

The Seven Seas Tattler Issue 1.9 - February 2018



Welcome to the February edition of Tattler. As we have entered a new year I would be most grateful for reader's comments. Over the past several months I have received the odd comment and some input but am keen to receive some genuine criticism, positive and negative. For example, your input on whether you would like none, less or more of the regular articles such as "spotlight", military history, jokes. Any feed-back to the editor (email: jonathanagolding@gmail.com) will be appreciated.

From the Treasurer

The month of December is traditionally a month of low financial returns, when many members are away on leave and when bonuses are paid to the Clubs deserving staff. But, thanks to the unexpected support and to a well organised New Year eve function, results for December were much better than expected. The deficit of R20 086, which was forecast for the month, was slashed by R6 888 with the actual deficit reduced to R13 198.

Cumulatively, for the 10 months so far, the Club's bottom line is still in the black. With only 2 months remaining in the current financial year, it looks like the Club will end off with a good surplus, way better than budgeted.

Some bad news however! It is that time of the year when membership and 100 Club subscriptions, for the next year, get communicated to members. At the last AGM members mandated that subscriptions should not be increased by more than 10%. So with this in mind and also taking into account the favourable results being forecast for this year, your committee has settled on an increase of 5.5%. Membership Subscriptions for 2018/2019 will therefore be R950 for the year for Ordinary Members and R475 for the year for Country Members. 100 Club subs unchanged at R300. Subs are due from 1st March 2018 and email / letters will be sent out shortly.

...till next time!

Tattler appreciates Denzil's meticulous control over the finances and books of the club, often a thankless task.

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Club Manager's Report

Happy Hour and 100 Club Draw. The next Happy Hour and 100 Club Draw will take place in the Club on Tuesday the 13th of February 2018 from 17h00 to 18h00. Boerewors rolls will be on sale at R25 each. Normal attendance prizes for two lucky Members in attendance. As there was no 100 Club Draw during January 2018, this draw will be a double draw. I.e. R300 X 6, R1000 X 2.

100 Club Winnings not claimed

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| R Adm(JG) D.R. Faure | R300 (Aug 2017) |
| Capt G.F. Harrison (Ret) | R1 000 (Aug 2017) |
| Sir R. Bromley | R300 (Sep 2017) |
| Mr C. Black | R1 000 (Oct 2017) |
| Mr K. Priday | R300 (Dec 2017). |

Members are requested to contact the Club Manager in order to arrange collection of their winnings.

Tattler and the Club would like to welcome a **New Member**

Captain (SA Navy) Ntokozo .J. Ntshalintshali. Ntokozo is married to Zanele Precious and lives in Strandfontein. He has served as a Naval Officer for 15 years both at sea and ashore. He is currently serving at the Fleet Command Simon's Town.

The Month of February in Military History

February 1, 1945 - In its drive toward the Oder, the Soviet 1st Belorussian Front (Zhukov) reaches the river NW of Küstrin. Since the beginning of the Soviet offensive in East Prussia that started on January 20, the Kriegsmarine has evacuated by sea 140,000 civilian refugees and 18,000 wounded soldiers.

February 1, 2003 - Sixteen minutes before it was scheduled to land, the Space Shuttle Columbia broke apart in flight over west Texas, killing all seven crew members. The accident may have resulted from damage caused during lift off when a piece of insulating foam from the external fuel tank broke off, piercing a hole in the shuttle's left wing that allowed hot gases to penetrate the wing upon re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere. This was the second space shuttle lost in flight. In January 1986, Challenger exploded during lift off.

February 2, 1848 - The war between the U.S. and Mexico ended with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In exchange for \$15 million, the U.S. acquired the areas encompassing parts or all of present day California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, and Texas. The treaty was ratified on March 10, 1848.

February 3, 1943 - An extraordinary act of heroism occurred in the icy waters off Greenland after the U.S. Army transport ship Dorchester was hit by a German torpedo and began to sink rapidly. When it became apparent there were not enough life jackets, four U.S. Army chaplains on board removed theirs, handed them to frightened young soldiers, and chose to go down with the ship while praying.

February 3, 1945 - The US 8th Air Force, with 937 bombers and 613 fighters, carries out the heaviest attack to date against Berlin which levels large areas of the city and kills more than 25,000 civilians.

February 4, 1945 - Beginning of the Yalta Conference in the Crimea between Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin to discuss plans for the treatment of post war Germany, its division into zones of occupation, the question of reparations, and the future Polish western border.

February 6, 1941 - The British 8th Army (Wavell) captures Benghazi in Cyrenaica from the Italians.

