

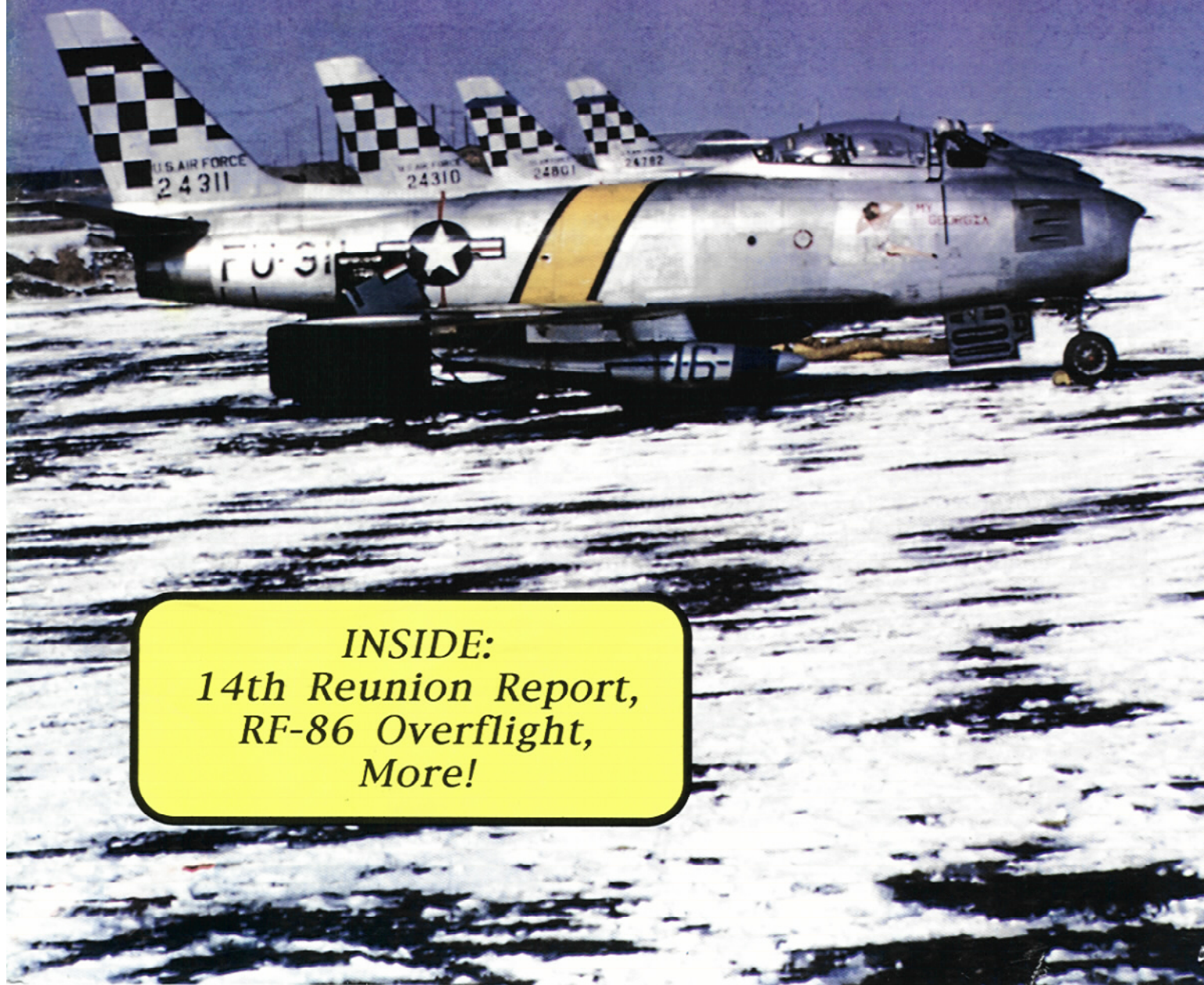
A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association



Volume 11
Number 2

Sabre Jet Classics

Summer 2003



INSIDE:
14th Reunion Report,
RF-86 Overflight,
More!

SabreJet Classics

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Korean War Anniversary,
More!*

(front cover) Four 16th FIS F-86Fs on the alert pad at Kimpo during the Winter of 1952-53. (credit - Dick Geiger)

SabreJet Classics

Published by
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The SabreJet Classics is published by the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association, PO Box 97951, Las Vegas, NV 89193. The F-86 Sabre Pilots Association is a non-profit, veterans organization, with membership limited to individual pilots who have flown the F-86 Sabre aircraft. The goal of the association is to 'perpetuate the history of the F-86 Sabre, the units to which it belonged, and to the men that flew the Sabre'. A second goal is to 'link Sabre jocks with their old comrades'. A third goal is to perpetuate an accurate, patriotic portrayal of our national, military, and Air Force history and heritage. If you are not a member, but meet the membership qualifications, you are invited to join. Application forms are available on our web site or from our Las Vegas address. Dues for one year are \$25, three years \$50, and a Life Membership is \$200, \$100 for those over 75 years of age. The SabreJet Classics is published

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The Presidents Notebook

The 14th Reunion of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association was another great success. A total of 594 members, spouses and friends attended. The River Rats, of which many Sabre Pilots are also members, dovetailed their convention with ours. But the main reason for the good turnout was that several unit associations also held their reunion within ours. Organized unit reunions included the 4th Fighter Wing, Class 51-H, 44th Fighter Bomber Squadron, 42nd FIS/71st FIS from Greater Pitt, 21st Fighter Wing, 335th Squadron, 79th Group and 86th FIS, 52-F, 339th Squadron, 54-F, and the "Recce Sabres". This was only the Recce Sabres second reunion since declassification of their mission. We will be doing this again in 2005. So let's start working on even more units with greater representation.

I would like to thank all the good people that helped out during the reunion. GREAT JOB! Next time I'm going to ask for a lot more people to help so that we can work in shifts and take some of the load off the people that are doing the work. I know we'll get lots of volunteers. Drop me a line.

Back to the 14th Reunion activities. The fifty-five Sabre Pilot golfers were joined on the Nellis links by twenty-three River Rats. The forecasted rain didn't materialize, but the wind chill was more than uncomfortable for the guys wearing shorts and t-shirts. The Director of Golf, Dan Druen, came up with some good prizes and everyone had a good time despite the unusually chilly weather.

Our tour to the Red Flag facilities at Nellis had a new twist this year when we opened up the tour to our ladies. We had 260 people sign up for the tour, but only 160 slots were available. At the 15th Reunion in 2005, we're going to try to have the

Red Flag tour split either into two days or in an AM and PM tour. Because of the popularity of the Red Flag tour, we always schedule it on a first come, first serve basis. The key is to register early.

We also tried something different for the ladies with a luncheon and fashion show. Instead of the Treasure Hunt. What started out as a luncheon/fashion show didn't happen because none of the stores would support it. Ardith Freebairn came to the rescue with a friend that sang patriotic songs and Ardith gave an informal but informative presentation of her experiences in China. The scheduled cocktail party went well. Fighter pilots as a rule, settle right down and even become sociable after a few drinks and snacks.

