

Maj Gen Desmond Barker, SM, MM, MSETP, FRAeS, (SAAF, Rtd)

After 40 years in the SAAF as a combat and experimental test pilot, Maj Gen Barker moved across to the CSIR in 2008 where he headed up the Aeronautics Research Unit until 2016.

He served as the Chief Test Pilot from 1990 at TFDC, Base Commander AFB Overberg from 1995, Air Attaché United Kingdom from 2000, Base Commander AFB Makhado from 2004, and in 2008, retired as Chief of Air Staff Operations. After forty years of service, he had accumulated 7250+ flying hours (more than 6,000 hours on fast jets) on 58 different types and an A1 QFI rating.

He was a member of the SAAF formation aerobatic team, the *Silver Falcons*, and a display pilot on the Aermacchi 326 Impala, Cheetah C, Mirage F1 and Canberra. As a Reserve Force member of the SAAF, he currently flies the Piaggio P-166 Albatross, Aermacchi AM-3C/AM-4 and Explorer at the SAAF Heritage Flight.

He remains self-employed as a civilian experimental test pilot and flies numerous other civilian aircraft for the Warbirds Aircraft Maintenance Organisation at Wonderboom Airport in Pretoria. He serves as the Vice President of the *Society of Experimental Test Pilots* (South Africa Division) and serves on the boards of the *Aeronautical Society of South Africa*, and of *Airshow South Africa*.

He is the author of *Zero Error Margin – Display Flying Analysed* published in 2003 and as a test pilot, he authored a handbook for general aviation pilots in 2013, *Guidelines for the Flight Testing of Experimental and Homebuilt Aircraft*. In 2017, he co-authored a book, *Wings Over Langebaanweg – A History of Fighter Training in the South African Air Force, from Spitfire to Impala*. He has forwarded a manuscript to the International Council of Air Shows in the USA, *The Anatomy of Airshow Accidents* for publishing at the end of 2019, which will focus amongst others, on the decision-making and the fickleness of judgement of display pilots.

In 2011 he was awarded *The European Society of Experimental Test Pilots Flight Test Gerard Guillaud Safety Award* “in recognition of his contribution to the demonstration of flight test prototypes”. In 2012 he was awarded the *European Airshow Council Paul Bowen Award* “in recognition of his contribution to airshow safety in Europe”. In 2018 he was awarded the *European Airshow Council, Ceremonial Sword (Jock Maitland)*, “in recognition of his long-term contribution and support of Airshow Pilots and Organizers across the Globe in pursuit of Safety and Excellence in the Airshow Community”.

In September 2018, he was awarded an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Aeronautical Society, the **world’s highest distinction for aerospace achievement awarded for only the most outstanding contributions to the aerospace profession. This honour is conferred on those whose careers, leadership, inspiration and impact marks them out as among the most eminent, widely recognised and influential aerospace professionals of their generation.**

