontein, were the finest body of men that I ever had the privilege of serving with.

**THEY WEAR THE MAROON BERET.**

**Marius Oelschig**



**?**  
**Why were  
aircrafts  
painted with  
white/black  
stripes  
during the  
last part of  
WW2.?**

**Answer page 70**





Deon been carried to the Field hospital. Everyone were in casual dress as it was a Sunday. Hein Liebenberg with the blue shirt was the Ops medic. / Below: Deon was operated on the veranda of the hospital and not in the theatre.





**This is his x-ray plate and right the bomb on the grass in front of the hospital.**



**The Field hospital at Ondangwa where the rifle grenade was removed from his chest. After the operation he was flown with a Flossie over Botswana to Hoedspruit and from there to 1 Mil in Voortrekkerhoogte. These photos were later given to him by Hein Liebenberg.**



**Sapper Bats: Dolf Binneman, Krige van Heerden, Deon Kotze during a Bftn Water jump ± 2010.**

## OPS CARROT/LEMON: +- 10 – 23 DES 79

### OPS IN USAKOS/KARIBIB OMGEWING

**Deur Jan Bierman**

Gedurende die week 10 Des 79 vertek G Komp via Windhoek na Karabib. Daar bly ons op 'n plaas en word deel van Ops Carrot/Lemon.

Volgens die inligtings prentjie in SWA op daardie stadium, dui dit daarop dat SWAPO treinbrue in die omgewing van USAKOS/Karibib

gaan saboteur met springstof. G Komp moet 11 x beperkte hinderlaë by spoorwegbrue lê vanaf laaste lig 19 Des 79 tot voor eerstelig 22 Des 79.

Geen insident vind plaas en G Komp word op 23 Des 79 terug gevlieg Bloemfontein toe vir bos verlof.



G Komp op die lughawe in Windhoek. Wag vir die voertuie./ G Komp Staflede en klerk. / Onder: G Komp besig om in die plaasdam af te koel (Was vrek warm Des 79)



G Komp keer gedurende Januarie 1980 terug vanaf verlof en berei voor vir diens te Sektor 10, Oshakati.

Kapt Bierman word deur 'n motor wat oor 'n rooilig jaag op sy moterfiets raak gery. Erg gekraakte skouer/blad en word 3 maande afgeboek met geen spring. Word as TPT Offisier en HK Komp Bev aangestel en oorhandig G Kompanie aan Kapt Kobus Human.

[JJB/JJB (Word2019 /A-G Komp 1 Valsk Bn\_Rhodesië Ops 1979/Okt 2020)]

01/10/2020 – 07/12/2020



**Above:** 01/10/2020 Member of D Coy 1980/81 Op Protea main attack force, get-together in Centurion. Wit-Willem, Danie Bakker, Paul Greeff, Flipie le Roux, Henning Keulder.

**Right top:** 02/10/2020. Willoughby and Koos Moorcroft studying the map of Northam during a Ronald de Vries planning session.

**Right:** Willoughby, Koos and Roland on their way home.

**Onder:** Ysterman van Niekerk - ere-lid van die Nomad Canopy. (Met erkenning aan Gerald Edward Males van die Bay Canopy.) Vanoggend om 08h00 presies 60 jaar gelede op **3 Oktober 1960** het 15 Suid-Afrikaanse soldate die opleidingsloods van no 1 Parachute Training School Royal Air Force ingemarsjeer om hul Basiese Valskermsspringkursus te ondergaan. Daan Ysterman van Niekerk, SA MARINE CORPS Commander was one of the founding 1 Parachute Bn members and still going strong.

**We salute you and Ronnie Claassen, the only two members left.**





Lourens; Krige; Wit-Willem,



Jan Bierman; Attie v Niekerk;  
Wit-Willem.



Wit-Willem; Johan le Roux;



Johan Hoon; Louis du Plessis



Johan le Roux; , Wynand Fourie



Paul J. Els; Attie v Niekerk



Coen vd Merwe; Willoughby Brits



, Willoughby Brits



John Quinn, MOTHS,  
friend of Bats



## KZN CANOPY

A very successful gathering of 16 Paratrooper Veterans, from the KZN Midlands, meet at the Allan Wilson Shellhole, to kick off the possible KZN Canopy Midlands Valk.

Our Snr is Hugh Raw, qualified in 1963 and our Jnr is Deon van Wyk, qualified in 1993.

Kevin Rhodes gave an overview of what the KZN Canopy is about and that we are currently supporting 8 couples / families.

Jules Cassere, Fred Wollentine, Hadyn Bam, Garth Adams, and Dion Curtis also encouraged the guests, to join and create a Valk in PMB.

Steve Camp, explained his book project and thanked Hugh Raw and Wally Gevers, for bringing their photo albums along, to be scanned.

