



# Sabre Jet Classics

Volume 11, Number 3

Fall 2003

*A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association*



**INSIDE:**  
*no. 2 Sq., South African Air Force In Korea,  
RCAF Ace, Two Bad Days In Korea, More!*

# SabreJet Classics

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Fall 2003  
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(front cover) "Bevkeneve", F-86F #52-4311 or 604 K in No. 2 Squadron, SAAF, on the alert ramp at Osan AB during the Summer of 1953 armed with a pair of 500# bombs. (credit - Paul Barranger)

## SabreJet Classics

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## THE PRESIDENTS NOTEBOOK

This issue is dedicated to the 50th anniversary the Korean War that ended with a truce signed July 27, 1953. The Korean War is called the "Forgotten War" even though it was one of the bloodiest wars in history. About a million South Korean civilians were killed and several million were made homeless. About 580,000 UN and South Korean troops and about 1,600,000 Communist troops were killed, wounded, or reported missing. We still have troops in South Korea and the North Korean dictator is rattling his nuclear saber. Same stuff different decade. Anyway Larry Davis has put together another great issue so sit back and enjoy.

The 15th reunion of the F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSOCIATION will be Monday, April 4 through 8, 2005 at the Monte Carlo. I chose this date because it is early enough to get good room rates and one week after Easter. The agenda will be similar to the 14th reunion with two brunches, a buffet, cocktail party, ladies luncheon, Red Flag briefing, golf, banquet and lots of embellished story telling. Please mark it on your calendar and plan to attend. As before we encourage you to have your unit reunions within ours and avoid the hassle trying to put one together on your own. The Registration form will be printed in the 2004 Summer and Winter issues of the *SabreJet Classics* magazine and available on our web site SABRE-PILOTS.NET

We greatly appreciate your help in sending your address changes. When you move and don't advise us of your change of address, the Post Office charges our Association an additional 70 cents. I know you are busy when moving, but help us out by keeping us advised.

Now is the time to look through the 2003 membership roster and make sure we have the correct data on your phone number, spouse, address, military unit and e-mail. E-mail your changes to Polly Winesett, pwinesett@aol.com

The date above your name on the address label indicates your dues date. We use this method of notification rather than mailing a notice to hold down work for me and cost.

You will probable be reading this during the holidays. Our country is at war and we have troops in combat. Remember how lonely you felt when you were half a world away freezing your ass off and getting shot at. That aspect of combat hasn't changed. Let the troops know you care and appreciate their work.

If you are one of the more than 500 members who paid \$100 to have you name on the F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSOCIATION tablet, you have received an invitation to attend the opening on Dec. 6, 2003. If you can make it we would appreciate a report.

CHECK 6 AND GOD BLESS AMERICA.

JERRY R. JOHNSON

### FOLDED WINGS

Charles P. Busick, April 18th, 2003  
Matthew J. Horvath, October 10th, 2002  
William (Bill) Lacey, July 8th, 2003  
Robert E. Lund, May 14th, 2003  
James B. Raebel, August 25th, 2002  
David A. Shinn, July 18th, 2003  
Tommy T. Tapper, December 31st, 2002  
David E Waterbury, April 2003  
Errol L. Williams, 2003  
Henry L. Willett, May 10th, 2003

#### 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.

## from the editor

Well here we are with another issue of your favorite magazine (I hope!). This will be the last issue of the 50th Anniversary of the Korean War series. There will be many more articles on Korea in future issues, but we will also be covering the other aspects of F-86 operations again, i.e. the interceptors, Guard ops, prototypes and test airplanes, etc.

Apologies - My apologies to anyone that was not identified or mis-ID'd in the 14th Reunion issue. Since I was unable to attend, I had to depend on others for photos and information. While much of the reunion article was correct, there were some holes. Mostly in not identifying the people shown in various photos. If anyone can help with identification, just drop me a note and we'll make the corrections.

Which brings me to another point. I have a new address. Actually, it's been my home address for some 15 years. But I've been using my old business address for all Association mailings as a convenience. Please make a note of the new address, which is as follows: Larry Davis, Editor, SabreJet Classics, 6475 Chesham Dr NE, Canton, OH 44721. The phone remains the same, as does the e-mail address. The Cleveland Ave address is still good, I'm just trying to get everything to come to my home address (finally). Thanks guys.

Another apology, this time for a tardy Fall issue. We were running a good deadline for this issue when wham, bang, my computer took a crap and destroyed the SabreJet Classics disc - completely. No one knows why. One guy said it was a virus that came onto the disc through e-mail and corrupted the entire disc. Thus I had to re-write every little portion of the new issue, including all the new stories that are enclosed. But we made it, albeit a bit late.

Finally, you're probably wondering what that F9F Panther is doing on page 19. Well, it was the only Christmas greeting I still had. I know you guys have some F-86 unit greeting cards in your foot lockers. Please forward them to me so I can get them photo copied for use in future years. However, the 1st Marine Air Wing in Korea is to be congratulated for the nice Christmas greeting. At least it wasn't a bomber!

Needs - My stock of new stories and photo materials is starting to run low. You'll notice that two of the three stories were written by your editor. Not that I mind, but I know you guys have stories and photos that haven't been seen. And I want to see them as much as you guys do. I'm in great need of stories on USAF fighter-bomber units. I'm also quite low on stories about the Guard. We do have a decent

backlog of Korea stories but we can always use more. And I'd love to hear from some of you guys that flew test versions of the F-86 in any variant, or tests of things like inflight refueling, weapons tests, unusual deployments, aerobatic teams, both authorized and not. In short, send me anything and we'll work with it and you to get it in print. I once took three paragraphs a guy sent me and worked it into a 6 page article!

