Cumulonimbus with anvil.

The Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) is an awesome display of weather. It extends around the circumference of the earth at the equator and follows the sun as it migrates seasonally to the north and south. The birthplace of some of the strongest storms on earth, it generates extremely hazardous flying conditions for all things in the air.

Experienced pilots can spot the early warning signs of its approach - a change of wind direction on the surface, or the tell-tale signs aloft of "mare's tails" riding on high-altitude winds. Up and down draughts of thousands of feet per minute are not uncommon in these towering giants, along with cascading waterfalls of ice and rain and blinding pulses of electricity. From the cockpit of an aeroplane at night Charlie Bravos (Cumulonimbus) can be seen far off, below the distant horizon, sparking and flashing like a gigantic arc welder. As they draw nearer they seem to climb up and up and up, until 50 000 feet and more is reached. Then the fun begins. “FASTEN SEAT BELTS.”
Of course, many thousands of domestic and international flights penetrate lines of storms of varying intensity during the course of the rainy season. With their on-board Radio and Detection and Ranging equipment (Radar), modern airliners are well-equipped nowadays to detect and avoid storm cells. In fact, it is now a legal requirement for all aircraft above a certain weight, operating in the commercial category, to carry said equipment.

Not so back in the 1950s, before the advent of airborne weather radar, when Central African Airways was plying between Salisbury and London in their old Vickers Vikings. Long distance meteorological forecasts were very unreliable in those far-off days and METAR and TAF information was completely unknown. Pilots knew they would encounter the ITCZ at some stage on their journey, but they had to rely on years of experience to help them navigate around bad weather and arrive safely at destination. Unhappily, this art of visually spotting areas in a cloud that may be dangerous, or where hail might occur, has been lost to most of today's high-flying pilots. They have become dependent on modern technology....

Come Fly With Us.

Please sit back and join the crew on a trip on the west coast of Africa.
The full story is supported by a number of great photographs, my favourite being the one showing refuelling in Lusaka, what a bowser, I wonder how she handled.?

To view the complete article click on this link:-

http://rhodesianheritage.blogspot.com/2013/07/vickers-vikings-on-west-coast.html
Comments are always welcome, please mail them to Eddy Norris at orafs11 @ gmail.com

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