

# Sabre Jet Classics



Volume 13, Number 1

WINTER 2005

A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association



*INSIDE: 8th Fighter Wing History  
More!*

# SabreJet Classics

volume 13, number 1  
Winter 2005  
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(front cover) Sabres from the 36th and 35th FBS line the 1'SP ramp at Suwon during the early Summer of 1953. The sandbag revetments protected the airplanes from attacks by 'Bebcheck Charlie'. (credit - Kermit Keeley)

next issue: BugOut From  
Kimpo, The 15th Reunion,  
Memories from Nellis,  
more!



*SabreJet Classics*  
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*-the*  
**PRESIDENTS**  
*notebook*

May the New Year bring you good health, wealth and happiness.

Our membership numbers are in decline. We ended 2004 with 1784 members. That's down from 1880 the previous year. I am mailing out delinquent dues letters every six months. I receive a positive response from about 65%. I think a lot of our members have passed away and we were not informed. We only gained 36 new members in 2004 which is also down from 100 for the previous year. I still think there are a lot of guys out there who flew the F-86 that have not heard of our organization. Wear your pins, hats, shirts and jackets and see if you can do a little recruiting.

Glenn Carus informs me we have 659 members who have

contributed \$100 to the Air Museum to have their names included on the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association monument. The monument consists of four tables with room for 252 names each for a total of 1008. We need 97 more names to complete the third tablet and 252 to complete the fourth tablet. I hate to beat a dead horse but we need your help. If you haven't made a contribution to have your name on our monument please reconsider. The Air Museum helps preserve history of air power and provide an educational base for young generations.

The 2005 Membership Roster should be in your hands by now. If you sent your changes in after the first of the year it didn't make it in the roster but it's in our data base for next time. Look the roster over and if changes need to be made let us know. We like to have accurate information in the data base.

April 4th will be here before you know it. If you haven't made plans to attend the reunion I hope you change your mind because you are going to miss a great party. This issue of Sabre Jet Classics does not flat have a reunion registration form. If you decide at the last minute to come to the reunion and cannot find the Summer or Fall 2004 issues, never fear. You can download one from SABRE-PILOTS.ORG. Or you can call me and I'll mail you one or just show up. But it's going to cost you for being late. We are looking forward to seeing you at the reunion.

May God Bless our troops,  
you and the  
United States of America.

Check 6.

**JERRY R. JOHNSON**  
President F-86 SABRE PILOTS  
ASSOCIATION

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## FOLDED WINGS

William M. 'Bill' Bayman, November 23rd, 2004  
Harvey L. Brown, February 5th, 2005  
Delair A. Clark, December 5th, 2004  
Howard E. 'Ebe' Ebersole, January 4th, 2005  
Whitney S. Halfhill, unknown  
Earl Payne, January 12th, 2005  
Whitney B. Robinson, June 18th, 2004

### 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*

It is with great sadness that I must report the loss of two close friends, both of which were very close to our association - Howard E. "Ebe" Ebersole and Harvey L. Brown.

Both of these fine gentlemen were some of the first people to help me in my quest for information and photos of F-86 Sabres and the pilots that flew them when I first wrote "MiG Alley", which was published by Squadron-Signal Publications way back in 1977.

Howard, forever known as "Ebe", Ebersole came forward with a large number of color slides and photos of the men and aircraft from the 12th Fighter Bomber Squadron in Korea. He also contributed a large number of stories which we have printed in SabreJet Classics over the years. "Ebe" was the Operations Officer of the 12th during the time that Dee Harper was at Osan. "Ebe" was on the Association Board of Directors from 1994 to 1996, and is listed in the Michigan Hall of Fame.

Harvey also flew with the 18th Group in Korea, in the 67th Squadron. He loaned me several color slides from his time in Korea, and his tour with the 366th FBG following the end of the war in Korea, and introduced me to many Sabre pilots. He also supplied quite a few stories for our magazine, including an interesting tour of Osan during the late 1990s.

Howard E. 'Ebe' Ebersole made his Last Flight on January 4th, 2005; Harvey L. Brown made his Last Flight on February 5th, 2005. I will miss them both.

*Larry Davis*  
Editor

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## *letters to the editor*

### *Who Is It? from issue 13-3.*

Well that one was sure a bust! I had absolutely no responses to my question about whose airplane this was during the Korean War. I know that Major George Davis flew several missions in the airplane, and that he got several victories flying it. But no one has come forward with any further information about F-86E #50-683 as to the pilot that it was assigned to and the complete name on the nose. It's important because of people like Diego Zampini who continue their attacks on the records of American pilots in Korea. We're still waiting. (credit - Iry Clark)



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### *Sabres Around the World*

(upper) Three Sabre prototypes on the Edwards AFB ramp during the Summer of 1953. In the rear is the first F-86F-5, #51-2928, Sabre which introduced the heavier underwing shackles that could hold the new 200 gallon drop tanks. Next is the first F-86D, #50-456, the first all-weather interceptor version of the F-86. And in the foreground is the F-86H prototype, #52-1975, which introduced the J73 engine having over 8900 lbs of thrust. (lower) Six F-86F-40 Sabres from the Japanese Air Self Defense Force 3rd Fighter Wing at Komatsu in August 1972. Mitsubishi Heavy Industries manufactured over 300 F-86F-40 Sabres for use by several nations. In addition, the longer span, slatted F-40 wing was also adopted for use by virtually every nation that was still flying North American Aviation-built Sabres, including the US Air Force. The leading edge slats gave the Sabre better landing characteristics; while the extended wingtips increased maneuverability in combat situations. (credit - Al Schmidt and Hideki Nagakubo)



## *HELP AGAIN!*

### *Jim Jabara and Dick Becker records under attack!*

Remember my note in SabreJet Classics vol. 12-1? Well the subject has again reared its ugly head. This time in the form of a web site and the two people that are involved are Jim Jabara and Dick Becker. The guy that I was talking about in the earlier issues is an Argentine named Diego Zampini.

He has chosen to attack the credibility of the American pilots that flew in Korea, and the record keeping of the 5th Air Force. Mr. Zampini chooses to believe whatever the Russian pilots and archives say "actually went on" in Korea. And believe me, their version, thus Mr. Zampini's version, is vastly different from the official records of 5th Air Force, even contradicting the memories and after-action reports of the pilots that actually flew those missions.

Mr. Zampini has created a web site on which he states his beliefs based on the Russian archives. It's out there for anyone and everyone to read and believe or not. And believe me, I know of a large number of people around the world that believe what he says. Hey, British historians have been nit-picking the 10-1 kill ratio in Korea for many years. [They simply don't believe it. Several American authors also have chosen to go with Russian archives notes such as the fact that they "shot down 630 F-86s in Korea", despite the fact that at the most, we lost about 110 Sabres during the war. I say "at the most" because the official tally is still 78 Sabres lost in air to air combat. But there were another 32 that went down for unknown reasons or operational causes (engine explosions, flight control problems, out of gas, etc).

The Russian claim of 630 Sabres shot down is despite the fact that 5th AF had only 75 Sabres flying combat during the first year of combat; only 150 the second year, and 300 Sabres during the last 2 months of the war. The loss ratio would have been incredible had they lost 630 aircraft during the war. Probably close to 90% of the inventory. And we still held air supremacy!