Lastly, a reminder of two things. First, look at the address label on this issue. There's a small number above your name. That's the code of when you dues are due. If it's less than today's date, you owe. If it's a future date, you don't. Second thing to remember is that the 15th Reunion is set for April 4th through the 7th 2005 at the Monte Carlo in Las Vegas. Start making plans to attend. I don't plan to miss that one. See you there

Larry Davis

Editor

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**15th Reunion of the F-86 Pilots Assn. At the Monte Carlo Hotel, Las Vegas,, April 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th, 2005. - Make your plans now.**

**KOREAN WAR COTTONPICKERS**

If you served in the 8th Photo Squadron(Jet) or 15th Recon Sq during the Korean War, you're invited to join a Wednesday chat group between 8-9pm Central Time. Keep up to date on your fellow squadron mates. Contact LtCol

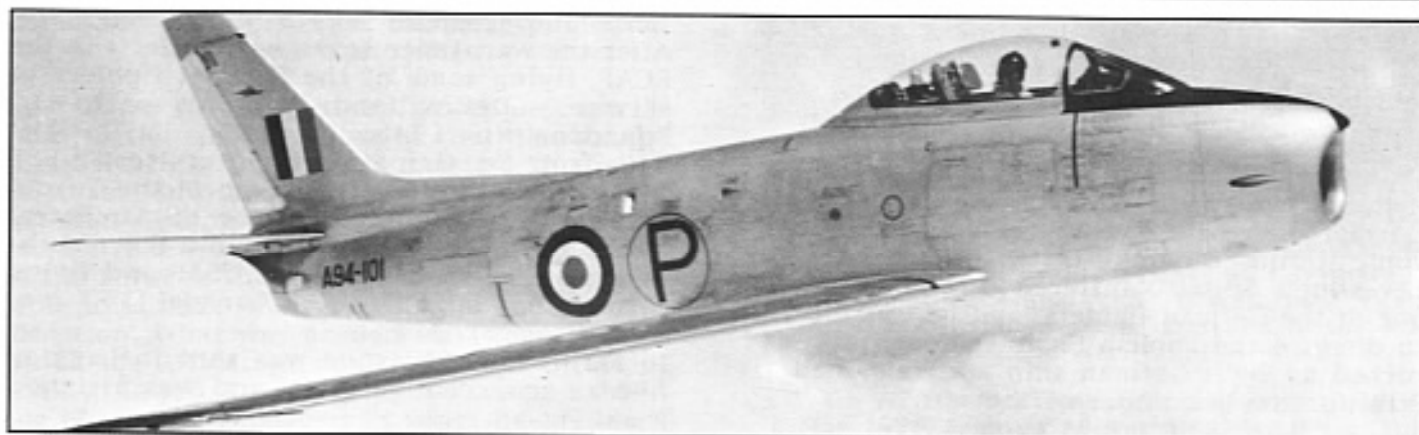
John Duquette at:  
wrangler01@prodigy.net

**50th FBW Reunion '04**

All members of the 50th FBW, from Clovis to the F-100 era at Hahn AB, WG. Reunion '04 will be held at the Marriott Hotel in Ogden, Utah, June 10th, 11th, and 12th, 2004. Contact Jack Lowrey, ph.

(801)544-0315, or e-mail  
Jumpnjacl@aol.com.

**Reunion notices** - If you have an upcoming reunion, or are just considering holding one at a future time, and wish Sabrejet Classics to post a notice of your reunion, we will do so provided that we receive said notice in time. Please allow about 6 months lead time for the notice to appear. If we have time to run your notice in multiple issue, we will gladly do so. And don't forget, you can always tie your reunion in with the Sabre Pilots Reunion.



**Sabres Around the World**

(upper) The prototype Commonwealth CA-26 Sabre during its maiden flight in August 1953. The CA-26 mated an F-86F airframe to an Rolls Royce Avon 26 engine that offered 7500 lbs of thrust - 1500 pounds more thrust than a USAF F-86F. (lower) A Commonwealth CA-27 Sabre of No. 77 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force is armed with AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles in addition to the two 30mm Aden cannon armament. No. 77 Sq. Sabres flew air defense missions from Ubon RTAB during the Vietnam War. (credit - Larry Davis collection)



# SQUADRON LEADER OMER LEVESQUE, RCAF ACE

by Larry Davis

Squadron Leader Joseph A.O. "Omer" Levesque was attending the University of Ottawa in January 1940 when his studies were interrupted by Adolph Hitler. He had been a 2nd Lieutenant in the Canadian militia but resigned to join the Royal Canadian Air Force following the Dunkirk evacuation. He entered the RCAF as an aircraftman second class, with the hopes of becoming a pilot, and was graduated from elementary flight school on 1 April 1941.

Levesque was posted to 401 Squadron, initially flying Hawker Hurricanes before converting to the Supermarine Spitfire at Biggin Hill during September 1941. On 23 November, Levesque was patrolling the Pas de Calais area when his flight sighted a gaggle of German fighters above them. These were unusual in that they had radial engines - they were Focke Wulf 190s. Levesque maneuvered his Spitfire into position and fired an accurate burst into one of the FWs, which began to smoke heavily and headed for the ground. It was the first FW-190 shot down by an RCAF pilot during the war. Later, Levesque would add three more German fighters to his credits.

