



Jimmy's Own

Official Newsletter of the Signals Association

Issue 6 - September 2018

Officership

A vital ingredient of
being a military leader

Blast from the past
Paratus magazine

A 'Jimmy' remembers

Spending time with 101 Signals Unit



From the pen of Robbie

Since our last issue in June this year we have had a very successful workshop and Annual General Meeting.

Also, in our previous issue we boasted with our own Art Teacher who, as a member of our Management Committee, embarked on giving art classes to the residents of Rosedale, the retirement home of the local SA Legion.

Carl Schmidt presented the first of his classes to a group of enthusiastic future veteran artists on 6 April 2018 and so great was the enthusiasm that Carl was asked to present further lectures. The second class was held on 13 July 2018 and I would like to express my gratitude to Carl applying his teaching and artistic skills to keep the folk at Rosedale creatively busy!

Management, at the workshop on 16 June 2018, finalised Value, Mission and Vision Statement for our organisation. Long overdue dress regulations for members was also finalised and a revised and enhanced management structure was drafted to take the association further.

If there are members who possess the skills and experience for any of the positions, especially IT and social media, please step forward to assist those individuals who currently try their best to perform those tasks. Members with any administrative and/or artistic skills are seriously needed to assist management.

Trust you enjoy this issue.

Robbie

Executive Committee 2018



Robbie Roberts
Chairman



Piet Jordaan
Vice-Chairman



Howard Shagom
Secretary
General



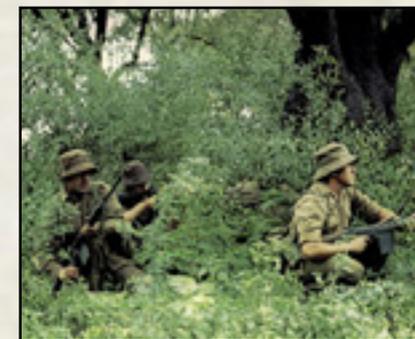
Wilna Bekker
Treasurer



Pierre Fourie
Public
Relations
Officer

What's in this issue of Jimmy's Own?

- 4 Officership**
A vital ingredient of being a military leader.
- 8 Blast from the past**
Do you know where and when it began?
- 8 Frontiers of Science**
How many of you remember Paratus magazine?
- 10 Upcoming birthdays**
Who will be celebrating over the next few months.
- 11 A 'Jimmy' remembers**
A signaller that spent 18 months at 101 Signals Unit in Grootfontein remembers his time there.



Officership as an essential ingredient of being a military officer

By Geoff Laskey

This document represents the view of the author and does not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the Signals Association or SANDF.

I recently read an article on “officership” which was very scant on information on the subject. It enticed me into reading a bit more on the subject matter. I wish to point out that this is not an academic dissertation but merely a few very interesting facts and opinions I came across and would like to share with other veterans and serving members on the subject.

In a nutshell, it can be stated that officership is about the complete “make-up” of a military officer, commissioned or non-commissioned. In my opinion and experience and from research done it would appear that very little is officially being done about pursuing this important aspect of an officer’s development agenda.

At the outset it is necessary to understand what a military officer is. It is a person in the armed services who holds a position of responsibility, authority, and duty, especially but not limited to those who holds a commission. More importantly it is a fact that officers are entrusted with the welfare, morale and professional development of the soldiers under their command. A respon-

sibility which can have a very serious impact on a soldier’s leadership development and career performance and in essence requires very careful planning, commitment and execution.

It is also a fact that to a great extent officership is the one element that separates the military officer from all other professions. It embodies a set of core values that have well served military leaders since the inception of armed forces worldwide. Officership is the basic foundation of military leadership and professionalism. However, officership is not something that most military officers bring with them when entering the service. It is an element which must be cultivated and instilled from junior officer level throughout its entire career. Officership is an attitude and behaviour that must be fostered and internalised and practiced by officers in their daily activities.

Quite often a senior officer will say, “What is happening with our young officers”. Their values and behaviour do not portray that of a “good officer”. This may be true, but we need to establish, are they being subjected to the



right kind of training or more importantly mentorship from their seniors? Technical military training standards are high and generally well executed. On the other hand the question can be asked do officership development and training receive the same attention and priority. Although officers are required to complete an officer’s formative course and some of the aspects of officership are addressed during the course, it is only scraping the surface of this important aspect and there is no formal follow-up training in this regard. The foregoing can be ascribed to the limited time and volume of work to be covered during courses.

