

Sabre Jet Classics



Volume 13, Number 3

FALL 2005

A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association



*Inside: "MINUTE MEN" Team,
44th FBS On Formosa,
F-86 Nose Art,
More*

SabreJet Classics

volume 13, number 3
Fall 2005
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(front cover) An F-86F-2, #51-2884, flown by Capt. John Ferrier - Left Wing at the time. Capt. Ferrier, then flying the Slot position, was killed in a crash at Wright Patterson AFB on June 7th, 1958, flying a similar F-86F-2. (credit - Pete Garremone)



next issue: The Commonwealth
Sabre, More Nose Art,
Evolution Of Sabre ID Bands
In Korea, More!

SabreJet Classics

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the
president's
notebook

I have received verbal confirmation from the Monte Carlo concerning our 2007 reunion. The date I am planning on is April 16 through the 20th 2007. The date selected is after Easter (April 8, 2007), after the Federal tax due date and before the National Broadcaster convention. Hopefully the date selected will accommodate your schedule. Make your plans early and be prepared to have a good time. If you have never been to one of our bashes it's time to do it.

I want to thank everyone who provided information for the individuals on the lost member list. I have sent notices out to all the people I received addresses for and received several positive responses. Unfortunately 16 have passed away.

Congratulations to all the 75 years olds who have taken advantage of the \$100 life membership. We now have 500 life members out of 1680 active members.

For a bunch of old fellows we seem to move around a lot. Thanks for keeping us informed on your new address. The Post Office is good about sending us your new address but it cost the association 70 cents extra postage.

Tom Slee is still looking for 25 F-86D/L drivers who would like a 1/32 scale model. Check the 2005 roster for Tom's phone number and e-mail address.

It is the Holiday Season and we have troops in combat. Most of us have been in combat during this time of year and remember how tough it is. Some of these guys are on their second or third tour. Remember the troops in your prayers and be generous in your contributions to the USO and other organizations supporting our troops.

I have received several inquiries about incorporating F-100 drivers into the F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSN. This subject was discussed during the 2005 15th reunion general membership meeting and disapproved. Since this question seems to have a life of its own let's review the salient points;

The F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSN. is aging and declining in membership numbers. Accepting F-100 pilots into the organization will increase the membership but it will also create a difficult to manage administrative workload.

Currently the only requirement to belong to the association is to have flown the F-86. Since all models of the F-86 have only one seat only pilots can join. A lot of non-pilots flew in the F-100F. Will they be able to join?

At some point in the future the membership of the Sabre Pilots Association (with F-100 membership) will face the same decline in numbers, do to ageing, as the F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSN. What will the solution be then?

Why don't the F-100 pilots start the F-100 Super Sabre Pilots Association?

The F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSN currently enjoys a healthy bank balance. To return part of this money to the members we have underwritten some of the reunion expense during the past years. If we accept a large number of F-100 pilots we won't be able to underwrite the reunions.

Finally there has never been any intention to perpetuate the Sabre Pilots Association. When the last F-86 pilot passes on, a great era will be gone but not forgotten. We have attempted to see to this by sponsoring tablets at the Air and Space Museum at Dulles so the many outstanding people who had the great fortune to fly the fabulous F-86 Sabre have their names etched in steel for all to see.

Check 6

JERRY R. JOHNSON
President



POLICY STATEMENT

The F-86 Sabre Pilots Association does not participate in any solicitation and/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

Greetings from your editor once again. From the number of responses, our last issue was a big success. In that issue, vol. 13-2, we had a list of some 170+ former members that have been "MISSING" from our ranks for a number of years. From that list, we have accounted for some 30+ names. Sadly, about 20 of that number are deceased. But we made contact with the others that are known to be still alive. I urge you to take just a few minutes and look over the list that appeared in vol 13-2. If you know of the status of anyone whose name is on the "Missing" list, please contact either the editor or the Association address in Las Vegas. Many thanks to all who have taken the time to help with this matter so far.

What's new and upcoming with *SabreJet Classics*? Well there is an update on Reunion 14. It will once again be at the Monte Carlo and will take place between 16 April and 20 April 2007. So start making your plans. I am!

Future issues will continue with our series on SabreJet nose art, which debuts in this issue. If you had an airplane with some type of nose art, please send us the photo and notation about the artwork, i.e. why was it named that name.

We also will do feature article on variants of the F-86 such as the Commonwealth CA-27 Sabre and the F-86F-2 'GUNVAL' Sabres. And of course many personal articles about pilots and their adventures flying the F-86. These are my favorite types of articles.

And my annual plea - if you have a story you feel will be interesting to the other members, you're probably correct. So send it along. And don't forget the photos. We need photos of men and aircraft, places and unit insignias like that of the "Minute Men" team featured in this issue. Speaking of the "Minute Men" team, how many other F-86 aerobatic teams were there? Anyone that flew with a team like the 4th FG "Silver Sabres", or the 48th FG "Skyblazers" - we'd sure like to hear from you. Especially if you have photos of your team aircraft.

Well gotta go. Let us know what you'd like to see in the magazine.

Larry Davis
Editor

Edward A. Smith, 336th FIS

"Skeet" Vaughan wants to hear from anyone that flew with Lt. Edward A. Smith, 336th FIS 1953-54. Contact Otha "Skeet" Vaughan, 10102 Westleigh Dr, Huntsville, AL 35803, (256)881-2566, or e-mail skeetv@knology.net

F-86 Sabre Aerobatic Teams

Wanted - Information and/or photos of F-86 Sabre aerobatic teams and crews. Contact Larry Davis, Editor, 6475 Chesham Dr NE, Canton, OH 44721; (330)493-4122, or e-mail sabreclsx@aol.com

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Patches Wanted

Want loan of or color xerox copies of F-86 squadron and flight patches, any unit, any time frame. Special needs include Sabre aerobatic team patches such as the "Silver Sabres" and the "Mach Riders". All to be used in SabreJet Classics magazine. Please contact Larry Davis, Editor, SabreJet Classics, 6475 Chesham Dr NE, Canton, OH 44721; or e-mail at sabreclsx@aol.com

F-86 NOSE ART

Did your F-86 have any personal markings like names or nose art? Your Editor would like to see photos of F-86s of any type, and at any base or unit, with personal markings of any type. Contact Larry Davis, Editor, SabreJet Classics, 6475 Chesham Dr NE, Canton, OH 44721, (330)493-4122, or e-mail sabreclsx@aol.com

letters to the editor

from Andy Andrews

This is in reference to an article in vol. 13, #2, specifically page 15 and "Bugout From Kimpo"

It's always enjoyable to read an interesting article, see pictures of, and review the names of guys involved in an operation. But too, it's truly exasperating to note an obvious error, especially when it involves one's self. That error is the spelling of my name. I am Robert J Andrews, known as "Andy" to my friends. But my name is ANDREWS, not ANDERSON as noted in the caption on page 15.