At the end of the presentation and an introduction of themselves, everyone agreed to continuing this meeting, on a monthly basis.

The Midlands Valk, will now be open for those wanting to meet, on the mid month Friday's.

The meeting was closed and we adjourned to the undercover deck, to the sponsored wors rolls and plenty more beverages.

Thanks to all that attended the meeting and to Jules, Steve, Fred, Garth, Hadyn, and Dion for the support.

We also presented Old Bill, Brian McGarry, with a PVO KZN Canopy Supporters cap, to thank him for opening the Shellhole to us. **Kevin Rhodes 16/10/2020**



**Above: Bay Canopy 24/10/2020.** Thanks for the turnout at Eric Joyce Farewell and for the fun and games afterwards. (Gerald Edward Males). **Below.** Linda Weber and Johan Thiert at Kalkgat Avontuurplaas. **Oct 2020.**

**Below right:** Wesrand Canopy at the funeral of Bernard Fouche. **25/10/2020**





A really good evening with Airborne brothers at the SAS Campbell Barracks for happy hour. Vincent Redpath, Bill Mullany, Slade Healy, Chris Beath, John Maddocks, and Jacques van Tonder. I took the photo. In the background is Colonel (ret) Harry Harvey -C Squadron Rhodesian SAS. And yes, we were drinking Spinflex's F88 Lager to do our bit for veterans mental health! Right: Slade and Col Harvey.

Dave Stevenson Outback Canopy. 30/10/2020.



PVO ANNUAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS MEETING  
@ Wesrand Canopy, Krugersdorp.

THE NIGHT BEFORE  
30/10/2020



Johan and Ockert. 1<sup>st</sup> together after 32 years.



What a weekend! We would like to thank everyone for attending the yearly Parabat Reunion this year, it was a great success and well attended. We trust that you all enjoyed your time here with us, it was great to have you all with us again. Please diarise the date for next year - 30th October 2021. Here are some of the photos from the day, please send us any photos that you took for our "Rogues Gallery". Parabat Reunion.

Mike Cronje 02/11/2020



Coen vd Merwe.  
Snykes Snyman.



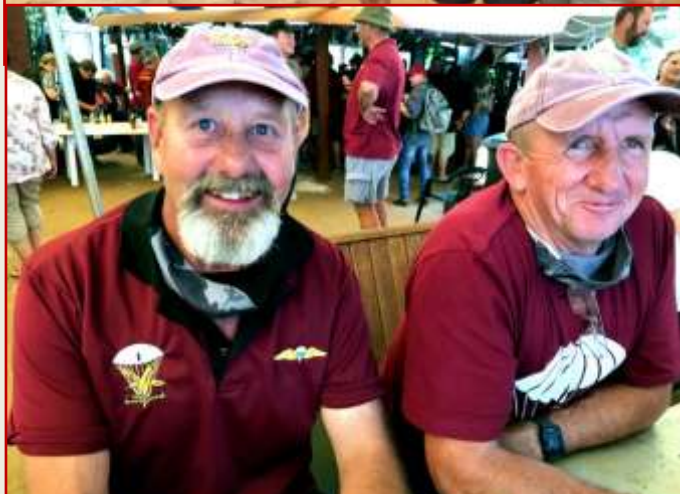
Mike Cronje



Japie Keet & wife







TILL NEXT YEAR CHEERS



KZN Canopy. 1/11/2020. Right: Wit-Willem with Adv Kevin Mullins – after 40. years.

## Remembrance day, Commonwealth Cemetery, Thaba Tshwane 08/11/2020



Grave left: Corry Meerholtz HCS 5 RR. Right. Cpl N.S. Olivier. 1 Para Bn.

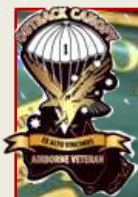




Remembrance Day Parade - Cape Town Civic Centre. **John Michael Tawse** 08/11/2020.



Westrand Canopy Fred Adams and Craig. 08/11/2020.



On Tuesday night (10 Nov) we were finally able to award Roy Chase with his PVP 50-years a Parabat certificate and cap. Roy was at 1 Para Bn in 1964 and his platoon sergeant was Koos Moorcroft. **Dave Stevenson Outback Canopy.**



Three members at the skouerskuur of the UVO. Paul J. Els; Jan Strydom (Suikerbosrand Canopy); Wit-Willem. 14/11/2020.

## PTA CANOPY FRIDAY 13th NOVEMBER





Attie van Niekerk (Centre) hands over the PVO Canopy trophy for 2020 to PVO Pretoria Canopy chairman Willoughby Brits and Krige van Heerden (vice-chairman). **Above centre & right:** Willoughby at the word and welcomed Koos Moorcroft. **Right:** Roche Vermaak reading the Bats veteran prayer. **Right 3 photos:** Koos Moorcroft presentation. **Below:** Attie and Pieter Labuschagne A Comp, 1971 Jan intake.





