

Supporting Charity

Little Annie, the Antonov AN2 who came to South Africa "from Russia with love" made a grand entrance at the Paramount Group SAAF Museum Air Show in May. Since then, her make-over has continued and along the way, she has had some interesting encounters.

Shortly after the air show, Little Annie was treated to a lifestyle "family" photo shoot with McCarthy Volkswagen Menlyn on location at the Jack Taylor Airport in Krugersdorp where Mike Spence and his expert team of engineering staff from Ultimate Aircraft Services, have been a great help.

Courtney and Stacey, both volunteers in the Little Annie support team look stunning in their flying gear, seen here posing with Little Annie.

On a more serious note, Little Annie is now officially registered as ZU-JLM and has finally received her

Authority to Fly certificate from SACAA. With all her adoption papers in order, she is now good to go!

The 'to do' list in Little Annie's make-over project is however far from complete. An upgrade to the original avionics was required in order to ensure that she can operate safely in the South African airspace, as required by SACAA regulations. As a "vintage" aircraft and a charity with limited funds, a glass cockpit was obviously not an option! The AN2 spent the first week of June at Clifford Electronics at Rand Airport. Clive and his family team at Clifford Electronics have done a fantastic job of installing a new VHF radio as well as a 4 place intercom system facilitating communications between the flying crew and the crew member in the rear of aircraft supervising the passengers and/or freight. A transponder is also being installed together with a small Garmin Aera 500 to assist with navigational duties.

Amazingly, for the first time in two decades, Little Annie was accommodated in a hangar provided by Clifford Electronics and such compassion displayed for the young lady is tantamount to cause a "Traffic jam on the extra mile"! For a partial canvas aircraft, it takes some doing to survive the elements and look as good as Little Annie does, but obviously,

finding a permanent and affordable home for her remains a key focus for her custodians. The main wing surfaces will not withstand the Highveld hail storms in summer.

The popular SAAF museum flying training days hosted by the Swartkop Air Force Base on the first Saturday of every month, has now officially been approved by the SAAF Museum as a platform for Little Annie to raise public interest, receive visitors and most importantly, take young orphans for "fun flips" to experience the joy of flight. Readers are invited to visit Little Annie and enrich themselves with all the aviation heritage available.

Many readers will know Derek Hopkins as an experienced pilot. Little Annie found a way right into his heart and Derek has been a fantastic team player overseeing much of the technical work behind the scenes, as well as

acting as her chief pilot. He and Jon-Marc Hill routed Little Annie from Rand Airport to Swartkop on 7 June, but on request of the Rand Airport authorities, Little Annie had a chance to show off her powerful "low and slow" fly past abilities, to the thrill of all those who watched her take to the skies after the avionics overhaul.

Jon-Marc Hill "Little Annie's" brother comments "From a pilot's point of view, flying the Antonov AN2 is a truly unique experience. It is a very rough and un-refined yet elegantly simple machine, with tons of vibrations and noise with that mighty 1000hp radial engine mounted just feet in front of the cockpit.

Despite weighing over 5500kg when fully loaded, she handles like a dream and when trimmed just right feels like a much smaller plane to fly. With ailerons on both upper and lower wings and a massive

elevator, roll and pitch control remains excellent throughout all speeds from stall to cruise".

After the Flying Day, Little Annie was moved out of sight for a secret paint job as she landed herself a role in a future production. The details are still under wraps and will only be revealed in future, but it is great that in a short time since being operational, Little Annie has enjoyed significant exposure. Scarcely 24 hours later and after filming was completed, all the paint had to be washed off in time for Little Annie's first real outreach on Monday, 9 June.

The August edition of Global Aviator will give readers a chance to see exactly what it is that this special aircraft is all about and how she launched her objective to "care2share". You can read more about JUST LOVE MISSION on www.littleannie.co.za or visit Little Annie Hill on Facebook. •

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