Some would say 'no big deal'. But to me, it's a sad situation because the Classics magazines, my career stories, and some memorabilia are being saved for my son. So to me, it's a shame that my picture displayed in an article is mididentified with another name.

I'd like to see a correction of this error published in the next issue. I'll be 80 in November so I'd like my old Sabre friends to know that 'Andy' Andrews is still around.

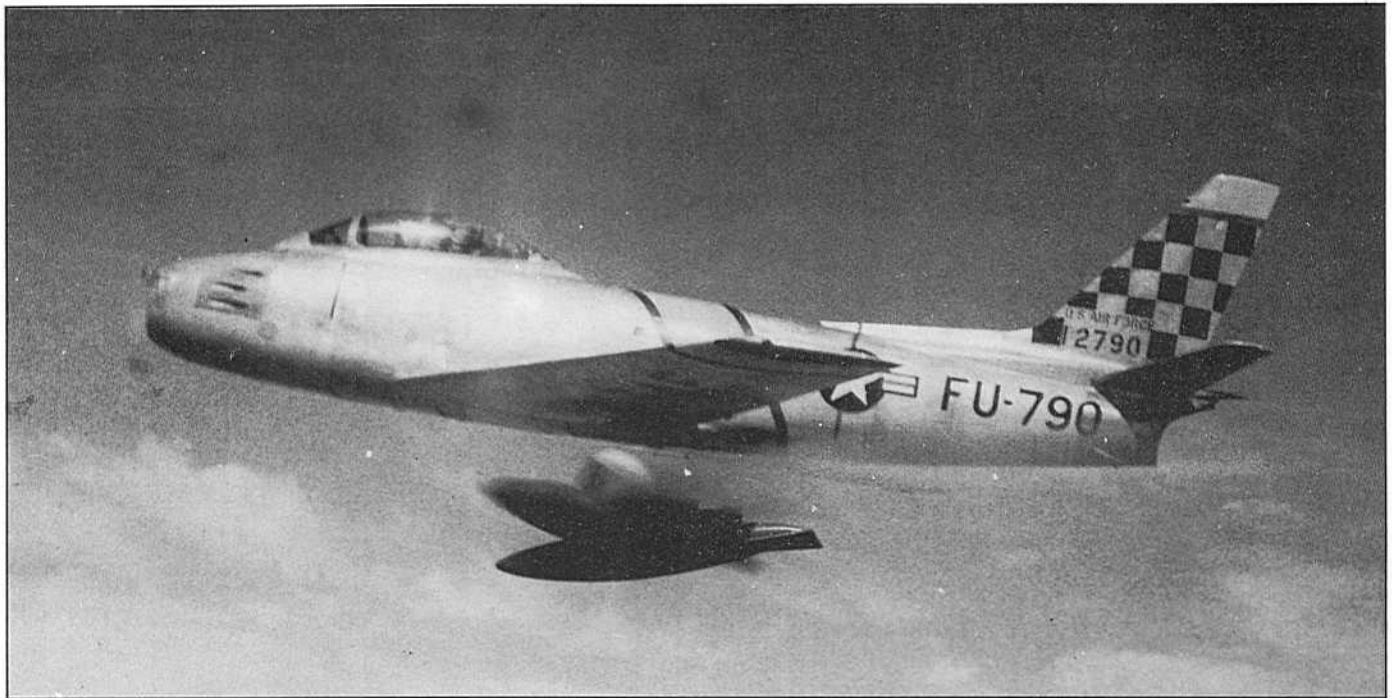


Andy Andrews, John Henderson, Dick Becker, and Nick Farrell talk things over on the Kimpo flightline in December 1950. The four pilots and Henderson, North American Tech Rep, were part of Detachment 'A', the first Sabre unit to fly combat in Korea. (credit - USAF)

editors note: We sincerely apologize to Andy about the misspelling of his name. But both John Henderson and I noted that the photo used came to myself directly from the North American Aviation archives. And on the back of the photo was noted the names of the pilots, including "Andy Anderson". Those notes were made by the photographer in Korea way back in 1950. And as such, have been repeated by every historian and/or author that has used that photo since. I have made the correction on my copy of the photo in my files.

FOLDED WINGS

Jack R. Best, July 16th, 2005
Charlie B. Cox, September 27th 2005
Eugene Edwards, unknown
William E. Enyart, April 26th, 2005
Peter D. Fraser, April 2nd, 2004
Roger Freeman, October 6th, 2005
John T. Guice, October 5th, 2003
Edward B. Landry, March 28th, 2005
Jose E. 'Marty' Martinez, March 10th, 2004
Stuart McCombs, November 2004
Frank L. McNiff, April 29, 2003
Edgar L. O'Neill, November 11th, 2003
Herbert R. Phelps, June 27th, 2005
Whitney B. Robinson, June 18th, 2004
Paul E. Vogel, April 2002
George H. Williams, July 23rd, 2004
Rodney J. Wood, May 27th, 2005



A 25th FIS F-86E drops its tanks over North Korea in the Fall of 1952. As soon as enemy aircraft were sighted, the tanks were dropped and it was "Look Out Below!". These tanks are Japanese-built 120 gallon tanks as signified by their being painted Olive Green. (credit - Bob Baldwin)

on the light side

DUCK!

It wasn't a secret weapon but for a minute during the war in Korea, several 8th Fighter Bomber Group F-80 Shooting Star pilots thought they were under attack by flying saucers.

During the flight home from a Summer 1952 strike at enemy rail lines in MiG Alley, the F-80 pilots suddenly ran into a veritable rain of round silvery objects.

"When I saw those damn things dropping around me I thought the Commies had started hanging artillery on

skyhooks!", said Lt Richard Lynn. "Then I looked up and saw a bunch of F-86 Sabrejets tangling with a whole sky full of MiGs. The Sabres had dropped their tanks to get more speed. There were more tanks coming down than there was flak coming up!"

(editor: During 1952, the F-86s were going north in flights consisting of an entire squadron, at least 16 aircraft - that's 32 drop tanks. And usually more than one squadron was involved! Plus the MiG-15 bis could carry underwing tanks and many did.)

None of the Shooting Stars was hit by the tanks, and the F-80 pilots were very thankful that the Sabres were keeping the MiGs off their necks. The MiGs weren't real happy though as they lost 4 airplanes that day - and it wasn't to 'flying saucers'!

