This year, as part of the run-up to the annual AeSSA conference, the keynote speakers agreed to visit the Western Cape and give a short presentation for the local audience that could not attend the full conference.

Billie, as a test pilot on the F-35 program, gave a fascinating insight to the design philosophy of the F-35 fighter. Apart from the stealth design of the airframe, the big advantage of the design is the so-called sensor fusion and the versatility it brings to the operator. Billie explained the concept of the sensor fusion and how it impacts the information shown to the pilot. Understandably, with terabytes of data being generated per flight from all the sensors, the question of ‘how and what data are used when’ provided a major challenge during the development and test phases.

Questions from the audience were equally engaging and entertaining – especially from the TFDC crowd. The three Air Force bases in the Cape (Langebaanweg, Overberg and Ysterplaat) really supported the event well, with even the student pilots from Langebaanweg attending.
Unfortunately, Ricardo Traven’s travel arrangements did not work out for him to give his presentation, though he did arrive towards the end of the sessions for casual interaction with the attendees. Dr Alan Nelson jumped in as a back-up and gave a brief overview of his efforts and progress to build an aeronautics-focused school. He presented on this topic at the AeSSA 2019 Annual Conference in Pretoria; see AeSSA2019-26 of the Abstract Summaries.

After the presentations, the AeSSA President, Marié Botha, treated the visiting guests to a wine tasting with lunch at the Meerendal Wine Estate.

A big thank you to not just the speakers with their truly entertaining stories, but also to the City of Cape Town Electricity Supply for making the lecture hall available and Alan Nelson for his efforts in organising the event.