February 8, 1941 - The first convoy of the newly formed Afrikakorps under the command of Generaloberst Rommel leaves Naples for Tripoli in Libya.

February 10, 1945 - In the East, the attack by 2nd Belorussian Front (Rokossovsky) against the Pommernstellung is blocked by the German defenders. In Silesia, Liegnitz is captured by the 1st Ukrainian Front (Konev). In Hungary, the remnants of the defenders of Budapest give up and surrender.

February 12, 1942 - Protected by a constant umbrella of Luftwaffe fighters and smaller naval units, the battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau and the cruiser Prinz Eugen make a dash from Brest up the English Channel, passing the Straits of Dover and reaching ports in Germany (Unternehmen Cerberus). Taken by complete surprise, the British Navy and Air force are unable to stop the operation, losing a considerable number of planes and naval vessels in the attempt.

February 12, 1945 - At Yalta, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin end their conference, with agreements on the Allied occupation of Germany, the founding of the United Nations, the "resettlement" of the inhabitants of the Eastern German territories to be ceded to Poland, and the entry of the Soviet Union into the war against Japan. Thus far, 374,00 German refugees have been evacuated by sea from East and West Prussia. Peru declares war against Germany.

February 13, 1945 - During World War II in Europe, British and American planes began massive bombing raids on Dresden, Germany. A four-day firestorm erupted that was visible for 200 miles and engulfed the historic old city, killing an estimated 135,000 German civilians.

February 15, 1898 - In Havana, the U.S. Battleship Maine was blown up while at anchor and quickly sank with 260 crew members lost. The incident inflamed public opinion in the U.S., resulting in a declaration of war against Spain on April 25, 1898, amid cries of "Remember the Maine!"

February 15, 1989 - Soviet Russia completed its military withdrawal from Afghanistan after nine years of unsuccessful involvement in the civil war between Muslim rebel groups and the Russian-backed Afghan government. Over 15,000 Russian soldiers had been killed in the fighting.

February 15, 1944 - In Italy, bombers of the US 15th Air Force drop thousands of tons of bombs on the monastery located on the top of Monte Casino. Subsequent attacks by British Commonwealth and Polish forces fail to capture its ruins now occupied and defended by paratroopers (the Green Devils) of 1.Fallschirmjäger-Division (Heidrich).

February 16, 1940 - The British destroyer Cossack, entering neutral Norwegian waters, captures the German freighter Altmark, former supply ship of the Graf Spee, and frees hundreds of British merchant seamen from vessels sunk by the Graf Spee in the South Atlantic.

February 17, 1838 - After the murder of Piet Retief and his 67 companions in February 1838, Zulu King Dingane ordered his forces to wipe out the remaining parties of Voortrekkers in Natal. Several unsuspecting Voortrekker laagers at the Bloukrans and Bushmans rivers (Weenen) were attacked by thousands of warriors in the early morning hours of 17 February 1838. Approximately 500 of Retief's followers were massacred, two-thirds of them women and children, and half of them Black. Tens of thousands of sheep, cattle and horses were driven away. The Voortrekker leader Piet Uys fell with his men in a battle a month later while Hendrik Potgieter beat an ignominious retreat back to the highveld. Port Natal was razed to the ground, the surviving missionaries and traders escaping by ship. It was at this point that Andries Pretorius reorganized the Voortrekker army and invaded Kwa-Zulu. The Battle of Blood River was fought, and the Voortrekkers defeated the Zulus. The Zulu nation never fully recovered from this defeat.

February 18, 1943 - In the wake of the Stalingrad disaster Dr Goebbels, speaking before an enthusiastic audience of soldiers and civilians, announces the implementation of "total war" which, for the first time, mandates the employment of German women in the war effort.

February 20, 1943 - German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel broke through American lines at Kasserine Pass in North Africa as inexperienced U.S. Troops lost their first major battle of World War II in Europe, with 1,000 Americans killed.

February 21, 1803 - In terms of the Treaty of Amiens, signed in 1802 (between England and France), the British officially returned the Cape Colony to the Netherlands. It was then renamed the Batavian Republic and the flag of the Batavian Republic was hoisted on the Castle. The Dutch only governed for three years (1803-1806), but their enlightened administration of the Cape was a great improvement upon the rule of the Dutch East India Company, which had lasted from 1652 to 1795. Commissioner-General J.A. de Mist and the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope, Lieutenant-General J.W. Janssens, sponsored development and reforms.

