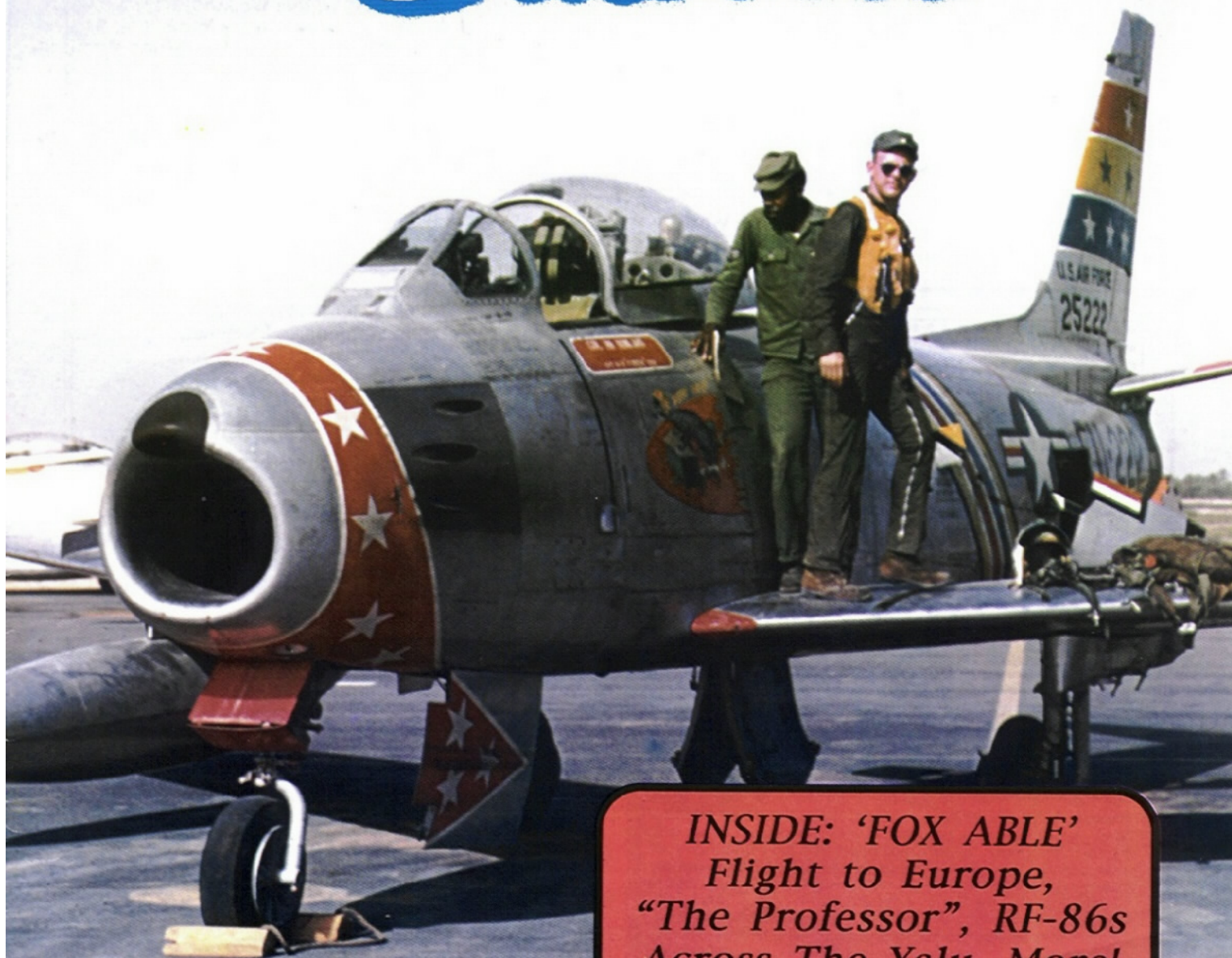


A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association



Sabre Jet Classics

Volume 11
Number 1
WINTER 2003



INSIDE: 'FOX ABLE'
*Flight to Europe,
"The Professor", RF-86s
Across The Yalu, More!*

The Presidents Notebook

Happy New Year. A year ago I hoped that 2002 would be more prosperous than 2001. Unfortunately it wasn't, but I won't give up. 2003 has got to be better if for no other reason than we will have the best reunion ever.

By the time you receive this magazine you still have time to register and come to the reunion. If you can't find a registration form give me a call (702 458-7863) and I'll send you one. The Red River Rats are having their reunion at the Riviera at the same time. This provides an excellent opportunity to see old friends and tell more war stories.

Along with this mailing we have included the 2003 membership roster. Take a little time and make sure all your data is correct. If it is not correct drop us a note so we can update the data base. Unfortunately we only have the time and money to produce a new roster every two years so keep us updated.

The Board of Directors has unanimously voted to reduce the cost of life membership to \$100, for those 75 years or older. This price change takes effect at the time of this publication. Life membership for those younger than 75 is still \$200. The primary advantage of a life membership is to relieve you from the task of paying your dues every one or three years. No, we are not going to give refunds to 75 year old members who have paid

\$200 for life membership before Jan.1, 2003.

According to the Jan. 2003 Air Force Association magazine, the Smithsonian officials expect to meet the December 2003 opening of the National Air and Space Museum annex. I am looking forward to the promised update on the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association member's tablet, at the National Air and Space Museum, by Glen Carus.

I goofed again. The group code for calling your reservation to the Monte Carlo should be XF86SPA vice FX86 SBR. The reservations folks have been briefed to except either one.

See you at the reunion

Jerry R. Johnson
President

FOLDED WINGS

Thomas Gargan, 2002

George Robert Grosz, Jr., November 24th 2002

Robert Janca, October 13th, 2002

John Montgomery, 2002

George W. Roope, November 7th, 1999

Thomas T. Tapper, December 31st, 2002

POLICY STATEMENT

The F-86 Sabre Pilots Association does not participate in any solicitation or endorsement not controlled by, or for the sole benefit of, the association. Readers are cautioned to be wary of any representation in conflict with this policy.

the editors desk

Just a quick note to tell all you guys how much I look forward to meeting with you at the 14th Reunion in Las Vegas, April 13th through the 16th. I have been closely associated with this wonderful group of guys for the past ten years and every reunion has been better than the previous one.

One thing I would ask of you at this time. If you have a story about F-86s and want to share it with the group via *SabreJet Classics*, and/or you have some photos or other memorabilia that you feel we could use in the magazine, and you don't want to trust it through the US mail system, please bring what you have to the reunion and approach me about your story, photos, and questions regarding safeguarding your memories. I can, and will work with you to both guarantee the best possible article and the safety of your materials.

One more thing, let me know about any ideas you might have on articles you want to see in the magazine, either in person at the reunion, by mail or e-mail, or give me a call. Your ideas are wanted. I'll work with you on almost any subject relating to th F-86, Sabre crews, and/or Sabre missions.

See you all in Vegas!

Larry Davis
Editor

Don Frisbie and Gil Garcia both responded with corrections and additional information regarding the photo of four California Air Guard F-86As shown in vol. 10-3.

All four aircraft were assigned to the 196th Fighter Interceptor Squadron based at Ontario, California in July 1954. The photo was taken by M/SGT Max Clover from the back seat of a T-33 flown by Cecil Sanders.

The aircraft were flown by the following pilots:
Lead #48-178, Art Bridge, Commander of the 196th FIS; #2, 49-1122 was Marvin 'Whitey' van Salter; #3, 49-1217 was flown by Don Frisbie, and the #4 man, in 49-1336 was Jim Rohrer.

Thanks guys for the correction and additional information.

