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BRAKES ON ... THROTTLE SET... CONTACT!



*De Havilland Dragon Rapide over the Wild Coast
Photo by John Illsley*

Whassup!

Wed 03 August
Chapter 322 Meeting
Dickie Fritz MOTH Hall, Edenvale

Thurs 11 August
EAA Flying Legends Talk Show
EAA Auditorium, Rand Airport
Guest: Petri van Zyl

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Africa's Last Dragon Rapide Flies Again

- John Illsley, Chapter 322



I was recently greatly privileged to be present for the maiden flight and the ferry flight of the last remaining De Havilland DH89 Dragon Rapide on the continent. This beautiful twin engine biplane will be known to longstanding members of the EAA as the aircraft once owned by John English, who brought it to the annual convention at Margate on several occasions. Many EAA members at the time chipped in petrol money and were treated to a coastal flight. It has been out of the air for the best part of two decades, but after a total rebuild it is now set to grace South African skies once again.

The Dragon Rapide was originally designed in the 1930s as a regional airliner carrying eight passengers and operating with a crew of just one pilot. In this role it was operated successfully all over the world prior to World War Two, when a military version known as the Dominie was built for the RAF and used mainly as a radio trainer and communications aircraft. Most Dominies were built under licence in Britain by Brush Coachworks, and the aircraft now flying again in SA is one of those, having come off the production line in 1944. This example then went on to fly with East African Airways and smaller charter operators in Kenya from the late 1940s until the early 1970s. It flew for a few years with Air Mahé in the Seychelles before being retired, and it was at this stage that John English bought it and ferried it to the Eastern Cape to be based at Progress Airfield outside Port Elizabeth.

In the late 1990s the aircraft was in need of refurbishment and this was started at Port Alfred by Don Johnson. Before completion, the owner brought it back to Progress and it remained in storage for several more years. In 2011 the aircraft was put on the market and Mark Sahd of Queenstown seized the opportunity to acquire the aircraft as part of his Historic Wings Collection. The Rapide was moved to East London airport on a low bed truck, and a very thorough rebuild was undertaken under the supervision of Dave Hart, the owner of Air Hart. The fuselage and centre section were separated and most of the woodwork in the fuselage and cabin was replaced. This comprises a mix of spruce

longerons and birch ply skinning. The Gypsy Queen six cylinder engines were done at Wonderboom airport. Authentic instruments were serviced locally and in the UK. A revised instrument panel layout was designed which, although true to the original, has two radios discreetly included. The interior of the cabin was upholstered in green leather, as were the passenger seats. Details include a sunburst on the cabin bulkhead and the DH monogram on each seat.

After assembly, the aircraft was finished in an authentic RAF colour scheme with the aircraft's original serial, although this particular aircraft is not known to have ever flown in these colours. Nevertheless, it allows a predominantly silver finish, which ties in with the silver military colour schemes of all Mark's other aircraft, currently comprising a Tiger Moth, Auster J1, Chipmunk and Fairchild Argus.

Strictly speaking, the rebuilt Rapide had its maiden flight over a year ago, but that flight, on a Friday 13th, ended up with the plane being tipped on its nose because of a brake problem. That led to a delay of several months, because the engines had to be returned to Wonderboom for the testing of the crankshafts, and the search began for two replacement Fairey Reed propellers. Sadly, none of these could be found, although this author thought he'd found one in mint condition at RAP Wonderboom, only to realise on closer examination that it came off an Auster Mk9! Consequently, I suggested to Mark that he consider having wooden replacements made by Hercules Propellers in the UK. They did all the research needed to make two props to the specifications of those used on the Rapide prototype. After months of frustrating delays, the engines were reinstalled and tested with the new props, and all these items worked perfectly. After some further delays procuring Authority to Fly paperwork from the CAA, all was set for a fresh round of test flights. There being no instructors in SA who have this aircraft on their licence, we had to look for 'similar type experience' pilots who could undertake the initial flights and the conversion training for other pilots.

On behalf of the owner, I negotiated with two ex-SAA captains who were considered to have the best credentials in this regard, namely Flippie Vermeulen and Brian Stableford. Needless to say, this was a rare opportunity, even for men of their huge number of flying hours and the diverse range of types on their licences, and both of them readily agreed to help. We got down to planning how to approach the task, using all the available literature and some advice from a friend of mine in the UK who has extensive experience flying Rapides.