Glenn Carus gave us a briefing on the progress of the new National Air and Space Museum during the business meeting. The museum is on schedule and will open in December 2003. Two years ago, the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association agreed to donate \$10,000 to the museum for a tablet to be placed at the walkway into the new facility. The tablet will have the names engraved on it of each association member that has contributed \$100 to the new museum. To date 500 of our members have participated. If you are interested in joining us on the Sabre Pilots tablet, simply complete the form contained in this issue of *Sabrejet Classics*, and send it and your check to the address shown.

Earl Severe gave us a presentation about the Aviation Cadets Museum that he has started in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, which is close to Branson Missouri. He is looking for support. Check out his web site, <aviationcadet.com> for more information.

I tried assigning tables during the banquet this year because of a problem I had with a former friend at the 13th Reunion. Unfortunately that didn't work out well for everybody and I got chewed out again. (You can't win for losing!) Next time we will have one giant table seating

500! After adding extra tables this year we ended up with 550 seats for 485 diners. (As I said.....)

One of the patrons of this organization, James H. Campbell, passed away January 9th, 2002. His son and other family members sent money to the Association to buy drinks for the reunion attendees. We drank a toast in honor of their father during the banquet. Our guest speaker this year was Major General Steve Woods. He gave an inspiring presentation on the combat capabilities of today's aircraft, weapons systems, and Air Force personnel. Not enough words can be said for the excellent support we receive from the staff and management of the Monte Carlo Hotel. Every aspect of the food and beverage preparation and presentation for the two brunches, buffet, cocktail party, ladies luncheon, and banquet was superb.

However, some of the members were not happy with the room rates because they received a flyer in the mail that advertised a lower rate during our reunion. I negotiated an \$85/night room rate over a year ago. Since it was the same rate as we received for the 13th Reunion in 2001, I accepted it as reasonable. Room rates are based on occupancy. If the hotel has a lot of rooms, the price goes down. As the hotel fills up, the rates go up. If you can get a lower rate than that offered by the Association go for it.

On a personal note, I received a letter from Johanna Heller, saying that Edwin Heller had a disabling stroke and is in a convalescent hospital. Ed would like to hear from all of his Sabre Pilot friends. You can write to him at 12318 Alta Sierra Drive, Grass Valley, CA 95949-6531.

Also in this issue is a flyer regarding items available at the Flight Line Store. Christmas is not that far away and everyone needs a new jacket or hat - a Sabre Pilots jacket or hat. That's all I have. See everyone in 2005!

Jerry R. Johnson
President

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

Well as most of you that attended the 14th Reunion know, I didn't make it. Just one of those things that I didn't quite count on. I was really upset that I couldn't make it. It was my first 'abort' since 1992 when Hank Buttleman invited me to the Sands. But I will be at the next one in 2005. My apologies to those that brought materials and photos for me to look at.

This being the Summer issue of 2003, it is the 50th anniversary of the end of, let's see now, the "Korean Conflict", "Korean Police Action". Baloney, let's call it what it was - The Korean War. It didn't get the headlines of the last war, nor did it make the TV cameras of the next three wars. But it took the lives of thousands of fine young Americans, as well as many thousands of Koreans. And after three long years, everything ended up in almost the same position as it began.

There were heroes aplenty in every service. In the air, we had thirty-nine pilots crowned as "Ace", with eleven becoming "Double Ace", and three making "Triple Ace". Major George A. Davis, Jr. was posthumously awarded the Medal Of Honor, our nations highest award for heroism. On the other side of the ledger, we lost over 100 F-86 pilots in the war.

With that in mind, our nation took almost fifty years to recognize the veterans of the Korean War. Now it's time for us to recognize those that served so valiantly during the Big War. Yes, in case you are unaware, we do not have a memorial to the men and women that served during World War Two. I urge each of you to find the nearest location that will accept donations for the World War Two Memorial and give from the heart. I will. The statistics say that 1000 World War Two veterans pass away each day. It would be a shame if we didn't have a memorial to these brave sould until after the last one was gone..

With that I will close. Sorry I missed you guys in Vegas in 2003. See you in 2005.

Larry Davis
Editor

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FOLDED WINGS

Ben Emmert, January 16th 2003
Norman Evans, November 19th, 2001
Richard F. Gillis, September 2002
Harry C. Grafe, November 16th, 2001
Vincent E. Stacy, May 17th, 2003
Eugene W. Steele, February 27th, 2003
Glen R. Wilson, October 15th, 2001
Donald H. Zdunczyk, August 1998



F-86 'MiG' used in the movie "Sabre Jet." (credit - Dick Gilbert)

The F-86 'MiG'

We have received a lot of replies concerning our photo in SabreJet Classics, issue 11-1, of an F-86 painted as a MiG. The following was obtained regarding the "movie MiG".

The F-86 'MiG' was actually an F-86A assigned to the 3525th Training Squadron at Nellis AFB. It was one of several Sabres from the 3525th that were painted a light grey overall, with red stars to represent a Russian MiG for the movie "Sabre Jet", starring Robert Stack. Filmed in 1953 at Nellis, the film was released in 1954. The movie "The Hunters", which starred Robert Mitchum and Robert Wagner, used F-84Fs painted to represent MiGs, including the legendary 'Casey Jones'.

Member Paul Kauttu writes: "The F-86 'MiG' was used in "Sabre Jet, which was filmed while Boots Blesse and I were at Nellis. Boots, myself, Lewis Blakeney, Houston Tuel, and Jim Kasler put up about \$1000 (total) as a sure-fire investment (in the movie), but we never saw a dime in return. The producer ripped us off. The Air Force got one large TV set for the airmans club, and that was it."

Paul, Bob Kennedy, Paul Bubernak, and Bob Jones all flew 'missions' in the movie, including several in the 'MiGs'. Bob Kennedy recalls that "all of us (in the MiGs) prayed for an opportunity to have some type of an emergency which would force us to land at another base." Finally "one of the Instructor Pilots had a radio failure on a cross country in one of the 'MiGs' and landed at a SAC base where he encountered a less than cordial greeting."



F-84F 'MiG' used in the movie "The Hunters". (credit - Brian Baker)

(Now that would make a great story for the Classics if we had more details. We also would like to see more photos of the movie personnel and our members. Contact the Editor if you have anything to offer.)

I believe the photo of the Sabre dog in the cockpit submitted by Emil Kotalik, was "Pepper", Lt. Wackerman's dog. We were all in the 331st FIS at Suffolk County AFB on Long Island. The 331st was later renumbered the 5th FIS. I was a pilot in the squadron and remember Pepper very well. He was the squadron mascot.

Coy Wilkes

(Does anyone have other photos of squadron mascots that they would like to share with the members? Send them to the Editor, SabreJet Classics, at the address on page 2.)