SABRES AROUND THE WORLD

In a preview of an article slated for *SabreJet Classics*, vol. 14-1, we have two photos of the prototype Commonwealth CA-27 Sabre built specifically for the Royal Australian Air Force. Production versions of the CA-27 Sabre had a Rolls Royce Avon powerplant rated at over 7500 lbs. of thrust; and were armed with two 30mm Aden cannon. In other respects they were very similar to a standard F-86F Sabre, including leading edge slats. (credit - Larry Davis collection)



IT WAS A FUNNY LOOKING BIRD

Ned

For nearly a month, UN fighter pilots in Korea were catching glimpses of a 'new Russian jet' in the skies over Korea. I finally got a crack at this 'funny looking bird' in early 1952. Lt. Jim Carey, 4th FIG, found himself on the tail of this 'funny looking bird.' "It looked like a MiG-15, except that the wings were high up on the fuselage, where the MiG-15 was a mid-wing aircraft. I gave him a few bursts and caught him in the right wing. Then other MiGs started coming at me from all sides and I had to get out of there. The MiGs seemed to be trying to protect the new boy."

The next day, a bunch of our guys spotted a formation of the new planes, but the Reds refused to fight and ran back across the Yalu River. 5th Air Force's first hunch was that the Russians were trying an advanced MiG-15, possibly the much rumored MiG-17. Later the 5th AF brass guessed that it was either an older, experimental MiG model that never went into mass production; or no MiG at all and they tentatively dubbed it a "type 15". Lt. Carey was KIA a few days after this encounter on 24 March 1952. And mt records indicate that the "type 15" was actually a Lavochkin LA-15.

Somewhere in my video tapes I have a 15 second blurb of gun camera film showing an LA-15 being shot at from behind. I noticed that it wasn't a MiG-15 because of the high location of the wings on the fuselage. That and the radio antenna mast was directly behind the canopy instead of angled from the right side as on the MiG-15.

I also read in a Czech magazine that noted - "A USSR VVS unit of LA-15 jet fighters was directed to go to North Korea. The unit's airmen started training flights

at an improvised airfield to get acquainted with the sector of operations. Almost immediately, the LA-15 main drawback became apparent - insufficient stability on landing under bad conditions. Within a short period of time four aircraft crashed. It was clear that the LA-15 did not pass the combat tests, and remaining aircraft were sent back to the USSR. Within a short period of time, production of the LA-15 was closed down."

Following this note I contacted Diego Zampini about the possibility. Yes, he's the same guy that wants to discredit Sabre pilots victory claims. But he's also a wealth of knowledge about the Soviet side of the air war in Korea. His response:

"I already knew about Lt. Carey's claim of shooting at what he identified as a LA-15. It was one of the first things I asked Mr. Igor Seidov, one of the more important Russian historians. However, his answer did not bring any more light on the subject. Mr. Seidov said, "I have no documents about the use of the LA-15 in Korea, despite the stubborn rumors that they were there."

I contacted another Russian historian on the Korean War, Mr. Mikhail Zhirovkov. He responded that he had met a Mr. B. Krenin and that Mr. Krenin had told him that indeed, he had flown the LA-15 in Korea. However, Krenin could not provide any photos or other evidence of his claim. Zhirovkov has made a number of attempts at locating any evidence that the LA-15 was deployed to Manchuria in official Soviet document archives.

So what we have is gun camera footage showing a Russian jet fighter with high fuselage wings being shot at by an American Sabre in the skies over Korea; as opposed to official Russian archives showing that no such airplane was there. Interesting, don't you think? Does anyone else have any knowledge or gun camera film of an encounter with a "strange looking bird"?

Our "WHAT IS IT?" aircraft from the last issue, vol. 13-2, really stumped you guys. And I thought sure I would have heard from the guy I met in Las Vegas that actually flew this airplane. We asked why an F-86H would have a Lockheed 'Starfighter' logo on the nose. The answer was that the airplane was bailed to Lockheed for use as a chase aircraft in the F-104G/S Starfighter program. The photo was taken outside the Lockheed hanger at Edwards. I'd still like to hear from anyone that can shed a little more light on this program. Contact the SabreJet Classics editor.





A 44th FBS F-86F over the Philippines during June 1954. The 44th FBS, and Bob Matasick, deployed to Tao-Yuan AB on Formosa for a mobility exercise in September 1955. (credit - USAF)

MY FIFTEEN MINUTE FIRE DRILL

by Bob Matasick

My form 5 for 13 September 1955 says it was a flight of 15 minutes with one landing. But what an interesting 15 minutes!

The 44th FBS was in its eighth day of a mobility exercise. We were operating out of Tao-Yuan Air Base on Formosa, living in 12 man tents, eating at a field kitchen, hating those outdoor latrines - but still flying training missions as if we were still at Kadena.

That morning I was scheduled to tow the target for the first mission of the day. As I left my tent and headed toward the operations shack, I could see that there weren't any holes in the cloud deck, and knew we'd be sitting around waiting for the weather to lift. After some time, a few holes began to appear and I was given the OK to go.

Everything was normal on the start-up, so I taxied to the end of the runway where the armament crew attached the target to my F-86. My ADF was tuned to the home field frequency (subsequent events cause me to wonder whether I really did have the proper frequency), but I deliberately didn't have it on "auto" since it was believed that the target could lead to false indications.

Run-up at 90% was normal so I released the brakes, pushed the throttle to 100% and started my take-off roll. I pulled the plane off at about 130 knots, and tried to climb at an angle that would maintain my airspeed just above 130 to prevent the target from rotating or tearing loose. I immediately began searching for holes in the cloud deck to minimize turbulence since I was dragging the target just above stall speed.

As I weaved my way through various openings, I concentrated on finding the next opening, being aware that I could get a fix on my position once I cleared the cloud deck. However, my concentration was interrupted by a horrific "Bang!" in the aft fuselage. It felt like a jolly green giant had wielded one hellacious blow with his sledgehammer. Almost instantaneously, both the forward and aft fire warning lights glared at me, and the entire airplane began vibrating so severely that it felt like it was going to shake itself apart.

Bob Matasick, 44th FBS 1955. (credit - Bob Matasick)



I'd always heard that old adage that flying was hours of sheer boredom, interrupted by moments of stark terror. In my case, it wasn't "moments". I certainly experienced many seconds of helplessness when I wondered just what the hell was going on. After the initial shock, I started talking to myself:

"No need to panic, just go through the emergency procedures. Get rid of the target!" However, as I moved to jettison the target, I realized that it was already gone. I'd automatically popped it off without realizing it. "Throttle back to idle." Here again, as I moved to the throttle, I found it already back in the Idle position - another automatic reaction.