During the breakout from Brest by the German warships Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, and Prinz Eugen, Levesque's flight met over forty German aircraft covering the breakout. At some point during the ensuing combat, Levesque's Spitfire suffered a fatal hit from one of the German fighters, and he was forced to ditch in the English Channel. Levesque was picked up by a German ship and remained a POW for the remainder of the war.

Sgt Pilot Omer Levesque in the cockpit of a Hawker Hurricane at Wellinger during July 1941. Levesque scored 4 victories over German pilots during World War 2. (credit - Omer Levesque)



Flight Lieutenant Omer Levesque shows two fingers representing his MIG kills in Korea. (credit - USAF)

After the war, Omer Levesque remained in the RCAF, flying some of the first jet fighters in service - DeHavilland Vampires with 410 Squadron in 1948. In early 1950, 410 Squadron participated in Exercise SWEET BRIAR in the Whitehorse region of the Yukon, along with several units of the US Air Force. Little did Omar know that within a few months he would be assigned to the USAF and flying combat in a land far from Canada.

In May 1950, Levesque was sent to Langley AFB as an exchange pilot, and was assigned

(L-R) Flt/Lt Omer Levesque, F/Os MacGraham and W. Bliss are seen prior to departure for Exercise SWEET BRIAR held in the Yukon Territory during January 1950. Levesque flew a DeHavilland Vampire jet in No. 410 Squadron, RCAF. (credit - RCAF)





The 334th Squadron alert ramp at Suwon is full of F-86A Sabres in the Spring of 1951. Flt/Lt. Omer Levesque went to Korea with the 4th FIG in November 1950, flying 71 missions with the 334th Squadron. (credit - Omer Levesque)

to the 334th Squadron, 4th Fighter Group, flying the F-86A Sabre. When war broke out in Korea in June, Levesque flew alert missions protecting the American capital from attack. In early November, Soviet MiG-15 jet fighters appeared in the skies over North Korea. The USAF countered by deploying the 4th FIG and its Sabres for a "short TDY to a land of temperate climate". The 4th was going to war in Korea and Omar Levesque, exchange pilot from the RCAF, was going with them.

One of the first things that Levesque contributed to the combat effort of the 4th was the identification stripes that marked the F-86s in Korea. In a meeting with the group commander, Colonel John C. Meyer, it was mentioned that with the similarities in size and shape between the MiG and Sabre, it was possible to mistake one for the other in a combat situation. What was needed was some type of quick identification device for the pilots of the 4th Group. Levesque quickly made a drawing of an F-86 fuselage and wings having black and white bands similar to the D-Day stripes that Allied tactical aircraft wore during D-Day 1944. Col. Meyer liked the idea but had the fuselage bands canted toward the front. All 4th FIG Sabres were painted with these black and white stripes before going into combat in Korea.

In mid-December, Omer Levesque was part of a detachment of the 4th FIG which began flying sorties from Kimpo AB to the Yalu River, just across the border from the MiGs at Antung. Although several pilots achieved victory against the MiGs, Levesque was not one of them. On 2 January 1951, when Chinese forces threatened to overrun Kimpo, the 4th Fighter Group detachment evacuated and returned to Johnson AB, Japan, to rejoin the rest of the 4th Wing. While the ground war continued well south of the 38th Parallel, Levesque and the 4th FIG pilots flew training missions and occasional air patrols over Ja-



(L-R) Flt/Lt. Steve Daniel, Capt. W. Carrington, Flt/Lt. Omer Levesque, and LtCmdr. Paul Pugh (USN) were 'exchange pilots' assigned to the 4th FIG during the Korean War. (credit - USAF)

A 334th FIS F-86A is refueled at Johnson AB, Japan, in May 1951. Johnson AB was 'Home Plate' for the 4th FIW between December 1950 and August 1951. Why the Sabre has no wingtip is unknown. (credit - Omer Levesque)





F-86A #48-260, which now resides in the new Stephen F. Udvey addition of the Smithsonian Museum, over North Korea in December 1950. Omer Levesque was one of many pilots that flew - 260 during the war and helped design the distinctive black and white ID bands worn by 4th FIG Sabres. (credit - John Henderson)

pan until 5th AF ordered his squadron back to Korea at Taegu. Then, when UN ground troops retook the airfield at Suwon, the Sabres relocated there and once again had a base within range of "MiG Alley", along the Yalu River.

On 30 March 1951, Levesque was flying as Red Two on an escort mission for B-29s that were attacking bridges along the Yalu near Sinuiju. As expected, a force of MiGs rose to attack the Superforts, and Major Ed Fletcher, Red Leader, called out "Bandits coming in from the right!"

Levesque: "We all dropped our tanks and Fletcher spotted two more MiGs at 9 o'clock and slightly high. Our element turned toward these enemy fighters, who turned away, and I found myself behind one of the MiGs. My MiG pulled up into the sun, probably trying to lose me in the glare. It was an old trick the Germans used to like, but this day I was wearing dark sunglasses and was able to keep the MiG in sight."