Maintaining the disciplined, structured and professional image of the military will require strong officership from officers at all levels. To appropri-

ately develop officership, the senior leaders in the armed forces must take the lead in the shaping and mentoring the officer corps of today and equip them for the future challenges they may face. In the light of the changes in the type of tasks performed by the military these days, officership may require different or additional values than what was the case in the past. In this regard one of the specific tasks that come to mind is “peace keeping” deployments in foreign countries. These countries often have different cultures and values which may be totally opposite from the norms soldiers in their home countries are used to. The fact of the matter is to be successful these foreign peoples’ culture, values and traditions must be observed and respected in a professional and dignified manner, especially in

the complex and volatile environment “peace keeping “forces are often required to function.

To be an officer is to be respected as a soldier and an inspiring leader — both within the force it serves and its community. Many officers would probably prefer to focus on the “hard core” specialist operational issues and skills rather than on people and social issues. Officership is essentially about people...and it is about the values, vision, and mission of an armed force they serve in. It is a set of principles and values that guide an officer’s attitude, judgment, decisions, behaviour and philosophy. Furthermore if the values that are the foundation of an officer are considered i.e. diligence and honesty, loyalty, duty, selflessness, service, integrity, etc., it is clear that it is about the people skills and attitudes of the officer, an aspect that do not necessary receive the attention it deserves at all levels in military training institutions.

A very important aspect of officership is the officers’ attitude, it portrays the image of the armed force and unit they serve in. In my personal observations and experience, I noticed that in more than one military training institution abruptness, animosity, domineering, and vindictiveness by the instructors appeared to have been part of the values of the Unit. The trainees in attendance, rightly or wrongly, had the perception that their presence is more of a burden and of a nuisance value than anything else. They did not feel

welcome, valued or wanted. The foregoing had a very serious negative influence on the trainees’ attitude towards the learning process and the outcomes of the training received. Although this was not a general trend throughout, it occurred and in my opinion certainly was an indication of lack of understanding by the instructors of the people they were required to train as well as evident of inadequate officership training and skills in certain cadres. The foregoing is rather unfortunate considering the fact that the main objective of a military training unit is the development of people (soldiers) even though it is required to be conducted in a disciplined and very structured military environment. In this regard the words of Sir James M. Barrie makes one think, he stated that “Happiness is found not in doing what one likes to do, but in liking what one has to do.”