"Pepper", mascot of the 331st/5th FIS ready for another 'mission'. (credit - Emil Kotalik)

It was with 'shock and awe', and a great amount of pride that I found a photo of myself on the cover of *SabreJet Classics*, vol 11-1. My original thought was "It couldn't be!", since the magazine is primarily Air Force oriented and I was not 'Air Force'.

However, small bits of evidence slowly evolved confirming that it was Col. Rowland's aircraft, with me standing on the wing. I looked at the cap on the pilots head - Marine Corps utility cap. The rank appeared to be the size and shape of a Major's oak leaf. The 'G-suit' was a full Navy/Marine suit and not the 'chaps' worn by Air Force pilots. I looked at the prominent ears and the big boots, both of which were very personal. It was me!

A little background to the photo. The aircraft was the 21st FBW Commander's airplane, Col. Robert Rowland, note the three colored stripes on the tail, and the date was 8 June 1955. It was taken at the end of the first gunnery camp for the newly arrived 21st FBW, at Wheelus AB, Libya.

Checking my log book, I found that I flew Col. Rowland's airplane only two times. Col. Rowland had had some problems with the air conditioning system and had to return to Chambley. He asked me to ferry the airplane to Chadereaux AB to get it fixed and I gladly accepted. I flew to Campino Airport, Rome, to refuel, then proceeded to Chadereaux. Those are the two times I flew F-86F-35 #52-5222.

I was 'on loan' to the 21st FBW, becoming a member of the 21st FBW Gunnery Team, then commanding the 416th FBS, which won the Wheelus Gunnery Meet in 1955.. It's still a bit staggering to see myself on the front cover of your prestigious F-86 magazine some fifty years after the fact. Thanks for the memories.

George Doderhof, Colonel, USMC Ret.

No. 2 Sq, SAAF, taxis to the active runway at Osan AB in Spring 1953. No. 2 Sq. converted from F-51D Mustangs to F-86F SABRES with the Rest of the 18th FBW in early 1958. (credit - USAF)



Major 'Dode' Doderhoff, USMC, on the wing of Col. Rowland's F-86F at Wheelus AB in June 1955. (credit - Gary Sparks)

From Bill Weiger, Webmaster

I have been busy moving our Web Site to a new server. I was running out of space at Yahoo and having difficulties upgrading the account, among other things. Seems you can't talk to 'real people' there, so I decided to move. With that in mind, please delete your old "favorite" and go to Sabre-Pilots.org to get to the new page. Once there, add that to your "favorites" list.

Jim Escalle properly guessed that the F-86H sitting outside the Lockheed hanger, which was featured on page 7 of *SabreJet Classics* vol.11-1, was on loan to Lockheed as a chase aircraft for the F-104S Starfighter program. The F-104S was the primary aircraft of the Italian Air Force during the 1960s and 70s.





President Jerry Johnson gets ready to call the Sabre Pilots Business Meeting to order, where he introduced the new slate of officers.

AFTER-ACTION REPORT FROM THE 14TH REUNION

by The Staff

(photos courtesy of Dean Juhlin, Jim Ramsey, and Bill Haynes. Thanks Guys!)

Although the 14th Reunion of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association was another complete success, it almost started out with a disaster. Sunday morning, the first actual day of the 14th Reunion, President Jerry Johnson received a call from Dee Harper, Chairman Emeritus of the Association. Dee felt like hell and his heart was jumping out of his chest. Dee said he felt so bad and that he might not make the start of the reunion.

Jerry calmly told Dee to "stop talking to me, call 9-1-1, and get your ass to the hospital!" Jerry then talked with Dee's daughter who then called the paramedics who rushed Dee to the hospital. Luckily, it was not a heart attack. Typically, Dee had overextended his body working on the reunion and was suffering from exhaustion. The hospital inserted a pacemaker and brought Dee's heart back to a normal rhythm. Dee went home at the end of the week, missing the entire 14th Reunion. He was sorely missed.

Despite the shock surrounding Dee Harper's condition, the 14th Reunion opened at 2 pm Sunday at the Monte

Carlo Hotel. The spacious and glamorous Hospitality Suite at the Monte Carlo Hotel was always kept neat and clean by the staff of the hotel and our association.



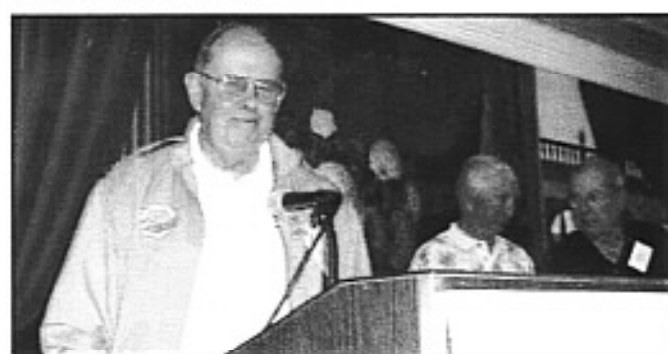
Carlo Hotel. When registration closed on Wednesday, a total of 594 members and guests were on the rolls. The \$55 registration fee brought every member a Sabre Pilots coffee mug, American flag lapel pin, a "Mach Busters Lament" audio tape, two brunches, a cocktail party, bus service to Red Flag, and seven drink tickets. It was quite a bargain in anyone's book.

A number of organizations either dovetailed or piggy-backed their reunions with us, including the River Rats at the Riviera Hotel, the 4th FIW, 44th FBS, 42nd/71st FIS, several pilot classes, the 21st FBW, and the "Recce Sabres", who flew the RF-86 on highly classified missions. Each group had their own table at the banquet.

A new feature for the women this year was supposed to be a fashion show at the ladies luncheon. But none of the stores wanted to participate. Instead, Ardith Freebairn gave a very entertaining talk about her experiences in China.

John Lowery accompanied a group of relatives of Korean War POW/MIAs in the Hospitality Suite every day. This group of fine people talked with any and all regarding their (still) missing loved ones.

President Jerry Johnson at the podium ready to introduce Glenn Carus, who gave a short talk about the Smithsonian 'tablet'.





A happy group of members and spouses at a table during the Monday Brunch. Two brunches were held in addition to a buffet supper and the banquet.

Freebairn gave a very entertaining talk about her experiences in China.

John Lowery accompanied a group of relatives of Korean War POW/MIAs in the Hospitality Suite every day. This group of fine people talked with any and all regarding their (still) missing loved ones.

There were two major events that took place outside the confines of the Monte Carlo - a trip to the Red Flag facilities at Nellis, and the golf tournament. Over 260 people signed up for the 160 space Red Flag tour. Many went away disappointed but understanding. We're looking at possibly running two separate tours at the next reunion, to accommodate twice as many members. The golf tournament saw 55 of our members, and 23 River Rats, hit the links at Nellis.

Two important meetings were held during the reunion. Board Chairman Dan Druen called a meeting of the Board of Directors on Monday. Following a report on the association finances, President Jerry Johnson informed the Board that the Association had 1914 active members, of which 188 were delinquent in their dues. The Board approved a new \$100.00 Life Membership fee for all members over the age of 75. Glenn Carus talked about the Smithsonian Museum opening scheduled for December 2003. Our Association has over 500 members already penciled in on the 'tablet' which will be at the entrance. Those interested in getting their names on the 'tablet' can apply using the form enclosed in this issue of *SabreJet Classics*.

