



# the Christian Aviator

Sept. 2015

Editor

Johan Lottering  
+27825503665  
editor@christav.co.za

Trustee

Cecile Lottering  
+278281 14182  
help@christav.co.za

[www.christav.co.za](http://www.christav.co.za)

PO Box 1847  
Hermanus 7200  
South Africa

## Copyright

Feel free to quote or forward a copy to a friend who might benefit, or pin to a notice board [with permission]

## Also inside

Shutting down the wrong engine – p. 3  
Introducing...

'Pete Pilot' – p.4

## Scripture

*For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved*

Rom. 10: 13 [KJV]

Joel 2: 32; Acts 2: 21

Folks interceded... Pilot called on Name of the Lord

# Escape from inferno

**RICK VAN WYK (41), currently an Airbus pilot with South African Airways (SAA), was asked to witness about the intervening power of God in his life having narrowly escaped a fiery death on a delivery flight gone wrong on Wednesday, April 15, 1998.**

The single-engine four-seat Piper Arrow 200, ZS-OOL, went down after departure from Rand Airport for Lanseria. The forced landing was actually a 'controlled crash' in which the aircraft was reduced to smithereens.

Rick has since flown for SAA the past 14 years on the Airbus A330 and A340 models. He is happily married to Anchen and has two daughters, Annabelle (6) and Kayla (1). But, things could have turned out very different.

Around the time of the accident Rick was flying for a charter company also involved in sales. The aircraft had been sold to a young lady who would do the advanced part of her training on it. As part of the conditions of sale the aircraft had undergone a Mandatory Periodic Inspection. Rick did the test flight. All went well, except for a few minor snags. (p. 2)



Images: Old newspaper clippings reveal how close pilot Rick van Wyk's escape had been. On the image directly above can be seen virtually nothing remained of the Piper Arrow. The steep embankment adjacent to the railway line was the only available landing space. Top: Rick recovering in hospital.

Acknowledgements: Die Beeld, The Star & Alberton Record

## Escape from inferno (From p. 1)

Rick took off again later that same day after assurances all defects had been taken care of. He was barely minutes in the air when the aircraft began losing power. . [From the symptoms he may well have encountered a problem with the fuel injectors – Ed.] Having done 'everything in the book' to rectify the problem he declared an emergency and received a clearance to return to Rand. However, the aircraft could no longer maintain height. He had to look for a landing spot nearby immediately. The area underneath was completely built-up. The Gosforth Park race track and the Germiston golf course in the vicinity were beyond range. The roads were swamped with traffic. The only option was an embankment adjacent to a railway line with power lines overhead, before a bridge.

Rick's chances were slim. His friends, listening to proceedings on the company radio, knew he was headed for disaster. They started racing towards the area where he would go down, ahead of the airport's emergency services. Under the circumstances they would take far too long before getting even close. To top it all, the aircraft had been refueled. An incapacitated Rick could be reduced to smithereens.

However, another ambulance happened to be in the vicinity while positioning between stations. The crew spotted the aircraft going down. Rick would get vital medical attention on the spot.

Donderdag 16 April 1998



Mnr. Rick van Wyk (24), vlieënier van die Piper Aero-vliegtuig wat gistermiddag teen 'n brug oor die N3-hoofweg vasgevlieg het, word op die toneel behandel deur paramedici van Germiston voordat hy na 'n hospitaal gebring is. Foto: KEITH WILSON

Image: A badly shaken Rick van Wyk receiving treatment for third degree burns and smoke inhalation, within seconds of a plane crash which could have claimed his life.

[Die Beeld]

## 'Divine twist'

Here our story takes a 'Divine twist', to include the stuff not readily encountered in either accident or media reports... Rick and his parents, Geyer and Dot van Wyk, all of Alberton at the time, are devout Christians, of a Charismatic denomination. They do not lay claim to any special position in the Church of Christ or that God would care any less for other kinds of believers, or other people for that matter. Charismatics merely place a high premium on being directly led by the Holy Spirit from day to day. They also believe the time for miracles as in the Book of Acts has not yet passed. Far from it!