The MiG pilot, (many of whom were Soviets, as learned later), leveled off, not knowing that Levesque had stuck to his tail. The tenacious Canadian quickly adjusted his gunsight for a deflection shot and banked more steeply to turn inside the MiG. A corkscrewing dogfight had by then carried them down to about 17,000 feet. Omar's right index finger tightened on the trigger and sent six streams of .50 caliber bullets toward the MiG.

Omar continues: "I guess I was about 1500 feet away from him. I hit him with a good long burst and he snapped over in a violent roll to the right. Firing again, I raked the MiG from nose to tail and watched as it rolled end over end into the hills below. I must have hit



(L-R) Col. John Carey, LtCols. Don Nance, and Frank Rogers witness Col. Henry Sebastian presenting Flt/Lt. Omer Levesque with the Distinguished Flying Cross. 2Lt. Bill Gallup reads the citation. Levesque received the medal for the 30 March 1951 mission. (credit - USAF)

his hydraulic system because I saw the flap on his left wing drop down."

A flash of red flame and white smoke marking the funeral pyre of both plane and pilot.

"I started to pull up and saw another MiG diving toward me. I climbed back into the sun at full throttle, started doing barrel rolls and the MiG disappeared."

Soaked with sweat, Levesque noticed that he was rapidly approaching "Bingo" fuel - just enough to get him back to Suwon. But even after losing the second MiG, he wasn't safe. As he climbed back to a fuel-efficient altitude of 40,000 ft. he passed through the nervous B-29 gunners' field of fire.

"I went right through the B-29 formation and they all shot at me! Thank God they missed. I wagged my wings to indicate I was 'friendly' and they stopped firing. But a lot of .50 caliber shells had just missed me!"

Turning his F-86 southwards, Levesque could relax a little. It had taken ten years and two wars, but Omer Levesque was an ace at last. He received the United States Distinguished Flying Cross for the mission. Levesque flew a total of seventy-one combat missions with the 334th FIS before rotating home in June 1951. He was proud of the Canadians serving with the US Air Force and of the UN efforts in general. "We achieved absolute air superiority in Korea. It was just classic. The Chinese said afterwards that they would have gone over us like a steamroller if it hadn't been for Allied airpower."

*SabreJet Classics* salutes Squadron Leader Joseph A.O. Levesque, "Omer" to his comrades.





"Black Dick" and "Imp VIII", a pair of 2 Squadron F-86Fs, take off from Osan in a storm armed with 500# bombs and Misawa underwing tanks, bound for targets in North Korea during the late Spring of 1953. (credit - NAA)

## THE FLYING CHEETAHS IN KOREA

by Larry Davis

The United Nations went to war against the North Korean forces that were attempting to take control of the entire Korean peninsula. One of the first nations to commit major combat forces to the conflict was the Union of South Africa. On 4 August 1950, the South African Cabinet approved commitment of a fighter squadron complete with ground personnel to the Korean conflict. All members of this squadron would be volunteers.

On 27 September 1950, No. 2 Squadron, "the Flying Cheetahs", left Pretoria and boarded the troopship M.V. Tjisadane in Durban Harbor. The ship docked in Yokohama on 5 November and the personnel went directly to Johnson AB, Japan, to pick up equipment, supplies and a full compliment of ex-USAF F-51D Mustangs. Commandant S. van Breda Theron took four F-51Ds to Pusan (K-9) on 15 November and flew their first mission four days later on 19 November, before

moving to K-24, Pyongyang East, where they were attached to the 168th Fighter Bomber Group, 6002nd Tactical Support Wing.

The Cheetahs weren't at K-24 very long, since Chinese intervention in the war was rapidly forcing all UN forces to retreat back down the peninsula. The Cheetahs abandoned K-24 and set up shop initially at Suwon (K-13) on 2 December, then moved to Chinhae (K-10) on 17 December, where they were permanently attached to the other F-51-equipped unit in 5th Air Force, the 18th FBG. The mission of the Cheetahs would be close air support of UN forces along the main line of resistance (MLR), and road interdiction missions throughout North Korea.

By February 1951, the squadron had flown their 1000th mission. Two months later they recorded their 2000th. No. 2 Squadron was, indeed, an integral portion of the

Members of No. 2 Squadron., SAAF, watch as a flight of 2 Sq. F-51Ds warm up prior to their first mission in Korea on 19 November 1950. At this time, 2 Sq. was attached to the 6002d Tactical Support Wing. (credit - USAF)





'Cheetah' ground crews remove the protective covers from a 2 Sq. F-51D at Chinhae AB during January 1951. By February 1951, 'Cheetah' pilots had flown over 1000 sorties against communist targets. (credit - USAF)



Replacement pilots pose under the 18th FBG archway at Chinhae in December 1951. (L-R standing) 2Lts. K.R. Whitehead and H.T.R. Joyce. Capt. R.V Lyons, Lt. F. Gows; (kneeling) Lts. P.I. Norman-Smith and G.H. Krohn. (credit - USAF)

Cpl. Daniel Grobeer (L) and Airplane Mechanic Thomas Laycock, armorers in No. 2 Sq., are seen putting fuses into napalm tanks that were used against communist troops fighting against UN forces along the MLR in February 1952. (credit - USAF)

A 2 Sq. pilot taxis "Miss Maranuchi" to the active runway at Chinhae armed with 500# bombs and 5" HVAR rockets during the Summer of 1952. The main mission of 2 Sq. Mustangs was ground support of the troops on the MLR and 'truck-busting' the road net of North Korea. (credit - USAF)





18 Jan 1953 - One of the first of three F-86F Sabres assigned to the 18th FBG, arrived at Osan AB complete with SAAF roundels in place of the USAF stars and bars. 2 Sq. would complete the conversion from F-51Ds to F-86Fs in less than a month. (credit - SAAF)

UN battle plan for defeating the Communists in Korea. On 8 July 1951, Cheetah pilots struck the airfield at Kangdong, just north of Pyongyang. Following their bomb runs over the runways, the Mustangs formed up for the flight home to K-10. Suddenly the RT erupted with the exclamation "MiGs!". Four Chinese MiG-15s attacked the much slower F-51Ds. But the Mustang pilots simply turned into them again and again and the MiG pilots finally tired of the game and went home.