**20/11/2020 RECCE GOLF DAY.** Anthony Modena & Johan Leech. / Les Rudman. / Dewald de Beer. / Sydney Wigget & Willoughby.



**23/11/2020.** Water jump 4 Recce Langebaan. Shaun Winckler (3 Para C Coy); Lt Col Louis Bester (old Cmdo OC); Col Barry Visser (Recce Operator); Maj Mynhardt Marais (3 Para C Coy.)



**23/11/2020.** Gen Mannetjies de Goede sends his regards to all Paratroopers of the PVO. With him Lt Col Krige van Heerden.



**26/11/2020.** This historical photo is of the last 5 members of the original first group of 11 Recces. John Moore; Jan Breytenbach; Dewald de Beer; Dan Lamprecht & Koos Moorcroft. Photo taken in Sedgfield.

## A COMP 1983 BIKE TOUR NOV 2020



Hentie van Rensburg; Scott Eggmont; Martin van Zyl; Johan de Bruin; Johan de W. Sandow Rossouw; Andres Schoonraad; Vink van Loggenberg.



↓ 03/12/2020 PTA Geckos and Nomad get together at Johan and Janie Combrink's plot.



Deon Benade; Kevin Kleyton;  
Albie de Lange.

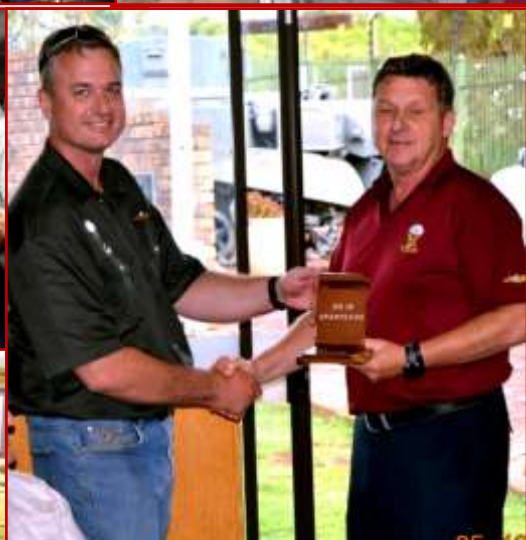


# SPIT BRAAI 05/12/2020



Baie dankie aan elkeen vir jul bydraë tot nog 'n wonderlike Pta Canopy jaareind skaapbraai funksie, veral vir: almal betrokke met die reëlings daarvan, die dames met hul harde werk agter die skerms vir die heerlike trifle poedings gemaak, die dames vir die mooimaak van die saal, Paul Ras vir sy lekker valskerm musiek verskaf, die braameester en laastens vir elkeen se teenwoordigheid en heerlike samesyn. Hartlike Pta Canopy Valskermgroete! **Krige van Heerden**



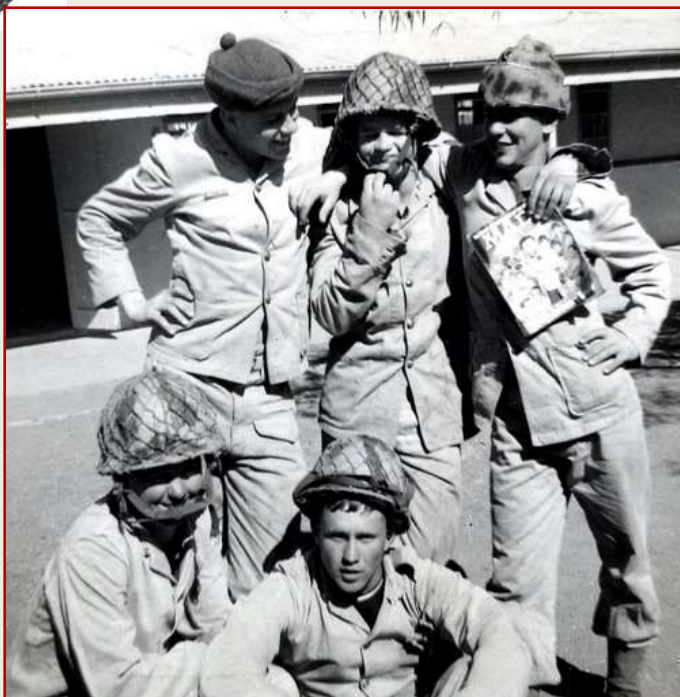


Hier ontvang Willoughby die SPARTACUS wissel trofee vanaf Chris Pohl as die PTA Canopy man van die jaar. Links: So sing die manne!!