Anyway, back to the Zampini web site and it's latest claims. On it, Zampini not only claims that Jim Jabara was NOT the first jet to jet ace in history, he claims that two Russian MiG pilots were not only the first jet to jet aces in history, but that Jim Jabara never made an ace at all! That Dick Becker was the first US jet to jet ace in Korea when he shot down his 5th MiG on 9 September 1951. His site states that Jabara only had 4 MiGs when he left Korea in May 1951.

His site is impressive. He has names, dates, times, and

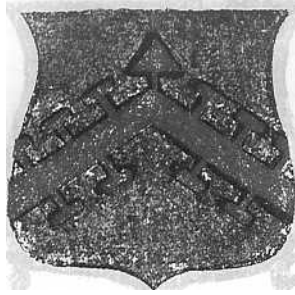


**Sgt. Robert Iulteen congratulates his pilot, Capt. Dick Becker, on becoming the second jet to jet ace in Korea on 9 September 1951. Sgt. Iulteen was Becker's crew chief. (credit - Dick Becker)**

even airplane serial numbers for the Russian claims. I know, however, there are claims that do not jibe with 5th AF records, such as the 4th FIG pilot that suffered anoxia on a flight from Johnson AB, Japan, to Kimpo. He went down in the Sea of Japan and was killed. One of our Association members confirmed this. But a Russian pilot claims to have "shot him down". I asked Mr. Zampini about this and when did the Russians fit the MiG-15 with inflight refueling equipment to fly the 400+ miles and be able to shoot down the Sabre that they claimed. He had no answer but still makes the claim in the Russian pilot's name. "That's the type of crap that is on the Zampini web site.

In speaking with Dick Becker about the Zampini claim that he, not Jim Jabara, was the first American jet to jet ace in Korea, Dick was quite upset. He and Jim were the closest of friends before and during the war. He wants it known that he had nothing to do with the Zampini web site or any of his claims. And that he knows for sure that Jim Jabara's 6 MiG kills were factual and that Jim Jabara was, and still is the FIRST jet to jet ace in history. Dick is very proud of his accomplishments and especially that he became the second jet to jet ace in the Korean War. He damn well should be! I'm very proud to have known him and can call him a friend.

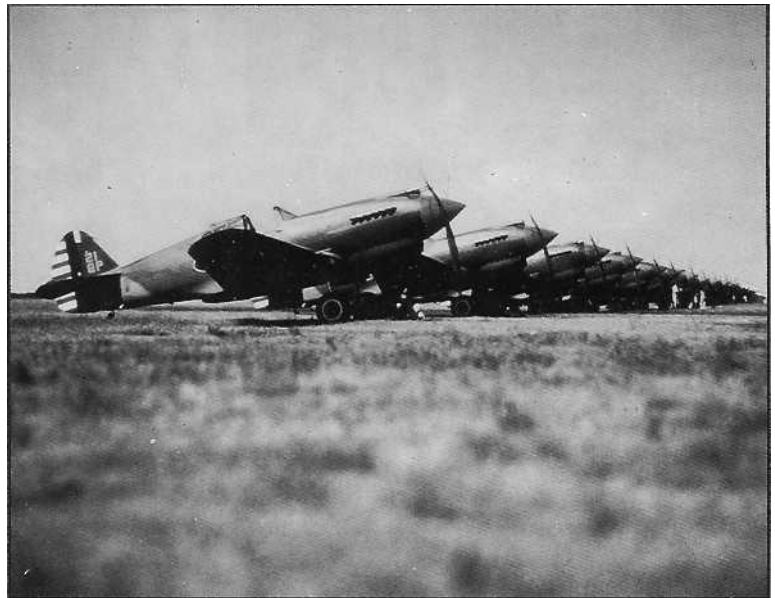
What to do about Diego Zampini and his claims? I'm not real sure. Maybe Ralph Parr had the right idea at our 13th Reunion in April 2001, when he challenged a visiting Russian MiG pilot, a Korean veteran, to a dogfight to settle the argument. I'd pay to watch it and my money would be on Ralph. Or Dick!



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**8th Fighter Bomber Group emblem.**

**8th Pursuit Group P-40Bs line the ramp at Mitchel Field, New York in 1941. The 8th PG had the mission of protecting metropolitan New York from attack prior to the beginning of the war. (credit - USAF)**



## History of the 8th Fighter Wing

**This is the another in a series highlighting a particular unit that operated the F-86 Sabre at some point. SabreJet Classics will do these unit histories when we have enough material built up to proceed. Our thanks go to several members of the 8th FBG Assn. as well as the 36th FBS Assn., and other members of the Sabre Pilots that offered stories and photos of their units over the last few years, with special recognition to Charlie Cox.**

The 8th Pursuit Group was activated at Langley Field, Virginia on 1 April 1931. It had three squadrons assigned - the 33rd, 35th, and 36th Pursuit Squadrons. Before World War Two, the 8th PG flew a variety of aircraft including the P-6 and P-12 Hawk, the P-35, P-36, P-39, and finally the P-40. The mission prior to the war was training pilots and testing airplanes. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the 8th PG was moved to Mitchel Field as part of the New York defense force.

In early 1942, the 8th PG was sent to the Australia and assigned to 5th Air Force. In March, the 8th moved to New Guinea, flying P-39s and P-40s before finally transitioning into the P-38 Lightning. It would be in the P-38 that the 8th (now) Fighter Group would achieve fame. In 1942, the 33rd Squadron was renumbered as the 80th FS.

During the war, the 8th FG would produce no less than 27 aces, including Major George "Wheaties" Welch, who would become synonymous with F-86s as the test pilot in the first supersonic jet fighter. Major Welch would shoot down 16 Japanese aircraft, including getting a kill on that fateful day in December 1941, the first American victory of the war; and Lt. Boyd "Buzz" Wagner, who became the first American ace when he shot down his fifth Japanese fighter on 18 December 1941.

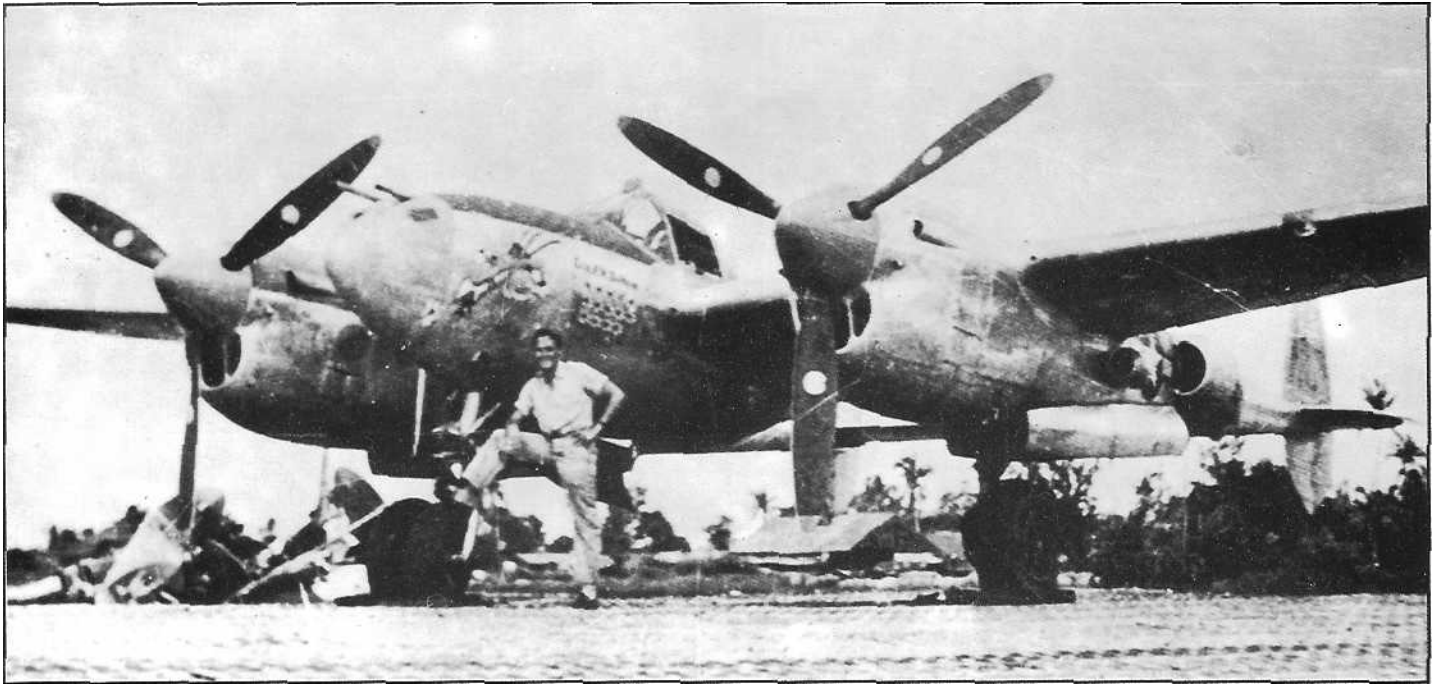
By the end of the War in the Pacific, the 8th FG had won Distinguished Unit Citations for actions over Papua in 1943, and again over the Philippine Islands in 1944. In 1946, the 8th moved to Ashiya AB, Japan. It was somewhat ironic since the pilots from the 8th had been instrumental in the destruction of Ashiya during the war. Now it would be their home. With a new home

