Elias Raphael

SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS' OLDEST PASSENGER

Elias Raphael was 101 years old when he took his first flight on 28 February 1977. Until then, he preferred terra firma. This time, the thought of the long car or train trip to Cape Town changed his mind. South African Airways gave its oldest passenger the red carpet treatment on the flight from Johannesburg to Cape Town, where he spent 10 days in his favourite city. One of his daughters, Fay Rosmarin, flew with him. Another daughter, Marcia Katz, and her three children were at the airport to wish him bon voyage.

Elias was born on 05 January 1876 in Birmingham, England. He spent five years at an orphanage before becoming an apprentice cabinetmaker at the age of 14. He sailed to Cape Town in 1895. The passage ticket cost £10. In Cape Town he first worked as a cabinetmaker. In 1902, he was living at 99 Upper Harrington Street. He started a crockery shop in Plein Street, Cape Town, called The Little Frypan.

After the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) ended, Elias moved to Johannesburg and worked for a furnishing company. In 1907, he opened a crockery shop, with the same name, in the Palace Buildings on the corner of Pritchard and Rissik streets. In 1915, the building was almost burnt down when an angry crowd, protesting against the sinking of the Lusitania and demanding the internment of Germans, set fire to Wehrley's Jewellers (a German firm) in the building.

Elias married Katherine Bloom on 01 January 1913 at the President Street Synagogue in Johannesburg. She was born on 28 August 1892 in London, England. They had three daughters:

1. Rae Ida (born 1914). She married Joseph Goldin in 1937 at the Yeoville Synagogue. She died in 2001 in George.
2. Fay Margaret (born 1917). She married Isaac Abraham Rosmarin in 1940.
3. Marcia Joan (born 1922). She married Isidore Katz in 1947. She died in 1995 in Johannesburg.

In September 1929, Elias arrived at Southampton from Cape Town, aboard the Armadale Castle for a visit.

In early 1957, Elias' crockery shop was demolished to make way for a 13-storey skyscraper. When Elias first opened his shop in Johannesburg, his rent was £25 a month. By 1957, it was £115 a month. When the new building was ready for occupation, his rent was about £270 a month.

Katherine died on 14 June 1959 in Rustenburg. At the time, the couple lived at Kloof Cottage in Loop Street, Rustenburg. After Katherine's death, Elias moved in with his daughter, Fay and her husband, in Joubert Street, Rustenburg.

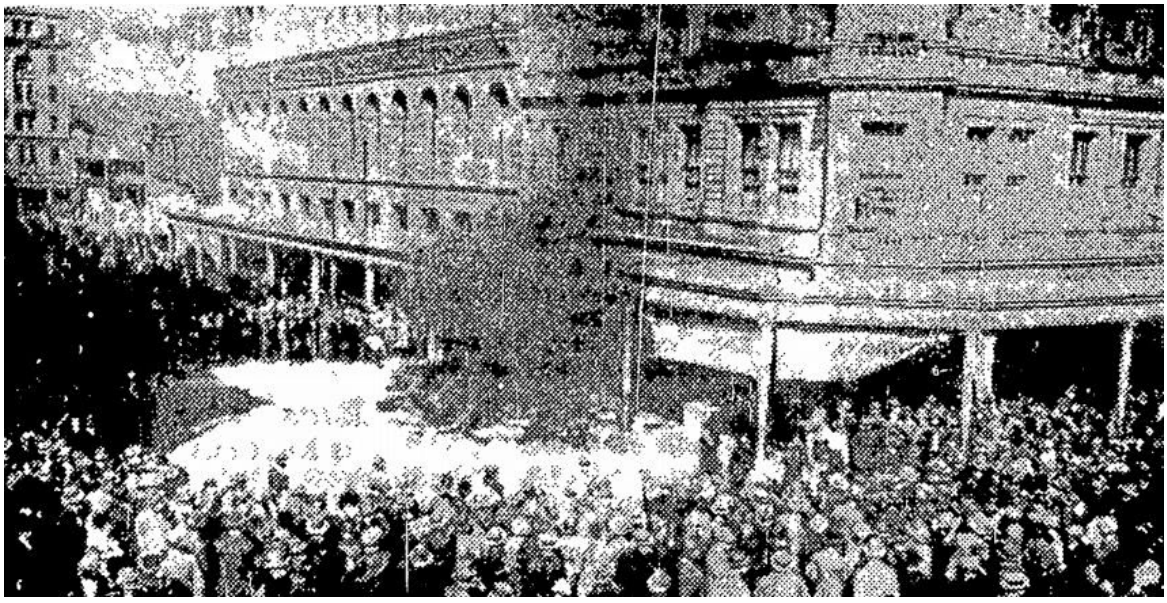
On his 100th birthday, he received congratulatory telegrams from Queen Elizabeth II and Dr Nico Diederichs, the State President. At the age of 101, his only handicap was difficulty in hearing, but he still listened to news and sport

on the radio, which he preferred to television. He had nine grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.
Elias celebrated his 103rd birthday in Rustenburg. By then, he could only see out of one eye but he still read the newspapers every day. Elias died on 05 December 1979 and was buried at the Old Cemetery in Rustenburg. He outlived the insurance clerks and doctors that refused his application at 50 because of high blood pressure.

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28 February 1977 at Jan Smuts Airport - Elias Raphael with ground hostesses Veronica Erasmus and Alwiene Marais



A crowd, protesting against the sinking of the Lusitania and demanding the internment of Germans, set fire to the German firm, Wehrley's Jewellers in the Palace Buildings, Johannesburg, in 1915.



Elias Raphael in 1957