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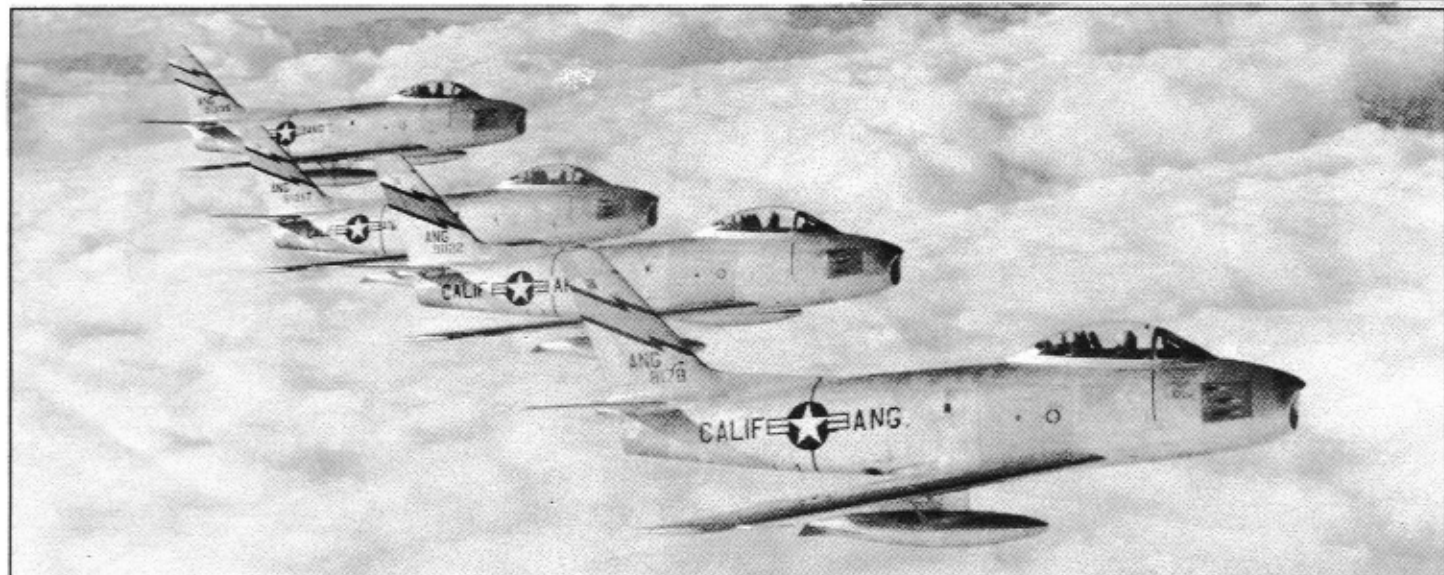
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**14th F-86 Sabre Plots Reunion
13-16 April 2003
in Las Vegas
Make your plans NOW!**

68th Fighter Squadron
April 24-26, 2003 in Branson, MO.
Contact W. Hearon, 7548 University Dr,
Shreveport, LA 71105, ph. (318)797-
3331, e-mail wvhaze@bellsouth.net

Korean War Cottonpickers
If you served in the 8th or 15th Recon Sq
during the Korean War, you're invitd to
join a Wednesday chat between 8-9pm
Central Time. Keep up to date on your
fellow squadron mates.
Contact L/C John Duquette at;
wrangler01@prodigy.net

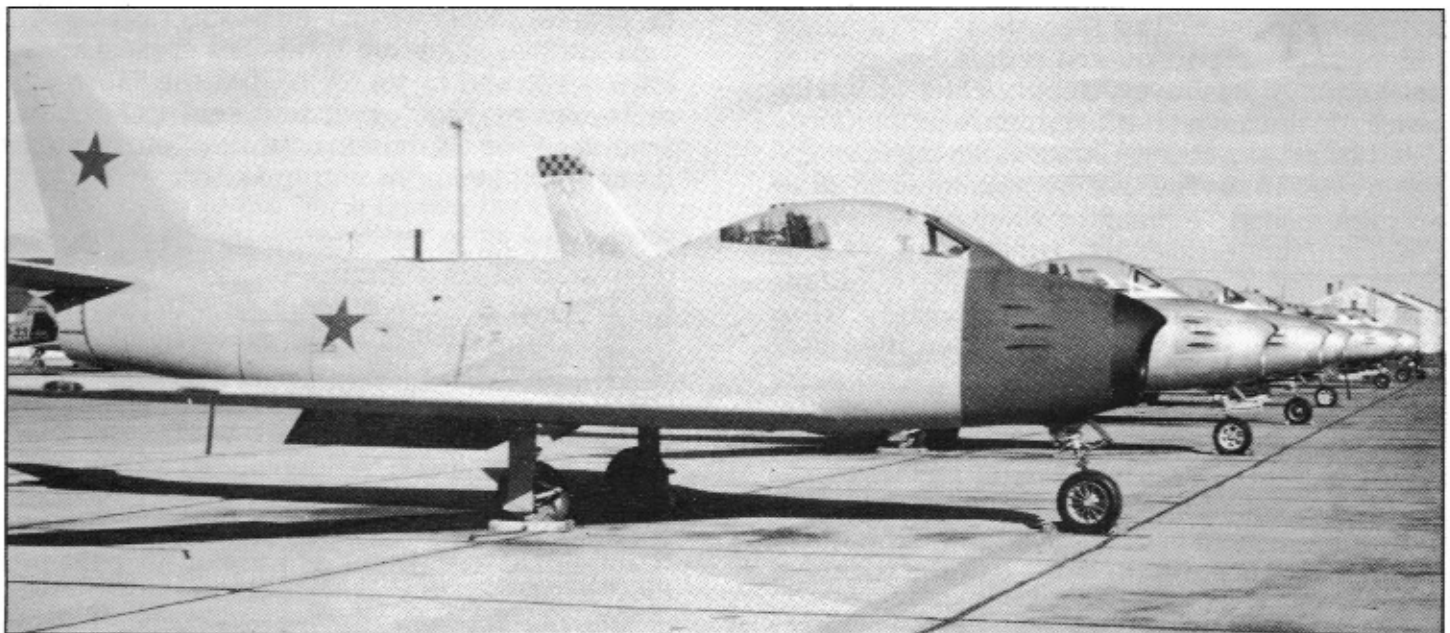
510th Fighter Squadron
30 March- 3 April 2003
at Langley AFB & Williamsburg, VA
Contacts - Hal Bingaman (541-482-
0928) or Jim Colegrove (805-937-8456)

**58th Fighter Bomber Group &
Wing**
May 20-25, 2003 at Holiday Inn/
Downtown, Louisville, KY. Contact
Jean Kupferer, 2025 Bono Rd, New
Albany, IN 47150 (812)945-7649, or
e-mail @ jkupfere@iglou.com

444th FIS,
April 10-13, 2003, at Airport Holiday
Inn, North Charleston, SC. Contact
Wallace Mitchell, 535 Mimosa Rd,
Sumter, SC 29150, ph. (803)469-3297

48th Fighter-Bomber Wing
October 1-5, 2003 in Albuquerque,
NM. Contact John Meinhardt, 9543
Bent Rd NE, Albuquerque, NM, 87109.
ph. (505)858-0493,
email N5048C@earthlink.net

WHO IS IT? Let' have some fun with this one. Obviously a "Movie MiG", can anyone tell us what movie this was in, who the main actors were, and where the movie was shot and what unit(s) were involved? Plus I'd like to hear from anyone that actually flew one of these "Movie MiGs" Does anyone have any aerial photos of these "Movie MiGs" or the F-84F "MiGs" from the other movie? Contact your Editor, Larry Davis, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709, or e-mail sabreclsx@aol.com



Sabre Pilots Still MIA

By John Lowery

During our 14th Reunion, members should watch for relatives of some of the 31 F-86 pilots who were shot down and are thought to have been captured, but were never repatriated. While the names of the relatives planning to attend are unknown at this time, we will attempt to identify them and provide nametags indicating their "MIA-relative" status. Many are children of these still-missing Sabre pilots. Most have no memory of their father or his personality. If you knew any of the MIA pilots, watch for their namesake(s) and introduce yourself. They thirst for information, photos and conversation with someone who knew their loved one.