February 21 1917 - The sinking of the SS Mendi became one of South Africa's worst tragedies of the First World War (1914-1919). A total of 616 South Africans, including 607 black troops serving in the South African Native Labour Contingent, died when the steamship sank in the English Channel on the way to France. The incident happened in the early hours of 21 February 1917, when another ship, the SS Darro (10 000 tons) travelling at full speed and emitting no warning signals, rammed the SS Mendi. The SS Mendi sailed from Cape Town on 16 January 1917 en route to La Havre in France, carrying the Fifth Battalion of the South African Native Labour Contingent. On board were 805 black privates, 22 white officers and a crew of 33.

February 22, 1941 - The Afrikakorps, newly arrived in Libya, launches its first probing attacks against the unpleasantly surprised British 8th Army (Wavell).

February 23, 1991 - In Desert Storm, the Allied ground offensive began after a devastating month-long air campaign targeting Iraqi troops in both Iraq and Kuwait.

February 27, 1881 - The poverty and vulnerability of the South African Republic (Transvaal) prompted Disraeli's Conservative government to annex it in 1877. This was an important step in achieving the federation of the South African colonies. However, Britain underestimated the fierce independence of Afrikaners in the Transvaal. An Afrikaner revolt in December 1880, led by Paul Kruger, prompted the first Anglo-Boer War (1880-1881). There were 4 decisive battles and several sieges during the first Anglo-Boer War, including the Battle of Majuba and 3 others: Bronkhorstspuit, Laingsnek and Schuinshoogte. The numerous sieges took place at Potchefstroom, Pretoria, Marabastad, Lydenburg, Rustenburg, Standerton and Wakkerstroom. On 27 February 1881, the Boers defeated the British at Majuba Hill. Sources differ as to the exact number of casualties, but approximately 200 British soldiers were killed, and only 2 Boers suffered casualties. The British defeat at Majuba brought about the end of the First Anglo-Boer War and provided temporary peace. Gladstone's Liberal government abandoned the previous government's federation policy, and signed the Pretoria Convention in August 1881.

February 27, 1991 - In Desert Storm, the 100-hour ground war ended as Allied troops entered Kuwait just four days after launching their offensive against Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces.

February 28, 1994 - NATO conducted its first combat action in its 45-year history as four Bosnian Serb jets were shot down by American fighters in a no-fly zone.

Cowboys Don't Cry - One for the smaller lads

Audie Murphy, only 5'5" and 110 pounds, played cowboy parts.

Audie Leon Murphy (20 June 1925 – 28 May 1971) was one of the most decorated American combat soldiers of World War II, receiving every military combat award for valour available from the U.S. Army, as well as French and Belgian awards for heroism. Murphy received the Medal of Honour for valour demonstrated at the age of 19 for single-handedly holding off an entire company of German soldiers for an hour at the Colmar Pocket in France in January 1945, then leading a successful counterattack while wounded and out of ammunition. Murphy was born into a large sharecropper family in Hunt County, Texas. His father abandoned them, and his mother died when he was a teenager. Murphy left school in fifth grade to pick cotton and find other work to help support his family; his skill with a hunting rifle was a necessity for putting food on the table.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, Murphy's older sister helped him to falsify documentation about his birthdate to meet the minimum-age requirement for enlisting in the military. Turned down by the Navy and the Marine Corps, he enlisted in the Army. He first saw action in the 1943 Allied invasion of Sicily; then in 1944 he participated in the Battle of Anzio, the liberation of Rome, and the invasion of southern France. Murphy fought at Montélimar, and led his men on a successful assault at the L'Omet quarry near Cleurie in north-eastern France in October.

After the war, Murphy enjoyed a 21-year acting career. He played himself in the 1955 autobiographical film *To Hell and Back*, based on his 1949 memoirs of the same name, but most of his roles were in westerns. He made guest appearances on celebrity television shows and starred in the series *Whispering Smith*. Murphy was a fairly accomplished songwriter. He bred quarter horses in California and Arizona, and became a regular participant in horse racing.

Suffering from what would today be described as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Murphy slept with a loaded handgun under his pillow. He looked for solace in addictive sleeping pills. In his last few years, he was plagued by money problems but refused offers to appear in alcohol and cigarette commercials because he did not want to set a bad example. Murphy died in a plane crash in Virginia in 1971, which was shortly before his 46th birthday. He was interred with full military honours at Arlington National Cemetery. His grave is one of the most visited sites in the cemetery.