Eventually all the planets lined up. The aircraft was ready; pilots were prepared; the necessary CAA paperwork was all in hand, and the eye-wateringly expensive insurance had been secured. A long weekend was identified where everyone concerned was available to meet in East London. I was invited as 'chief publicist', responsible for all the articles and photographs that would be sent to the media on completion of the flights. On the 16th June, Flippie, Brian and I flew down to East London on the early morning SAA flight, with the ex-'sky gods' seated in business class enjoying a proper breakfast, and 'yours sincerely' in the back, eating the cold fare that passes for breakfast in economy class!

We met up with Mark Sahd and Dave Hart at the Air Hart hangar. Flippie started to familiarise himself with the aircraft by way of a comprehensive technical briefing from Dave Hart, who, having been responsible for the rebuild, literally knows every nut and bolt in the plane. A coffee break followed, during which decisions were made on how to approach the first flight, including which taxiway to use for taxi trials; runway for take-off and identifying a suitable patch of sky over a massive forced landing ground.

The first task, after pushing the aircraft out, was to do a run-up of both engines at various power settings. That didn't reveal any snags, so it was time to try some taxiing around the airport. This is a very critical stage in the work-up to the first flight, because the Rapide is infamously difficult to manage in this respect. It is has been described by several pilots as being simple if you have three hands! The reason is that, ideally, there are stages of operation where you have to operate a control column, the throttles and hand brake simultaneously!

The Rapide cockpit is designed for only one pilot, but one of the passenger seats is directly behind this position, and so, for the first test flight, this was occupied by Brian, who would act as a 'non-flying first officer', for want of a better term.

The taxi trials went well and, because he thought he had sufficiently mastered the quirks of the aircraft on the ground, Flippie decided to proceed directly into the first flight. We watched as the Rapide lifted off past the modern airliners that serve East London – a stark contrast in technology, separated by seventy years. The aircraft was flown to an area south of the city and then put through its paces, as Flippie got used to the handling characteristics, ably assisted by his 'co-pilot'. After about half an hour the aircraft and its lucky crew returned, and that was when Mark really had his heart in his mouth as the moment of truth arrived – the landing. In the event, it was made to look very easy. As they say in the classics, the 'new boy had brought the ship back in one piece'.



Mark Sahd





Capt. Flippie Vermeulen

Shutting down after the flight, the verdict delivered by a beaming Captain Vermeulen was that the aircraft had performed according to the book numbers and that there was no need for any adjustments. The successful first flight and completely snag-free assessment of the Rapide was cause for celebration, although the bottle of champagne that was produced for the occasion wasn't opened as more flying was on the cards for later in the day! So, the post-flight bonhomie was limited to a tea break at the Border Aviation clubhouse. The next flight of the day was intended to give Flippie some more time behind the controls, but the owner was invited to finally fly in his aircraft and I was very kindly invited along to obtain some photos from inside the cabin. The flight took us down the coast from East London. What a wonderful experience to see this part of the country through the elliptical wings of this aerial carriage. Equally wonderful was seeing Mark Sahd savouring this first flight in the Rapide, after years of investment in the project and not a few setbacks along the way.

All too soon, we were heading back to the airport, with Flippie giving a running commentary to us on the handling characteristics and target speeds for approach and landing. All seats have their own headset jacks, so one can converse with the pilot, although I would venture to suggest that many a pilot would be inclined to switch the intercom off for the landing! As a mere PPL holder, I found it mindboggling to watch a pilot who has never flown this particular type of aircraft, teach himself to fly a new type, and within a few hours be flying it as if he had years of experience on type. It was a real treat to observe the expertise of men who have reached the pinnacle of their profession and who are so willing to lend their vast experience so freely to a project of this nature.

I think everyone involved with the Rapide had been expecting some tweaking of the aircraft, but there was absolutely nothing deemed to require adjustment after these first flights, a huge tribute to the skills of Dave Hart and his team. Consequently, the decision was taken to ferry the aircraft to its new home in Queenstown the following day. My hope that we could utilise this for taking air-to-air photos, came together perfectly. Because the Queenstown Flying Club Cessna 172 also needed to be ferried home, this became the camera ship, with Brian flying it from the right hand seat so that the Rapide could be flown on our port side.

After a final farewell flypast over the airport for the benefit of Air Hart personnel and others who had gathered for the event, we set off up the Wild Coast. The Rapide flying above the surf and over river mouths made for some fine photographs before we turned inland at the Kei mouth. The next leg provided spectacular views of a different kind as we flew over the deep gorges of the Kei river and its tributaries. With Flippie placing the Rapide in a number of positions relative to the Cessna, which Brian, predictably, held rock steady, it was an easy task to secure scores of good images.

