

A man with short hair, wearing a blue and white vertically striped button-down shirt, stands with his arms crossed in front of a propeller airplane. The background is a clear blue sky. The propeller and part of the fuselage of the airplane are visible on the left and right sides of the frame.

profile

FLIGHT CLUB

Seduced by images of World War II sky heroes and the stories told by his ex-Air Force engineering father, it was a natural progression for Diners Club member Bruce Johnstone to succumb to the magic of flying. Kerry Dimmer meets a man who is down-to-earth yet has his head in the clouds

CONTRARY TO POPULAR BELIEF, IT IS NOT THE WORM THAT IS TO BE FOUND AT THE BOTTOM

of a bottle of tequila ... it is inspiration. Bruce Johnstone, owner of Qwila Air, explains: 'The concept behind Qwila Air was completely different to my earlier experiences in the corporate world ... no jackets and ties, no boring corporate colours, no boardroom meetings. Our logo came out of my attending, in 2002, some pretty boring parties and the consequences of hauling out a bottle of tequila. The whole Qwila logo, inclusive of cactus and sun, is a result of me proclaiming "no more boring". I want bright colours, and the name itself is derived from the word tequila.'

Before you think this is one naughty boy, you have to look into his bright blue eyes and read the heart of the man. His aviation business is by no means glamorous or fun. Spiked with an element of danger, it touches thousands of destitute African people. In his own words: 'What Qwila does is work for humanitarian organisations that provide relief aid to African states.'

Qwila's clients include the International Committee of the Red Cross, World Food Programme and Médecins Sans Frontières (aka Doctors without Borders), all of which deliver emergency aid to people affected by armed conflict, epidemics, natural or man-made disasters or even just poverty-stricken and destitute people in an attempt to prevent suffering.


These organisations outsource their aviation requirements to Qwila Air for a number of reasons. Bearing in mind that Qwila provides client-branded planes, maintenance, crew and all aviation expertise, as Johnstone explains, the needs of his clients lie in the supply of aid, not the logistics or expertise of aviation.

Qwila Air is currently operating in two main areas - Chad and Pakistan. 'Dafur in Sudan has been in the news this past year with reports of people dying and allegedly being killed by the Sudanese militia. A lot of Sudanese people have fled into Chad so there is considerable humanitarian effort that takes place in both countries. We currently have a number of aircraft and staff based in Chad assisting with aid.

'When we set up a base in another country, we typically have a crew of two pilots and one engineer per plane. Each works for two months before returning to South Africa for some rest and recovery as well as recurrency training. Sometimes we don't see our planes for years but they are maintained to the highest standards required anywhere in the world.'

The Qwila Pakistani base is necessary to cater to the needs of oil giant Eni's multiEnergy service station, Agip. 'Agip sources oil and gas from the northern Pakistani oilfields. There are some pretty tough standards of operation we need to follow there; they are pedantic about the operators that they allow to become vendors. We make the grade.'

When it comes to Qwila people, Johnstone says, 'Qwila employs 20 engineers, 40 pilots and 15 head-office staff. I wouldn't send anyone to any place that I am not prepared to go to myself. The flying efforts we make are actually no less dangerous than living in any major city. We just need to make sure we follow the rules and stick to the curfews.'

Johnstone is ex-Air Force, having done 10 years for, he says, 'volk and vaderland'. He maintains a commercial pilot's licence but rarely flies, instead preferring to work tenaciously in the wings. 'I do not sit in an ivory tower just making decisions. I have a lot of respect for my team, and Africa especially. Being the jumble sale that this continent is, sort of creates work for companies like Qwila Air because at the end of the day, our work is what supports the aid agencies that help to heal Africa's wounds.' 

Qwila Air operates from Lanseria Airport, outside Johannesburg, and also offers charters. Contact Qwila Air on 011 659 2910 or visit www.qwila-air.com.