OPPROTEAUG 1981





**Left:** Mortar section, A Coy, June 1966. **Above:** Bat on the left. Our smallest and fittest Parabat.

**Left second:** Lt Koot van der Walt and Bat Capt Derrick Els, members of 101 Bn with the 'Jakkalstrofee' of Sector 10 which they won for 1984. Els was the founder member of 903 SSC.

**Below:** Ehomba 1989.



## Valskermersoldate kry medaljes vir 40 j diens

### Melana van Wyk

DIE een het 4 200 valskermerspronge agter sy naam en het meer as 15 000 soldate opgelei. Die ander een was op sy dag die fiksste soldaat in die hele weermag. Saam is hulle die eerste valskermersoldate aan wie 'n egte goue medaille toegeken is vir 40 jaar diens.

En as hulle moet terugdink aan die hoogtepunte van hul loopbaan was die eerste valskermersprong een van hulle, sê kol. Johnny Kieser (61) van Bloemfontein en kol. At Schoeman (59) van Durban.

"Ek kon daardie dag die son tussen my bene deur sien toe ek in die lug was," sê Kieser, wat sy eerste sprong in 1960 in Engeland uitgevoer het.

Twee jaar later was hy Schoeman se instruksie by 44 Valskerm Bataljon. Hy was die toets houder toe Schoeman vir die eerste keer met 'n valskerm gespring het.

Kieser, wat 4 200 valskermerspronge uitgevoer het en 15 000 soldate opgelei het, was in drie nood situasies.

Sy hoofvalskerm het nie ontplooi nie en hy het met die noodvalskerm aarde toe gekom.

Schoeman, wat 961 spronge uitgevoer het, 90 hy het vyf keer op sy noodvalskerm statiegemaak.

"Ek het een keer in die see in Langebaan geval. Ek was benoud, maar was meer bekommerd oor die skade wat die seewater aan die valskerm sou doen."

Vir albei is dit steeds 'n ongelooflike ervaring en uitdaging om met 'n valskerm te spring en hulle doen dit nog gereeld.

Kieser het hom in 1968 by die weermag aangesluit en was kort daarna een van 15 Suid-Afrikaners wat in Engeland in valskermers

spring opgelei is. 'n Jaar later is 44 Valskerm Bataljon in Bloemfontein gestig. Kieser was van 1977 tot 1990 in bevel van alle valskermopleiding in die weermag.

Hy het Suid-Afrika in valskermersport verteenwoordig. Sedert 1981 is hy 'n internasionale valskermbeoordelaar.

In 1996 was hy die bestuurder van die nasionale valskermersprong-

span wat in Kroasië aan die wêreldkampioenskapstoernooi deelgeneem het.

Schoeman, 'n Springbok-atleet in vyfkamp wat twee keer na die Olimpiese Spele genooi was, is in 1960 as valskermerspringer opgelei. Hy was daarna vir 14 jaar by 44 Valskerm Bataljon.

Later was hy die bevelvoerder van die spesiale mag in Durban.

Van 1979 tot 1981 was hy die weermag se fiksste soldaat en hy hou die rekord van opstote, 78 per minuut, in 'n gimnasium in Durban.

Die medaljes wat hulle gister op parade in Bloemfontein ontvang het, is 'n hoogtepunt in albei se loopbane en hulle skryf dit toe aan hul Skepper se genade.

Albei is lid van die weermag se reserwemag.

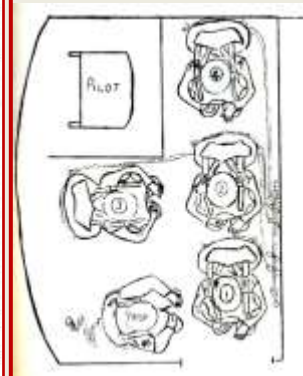


KOL. AT SCHOEMAN (links) en kol. Johnny Kieser is die eerste valskermersoldate wat 'n goue medaille van die weermag vir 40 jaar diens ontvang het. Kieser het Schoeman 40 jaar gelede opgelei en hulle is sedertdien gereeld in verbinding met mekaar.

Foto: Charles Lombard



**CHOPPER JUMP**





Jan Bierman; Krige v Heerden; Willoughby Britz; Gerrie Ferreira.



**07/08/2017** Cassinga day, War museum Johannesburg. Willoughby Brits; Paul J. Els; Kobus Human. Pretoria Canopy. / **Left: Seated:** WO1 Johnny Kieser (Trg Bn RSM); Cmdt Chris le Roux (OC Trg Bn); Capt Nic vd Berg (Para Trg Wing Cmdr); SSgt Jerry Holtzhausen (Para Trg Wing WO). Back: Capt McGill Alexander; Capt Kobus Human; Lt Gustave Erlank; Sgt Martiens Verster; Sgt Sakkie Cornelissen.