Amusingly, it became apparent from radio chatter that I wasn't the only one trying to capture the beautiful lines of the Rapide in the air. Two other aircraft out of East London were chasing us, and at one stage we had four aircraft in formation! The Rapide was tucked in so closely to us that I don't think the 'pursuit' planes could have got any photos without a Cessna 172 in the background!

Eventually Queenstown hove into view and we took the last few photos of the Rapide descending past the Hangklip





De Havilland trio: Tiger Moth, Dragon Rapide and Chipmunk

mountain, which was a famous landmark for young trainee aircrew in World War Two when this was an Air School. We landed first in the Cessna, so as to get some photos of the fly-past and landing. Quite a crowd had gathered to welcome the 'African Queen' to Queenstown. After it had taxied in, there was much taking photos of, and with, the new arrival. Flippie's enthusiasm at having just flown for an hour in Africa's oldest airliner knew no bounds, and he half-jokingly offered to swap his DC3 for the Rapide!

Appropriate to the gracious old lady of the day, we enjoyed tea and cream scones under the trees. Later the Rapide was moved to the opposite side of the wartime Bellman hangar that is home to the Queenstown Flying Club and the Historic Wings Collection, the aircraft owned by Mark Sahd.

During WW2, Queenstown's contribution to the war effort was hosting 47 Air School, which trained aircrew for both the RAF and the SAAF as part of the Joint Air Training Scheme. One of its commanding officers was Allister Miller, founder of Union Airways (later SAA). Almost all of the hangars and other buildings are still intact, mainly because, apart from one hangar, all of the buildings are part of the SAPS facilities in the

town. Mark has done much to ensure that the airfield and the flying club remain viable. That dedication extends to preserving its heritage and he has recently secured a relic of the wartime airfield in the form of an engine crane. This has been beautifully restored and will form the centrepiece of a memorial to 47 Air School.

After moving the Rapide, which gave Brian the opportunity to taxi the aircraft, the two Captains left for East London to catch a flight back to the Reef. With some helping hands, Mark and I 'posed' the De Havilland products in his collection for some additional photos, his Tiger Moth and Chipmunk being positioned either side of the new flagship of the collection. So ended a memorable two days, and that evening in a Queenstown restaurant, the champagne did finally flow in celebration!

The Rapide will be preserved for the benefit of South African aviation enthusiasts and will make a limited number of appearances at a few select air shows each year. The good news for those of us on the Witwatersrand is that the debut air show for the Rapide will be the Rand air show on 21st August. One good reason to be there!



Brian Stableford, Flippie Vermeulen and Mark Sahd

Chapter 322 Meeting

'Wild Landings' proves to be a huge hit at Chapter 322's July Meeting

- Gordon Dyne

Some 120 members, friends and visitors came together at the Dickie Fritz MOTH Hall on Wednesday evening 06 July for EAA Chapter 322's July meeting. It was a cold night and the wonderful piping hot soup and buttered rolls from the kitchen were consumed with great relish. Delicious! Thank you very much, Ann Ferreira.

At 19h00 hours precisely, Chairman Dr Mike Brown called the gathering to order and began to run through the usual monthly formalities. These were interspersed by some very clever parapsydokians – I think one could call them that – accompanied by some suitable pictures! For example: 'There was a kidnapping at the local primary school. Luckily the kid woke up!' Perhaps not quite a parapsydokian, but near enough.

Finances are strong, thanks to honorary treasurer Mark Clulow, former SAAF Mirage pilot and Chartered Accountant. On Friday of this coming week Mark and I are visiting Wits University with Monty le Roux, who is a pilot/engineer and a good friend of mine who repairs all Wits' CNC (Computer Numerically Controlled) machines. A very clever oke is Monty! Wits University have a complete former SAAF Mirage F1 in their technical department. I imagine it is used by the aeronautical engineering undergraduates to understand just what made this iconic fighter of the 70s tick. I know Mark is looking forward to reacquainting himself with this plane,

which played such an important role in his young life in the Air Force and brought him safely home from many sorties over enemy territory during the Border War. For me, a huge fan of this amazing plane, it will be an opportunity to sit inside a Mirage (if I can fit my huge frame inside this small cockpit) and try to imagine what it was like for pilots such as Mark Clulow and another EAA 322 member Arthur Piercy, to face an uncertain future when over enemy territory. Unfortunately Arthur was badly injured and is now a paraplegic. These guys are my heroes. Thank you Mark, Arthur and your colleagues for helping to preserve our freedom. Otherwise today we could be speaking Russian, Spanish or Portuguese!