The powers that be - (L-R) Lon Walter - Director, Dan Druen - Chairman of the Board, and and Director Bruce Hinton, Past President of our association.



(L-R) Hoot Gibson, Doris and Lon Walter, and Jim Ramsey in the Hospitality Suite. You should smile a little more Lon.

The Membership Meeting was called to order by President Johnson on Wednesday morning. President Johnson then introduced the new slate of Officers and new Board of Directors. The new Board includes Dan Druen - Chairman, and Directors Bruce Hinton, Pat Hughes, Bob Matasick, Bob Slater, Lloyd Ulrich, and Lon Walter. The new slate of Association officers includes President Jerry Johnson for a second term, Bob Smith as Vice President, and Rich Geiger as Treasurer. Larry Davis, Editor of the *SabreJet Classics* magazine, Bill Weiger will continue as Webmaster, Diane Weiland as Secretary, and Polly Winesett as Data Processor. An updated list of e-mail addresses is on page 4 of this issue of *SabreJet Classics*.

Rich Geiger, Treasurer, reported the Association had a balance of \$239,000.00 at the beginning of the 14th Reunion. Mike Freebairn reported that \$55,000.00 worth of Flight Line Sales merchandise was available, but jackets would only be available in blue. Shirts still come in red, white, or blue. Glenn Carus gave his report on the Smithsonian, and Earl Severe gave a presentation on the Aviation Cadet Museum, along with a plea for donations to finish the project.

The banquet was held on Wednesday evening and had an especially patriotic theme due to the fact that our brothers-in-arms were facing combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Following the Nellis Color Guard's presentation of the colors, President Jerry Johnson then offered a toast to all our departed comrades, to the ladies, to President George W. Bush, and to all our troops

A pretty "volunteer" helping out with the Counrty Store. The many boxes contain association shirts, hats, and jackets - all at a reasonable cost.





involved in the ongoing combat around the world.

A sumptuous meal was again provided by Carolyn Welch, Catering Manager at the Monte Carlo, which was topped off by a dessert that was almost too pretty



Action at the Country Store. (L) Dick Geiger counts the money, while (R) Andy Olman checks out the merchandise.

(L-R) Andy Meyer, Jim Ramsey, Mort Mumma, and Bob Gilliland share old memories in the Hospitality Suite. Many old friends held unit mini-reunions within the 14th Sabre Pilots Reunion.

to eat - but everyone did! Our speaker was Major General Stephen G. Woods, Commander of the Air Force Weapons Center at Nellis, who gave an informative talk on new aircraft and systems being used in the skies over Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as things coming in the future of military aviation. President Johnson presented him with a model of the F-86 Sabre, which

The line forms at the left during the Banquet. The food was outstanding as always, and no one left the table hungry.





President Jerry Johnson introduces Carolyn Welch, Catering Manager for the Monte Carlo, to the enthusiastic crowd at the banquet.



Dick and Helga Geiger during the banquet. Dick is the Treasurer of our association.

the general said would adorn his desk until his retirement.

With that, the banquet broke up into small individual parties. But not before the announcement that everyone had waited for - the 15th Reunion of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association will be held in 2005 in Las Vegas. I have already cleared my calendar for the entire month of April for that year. See you there!

(L-R) Dean and Babbette Juhlin, and Connie and David Jones enjoy the banquet at the 14th Reunion.



(L-R) Jim Ramsey, Bob Gilliland, and Curt Burns share a moment in the Nellis AFB Operations Center during the 14th Reunion.

The bar was always doing a brisk business. Each reunion attendee received coupons for six free drinks of his choice.





(L-R) Hoot Gibson, Major General Stephen Wood, and Ralph Parr are all smiles following the banquet. Maj.Gen. Wood was the Guest Speaker for the banquet.



(L-R) Lefty Frizzell, Bob Brackett, and Earl 'Snake' Pitts at the banquet.



Major General Stephen Wood shares a thought with Jerry Johnson as Dan Druen and Bruce Hinton listen in.



(L-R) Lon Walter, Major General Stephen Wood, and Dean Juhlin get together after the banquet. Maj. Gen. Wood gave a nice presentation on the Air Force of today and tomorrow.

IT'S COMING!!

15th Sabre Pilots Reunion in 2005
at the Monte Carlo Hotel, Las Vegas.
Make your plans NOW!!

Overflight

Col LaVerne H. Griffin

My part in the tactical reconnaissance missions involving overflight of denied territory began in June 1953. I was assigned to the 15th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron operating out of K-14 (Kimp'o) Air Base near Seoul, Korea. One thing I remember that occurred just before the cease-fire was the day Vice President Richard Nixon visited our unit. I am sure that he was sent over by President Eisenhower to see what was going on, because Ike had pledged during the presidential campaign that, if elected, he would go to Korea with the intention of ending the war. It was my job to brief the Vice President on the capabilities of the RF-86. One of his questions was, "Son, what do you need this airplane for?" This was a fair question since the rest of the squadron consisted of straight-wing RF-80A's. I replied, "Well, if we get caught up there, we can get away from anything they have because the 86 is faster."

It is difficult for anyone today to understand the tension existing in the world at that time, the polarization developing into two armed camps; democracy vs. communism. Tensions were not only high in the Far East, but throughout Western Europe as well. The Soviets had the Hydrogen bomb and they were building more modern bombers capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Their action was an omen of aggression and NATO was only just developing as a viable counter force to huge Soviet armies in Europe. We did not know whether communist efforts to expand would break out anew in the Far East or in Europe. It was with this understanding of communist expansionism threatening us and our allies and perhaps our very survival that strategic planners decided that we must know much more about the Soviet and Chinese capabilities. If all out war became a reality our bomber forces in Strategic Air Command needed to know not only the enemy order of battle, but also their radar capabilities, in range, altitude, as well as operational frequencies. SAC needed to know how to jam those frequencies and be