also came a new aircraft, the P-51 Mustang.

While reconstruction was going on at Ashiya, the Group was moved to another former Japanese air base - Itazuke. They would return to Itazuke several times over the next few years, and were in place at Itazuke on 25 June 1950 when the North Korean Communists invaded South Korea. The 8th had been designated the 8th Fighter Bomber Group in January. There was a 4th squadron attached to the 8th FBG when the war broke out, the 339th F(AW)S with F-82G Twin Mustangs.

President Harry S. Truman committed US forces to attempt to stem the Communist invasion, including men A pair of (now)8th FG P-38Hs escort a 5th AF B-25 Mitchell bomber to a target during 1943. The 8th FG transitioned into P-381Is during 1943, flying from bases on New Guinea. (credit - USAF)





**Capt. Robert Dehaven stands next to his P-38J at Biak during 1944. Capt. Dehaven scored 14 victories with the 7th Squadron during World War 2.** (credit - Don Garrett, Jr.)

and aircraft of both Far East Air Force (FEAF) and 5th AF. At the top of the list was the 8th FBG. The 8th had been in process of transitioning into the new F-80C Shooting Star. But they had a mission to fly, a combat mission. The North Korean Air Force (NKAF) had been strafing the evacuation centers at Kimpo and Inchon, and the 8th was ordered to stop them.

On 26 June 1950, pilots from the 8th began flying top cover over the evacuation. On the 27th, the NKAF sent a formation of Yaks to hinder the evacuation. They lost! No less than six NKAF fighters went down, four by pilots from the 8th. Major James Little, a 339th F-82G pilot shot down one of the Yaks. It's still not clear whether Maj. Little was the first to score as he and Lt.

Following the end of the war, the 8th FG transitioned from P-38s into P-51 D **Mustangs**. These (now)F-51Ds are warming up the engines on the snow-covered ramp at Chitose AB, Japan **during** the Winter of 1949. (credit - USAF)



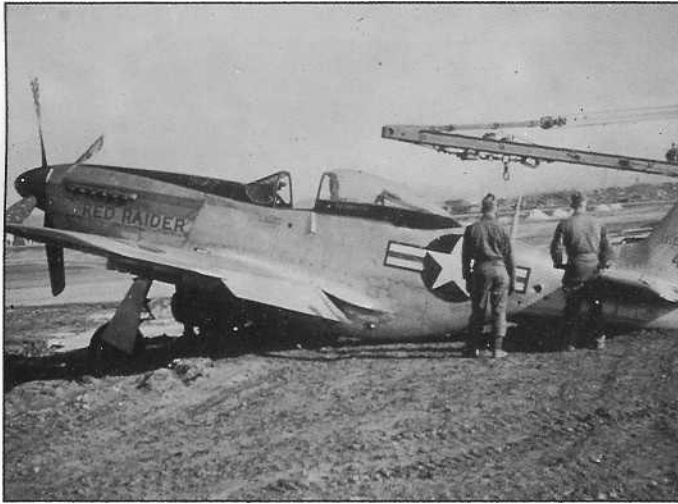
Wm. Hudson, a 68th pilot, both scored at virtually the same time. Three of the Yaks went down to 35th FBS pilots - Lt. Bob Dewald, Capt. Ray Schillereff, and Lt. Bob Wayne.

*By early* November, 8th FBG pilots had downed an additional nine NKAF fighters. The Communists had seen enough and in early November, they unleashed the MiG-15 jet fighter, flown by Soviet pilots, into the air war over Korea. 5th AF countered by sending the 4th FIG with F-86A Sabres into Korea. However, U. Howard Landry, a 36th FBS F-80 pilot, did shoot down one of the vaunted MiG jets on 17 March 1951, one of only two MiG kills of the war for the 8th, the other being by Bob Smith in December 1951.

A **35th FBS** F-51D armed with Tiny Tim rockets on the ramp at Kimpo during November 1950. The **huge Tiny** Tim rockets were used against reinforced structures like bridges and rail **tunnels**. (credit Warren Thompson collection)







Lt. Joe Rogers flew "Red Raider", a 36th FBS F-51D which was hit by communist flak while attacking targets near the Pusan Pocket in the early Fall of 1950. At the time, the 36th FBS was based at Taegu inside the 'Pocket'. (credit - Howard Tanner)



Capt. Roy Marsh shot down a North Korean IL-10 fighter bomber on 29 June 1950 while flying "Li'l Dottie", an 80th FBS F-80C. Capt. Marsh would score two more North Korean fighters in July 1950. (credit - Roy Marsh)

Late in the year, 1950, 5th AF ordered the 8th to transition back into F-51 Ds. Col. Charles Stark, CO of the 8th from December 1950 to April 1951, recalls: "After we got kicked out of Korea, they made us shift from '80s back into '51s. That was done by simply crawling out of an '80 at the end of one mission, and into the '51 for the next mission of the day! Check outs?! Nuts! What a step backward that was!"

In April 1951, the 8th moved back into Korea after UN ground forces had pushed the Communists back across the 38th Parallel. They were based at Kimpo, just across the Han River. The men of the 8th had to rebuild literally everything at Kimpo as FEAF B-29s had decimated the airfield and buildings. But they built the base back up too well. The 4th FIG Sabres moved in during the late Summer of 1951, pushing the 8th back to Suwon (K-13).