Unfortunately, neither of those actions seemed to help. The fire warning lights were still glowing, and the vibration was still rattling me around the cockpit. There was no other choice but to stopcock the throttle and shut down the engine. That helped ease the vibration, but those damn fire warning lights kept staring at me with an ominous red glow. They seemed to be reminding me that I had about 20 seconds before the compressor section would blow if the forward fire warning light wasn't a malfunction. And with the explosion and vibration I'd just experienced, I had every reason to believe that the warnings were real.

I finally made the decision to bail out and started through the bail out procedure by lowering my head prior to jettisoning the canopy. However, I was still mesmerized by the warning lights and never took my eyes off them as I lowered my head. Just as I was about to raise the ejection handle, the lights went out. I blinked and took a second look. Sure enough, the lights were out. With the lights out and the vibration gone, I decided to reassess my situation rather than doing something foolish like bailing out - at least not yet.

My altitude was just over 3000 feet, and air speed was about 135 knots. I lowered the nose to gain the optimum glide speed of 185 knots, and flipped the ADF control to automatic. The ADF needle pointed to my 2 o'clock position so I eased the airplane to the right to get the needle on the nose. I decided to ride it out down to 1500 feet. If I didn't have a runway in sight by then, I'd go ahead and bail out.

About that time, with everything in some semblance of control, I felt I had time to declare an Mayday! and make Mobile Control aware of my situation:

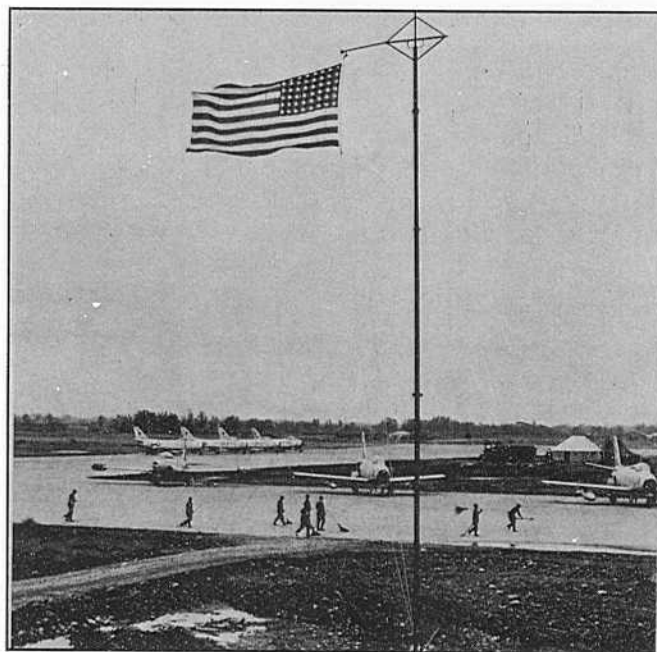
"Mobile, this is Punchbowl White Tow, I have a Mayday!"

"Roger White Tow, what's your problem?"

"Mobile, I've had an explosion in the aft section, Both fire warning lights were on. I've stopcocked the throttle and the lights are out."

"White Tow, drop the target and jettison your tanks."

Almost simultaneous with the last communication, I broke below the cloud deck and spotted a runway at 1 o'clock. I'd had a number of simulated flame-out approaches, but they were always the 'standard' approach of being over the field at 6,000 feet and then 'playing' a 360° turn into a landing at the end of the runway. As low as I was, I knew it was going to be a straight-in approach. But it appeared that I was going



The American flag flies proudly over Tao-Yuan AB, Formosa with US Air Force F-86F Sabres on alert in the background. (credit - USAF)

to be too high when I reached the end of the runway. So, not only did I not drop the tanks, I also lowered the landing gear.

"Mobile, the target is already gone. But I need the tanks to lose some altitude."

"Roger White Tow, where are you?"

"Mobile, I'm north of the field about five miles out."

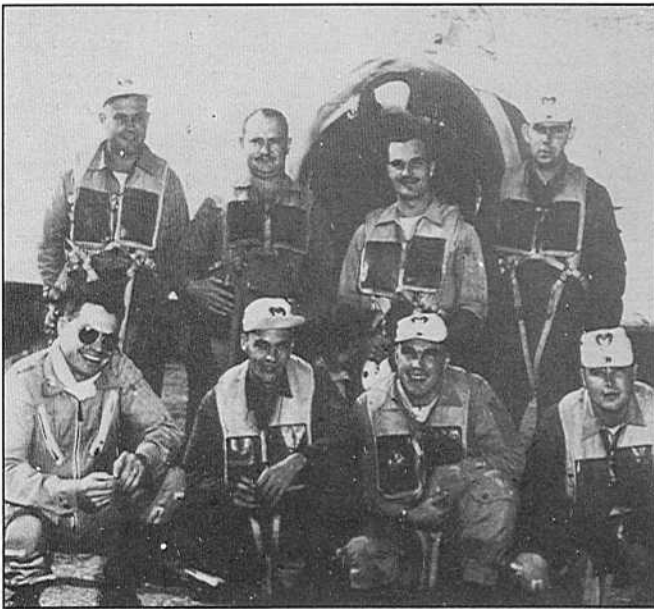
"Roger, White Tow. We don't have you in sight. Keep us advised."

"Roger Mobile."

Suddenly I realized that I was losing altitude much faster than I anticipated. I hadn't taken into account that every time I made a simulated flame-out approach, I'd done

The engine compressor in Bob Matasick's F-86F showing the damage caused when five compressor blades cut loose. (credit - Bob Matasick)





White Flight, 44th FBS - (L-R front row) Capt. Amos Leighton, LTs Carroll Blum, Glen Nordin, and Bob Matasick. (back row) LT Paul Watts, Capt. Thurman 'Speedy' Butler, and LTs Dick Lee and Bob Stone. (credit - Bob Matasick)

so at the end of a mission when I was very light on fuel. Here I had almost a full fuel load and it was making a very big difference.

I immediately dropped the tanks and flipped the gear lever into the Up position. But the gear did not retract. "Oh Shit!", I exclaimed, realizing that with a dead engine, I had no hydraulic pressure. There was nothing to do except to flip the gear lever back and hope that gravity would work its magic and ease the gear into the locked position. I breathed a sigh of relief when the panel showed Down and Locked.