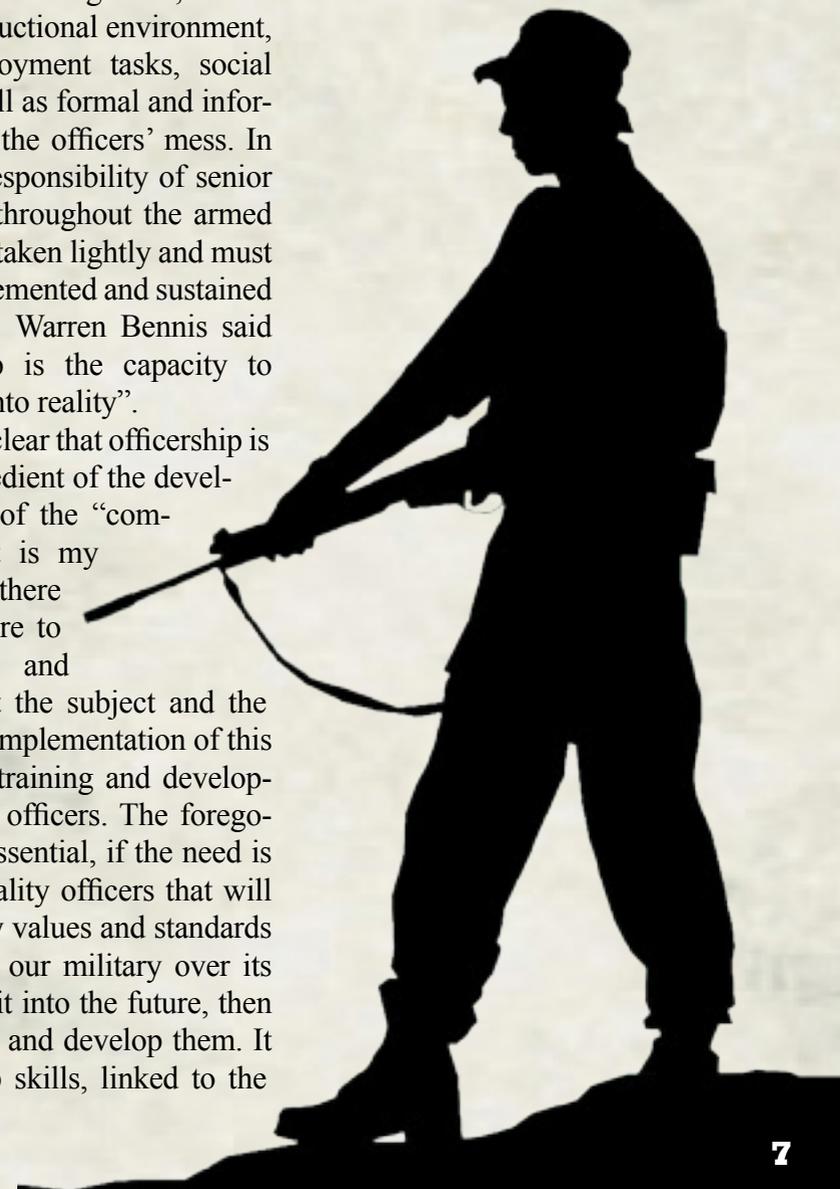
From research done it would appear that the question of officership locally and worldwide do not receive the attention it should and is an aspect of military officer training that needs to be developed and instilled and sustained from day one of entering the service. Most officers will certainly possess some of the vital officership values, but these values will need further enhancing and development in the military sphere. Senior military leaders must understand the basic fundamentals of officership and their important role in the development and mentoring of officers. Developing officership skills

must start at the top and must be executed in a carefully planned and structured manner. It should be an integral part of the officers’ career planning and development program in order to learn, grow and develop his skills as an officer. Officership should be integrated into all aspects of an officer’s activities and tasks including aspects such as behaviour on the parade ground, in the training and instructional environment, operational deployment tasks, social interaction as well as formal and informal activities in the officers’ mess. In this regard the responsibility of senior military leaders throughout the armed forces cannot be taken lightly and must be planned, implemented and sustained to be successful. Warren Bennis said that” Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality”.

Although it is clear that officership is an essential ingredient of the development process of the “complete” officer, it is my impression that there is still much more to be investigated and researched about the subject and the formal practical implementation of this approach in the training and development of military officers. The foregoing is however essential, if the need is to have good quality officers that will maintain the very values and standards that have served our military over its history and take it into the future, then we need to build and develop them. It is the officership skills, linked to the

technical and operational” know-how” and experience that will enable an officer to ultimately successfully progress and meet the challenges of being a commander.

“Leadership is unlocking people’s potential to become better”. —Bill Bradley



Blast from the Past

Historic, informative, interesting, and nostalgic. Paratus magazine was all of those things. By Matt Tennyson.

Anyone that served in the South African Defence force must remember Paratus magazine, the official monthly publication of the SADF.

Each issue was between 42 and 60 pages and it would often come with a supplement. It covered all branches of the SADF (Army, Navy, Air Force and SA Medical Services).

The very first issue came out in November 1970 with Cmdt I.D. van der Walt as the editor. That first issue would have cost you 10 cents.

The last issue of Paratus was published in April 1994, just before the SADF became the SANDF. The editor for that last issue was Mrs AD van der Westhuizen.

That final issue cost R4.50. The magazine ran for 24 years and published an incredible 282 issues.

These days Paratus magazine is considered a collectors item and you can pay a small fortune just for a single issue.

So I was delighted to discover that Bush War Books had managed to track down every one of the 282 magazines published.

It must have taken some time and expense to track down every issue. They paid as much as R500 for some

of the issues.

Then they took all of the magazines and scanned them into digital format. Again this must have taken time and money to do this.

The good news is that you can now purchase all 282 issues of Paratus in digital format. It will cost you R650.

Now while this may sound like a lot, I think its a bargain. Especially when you consider how much time and money they must have spent to complete this mammoth task.