#### PARA INSTRUCTORS COURSE

A sound and smell that my Airborne Brothers will always remember !!!



Maj Anton van Graan; WO Sakkie Marais; Maj Gerrie Leibrandt; Brig M.J. Du Plessis. **Below:** WO1 Frans Marais, Lt Col Steve Camp, Maj Gen Chris le Roux and Col J.D. Rothman. **Date UN.**



Johnny Kieser; Koos Moorcroft; Johan Malan; André Grebe.

**Below:** See previous page of jumping out of a chopper.





A mystery photo: All wear Bat barets but only a few wear wings on their shirts?

AO1 G.A. Erasmus, RSM van die Leer, Lt genl Constand Viljoen, Hoof van die Leer, KO Piet Viljoen en mev. Ristie Viljoen.



## HULDEBLYKE / TRIBUTE

Today, 28 October, we salute and honour the following men & woman who sacrificed their lives whilst standing in the defence of what they held dear at the time and against evil and tyranny.



### SOUTH AFRICAN BORDER WAR

28 Oct 1977: Six members of 1 and 2 Reconnaissance Regiment were Killed in Action at Onalomonzo in Southern Angola while attacking Ekeke during Operation Kropduif. While attacking a SWAPO/PLAN Base, the Recce team prepared to cross an open area of ground as the SWAPO/PLAN forces were in the process of withdrawing from their positions. As the Recce group moved forward they were caught in the enemy arcs of fire. The casualties were:

- 05453576PE Warrant Officer Class II Francois Carl van Zyl PMM MMM (1 RR). He was 34.
- 67291112PE Sergeant Michiel Labuschagne Kruger MMM (1 RR). He was 26.
- 65666281PE Sergeant Wentzel Christoffel Marx (1 RR). He was 29.
- 64024110BT Sergeant Neville Grant Clack (2 RR). He was 30.
- 68277771BG Corporal Antonie Badenhorst (1 RR). He was 25.
- 72321920PR Lance Corporal Gary William John Walker (1 RR). He was 20.
- 64020357BT Lieutenant Leslie Charles Greyling (2 RR) was critically wounded and evacuated to 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria where he unfortunately succumbed to his wounds on 4 November 1977. He was 30.

28 Oct 1977: 76908722SP Sergeant Bernardo Andre Mwonambunga from 32 Battalion was Killed in Action after suffering multiple shrapnel wounds in an enemy mortar bomb explosion during a contact with SWAPO/PLAN forces near Onalomonzo in Southern Angola during Operation Kropduif. He was 34.



Stop worrying Ma. Everything's OK so far. I'll try and contact you when we arrive at camp. Over and out.



The only reason I can think of for being issue with this tokkel-tou is to put it around some Corporal's neck.



Haal, troep! Moenie jou geweer laat water soek nie!



"MMMM, dit was my laaste kans om hom te kry om my was- en strykwerk en meer 'push-ups' te doen voordat hy sy ★ = £ + \$ & pips kry."



EK WEEÏ NIE WIE JY IS NIE, MAAR AS DIE KORPORAL JY NAW OP DIE GRAS SIEN IS JY IN DIE MOEILIKHEID!



And what happens if one doesn't feel like jumping?