There is no Flying Legends Talk Show in July, but on 11 August our Flying Legend is Petri van Zyl, a former SAAF fast jet pilot and helicopter pilot who, like our Mark Clulow, played a big part in the Border War. Petri is a former SAAF test pilot who now spends much of his time in China teaching Chinese pilots to fly helicopters. I was privileged to listen to Petri when he spoke at a seminar at our recent EAA Conference in Mossel Bay. It was quite mesmerising, so don't miss this opportunity to hear Petri on 11 August.

So ended the formalities in double-quick time.

After a quick break to recharge our glasses, we sat back to enjoy the film 'Wild Landings', made by those two intrepid pilots and adventurers Mike Blyth and James Pitman, owners of the Airplane Factory and manufacturers of what is becoming the world famous Sling Aircraft. The film was introduced by Mike Blyth. This amazing film covered the two weeks these two men spent flying over Namibia and having all



Dr Mike Brown and Mike Blyth

sorts of wild adventures. The film, which lasted 80 minutes, was a wonderful advertisement for the Sling Aircraft and Namibian tourism. To watch James Pitman performing gentle aerobatics was great fun. Great film, guys! Best of luck for the future. You deserve all the kudos that come your way.

Incidentally, one of the two pilots flying the 'support' Sling carrying all the gear was 322's Stephen Haupt – 21 year old Stephen is a commercial pilot working out of Lanseria and is a Sling delivery pilot. What a tough job, but someone has to do it! Stephen is the son of EAA member, aviation enthusiast and retired engineer Mike Haupt. My claim to fame in Stephen's success story is the fact that I took him for a Young Eagles flight in my Arrow about seven years ago. Even then I could see that he was a 'natural'. Well done, Steve. We are all very proud of you. Fly safely. Steve, Jason Beamish and a couple of their chommies are going to Oshkosh this month for EAA Air

Venture. I know the trip to this incredible air show will inspire Steve to even greater heights in his aviation career.

So ended another rip-roaring 322 evening. Thanks, Chairman Mike, for all your preparation. Your efforts are nothing short of phenomenal. Mike's mum, who lives in Plettenburg Bay, was about to celebrate her 90th birthday when she had a bad fall, broke her arm and had to be hospitalised to undergo an operation. Here's wishing Mrs Brown a speedy recovery.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 03 August. Same time; same place.

For more information on EAA Chapter 322, please visit our website www.eaa.org.za or contact its hard-working PR girl Trixie Heron on editor@afskies.co.za

Thank you. Hope to see you on 03 August.

Mark Clulow and Mike Blyth



Forthcoming

EAA Flying Legends Talk Show



Petri van Zyl, Chief Instructor and Manager of the Test Flying Academy of SA, and CEO of Blue Sky Aviation and highly experienced Test Pilot, will be our guest at the EAA Flying Legends Talk Show in August, hosted by Dr Mike Brown.

We start gathering at about 18h00 for steak and boerewors rolls and pre-event drinks. The EAA Auditorium is just beyond the Aero Club's offices (not through the Rand Airport main entrance), up Hurricane Road, off Rand Airport Road, heading towards holding point of runway 29.

For bookings and enquiries, please send an email to eea.talkshow@icon.co.za



Petri van Zyl

Wits University Mirage F1



Mark Clulow and Gordon Dyne

A visit to Wits University to view its Dassault Mirage F1 - Gordon Dyne

In March 1999, the South African Air Force (SAAF) donated a Mirage F1 fighter to the University of the Witwatersrand, in Johannesburg. At that time Professor Beric Skews said, "Wits will use the aircraft to train aviation engineers. Wits' Aviation Engineering degree is the only one offered in Africa. It is fully accredited with the relevant professional bodies in both the United Kingdom and South Africa."

I had no idea that Wits University had a fully assembled Mirage F1 in its engineering workshop on the first floor of its technical building in Johannesburg. Did you? Apparently she was hoisted through a first floor window and completely reassembled once inside. She sits on 'jacks' with the engine lying alongside.