Nine months later, on 20 March 1952, a flight of Cheetah Mustangs was again jumped by MiG jets. This time the MiGs scored and the Cheetahs countered. Lt. D.L. Taylor's F-51D was badly damaged by MiG gunfire and he was forced to dive for the deck and head for home. His Mustang was last seen streaming heavy smoke. As Lt. Taylor headed back for Chinhae, the MiGs regrouped and attacked again. But the Mustangs just kept turning into the MiGs to avoid further damage. During one of these maneuvers, Lt. J.S. Enslin pulled his Mustang hard around and into the path of one of the MiGs. The

No. 2 Sq. Sabres sit on the snow-covered ramp at Osan in February 1953. The first Sabre mission was flown by 2 Sq. pilots on 22 Feb 1953 - a MiG Sweep to the Yalu River. (credit - SAAF)



2 Sq. armorers fuse a 500# bomb on the Osan ramp in April 1953, prior to being loaded under F-86F 619-M. "M for Mary" (USAF #52-4344) was written off on 19 May 1953, one of six 2 Sq. Sabres lost during the Korean deployment. (credit - SAAF)

MiG flew directly through his guns and Lt. Enslin pulled the trigger and watched his bullets strike the right wing of the jet. The MiG pilot promptly turned and ran for the safety of the Yalu River. Lt. Taylor's Mustang never made it back to Chinhae and he was listed MIA.

The Cheetah pilots had seen enough. They didn't want any part of MiG-fighting in the F-51. They wanted something that was on a par with the MiG-15 in every way. In late 1952, that "something" was made available to them in the form of brand new F-86F Sabres. In October 1952, 5th Air Force made the decision to re-equip the 18th FBG, including No. 2 Squadron, with F-86 Sabres. These aircraft would be brand new F-86F-30 fighter-bombers with the new strengthened wing that had additional underwing hard points for carrying bombs in addition to the much-needed external fuel tanks.

On 27 December 1952, No. 2 Squadron flew its last missions in the veteran F-51Ds. But problems with the Commandant J.S.R. Wells, CO of 2 Squadron, briefed other 18th FBG pilots prior to the last combat mission during the Korean War. Cheetah pilots flew 12,067 combat missions during the Korean War. (credit - SAAF)





2 Sq. Sabre 603-B (52-4315) taxis back to the parking ramp at Osan following a mission into North Korea on 2 May 1953. 2 Sq. Sabres flew interdiction missions against targets deep in North Korea. (credit - USAF)

deliveries of the Sabres held up the conversion until early 1953. On 30 December 1952, the 18th Wing moved from Chinhae to the new air base that had been built at Osan in anticipation of the arrival of the F-86s.

It would be no easy task for the South African air and ground crews to transition into the Sabre. None of the pilots had ever flown a jet, nor had any of the ground crews maintained an aircraft as complicated as the F-86. Beginning on 7 January 1953, a mobile training detachment for the F-86 came from Tsuiki to Osan to begin the conversion training. It continued eight hours a day, seven days a week until the task was completed. Several experienced pilots from the veteran 4th and 51st Interceptor Wings were transferred into the 18th to ease the pilot transition.

On 28 January 1953, the 18th Fighter Bomber Wing received its first three F-86F Sabres. One aircraft, F-86F #52-4352, carried a distinctive orange, white, and blue stripe on the vertical tail, the colors of South Africa. Commandant J.S.R. Wells (center) toasts his crews in the 18th FBG O-Club following the end of the war. No. 2 Sq, SAAF was attached to the 18th FBG from January 1951 until they returned to South Africa in October 1953. (credit - NAA)



rica, with Springbok insignias on the wings and fuselage. The other two aircraft had 18th FBG tail bands. On 30 January 1953, Commandant Ralph Gerneke, commander of 2 Sq., and Major J.S.R. Wells became the first two South African pilots to fly the Sabre.

On 22 February, the first mission was flown. It was a MiG Sweep along the Yalu flown by the commanders of the three squadrons in the 18th Group. Major Jim Hagerstrom, CO of the 67th Squadron led the flight, with Commandant Gerneke as no. 2, Colonel Maurice Martin, new CO of the 18th, was no. 3, and Major Harry Evans, CO of the 12th Sq., flew no.4. Although several flights of MiGs were called out, combat with the speedy Russian jets was not accomplished. Hagerstrom eventually scored 6.5 MiG kills to become the first and only ace from the 18th Group. He had earlier gotten two while flying with the 4th Group, giving him a total of 8.5.

