



all Fired up

Lowveld & Escarpment Fire Protection Association Newsletter

Issue 59 December 2020

Greetings,

We've done it! Somewhat battered and bruised, the year we'd all rather forget is about to end. 2020 was simply unimaginable and who knows what surprises lie in store next year? Time enough to worry about that in due course; for now, everyone deserves a summer timeout to reflect and recharge batteries. The Board wishes LEFPA members, staff, ground and aerial crew a peaceful and blessed festive season. *All Fired Up* joins them in the good wishes and adds a huge 'thank you' to the Board, staff and crew for the incredible efforts put in by all during an extremely challenging season. Until next time.

May this special time of year be filled with joy!



Contact Us

LEFPA Nelspruit

Ivina

Office: 013 752 6419

Cell: 082 566 2728

Fax: 086 515 3755

admin@lefpa.co.za

Permit Requests

Office: 013 752 6419

0860 66 34 73

permit@lefpa.co.za

Pandemic Postpones LEFPA Birthday

Members with long memories may have wondered why LEFPA's 20th birthday in October went unremarked? Quite simply, 2020 hasn't put anyone in a party mood and besides, if we wait a few months, we can really step out with a 21st birthday party of note. So that's what we plan to do. Make a note in your diary for October 2021 - you're invited to look back at how far the Association has come to reach its current status, to remember familiar faces fondly and to laugh outright when you see the photo of a very young Andre Scheepers. *Volgende jaar!*

Braaivleis, Rugby, Sunny Skies and No Wildfires!

Come this time of year, we're generally exclaiming at the speed of passing months and wondering where the year went. For some odd reason, being locked in, locked down and locked up for eight months seems to have accelerated, rather than dragged, time out. What will we be doing over the festive season 2020, we ask?

Temperatures have warmed up and already heatwaves are passing over the country. Not great for our southern neighbours as their fire season begins and we shouldn't be too complacent in the Lowveld either. We enjoyed good early rains but if the heatwaves continue and the rains fail, we're in for another rollercoaster 'out of fire season' time.

Everyone is eager to get out and about in warm weather and make the most of our sunny skies while lighting up the braai, but hopefully we're all sensible and ensure our outdoor cooking is performed with fire safety in mind.

NEVER leave a fire unattended, and make sure it's properly extinguished before you pack up and head home.

Any readers old enough to remember the vintage Chevrolet advert from the 1970s won't be able to resist singing along when watching the link below. Youngsters will probably laugh their socks off at how unsophisticated it is, a far cry from the cosmopolitan advertising of today.

How about some ideas to update the jingle - what's your favourite food, sport, car, fun and best thing about SA? What about padkos, soccer, vellies and stary nights? Fried chicken, kwaito, bunny chow and Toyota?

We don't mind if your jingle includes LEFPA, although we've struggled to fit Jerusalem in! Send your ideas to Andre, manager@lefpa.co.za, we'd love to read them and we'll feature them in the January issue.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1wvQ7ERXhY&feature=emb_logo



Member Andre Oosthuizen's *lekker braai vuur*, is a perfect example of best braai practice.

Over 20 000 Fixed Wing Hours and Still Flying High

Leading Edge's Blackhawk pilot Tosh Ross tells the fascinating story of his flying career and as impressive as his career is, it's all the more remarkable for it's humble 'bootstrap' beginnings. Over to Tosh.

"I started flying hang gliders over the Barberton valley in 1985, then moved on to weight-shift trikes. In those days, we flew with neither parachutes nor licences! In 1988 I received a bursary from HL&H Forest Products to study at Saasveld Forestry College in George so moved to the Eastern Cape. Selling my car and glider to raise money for my PPL, I started my private pilot's license in January 1989 with Cape Flying Services and completed my PPL in May that year. I convinced fellow students to fly with me and share the costs of flying along the Garden Route, hour building towards my licence. In those days a small four-seater aircraft was charged out at R90 an hour, including fuel!

Whilst completing my Forestry Diploma I began studying for my commercial licence. I graduated from Saasveld at the end of 1991 and then passed my commercial licence and instrument rating test in July 1992. I was lucky enough to be employed as a spotter pilot with LFPA (Limpopo FPA). By the end of 1992 I had completed my multi-engine rating and between fire seasons, flew charter flights to build more experience and accumulate night flying hours.

Over the next two years I flew part time for TSB and Metavia Airlines. In 1994 I obtained my private helicopter licence followed in 1995 by my commercial helicopter licence. I went on to fly for Lowveld Helicopter Services for two years.

In 1996 I passed my test for the Airline Transport Pilots licence and spent several years in Afghanistan with Rossair Contracts flying humanitarian relief for the Red Cross and in Africa flying various contracts for the United Nations. We flew Beechcraft King Airs, 1900's, Turbine DC3's and Twin Otters.

I was offered a position with Spectrem, a survey company operating worldwide, in 1999, flying a Turbine DC3 for geophysical survey work. We flew for a few months on the west coast of South Africa before ferrying the aircraft to Canada on a new contract. Thankfully, we survived a winter in the northern parts of Canada where temperatures were regularly lower than -20 Celsius!

In March 2000 I resigned from the best paid job I had ever had to return home and see my son, born 9th January 2000, for the first time. After a few months at home and after surviving a forced helicopter landing in the Crocodile gorge, I realised it was time to seek a stable job and applied to join the national carrier, SAA. I was days away from returning on contract for Rossair when I was notified that I had been selected by SAA and started in September 2000 as a "boy pilot" on the 747 classic. Three years later I passed the check ride as a fully-fledged co-pilot and moved to the window seat at last. For the next 16 years I was lucky enough to fly the 747 in its various forms from the 747-SP to the magnificent 747-400 as well the Airbus 340 and 300's.

