

Commission of Inquiry into TRC Stopped Cases

Case Reference: The Rietbok air crash, 13 March 1967

Submitted by: Aaron M Goodman associated with AFORAT

(The Associated Families of the Rietbok Aircraft Tragedy)

Date: November 6, 2025

Affidavit

I, Aaron M Goodman, 44 years old

Residing address: [REDACTED]

Occupation: Urban [REDACTED]

Email: aaronmg8[REDACTED]

Declare under oath in English / confirm in English the following:

My connection to the Rietbok Crash:

Audrey Anne Rosenthal (née Faren) was my great-aunt, younger sister to my maternal grandmother Lois Faasen (née Faren) and aunt to my mother Debra Singer (née Tilleman). At the age of 27, Audrey was one of the 25 victims of the South African Airways Flight 406 Reitbok tragedy when the plane disappeared into the Indian Ocean on March 13, 1967 while approaching land in East London, South Africa.

While I did not get to have my Aunt Audrey as a part of my life, I've learned from my family and research into her life that she was a remarkable person of great intelligence, impressive achievement, and compassionate humanity. She was born in Detroit, Michigan, USA in 1939, received an undergraduate degree from the University of Michigan and later completed a doctorate degree in History at the University of California, Los Angeles. Through letters and accounts she has been described as extraordinary, brilliant, lively, inquisitive, possessing a sharp wit, having a strong sense of justice and committed to acting on her beliefs, easy to connect with, and a fast and true friend to many. A loving and cherished member of our family Audrey's story and her loss in the Reitbok air crash tragedy has cast a shadow of mystery and sadness over my family for nearly sixty years.

At the time of the Reitbok crash, our family was left with many more questions than answers. Over the past 10 years, I have been working to piece together Audrey's story in connection to the Reitbok crash and why she was in South Africa in 1967. I have relied on accounts from those she was close with, her own letters, the research and efforts of other interested people, as well as published news articles about her and the incident. The following is a summary of my understanding of why Audrey was in South Africa, how her loss impacted my family, and the unanswered questions surrounding the circumstances of the Reitbok crash of March 13 1967.

Why Audrey Rosenthal was in South Africa in March of 1967: Audrey was recruited by her partner / fiancée Martin Legassick (a South African national and anti-apartheid activist) to volunteer for the Defence and Aid Fund, founded by Canon John Collins. According to Mr. Legassick, at the time of the crash she had been in South Africa for five weeks in Johannesburg, Natal, Zululand, Cape Town, The Eastern Cape, and Transkeo. During her time in the country, Audrey gathered information for the banned Defence and Aid Fund on political prisoners and their families, establishing and renewing contacts between those working for DAF in London and South Africa. She was also gathering information of use to the South African Freedom movement.

According to an obituary published many years later by Mr. Legassick: *"Throughout her trip she acted with courage, insight and determination. Though she died, she sent out a great deal of information and her last letters were posted a day before she boarded her last flight.....This she did, and did well, and as an American, she did it for South Africa and for mankind. I believe that she deserves to be remembered now, and when South Africa is free, as one of South Africa's heroines."*

What happened to my family at the time of the Reitbok tragedy:

Our family was left with many unanswered questions and a disturbing lack of closure over the tragic loss of Audrey. In the immediate aftermath of the crash, Audrey's father, Samuel Faren made inquiries from the United States, through available channels to determine the cause, potential liability, secure an official death certificate, and attempt to recover Audrey's personal belongings/luggage. There were inquiries to South African Airways and the South African government made on behalf of the family by their Congressman at the time, Gerald Ford (who later served as President of the United States). There was correspondence from the Airline that indicated there would be a formal inquest into the crash. However, we do not have any documentation that speaks to the outcome of an investigation, or if South African Airways or other entities were ever found to be liable in any way for the disaster.

As far as we are aware, Audrey's remains were never recovered and I do not know if even an official death certificate was issued or received by the family. She was not able to receive a burial in accordance with the religious traditions of her family. I also do not know if her personal effects were returned to the family by friends and close contacts. To my knowledge, none of her belongings from the Reitbok crash itself were recovered or received by the family.

There were many letters received by her father at the time of the tragedy, attesting to her wide community of admirers who held her in the highest esteem and sharing their grief and shock at her loss. However Samuel was so grief stricken over the loss of his daughter, my family has reported that he actually would not read or respond to the letters he received or even talk about the plane crash with the family. It is thanks to her sister Lois (my grandmother) who kept many of the documents and letters from that time and they were given to me after my grandmother's passing in 2015.