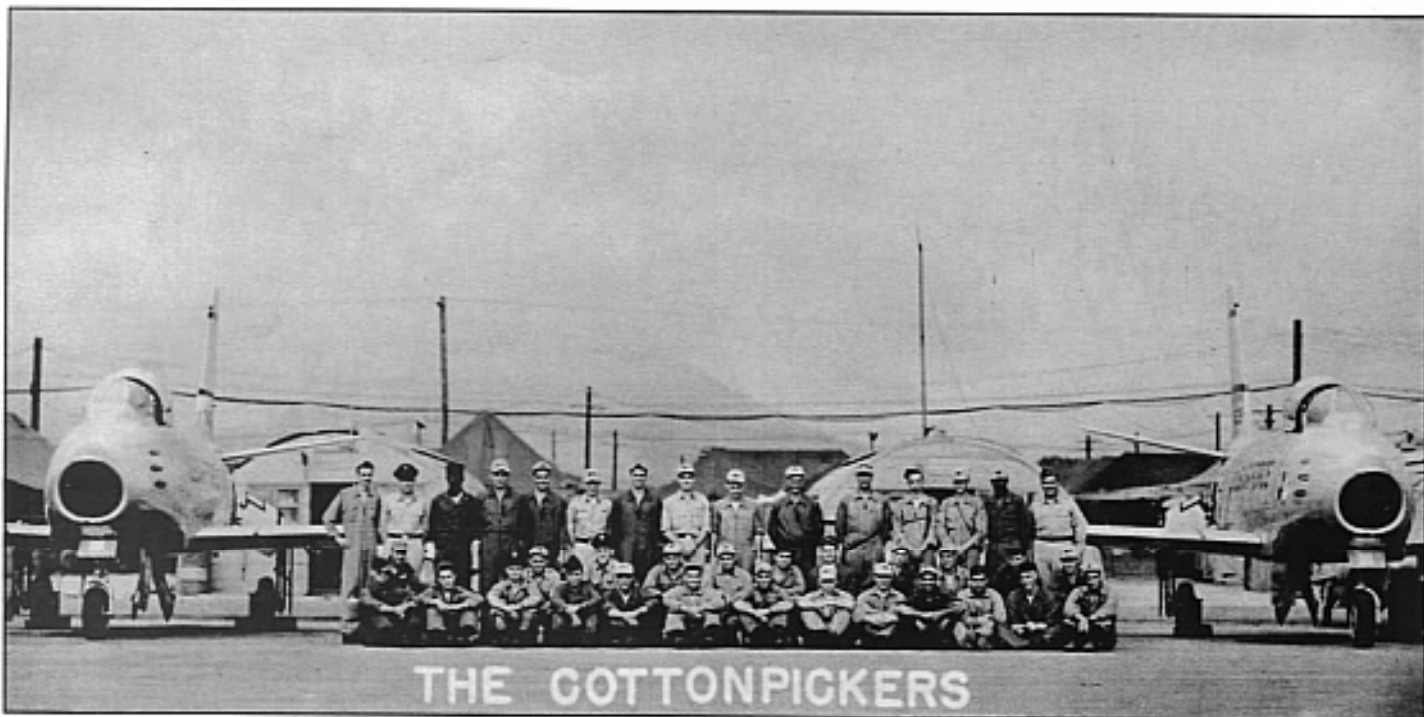
knowledgeable of the best avenues of penetration.

It was then decided at the highest level - I later learned it was from the President himself - that we would be launched on Top Secret overflight missions; first over the Vladivostok area, later to places like Port Arthur, Dairen, Shanghai, Mukden, Khabarovsk and Soviet submarine pens. As the Squadron Operations Officer and the most experienced RF-86 pilot in the unit, I was designated to select pilots and plan for a maximum-range Top Secret mission, but for the time being, given only the distance that the mission would require. Before we could fly the mission, we had to fly practice missions locally, using the same distances we would be required to cover on the actual flight. This would allow us to check our cruise-control procedures, power settings, and included dropping all external tanks at

ASHTRAY RF-86s had the camera suite from the RF-86A installed on an F-86F airframe. The ASHTRAY airplanes flew well into 1954 although obsolesced by the new HAYMAKER RF-86F. (credit - Larry Davis Collection)

A pair of RF-86F ASHTRAY Sabres on the ramp at Kimp'o in the Summer of 1953.





The 15th TRS "The Cottonpickers" pose for a unit photo between a pair of ASHTRAY RF-86Fs on the Kimpo ramp in July 1953. The 6408th MS modified 5 F-86Fs to ASHTRAY configuration at Tachikawa. (credit - Larry Davis Collection)

the appropriate times to determine how long we could remain airborne and still have minimum fuel for landing. We practiced this profile over the Sea of Japan a few times, recording data and determining that we could indeed complete the mission in this newer, but somewhat restricted model RF-86 aircraft. About the only change required for optimum performance had the North American Tech Reps installing 'rats' and 'mice' in the engine to increase the tailpipe temperature so as to maintain 6400° above 40,000 feet.

My last profile mission; 14 March 54, was for two hours and fifty minutes. Our actual mission was planned for two hours and forty minutes. I told the Intelligence planners that we could make it with fuel to spare.

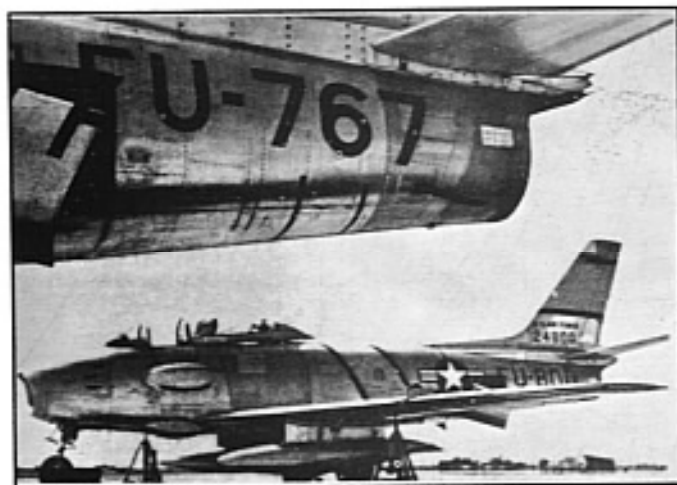
An RF-80A from the 45th TRS at Kimpo in 1952. Although the RF-80A/C could evade the MiG, they were not suitable for deep penetration missions due to their slow speed. (credit - Stanley Newmann)



On the first mission we were briefed by a couple of field-grade planners that we would stage out of Korea, over the Sea of Japan, into the Vladivostok area of the Soviet Union. We would obtain photos of select air bases, and recover into Misawa Air Base in Northern Japan. The briefing included the targets, the route to be flown, the altitudes to fly, and of course the cover stories we had to have if we were forced to come down in Russian territory. Being much younger then, and eager, I wanted to believe these stories. In reflection the stories seem pretty weak. I doubt if the enemy would have believed that we were lost while flying a local mission out of Nagoya, Japan, some 300 miles to the south; especially since we were wearing 'poopie suits', those rubber exposure suits almost guaranteed to keep you alive thirty minutes longer in ice cold water in case of a ditching at sea.

A detachment of two RB-45C Tornados was assigned to the 67th TRW during 1953 to augment the long range capabilities of the 67th in monitoring North Korean and Chinese activities which couldn't be viewed by either the RF-80 or RF-86. (credit - Dick Beitel)





The 6408th MS at Tachikawa built a large number of RF-86F HAYMAKER aircraft during 1953-54, including FU-767 and -800. The Haymaker had vertically mounted cameras as opposed to horizontal cameras in the ASHTRAY aircraft. (credit - Larry Davis Collection)

Some smart electronic guys had calculated that the Russian radar would not be able to see us above 38,000 feet, so that before crossing the 40th parallel, we had to climb above 38,000, above which we were assured we would be invisible to Soviet radar. Our flight would stage out of Osan, Korea (K-55), where there was a long runway. We would top off all four external tanks of fuel; two 200-gallon tanks and two 120-gallon tanks, head out over the Sea of Japan and drop the 200-gallon tanks, which still contained some fuel, so that we could climb above 38,000 feet before reaching forty degrees North Latitude and eventually reaching 42,000 feet before entering Soviet airspace. We would carry the 120-gallon tanks until we exited the Russian mainland and at least 12 miles out to sea. No sense in leaving a couple of fuel tanks in Vladivostok that said, "Made in USA."

