

PRESS RELEASE

Historic Margate Off-Shore Air Festival this weekend

23 June 2009

The historic Margate Off-Shore Air Festival in association with the Southcoast Mall, returns to Margate this weekend, on Sunday 28th June. The airshow, which for the first time is being staged off-shore, and free of charge, will take place at Margate's Main Beach on KZN's South Coast. The event, which is steeped in tradition, owes much of its success to the unwavering support of Captain Scully Levin, South Africa's most successful and experienced air show pilot.

Levin, who has participated in over 2000 international airshows in the last 28 years, and who has accumulated over 25 400 flying hours in a glittering 45 year career, was present at Margate's first airshow, and has hardly missed one since.

The first edition of what was to become one of KZN's most popular annual events was back in 1984, and it took the form of the first annual convention of the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA). Levin wasted no time in securing his place in South African aviation history by landing his Piper Cub on the back of a moving truck, in what would become his trademark maneuver. Levin appeared in every edition of the EAA's Margate Conventions, until the late nineties where, for reasons unknown, the EAA was forced to look elsewhere to stage its annual fly-in, much to the disappointment of the entire aviation community.

In 2004, with the KZN aviation community still smarting from the loss of 'their' air show, a few display pilots got together and decided to help Margate Airport management stage the return of the "great airshow", though not under the auspices of the EAA. The pilots paid for all their own flying and attracted a rather significant

crowd, and this laid the foundation for the comeback of the Margate Off-Shore Air Festival.

According to Levin, "the manoeuvres I fly are not complex, I believe in simplicity, as I fly many different types of aircraft. Also, the manoeuvres we fly as a team have beauty and grace as the basic theme, instead of complexity and difficulty". Levin is modest, as the choreography that he and his pilots employ gets complex at times, and calls for great awareness and timing. Levin said that "if you come watch "switchblade" manoeuvre, and some of the opposing modules we fly, you will see what I mean".

Levin has been in the employ of SAA for the last 38 years, and now holds the position of the airlines Chief Training Captain. He says that from the age of four he knew he wanted to be a pilot. "My father was a pilot in the Royal Air Force during World War II", said Levin, "and I was brought up listening to the stories of all his exploits and adventures, he had an enormous impact on shaping my future as a pilot" he said. In 1964, Levin left school, joined the South African Air Force and in 1964 was selected for pilot training, and has never looked back.

Levin believes that "the Margate Airshow, and indeed the town, is known for its friendliness and hospitality, and, in this respect, nothing has changed". "The Margate Airshow," he continued, has always been a favourite fixture on the airshow calendar for the display pilots. The fact that this year will be the first time we will be testing the "offshore" concept is exciting, and I am sure it is going to be a huge success."

Levin acknowledges that his entire career "has been peppered with one highlight after another, I have been extremely blessed in this respect and consider myself very fortunate to have had such a wonderful innings". He rates

flying as a team member in the Pitts Special and Harvard Aerobatic Teams as “an enduring experience that I shall never tire of”, and also says that “putting on an airshow in a giant airliner such as the Boeing 747 or the Airbus A340 is incredibly satisfying to do”. Another highlight of his career was participating in the Reno Air Races in the USA, and winning both the races that he flew in., which was the first time anyone from Africa had ever flown in these races, let alone win one.

The Margate Off-Shore Air Festival forms part of the events calendar which celebrates its centenary year. The air show also forms part of the annual Sardine Festival. VIP lounges are available at the air show, to both corporate and individuals, and there will also be a pilot deck at Johnny Rockets. This area will be exclusive to the air show fraternity, and pilots can gain access by flashing their ASSA or EAA licences. On the ground children’s entertainment, aviation stalls, car dealership displays as well as craft markets will add to the festivities. On the Saturday before the air show, 27 June, aviation teams will have a display at Southcoast Mall between 11h00 and 12h00, so don’t miss out on that. For further information contact Vicky Wentzel of Wozani Africa Events on 039 3168137 or visit www.gomargate.co.za

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