

# F a S H - K O S H

## RETURN OF THE HIGH IMPACT AIRSHOW TO THE CAPE

By Irene McCullagh

Saturday 11 April. Airshow day! Excitement had been building: Stellenbosch Flying Club's Airshow Director Alewyn Burger put together an ambitious programme to which everybody was looking forward. 07h00 headlights on. Windscreen wipers on. Thick fog on the deck. Visibility... nonexistent. Driving towards Stellenbosch, memories of last year's rained-out event clouded my thoughts.



Once I arrived at the airfield, I noticed that everybody was huddling around in anoraks and jerseys hastily pulled from the boots of their cars. The previous day's validations had been exhausting in humid conditions at a temperature of 31 deg. Ahh: Cape Town. All four seasons in one day.

ASSA's Rikus Erasmus presided over the morning's briefing when we heard that the airshow's hush-hush secret special highlight, the P-51 Mustang 'Queen of Hearts' flying from Port Elizabeth, was stuck at Worcester looking for fuel. Patrick Davidson was going to be the show stopper in his Mustang. He had already flown to Stellenbosch, but could not land due to the fog and then he attempted to land at Fisantekraal with the same thick fog. With little choice he flew on to Worcester, by which time he had burned up more fuel than for which he had bargained and was running low on reserves. Between the weather and fuel, the Mustang's appearance hung in the balance.

By 10h00 a very large crowd was milling around. Parking areas were full and cluttered with people walking from their cars carrying camping chairs and bags. Patches of blue sky were visible. A collective air of optimism was palpable. At 10h30 as per schedule, Stellenbosch Flying Club's (SFC) Alison Navarro introduced the Executive Mayor Cape Winelands, Alderman C.A. de Bruyn, who took the microphone from Brian Emmenis and officially declared the airshow open. In traditional style, there was a procession of emergency service vehicles and skydivers, bearing flags representing South Africa and the SFC, landed on target. After a 'flying start,' the airshow was in full swing and the day and the weather became better and better. To a wave of excitement, Mustang 'Queen of Hearts', which has a fuel burn of between 50-60 gallons an hour, landed uphill on the tricky strip in the beautiful mountainous setting. Horace Blok (of Shackleton - Pelican 16 fame) flying from Groot Brak River and Trevor Davis from Knysna in their RVs, met Patrick at Worcester and gave him an additional 40 minutes of fuel and saved the day.

*Air Tractor with ground crew*



The long-winged Jonker's Sailplane glider was released from the Wilga tug and Oscar Goudriaan went into his silent display in the JS-1 Revelation, followed by a somewhat faster and louder L-39 flown by Alan Fergus. An unusual fly-by came in the form of Tom Kean in the Falcon 50EX which, on his wide turn behind the hangars, flew over the daytime moon, making a pretty sight.

It has been a long time since anyone in the Cape has seen the SAAF's formation team - the Silver Falcons, which treated spectators to two full displays. The team flew a four-ship formation under the leadership of Falcon 1: Major Werner Vermaak, waiting for the team's newest member to receive full validation, but the manoeuvres were no less exciting. The 15 minute four-ship display we witnessed contained new elements and different run-in directions, so we look forward to Team 78's new display with great anticipation! A big thank you to Lt. Col. Toodi, SAAF's airshow planner, for

laying all the foundations for participation in this event and Chief of Air Staff Operations, Major General Mbambo for his approval.

After the fast and thrilling aerobatics of the Falcons, Len Klopper went up in his M16 Gyro and showed us his complete control and mastery, followed by Johan Ferreira (T-6 Harvard) and Peter 'Space' du Preez in the Christen Husky, which always impresses with its short field take-off and landing capability.

Hold your breath kids, here comes the high impact display by aerobatics' champion Nigel Hopkins flying the red MX2, smoke rings in the sky and exhilarating knife-edge 'runway inspections.' Even as he was kitting up pre-flight, children were craning their necks and applauding him. Their anticipation was surely exceeded by his two adrenalin-pumping electrifying displays. Barely had he landed, than we were in for the next



Mark Jackson's Huey ZS-HLZ



Nigel Hopkins in his MX2



Silver Falcon 3



Beechcraft King Air and Bonanza

big draw card: Patrick Davidson flying the stunning blue and silver Mustang with the distinctive sound. For many spectators this was their first experience of this iconic aircraft and one which will no doubt leave a lasting impression.

Western Cape Aero Modellers provided a display of some of their radio controlled models, including an incredibly impressive high-speed jet. The SAAF's 22 Squadron's Lynx departed after being on static display for the day and we were in for a treat of a formation: Beechcraft's King Air and Bonanza, looking like big and small brothers, flown by Nigel Hopkins and Jason Beamish respectively. Flying very closely and tightly, they were a beautiful sight indeed.

NAC's Bell 407 represented the rotor wings and Nico Kohne showed off his Whisper motor glider before Derek Lord took to the air in the Bosbok. Thereafter, two Yaks, two Harvards and a Howard DGA gave us a musical earful with their mass radial fly-past. Alewyn Burger broke away to display the beautiful and graceful 'old lady' veteran Howard, sporting her original 1944 peppermint pastel green colour scheme.

The afternoon programme saw some action packed repeats of favourite displays by the Silver Falcons, the MX2 and the Mustang before making way for the moving finale honouring our brave fire fighters. The Cape this season suffered a record number of fires which caused large-scale evacuations, destroyed homes and property and razed many hectares of mountain vegetation. Our fire fighters are made up of a permanent force, volunteers from non-profit organisation Volunteer Wildfire Service and Working on Fire (WoF). Tragically several lives were lost, notably Hendrik Willem 'Bees' Marais, who died when his WoF Huey crashed near Cape Point. Local musician, Jennifer Eaves, wrote and dedicated the song 'David and Goliath' for the fire fighters, which was played over the Capital Sounds system during the moving tribute. The fire fighters lined up whilst a water-drop display was given by two Hueys, a Cessna 182 spotter and an Air Tractor after which there was a memorial fly past of the yellow fire fighting team and the Silver Falcons performed the always emotive Missing Man formation; a most appropriate conclusion to the day at the airfield at which the WoF team is based during the Cape's fire season.

To end with, a personal statement from Silver Falcon leader Werner Vermaak; "I was in awe of the aviation enthusiasts and general public who attended this airshow and especially thrilled about the youth attendance, which ultimately represents the future of aviation in South Africa. I would also like to acknowledge the exceptional effort by the airshow organisers, the air boss and ATCs present. What a privilege to have been a part of such a blessed day!"

Congratulations to Alewyn Burger and all at Stellenbosch Flying Club for fantastic organisation and for pulling off a great event. 3500 tickets were sold of which almost 1000 went to under 12s. Thanks to the SA CAA, ATNS, and ASSA including the Port Elizabeth team. Also to Brian Emmenis and Capital Sounds for providing commentary and the PA system, Absolute Aviation (main sponsor), Flight Sure (second sponsor) as well as the many exhibitors with stands. SAAF representation Chief of Staff Operations Maj. Gen. W.S. Mbambo and his wife; the OC 35 Squadron AFB Ysterplaat, Col. Gerrie van der Merwe; Lt. Col. K.Z. Khan (P.S.S.M) from the Siyandiza Youth Development project, who was present on Friday's validation day. 🇿🇦