My good friend, Monty le Roux, a pilot of note and a very experienced engineer specialising in CNC (Computer Numerically Controlled) machines is called upon frequently to service much of the old machinery at Wits and by all accounts is highly thought of by Shaun Riekert, the Technical Manager. Monty asked Shaun if a couple of his friends could come and view the Mirage, one of these friends being former Mirage pilot Mark Clulow. Shaun was only too happy to oblige.

So on Friday 15 July, Monty, Mark and I arrived at Wits to be warmly greeted by Shaun and his number one, Andrew Heydenrych. We could not wait to see the Mirage and we were almost stunned to silence when we beheld her. For Mark it was like reuniting with a very old friend whom he had not seen for more than 30 years. For Monty and me it was a humbling few moments, thinking of Mark and his many pilot colleagues who flew and fought in the Border War back in the seventies and eighties to secure South Africa's continued freedom.

"When you go home, tell them of us and say
For their tomorrow, we gave our today."

- John Maxwell Edmonds

It was a wonderful visit and below is the email I sent to Shaun Riekert to say 'Thank you'. I hope the pictures I took accompanying this article will remind readers of this venerable beauty and her glorious past.

For the kind attention of Mr Shaun Riekert,
Technical Manager,
University of the Witwatersrand.

Dear Shaun,

What a tremendous honour it was for Mark Clulow and me to meet you and Andrew Heydenrych today in the company of our mutual friend Monty le Roux. Thank you so much for your warm hospitality. You made us very welcome. Thank you.

For Mark and me it was a tremendous thrill to see that beautiful Mirage F1 in your workshop. Even for Mark who completed more than 2,000 hours on that magnificent beast, it was still a huge treat to be able to sit in one again. Mark had not sat in a Mirage since 1980, but I could still see the excitement in his eyes as he cast his mind back to those dark days of the border war when he knew that every take-off could be his last. Mark still had the whole 'start up' procedure in his head and he promptly gave us chapter and verse on it. Very impressive! I could detect a look in Mark's eyes which translated as "I wonder if I could fly her out of the window?"

Mark has not put on any weight since his SAAF days so he was once again able to slip his sylph-like figure into the cockpit! I, on the other hand, have put on a lot of weight since my military days when I was in my twenties in the sixties and seventies. A few years ago I tried on my old army mess kit and found it had SHRUNK (!) so much; I was compelled to donate it to the drama society at my daughters' school!

So it was a bit of a struggle for me to get into the Mirage's cockpit, but when I finally made it I could I almost appreciate what it was like for pilots like Mark to strap themselves in and go off into combat. I just cannot get my head round the feat of flying at Mach 2. That is one hell of a speed. My admiration for these young pilots such as Mark knows no bounds. There are the fictional figures from schoolboy comics, but these guys are real-life heroes! Mark is such an incredibly modest man, one would never know of his six years with the SAAF flying this iconic fighter, unless somebody else told you! An amazing guy. I am delighted that Mark was able to add his name, signature and squadron to the nose of the plane, joining the names of his former pilot colleagues. The 'nose art' was not complete without the name of Mark Clulow – 1 Squadron SAAF 1979-1981.

I just about managed to get out of the cockpit with Mark pulling and Monty pushing, but at one time, I thought I would be spending the weekend in the cockpit. Actually I would not have minded too much, just so long as I was fed and watered!

Thank you too, Shaun, for using Monty and his company Machine Tool Innovations. I have known Monty for more than twenty years and we share a number of clients. I have never heard anything, but praise for his workmanship. Monty is a craftsman who takes enormous pride in his work. Monty is from the 'old school' like you and me.

So once again, Shaun, a huge thank you to you and Andrew for allowing us to visit your workshop and enjoy an amazing hour or so admiring this old beauty. For aviation lovers and pilots such as Mark, Monty and me it was an awesome visit. Thank you so much.

I have now added your name to my two emailing lists, so I hope you enjoy the emails you will be receiving now and again.

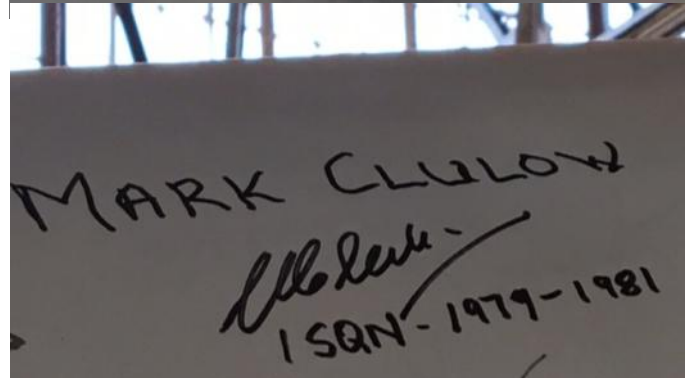
All the best from Mark, Monty and me.