Unresolved questions about the circumstances of the Reitbok Crash

I understand that the Margo report investigated the cause of the Reitbok crash in August of 1967. However this report was inconclusive in assigning any particular cause, due to lack of evidence, while conjecturing that perhaps the pilot had a heart attack, again with no evidence to support. I am also familiar with reports by those who were part of the initial crash investigation stating the involvement of South African government security services who sought to limit information about the crash and its potential cause.

While no one in my family knew of Audrey's purpose and activities in South Africa at the time, once the circumstances of her mission were revealed there were clear reasons for us to wonder that the plane crash may not have been accidental based on the following:

1. The importance and secretive nature of Audrey's mission with the Defence and Aid Fund in South Africa
2. The fact that another person of political interest / adversary to the South African apartheid government, JP Bruwer was also a passenger on the plane.
3. The fact that the apartheid government has since been revealed to have engaged in targeted, covert killings of anti-apartheid activists and it has been speculated that the Rietbok incident could have been one of the first so-called "Dirty Tricks" operations of the regime.
4. That, Audrey herself believed that she was being tracked by South African government security agents, according to Martin Legasick as reported in a 1998 Mail and Telegraph article:
<https://mg.co.za/article/1998-04-09-was-she-the-reason-for-the-rietbok-crash/>
5. In the same Mail and Telegraph Article referenced above, there are many statements that raise these questions: That the authorities made extensive efforts to obscure the fate of the Rietbok and its passengers, that there have been previous efforts to find / recover the plane, and even a claim that the plane had been secured to the sea floor by netting.

Hopes for the outcome from the 2025 Commission of Inquiry into TRC Stopped Cases

In 1998, families of the Reitbok victims petitioned the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to further investigate this incident, due to the potential political motivations of apartheid-era government authorities to disrupt the activities of both my great-aunt Audrey as well as another passenger on the plane, JP Bruwer. Mr. Legassick also submitted to Jasmine Suka at the TRC a statement giving information about Audrey's activities and the need for further investigation. My family and I were not a part of the original 1998 submission to the TRC, and I understand that the case of the Reitbok crash was not ultimately pursued as an investigation by the commission, for reasons unknown.

I sincerely believe that above referenced circumstances and unanswered questions give reason to the necessity for this 2025 Commission of Inquiry to fully investigate the Reitbok crash. Specifically, I hope to learn the truth about the cause and the relevant actions of governmental or other actors preceding and in the aftermath of this air disaster. Critically, we need to know the reasons that the 1998 TRC did not pursue this incident previously and whether attempts were made to prevent the investigation and prosecution of this incident as a potential apartheid-era crime. My family and the families of all of the victims deserve to finally understand the Reitbok tragedy that took the lives of 25 victims and devastated their families and loved ones. It is particularly grievous and heart-breaking for my family to consider the possibility that my great-aunt Audrey may have been the target of a crime and/or official actions that resulted in the loss of so many other innocent lives, and the possibility that there are those who may still seek to obscure the truth regarding this disaster. After so many years, I simply request this Commission of Inquiry to take great effort and care to seek the truth and provide us and all of the families of the Reitbok victims with closure after so many years of questions and uncertainty.

Signature:

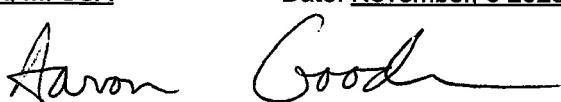
I am familiar with and understand the contents of this declaration. I have no objection/have objection to taking the prescribed oath. I consider the prescribed oath as binding to my conscience.

Place: Detroit, MI USA

Date: November, 6 2025

Time: 16:35

Signature:



I certify that the above statement was taken from me and that the deponent has acknowledged that he/she knows and understands the contents of the statement. The statement was sworn to/affirmed before me and deponents signature/mark/thumb print was placed thereon in my presence.

Date: 11/06/2025


[Signature of Affiant]

STATE OF MICHIGAN)

)

COUNTY OF WAYNE)

)

The foregoing instrument was signed and sworn before me in Wayne County, Michigan, on 11/06/2025, 2025 by



Print Name: Michelle Turner
Notary Public, Wayne County, Michigan
My commission expires: May 28, 2032
Acting in the County of Wayne