

The 2014 air show was no exception, as the air force grounds were soon jam-packed after the gates opened at 7am. The spectators' expectations ran high, and word was doing the round that a Russian plane by name of Little Annie might perhaps feature on the aviation program.

In the meantime, Little Annie was airborne at the Krugersdorp Airfield – her current home.

This flight took on special significance for pilot Derek Hopkins and Mark Hill, co-pilot en crew member – they prefer to think of it as her first flight of freedom. In a clear blue African

sky a number of colorful hot air balloons over the picturesque Hartebeespoort Dam added to the magic of the flight.

At approximately 08:00 Little Annie landed on the Zwartkop Air Force Base to be introduced to South African aircraft enthusiasts. As she strutted down the landing-strip and came in for her grand entrance, camera shutters went off relentlessly as photographers captured Little Annie's every move.

Part of the lineup for the day was the Heritage Fly Past with Little Annie also participating in this honorable display.

Derek Hopkins piloted the Antonov AN-2 during this magnificent display. Lighter aircraft with smaller engines led the way. Little Annie with her roaring 1 000 horsepower of life brought up the rear.

And this is the type of cockpit where Derek finds utmost satisfaction and exhilaration.

Derek, aged about 70 years, has flown the smallest and basic of aspirated aircraft to the most modern sleek business jets of today. His preference is vintage aircraft in what he calls "real" flying. Piloting skills with vintage aircraft are tested to the limit which

is not the case with today's modern conveniences and aids offered in modern aircraft. A pilot's skills are tested to the limit, and the Antonov AN-2 offers the perfect challenge.

Mark enthusiastically described the Heritage Fly Past: "It was a loose gaggle of pistons each singing out their unique composition of melodies to the tune of 'Those magnificent men in their flying machines'.

"Speed was not on display, only graceful machines of a bygone era where man and machine's souls were joined in harmony of achievement through the discovery of flight.

"The magnificent sound of her radial engine driving her four bladed propeller through the air, brought some nostalgia to those who recognized this tune of such and similar aircraft."

The Paramount Group / SAAF Museum 2014 Air Show was orphaned Little Annie's first step into the exciting world of the JUST-LOVE-MISSION.

Future planning involves the completion of all her adoption paper work, in order to start with the task at hand - to meet and change the lives of orphans and the lesser privileged who never had the opportunity to experience

the joy and thrill of flight.

Little Annie will strive to create an atmosphere of cooperation between various charities involved, so that all can pool and coordinate their resources to benefit all.

She will also act as the link and conduit through which businesses (sponsors) and communities can build lasting and sustainable relationships that will uplift many through positive inspiration.

Little Annie explains: "This win-win philosophy will not only build a solid foundation in a family context, but also in communities as a whole." •

LITTLE ANNIE'S FAMILY SPONSORS

- Flightsure:** Dorrien Andrews
- McCarthy VW Menlyn:** Bart Hettema & Stacey Lee Bothma
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- SAAF Museum:** Lt Col Mike O'Connor, Capt. Kobus Kapp, Col Keith Fryer
- Boma Meat Market:** Hendrik Steenkamp
- Woodhill College:** Richard Taggart (Director) and Kenneth Checkley (principal)
- Electronic Art:** Neville and Lindi Smith
- Business Print:** Marnus Myburgh
- ExecuJet Africa:** Ettore Poggi (CEO) & Michael Clark (operations manager)

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Little Annie's flight of freedom

Featuring high on the aviation scene's social calendar, is the annual SAAF Museum Air Show at the Zwartkop Air Force Base in Pretoria, Gauteng.