Two relatives we know that will attend are Mrs. Ann (Niemann) Bakkensen and Mr. Richard Niemann. Ann is the daughter and Dick the brother of 1st Lieutenant Robert F. Niemann, 334FIS, 4th FIW. Bob, a new first lieutenant and recent West Point graduate, was downed by a Mig-15 at around 1115 on 12 April 1953. His case will give you a feel for the problems the MIA-relatives face.

In a September 28, 1993, article for the now defunct *Sacramento Union*, writer Robert Burns wrote that the name of First Lieutenant Robert Frank Niemann appeared on a document provided by the Russians, called the "List of 59". This document, compiled in 1991 & 92 from original documents in the former Soviet military archives, identified 59 airmen who were shot down in Korea "...and who transited through a (Soviet) interrogation point." ("Last Seen Alive", by Laurence Jolidon) The report quoted retired Soviet Colonel Viktor A. Bushuyev, deputy chief of intelligence for the Soviet 64th Fighter Aviation Corps (FAC) based at Antung, China, as saying in a September '92 interview that he remembered an F-86 pilot named "Neiman or Naiman". The 64th FAC commander, General Lobov, also remembered Niemann. General Lobov recalled questioning Niemann while he was recovering from wounds in a "war zone hospital" - identified elsewhere as Antung, China. (*San Francisco Chronicle*, September 28, 1993.)

Both General Lobov and Colonel Bushuyev recalled that Niemann refused to answer any of their questions. Instead he reminded them "it is a violation of international law" to interrogate a wounded POW.

Niemann's reported strict silence is consistent with the author's earlier conversations with him. He talked fervently about the necessity of resisting interrogation if he was captured. The reports from his captors, some of whom remembered Niemann specifically, after almost 40 years, show he was a man of his word. It is clear from several sources that Lt. Niemann's adamant adherence to the military code of conduct impressed his interrogators.

Colonel Bushuyev confirmed that Bob was alive in Soviet custody for some time. A later notation on the Soviet list of 59 airmen (not all Sabre pilots) noted that he had died. Given his refusal to be interrogated we can only imagine how he died. ("Last Seen Alive", Jolidon)

The 31 missing Sabre pilots are thought to have been victims of a special Soviet effort to capture F-86 pilots for intelligence exploitation. According to General Lobov, around April 1951, a secret special unit was formed, consisting of nine Mig-15 test pilots. Their mission was to force down an F-86, and not only capture the pilot, but to get the airplane's radar ranging gunsight, which Russian designers wanted to duplicate. Unfortunately for the Soviets several of these pilots were shot down and killed. Most of the survivors returned to Moscow. ("The Unreturned", by Ralph Wetterhahn, *The Retired Officer* magazine, November 2002.)

Although the special unit's mission was unsuccessful, on 6 October 1951, Col. Evgenie Pepelyayev shot down an F-86 which crash-landed on a sandbar along the Yellow Sea coast. The pilot was rescued by an SA-16, but the Sabre was recovered by the Soviets and sent to Moscow. Several of the 31 missing Sabre pilots are also thought to have been sent to Moscow.

F-86 Sabre Pilots Association members may be interested to know that until around 1994 the Russians were relatively generous with previously classified information. For example, they provided a "Summary of Combat Activities of Corps Units on 12 April 53". This was the day Lt. Niemann was downed, along with soon-to-be triple ace Captain Joe McConnell. In reading these reports, Niemann's engagement is fully described.

"Captain Lazarev, flying as wing of his pair, noticed a pair of F-86s, which were pursuing a pair of Mig-15s. He went into an attack. The pair of

of Mig-15s. He went into an attack. The pair of Migs, which were being attacked, went into the cloud cover while the pair of F-86s turned left and began heading for the bay. Banking left and closing to a distance of 800-900 meters, Captain Lazarev fired a short burst from an angle of 2/4. The pair of F-86s rolled over from a left into a right turn and entered a right bank. Having completed (sic.) 3 - 4 banks and descended, Captain Lazarev closed on the wing F-86 to a distance of 600 meters and on an attack angle of 1/4, fired three bursts. After a third burst the F-86 turned over onto its back and began to smoke. Captain Lazarev began to quickly close and pass above him (the F-86). He pulled out of the battle by going into the cloud cover." (Note: Sometime in May 1953, Captain Lazarev was killed in combat.)

This is but one story. The Niemann family is still trying to get documentation as to how Bob died and where he is buried. Although the Russian in-

formation flow stopped abruptly in the mid-nineties, they are hopeful that today's political climate will see them resume cooperation.

We know that some of captured airmen were executed by firing squad. The execution of an entire B-29 crew in Russia was documented by at least one eyewitness. ("Last Seen Alive", Jolidon)

By now, for some, the years have dampened the emotions of war. Those of us who survived may not think as frequently about our lost comrades. But for the MIA families the story has no ending. They live continuously with images of a now-forgotten war, and the disappearance of their closest family members.

So share the good memories and photographs. Every bit of knowledge brings greater insight and is a gold mine for the MIA families.

Who Is It? Why is this F-86H sitting on the ramp outside of the main Lockheed hanger at Edwards AFB? The photo was taken around 1962-63 and the aircraft was involved in some type of flight test program. Does anyone know anything about this airplane or the program that it was involved in? Anyone with further information and/or photos are asked to contact the Editor, Larry Davis, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709, e-mail sabreclsx@aol.com



Run For The River

by George McKay

editor's notes: George McKay was a P-51 Mustang driver with the 81st Fighter Group in China during World War 2. During the Korean War, McKay went to Korea with jet experience and hoped to be assigned to one of the F-86 units. He was, but not exactly the one he was hoping for.

I kept volunteering for a combat tour in Korea every week, but for some reason I was never accepted. This went on for months until I changed tactics and went to 15th AF Headquarters at March AFB, and volunteered for Korea there. This was on Monday and by Wednesday I had my orders for a fighter assignment in Korea.

On Saturday, I was on board an Air Force C-54 on my way to Japan. Landing in Japan, we were transported to Fuchu Air Station which was 5th AF (Rear) for assignment orders to a combat unit. Here my limited hours of Jet time stood me in good stead for I had left the states as a F-51 replacement pilot.

But instead of going to one of the fighter groups, I was assigned to the 67th Tac Recon Wing. I flew to Seoul in a C-47, where I was met by a 67th enlisted man who hauled me down the road to Kimpo. Again, my limited jet time was a life saver for I was assigned to the 15th Tac Recon Squadron (Photo Jet), which was equipped with the same RF-80s I'd flown at March AFB several years earlier.

My first mission was a two-ship RF-80 flight, with me flying wing and watching for MiGs that might attack us as soon as we got above Pyongyang. Inbound to the target area I noticed some contrails headed our way. Not knowing who or what they were, I called them out to my leader. It was a good thing that I did for things



happened much more rapidly in the jet age.