Having committed his life to the Lord at a young age and making a recommitment later, Rick had never doubted nor gone back on his decision. Much as most would love to have it otherwise, many busy charter pilots would attest to not having much opportunity for quiet time. This has always been a predicament for crew having to constantly think and plan ahead for not only foreseeable circumstances but contingencies. Besides, telling a boss one was not to fly on a particular day 'having heard the Voice of the Lord' would probably amount to instant dismissal. But, God's guidance is always available.

## Intercession

About a week before the flight the Holy Spirit had awoken Rick's parents in the night, to start interceding for their son. Knowing full well what a safety conscious pilot he was, they'd decided not to phone and impose fear on him. They'd opted instead to carry on praying for him, as the Spirit led, night after night. They would leave matters in God's hands.

## Name of the Lord

Just before touch-down Rick had the unction to call on the **Name of Jesus**, several times. Moments later he ended up bruised, but largely unharmed, pinned down in a damaged plane virtually on its side. The only escape door, above him, was jammed. He could hear fuel dripping and sizzling and felt a small fire igniting. The growing flames were lapping at his hands and feet, smoke searing his lungs. He kicked out the window with 'supernatural strength' and half clambered out, into the helping hands of an ambulance crew – fully equipped to deal with his burn injuries there and then. When his friends arrived, he was already bandaged and being taken to a suitable hospital. He was discharged a few days later. He and his family would always remember the redemptive power of God in the whole episode... and to honour Him for the outcome. [End]

## Shutting down the wrong engine

Under extreme pressure some crews can inadvertently cut out vital steps in prescribed procedures. Incorrectly identifying the respective operative and inoperative engine in asymmetric operations has been the demise of many. The cry of Capt. Liao Jian-zong (41), “Wow, pulled back the wrong side throttle” after an engine flame-out on February 4, 2015 may date back to failed attempts to upgrade as commander of the ATR 72-600 months before. When TransAsia Airlines Flight 235 subsequently went into the Keelung River minutes after taking off from Taipei’s Songshan Airport on a flight to Kinmen Island claiming 43 aboard it may have come as no surprise to training assessors. Upon passing their protégé on a second attempt, it was not without reservations. Comments included “being prone to oral errors”, “a tendency not to complete procedures and checks” and “inadequate cockpit management and flight planning”.

The disaster in Taipei revealed striking similarities with the Jetstream 41 accident on September 24, 2009. The South African regional airliner had gone down shortly after departure from Durban International Airport during a positioning flight to Pietermaritzburg. The 40-year old captain had 276 fewer hours on type than his younger co-pilot who kept prompting him to do the right thing. To her surprise he responded by incorrectly pulling the operative left hand engine’s condition lever into feather cut-off. According to the SACAA report no. 8692 she had not only identified the inoperative engine shortly before correctly, but even announced the kind of warning as oil contamination failure. On the CVR she could also be heard prompting him to retract the gear. The action would have reduced drag and improved the probability of flying on the operative engine.

Under prevailing environmental and operational conditions they were 2646 kg lighter than the maximum needed to climb to the required 1500 feet above ground before returning to land with one engine. The CVR also highlights that the captain’s situational awareness had been lagging behind the co-pilot, to the point of getting his tenses mixed up, responding first: “We have lost an engine” and then “We are losing an engine”. In response the co-pilot advised him “I have it, I have it... keeping runway track six thousand feet... flap is zero. We have lost an engine”. A linguist may well explain how she, having already identified and assessed the situation correctly, had regressed or reverted to his level of awareness to reduce the potential for conflict and confusion, creating a new basis from which to progress.

She may well have been as surprised as the two Swiss lady passengers who had ended up in the passage of the suburban home near Virginia Airport on August 22, 2005. On that occasion with the same captain behind the yoke and only one of the two engines of the ten-seat Britten Norman BN2B Islander operating, he had also lost it. The one engine had quit due to suspected carburettor icing, a condition readily remedied.