As I continued my approach to the field, I began checking the landscape for some of the landmarks that were north of Tao-Yuan - but nothing looked familiar. Suddenly it dawned on me. I wasn't coming into TaoYuan! That caused me some concern as I didn't have a runway being held for me. That meant I might be faced with dodging some other aircraft that were trying to land or take off. Fortunately, I couldn't see any activity so it appeared that I wouldn't have to wrestle with any Chinese planes for the runway. (I later learned that the Chinese squadrons had stood down until the weather cleared a bit more.)

I was about to advise Mobile about the situation when I spotted some electrical lines blocking my approach. I immediately abandoned all thoughts of making a position advisory. I had more important matters to consider.

I really had no choice on what I was going to do. I sure as hell wasn't about to give up any altitude by trying to go under the power lines. And I certainly wasn't about to try to 'stretch' my glide and risk a stall by trying to pull up and over. So it was strictly a case of gritting my teeth and boring through. I was totally surprised at how easily the F-86 went through those wires. There wasn't a jolt or any other disruption to a smooth glide. Just a few 'pings' as the wires broke, and a couple of sparks as the ends of the wires brushed along my fuselage.



'Tweedle Dum' and 'Tweedle Dee'. On the left is Glenn Nordin, past President of the F-86 Pilots Assn., was known as "Tweedle Dee"; and Bob Matasick known as "Tweedle Dum". (credit - Bob Matasick)

From there on, it was strictly a matter of trying to coax the airplane down to a hard surface. It was obvious that I couldn't make the runway, but I could see that I was going to make it to the overrun. As I flared out however, I recognized another problem: the crash barrier was set up for landing from the opposite direction! But again, there was no decision to make. Get the nose gear on the ground and plow ahead! Fortunately, the F-86 snapped the cable without so much as a jerk and rolled on down the runway.

I turned off on a taxiway and brought the plane to a halt, opened the canopy and was unstrapping myself when a jeep with two Chinese soldiers drove up. "Flame-out!", I announced to them, hoping that those words would be understood. They looked at each other and then back at me. One finally muttered something that sounded like "Whey". With that, they started to drive away.

"Halt!", I shouted as I was crawling out of the cockpit. When the jeep stopped I tried some other words, "Mayday! Mayday!" That had almost the same effect: a puzzling look back at me, another "Whey" and they started to drive off again.

"Halt!", I shouted again. They seemed to understand that word because they stopped a third time.

By this time I was on the ground and running toward the jeep. They looked a little surprised as I jumped into the back seat and said, "Take me to someone who speaks English!" I'm certain they didn't understand a word that I said, but I am just as certain that they came to the conclusion that they should take me to someone who spoke English because they looked at each other with that same puzzling manner, muttered something in Chinese, and then drove directly to the operations building.

I was ushered in to a Chinese major who spoke fairly good English. I explained the situation and told him that I needed to contact the 44th at Tao-Yuan to advise



Four 44th FBS F-86Fs fly a patrol over Formosa in 1955. Note that three airplanes have the 44th FBS 'Vampire Bat' on the tail; while the fourth Sabre has no tail marking and retains the old FEAF ID bands around the fuselage. (credit - USAF)

them that I was safely on the ground and exactly where that was. He said he'd have someone try to "get through" for me, then invited me to sit down and relax. He asked, "Would you like some cookies and milk while you're waiting?"

I really wasn't in the mood for cookies and milk (a double scotch would have been more in order!), but we'd been briefed on Chinese etiquette and I knew it was impolite to refuse an offer such as this. I said, "Yes sir, that would be very nice." In short order, he was back with the cookies and milk. But the second that I took the glass from him, I knew that I had a real problem. It was HOT milk. And if there's anything I can't stand, it's hot milk.

I knew I had to find a way to get that milk down, so I decided to handle it as if it were some foul-tasting medicine. I took a large gulp, swallowing it quickly, then shoved a cookie into my mouth. After a short respite, I followed the same procedure - large gulp, swallow, shove cookies into my mouth. Finally after a tortuous number of repetitions, I had an empty glass and was feeling proud of the fact that, at great sacrifice, I had managed to preserve good Chinese-American relations.

About that time, the major advised me that the phone connection to the 44th had been completed and pointed me to the phone. As I arose, he noticed my empty glass and asked how I liked the cookies and milk. "It was very good," I lied. "Thank you very much." "Good", he replied, "I will get you some more."

"No!", I almost shouted. The major looked at me in a rather startled manner and I realized that I had some fast talking to do. "It was very good" I explained, "but I am very full and really shouldn't eat any more right now. Perhaps later." He seemed to accept my explanation and led me to the phone. My phone conversation was

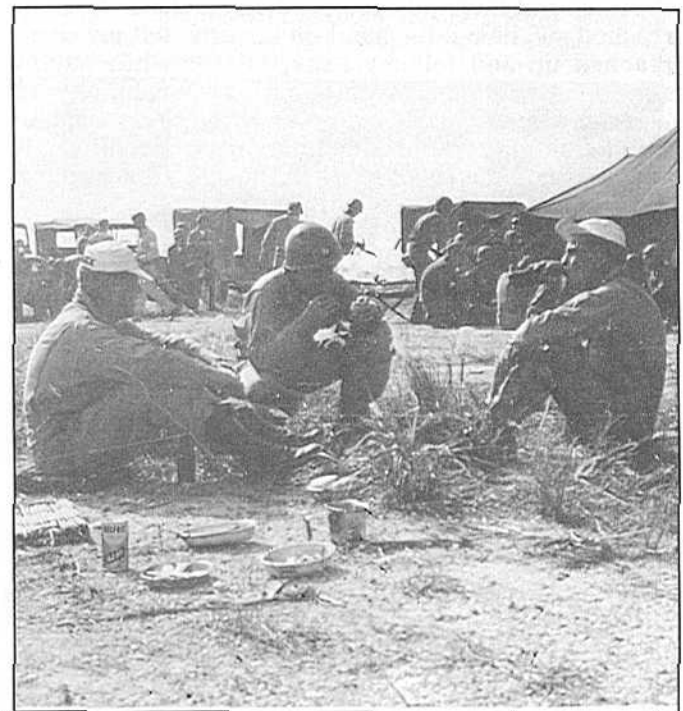


(L-R) Bob Matasick, Glenn Nordin, and Paul Watts hold an impromptu pre-flight briefing in the 44th FBS operations tent during a mobility exercise at Yon Tan AB, Okinawa. (credit - Bob Matasick)

rather short; a quick summary of what happened and where I was, followed by instructions to stay put until a helicopter arrived to take me back to Tao-Yuan.