Suwon was especially interesting as, for many months, there were no taxiways. Everything was mud. And you



A flight of 36th FBS F-80Cs returning to Suwon following a mission against targets inside North Korea **during the** Summer of 1952. The 8th Group finally completed the transition into F-80C jets in the Spring of 1951. (credit - USAF)

A fully loaded 35th FBS F-80C lifts off the runway at Suwon in September 1952 armed with a pair of 1000 lb. bombs. The mission of the 8th FBG for most of the Korean War was that of interdiction of the communist rail and road net. (credit - USAF)





The distinctive sunburst tails of F-86F Sabres from the 36th FBS line the ramp at Suwon in the Summer of 1953. The 8th FBG converted to F-86F Sabres in May 1953. (credit - Kermit Keeley)

North American pilot Bob Hoover stands with Col. **Benz** on the Suwon flightline in June 1953. Hoover was in Korea giving demonstrations in the new F-86F and its ability to carry bombs in addition to drop tanks. (credit - Paul Barranger)



Col. Walter Benz was the Commander of the 8th FBG when they converted to F-86F Sabres in May 1953. His aircraft was appropriately named "The Old Man", and carried the three squadron command bands **around** the nose. The photo was taken during a firepower demonstration at Suwon during July 1953. (credit - NAA)



had five squadrons using the runway. You taxied down one side while other airplanes were taking off or landing on the other side of the same runway! It was a little hairy. In the Fall of 1952, an 8th FBG F-80C flew the 50,000th sortie of the Korean War. The 8th was the only unit in Korea still flying F-80 fighter bombers.

On 22 November 1952, one 8th Group pilot made the supreme sacrifice in the name of freedom. Major Charles J. Loring, Jr., was leading a flight of 80th FBS F-80Cs against a Communist gun position that was firing on friendly forces. Major Loring pressed his attack so close that his F-80 was hit and mortally damaged. With no hope of making it back to Suwon. Major Loring then deliberately turned his F-80 and dove the plane into the gun emplacement, destroying the gun and killing himself. For his selfless and heroic action, Major Charles Loring was awarded the Medal Of Honor.

In the Spring of 1953, 5th AF made the decision to phase out the veteran F-80Cs and transition the 8th FBG into brand new F-86F fighter bombers. The Sabres began arriving in April and the Group was flying combat missions in time to make the infamous May Day attack against Pyongyang Radio. During the late Spring, the Communists launched what would be their last effort



Members of the 36th FBS sit on the wing of Major V.A. Theilhorn's F-86F, "Rosalie", on the Suwon ramp in July 1953. Major Theilhorn is kneeling in the front row and petting "Figmo", the squadron mascot. (credit - Dave McLaren collection)

to break the UN lines. Every squadron in 5th AF was called on for a maximum effort. The men of the 8th FBG responded with a record 291 sorties for a single day.

Following the signing of the truce agreement on 27 July 1953, the 8th FBG returned to its 'home plate' at Itazuke AB, Japan. Their record was quite enviable and included many firsts - First air unit committed to action, first jet unit, first unit to shoot down an enemy airplane, first to fly 255 sorties in one day, first to fly 50,000 sorties in jet warfare, first to fly 60,000 sorties, and first to fly 291 sorties in a single day. The Group added eleven streamers to their flag, two Republic of Korea citations, and another Distinguished Unit Citation.

In the years following the truce signing, the 8th would see more action, although not on a daily basis. Rotating squadrons in and out of Korea, the 8th would fly escort to the many reconnaissance aircraft that were monitoring the North Korean military buildup. MiGs were encountered on several occasions but the results were mixed. In 1956, the Group turned in their F-86Fs for the first of the Century Series fighters, the F-100 Super Sabre. And in 1963, the Group transitioned into F-105D Thunderchiefs. With the Thuds, the 8th Group would again go to war, this time in Vietnam. 8th FBG Thuds flew some of the first missions against North Vietnam.

During the Vietnam War the 8th (now) TFW would become famous for something called "Bob". On 2 January 1967, Col. Robin Olds led several flights of F-4C Phantoms on Operation BOLO. The 8th F-4s were tasked with eliminating the MiGs that had been harassing the strike forces. Olds flights used F-105 call signs, flew at F-105 speeds and altitudes, and even used F-105 tanker tac-



An 80th FBS F-86F on the ramp at Suwon in July 1953. The F-86F fighter bombers could carry a pair of 1000 bomb bombs, plus a pair of drop tanks, and still mix it up with the MiGs if necessary. (credit - Bob Esposito)



"Tall and Cocky", a 35th FBS Sabre flown by Lt. K. Grubaugh, was certainly the motto of the pilots of the 8th FBG, especially after they transitioned into the new F-86F Sabres. (credit - Jim Carter)

"Bob's Buggy", an F-86F from the 80th FBS sits ready alert on the ramp at Suwon in the Fall of 1953. The mission of the 8th FBG changed from interdiction to long range escort and air superiority following the end of the war in Korea. (credit - David Menard collection)

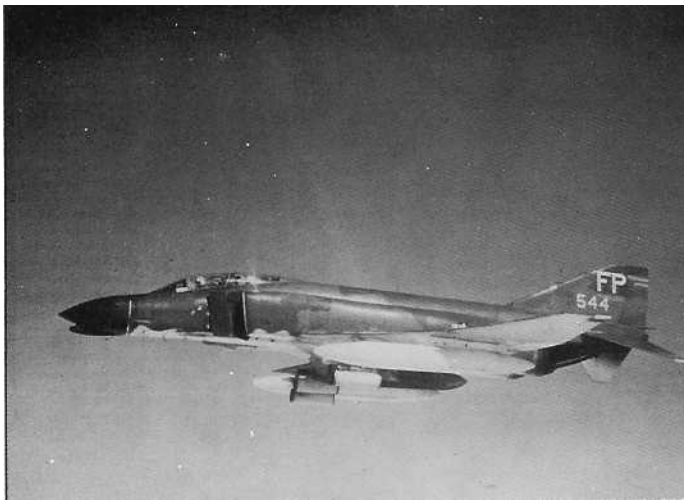




An 80th FRS F-100D on the ramp at Yokota in May 1961. The 8th (now) TFW converted to F-100D Super Sabres in 1956, flying the 'Hun' until 1963. (credit - Marty Isham)



This group of 36th TFS pilots were the first F-105 pilots to fly combat in the Vietnam War. The 36th TFS deployed to Korat RTAFB on 9 August 1964, flying their first mission four hours after landing at Korat. (credit - Dave Graben)



In 1966, the 8th TFW transitioned into the F-4C Phantom II and began flying escort for the P-105 strike forces that were attacking targets in North Vietnam. Under Col. Robin Olds, they scored some of the most impressive totals of any unit in SEA, getting 7 MiG kills on 2 January 1967. (credit - USAF)

During Operational LINEBACKER, 8th TFW F-4D Phantoms began flying strike missions against North Vietnamese hard targets. This 25th TFS F-4D is armed with a pair of 2000 lb Laser Guided Bombs, with a LORAN antenna on the fuselage and ECM pod in the left missile bay. (credit - John Poole)

tics. When they entered North Vietnam, they appeared to be another part of a large F-105 strike force.

The NVAF MiG-21s came up in force. What they found was Col. Olds' F-4s itching for a fight. When the day ended, no less than seven MiG-21s had been shot down - over half of the NVAF MiG-21 inventory. And it established the F-4 Phantom as the premier fighter in the skies over Vietnam.

Today, the 8th FW is based at Kunsan AB, South Korea, flying the latest in F-16 fighter aircraft - and still defending the skies over Korea from any threat that might emerge from the north. SabreJet Classics salutes all the men that have served in the 8th Fighter Wing from its inception.