The MiGs intercepted us at about the time I ended my transmission! Our standard evasive tactic was to drop the speed brakes, and stick the nose straight down in about a 4.5G spiral, and head for the deck. The MiGs were very limited on fuel and much less maneuverable than the RF-80 at lower altitudes. These evasive maneuvers were very effective, for in some 13,000 RF-80

A 15th TRS RF-86A shares a revetment at Kimpo AB, Korea in 1952 with an RF-80A of the 15th TRS. The 15th TRS flew both the RF-80A/C and RF-86A/F in the Korean War. Note the small personal photo in the RF-80 camera port. (credit - George McKay)





RF-86A pilots pose for the camera in front of RF-86A #48-217. (L-R Front row) Capt. Cowgill, Maj. Vanderhoer, Maj. George McKay, Capt. Tony Katauski. (Back row) Capt. Cecil Rigsby, Capt. Perry, Maj. Wilson, Capt. Ken Chandler, Capt. Clyde Voss, Capt. Hesch, Lt. Brown, and Maj. Jack Williams, the 15th Squadron Commander. Williams was killed on a mission on 27 June 1952. (credit - J. Cowgill)

sorties, we lost only one aircraft and pilot. And they worked again this time. However, they were very hard on the ear tubes if you had even a slight cold.

Shortly after I arrived, they began talking about converting me to RF-86 pilot. The day finally came. My checkout in the F-86 consisted of a cockpit briefing, instructions on starting the engine, takeoff and landing speeds - and a quick pat on the back! Lt. Bob Burkhart gave me the blindfold cockpit check.

Burkhart then gave me the pat on the back and I started the engine, flew a 45 minute local flight, made a single 'touch and go', and then landed. I was now considered "checked out" and my next flight was a dicing mission to Antung Airfield. After flying the RF-80, the RF-86A was kind of like moving from a Chevy to a Cadillac.

On a typical 'across-the-river' mission, we would take off, climb to about 20,000, and head directly north toward Antung. The RF-86 pilot was always first off the Kimpo runway as we were slower than the escorts. It was a wonderful feeling to look in the mirror and watch the escort Sabres, between 4 and 24 F-86s, run their engines up to full throttle and see the smoke roll up from their exhausts prior to the takeoff roll.

When the mission was a dicing run to Antung or Ta-Tung-Kou, standing orders were to never cross the Yalu River into Manchuria. And we were continually briefed on this policy, which was violated almost every day by some Allied pilot. On the other hand we were also always tasked to get GOOD photos - which was impossible without crossing the Yalu.

On one of these missions, MiG activity was expected to be minimal, so I only had a four ship escort with Capt. Ralph Banks as Flight Lead. We proceeded north to the Yalu, where I broke off, dove down and crossed the Yalu before beginning my dicing run on Antung. The weather was extremely hazy with poor visibility and I never saw the twenty-four strip alert MiGs being scrambled.

As I turned west to cover Ta-Tung-Kou Airfield on the way out, I was almost rammed by the first of the MiGs being scrambled from Antung. My only choice was to turn into and under the MiGs as they were climbing out. My escort saw this at about the same time that the first two MiGs latched onto me and began firing:

"Kathy", RF-86A #48 257, carries the logo of the 15th TRS on the gun bay door - "Every Man A Tiger". '257' was assigned to Lt. Mele Vojvodich in late 1952. (credit - Bill Coffey)





The ramp on the 67th TRW side of Kimpo showing three RF-86As and a pair of RF-80As. The 15th TRS flew RF-80A and C Shooting Stars from the beginning of the Korean War when the squadron was designated the 8th Photo Squadron(Jet). (credit - Bill Coffey)

As I looked in the rear view mirror, I could clearly see the MiGs firing, and behind them were another pair of airplanes. But these birds had low wings - Sabres! I pulled hard on the stick and just went anywhere. This 'evasive maneuver' took me deeper into Manchuria, but at this point I really didn't care.

Fortunately for me, the F-86 pilots were better shots than the MiG drivers and Ralph Banks shot both MiGs off my tail. Meanwhile, the rest of the squadron was at altitude nearby and dove into the fray. Of the twenty-four MiGs that were scrambled, twenty-one were shot



S/SGT Cummings smiles for the camera as he checks the cockpit of Lt. Bob Burkhart's RF-86A, #48-195 at K-14 in the Summer of 1952. Some RF-86As, and even a few of the early RF-86Fs, had the upper pair of .50 Caliber guns operational. (credit - Bill Coffey)

down or heavily damaged. Colonel Harrison Thyng, Commander of the 4th Fighter Group, made Ace on that mission. We understood the Chinese commander was relieved.

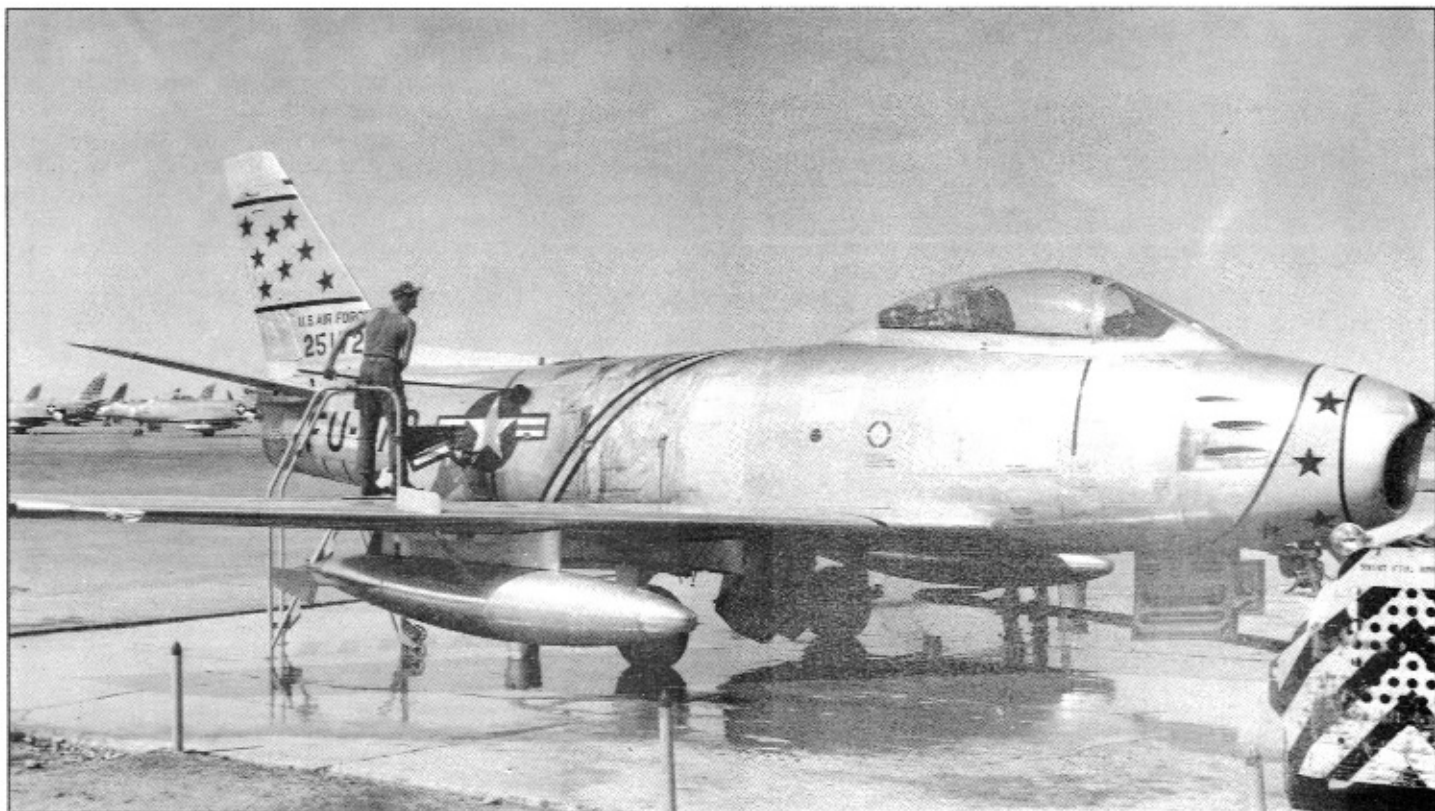
As soon as I worked my way back across the Yalu, I released the escort and continued on the deck back to Kimpo, making sure no MiGs had followed. When I got back to Kimpo, most of the escort Sabres had already landed and were filling out their mission reports. The guys in the 4th put me in for a Distinguished Flying Cross, which was upgraded to a Silver Star at 67th Wing Headquarters. They pinned the medal on me at Willy Air Patch after I'd finished my 103 missions over North Korea.