I returned to my seat and advised the major that a helicopter would be coming for me. He nodded and we continued to make small talk for short while. Before long, a command car pulled up and a rotund Chinese general emerged, followed by several others. As they approached

(L-R) Bob Matasick, Capt. Harry Warwick, and Carroll Blum, enjoy a steak fry during the mobility exercise held at Yon Tan AB, Okinawa. (credit - Bob Matasick)





During Operation GOODWILL, the 44th FBS sent a flight of four Sabres from Clark AB to Don Muang Airport in Bangkok, Thailand. The near aircraft, FU-880, was flown by Maj. Don Robinson, Commander of the 44th FBS in June 1954. (credit - USAF)

the door, the entire room snapped to attention and I followed suit. I had no idea who this person was, but he certainly appeared to be someone to be treated with respect, and I did my best to do so.

As we all stood at attention, the general looked around the room and then walked directly toward me. When he reached me, he put his hand on my arm, felt my chest, reached up and felt my neck, all the while saying something in Chinese. My imagination was running wild: Was this some type of Chinese foreplay, God forbid, or the preliminary to a condemnation proceeding? My apprehension was relieved when the major interpreted; "General wants to know if you were hurt?" "No, sir", I responded "I'm fine!"

More words from the general, interpreted by the major: "General says you should not worry about knocking out the power in this northern section of Formosa." I can't remember exactly what I said, but it was some sort of apology for whatever damage I'd caused. My comment was followed by more words between the major and the general and then interpreted; "You should not worry. We are just happy that you were not injured." "Thank you, sir!"

With that, the general and his entourage completed their inspection and departed. A short while later, the helicopter arrived and whisked me back to Tao-Yuan. Life was back to normal.

Bob Matasick was awarded the "Order Of The Able Aeronaut", a FEAF flight safety award, for the forced landing described in the story. (credit - Bob Matasick)





"Minute Men" F-86Fs line the ramp at Buckley Air National Guard Base in 1958. The second aircraft, F-86F-2 #51-2900, the Slot position Sabre, was destroyed in a crash at Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio, on 7 June 1958, killing the pilot, Capt. John Ferrier. (credit - Bob Esposito)

THE MINUTE MEN

The Air Guard's only official jet acrobatic team

by Gobel James

How it began: In 1953, Lt.Col. Walt Williams, Commander of the Colorado Air Guard's 120th Fighter Squadron, and three squadron pilots, put together an informal acrobatic team, flying the F-80C that had recently replaced the unit's F-51's.

The unofficial team consisted of Lt.Col. Williams - Lead; Maj. Ranger Curran - Right Wing, A.F. Advisor to the 120th, had previously flown with the Alaskan Air Command acrobatic team, the Arctic Gladiators; Maj. Warren Harvey - Left Wing, a full time Air Guard technician; and Lt. Dick Hueholt - Slot. All had flown combat in Korea. No additional funding was available, so all expenses came out of the 140th Fighter Wing's budget. Lacking any funding for special uniforms, the team members dyed their flight suits black and bought matching black baseball caps.

The *Minute Men* began putting on shows locally and later, as their fame spread, began performing outside of Colorado. In the fall of 1956, Air Force Secretary Donald Quarles was in the audience when the team performed at an air show in Spokane, Washington. It may have been a coincidence, but, a few days later the *Minute Men* team was declared the *official* "Jet Precision Demonstration Team for the Air National Guard of the United States". By then, the team of 'weekend warriors' had added a Solo aircraft flown by Wynn Coomer, a United Airlines Pilot. Capt. Bob Cherry, a Guard technician had replaced Major Harvey at left Wing, and Capt. John Ferrier, also a United Airlines pilot, had replaced Lt. Hueholt in the Slot.

After the *Minute Men* became the official team for the Air Guard, scheduling was handled by Air National Guard Headquarters in Washington D. C. The workload immediately increased and the team performed at more than 38 official airshows the following year (1957). In mid-1957, Maj. Curran, the only active duty officer to ever fly with the *Minute Men*, was transferred and replaced at Right Wing by Lt. Bo Odle, a full time Air Guard technician.

A "Minute Men" F-86F-2 at Buckley ANGB in 1958. All the original "Minute Men" Sabres were F-86F-2s, which had conducted combat tests in Korea under Project GUNVAL. (credit - Jim Carter)





The "Minute Men" fly a tight diamond formation during an air show at Denver in March 1958. The underside of the team aircraft was painted red. (credit - North American)

In early 1958, the team received 7 F-86F's. And not just any F-86F Sabres. These were the remaining F-86F-2 Sabres that had flown the GUNVAL combat tests in Korea. They were experimentally fitted with four T-160 20mm cannons (M39 operational designation) that would equip the F-86H. As with most other jet acrobatic teams, the armament was removed and the aircraft were rebalanced with ballast in the nose. The fire control system was removed and smoke tanks and piping were added within the rear fuselage. But otherwise they were standard F-86F Sabres.

After a brief transition period, the team put on its first show in the Sabre at Jacksonville, Florida. During that year, the *Minute Men* performed at approximately 40 airshows throughout the United States. They were often joined by the inimitable acrobatic pilot, Bob Hoover, who would perform his solo act using one of the team's aircraft.

On June 7, 1958, the team suffered its only accident while performing at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, before a group of West Point cadets. The team had just completed the rollout from the bomb-burst maneuver when the Slot man's aircraft, flown by Capt. John Ferrier, began a rolling high angle descent toward the small town of Fairborn, Ohio, on the edge of Patterson Field. The aircraft impacted in a small clearing in the midst of 4 houses. A woman and several children were knocked to the ground but no one was injured, with the exception of Capt. Ferrier. He was killed upon impact. It was determined that a flight control malfunction caused the crash. Based on eye witness accounts, although he had ample altitude to eject, Capt. Ferrier stayed with the aircraft and used his limited control to guide it into the open area. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for that courageous act.

Captain Ferrier was replaced in the slot position by Lt. Gobel James, an aeronautical engineering student at the University of Colorado, who'd been flying one of the Solo positions. Capt. Ron Jankovsky, a United Airlines pilot, also joined the team as a solo pilot.

In early 1959, Lt.Col. Williams left the team to become Wing Commander of the Colorado ANG. He was replaced as team leader by the Left Wingman, Capt. Cherry. Lt. John France, a law student at Denver University, who had joined as a Solo pilot a month before, moved to the Left Wing.