# Scramble From K-13

by Bill 'Creme' Demint

It was the third week in June 1953 and it was definitely NOT a good week for K-13. The R&R C-124 courier flight crashed departing from Tachikawa on the 18th, killing all aboard. The loss of life was especially traumatic to the men at Suwon (K-13) since most of the men aboard were from the 8th FBG or 51st FIG. We lost three pilots from the 36th Squadron. And I was almost was one of them.

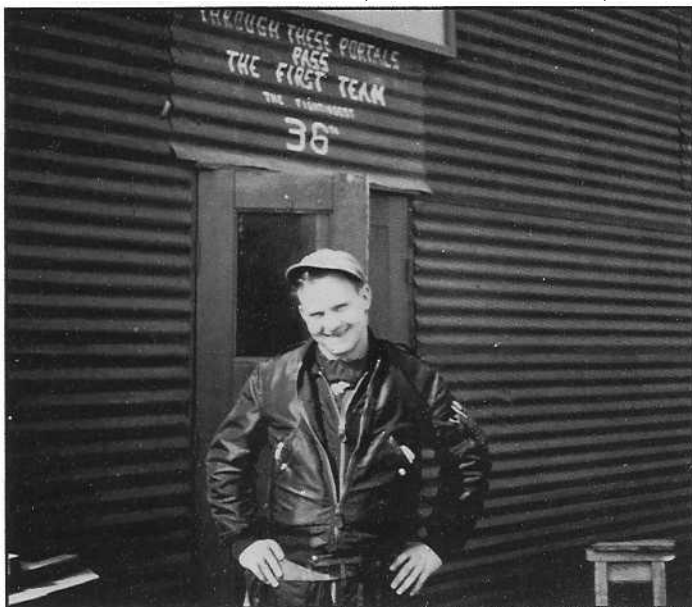
I had taken the R&R C-124 to call and check on my wife. She was about to give birth to our first born. Naturally I was late as she'd had our son on the 10th. This was the just the first of my 'later' that would save my life. After calling home and finding I was too late, I went out to Kisarazu hoping to find an '86 to take back to K-13, but no bird was ready. So I hopped a ride to Itazuke, then to Tsuiki. Likewise, there was again no bird for me. So I hopped a C-119 back to K-13, arriving late in the afternoon of the 19th.

Literally upon arrival, they put me on the Able Able alert flight. I was still in low quarter shoes, khakis, and scarf. The Able Able alert was normally called off at dark and had never been scrambled in anyone's memory. I volunteered to act as Flight Commander so the appointed commander could take the evening off. I expected to sit in the Ops shack for a few hours and that would be it.

About dusk we were playing ping pong when the alert sargeant ran in and yelled "Go!" We couldn't believe it and thought he was kidding. He wasn't! We ran out the door to the airplanes and took off, proceeding under radar control to a crash site just north of the 'Holy Land'. I didn't know who was down but later found out it was a buddy, Vic Hodges.

It was dark by the time we reached the crash site. I made

**Bill 'Creme' Demint** outside the 36th Squadron Operations shack at K-13 in **1953**. (credit - **Bill Demint**)

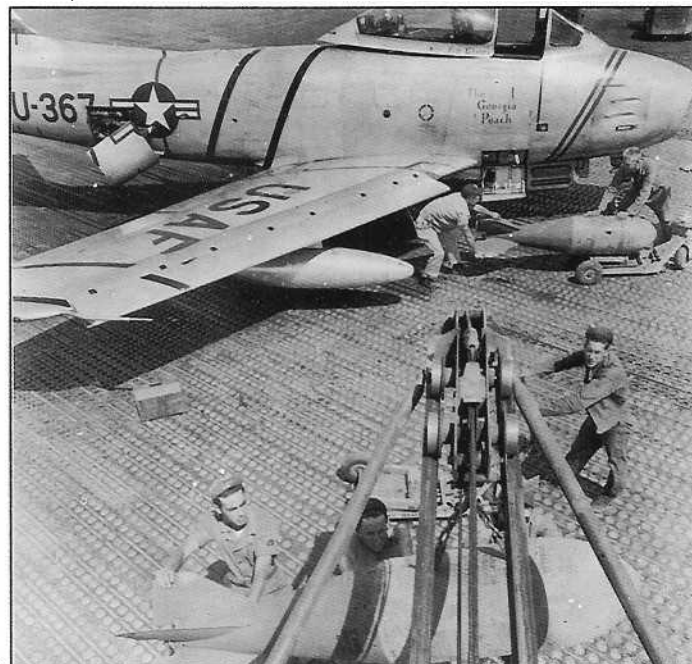


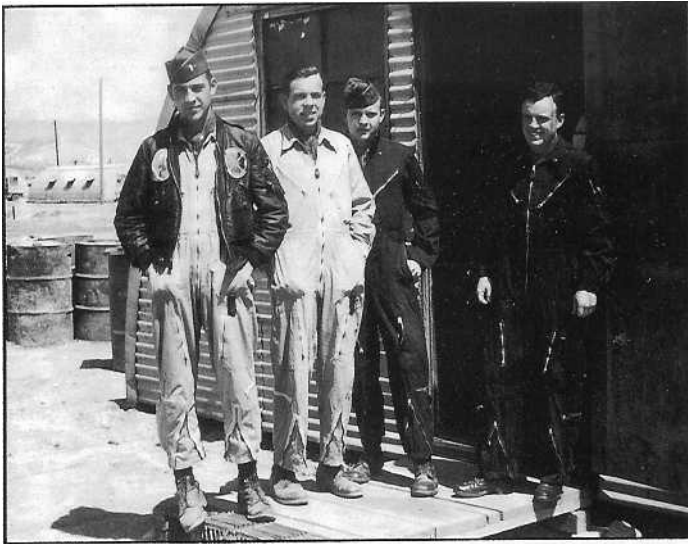
Troops line up to board the R&R flight C-124 Glovemaster for the return to Korea. It was a C-124 like this one that crashed in June 1953 killing all aboard, including many crew members from the 8th FBG. (credit - Bill Demint)

a low pass over the burning wreckage. There was no sign of life, nor were there any calls on Dog channel. So I rejoined my flight and asked the Rescap commander to return home. They'd previously called the 35th back to K-13. The Chodo radar took charge and guided us south. The K-13 GCI took over and gave us a let down.

At about 1000 feet, just under the overcast, the radio suddenly squawked "Here you are!" I said "Where?" As a junior birdman even though I had 95 missions, I hadn't thought to ask the controller where he was taking us. As it turned out, we were at X-ray Zebra, a point near the west coast of Korea. The controller had been accustomed to working with all-weather F-94s, and that was where they ended up for a GCA approach.

**Armorsers prepare to load 1000 lb. bombs under Bill Demint's F-86F "The Georgia Peach".** Lt. Jim Escalle was shot down in this airplane on **19 June 1953**. (credit - USAF)





**Uncle Flight, 36th FBS at K-13 in 1953 included (l: r) Lt Jack Mitchell, Capt. Chuck Wilson, Lt. Bill Demint, and Lt. Torr Harmer. (credit - Fick Henderson)**

So here we were, Bingo fuel, at 1000 feet, dark as a coal miners you know what, in hilly terrain, 30 miles from home - and not sure what to do. We didn't have enough fuel to climb and make a let down. Nor did I think that we could get a GCA in time, at least not all four of us. So I asked the GCA guy to direct us to K-55 (Osan AB), and I could find my way home from there. He did and we did.