On the 21st of March 1954, six RF-86F Sabres departed Komaki Aerodrome, Japan, for Osan, Korea, about an

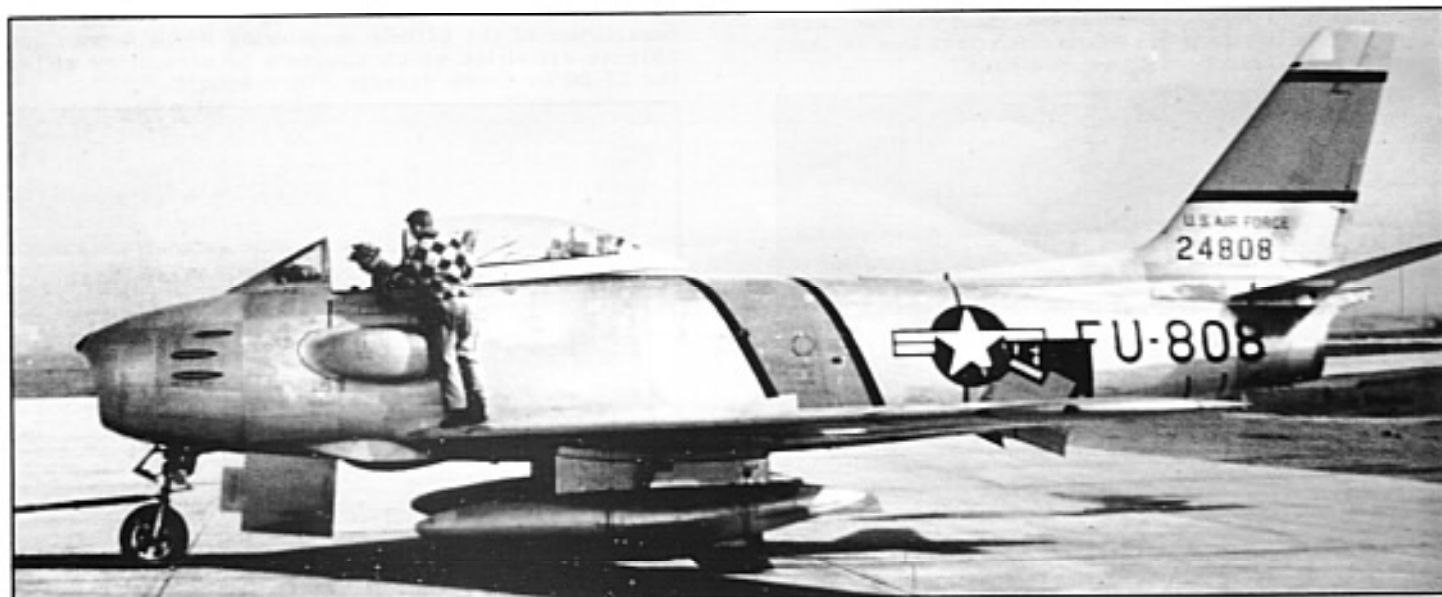


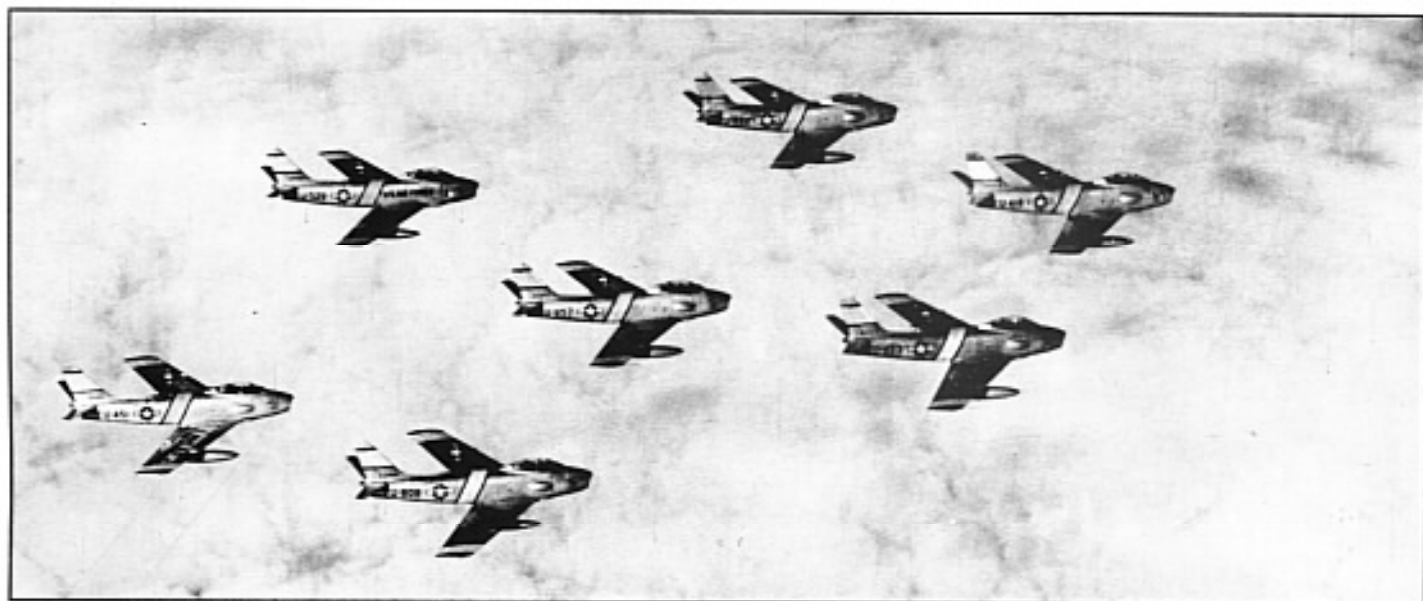
Lt. Charles Witmer was one of the 15th TRS pilots that flew ASHTRAY RF-86Fs in the Summer of 1953. What was the bayonet for Lt. Witmer? (credit - Charles Witmer)

hour and a half flight. The pilots with me were Lt Bill Bissett, Major George Saylor, Lt Larry Garrison, Lt Sam Dickens, and Lt Pete Garrison. Dickens and Garrison would be spares who would return to base if the first four aircraft dropped tanks and got to 38,000 feet without any problems. Upon landing at K-55, our aircraft were met and whisked inside a huge hangar so as not to be detected by any outsiders, such as members of the United Nations Inspection Team, who might wonder if these '86s with the bulges on the nose were legitimately in Korea!