1/Lt Bradley Irish

Wanted - Information regarding the MiG kill that 1/Lt Bradley Irish, 334th FIS, 4th FIG, scored on 21 October 1951. An effort is being made to record this victory in the "official credits list". Anyone knowing anything should

contact Pat Halloran,
3791 Blue Merion Ct,
Colorado Springs, CO 80906
Ph. (719)576-6077
e-mail - Pat HABU@aol.com

WANTED - Capt. Thomas M. Collie
Capt. Collie's son would like to hear from anyone that flew with his dad at Nellis in 1954-55. Contact Deane Collie-Beard at CollieDeane@aol.com



A crew chief washes a 21st Fighter Bomber Wing F-86F on the ramp at George AFB, California in the Summer of 1954. Nose and tail are yellow with black stars to signify a Sabre from the 531st FBS. All the Sabres assigned to the 21st FBW were F-86Fs with the new hard leading edge '6-3 wing', which had four underwing hard points. (credit - Larry Davis Collection)

A 'Fox Able' Flight to Europe in the F-86F

by Gary Sparks

As I stopped at the main gate at George AFB, CA., I saw a flight of 4 F-86's on the break coming in to land. I was impressed with the lead's pattern as he pulled it pretty tight, and in that era, 1954, most of us still liked to make a tight pattern even with the modified 360 overhead we were forced to go to in the jets. (I found out later that the pattern I was impressed with was flown by the commander of my new squadron.) The gate guard gave me directions to Base Personnel and I drove there to find out where I was going to be assigned.

I had been flying the F-84G & F models in the 405th FBW at Langley AFB VA, but wanted to go to Europe and, more importantly, I wanted to fly the '86. The 21st FBW at George, my new wing, had the Sabre and was going to France. Personnel informed me that I was being assigned to the 416th FBS, and that it was commanded by Major Morgan R. Beamer, who had requested that I be assigned to his squadron. I was very pleased as I had been in his squadron in Korea during the 'Police Action' and had flown 100 combat missions in the RF-51 at K-14 while under his command. He was a great commander and at that stage of my career, the finest fighter pilot I had ever known. Today, after flying fighters for 20 years, that statement is still true.

In the next several days I checked out in the F-86 and felt it was a vast improvement over the F-84. We practiced almost daily, mainly HABS, LABS, and some air to air. Occasional cross-countries were permitted and I lost no time in returning to Langley AFB and showing off the '86 to my envious former squadron mates.

The first action directly related to the flight to France was getting fitted for the infamous exposure suits. George AFB in July is never cool and I think they must have been setting records that year. Even the water in the swimming pool at the O'Club where we checked for leaks in the suits seemed to be 90 degrees or so. It was a very unpleasant way to spend the afternoon. But, after a couple of sessions, we were all fitted and the next time we saw the exposure suits was at Loring AFB, Maine.

On the 13 December 1954 our squadron left George AFB in flights of four, with 15 minutes intervals between flights. Our route was; Clovis AFB NM, Alexandria AFB LA, Shaw AFB SC, Dover AFB DE, Loring AFB ME, Goose Bay AB Labrador, BW1 Greenland, Keflavik AB Iceland, Prestwick AB Scotland, and then on to France. We RONed at each base, and in some cases stayed much longer than one night. We fell under the old Ferry Com-



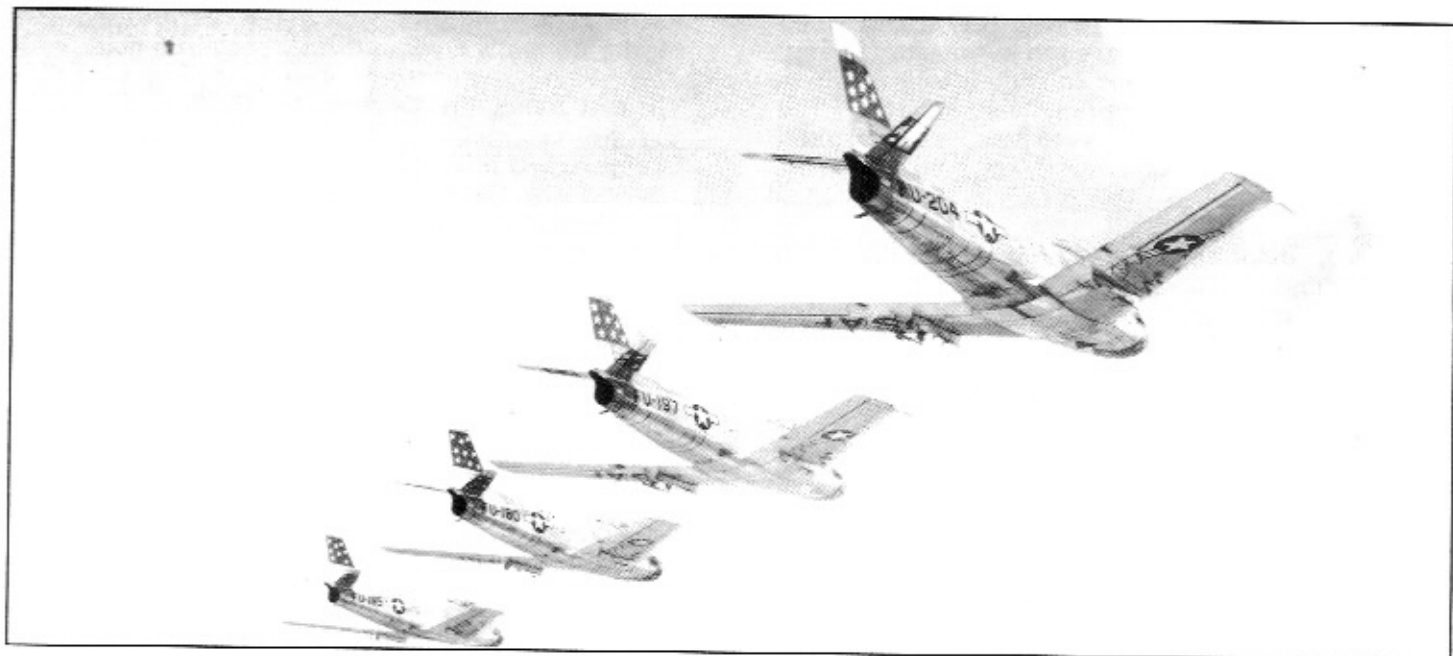
Armed Forces Day 1954 and the 72nd Fighter Bomber Squadron is on display at George AFB. The aircraft in the foreground is assigned to the Commander of the 72nd FRS as denoted by the multiple red and white bands around the fuselage. The next Armed Forces Day celebration would be held in Europe. (credit - Bob Mikesh)

mand, and weather restrictions were much more restrictive than the normal TAC limits. We had a marine pilot, Capt. George Dodenhoff on exchange duty with us, and up to that time, there had never been a marine on a High Flight to Europe. George was looking forward to the flight, but while at Dover, he suffered a kidney stone attack, which grounded him. When he finally passed the stone and was back on flying status, our squadron was long gone. He wound up catching a C-54 to Keflavik, where he replaced a pilot from the squadron following us who had broken his ankle. So he at least got to make part of a High Flight.