Fortunately, K-55 was lit up and easily spotted. From there, with a band switch procedure on George Willie and Sugar Willie, it was a piece of cake to get lined up with the runway. The radar controller was a bit reluctant to turn us loose, but he did just as we were on initial. We switched to the K-13 tower frequency. What do you know, they were landing to the south. So here we are in right echelon, at 1000 feet, at night - and going down the runway the wrong way!

Can you imagine my flight members thoughts? They were flying a night formation, following a leader that wasn't too sure of where he was, and now they were in right echelon and about to make a right 90/270 to the active. Visibility wasn't all that good. And, oh yes, there were mountains out there also. But they didn't say anything

It was a fine display of airmanship. Being able to maneuver at night like that. I can't commend them enough. I wish I'd told them then, but I hadn't. I just expected it. And we all made it. I'd like to thank whoever designed the band switch let down. It may have saved us that night. Another 36th pilot went down that day and was KIA. His name was Jim Escalle. He was flying an armed recce mission in my airplane "The Georgia Peach". At a later reunion, Vic Hodges, the pilot that we were covering, came up to me and hugged me. I hadn't seen Vic since Korea. He said that when I made that low pass over his wreckage, the bad guys quit beating him and took him to the rear. He was repatriated a few weeks later.

And this is "The Rest of the Story"!

The Downing of Jim Escalle

By Jim Escalle & Jack Senneff

On 19 June 1953, Mike Flight, a 36th FBS flight of Sabres, attacked a pre-briefed target in the 'Charlie Tare' area of North Korea. Following the dive bomb runs, the flight broke up into two separate elements and went truck-hunting on the nearby roads.

Lt. Jim Escalle led the second element flying "The Georgia Peach", which was Bill Demints aircraft. Scanning for trucks coming down the main supply route, Jim's element spotted a small convoy of camouflaged trucks parked along a dirt road that jutted south of the main road from Wonsan to Pyongyang. The trucks were parked close to the "Imjim-Gang" River that snaked through a wide valley. There were steep hills on both sides and small arms fire was a strong possibility from both hills.

Jim initiated his first strafing attack from north to south, calling me, Lt. Jack Senneff (Mike 4), as he pulled off the target. I made my pass from the opposite direction. We spotted more trucks in the immediate area and Jim made a second pass. But I heard no call from Jim that he was off the target. I waited a few minutes and when I heard nothing, I started a run from east to west.

I tried to contact Jim several times on different frequencies. Mike 1 and 2 then joined in the search. The three of us orbited the area at 10,000 feet but saw nothing. After we returned to base, we reported what happened and Suwon immediately launched a second flight of Sabres to provide a hopeful ResCap to the target area. The second flight found the burning wreckage of Escalle's Sabre about 10 miles SSW of the second target area. They saw no signs of a parachute or of Jim.

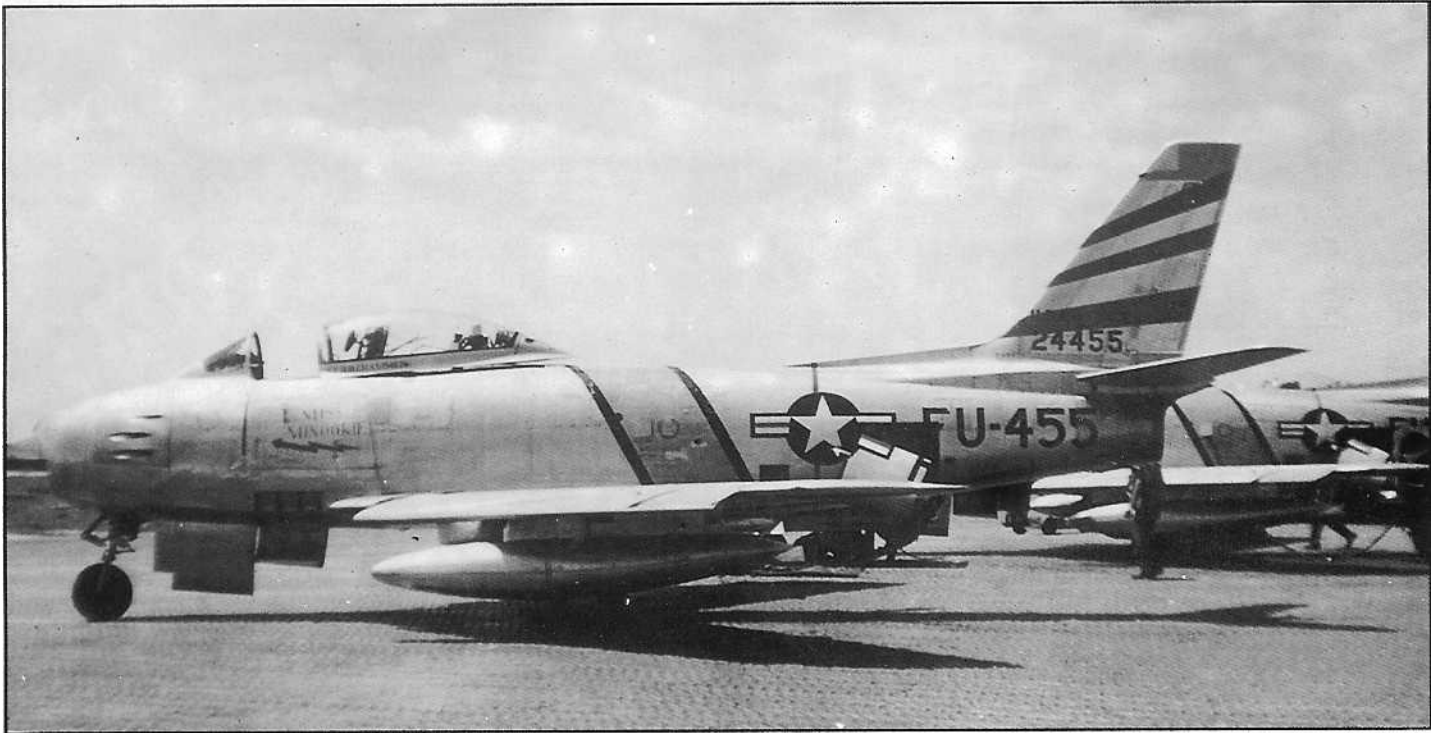
Jim was listed as MIA later that afternoon and officially listed as KIA on 20 June 1954. Late that same afternoon of 19 June 1953, a second 36th Squadron pilot was shot down pulling off of another target in the 'Charlie Tare' area. The pilot was Vic Hodges from Victor Flight.

My 2 1/2 month POW Vacation.

an abstract from a letter Vic Hodges wrote to his wife.

**2/Lt. Jim Escalle in the cockpit of his F-86F in the Spring of 1953. Lt. Escalle was killed in action on a strike against a North Korean truck convoy on 19 June 1953. (credit - Jim Escalle)**





"Miss Minookie", the F-86F flown by Lt. Herm Grammer in Victor Flight, 36th FBS. On 19 June 1953, Lt. Vic Hodges was flying Grammer's Sabre when he was hit by North Korean flak and forced to bail out. Lt. Hodges was immediately captured and spent the next 2 1/2 months as a POW. (credit - Paul Gushwa)

"This is a condensed version of my 2 1/2 month POW 'vacation' in North Korea. As you know, I was shot down on 19 June about 7:15 pm. 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. As I looked down, a ring of Chinese soldiers were maneuvering in a circle and I landed right in the middle of the ring. I wasn't injured and the Chinese treated me fairly well.