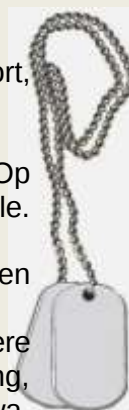




# ROLL OF HONOUR

## OPERATIONAL LOSSES OCT - DEC

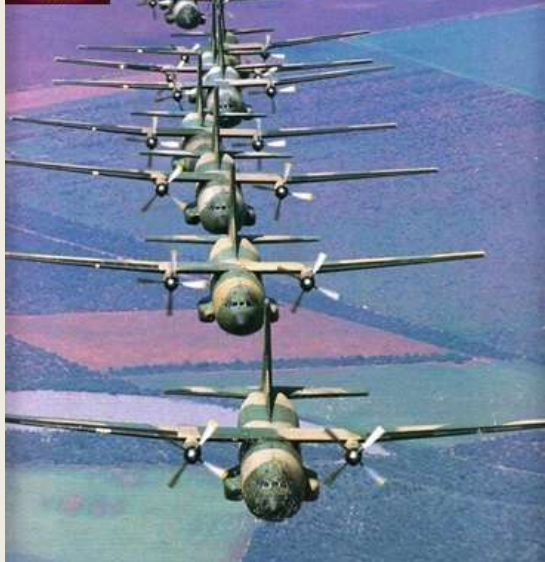
- >**BREYTENBACH**, P.44 Para Bde **MDS** †24/12/1987 (age 22). Died in a freak Acc, at Komatipoort, drowned at Witriver. Missing presumed dead.
- >**CROMHOUT**, J.C. Rfn 2 Para Bn **KIA** \*07/06/1958 †29/12/1981
- >**DAVIS**, T. Cpl 2 Para Bn DS \*07/05/1954 †15/12/1978 (THOMAS). Accidentally killed in the Op area when struck by a bullet resulting from an accidental discharge of a fellow soldiers rifle. <sup>Q</sup>ZANDFONTEIN Cemetery PRETORIA (Section R, Grave 1000)
- >**HUMAN**, D.J. Sgt 2 Para Bn **DS** †26/11/1975 (DIRK JOHANNES age 28) Died in a freak Acc, at Gen De Wet Training Terrain, parachute accident. (read BATE)
- >**JANSE VAN RENSBURG**, T.W. Cpl 1 Para Bn **DS** †15/11/1986 (THOMAS WILHELM age 23) Were killed with C. BADENHORST of 6 SAI Trg Cen, when the Casspir in which they were travelling, overturned near Tsande while travelling on the road from Ombalantu to Ondangwa. <sup>Q</sup>BLOEMFONTEIN HAMILTON WAR CEMETERY. (A30)
- >**SMUTS**, N.W. 1 Para Bn **KIA** †05/11/1985 (NICOLAAS WILLEM age 20) Was while acting as a machine gunner when his patrol was ambushed near Alpha Tower by PLAN insurgents who were in the process of kidnapping local Owambo children from their villages. In the fierce fire-fight that followed, all the insurgents were killed and he was found dead behind his LMG. <sup>Q</sup>CENTURION (HA1)
- >**31/10/1987**. Two platoons of D Company, 1 Para Bn were seconded to 5 Rec Regt. The platoons were under command of Capt P.A. **PIENAAR** (Pine), 2IC of D Coy and the platoon commanders were Lt J. de **V KRUYS** and 2/Lt F.J. **WIESE**. Together with members of 5 and 2 Reconnaissance Regiments, the members of D Coy took part in an attack on a SWAPO base in central Angola. The operation was named Op Firewood. The attack commenced at dawn on 31/10/1987 and the SA Forces only withdrew after dark on the same day. It was estimated that more than 300 SWAPO fighters were killed during the battle. At the end of the day five members were killed. Several other members of D Coy was also wounded during the battle and Rfn J.M. **SCHUURMAN** was wounded and was evacuated from the battlefield to the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital at AFB Ondangwa where he underwent emergency surgery. Once he had stabilised, he was evacuated to the RSA early on the morning of 01/11/1987 but he unfortunately succumbed to his wounds before the aircraft landed in Pretoria. Capt P.A. **PIENAAR** the 2IC of D Coy who was in charge of the two platoons was killed in West Africa almost 10 years later, on 29/10/1997. Cpl N.S. **OLIVIER**; L/Cpl R.M. **LIGHT**; Rfn H.N. **DE ROSE**; Rfn D.W. **VAN ROOYEN**; Rfn W.F. **EWELS**.



## Pretoria Canopy Birthdays



### BIRTHDAYS





Veteraan.... Baie geluk met jou verjaardag...  
Mag elke dag vir jou gevu wees met die mooiste  
sonsopkoms en herinneringe van die verlede....  
Many happy landings!!

### JAN

25 Sandow Rossouw  
26 Chris Phol  
27 Charl Brand  
29 Wynand Erasmus

---

### FEB

1 Gideon Andriaanse  
5 Kobus Hoon  
12 Johan Kock  
18 Ronnie Claassen  
27 Jan Bierman

---

### MRT

9 Wynand Fourie  
5 Koos Human  
18 Les Rudman  
19 Fred Burger  
26 Marius vd Merwe  
26 Christiaan Steinmann



### VERJAARSDAE





Veteraan.... Baie geluk met jou verjaardag...  
Mag elke dag vir jou gevu wees met die mooiste  
sonsopkoms en herinneringe van die verlede....  
Many happy landings!!



HAPPY  
XMAS

# FINALE



IT BECAME TRADITION TO SALUTE TO THE SUNSET ON OLD YEAR'S EVE TO HONOUR THOSE WHO WILL NOT SEE IT HAPPEN THIS YEAR.

PLEASE TAKE A PHOTO OF YOUR SALUTE ON THE 31<sup>ST</sup> OF DECEMBER AND SEND TO THE EDITOR OF THE BAT CHAT FOR THE MARCH ISSUE.