We had stayed pretty well on a one night RON schedule until we reached Loring AFB. Looking at my Form

5, we got there the 20th and left on 30 December. Loring was a SAC base, and many of you will recall that SAC had a requirement to wear the uniform with a white shirt and a black bow tie in the O'Club after 1800 hours. We briefed every morning at 0500 regardless of what the forecast had been the night before, and this resulted in a lot of needless briefings. Finally, we got a "Go" on the morning of the 23rd. The weather briefer told us he expected scattered snow storms that afternoon, but we would be in Goose Bay by then, so no problem. I was flying No.3 on Major Beamer, who was leading the squadron, and we were waiting in the cockpit for the signal to start engines when the snowflakes started. Within 3 or 4 minutes you couldn't even see the Base Ops building. Major Beamer's crew chief came

A flight of 72nd Fighter Bomber Squadron F-86Fs returning to George AFB from a gunnery practice in the Summer of 1954 prior to leaving for France. After arrival in France, the 21st Wing would take gunnery practice at Wheelus AB, Libya. (credit - Larry Davis Collection)



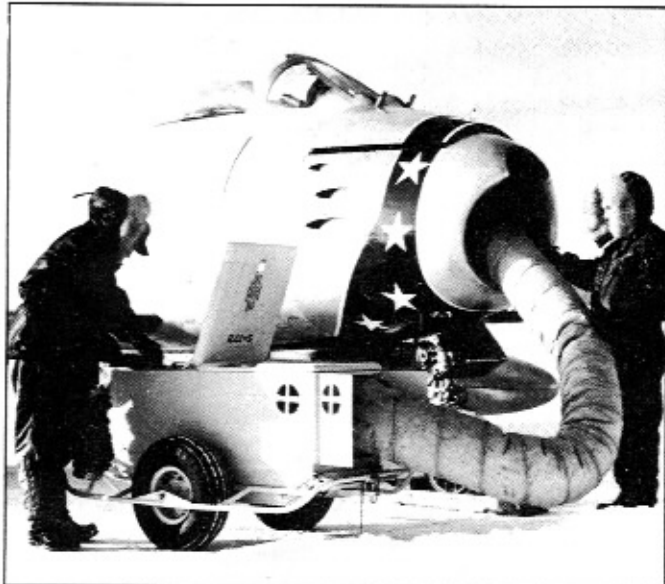


It's 13 December 1954 and the families of pilots in the 21st Fighter Bomber Wing wave goodbye to their loved ones from the ramp at George AFB. These 531st FBS pilots have a long 5,000 mile flight ahead of them. Final destination was Chaumont AB, France. (credit - USAF)

over and said, "Major Beamer said we should all go inside and wait till the snow shower ends." 24 hours later, it ended.

It took them two days to clear the taxiways and runways. The weather forecaster was asked several times about his definition of "scattered snow showers" the few times he ventured into Club after that storm! Before we finally got out of Loring, Beamer shuffled the lineup of his flight. Originally, we had a lieutenant colonel "headquarters-type" flying wing on Major Beamer, while I was a first lieutenant leading the element. The lieutenant colonel suggested to Beamer that he felt it

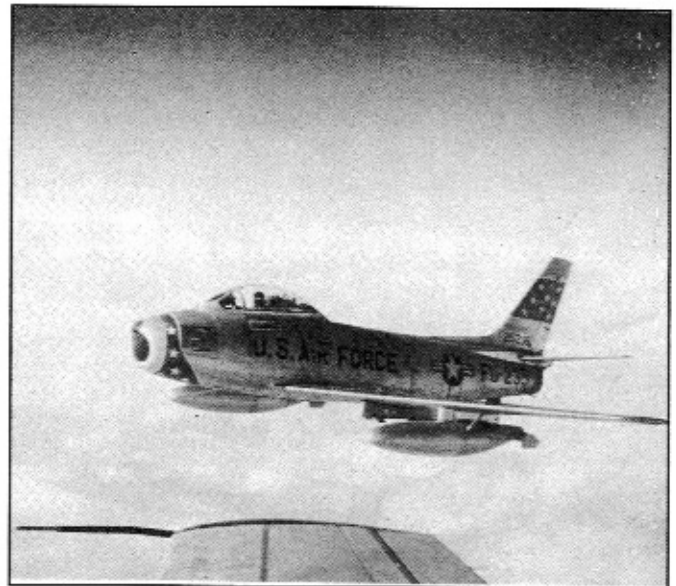
Goose Bay, Labrador. 416th FBS crew chiefs pump warm air into the intake of a Sabre following a heavy snow-storm that kept all the crews at Goose Bay for ten days. The temperature on the ramp at Goose Bay was in the neighborhood of -25! (credit - USAF)



might be more fitting for him to lead the element, and as Beamer told me later, normally when a superior officer suggests something to a major, the major takes the suggestion to heart. So, when we finally left Loring, I was flying Two on Major Beamer. I'm sure the colonel had been a very good fighter pilot at one time, but his years in staff jobs, and flying four hours a month didn't do a great deal for his proficiency. The join-up he made coming out of Loring didn't result in a mid-air, but it was a bit more exciting than a normal join-up!

I see by my Form 5 that we got into Goose Bay on the 30 December and departed there on 11 January 1955.

High over the Atlantic and enroute to the next stop on the 5000 mile Fox Able flight - Blueie West One on Iceland. Weather at Blueie West One was marginal and the crews were airborne the next day, bound for Iceland. (credit - I.C. Armstrong)





The 531st FBS Commander's Sabre on the ramp at Wheelus AB, Libya in the summer of 1955. Wheelus was where the USAF fighter pilots went for bomb and gunnery practice. (credit - Ron Picciani)

As I recall, there was a reasonable amount of "spirits" consumed on that New Years Eve. We knew we weren't leaving the next morning and, to be truthful, the 8 hours between bottle and throttle was not always adhered to in that era, specially by young fighter pilots - and some of the old fighter pilots as well. One thing I recall on the morning of departure is that I put my clothing bag on the wing while I was making my walk-around, it fell off the wing and the plastic shattered. I think it was something like 25 below that morning and the plastic got too brittle to be plyable.

We had been airborne only a short time when the colonel got an opportunity to show his ability as a leader. Four called and said his tanks weren't feeding. After he had done all the necessary checks to get them to feed with no results, Major Beamer told the element lead to take Four, return to Goose and get the tanks fixed. Beamer & I pressed on. The two of us continued to BW-1 and were lucky enough to encounter a T-bird when we broke out on the letdown, and its pilot led us up the fjord to the runway. The rest of the squadron arrived later on, along with our element after Four's tank problem was fixed.

We got airborne the next morning and the whole squadron made it to Iceland that day. We weren't quite as lucky with the weather while in Iceland. Referring again to my Form 5, it shows we left there for Scotland on the 18th. Iceland sure isn't the greatest R & R area, but I did luck out and encountered a Republic tech rep who I had known from Langley. He was a fun-loving bachelor type like myself and knew quite a number of the beautiful, blonde Icelandic gals. They certainly helped make the time pass a bit faster.