"I'd been shot down about 20 miles north of the 38th Parallel in the central part of North Korea.. They kept me there for a couple of days before putting me on a truck. There were several nights in that truck (nothing moved during daylight hours!) before I arrived at a place called Sinanju that was close to the Yalu River and the MiG base at Antung. I spent over five weeks there under continuous and intensive questioning."

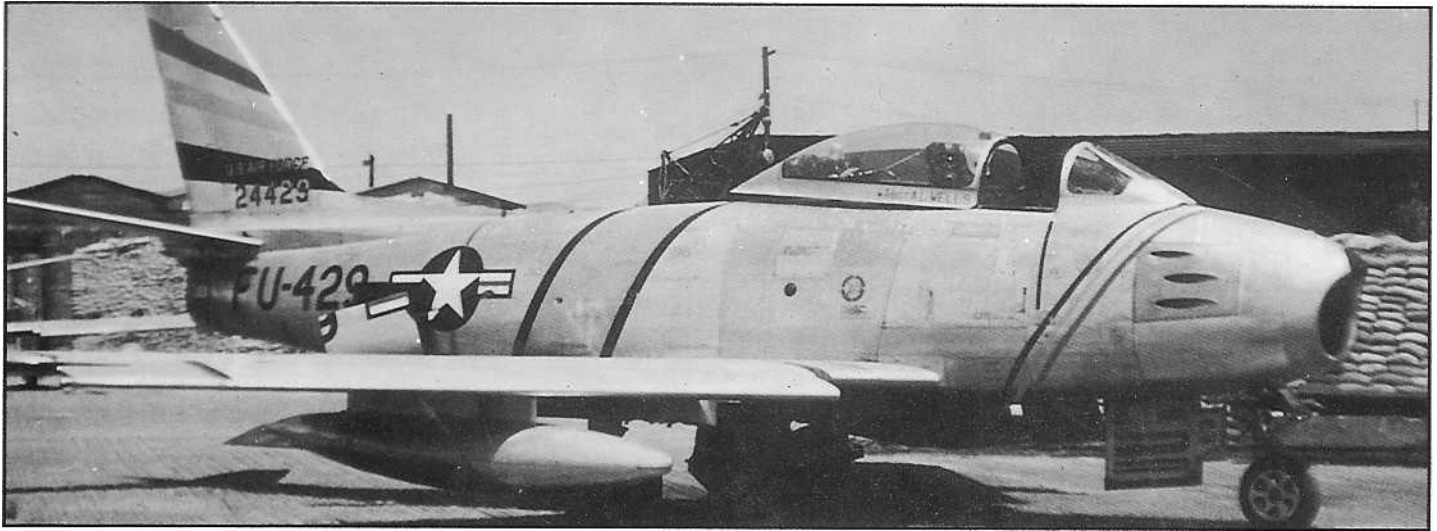
"There were three other POWs close by in other small rooms, but I wasn't allowed to speak with any of them. However, I did manage to see them out of my darkened cell quite often. In early August, after the war had stopped, we were herded onto another truck and rode east for about fourteen hours, arriving at a camp on the Yalu River. I was in Camp Number 2 annex. We were kept separated from the other POWs for two nights and a day. It was then that we learned that a ceasefire had been agreed to and that we would leave in about three weeks to be repatriated."

"We actually started south by truck thirteen days later on the morning of the 19th of August. Rain delayed us for a day as it had washed out some of the wooden bridges that led out of valley. We arrived that night in Mampo and boarded a train. The train ride to Kaesong took about 42 hours and we stayed in 'Tent City' until today, 5 September, before crossing the bridge into Freedom Village."

"Ten of my guys from the 36th Squadron including LtCol Ruby and my dog Figo, will be coming up tomorrow afternoon to pick me up. I was sure glad to hear that because we're not allowed to leave the compound due to health reasons. It'll be good to see the guys tomorrow."

LtCol Robert Ruby, CO of the 36th FBS, and the squadron mascot Figo, greet Lt. Vic Hodges in August 1953 after he was repatriated and returned to Allied hands. (credit - 36th FBS Assn.)





**The F-86F that was assigned to Col. William Elder the Wing Commander during the time that the 8th FBW went operational in the F-86F Sabre. The nose and tail stripes are in the colors of each squadron, red-36th FBS, yellow-80th FBS, and blue-35th FBS. (credit - Paul Gushwa)**

by Jack Brady

## LAST MISSION SHOW

I'd flown 90 missions in the F-80 and could have elected to go "FIGMO" and return home. But I didn't because Kathleen, my new bride, wasn't going to graduate from college until June. So I volunteered to fly ten missions in the new F-86 Sabre, thirty five if possible.

The F-86F was a great airplane compared to the old F-80C, with 35% more power and a total hydraulic system. F-80 flight controls had a 20-1 aileron boost system. You had to manhandle the airplane with the boost off. But the Sabre's flight controls were very sensitive, especially in a formation flight and during aerobatic or combat maneuvering. On my check flight, the chase pilot accused me of flying 'square loops'.

But I digress. A pilot flying his last mission was allowed some latitude. On one of these showboat missions, my flight leader, who was also FIGMO, put us in a diamond formation. I was in the slot. He made a high speed pass down the runway at K-13 at a very low ground clearance. VERY LOW! My choice was to almost fly in his jet exhaust or scrape the runway. After fighting this the full length of the runway, about 12,000 feet long, he finally pulled up. That was a close call.

On MY last mission I was group Lead. In the F-80, group missions had up to 48 airplanes, but the max for an '86 mission was 36 birds. I led two 4-ship formations that day, one flight from the 36th Squadron, the other from the 80th; with each F-86 making a single run on a pre-briefed target.. It was strictly "no sweat". Well almost.

Now it was time for my "last mission show". After the other seven Sabres had landed, I made a high speed pass down the runway at about .9 Mach plus, pulled up at about the halfway point and started