Next morning was a beautifully clear day, and we checked our enroute weather and winds, refined the flight plan for the winds and briefed for the mission. The aircraft were towed out of the hangar and up on to some 2-by-6 boards and fuel added to the drop tanks until they overflowed. We cranked up the engines and taxied to the runway without delay; using a green light from the tower for clearance; there would be absolute radio silence on this flight, except for an emergency. We departed to the east, using a lot of take-off roll with a heavy load and headed out on course. The climb to altitude was uneventful and light

A 15th TRS RF-86F HAYMAKER on the ramp at Komaki in 1954. The bulges on the gun bay door cover the camera film magazine of the vertically mounted K-22 camera. At this time, the aircraft of the 15th TRS still carried markings similar to those of 4th FIW fighter F-86s. (credit - USAF)





Seven HAYMAKERS and a single ASHTRAY RF-86F over Japan in mid-1954. Although most historians state that relatively few (6-10) HAYMAKER RF-86Fs were built (all at North American/Inglewood), in actuality, there were at least 25 RF-86F HAYMAKERS built, and all were modified from fighter airframes by the 6408th MS maintenance crews at Tachikawa AB, Japan. (credit - George Clifford)

200-gallon tanks from four aircraft were jettisoned successfully over the Sea of Japan. I rocked the wings as a signal to close up the formation and we looked each other over, giving the 'thumbs up' to signify that the drops were clean and the aircraft looked okay. At this point, the disappointed spare pilots waved good-bye and returned to Komaki Air Base, Japan.

Four of us continued on in tactical formation, wingmen with their eyes on a swivel to detect possible MIG-15 interceptors. As we approached the coast near Vladivostok, the two elements split up as each element had specific targets to photograph. It was shortly after this that I heard the transmission, "Alabama!" This transmission brought a tingle down my spine; "Alabama" was the code word of our companion element for pulling contrails, which would be a dead giveaway to revealing our presence over the Soviet mainland. The codeword for our element was "California." I looked at my wingman, Bissett, and since he was not pulling contrails, I continued to press on over the Vladivostok area; nervously, I might add. Forecasters had predicted little chance of cons. I did not know it at the time, but the other element aborted their mission and headed for Misawa, Japan. We flew over the airfields at Vladivostok, proceeding as far north as Artem and exposed over 90 frames of film on several airfields. We had no airborne aircraft sightings to worry about, and we proceeded to exit the area out over the Sea of Japan, on course for Misawa.

Inbound to Japan we were to exercise the Japanese Air Defense Force to see if they could pick up aircraft incoming from the Soviet Union at high altitude. I would have to rate their effort a failure. Without the IFF on, they couldn't pick us up, and with it on they did a poor job of intercepting us. I doubt that the Soviets would have their IFF's on. At any rate we recovered at Misawa Air Base where we were met by a C-47, which took us to Tokyo where the film was processed and interpreted

by SAC Photo Interpreters. They told us that the results were excellent. We were not allowed to view the film, ourselves! But it must have been successful as the next morning we were summoned into the office of the commander of the Far Eastern Air Forces (FEAF), General O.P. Weyland where he pinned the Distinguished Flying Cross on the four of us. His exact words were: "Boys, I'll take care of the paperwork later, but here is a little something for a job well done." Looking back, we would have done just about anything for General Weyland because of the time he took for that impromptu ceremony. I believe he was just as glad to see us get back in one piece, as he was to get the photography.

I was the leader of the next two missions, which were in the same general area, Vladivostok, one of them on 3 April 1954, and one on 22 April 1954. On these missions we refueled at Misawa and flew the film down to Tokyo ourselves. I selected a few different pilots for these flights,

An RF-86F HAYMAKER rides above 'the cons' at 40,000 feet enroute to a target inside Manchuria in 1954. Officially, the F-86F had a service ceiling of 49,000+ feet; but 15th TRS pilots routinely entered Soviet air space at 54,000+. (credit - James Black)





The pilots involved in the March 1954 overflight missions to Vladivostok, USSR; (standing L-R) Lt. Sam Dickens, Lt. Pete Garrison, Maj. LaVerne Griffin, Commander of the 15th TRS, Maj. George Saylor, Lt. Bill Bissett, and Lt. Larry Garrison. Two pairs of RF-86Fs would go north at up to 55,000 feet, and photograph the target, then 'coast home' to Kimpo, refuel at night, then leave Kimpo and return to Komaki before dawn. Such was the mission of the Cold War Warriors of the 15th TRS. (credit - LaVerne Griffin)

my motive being to insure that all the qualified RF-86 pilots had a chance to get a mission and obtain a DFC for their efforts. My wingman on the 3 April mission was Lt Sam Dickens, and on the 22 April mission, Lt Frank Halstead. On the last mission we sighted an airborne MIG about 5000 feet below us as we were exiting the area. After determining that he did not see us I maneuvered over top of him and took his picture. Upon examining the film, the photo interpreter rushed out of the lab and says, "Do you know what you got on this film?" I said that I hoped I had gotten the targets, and he said, "No, I mean the airplane." I said, "You mean that MIG-15 that flew under us?" He said, "That is not a MIG-15, it is a MIG-17, and we didn't know that they were deployed east of the Urals." And that is how a 'lucky strike' extra picture became a valuable intelligence find.

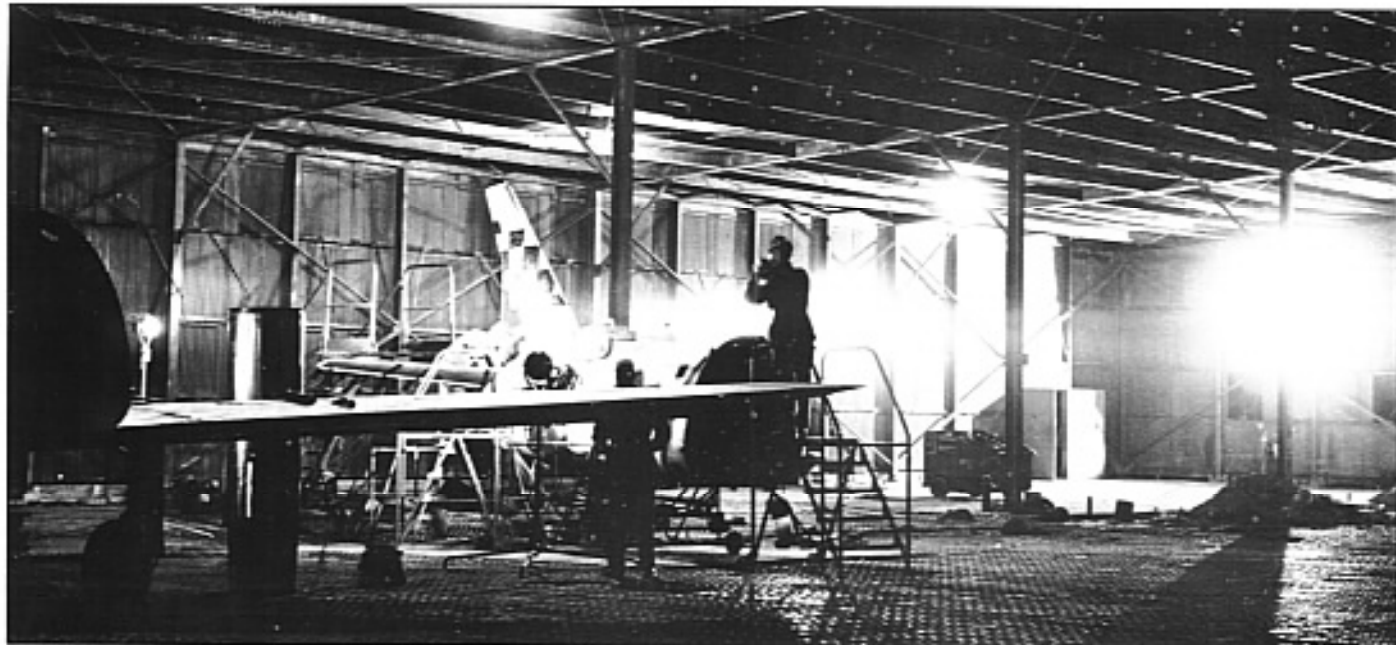
During my time at Komaki, I also flew a few test flights in the RT-33, which was being delivered to Nationalist Chinese pilots in the Republic of China on Taiwan. The airplane had a 172-gallon fuel tank in the rear seat that added much extra range, and the same camera configuration of the RF-80. It was a nice reconnaissance airplane, but not around MIGs.