Upon arrival in Scotland, they didn't have adequate room in the BOQ's so we were quartered at a great hotel in Troon. Our permanent base in France was to be



An armorer loads a belt of .50 caliber ammo into the ammo box of a 531st FBS Sabre on the ramp at Wheelus AB in the Summer of 1955. Live munitions could be used on the Wheelus gunnery range. The 500# bomb will be loaded under the wing on one of two available munition pylons. (credit - Larry Davis Collection)

Chambley, but they were not ready for us, so, temporarily, we would be flying out of Toul AB. The squadron ahead of us had lost a plane going into Toul because of GCA difficulties (the pilot got out OK), so USAF thought it prudent to send flight leaders from the 48th FBW at Chaumont AB France over to Scotland to 'lead us into France'. In retrospect, this had to be a bit of an insult to our very competent squadron commanders and flight leaders. They sent some great guys though and we all got along fine.

Finally, we departed Scotland on 29 Jan 1955 and arrived at Chaumont AB where we were greeted with a great deal of enthusiasm and an equal amount of beer provided by the 48th FBW. The next day we flew to Toul AB, led by our own squadron commander and flight leaders. It had taken almost seven weeks to travel from George AFB to Toul AB, which is a long time to live out of an F-86! It was a very interesting trip and one that I don't think any of us will every forget.



'Willie Dog' Taylor shows how he got into position on a MiG in April 1951. (L-R) Lt.Col Glen Eagleston, Maj. Martin Johansen, Lt. Roy McLane, Taylor, and Lt. John Odiorne. (credit - USAF)



"BEEN WITH THE FOURTH LONG, SIR?"

FIRST DRAW WITH "THE PROFESSOR"

(We didn't get 'em All!)

by Colonel Martin C. "Joe" Johansen

When we got to Korea in December of 1950 no one in the 4th Fighter Wing knew a whole lot about the MiG-15. We spent many hours talking with some of the F-80 jocks who had battled the MiGs in the past month since they appeared. We learned that the MiGs were clobbering the B-29s along the Yalu River, and there was very little the F-80 guys, much less the Mustang drivers, could do about it. The F-80 pilots were courageous, but they had very limited success fighting the much faster Mig. That is why the 4th was now in Korea. The F-86 was the only logical choice to re-capture the skies.

Lt. Col. Bruce Hinton took the first batch of Sabres into Korea during mid-December 1950. Although they didn't know a lot about the MiG, they learned fast, shooting down several North Korean and Chinese pilots who had showed up on our side of the Yalu. Bruce's gang passed the word along to Col. J.C. Meyer, Lt. Col. Glenn Eagleston, Major Ed Fletcher, and the rest of us who would take the 334th Fighter Squadron into what became known as "MiG Alley". But the Migs were very elusive and things were quiet in the Alley for the better part of a month. Often we could see them forming up on their side of the river. But it was rare when an occasional brave soul, or 3 or 4, would even make a threatening pass to try and get us to drop our external tanks.

This changed quickly when Soviet pilots showed up. Suddenly the MiGs got bolder, appearing more and more frequently on 'our' side of the Yalu - large for-

mations of them! Their passes became more aggressive, and we got into scraps more and more often. Our guys now found it more difficult to score. These MiG drivers didn't make the same mistakes the earlier MiG pilots had. They didn't make those dumb shallow banks to evade us. Nor did they try to dive away from us, apparently knowing that the '86 could outdive them easily. They did have one advantage that they used often. When they wanted to break off an engagement they simply ducked across the Yalu, knowing full well that we were ordered not to follow. The MiG pilots were improving.

About this time we started getting reports of a single MiG, which would stay high above the madding crowd, all by himself. He remained on his perch and would only come down when he spotted a stray with no wingman, a common situation with the wild maneuvering during a big fight. In early spring of 1951 we decided to try a "bait" tactic to see if the Soviets were listening to our radio chatter, much as we assumed we were listening to theirs. The plan was for Lt. Col. Eagleston, nicknamed "Eagle", to take a flight of six up to the river, just below the contrail level, usually about 40,000 feet. Eagle and his wingman were in the lead, Captain Jim Jabara and his wingman on the left element, and "Ole Joe" Johansen and his wingman on the right.

The idea was to have Captain A.J. Melancon with another flight of four down about 25,000 feet. A.J. was to start broadcasting a panic "Bingo" (low fuel) and other

troubles, saying he was heading south and yelling for his other three flight mates to cover him. Obviously the enemy was listening and the MiGs took the bait. Soon enough, four of them were chasing A.J. Eagle, superb combat leader that he was, rolled us over and down beautifully, bringing us out right behind the MiGs.

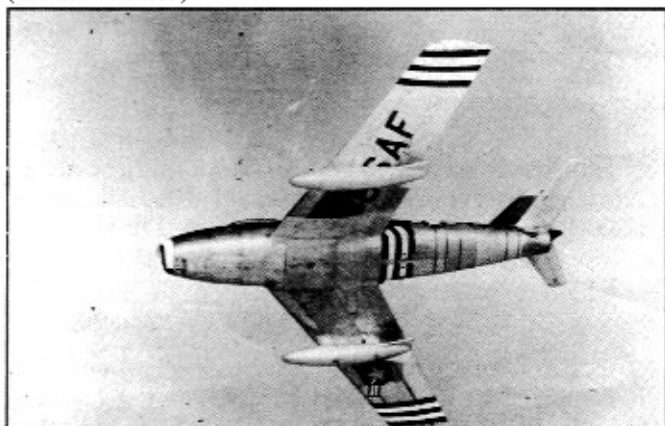
We were perfectly aligned for a quick kill. Eagle and his wingman lined up behind two of the MiGs, with Jabara and his wingman behind the other two. Ole Joe had no MiGs in front of him so I started to position myself and my wingman to cover the other four. Suddenly I saw a lone MiG climbing off to the right. At which time I said to this MiG "You're dead, you SOB!" — WRONG!

With tons of airspeed after the Split-S, I knew I could get this guy. That was my first mistake. We knew they were maneuverable, but really didn't know how much the MiG could out climb us. I decided to go up after him - second mistake. The MiG orbited to the left, apparently just watching my wingman and me. He threatened a couple of times, which caused me to begin a spiral upward, gravity notwithstanding, in order to keep my nose toward him - another mistake. That's when he made his first pass.

I pulled my nose in to meet him. He came in at a high Mach and started firing all of his "Roman Candles" (red for 37mm and yellow for 23mm). A hit by any one of those would make my Sabre mighty sick! I met him head-on, firing my poor little .50 calibers. But because his tracers were like a colorful stream of water, it was easy for me to press a bit of right rudder, knowing he was probably sighting on my air intake the same as I was on his. He was. The Roman Candles went directly over my left wing, as did the MiG. That's when I saw the four big red stripes just aft of his canopy. I thought, "This guy is a wheel!"

The MiG zoomed back up on his perch like a homesick angel, as I began to lose both airspeed and brains trying to climb after him. The MiG banked over and came down, all lined up for his second pass. Again I met him head-on. I really hosed at him with a lot of rounds, still with a bit of rudder. He fired a rather short burst, again passing over my left wing before roaring up high again in his yo-yo.

