Editor’s Note

Issue 2 of 2008 in all of its glory.

Like most of the other Bara Barnstormers, I have been looking forward to summer – the end of the August winds (which seem to be more common in September now), the lush greenness of the land and some late, lazy flying afternoons. The weather hasn’t been playing the part though, but at least there have been a few weekends of clear highveld afternoons when, to be honest, the only real place to be is in the sky!

I hope you enjoy this, the last installment of 2008, and have a merry Christmas and a fantastic New Year.

Special thanks must go to the contributors, and particularly Noel Otten who once again provided some superb stuff.

Also, if you have any anecdotes, photographs or musings, please could you pass it along to cwatson@stithian.com.

Other than that, enjoy the read!

Courtney Watson

Chairman’s Message

Since the Sport Aerobatic Club removed all of their posters from the clubhouse, the place looks a little bare. With the benefit of hindsight, I believe they have done us a favour by removing the posters and photographs. We need to re-state our own identity!!!

So, what would be good is to have a picture of every aircraft based at Baragee which we can put up in the clubhouse. The picture may be of aircraft in flight or on ground, but the important thing is to have the aircraft owner(s) clearly identifiable in the photo. We can then make up a collage for Year 2008 and repeat that every year.

Also as a suggestion, a good quality photo of the aircraft, preferably in flight, on A4, mounted in "silver" or "gold" frames, behind glass, which we can put up around the clubhouse. If anyone wants to donate a "poster" size (A3), framed print ....even better!

We should be promoting "our own" aeries!

Regards,
Noel
A Tiger’s Tale

I know that every pilot has a tale or two to tell. I would like to share this one of DH82A Tiger Moth ZS-CDJ, (my baby).

I first met ‘CDJ in November 1970. As a result of an incredible series of events, (which I could write a book about), I found my “baby” hangared at Grand Central, (FAGC). It was in pristine condition. What a sight she was. No other Tiger I had ever seen, let alone flown, came close to her for looks and condition, with the possible exception of Alan Hindle's Tiger, (Alan, the aviation artist, now, sadly, deceased). I saw her and I wanted her. I had been on the hunt for a Tiger for about 2 years at that time. The late Mr. C. H. “Bok” Strecker, the doyen of Tiger Moth restorers, had told me about this Tiger that lived at FAGC, and which never flew; at least it hadn't flown for some time. Bok serviced and maintained it, but it never left it's hangar. "This is the best Tiger around" Bok assured me. He gave me the owner's name, John (van) Eeden, together with a stern warning ... "don't call him 'van Eeden' and don't tell him I put you onto him, ... he'll kill me!"

I contacted John Eeden. The call was very brief. "The Tiger is not for sale!" he said. Undeterred, I phoned him again and again over the next few weeks. He was never rude, just not willing to sell. He never even hinted at a price. Then one evening in late November 1970, he phoned me. "Noel", he said, "you have been very persistent. I have been thinking about the Tiger and I have to be brutally honest with myself. It is unlikely that I will ever be able to fly her. You can have her for R 2 200 - cash".

I was dumbfounded!!! It was 21:00 hrs on a Friday night. I did not have R 220,- to my name let alone R 2 200,-. The going rate for a Tiger you could push out of the hangar was R 1 200 -. If you wanted to fly it away... R 1 600 -. How on earth was I going to latch onto this one? "Mr. Eeden" I stammered,"I have R 100 - on me, (I had just been paid earlier that day); I can give that to you now and I'll bring the rest in a few days". "Done!" he said. "I'll wait up for you". I was 22 years old at the time and still lived with my parents, (I reasoned that it was much cheaper than trying to make it on your own), no girlfriends, no commitments ... nothing that could eat up my "flying" money. But I did not have R2 200 -. I had a birthday coming up in a few days and I reckoned I could "con" money instead of presents out of friends and family, especially if they knew I was buying an aircraft. I spoke to my folks. Between them, there was another R 100 - available. I got into my car and drove to Bryanston (my mother insisted on going with me).

John Eeden greeted us and invited us in for tea. Time - 23:00 hrs. I paid the deposit of R 200,- and arranged to pay the balance on hand-over. "Meet me at Grand Central at 10:00 tomorrow morning" he said. "Bok Strecker is doing the "annual" on her. He'll be able to tell you all about the plane. Bok assembled it when it was given to the SAAF and he re-assembled it back in 1956 after it was taken out of mothballs following her time in the SAAF" John added.

Can anyone pin-point the intersection I am over? 5th August 1972

26th December 1970. My first flight in 'CDJ from Baragwanath
Saturday morning, 10:00hrs, Grand Central Airport.... I saw "my" Tiger for the first time. It was immaculate! "She's yours as soon as you pay the balance" said John. Bok and Cyril Strecker, (Bok's son), gave me a "thumbs-up". By now I had already secured the balance of the money. My parents would "loan" me the money, (you know the way most parents do) ... "you can pay us back when you are able to"; (it took me about a year to pay it off). "I'll be able to pay you on Monday", I said and we shook hands on the deal.