Fortunately the elderly home owner had been absent at the time, as were the pupils of the Meredith Secondary School on Heritage Day 2009, where the Jetstream 41 would later end up. The Jetstream 41’s right-hand engine second stage turbine seal had broken, as similar ones had done on two occasions in similar aircraft preceding the issuing of a service bulletin and seven afterwards.

Especially in the case of the Islander one might well have asked why it had proven impossible for the pilot to continue flying with one engine inoperative. Admittedly, those with hindsight have perfect vision, but any BN2A rated instructor may well attest to the relative ease with which those docile beasts are handled on one engine. The single engine minimum control speed (V<sub>mc</sub>) can be as low as 51 miles per hour.

Our cue is to revert to original twin flying training techniques, as was one of the recommendations by the SACAA after the Jetstream 41 accident. The imperative of correctly identifying the inoperative engine at first glance seems overstating the obvious. The track-record shows otherwise...

In the British Midlands Boeing 737-400 air disaster of January 8, 1989 the captain had incorrectly used fuel flows to identify the inoperative engine on a flight from Heathrow to Belfast. A fan blade had detached causing severe vibrations and engine smoke. The first officer added to the confusion by incorrectly identifying the right-hand engine. His convictions were exacerbated by smoke entering the forward cabin. [p. 4]

## Pete Pilot

"Pete, it is good that strangers are not to sit on the jump seat anymore..."

"What's good about it, Captain?"

I'm wary of fundamentalists... Besides, anyone is entitled to his or her beliefs. All roads lead to Rome, anyway... Descend Checks..."

"Yes Sir! Descend Checks to follow... Shall we talk more about it later?"

STERILE COCKPIT...

AFTER LANDING...

"Pete, it was a nice trip. You're different... perhaps a tad reserved. I mean, you're not into the party stuff."

"Captain, Jesus said we're to be His witnesses. Though we're not allowed to say anything about our Christian faith at work our 'walk' can be louder than our 'talk' "

**Acts 1: 8** – You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

**Matthew 10: 32** – Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven [Luke 12: 8]

**John 14: 6** – Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through me".

**Romans 12: 1** – Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God--this is your true and proper worship.

### Shutting down wrong engine (From p. 3)

In previous versions of the Boeing 737 the left-hand engine supplied the flight deck with compressed air and the right one the cabin. With the 400 version the left pack fed both the flight deck and aft cabin zone. The right engine fed the forward cabin. Smoke in the cabin had led the crew to incorrectly assume the right engine was the culprit. When the pilots subsequently shut down the right engine the amount of smoke dissipated. Coincidentally the auto-throttle, which had been disengaged before shutting down the right engine, had led reduced fuel flow to the affected left-hand engine less fuel being ignited in the exhaust trail.

Compared to older models the LED displays on the vibration indicators had been changed. The new needle went around the outside of the much smaller gauges, instead of on the inside. Furthermore, vibration indicators were considered unreliable at the time. The result was 47 dead when the aircraft crashed near Kegworth.

\*\*\*

The habit of priming both engines at the same time before start in smaller piston twins can add to the kind of confusion encountered above, especially if in the habit to primarily rely on fuel flow gauges to indicate an inoperative engine. A friend with a twin Comanche had once discovered the fuel lines had been switched around during a routine service. In an engine-out situation he could have misidentified the inoperative engine if going purely by fuel flow indicators. The crucial step of confirming the inoperative side and the attend to factors such as no change in sound or yawing moment upon retarding the throttle before shutting down or feathering can therefore make the difference between life and death. [End]

Order your copy for R150 inc. postage in South Africa

[admin@christav.co.za](mailto:admin@christav.co.za)

## AVOIDING FATAL FLYING TRAPS

GENERAL AVIATION WAKE UP CALL

Air safety project

JOHAN LOTTERING