In May of 1959, the *Minute Men* were informed that, for budgetary reasons, the team would be disbanded. However, the team was very nearly disbanded earlier than planned. They were scheduled to put on a show at Kelly AFB. The distance from Denver to Kelly was within a clean Sabre's range. Thus, they elected to make the trip without external tanks. The weather at Kelly was not forecast to be great, but was expected to be reasonable. When they arrived over San Antonio, the weather was lower than expected and Randolph AFB was worse. Fuel soon became an issue. Maj. Cherry was leading and Col. Williams had gone along as the Solo because the regular Solo pilot, Wynn Coomer, was scheduled to fly a trip for United Airlines.

Cherry started a 5 ship VOR approach and had no sooner entered the tops of the clouds when his VOR failed. He called Col. Williams and told him that he would have to take over the letdown. Williams didn't have VOR in his aircraft and there ensued a flurry of activity of aircraft changing positions and letdown books flying around Williams cockpit, as he looked for the ADF letdown sheet. As the formation was making the turn to GCA final approach, the controller called and said, "Redeye, be advised that we have lost you." Col Williams replied, "Roger, if you don't pick us up, give me a bailout heading for 5 aircraft!"

The Slot man had declared emergency fuel during descent and all the other aircraft were nervously low. The weather was now 100 feet and 1/4 mile visibility, with rain. Happily, a few seconds later, GCA picked up the aircraft and guided them in for a 5 ship landing. All fighter pilots have experienced the feeling of relief that came over each of us as we touched down and great plumes of water spewed up from all 5 aircraft. The Slot man flamed out on engine runup before shutdown and each of the other aircraft had less than two minutes fuel remaining. Just another routine day in the life of a fighter pilot.

The team's last performance was at Grand Junction, Colorado, on July 10, 1959. The following month, sadly, the Sabres were ferried to the boneyard at Davis Monthan AFB, thus ending the last official U.S. demonstration team to fly the F-86 Sabre.

No discussion of the *Minute Men* would be complete without mentioning Ed Mack Miller, a United Airlines Instructor Pilot who was the team's narrator and publicity officer; Bill Koger, a Denver attorney who was the team's intrepid support pilot and alternate narrator who flew the team's aging C-47 from Alaska to Panama and throughout the continental U.S. without a single incident; and, the expert and totally dedicated crewchiefs who

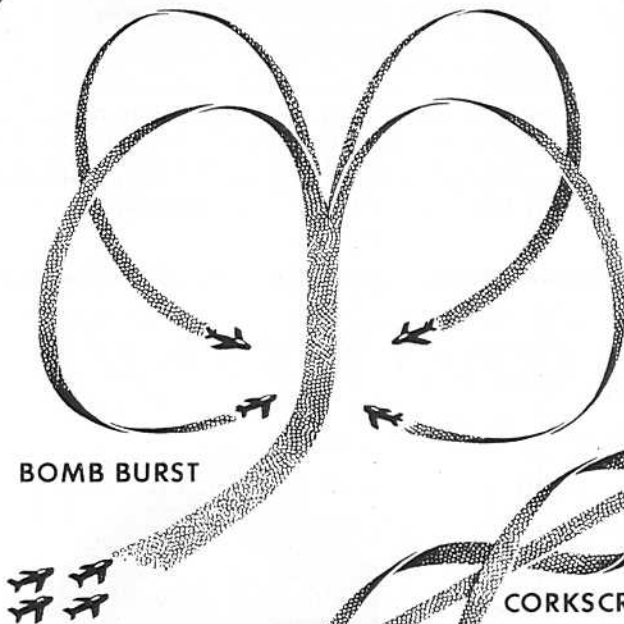


Minute Men

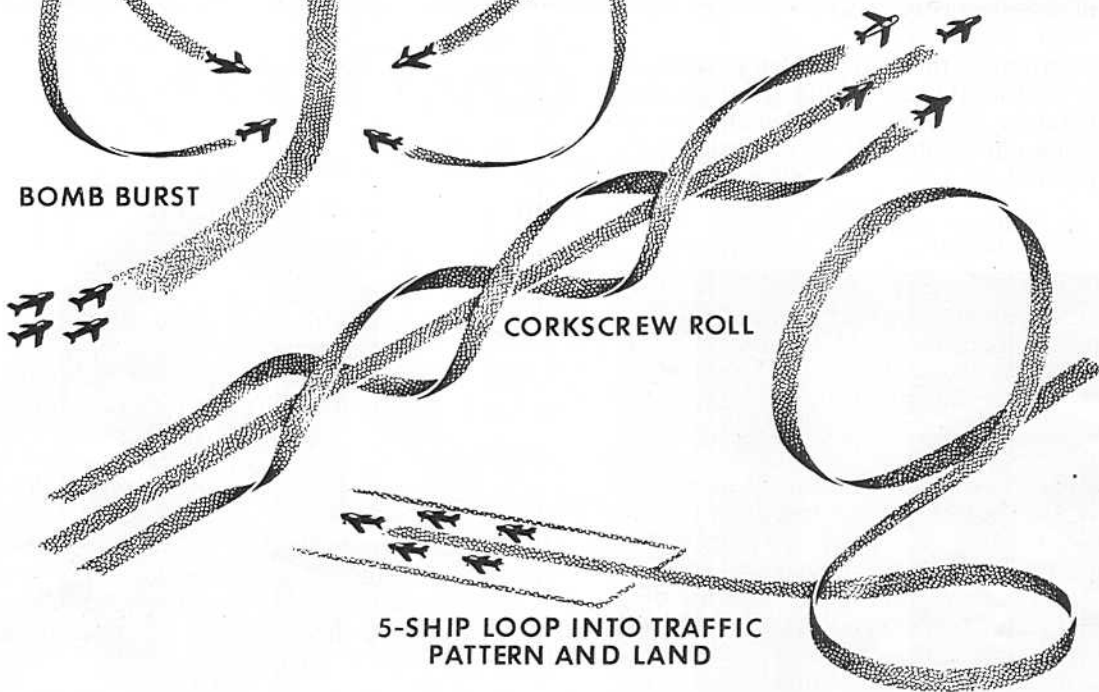
AIR NATIONAL GUARD PRECISION TEAM
FLYING F-86 SUPERSONIC SABRE JETS



CHANGE-OVER
LOOP



BOMB BURST



CORKSCREW ROLL



5-SHIP LOOP INTO TRAFFIC
PATTERN AND LAND



DIAMOND ROLL



8-POINT ROLL

MANEUVERS

- ATTENTION PASS
- DIAMOND LOOP
- CHANGE-OVER LOOP
- SOLO - 4-POINT ROLL
- DIAMOND ROLL
- CHANGE-OVER ROLL
- SOLO - 8-POINT ROLL
- 360° LOW TURN
- SOLO INVERTED FLIGHT
- CORKSCREW
- SOLO - HAWAIIAN "8"
- BOMB BURST
- 5-SHIP LOOP
- 5-SHIP ROLL
- ECHELON ROLL



A "Minute Men" F-86F-2 in the maintenance shops at Buckley in 1958. The F-86F-2s that the team flew, had been experimentally fitted with T-160 (M39) 20mm cannons and combat tested in Korea with members of the 4th FIG. (credit - Pete Garremone)

worked many 18 hour days to insure that enough Sabres were always available for every show.