I had an airplane but nowhere to keep it. My "home" field was Rand and there was nowhere there that I would dare to leave the Tiger. I contacted a very good friend of my from my college days, Mel Colyn. Mel had once owned a Tiger, the one in which Scully Levine gave me my conversion, ( Mel and Scully were flatmates ). Mel's "home base" was Baragwanath, a place I had only flown in and out of 10 or 12 times before. Mel's response when I phoned him.... "You bought a Tiger for how much???? Jeez are you crazy?" "I need a hangar," I said. "Are there any available at Baragee?" "Yes!" he replied. "Mine!" "I am moving my Globe Swift to Heidelberg. If you want the hangar you will have to join JLPC".

That very afternoon, I paid my entrance fee to join the Johannesburg Light Plane Club. It turned out to be a "life changing" event for me. The course of my life changed forever. I have had some awesome experiences at Baragee. Met the most interesting people and "characters". Achieved memorable "aviation" goals. Learned a lot about a lot of things. Met my wife there. Met my best friends there. And, in spite of some set-backs and dropping out of aviation for nearly 18 years, I have now come "full circle". I am back here at JLPC!!! And have met a new bunch of great people, (and a lot of the "oldies" as well). And I'm enjoying a whole lot of new experiences.

Now I hope that I have inspired others to put pen to paper and to relate their "baby's" story for all of us to enjoy.

Noel Otten

Foot notes:-
1) John Eeden, as far as I could establish, had bought 'CDJ on 22nd August 1969. Not once does his name appear in the log books as having been her pilot-in-command. Strange!
2) On the 12th August 1972 I crashed in 'CDJ during an airshow at the "old" Baragwanath, (substance for another story). If you want to crash, do it at an airshow. Thousands of "I was there" witnesses; lots of photographic records; hundreds of "expert witnesses" who are willing and able to give you a detailed analysis of your flying skills, (or lack thereof). Just don't kill yourself, or others, in the process. Well, 36 years on and 'CDJ is about to be re-born. Stay tuned-in to the newsletters for details. We are going to have one almighty party that day. I promise!!!
3).....and No!!! She is not for sale!

End of the Show! 12th August 1972.
How did they navigate in the “old” days Grandpa???

Before Jeppessen and Garmin there was “SHELL”. Shell produced incredibly detailed, and accurate, “route” maps. The routes, (circa 1936), were very specific, e.g. Nairobi - Broken Hill (I’ll bet no one under 40 knows where that is) - Salisbury - Johannesburg - Cape Town. Included in the "aerodrome" information charts I found this one giving details of our "old" home.... Baragwanath Airfield, on Crown Mines Property south-west of the JHB CBD; (where the Rand Show / NASREC Complex stands today you young wimps!)

Thanks to Brian Zeederberg for entrusting them to me before he moved to Aussie.

(Article compliments of Noel Otten)

Overleaf are the enlarged details of the 'Old Baragwanath...

Tips for Pilots...

1. Take offs are optional. Landings are mandatory.
2. Flying isn't dangerous. Crashing is dangerous.
3. It's always better to be down here wishing you were up there than up there wishing you were down here.
4. The only time you have too much fuel is when you're on fire.
5. The propeller is just a big fan in front of the plane used to keep the pilot cool. When it stops, you can watch the pilot start sweating.
6. When in doubt, hold on to your altitude. No one has ever collided with the sky.
7. A "good" landing is one from which you can walk away. A "great" landing is one after which they can use the plane again.
8. Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make all of them yourself.
9. You know you’ve landed with the wheels up if it takes full power to taxi.

10. The probability of survival is inversely proportional to the angle of arrival. Large angle of arrival equals a small probability of survival -- and vice versa.

11. Stay out of clouds. The silver lining everyone keeps talking about might be another airplane going in the opposite direction.

12. There are three simple rules for making a smooth landing. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.

13. If all you can see out of the windscreen is ground that’s going round and round and all you can hear is a commotion coming from the passenger compartment, things are not at all as they should be.

14. Good judgment comes from experience. Unfortunately, experience usually comes from bad judgment.

15. It’s always a good idea to keep the pointy end going forward as much as possible.
Why Aviation?

As a flying enthusiast, I find myself constantly looking up at the sky whenever I hear some sort of an aircraft flying over. Whether it is a Cessna 172, a Learjet or even a Boeing 747, I am equally drawn skyward by their distinctive noise that casts a shadow on the earth below. I feel somewhat isolated in this pursuit, however, as companions who rush outdoors and peer through squinted eyes at the sky are few.