TRUE STORY: WWII, Lithuania

In 1939, Chiune Sugihara became a vice-consul of the Japanese Consulate in Kaunas, Lithuania. His duties included reporting on Soviet and German troop movements, and to find out if Germany planned an attack on the Soviets and, if so, to report the details of this attack to his superiors in Berlin and Tokyo.

Sugihara had cooperated with Polish intelligence as part of a bigger Japanese–Polish cooperative plan. As the Soviet Union occupied sovereign Lithuania in 1940, many Jewish refugees from Poland (Polish Jews) as well as Lithuanian Jews tried to acquire exit visas. Without the visas, it was dangerous to travel, yet it was impossible to find countries willing to issue them. Hundreds of refugees came to the Japanese consulate in Kaunas, trying to get a visa to Japan. At the time, on the brink of the war, Lithuanian Jews made up one third of Lithuania's urban population and half of the residents of every town as well. The Dutch consul Jan Zwartendijk had provided some of them with an official third destination to Curaçao, a Caribbean island and Dutch colony that required no entry visa, or Surinam (which, upon independence in 1975, became Suriname). At the time, the Japanese government required that visas be issued only to those who had gone through appropriate immigration procedures and had enough funds. Most of the refugees did not fulfil these criteria. Sugihara dutifully contacted the Japanese Foreign Ministry three times for instructions. Each time, the Ministry responded that anybody granted a visa should have a visa to a third destination to exit Japan, with no exceptions.

From 18 July to 28 August 1940, aware that applicants were in danger if they stayed behind, Sugihara decided to grant visas on his own. He ignored the requirements and issued ten-day visas to Jews for transit through Japan, in violation of his orders. Given his inferior post and the culture of the Japanese Foreign Service bureaucracy, this was an unusual act of disobedience. He spoke to Soviet officials who agreed to let the Jews travel through the country via the Trans-Siberian Railway at five times the standard ticket price.

Sugihara continued to hand-write visas, reportedly spending 18–20 hours a day on them, producing a normal month's worth of visas each day, until 4 September, when he had to leave his post before the consulate was closed. By that time, he had granted thousands of visas to Jews, many of whom were heads of households and thus permitted to take their families with them. According to witnesses, he was still writing visas while in transit from his hotel and after boarding the train at the Kaunas Railway Station, throwing visas into the crowd of desperate refugees out of the train's window even as the train pulled out.

In final desperation, blank sheets of paper with only the consulate seal and his signature (that could be later written over into a visa) were hurriedly prepared and flung out from the train. As he prepared to depart, he said, "Please forgive me. I cannot write anymore. I wish you the best." When he bowed deeply to the people before him, someone exclaimed, "Sugihara. We'll never forget you. I'll surely see you again!"

February Birthdays!

Tattler wishes all of the following members the happiest of birthdays and hope all will have a brilliant year.

- 1 February** Mr P Berrangé
- 1 February** Mr G E Palmer
- 2 February** Maj Genl P J Rast (Ret)
- 3 February** Mr W Fourie
- 3 February** Dr J W J van Wyk
- 7 February** Mrs J D Barnardo
- 7 February** Mr G L Froud
- 8 February** Mr D S T Tunbridge
- 9 February** Lt Cdr K W Baker (Ret)
- 9 February** Mr E J P Fenech
- 13 February** Mr P V Dines
- 14 February** Mr E J Smith
- 15 February** Capt R H L Harrison (Ret)
- 17 February** Mr T van Zyl
- 18 February** Capt G Filmalter (Ret)
- 19 February** Capt GG Schlemmer
- 20 February** R Adm (JG) E T Beddy (Ret)
- 20 February** Mr C T Tosio
- 21 February** Mr D J M Bruce
- 23 February** Lt Cdr L van Zyl
- 25 February** Capt A H de Vries (Ret)
- 26 February** Cdr W Stassen
- 28 February** Capt D P de Wet (Ret)



Dress Sword for Sale

Mr Brian Dutlow has a sword he would like to sell. The following is an extract of an enquiry he made to Wilkinson Sword to check on the sword's authenticity.

Thank you for your enquiry.

According to the ledger entry, serial no 68857 is a Royal Navy sword, sold to a Sub Lieutenant P.B.Macpherson. The date is listed as 19 July 1945, and no further information is given.

*Yours Faithfully,
Stuart Ivinson
Librarian*

With this information confirming its authenticity, he will offer it for a reduced price of R8,000.00, to a discerning collector. Should you be interested please contact our club manager, Glen or the Tattler. Please see picture below.



Imagine this guy coming at you!!



