



SOUTH AFRICAN LEGION (CAPE TOWN BRANCH)

PBO 93000796

CAPE TOWN BRANCH NEWS MAY 2020

New members

Welcome to Hazel Goddard, Ann Long, Desmond Long, Carol Mason, Sandy Reypert, Dan Rolinson, Frank Snare & Lew Wolhuter.

Message from the Branch Chairman – Lgr Ray Nessel

The lockdown has certainly brought some challenges and changes to the way we live our lives, and this has impacted on all our members. From the Branch Executive, we trust that members are coping and keeping safe and healthy. The lockdown has resulted in its own challenges at Rosedale and I want to thank our staff for going the extra mile to continue to provide a service to the residents in these difficult times. To the residents, please continue to adhere to the lockdown requirements. Older persons and those with certain existing conditions are particularly vulnerable and it's in your best interest and the interest of your fellow residents to do so.

As a Branch, regular activities have had to be cancelled. It was not possible to hold the Poppy Day thank you function, the planned induction of new members in April and the Executive Committee last met in March. Given the uncertainty of what lies ahead and that it seems likely that it will be some time before large gatherings are again permitted, it is not possible to answer questions such as when will the next branch social be held and will we be able to hold an AGM this year and the annual Poppy Day collection?

I had hoped to engage with Rosedale resident's again in open forum, but as this is not possible, I will take this opportunity of informing everybody, both residents and non-resident members, of future events and intentions.

The financial committee of the Exco are working hard to manage the numerous outlays amid the lockdown. Residents may have noticed some aspects have been implemented, which I am sure will be highlighted at the next AGM.

Refurbishment/upgrade and maintenance issues:

1. The roofing (concrete deck), adjoining the dining room has had to be re-waterproofed as it was leaking and last done 15 years ago. This includes the IBR roof sheeting over the recreational room. With the onset of winter this has been prioritized.
2. Proposals and quotes have been received for a backup power supply for certain critical functions at Rosedale. The amount is substantial, but necessary, as the Eskom problem will be with us for many years. Once the correct application and final cost has been ascertained, we will share the information by informing the members prior to any installation.
3. After the last communication session, the upgrade to the recreational area was put on hold, until the lockdown is lifted. This project will still go ahead amid financial constraints, as it is an imperative to the well-being of the residents of Rosedale and members of the Cape Town Branch of the Legion. I confirm the specific aspects of this project namely;
 - The renovation of the kitchen area to service a bar and future minor catering events from the lawn.
 - Creating a coffee station in a lounge and rest area.
 - Separate provision for a designated bar area.
 - The re-location of the tuck shop to allow a more suitable/larger facility.
 - The retention of the recreational carpeted area.
 - The retention of the library room until a suitable agreed venue is found/built.

The newly renovated facility will be known as the "ROSEDALE CLUB".

Centenary Celebrations:

The centenary of the RCEL which was scheduled to be held late February/ early March 2021 will still be hosted in Cape Town but has been postponed to the latter part of the year probably September/October 2021.

The Cape Town Branch will also celebrate its centenary in September 2021. Just how this will be done has not been planned at this stage. If anyone has any ideas, please let me know.

The National Congress of the SA Legion is to be hosted by Cape Town and will probably be at Rosedale over a period of 3 days. Initially this was planned for March 2021, but the dates may well change to later in the year.

Further feedback will be forthcoming on these 3 events.

In closing please look after yourselves. We all need to do our bit to lessen the impact of the challenges that our country and the world face. I look forward to when we can meet again and catch up. I am sure that many will have interesting stories to tell.

Take care

Lgr Ray Nasset - Chairman Cape Town Branch

South African Rescue Missions

There are several rescue operations of note that the SADF and SANDF have undertaken in aiding the civilian population. Let's look back at the sinking of the Oceanos.

On 3 August 1991, the Oceanos, a Greek owned liner built in 1952, set sail from East London bound for Durban. Opinion is the ship was in a poor state of repair and that given the conditions it should never have sailed.

Early that evening the ship started taking on water and around 2030 the crew started gathering the passengers in the ship's lounge and handing out life jackets. The watertight doors of the engine room were closed, and the ships engineers joined the passengers on the upper decks wearing their life jackets a sure sign that the ship was in trouble.

Although no alarm was sounded, and no orders were given to abandon ship the crew started lowering lifeboats and officers and crew were seen jumping into lifeboats before passengers. Trying to get some order amongst the passengers was left largely to the onboard entertainers. Some boats were launched half full which resulted in some 200 passengers and crew being left stranded on board.

At first light on 4 August, helicopters from 15th and 19th Squadron in Durban set out for the Wild Coast with navy divers on board. On arrival, they found the ship listing some 30 degrees to starboard and being battered by huge waves and a 60-knot southerly wind. The helicopters could not land on the ship, so navy divers including Paul Whiley were winched onto the deck by harness. During Paul's descent he was blown around and ended up crashing into the sloping deck and being badly gashed.

Given the conditions and having witnessed the descent of the diver, those on board were understandably reluctant to leave but had little option and were lifted by harness two by two into the hovering helicopters. The helicopters flew on rotation dropping their passengers on the shore.

One of the passengers had an extremely lucky escape thanks to Paul. While being lifted, he fell from the harness landing in the sea. Paul immediately dived overboard and managed to locate the passenger despite the mountainous waves. The two were then lifted to safety.

Surprisingly, Captain Avranas, the ship's captain left the vessel on the second helicopter to supervise the rescue from the shore!

The helicopters had to head to Umtata to refuel and during this time the divers searched the ship and reportedly found one passenger in his cabin trying to drown his sorrows. They then tried to lower the ships rubber ducks and were successful at the third attempt but could not encourage any passengers to jump into the sea and swim to them.

The helicopters returned and the remainder of the passengers were removed. Several cargo ships and fishing vessels arrived in the area and saved those in the lifeboats which was also a difficult task with lifeboats crashing into the side of larger vessels, people falling overboard and being retrieved and then having to climb rope ladders to board the rescue vessels.

It took some 18 hours for the Oceanos to sink and every person on board was saved thanks to the heroics of the SAAF helicopter crews, the entertainers on board and the navy divers. Paul Whiley the first navy diver lowered on board was awarded the Honoris Crux Gold. The pilots, co-pilots and engineers of the Puma helicopters were all awarded the Air Force Cross.

A Greek board of enquiry found Capt. Avranas and four other officers negligent in their handling of the disaster. In spite of these findings, Avranas was not sanctioned or jailed and was given command of a ferry until his retirement.

Magician Robin Boltman, one of the entertainers on the Oceanos, had the misfortune to be on the Achille Lauro in 1994 when it caught fire and sunk off the coast of Somalia. Talk of bad luck!!

Branch Welfare Activities

While the Branch has not responded specifically to assist veterans impacted by the current Coronavirus pandemic, we are doing our bit to support veterans in need who don't live at Rosedale.

This support is provided mainly via two monthly activities. The first is the provision of "goody bags" of essential items and some treats to veterans in various homes and shelters around Cape Town. This service is provided by a group of volunteers who make up the parcels and deliver them on a monthly basis. Over fifty veterans are supported each month.

The second is the provision of casual relief by way of a small monetary amount and clothing veterans who call at Rosedale monthly. Where possible, we try and assist with finding employment, although many are no longer employable. This support assisted eighty-eight veterans during 2019.

The Branch spent in excess of R60000 on welfare last financial year which was funded by the annual Poppy Day Collection.