

Mission 6

Airbridge to Bethany Children's Home, Umtata – 2004



We have just completed our 5th mission of the year and our second trip to Bethany Children's Home, Umtata. Planning the trip proved a challenge, coordinating, pilots, aircraft, and a film crew was difficult enough, but the weather had to play a part too. Our initial trip was planned for the weekend of the 23rd and 24th of October had to be put ahead till the weekend of the 12th 13th November 2004. Weather proved tricky to predict, it went from a mid week no go to a Friday go, and the flight was on.

Pilots, Ernie Alexander (C-182), Lloyd McKay (PA-28), and Armand Upton (Springbok 1 in his PA-28) were up for the challenge and all did a sterling job in delivering about 400kg's of cargo.

Some interest from a TV program producer to further Rainbow's cause resulted in a slightly complicated plan of action. Armand was to fly loaded with foodstuff to Pietermaritzburg, Oribi airport; Lloyd from Umtata was to pick up the film crew in Treverton, and then meet up with Armand at Oribi in PMB. Ernie flew from Rand to meet up with the other crews and do some filming en-route to Umtata.

Well done to Ernie who put all this together, I am told his average phone call count for a trip like this is in the region of about 60 calls, 30 of these attributed to Springbok One.

On arrival in Umtata, the crew alighted and we offloaded the aircraft of their cargo of nappies, and Nestle products, cereals, and nutritional formulae. Thanks to Brenda McKay who was on hand to meet us with refreshments the Umtata airfield. She also contributed to Rainbow's cause by organising a some needed clothing to compliment the load and put on the transport for pilots and cargo. On arrival at Bethany home we were met by Sister Mary Paula and her team of volunteers.



They are at present caring for about 60 children, aged from 2 weeks to 8 years. Against all odds, they provide care and shelter to these children in a loving and caring environment. We were chorused in by the children old enough to sing, and once that was done all present experienced first hand the attentions that caring for these lively children entails.

There are new faces amongst the children and the building is expanding too, a new dormitory with ablutions is being added. The cargo was then offloaded into there stores and the sight of shelves heaped high with needed supplements was much appreciated by all. So a thank you to our sponsors, Air BP for our fuel and funds and Nestle who provided food at cost



Lloyd and Brenda kindly put up with us up for the night. We were all tired out from the day's events and the anticipation of a bright and early start promised for the morning. But Umtata is fast getting the reputation of a town that loves closing us in. The weather moved in during night and threatened not to lift until late on Sunday morning, but our faith in the met office is certainly improving as true to their predictions the weather started improving to enable a 0900 departure from Umtata for Johannesburg. Armand had to refuel in PMB and was able to drop Des, our film crew, off en-route at Treverton. Some CB activity played around with both our intended flight paths and both aircraft landed safely at their home bases on the Reef.



Rainbow is able to boast another successful trip. We are all the richer, and the wiser for the experiences. New friends were met and old acquaintances rekindled.

Thank you to all who played a part in this our 6th Airbridge mission thus far.