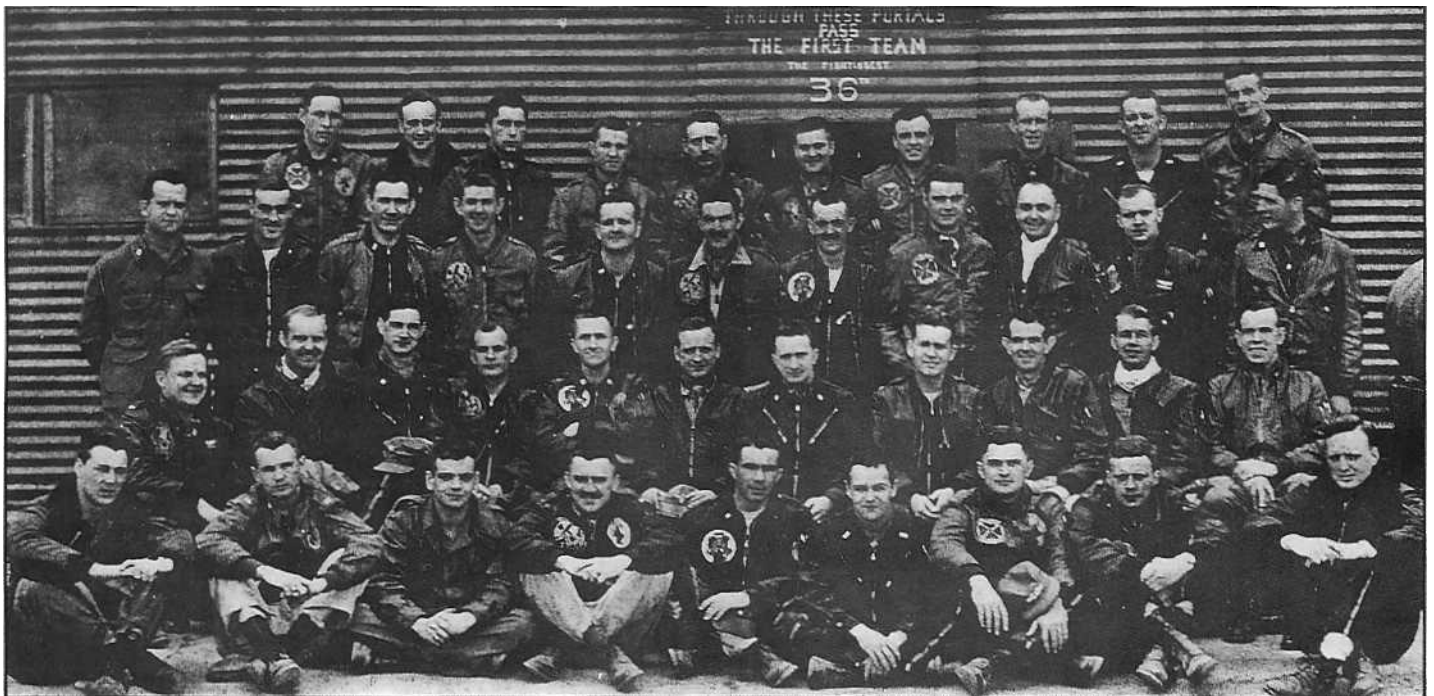
into a 40° climb making aileron rolls, seventeen as I recall, until I ran out of air speed. I did a wingover to the downwind side and landed. My airplane, named "Kathleen II" (both of my loves were named Kathleen), and I were greeted by several pilots and my crew chief and armorer. The last two always took great care of my bird.

After the ritual photo-taking and congratulations, I started to leave the flight line and head over to the O-Club for a scotch and soda when I looked back and saw a couple of senior NCOs glaring at me. They were pointing at one of the fuel tank pylons under the wing of my bird. I came back

**"Figmo" was the mascot of the 36th FBS in 1953. He is a very young pup when he was caught inside Lt Paul Gushwa's boot. (credit - Paul Gushwa)**







The 36th FBS at K-13 in 1953. (1st row 1-R) Bob Noel, Herm Grammer, Bill Stacy, Jim James, Jim Lscalle, Jack Senneff, Fick Henderson, Charles Cox, and Lou Reilly. (2nd row L-R) Tom Owen, Lt. Davis, Al Boychuck, Bill **Garvey**, Jack Magee, Cal Owens, James Gray, Darwin Trout, Robert Andrus, Gene Cackel, Chuck Wilson. (3rd row L-R) Capt. King, Kent Dodge, Chuck McCollister, Raoul Mouton, Al Hamilton, Bob Green, Lloyd Irish, Jim Kennedy, Paul **Gushwa**, Bill Demint, F/Lt Ian Gordon-Johnson, RAF. (4th row L-R) Jack Cook, John Mayers, Bill Sternhagen, Jack Mayo, Jack Taylor, Stan Sclaroff, Torr Harmer, Bill LeMaster, Jim **O'Connell**, Rex Van Camp. (credit - USAF)

and was shown two very damaged torn fairings where the tanks were mounted to the wing. The seventeen aileron rolls at high speed had done some damage.

My buddies thought I was lucky. I was a 100 mission pilot on his way home. But the NCOs didn't think I was such a hot shot pilot. They were still glaring at me. Just another ham-handed pilot who should have known better. I remember slinking away.

### "FIGMO"

A sargeant at K-13 had a dog that gave birth to a litter of pups. I took the runt home to Victor Flight's hut. We fed him powdered milk from a punctured condom. I was close to being FIGMO (Forget It, I Got My Orders) so that's what I named the dog. After I rotated home, the rest of Victor Flight took care of the dog. He even won a loving cup in a dog show and was written up in Stars & Stripes. Col. Ruby and FIGMO greeted Vic Hodges when he was repatriated at Freedom Village in September. The 8th Wing went back to Itazuke after the war. And tragically, in the early 1960s, an AP shot FIGMO on the flight line. He was just over 10 years old.

### Meeting "The Splendid Splinter"

by Charlie Cox

On some combat missions, the sky conditions and bad weather added to the challenge of air to ground fighter-bomber work. On one of these, the clouds below were scattered to broken. The target was a North Korean tank training base. Even with

three second spacing, I lost sight of number 3, who was supposed to be right in front of me. Bomb release was close to 4000 feet. When I pulled off the target and climbed above the clouds, I couldn't spot the rest of my flight. So I headed back to K-13 as a single ship.

Close to pitch out, I was told to go around at least three times. Preference was always given to three

Lt Charles Cox **stands** next to the door of Victor Flight hut, K-13 1953. (credit - **Paul Gushwa**)





8th FBG Sabres line the ramp at K-13 in the Summer of 1953 as armorers prepare to load 1000 lb. bombs **under** the wings. "Red Raider" in the foreground, was assigned to Lt Charles Cox. (credit - Paul Gushwa)



Marine Capt. Ted Williams brought this badly damaged F9F Panther back and crashed on the runway at Suwon. Williams, the famous ball player with the Boston Red Sox, walked away and was playing in the All Star Game later that summer. (credit - USAF)

All of Lt Tom Owen's combat aircraft were named "Miss BB", two F-80s and this F-86F, which was #3. (credit - Paul Gushwa)



or four ship formations in the pattern. The mission had sixty four airplanes involved, including eight Marine Pantherjets. Now they were all trying to land at the same time! One of the Marine Panthers had suffered some combat damage and I was told to approach and land as close as possible behind him.

I was perhaps 40-50 yards back when the Marine pilot touched down. His landing gear promptly collapsed and he slid off the runway in a pile of dust. I landed and pulled close. It was then that I saw this giant of a man stand up in the cockpit of that Marine jet. It was Ted Williams the famous ball player. He stepped over the side of the cockpit and walked away, waving to me as he went. A month or so later, he returned to the US just in time to play in the 1956 All-Star Game.

Lt Fick Henderson stands in front of the 8th FBG Operations building at K-13 in 1953. The **8th Group** had three squadrons, the 35th "Panthers", the 36th "Flying Fiends", and the 80th "Headhunters". (credit - Fick Henderson)







**A 4th Wing F-86E in a revetment in early 1952. (credit - NAA)**

*What Is It?* The question for this issue is "When did the 4th Fighter Interceptor Group adopt the black and yellow ID? When the 4th FIG went to Korea in December 1950, their aircraft were painted with distinctive black and white ID bands for quick recognition in combat. In October 1951, 5th AF converted the 51st FIG from F-80s to F-86E Sabres. The 51st adopted black and yellow ID bands for their Sabres as a unit marking. 5th AF liked the black and yellow bands better and ordered the 4th FIG to also use the black and yellow bands. But the date is somewhat fuzzy to the historians. Most research has indicated that the 4th didn't adopt the black and yellow bands until early Spring 1952. However, a recent discussion with a 4th crew chief indicates that it may have been as early as October-November 1951. Anyone with knowledge of when the 4th FIG Sabres began being painted with the black and yellow ID bands on the fuselage and wings, please contact Larry Davis, Editor, 6475 Chesham Dr NE, Canton, OH 44721, ph. (330)493-4122, or e-mail at [sabreclsx@aol.com](mailto:sabreclsx@aol.com).

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