If you own a private aircraft, the Diners Club Aviation Services Card offers you the opportunity to pay for all your aviation-related fees around the world immediately and then receive 55 days interest-free payment terms. So you can now pay for all your fuel, aircraft parts, maintenance, landing and parking, with one card.

style

WORTH THE WEIGHT

The genius of Mark Gold lies in the design of his contemporary jewellery as well as in its presentation.

His creations are not 'ready', he explains to Kerry Dimmer, until even the packaging reflects the essence of his design

THAT MARK GOLD'S FLOWER RING IS

beautiful is accepted, but what makes this likeness of a daisy with a gem nestled in the centre of unpolished gold petals amazing, is that its packaging is a proportionate metal flower pot.

'You could just put this in a ring box but because the product and its packaging are unique, the ring becomes more powerful, more personal to the owner,' explains Mark.


His unique and renowned PUZZLE™ ring follows through with Mark's idea of creating 'stand alone' brands. PUZZLE™ is a concept that emerged from a fusion of Mark's engineering studies and his creative spirit. Precision principles have been applied to create a series of moving blocks within the rails of a gold and stainless steel ring.

'If I hadn't studied the basics of engineering, this product and its 28 variations would not exist. In fact, you can't make this ring using jewellery techniques, you have to be acquainted with micro-engineering.'

The same precision has been applied in the design of all three Mark Gold Jewels stores. There are no cabinets, just a series of framed glass cubes, cleverly set into the walls. You won't be overwhelmed with glitz: 'I want people to experience jewellery in a non-intimidating way but still have a strong visual encounter. What we offer is fresh energy within a feel-good space ... and a great cappuccino.'

Mark's preference is to work with gold and gems. For him weight and quality are closely related. 'Weight really is the thing when it comes to premium jewellery. We are not shy with the dimensions of the

jewels and are rather bold in our design. I choose interesting gems and attach beautiful designs to them. The next step is to market them in a way that creates desirability.'

Linking a coffee shop to Mark Gold Jewels is just one aspect of the 'design language and lifestyle' that Mark and his brothers, Dean and Graeme, are creating. 'Our choice of store location is as unique as our products. You will not find us in a mall, we prefer to be a destination.' 

Use your Diners Club Card to purchase jewellery (and great coffee) at the following Mark Gold Jewels stores:

- Morningside, Durban ☎ 031 303 4417
- Fancourt, George ☎ 044 870 0244
- Melrose Arch, Johannesburg ☎ 011 684 2985

TRAVEL

TEN BOMPAS, JOHANNESBURG

Contemporary, individual, stylish ... Ten Bompas in Dunkeld West is all this and more. From the moment you step into the sleek reception area of the boutique hotel, the service you receive is attentive, warm and unobtrusive.

Each of the 10 suites in this boutique hotel has been decorated by a different interior designer to reflect their interpretation of Africa. Themes include 'Ethnic turns high tech', 'Modern colonialism', 'Architecture meets fashion' and 'African colours'. This eclectic mix has allowed for an amazing collection of locally sourced artworks and furnishings.

No assumptions have been made in terms of service. Everything is a considered enhancement, from the exquisite L'Occitane beauty and grooming products to the full complimentary bar in each suite (with no miniatures). The suites include a guest toilet set off the main lounge and private access to the garden or a terraced balcony. A steam room in the bathroom is a fabulous indulgence.

Guests are treated to free laundry service and a chef that will attempt to cater to individual needs. The restaurant, Sides (open to the public), offers sublime flavours (I recommend the tender duck confit, served with potato dauphinoise and a black cherry jus) complemented by a wine cellar that has, according to co-owner Peter Aucamp, 'several thousand bottles of wine'.

For corporate guests, Ten Bompas is the ultimate for intimate, almost covert, meetings. It offers three breakaway boardrooms and a number of small outdoor corners for more informal gatherings. Free internet access completes the package.

Set on an original 3 000m² Dunkeld property, and despite its somewhat modern approach, Ten Bompas has maintained part of the original garden, creating an undercurrent of utter relaxation and indulgence. You'll feel like you've just arrived home.

☎ 011 325 2442

www.tenbompas.com