A 4th Group F-86A banks away toward the Yalu River and the waiting MiG-15s. Black and white ID bands were added for quick recognition in combat situations. (credit - USAF)



How deadly the MiG could be depended on the pilot of both the MiG and Sabre. MiG cannon fire took the aileron completely off this 4th Group Sabre in the Summer of 1951. (credit - Doug Evans)

F-86As of the 335th FIS on the PSP ramp at Suwon AB (K-13), Korea in June of 1951. Two of these aircraft, -276 and -236, would be lost in combat later in the year. Off the end of the PSP ramp, the crews can be seen extending the K-13 runway. (credit - USAF)



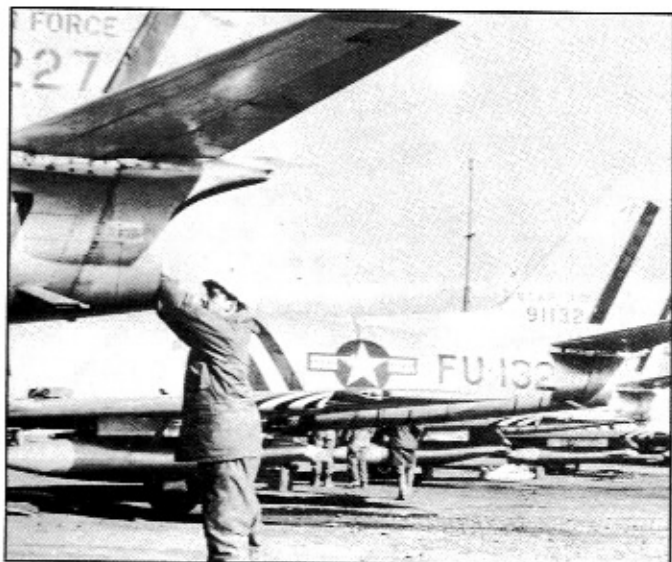


June 1951. 4th Group pilots sit in the cockpit on the K-13 ramp, waiting for the "Start Engines" sign that will take them into combat over the Yalu River in Northwest Korea. (credit - Irv Clark)

On his third pass, as my Sabre was shaking in a pre-stall, he made a classic curve-of-pursuit attack, and opened up on me from way out. As the bright stream headed my way I kicked in a little more rudder with a stick-pull - almost stalling. The Roman Candles passed just behind my vertical tail - and just over my wingman's canopy! Incredibly my wingman was still with me. The MiG driver again zoom-climbed up for his fourth yo-yo. I stayed around because I wanted this guy - BAD! Still one more mistake!

This time he came in with lots and lots of airspeed. Same song - next verse. He fired a long burst. A little bit of rudder and stick-pull into an even worse stall on my part caused his rounds to again pass slightly aft of my rudder and in front of my wingman. He sure must have had a lousy gunsight! Then came his fifth yo-yo and his great insult to me. As he started in with his

A 4th Group crew chief checks the tailpipe area for foreign debris on the K-13 ramp in the Spring of 1951. It was not unusual for infiltrators to get on the K-13 ramp and place rocks and other articles in the intake and exhaust of Sabres. (credit - USAF)



(L-R) Lt.Col. Glen Eagleston, Commander of the 4th Fighter Group, Brig. Gen. 'Po' Smith, and Capt. Ben Davis, pose for the camera on the K-13 parking ramp in late Spring 1951. (credit - Troy White)

speed boards out to slow down to pull more lead, the guy did a nice left-hand barrel roll! That's sort of insolent, I thought to myself.

At the end of the roll he opened up again. But as quickly as the Roman Candles started, they stopped. The MiG was out of ammo! He floated down toward me, passing just aft. I flung my 86 over to the right hoping for a canopy-to-canopy snap-shot as he passed underneath. I knew the odds of hitting him were like drawing to an inside straight, but I had to try. We looked at each other, canopy-to-canopy, for a bit. I could plainly see, underneath that funny little tankers helmet and behind the little mask that he wore, that this light-haired, bright blue-eyed jock was not Korean or Chinese. And for some reason, this knowledge made me feel better.

Still flying canopy-to-canopy, I'm wishing he'd blink

Crew chiefs and security personnel watch as 4th Group pilots begin 'Start Engines' procedures on the K-13 ramp. MiG Alley was about 230 miles from Suwon, or about 1/2 hour away. MiG pilots were only 5 minutes from 'home plate'. (credit - USAF)





6 April 1952 - A big day for the 4th Fighter Group. Congratulations all around as Lt.Col. Zane Amel shakes hands with Lt. Billy Dobbs on his victory. Others looking on are (L-R) Mike DeArmond, Dobbs, Amel, Al Smiley, Phil Colman, and Coy Austin. (Credit - Bob Dorr)

and get the hell out of there. I guess he felt the same way, especially since he was out of ammo. He firewalled the throttle, accelerating rapidly and climbing the whole time. I did a Split-S, and finding that I was way beyond "Bingo" fuel, headed south with my tail between my legs and rather damp armpits. Hairy though it had been, it was still a draw. And my wingman was still with me!

Returning to Suwon I found the word was already out that I'd had a real gasser with a great enemy pilot. The officers and IMs from both the 334th and 336th squadrons were gathered for the war story even before I got to Intelligence for the de-brief. It was all still fresh in my mind to say the least, and I had no trouble at all

This 4th Group F-86A crash landed at K-13 in the Spring of 1951. But the damage wasn't due through enemy action. Experimental explosive .50 caliber ammunition blew up in the breech of one of the Sabre's guns, which took out the main hydraulic system of the airplane.

telling what I'd learned from this Soviet jock. I named the MiG driver "THE PROFESSOR", for he had a true PhD in Air Science and Tactics. Various other 4th Fighter pilots encountered this guy later on, some of whom were clobbered by him. Bruce Ilinton got a few pieces of him during a clash after the Professor had punched a lot of big holes in Eagle's F-86. Someone later dubbed him CASEY JONES and that name stuck. After my debrief with the troops and Intell, my wingman stole up to me and quietly asked, "Sir, do you think we might have been a little too aggressive today?" I had no answer.

(Editor's note: "Old Joe", Col. Martin C. Johansen, made his last flight on 19 October 2002. He is missed.)

This large hole in a 4th Group Sabre flap was caused by a single hit from a MiG 37mm cannon shell. A little further toward the spar and the explosion probably would have taken the wing off. (credit - Bob Makinney)





AROUND THE WORLD IN (THE) F-86 DAYS

The Italian Air Force was one of the leaders in NATO use of the F-86 Sabre. Most of the 'day fighter' contingent came from ex-RAF Sabre Mk. 4s. But Fiat built a large number of F-86K Sabre interceptors specifically designed for use by NATO air forces. The F-86K was a close kin to the F-86D, except for having a simplified fire control system, and being armed with four 20mm cannons. In the late 1950s, Fiat modified many of the K models to carry the AIM-9 Sidewinder heat-seeking missile. (upper left) Maj.Gen. Siro Fossati (3rd from left), Deputy Chief of Staff, IAF, during a visit to the North American Aviation plant in Los Angeles in February 1954. (upper right) A Sabre Mk. 4 from the Italian Air Force aerobatic team, "Cavallino Rampante" in 1959. (lower) A Fiat F-86K with underwing Sidewinder launch rails, assigned to the 36th Stormo at Turin in 1970. The IAF flew F-86Ks into the early 1970s before replacement with F-104S Starfighters. (credits - Larry Davis Collection)



Patches Wanted
 or color xerox of any patches used by F-86 Sabre squadrons or flights, especially 'special patches' such as 335th FIS "Mach Riders", recon units, air demonstration teams, etc. For use in SabreJet Classics magazine. Contact: Larry Davis, Editor, SabreJet Classics, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709, e-mail <sabreclsx@aol.com>

F-100 Photos
 Larry Davis needs photos of the next generation Sabre, the F-100 Super Sabre. Any members having photos, especially those that flew the 'Hun' in Vietnam, please contact Larry Davis, Editor, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709, ph. 330-493-4122, or e-mail sabreclsx@aol.com

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