The first dive-bomb mission was flown on 14 April, and the first close support of troops along the MLR, 2 Sq. crew chiefs refuel "Renkins", 601-A (52-4352) on the Osan ramp in May 1953. 'A for Annie' was assigned to the CO of 2 Sq., which was Commandant Ralph Gerneke at this time. (credit - SAAF)





Armorerers from No. 2 Sq. move bombs to "Naughty Nellie", 605-C (52-4313) at Osan in May 1953. Following the end of the Cheetah mission in Korea, 'Nellie' was initially transferred to another 5th AF squadron before being sent to the Chinese Nationalist Air Force under the MAP program. (credit - NAA)

was flown on 27 April. Sabres from the 18th Group, with top cover from 4th and 51st Group Sabres, knocked Radio Pyongyang (Ping-Pong Radio) off the air during the May Day attack led by General Glenn Barcus, boss of 5th Air Force.

At 1000 hours on 27 July 1953, the Korean Armistice agreement was signed, stopping the fighting in Korea. Throughout that final day of the war, UN aircraft roamed the skies over North Korea searching for targets of opportunity. The Cheetah Sabres were among the many flights attempting to minimize the Communist forces that were being jammed into North Korea before the agreement took effect. Cheetah Sabres flew forty one sorties on that final day. Major J.F. Nortje flew his 100th mission, and 2Lt Wilmans was the last Cheetah to touch down back at Osan. At 2201 hours, the Armistice went into effect and all UN aircraft had Flight Sergeant C.H. Can Vouren reads mail from home at Osan in the Summer of 1953. Sgt. Van Vouren was the SAAF equivalent to a US First Sergeant, but was qualified to fly. (credit - NAA)



Bill Grover stands in front of "Black Dick", 604-K (52-4311) at Osan during the Summer of 1953. Grover was the North American Tech Rep for the 18th FBG, which included No. 2 Sq. (credit - Bill Grover)

to be on the ground and/or south of the bomb line. Lt. Wilmans mission was the 12,067th mission of the war flown by pilots of No. 2 Squadron.

On 1 October 1953, No. 2 Squadron ceased all operational flying and began turning their Sabres over to 5th AF units still operational in Korea. The last aircraft were returned on 11 October, and all South African personnel had departed Korea by 29 October. The final tally for No. 2 Squadron was impressive indeed. Of the 12,067 missions flown, 10,373 were in F-51Ds and 1,694 were flown in Sabres. They had destroyed 891 vehicles, 44 tanks, 221 pieces of artillery, 147 anti-aircraft sites, 11 locomotives, 553 rail cars, 408 ammunition and supply dumps, dropped 152 bridges, and destroyed 9,837 buildings. Some 2,276 enemy troops fell to squadron weapons during the war.

Losses included twenty six pilots listed as KIA, with eight more who were taken prisoner and repatriated under Operation BIG SWITCH. Two ground personnel were killed in accidents. Of the ninety-five F-51D Mus-

"Sherdanor II", 601-A (52-4352), was assigned to Commandant J.S.R. Wells when he commanded No. 2 Sq. in the late Summer of 1953, as denoted by the 'command pennant' painted under the 'Flying Cheetahs' insignia. (credit - Dave McLaren)





Armorers load 500# bombs under "Glow Worm", 610-N (52-4333), on the Osan ramp in June 1953. 2 Sq. Sabre pilots flew the long range interdiction missions on or near the Yalu that were considered too dangerous for 5th AF F-80 and F-84 crews. (credit - SAAF)



Major J.S.R. Wells in the cockpit of "Sherdanor", following a mission in June 1953. Major Wells was second in command of 2 Sq. at the time. (credit - SAAF)

No. 2 Sq. pilots relax in the 'Die Suikerbossie Sit en Dink Klub' (the Sugarbush Sit and Drink Club) at Osan AB in the Summer of 1953. It's rumored that 2 Sq. pilots could out-drink anyone at Osan. (credit - NAA)

tangs assigned to the squadron, seventy-four were lost either to enemy action or operational problems. Of the total of twenty-two Sabres that were assigned to the squadron, six were lost.

So impressed were the veterans of No. 2 Squadron that they campaigned to have the F-86F Sabre become the primary fighter aircraft of the South African Air Force. In 1956, the South African Air Force began receiving Canadair Mk. 6 Sabres, flying them well into the 1960s before retirement.

*SabreJet Classics* salutes the pilots and crews of No. 2 Squadron, SAAF - "The Flying Cheetahs", for a job well done.

613 - G (52-4327) gets a new engine at the Tsuiki, Japan, REMCO facility in April 1953. 'G for George' was written off on 21 April. (credit - R.L. Ward)

Q-622 (52-4572) returns to Osan AB in July 1953 without tanks or bombs, usually a sign that MIGs were sighted. No. 2 Squadron Sabre pilots flew a total of 1694 missions by the time the ceasefire was signed on 27 July 1953. (credit - Dave McLaren)





The 35th FBS on line at Suwon AB headed by Col. Wilmot's F-86F "Niss Tena". Col. Wilmot was the commander of the 8th FBW in 1953 and his Sabre carries the colors of all three squadrons in the 8th Wing on the nose and tail - blue for the 35th, red for the 36th, and yellow for the 80th Squadron. (credit - Jim Carter)

## TWO DAYS IN THE KOREAN WAR

by Bill Demint

One week in late June 1953 was a very tragic time. First the R&R courier aircraft crashed departing Tachikawa on its return to K-13 (Suwon AB) on the 18th. I was supposed to be on that ill-fated C-124. Then, on the 19th, the 8th Fighter Bomber Group lost four F-86s and I flew a very eventful ResCAP. The crash of the C-124 was very traumatic for the personnel at K-13. All of the men lost in the crash were from the 8th FBG, 51st FIW, 319th FIS, or Army support people stationed at Suwon.