I recently purchased the set online and it was delivered to my door. All 282 issues are on a 16 GB memory stick.

I'm still going through all of the issues and I must confess that I'm finding the wide range of articles fascinating. Many of the articles and photographs bring back memories.

For the first few years the magazine carried advertising as well, and some of the ads also brought back memories. Ads for items such as Life and Hunter cigarettes and Kroenbrau 1308 beer. All of which ceased to exist decades ago.

Something else from the adverts that amazed me were the prices of things.

One of the articles in the January



TWENTY-FOUR YEARS: The very first issue of Paratus came out in November 1970 and the final issue was in April 1994. A total of 282 magazines.

1971 issues is about “The firearm of the future”. The weapon they are talking about is the R1, which had just been introduced into the SADF.

Many years later there would be another article introducing the new R4 rifle into service.

This collection of magazines is a real blast from the past and well worth owning.

They are available from Bush War Books. You can buy the entire set for R650 or individual issues at R3.80

To view more on this offer visit Bush War Books at their website or click on the link below.

<https://www.warbooks.co.za/collections/paratus>



Upcoming Birthdays

September 2017

15th Jeanne Pienaar (New Zealand member)
 28th Carl Schmidt (Manco Member)

Davies (Del is from Rosedale Service Centre)

30th Johan Smuts
 31st Andrea Andrews

October 2017

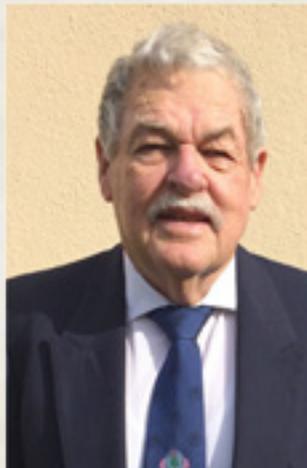
4th Chris Richter and Jeffrey Marcus
 13th Willem Lubbe
 20th Willie Snyders and Del

November 2017

10th Fahmy Rhode (Manco Member)
 15th Adi Fourie
 29th Gideon (Mossie) Mostert



Fahmy Rhode



Johan Smuts



Carl Schmidt

A 'Jimmy' remembers

**Mike began national service in 1977 and spent most of his time with 101 Signals Unit.*

It was December 1976 and I had just finished matric. I was looking forward to a good holiday before decided what to do next.

The decision was taken out of my hands when I received a nondescript envelope with the word 'Amptelik' on it. It was my instructions to report for national service.

I had been assigned to the South African Corps of Signals and would be doing my basic training at the Army Gymnasium in Heidelberg. I lived in Johannesburg, which was only 45 km away, so it didn't seem that bad.

My basic training began on 5 January 1977. I was put into Bravo company and for the life of me I can't remember the name of our basics corporal.

What I can remember is that the basics sergeant major was a man called Sgt Major Blom. I believe that he later went on to become the RSM of the Army Gymnasium.

What I remember from basics was endless hours spent on the parade ground, and countless inspections which I hated with a passion.

After basic I did a course which, if I remember correctly, was called an R9 course.

Afterwards a large portion of us were told that we were going to the border. I was excited and had these visions of

being involved in the thick of the action. If only I had known.

We flew out on a SAFAIR C-130 'Flossie' and landed at AFB Grootfontein. From there we were transported to our new unit. 101 Signals Unit in Grootfontein.

One of the advantages was that we had our own camp within the camp. It wasn't that bad because we had our own kitchen, mess, pub and accommodation. We also had our own tennis court and swimming pool.

I can't remember how many accommodation blocks there were, but I know that one of the blocks was used by 101 Engineer Support Unit and that they shared our facilities with us.

The accommodation blocks could each sleep 32 troops if my memory serves me correctly. You entered into a small foyer and there was a passage that went down either side. On each side was a small store room and ablution facilities that consisted of toilets, showers and basins. Then there was an open-plan room with four beds with built in cupboards on either side of the passage. This was followed by another open-plan room that was exactly the same.

I was told that I would be working in the Comcen (Communications Centre). We had the responsibility for dealing

with all telex messages to and from the operational area. You must remember that back then there were no fax machines, no e-mail and no Internet. Most messages were sent by telex.