I remain.

Yours very sincerely,
Gordon Dyne



Mark Clulow



Mark Clulow and Monty le Roux

Birthday Breakfast for Claus Keuchel



L-R: Wayne Powell, Mike Brown, Yvonne Corrigan, Eugene Couzyn, Val Jensen, Claus Keuchel, Gordon Dyne and Ricardo De Bonis

- Gordon Dyne

Much loved EAA 322 member and vastly experienced pilot Claus Keuchel celebrated his 82nd birthday on Wednesday 29 June. A week or so earlier, Claus had lost his 85 year old dearly beloved wife Edna after some 55 years of marital bliss. They would have celebrated their 56th wedding anniversary this coming 10 September. German-born Claus came to Africa after World War II and settled in Kenya where he was the Volkswagen Service Manager for East Africa. On arrival in Kenya, Claus met his lovely English rose, Edna, and although neither spoke a word of each other's language, romance soon blossomed. Who needs to speak at all when one is in love? Perhaps a little Braille took place!

"With love in your heart, you are the magic and the miracle right where you are."

- Harold W Becker

Encouraged by Edna, Claus learned to fly and soon became a well respected Flight Instructor. Later, Claus also taught Edna to fly – now that has to be the true test of love – and they flew together for many years. Sadly, the union was not blessed with children, but this smashing couple stayed devoted to each other until the end.

Soon after Edna's passing, a number of us decided that, to take Claus' mind off his loss, we would fly to Zebula Lodge for breakfast. So on Sunday 03 July – a beautiful morning – five aircraft departed their home bases for Zebula, which is near Warmbaths (Bela Bela), all arriving within fifteen minutes of each other. Captain Karl and Val Jensen arrived in Karl's shimmering Cessna 170B. Ricardo De Bonis brought his son Andre in his Piper Cub. Dr Mike Brown and Wayne Powell

and Trixie Heron tiptoed in, in Mike's stunning Saab. That is such a lovely plane. Eugene Couzyn and Yvonne Corrigan arrived vertically in Eugene's historic and immaculate former French Army Alouette II. Brian Appleton arrived in his post-war De Havilland Chipmunk, accompanied by Renita Moonsamy. Last, but hopefully not least, I arrived in my trusty old steed, my Piper Arrow 200, with the birthday boy Claus and his very pretty accountant Cherise Grobbelaar, partner of 322's 'braaiing king', Ronnie Alcock.

These five planes with a combined age of about 270 years lit up Zebula Lodge's parking area, and it was not long before a number of game viewers came to admire these old beauties – and I do not mean Karl and Eugene! Plane spotting is a much more interesting pastime than game viewing!

A quick phone call to the Lodge, which is about 2 km from the airstrip, and within minutes a game viewing vehicle came into view, into which all 14 of us scrambled, some more elegantly than others.

A hearty breakfast followed, with many toasts to Claus and his wonderful late wife Edna, whom we all loved. Rest in Peace, Edna.

A return trip to the airstrip, followed by tears and fond farewells, saw all five planes taking off, almost in unison, for the hour or so trip home. The weather was again beautiful and the flight calm and totally stunning.

Claus left for England the following day to see Edna's family and then, after ten days of revelry, Claus arrived in his homeland Germany for more beer-tasting and family reunions.



Gordon Dyne, Cherise Grobbelaar
and Claus Keuchel

Claus will be home by the time you all read this brief report, so would all his old friends remember that Claus will be very lonely as he returns to reality, so please phone him and take him flying! He is a marvellous old guy!



Riding the Dragon



The 'CONTACT' Managing Editor, Gus Brown, bravely takes to the skies in my Nanchang Dragon CJ6A

- Gordon Dyne

(Rhodesian-born Gus Brown is an aeronautical engineer with Aerosud. He is a seriously clever young engineer. He has been instrumental in developing South Africa's home-grown homeland security aircraft – the Paramount Group AHRLAC. Gus is a quiet, unassuming man, unlike most of the boisterous pilots with whom I normally fly! Gus has a NPL and after our flight was over, he drove to Rhino Park to do his Jabiru conversion.)