Capt. Sam Dickens made this photo of Vozdvizhenka Airfield near Vladivostok on 3 April 1954 with the cameras in a HAYMAKER RF-86F. The photo, taken by one of the 40" K22 cameras from 40,000+ feet, clearly shows a large number of IL-28 'Beagle' jet bombers and TU-4 'Bull' bombers (the Soviet B-29 clone), plus a number of MiG fighter aircraft. The pilots of the 15th TRS flew these extremely dangerous missions "Alone, Unarmed, and Unafraid" - well at least alone and unarmed. (credit - DIA via Sam Dickens)

I rotated back to Shaw AFB, South Carolina on the 1st of May 1954 and thus ended my career as an overflight pilot. While at Shaw I received two more Distinguished Flying Crosses for the last two missions I had flown in April 1954. I know that all the pilots who were with me on the first three overflights received a Distinguished Flying Cross. I never knew if there were other missions, although I expected that more had been flown. But what was probably the highlight to a 28-year air force career was something I could not talk about for 46 years. I am glad that this forgotten episode of tactical reconnaissance is finally being documented, and will take its rightful place in our military history.



SCENES FROM THE WAR



Nighttime maintenance in the 51st Wing shops at Suwon. The maintenance gang always 'kept them flying'. (credit - USAF)



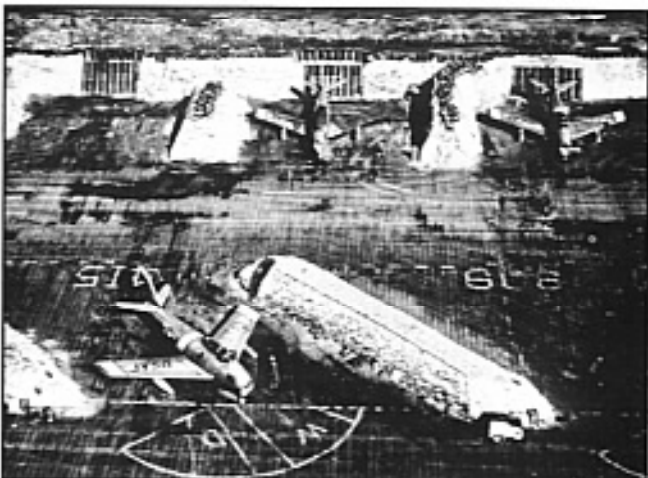
Now that's "nose art". (credit - Frank Tomlinson) No.



2 Sq., SAAF ground crews working in the rain at Osan, Spring 1953. (credit - SAAF)



Hitching a ride in an H-19 during SAR school at K-13 in 1953. (credit - Dean Abbott)



The revetments for the 80th FBS at Suwon. (credit - R.C. Hyatt)



Forget that apple pie and mom jazz, this is what the American fighting man fights for. Just check out the grin on Lt. Garner Snow's face as Marilyn Monroe chats with him on the wing of his F-84 Thunderjet in Korea. Luckiest pilot in the Far East. (credit - USAF)



Hauling bombs on the flightline at Suwon. (credit - Jim Carter)

North Korean Lt. Kum Suk No lands his MiG-15 in the alert area of the 335th Squadron at Kimpo, 21 Sept. 1953. (credit - Larry Davis Collection)



THE PRETTIEST SHIP

by anonymous

Down on the line,
The MiG-15
flies fast and fine
The prettiest ship down on the line
the MiG-15 flies fast and fine.

And on our planes
We paint red stars
For MiG-15s that land on Mars
And on our planes, we paint red stars
For MiG-15s that land on Mars.

We're climbing up
To forty-four
This Fox-Eight-Six ain't got much more
We're climbing up to forty-four,
This Fox-Eight-Six ain't got much more.

When letting down
You're sure to find
There's toksan MiG-15s behind
When letting down, you're sure to find
There's toksan MiG-15s behind.

I'm checking out
with thirteen chicks
Twelve MiG-15s, one Fox-Eight-Six
I'm checking out with thirteen chicks
Twelve MiG-15s, one Fox-Eight-Six.

The moral of
This story's clear
When letting down just check your rear
The moral of this story's clear
When letting down just check your rear.

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20 Nov 1952 - Lt. Glenn Carus smiles as he holds up
one finger to indicate "one Mig-15 down". (credit -
Paul Jones)



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Contact John Meinhardt, 9543 Bent Rd NE,
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Astronaut Sabres

SabreJet Classics is trying to find out anything
we can regarding the F-86s flown by Astronauts
such as **Buzz Aldrin** and **Jim McDivitt**, especially
photos of same or names of their aircraft.

Please contact Larry Davis, Editor,
SabreJet Classics, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW,
Canton, OH 44709, e-mail sabrecjsx@aol.com

Capt. Ralph Parr shows Vice President Richard Nixon
the controls in an F-86F Sabre on the ramp at Kimpo
in November 1953. Mr. Nixon also went across the
field to visit with the crews flying the RF-86F in the
15th TRS. (credit - USAF)





The final gun. 30 July 1953 - Clyde Curtin gets a royal sendoff from Foster Lee Smith and Ralph Parr, before he takes off on one of the first "peacetime combat air patrols". The trio of pilots shot down more than their share of Communist aircraft; Clyde Curtin was an ace with 5 MiGs, Foster Lee Smith shot down 4, and Ralph Parr totaled 10, making him one of 11 'double aces. (credit - USAF)

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