I was promoted to Captain in September 2016 and flew the 737-800 on the domestic schedule for about eight months until I eventually moved to the freighter fleet on the 737-300 where I remain today. With the advent of COVID-19, I believe that my airline adventure is over but another chapter begins as I have joined Leading Edge Aviation, flying the Sikorsky Blackhawk for aerial fire suppression and sling work.

Throughout the years I have kept all my licences current and have instructed on both helicopters and airplanes; I have loved every minute of it. I hold Airline Transport Pilots Licences for both airplane and helicopters with Instructor ratings on both and have a flown a little over 23000 flying hours. My remaining goal is to complete my Grade 1 Instructor's rating.

Firefighting was my first job as a pilot so its fitting that, as I move into the latter part of my career, I can once again do something that really excites me.

Friday the 30th of October saw us one day away from the end of the 2020 winter fire season and as I was filling in my logbook I realized that I was only an hour short of the 20000 hour mark on fixed-wing aircraft. I resolved that something special was in order for the day, so flew a celebratory flight with my son Aiden in our 1947 Piper Cub along the western boundary of the Kruger National Park. We were joined by two other Cubs flown by Mark Jackson and Dr Billy Van Wyk, sighting many animals along the way.

On landing at Nelspruit airfield, we joined the LEFPA end of season function at the Aero Club and celebrated a safe end to the season with a few beers."



Tosh and Aiden all smiles after their special flight



© Hennie Homann

Hytera Smart One System - Digital Radio Technology

Chairman Vaughan Lascelles led the pack when he bought the first digital radio in the Lowveld some years ago. LEFPA and most of the forestry companies have been using these radios for about five years now.

Representatives from LEFPA, UFPA, MTO, Sappi and Safcol visited Hytera SA's head office recently to find out more about the Hyteras SmartOne system and how it could be implemented and used locally and across Mpumalanga.

SmartOne is a professional application solution combining a variety of professional mobile radio functions, including dispatch, voice recording, AVL and camera monitoring using one interface.

Although SmartOne is independent of mobile radio standards, it can integrate and interconnect several mobile radio networks simultaneously.



Key points of SmartOne:



- Comprehensive dispatching solution and expanded functions,
- Integration of TETRA, DMR Conventional, DMR Trunking & MPT,
- Cross-technology communication,
- User-friendly and adaptable user interface,
- Wired or wireless connection,
- System architecture.

www.hytera-mobilfunk.com/en/product/details/hytera-smartone/

L - R: Vaughan Lascelles, Andre Scheepers, Mark Wagner, Johan Bothma, Fred Ludick.
Front: Annalize van Wyk

WoF Thank You

Bongani Nhlabathi, Assistant General Manager WoF Mpumalanga, has expressed the organisation's thanks to WoF's partners, fire protection associations, management and firefighters for a job well done during the 2020 fire season. "We faced many challenges this year and...our courageous teams worked tirelessly to assist partners and landowners in combating fires," Mr Nhlabathi writes. COVID-19 presented challenges and forced a new way of operating but everyone pulled their weight and WoF assisted in suppressing 288 fires, with some blazes raging for days on end. The teams' high level of commitment and sacrifice, supported by the great working relationships between WoF and their partners built over the past 17 years, has honed the Lowveld's well-oiled and capable firefighting operations.



Helping Hertzogville

Mike Assad, National WoF Aviation Manager, sent Andre Scheepers a lovely letter of thanks for the assistance and support offered in Hertzogville by LEFPA.

Dear André and LEFPA Partners

Whenever raging veld and runaway fires claim thousands of hectares of agricultural, forestry or grasslands, hundreds of livestock, infrastructure, and injuring people, we always act as fast as possible once instruction is given. With the past Free State and Northern Cape fires, role players such as yourselves and your team contributed to the success to contain these fires swiftly.

I would therefore like to make use of this opportunity to sincerely thank you from both Working on Fire (WoF) and Kishugu, for your prompt response and willingness to release the AT-802 Bomber and Spotter resources as well as the fire suppression gel to assist in the recent disaster fires. We also appreciate the other assistance that you have given and the support and monitoring of flight following on the operations group over the past week.

Thank you for being so reliable and for making the calculated decision to release your resources during a very critical time.

Your attitude and willingness to assist in times of need is a great example of the definition of "partnership" as intended for the WoF Programme. Your incredible reaction is appreciated and a testimony in times of need.

We wish you only the best for the remainder of the fire season and your preparation for the next season.

Recognised For Their Hard Work

We're delighted to publish photos of some prize winners who unfortunately weren't able to attend the LEFPA year-end awards held 31st October.



Thembile Dlungwana with her Grinder of the Year award



The proud crew of Injaka FSP base pose with their trophy for the Best WoF Hand Crew



Graskop won the Most Improved Runway award

Activities for the Month - December

- Slash burning allowed if weather permits - obtain a burning permit from LEFPA.
- Plan for invader species control in fire breaks & open areas.
- Start to plan for the next fire season.
- Start to spray roads to ensure access.



Take #Covid19 precautions when shopping this #festiveseason.

Keeping your hands clean is important! *all Fired up*

Important Note:

- The LEFPA office will close 15 December at 13h00 and reopen 11 January 2021. Burning permits will be available until 18 December 06h00 to 10h00 daily then from 11 January 2021 on 0860 66 3473.
- Basic Firefighting Training is available to LEFPA members. Interested parties can contact the LEFPA office.
- FDI weather emails and SMSs are available to LEFPA members; contact Ivina for more information.
- **SUCCESS** cannot be spelt without **U**. Attend and participate - we need your contribution!