A few months ago, Gus – probably after a few beers and showing loads of Dutch Courage – asked me if I would introduce him to my beautiful Nanchang Dragon CJ6A. I happily agreed, and two weeks ago I emailed Gus, asking him if he was free the following Saturday? Much to my surprise Gus did not back out and was at Brakpan Airfield on the day of our flight at 07h30 hours on Saturday 09 July – 'ship-shape and Bristol fashion'!

After a thorough pre-flight and passenger briefing, Gus was strapped securely in the rear seat. I have been experiencing a slight air leak from the air storage tank and consequently I knew that I only had three attempts at starting my Chinese 'baby' before I had to replenish the air. This would have meant a terrible loss of face for me so, after two failed attempts, I prayed, cursed, told her I loved her, promised her 'the earth' and to my delight on the third attempt the engine roared into life! What a relief! How I love the sound of that radial engine! Once the cylinder head temperature reached the white arc, off we taxied.

I had told Gus about the perils of taxiing a plane with a castoring nose wheel and promised him that he could taxi my 'girl' on our return to the airfield. As the book says, 'If you can taxi the Dragon to the Holding Point' then you can fly her!' Whoever wrote that was quite correct, as the taxiing is much more difficult than the flying.

We were soon in the air and, after my trademark three low level 'field inspections' over the heads of the poor 'earthbound mortals', I said goodbye to Brakpan, offered the controls to Gus, which he willingly took, and we headed for Heidelberg and down the N3 to Villiers. On our way there we flew my 'dambusting routine' over Fortuna Dam, disturbing a few hardy fishermen still asleep in their tents. Like everyone else who has ever flown with a joystick, Gus agreed that it was much more fun than a yoke.

Once out of the TMA, we climbed past 7,500 ft and performed a stall. Being the lady she is, the stall was a non-event. I then asked Gus for some 360 degree rate one and maximum rate turns. These were all accomplished with great aplomb and barely a foot was lost or gained during the manoeuvres. I congratulated Gus heartily, but I have to admit that I hate it when someone else flies my Dragon better than me!

For the next 90 minutes or so Gus flew us from Villiers, low level down the Vaal River to the Vaal Dam. Over the Dam wall, down the river to the prisons, photographing the orange suited inmates, and then a gentle return to Brakpan, where I took control again for the first time in almost 2 hours and landed reasonably well on runway 36. I have completed about 600 hours in the Dragon over the past ten years, but as all I do is take off and land, I think my actual total time is no more than about 20 hours!

As promised, I gave Gus control for the taxiing. Taxiing the Dragon is a combination of rudders, brakes and throttle. Not easy. It took me months to conquer this. I expected a good laugh, as I thought Gus would be all over the place, including the veld! However, I underestimated Gus, and within 100 metres Gus was taxiing as if he had been doing it all his life. Very irritating! Put me to shame!

So we taxied to the pumps, filled up and then taxied back to the hangar.

What a wonderful flight. I had an absolute 'ball' as I always do, and I am pretty sure Gus did too.

It was a pleasure flying with you, Gus. Thank you for joining me. Good luck with your career. You will go far.



Gus Brown and Gordon Dyne

Tribute to Bill Keil

Bill Keil, one of the founder members of EAA South Africa and EAA Chapter 322, has passed on to Higher Service.

Hugh Roderick 'Bill' Keil

30 November 1929 to 23 July 2016

Bill (born Hugh Roderick) Keil was born on 30 November 1929, (he shared a birthday with Winston Churchill).

Bill grew up in the then Rhodesia and learned to fly in the Royal Rhodesian Air Force, flying a Fairchild Cornell. He also flew Harvard Mk1s and 2s, then Airspeed Oxfords and Ansons.

After leaving the RRAF, he became a road engineer and worked for the Southern Rhodesian Government, building many of the roads and bridges. Bill pranged Ray Amm's 'Indian' motorbike and ended up in hospital with, amongst other damage to his airframe, a broken back, ribs protruding through his covering, a buckled undercarriage and no front teeth, a broken nose cone and no sense of smell.

In hospital he met Rosemarie Williams, a nurse – he was smitten and married her. The couple had two sons: Nigel, who became SAA's Fleet Manager of the B737-800 for 15 years and presently is a Commander on the Airbus A-340; the second son, Andy, a one-time Air Traffic Controller, is a multiple SA National Champion Radio Control pilot who represented South Africa a number of times at the World Championships. His best place was 6th in the world. Andy flies scale radio controlled jet aircraft.

Much, much later, aircraft in various states of (mainly dis-) repair started to appear in the garage... The EAA was gaining momentum! Sounds familiar?