Bismarck was the first of two Bismarck-class battleships built for Nazi Germany's Kriegsmarine. Named after Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, the ship was laid down at the Blohm & Voss shipyard in Hamburg in July 1936 and launched in February 1939. Work was completed in August 1940, when she was commissioned into the German fleet. Bismarck and her sister ship Tirpitz were the largest battleships ever built by Germany, and two of the largest built by any European power.

In the course of the warship's eight-month career under its sole commanding officer, Captain Ernst Lindemann, Bismarck conducted only one offensive operation, in May 1941, codenamed Rheinübung. The ship, along with the heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen, was to break into the Atlantic Ocean and raid Allied shipping from North America to Great Britain. The two ships were detected several times off Scandinavia, and British naval units were deployed to block their route. At the Battle of the Denmark Strait, the iconic battlecruiser HMS Hood initially engaged Prinz Eugen, probably by mistake, while HMS Prince of Wales engaged Bismarck. In the ensuing battle Hood was destroyed by the combined fire of Bismarck and Prinz Eugen, who then damaged Prince of Wales and forced her retreat. Bismarck suffered sufficient damage from three hits to force an end to the raiding mission.

The destruction of Hood spurred a relentless pursuit by the Royal Navy involving dozens of warships. Two days later, heading for occupied France to effect repairs, Bismarck was attacked by 16 obsolescent Fairey Swordfish biplane torpedo bombers from the aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal; one scored a hit that rendered the battleship's steering gear inoperable. In her final battle the following morning, the already-crippled Bismarck was severely damaged during a sustained engagement with two British battleships and two heavy cruisers, was scuttled by her crew, and sank with heavy loss of life. Most experts agree that the battle damage would have caused her to sink eventually. The wreck was located in June 1989 by Robert Ballard, and has since been further surveyed by several other expeditions.

A Naval Story

A Royal Navy Admiral was attending a naval conference that included Admirals from the U.S., English, Canadian, Australian and French Navies. At a cocktail reception, he found himself standing with a large group of Officers that included personnel from most of those countries. Everyone was chatting away in English as they sipped their drinks but a French admiral suddenly complained that, whereas Europeans learn many languages, the English learn only English. He then asked, 'Why is it that we always have to speak English in these conferences rather than speaking French?'

Without hesitating, the British Admiral replied, 'Maybe it's because the Brits, Canadians, Aussie's, South Africans and Americans arranged it so you wouldn't have to speak German.'

-- You could have heard a pin drop.

Who Rules?

When everybody on earth was dead and waiting to enter Heaven, God appeared and said, "I want the men to make two lines. One line for the men who were true heads of their household, and the other line for the men who were dominated by their women. I want all the women to report to St. Peter."

Soon, the women were gone, and there were two lines of men.

The line of the men who were dominated by their wives was 100 miles long, and in the line of men who truly were heads of their household, there was only one man.

God said to the long line, "You men should be ashamed of yourselves; I created you to be the head of your household! You have been disobedient and have not fulfilled your purpose! Of all of you, only one obeyed. Learn from him."

God turned to the one man, "How did you manage to be the only one in this line?"

The man replied, "My wife told me to stand here."

Nominated as the best short joke this year...

A three-year-old boy was examining his testicles while taking a bath.

"Mom", he asked, "are these my brains?"

"Not yet," she replied.

AND AN OLDIE TO FINISH

A guy is driving around the back woods of Montana and he sees a sign in front of a broken down shanty-style house: 'Talking Dog For Sale.'

He rings the bell and the owner appears and tells him the dog is in the backyard.

The guy goes into the backyard and sees a nice looking Labrador Retriever sitting there.

"You talk?" he asks.

"Yep" the Lab replies.

After the guy recovers from the shock of hearing a dog talk, he says, "So, what's your story?"

The Lab looks up and says, "Well, I discovered that I could talk when I was pretty young. I wanted to help the government, so I told the CIA. In no time at all they had me jetting from country to country, sitting in rooms with spies and world leaders, because no one figured a dog would be eavesdropping, I was one of their most valuable spies for eight years running... but the jetting around really tired me out, and I knew I wasn't getting any younger so I decided to settle down. I signed up for a job at the airport to do some undercover security, wandering near suspicious characters and listening in. I uncovered some incredible dealings and was awarded a batch of medals. I got married, had a mess of puppies, and now I'm just retired."

The guy is amazed. He goes back in and asks the owner what he wants for the dog.

"Ten dollars" the guy says.

"Ten dollars? This dog is amazing! Why on Earth are you selling him so cheap?"

"Because he's a liar. He's never been out of the yard."

That's it for the February edition. Please look after yourselves and your loved ones.