I will try and describe, as best as I can remember, how everything worked. There was an office that belonged to the adjutant. Another office was the office of the officer commanding. I remember that his name was Commandant Dalton. Then there was another office that was our 'tearoom'. After that was the radio room where the radio operators worked from. Across from these was the actual comcen. There was a reception area with a counter. Behind the counter to the right was the entrance to the actual comcen. To the left was a thick steel door that led into the cryptology room.

The crypto room was where coded messages were sent and received. If I can remember they used something called a Gretag machine to code and decode these messages. You had to have a top secret clearance to even go inside, so none of us ever got to see the inside of the place. I remember that two of the people that worked in the crypto room were a Staff Sergeant Starfield and another staff sergeant who had the nickname 'Snorre'. This was because of his huge moustache.

The room where we worked was the comcen. There were a number of telex machines in the room. There were two telex machines that linked us to the main comcen in Pretoria. One telex



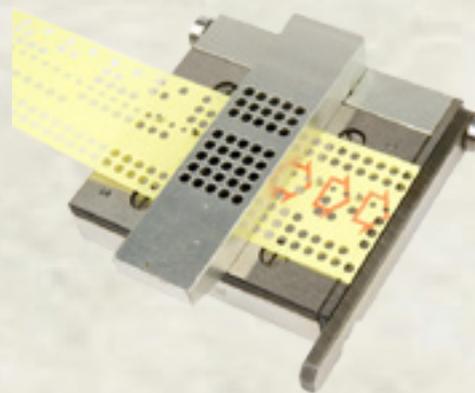
machine was send and one to receive. There were also telex machines to and from Oshakati, to and from Rundu, to and from Katima, and to and from Windhoek.

Let's say that someone at Western Province Command wanted to send a message to Rundu. They would go to Western Province Command Signal Unit who would send the message via telex to Pretoria. They would then send it to us in Grootfontein, and we would send it on to Rundu.

Incoming messages would be printed onto telex paper. We would keep a log of all incoming and outgoing messages. The telex machine would also produce the message on yellow telex tape.

If we received a message on one machine we would take the telex tape and load it into the outgoing machine to send it on.

Those of us that worked in the comcen worked shifts. You were either on day shift or on night shift. The comcen operated 24 hours a day.



If you were on day shift you would normally get up at about 5.00 am, have a shower, get dressed and go for breakfast. Then you would walk down to the HQ building and the comcen and start your shift at 6.00 am.

You would then work a twelve hours shift until 6.00 pm when the night shift would take over from you. This process was repeated from Sunday to Friday.

Saturdays were different. If you were on day shift you worked from 6.00 am to noon. Then you had six hours off before you reported back at 6.00 pm. This was how we changed over from day shift to night shift. This means that on a Saturday we worked for 18 hours. So we actually worked seven days a week. The only break you had was when you went on your seven-days pass.

Towards the end of 1977 we were all looking forward to finishing our national service and going home. Then they sprung a big surprise on us.

National service was extended for another year. So instead of going home we now had an extra year to look forward to in Grootfontein. The one small

consolation was that during that extra year we were given a 14 day pass.

It was a long and tough two years, but we still made the most of it. As I said earlier, we had our own pub at our base. I think we paid something like 16 cents for a beer. But if we got half a chance we would head off into the town of Grootfontein. There were two hotels in town where we would always go for a drink. It was one of the only places you had the chance of meeting the few civvie women that lived in the town.

One hotel was called the Meteor and the other the Noord. Of course as national servicemen we were not allowed to go there. Not that it ever stopped us.

The other place that we would try and visit, especially on a Sunday, was the local swimming pool. Although we had our own swimming pool and there was also an Olympic size pool in the military base, the local pool was where you could get to meet the few single civvie girls. There was also a place there called the Hamburger Hut.

I can still remember on many a night shift when we would sit in the comcen with someone's 'Ghetto Blaster' pumping out music. Just after midnight most of us would put our head down on the nearest desk and get some much needed sleep.

I wonder if any other readers of Jimmy's Own served with 101 Signals Unit. Maybe they can write something and refresh my own memories of the place.

Reproduction of a cartoon by Len Lindeque taken from Paratus magazine July 1976.

DOPPIE



LEN LINDEQUE
© PARATUS JULY 1976

BANG!
ON.