But I digress. My wife was supposed to have our first born in early June. So I hopped the K-13 courier flight to go to Japan so I could call home to find out how she was doing. (I found out that she'd given birth on 10 June to our son.) I then went to Kisarazu for a possible flight back to K-13 but there were no birds ready to be returned. I then hopped a ride to Itazuke, then to Tsuiki AB, home of the Sabre REMCO facility. Still no birds available. So I jumped on a C-119 bound for K-13, arriving late afternoon on the 19th.

Bill Demint in front of 36th Squadron Operations. (credit - Bill Demint)



We had an alert called "Able Able", which was normally called off at dark. And it had never been scrambled in anyone's memory. I was still in khakis, low quarters, scarf, etc.. I had volunteered to act as flight commander so the appointed commander could take the evening off. I was fully expecting to do little more than sit in Ops for a few hours and that would be it. Just like a hundred other alerts.

About dusk as we were playing ping-pong, the alert sergeant came out and said "We're a Go!" We couldn't believe it and thought he was kidding. But he wasn't, and we rapidly went to the flightline and took off. (We later heard that the 35th Squadron also was scrambled.) A friend of mine, Bill Coe, was the appointed flight commander for that night, but he had gone to the club and left Jim McDivitt in charge. However, Jim wasn't checked out as a flight leader. Bill later told me that he was near panic when he heard that we'd been

A C-124 Globemaster cargo aircraft similar to the one carrying personnel and troops from Suwon to R&R in Japan on 18 June 1953. The C-124 crashed leaving Tachikawa AB on the return to Korea, killing all aboard. (credit - Bill Demint)





36th FBS revetments at Suwon in the Summer of 1953. The revetments were constructed from old fuel drums with sand bag walls. (credit - R.C. Hyatt)

scrambled. Unbeknownst to us, Colonel Walter Benz, our Group Commander, had already nixed any ResCAP because of the approaching night and deteriorating weather.

But we didn't know that, and we proceeded under radar control to a crash site just north of the "Holy Land" (the MLR). I had no idea who was down at that time, but it turned out to be a buddy of mine, Vic Hodges. It was dark by the time we reached the crash site and when I made a low pass I could see that the wreckage was still burning. There was no sign of life, nor were there any calls on Dog Channel. So I rejoined the flight and asked to return home. The Able Able Flight from the 35th had already returned.

The radar directors took charge, guided us south and gave us a let down. Upon reaching about 1000 feet, just under the overcast, radar said something to the effect "Here you are". I said "Here we are where!" As a junior birdman, naive and green as grass even though I had 95 missions in the log, I hadn't thought to ask where the radar guy was taking us. In fact, we were at point Xray Zebra, near the west coast of Korea. The radar troops were accustomed to working with F-94 Starfire all-weather interceptors, and Xray Zebra was where they usually ended up for a GCA pickup and approach.

So here we were, not very much fuel left, at 1000 feet, dark as a coal miners butt, in hilly terrain, 30 miles from home, and not sure what to do. We didn't have enough fuel to climb up and make a let-down, nor did I think that we could get a GCA in time - at least not for all four of us. So I asked radar to direct us to K-55 (Osan AB), and I would find my way home from there. He did and we did. Fortunately K-55 was lit up and easily recognized in the black night. From there, with a "band switch" procedure, it was a piece of cake to get lined up with the runway at K-13. The radar controller was reluctant to turn us loose, but he finally did when we were almost on initial for the north runway. We switched to tower frequency and what do you know, they were landing to the south. Now we're in right echelon, at 1000 feet, in night weather, minimum fuel - and going down the runway the wrong direction!

Can you imagine my flight members thoughts? They



L-R) Herman Grammer with newspaper, Flt/Lt. Ian Gordon-Johnson, an RAF exchange pilot, and Jim Estelle. All three pilots were assigned to the 36th FBS. (credit - Fick Henderson)

didn't say anything then or later, but I've often wondered. They were flying night weather formation, following a leader who wasn't real sure of where he was. And we were now in right echelon and had to make a right 90-270 to make the active runway. The visibility wasn't all that good and Suwon was located in a bunch of mountains just to make things a little more exciting.

I can't commend them enough. They put on a very fine display of airmanship. Being able to maneuver like that in the dead of night and in weather, being low on fuel, and making that right echelon turn without any trouble is really something. I wish I'd told them how great they were. But I didn't. I just expected it. I'm not completely sure who else was in the flight that night, but it was probably Jack Cook, Henderson, and Harmer.

As an aside, my wife knew that I'd been in Japan and was returning to Korea. Naturally, she and her brother had some very tense times when they heard about the crash of the courier aircraft until the casualty list was published in the Houston Post.

I would like to thank whoever designed the 'band switch let down'. It may have saved all of us that night. And I want to thank my flight that night. They deserve rec-

Looking down from the Suwon tower at the 36th FBS area showing the Headquarters buildings, drop tank 'farm', and the revetments. June 1953. (credit - Bill Demint)





ognition. The 18th and 19th of June 1953 were tragic days that will remain fresh in my memory. My Form 5 for the 18th shows that I got 1+30, with 1+00 night, 30 minutes of it in night weather. The 36th Squadron lost four airplanes and three pilots on the 19th.