Bernard Fouche. C Coy 1973.  
29/07/1955 – 20/10/2020



WO1 Mike Mushayi. Bde RSM 44  
Para Bde. 01/01/1960 – 05/11/2020

## JANUARIE

Lucas van Vuuren 3 Jan  
Xavier Liebenberg 6 Jan  
Ricky Roberson 13 Jan  
At Schoeman 18 Jan

## FEBRUARY

Warren Jevon 10 Feb

## MAART

Dave Potgieter 20 Mrt  
Greg Barnes 25 Mrt  
Tim Chadwick 25 Mrt  
Dries Rabe 27 Mrt

## APRIL

Genl C. Viljoen 3 Apr  
Herman v Wyk 4 Apr  
Ken Marx 10 Apr  
Rudolph Weitz 30 Apr

## ROLL OF HONOUR 2020

### MEI

Stephan Bester 5 May

### JUNE

Trevor Floyd 11 Jun  
Jock Botes 15 Jun

### AUGUSTUS

Sakkie Cornelissen 2 Aug  
Rudi van Heerden 3 Aug  
Pieter van der Walt 25 Aug  
West Mathewson 26 Aug

### SEPTEMBER

Johnny de Gouvela HCS 14 Sept  
China Chinanayi 21 Sept



## OCTOBER

Bernard Fouche 20 Oct

## NOVEMBER

Mike Mushayi 5 Nov

## DECEMBER

Henry Leppan 4 Dec

**ANSWER FOR PAGE 46:** Invasion stripes were alternating black and white bands painted on the fuselages and wings of Allied aircraft during World War II to reduce the chance that they would be attacked by friendly forces during and after the Normandy Landings.

## WORD FROM THE EDITOR

This is your newsletter. Please make contribution to it in the line of news; personal stories during training or operations; looking for someone; report on parade attended; and any lose of Bats. The next one will be at the end of June 2020 and need your inset two weeks before that. **VASBYT**

[chris.pohl@parabat.org.za](mailto:chris.pohl@parabat.org.za)

Chris Pohl



[paul@who-els.co.za](mailto:paul@who-els.co.za)