During this time, he also met Woody Woods, who convinced him to work for him at a brand new company called 3M. Bill worked for 3M for around 20 years and was responsible for, amongst other things, the introduction of something we all take completely for granted these days, the introduction and legislation of reflective road signs and number plates, as well as 'cats' eyes' in Africa. So, every time you see a nice visible reflective road sign or miss driving into a stationary car at night because you saw the reflective number plate glowing in the dark, please thank Bill Keil! In later years Bill introduced this technology for reflective paint used in runway markings.

Bill was very much at the forefront of the homebuilding scene. He, Mike Spence and Woody Woods were some of the early Founding Presidents of EAA in South Africa, then only one chapter, which was 322, the very first chapter outside of continental Northern America.

All 3 of them were personal friends of Paul Poberezny, founder of the EAA in Wisconsin USA, and his son Tom. Bill was the Chairman of EAA Chapter 322 and/or President of EAA SA on and off for a period of some 8-10 years and served on the various committees for a further 30 years or so.

Another thing we can all thank Bill for was that he and his friends, Anton Maneschijn and Murray Cohoe, were prime movers in getting LS1 Category off the ground in South Africa. Bill became the local DCA approved EAA 'test pilot' in the early days when homebuilts really were homebuilt.



There was no such thing as kits in those days, you had to make everything! They even made their own plexiglass canopies.

As a special favour, Curtis Pitts sold Woody Woods one of the early fuselage structures for his Pitts S1, which Curtis later started offering as a kit to the homebuilding fraternity and which Bill and Woody assembled at Woody's Sandown home. Bill owned a number of aircraft, including a Piper Tri-Pacer, an Aero Commander 100, a Taylor Titch, a Cessna 210, a Mooney M21, an Auster VJ1 (which later became ZS-UKB and the second aircraft in the country to be registered in the then new LS1 category of aircraft), and, later, a Piper J3Cub.

Bill was one of the movers and shakers in the EAA, organising countless conventions and air shows around the country, often collecting at the gate, then doing the commentating, as well as flying in the show, invariably camping on the airfield and doing interviews on the local radio stations.

Bill amassed around 6,000 flying hours on over 120 types. Over the years, Bill had an enormous influence on the South African Aviation scene. His incredible energy and devotion to flying and the EAA continued unabated, yet he remained humble and always approachable. His sense of humour was legendary.

Bill was always crazy about aviation. The EAA and aviation in South Africa has come a long way, thanks to people like Bill Keil. We all owe him a big thank you for helping to get it to where it is today. Thanks Uncle Bill, for your amazing contribution, and may you continue to fly high in that big hangar in the sky.

Bill was an active member of RAFOC Johannesburg and served on the Committee for a while before being afflicted with illness.

[Thanks to Nigel Keil, Paul Lastrucci and Karl Jensen for the tribute text.]

EAA Airmail



Thanks for the Young Eagles Programme.

It seems so long ago that Karl Jensen arranged my first flight experience with Anthony Cohen in a gyrocopter at Fly Inn Estate, and later that day Karl took me up in his Cessna 170B. What a fantastic day!

Up until then I had only experienced model planes, but after experiencing the real thing I was sure I wanted to fly. I studied the EAA basic course on lift and drag and, after passing, was very proud to receive my Young Eagle Certificate from Dr Mike Brown in 2014.

I just want to let everyone at EAA Chapter 322 know that I am now the proud holder of a PPL, licensed to fly Cessna 172.

Thank you to everyone in Chapter 322 for your advice and support. I have reached my first goal in aviation and look forward to reaching many more to follow.

Kind regards

Roston Dugmore (Junior)



Taildraggers was yet another great, well organised event.

The Nicholsons and the Nylstroom Flying Club outdid themselves yet again.

This year I decided to brave the cold and noise by camping on the airfield. It was cold and noisy, but waking up before sunrise and watching the sunrise from the cockpit made it all worth it. The sunset flights were enjoyed on both evenings. Looking forward to Taildraggers next year!

Best regards,

Gregory Clegg



CONTACT! Is the official newsletter of EAA of SA. This edition was compiled by Gus and edited with love and kisses by Trixie Heron. All material is gratefully received from Chapters, members and non-members alike. Remember that this is your newsletter, so please submit material as it happens to Gus (news@eaa.org.za). We want your flying news! Our grateful thanks to all those who regularly support our newsletter and our EAA organisation.