The following is an abstract from Vic Hodges' letter to his wife, dated 5 September 1953, the day of his repatriation:

*"This is a condensed version of my two month POW 'vacation' up in North Korea. As you know, I was shot down in late afternoon on 19 June. It was about 7:15 pm when I was hit by flak just after pulling off the target. My F-86 went out of control so I ejected, pulled the rip cord, and the chute opened. I looked down and Chinese soldiers were maneuvering under me in a circle."*

*"I landed in the ring and was captured immediately upon touching down. I was not injured and the Chinese treated me fairly well. I was shot down approximately 20 miles north of the 38th Parallel in the central part of North Korea. I was imprisoned there for two days. Then after several nights of travel in a truck (nothing moved during daylight hours), I arrived at a place called Sinuiju that was close to the Yalu River and Antung, a MiG base. I spent over five weeks there under continuous and intensive questioning."*

*"There were three other POWs close by in small rooms but I wasn't allowed to speak with them. I did manage to see them out of my darkened cell quite often. In early August we were herded onto another truck and rode to the East for about 14 hours. We arrived at a POW camp by the Yalu River. I was in the Camp Number 2 Annex. We were kept separated from the other POWs for two nights and a day. Upon joining the group, we were told by the Chinese that a cease-fire had been agreed-to and that we would leave in three weeks to be repatriated."*

*"We actually headed south by truck thirteen days later on the morning of 19 August. We were delayed a day due to heavy rains that flooded the area and washed out wooden bridges leading out of the valley. We arrived that night in the town of Mampo and boarded a train. The train ride to Kaesong took 42 hours. We stayed in 'Tent City' until today, 5 September, and then crossed over into Freedom Village."*

*"Ten 36th Fighter Bomber Squadron pilots, including L/C Ruby and my pet dog Figmo, will arrive here tomorrow afternoon. Sure was glad to hear that because we cannot leave this compound due to health reasons. It will be good to see the troops tomorrow."*



Horsing around outside 36th Operations. (L-R) Raoul Mouton, Gene Crackel sitting on Vic Hodges' knee, Bill Stacy, Bill Demint, and Lloyd Irish. Mouton and Stacy were killed on the ill-fated C-124 R&R flight. (credit - Pick Henderson)

After reviewing the letter, Wendy, one of Vic Hodges' daughters, had a few comments: "My father's version of his capture and prison camp experience was sanitized to protect my mother's and grandmother's feelings. His shoulder was injured as he ejected from his jet. His ankle was badly damaged when he landed on the ground, so it was difficult for him to move along with his captors. The treatment of POWs was at times brutal. Food was scarce and prison camp living conditions were poor, with bugs, dampness, and a lack of exercise. Even though he was a prisoner for only three months, Dad returned to the States many pounds lighter and with some health problems related to poor nutrition and loose teeth. However, he did mention there were some enemy captors who did what they could to be humane in their POW treatment. They themselves were not

8th FBG Combat Operations building at Suwon. The 8th Group converted from F-80 Shooting Stars to F-86Fs in May 1953. (credit - Bill Demint)





An M4 Sherman tank is dug in along a hilltop overlooking "No Man's Land" along the MLR in June 1953. (credit - Bill Demint)

living with conditions much better than the prisoners."

Bill Demint adds: Later at one of our reunions, Vic came up to me and hugged me. He said that I had saved his life. I hadn't seen him since the time of the war. He said that when I made my low level pass, the bad guys quit beating him about the head and shoulders and took him to the rear. He felt that getting out of the hands of the front-line troops had probably saved his life.



Lt. D.A. Clark's F-86F "Delta Queen II" on the ramp at Suwon in the Summer of 1953. The red stripes on the tail indicate a Sabre from the 36th Squadron. (credit - Bill Demint)

Note: Your Editor is looking for more photos and color slides of fighter bomber Sabres from the 8th and 18th Fighter Bomber Groups in Korea. If you have stories and/or photos and color slides, please contact Larry Davis, SareJet Classics Editor, 6475 Chesham Dr NE, Canton, OH 44721; or e-mail [sabreclsx@aol.com](mailto:sabreclsx@aol.com)



1st MAW Korea 15 Nov 54 - Photo By: Sgt. R. Wheeler - In an unusual Christmas greeting from Korea, officers and men of "Willie Lovers" Pantherjet Fighter Squadron, Marine Aircraft Group 33, form a Christmas tree outline with Lieutenant Colonel R. Younck, (Los Altos, Calif.) Commanding Officer, Air Group 33, in the cockpit of the plane. (Credit - USMC)



**What Is It?** Here's strange one for you guys. This F-86F was seen at NAF El Centro, California in March 1982. It's all-white with blue stripes, a Navy Sabre flying out of China Lake, and the crew block under the cockpit states the pilot was "H.E. Reep - The Grim Reaper". Anyone knowing anything about this airplane, please contact the Editor, Larry Davis, 6475 Chesham Dr NE, Canton, OH 44721, or e-mail <sabreclx@aol.com>

## ***IT'S COMING!!***

15th Sabre Pilots Reunion, April 4th thru 7th, at the Monte Carlo Hotel, Las Vegas. Start making plans. It'll be a blast!

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