Paul J. Els

## ERE ROL / ROLL OF HONOUR 2020

### OCT

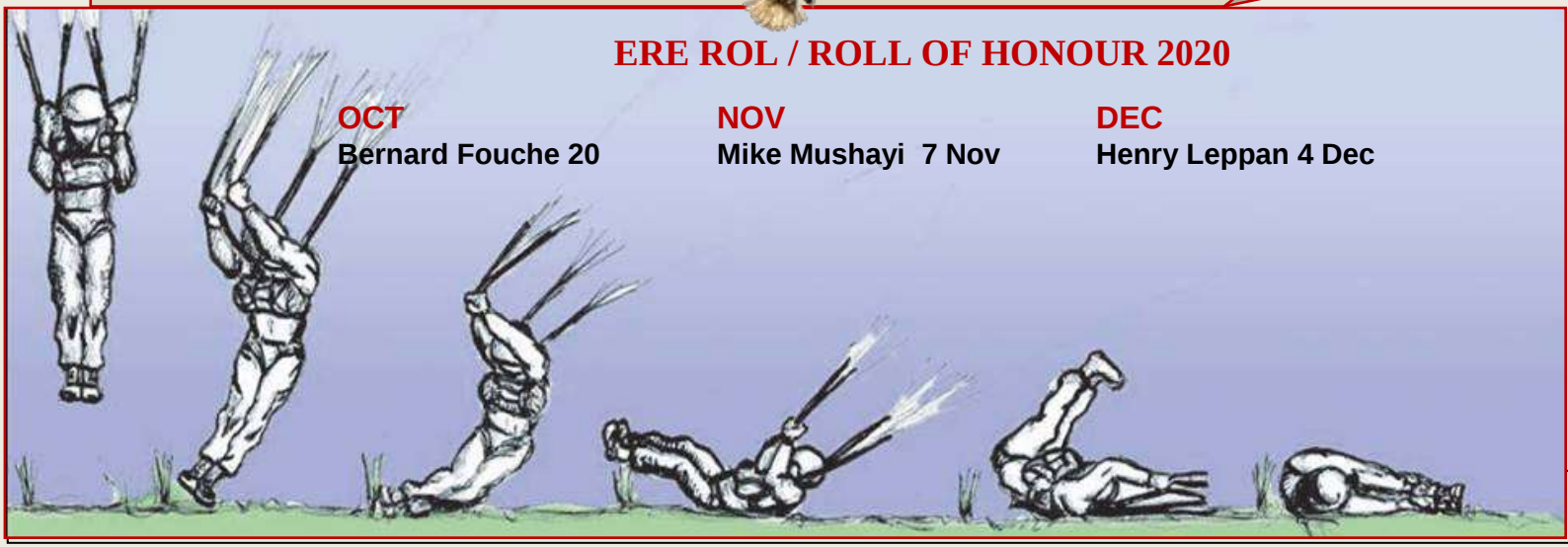
Bernard Fouche 20

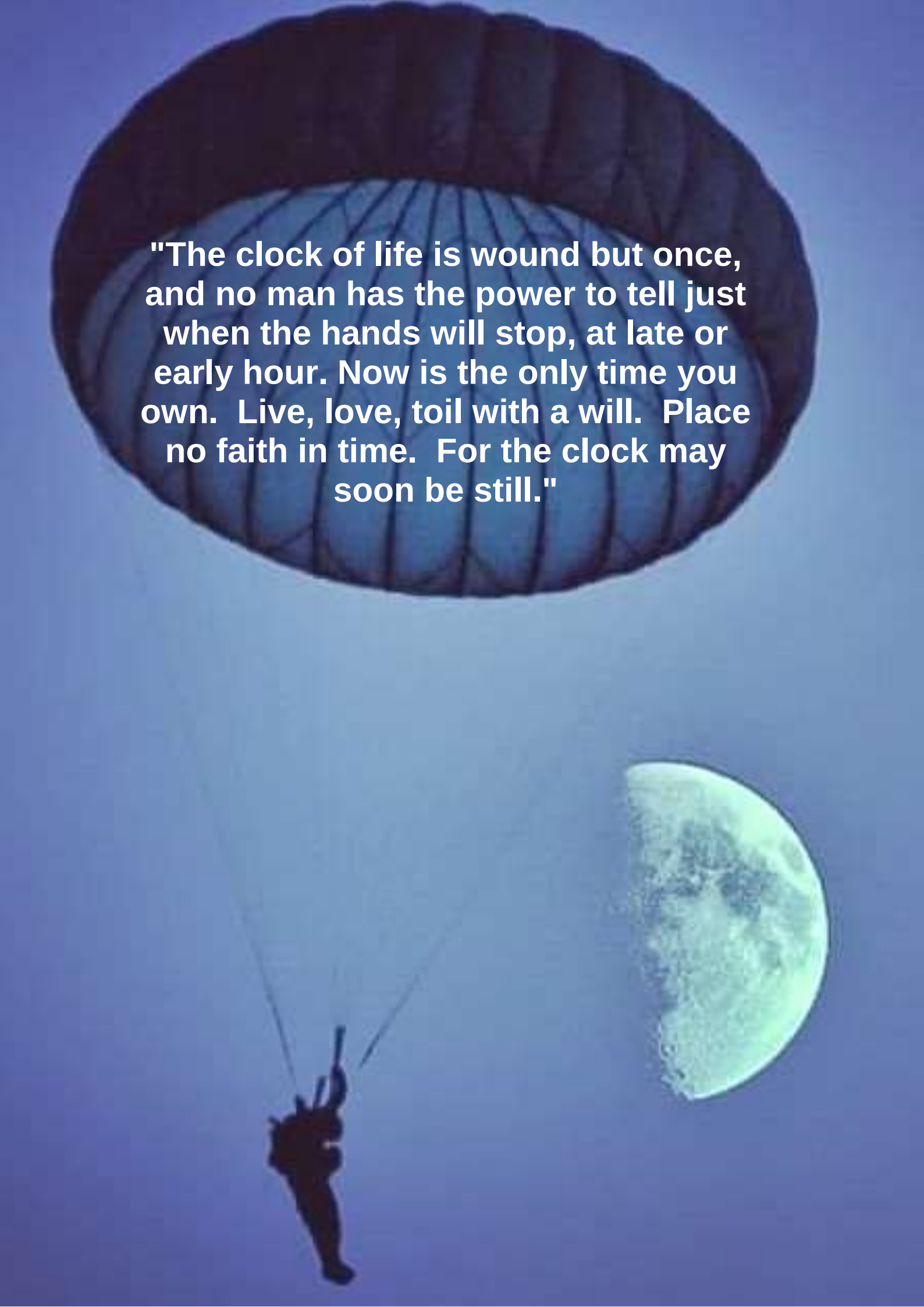
### NOV

Mike Mushayi 7 Nov

### DEC

Henry Leppan 4 Dec



A person is seen from below, silhouetted against a dark blue night sky. They are suspended by a parachute, which is a large, dark, circular canopy with visible suspension lines. The person's body is also silhouetted, showing their legs and arms. To the right of the person, a large, bright, full moon is visible in the sky. The overall scene is a dramatic, high-contrast image of a night parachute jump.

**"The clock of life is wound but once,  
and no man has the power to tell just  
when the hands will stop, at late or  
early hour. Now is the only time you  
own. Live, love, toil with a will. Place  
no faith in time. For the clock may  
soon be still."**