What I fear is that flying is slowly losing its importance for the average person. For Joe Soap, flying is strictly for the purpose of getting as quickly as possible from one place to the next. It is a means to an end of traveling, and instead of being where the journey begins, it is a way of getting to the start of a journey.

And at this point I must stress that I am generalizing.

The pioneers of flight, however, sought a way of extracting a means of moving from one part of the world to the next with a relative ease, like we focus our pursuits in the present, but unlike us, they still appreciated what it meant to be aloft. They still flew close enough to the grips of the ground so that they could appreciate the clouds and sea and earth and sky around them. Being aloft was something that was treasured and respected.

Now, when one travels through the airwaves in a commercial jet or turboprop, most passengers are drawn immediately to the in-flight entertainment and close the blinders that cover their personal windows, eager for the journey to be over as quickly as possible. I was recently on a flight to the United States and noticed that there was only a very sparse community of passengers that dared look outside the window.

As we climbed out of O.R. Tambo, the 747 was faced with a brief smattering of an Autumn South African Landscape before it disappeared through a candy floss sky of virgin clouds. The view was simply breathtaking as I watched the breath of these clouds make the wing beside me invisible for a moment. It caught the light in streaks of gold that stretched like angelic fingers upwards and downwards. I was irritated that the window was positioned slightly behind me and my other option of a view hole in front of it was obscured by the seat in front of me.
How could all these other travelers be so oblivious to such beauty, though!

The positioning of these windows seemed to substantiate this feeling. They were purposeless as most passengers closed the blinds to keep out the light before we had even taken off. It was almost as if the designers of these huge transporters knew that windows would be one of the features superceded by the in-flight entertainment screen in the backrest of the seat in front. It was ironic that one of the features of this little screen was a camera that showed a view directly beneath the aircraft, and once could watch what was going on outside not through a window, as it really is, but through a digital projection of the outside world.

I felt sorry for those who missed out on the real flying outside. In my eyes their ignorance is not so bliss.

Perhaps this mindset is endemic of our immediate gratification society where watching the outside is not as enthralling as watching someone else’s world through a television screen. Perhaps it is easier to sit behind a computer screen and play a flight simulator instead of going out there and trying the real thing. Is the easy option the one more chosen?

No, I don’t think so, that opinion is too prescriptive.

But it is the reason why the recreational side of flying needs to be nurtured now more than ever. The days of Piper Cubs and Tiger Moths being a tether which the Average Joe can hold on to an afford in their pursuit for achieving dreams of flying have disappeared. Let’s face it, flying is expensive, and we must endeavor to source a means of attracting more people to this market. That is why places like Baragee are so important. They are places where flying at grassroots level is grown and enjoyed.

The majority of the population is unaware that there are people out there that sink every Rand they earn into a fiberglass or rag and tube homebuilt that nestles in their garage, just waiting to take flight. Unfortunately, however, these people are diminishing every year.

At Baragee, we have a core of pilots that are a throwback to the pioneers who knew aviation was something to be taken seriously because they too believe the sport is so special.

I read a book recently which puts it all into perspective...Graham Coster writes understandingly and poetically about this inspirational nature of air travel in his book, “Coursairville”. This novel reveals the romance and symbolism in traveling with flying boats, but he also describes an account of Alan Cobham:

“But flying itself – what aeroplanes do – was in the inter-war era a constant process of time-shrinking. The race between nautical and aeronautical was joined on 26 February 1926, when the Union Castle ship, Windsor Castle, steamed out of Cape Town, Southampton-

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bound, on the same day as the pioneering aviator Alan Cobham took off from there in his de Havilland biplane. Cobham was on his way home after having completed a survey flight from London… The simultaneity was coincidental but, once realized, the challenge was on for an aeroplane to be the first home” (Coster 2001: 83).

The aeroplane won, but can you imagine the thought of trudging the length of Africa in an open biplane, just to prove that air travel was something that should be taken seriously. Would Cobham have expected his flight to be materialized in literally hundreds of flights the length of that same continent with pin point accuracy and no attention given outside the window?

We know that recreational flying is diminishing, but is needed as a vital component to support commercial endeavours. We are all linked through the passions of flight. Flying is not just a hobby or just a job. Because without the spirit of recreational aviation, flying will never be the same.

Courtney Watson

For Sale

SORRELL HIPERLIGHT 46 HP Rotax 503, ideal economical aerie R60 000.00 but any offers welcome Contact Courtney – 083 642 3565 or cwatson@stithian.com

WAG AERO Newly painted fuselage and tail feathers; Undercarriage – new tyres, cleveland brakes, new springs, new tail wheel; 65 hp Continental Engine and logbook; Wing ribs, mainspar and new wing tanks; Control column and various pulleys and fittings. R60 000.00 but any offers welcome Contact Courtney – 083 642 3565 or cwatson@stithian.com Please contact me for anything else for sale – cwatson@stithian.com