During its brief existence, the *Minute Men* performed in 47 states, as well as Hawaii (using the Hawaiian Guard's F80C's), Alaska, Nicaragua, and Panama, as well as impromptu shows at Guatamala City, Mexico City, and Kingston, Jamaica.

Colonel Walter E. Williams was Team Leader of the "Minute Men". (Gobel James)



"Minute Men" Sabres on the ground in Guatamala in 1958. As the 'official' Air National Guard aerobatic team, the "Minute Men" flew shows all over America, including several shows in Central America before being disbanded in July 1959. (credit - C.L. Sutherland)





Henry Crescibene flew the "Newark Fireball" with the 335th FIS in Korea during 1952. The art was painted by Karl Dittmers. (credit - Karl Dittmers)

F-86 Sabre Nose Art

"Dennis The Menace" was an F-86F with the 67th FBS in Korea in 1953. (lower left) "Seein Eye Dawg" was Arlie Sanders' F-86D when he flew with the 97th FIS. (lower right) Capt. Karl Dittmers, shown putting the finishing touches on Troy Cope's "Rosie", was one of the most talented artists in Korea, serving with the 335th FIS (credit - Bernard Kibort, Arlie Sanders, and Karl Dittmers)



My F-86D airplane #739 The "Seein Eye Dawg"
Sgt Oesch, My crewchief





(top left) Capt. George Otis flew the "Kentucky Rifle" when he went to the 1955 Yuma Rocket Meet with the 82nd FIS. (top right) Another "Dennis The Menace" flew with the 97th FIS at Wright Patterson AFB. Many of the 97th FIS F-86Ds sported nose art. (left) True 'art' is exhibited on this 39th FIS F-86F at Suwon AB in 1953. (credit - North American, David Menard collection, and Warren Thompson collection)

The pilot of this Maryland Air Guard F-86H must have been considered a 'playboy' as he even named his airplane after the famous magazine logo. For the most part, Guard aircraft did not have much nose art or personal markings. (credit - Larry Davis collection)



BOOK REVIEW:

**“SABRES OVER MiG ALLEY”
The F-86 and the Battle
For Air Superiority in Korea**

By Kenneth P. Werrell

Naval Institute Press
291 Wood Road
Annapolis, MD 21402-5034

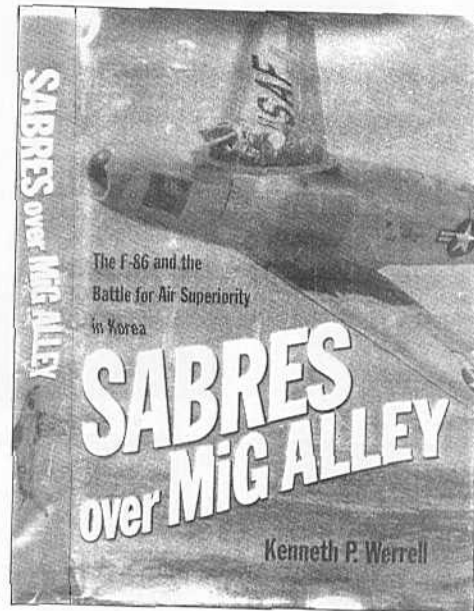
www.navalinstitute.org

It is not often that an historical work is promptly recognized as preeminent and perhaps the “last” word on a particular topic. This is such a book, and Dr. Richard P. Hallion, former USAF Chief Historian, declares it “...the best treatment of the [F-86] I’ve read....one of a kind.” William T. Y. Blood, USAF Historian, says “It is a unique book filled with valuable and relatively unknown information.” This is not a “coffee table” book similar to several excellent F-86 books of that type (many referenced by the author of SOMA). Rather it could be considered a textbook for study of the Sabre and its pilots.

The author, an Air Force Academy graduate ('60) and former USAF pilot who went on to earn his doctorate in history, has many published works focused on military aviation history.

“Sabres Over MiG Alley” is an extraordinarily well-researched and documented book. Sixty former Sabre pilots were interviewed by the author, and the extensive footnotes cite the many sources for his detailed account of the F-86, its employment, and its pilots.

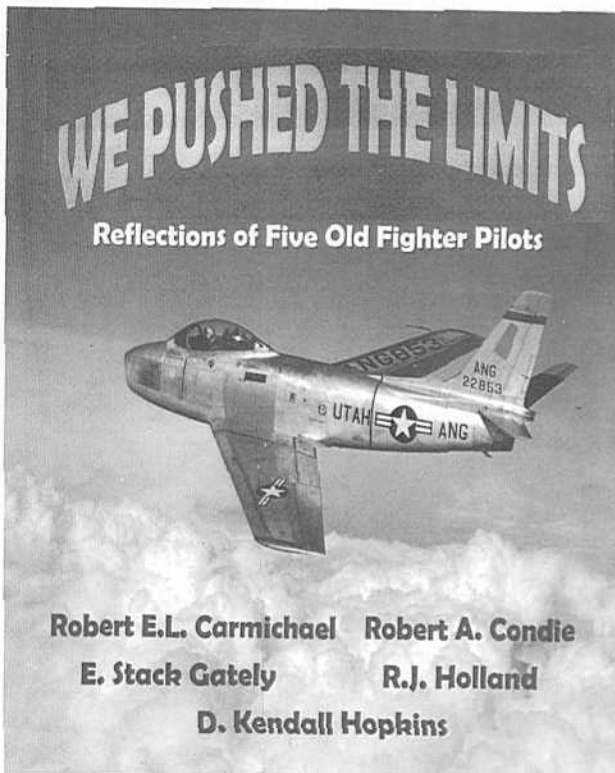
The narrative flows easily from the development of the F-86 to its role in Korea, and finally to an in-depth look (warts and all) at the premier Sabre pilots - aces mostly. The first two portions are superbly documented and contain many little-known facts. The



mini-biographies of the aces rely heavily on cited interviews with the subjects themselves and those who knew them. Some of these are intensely personal and even painful. Unfortunately, at times it is difficult to distinguish between comments made by the interviewees and conclusions drawn by the author. Aside from a few clearly incorrect dates and an occasional gratuitous comment which misses the mark, this is an objective and scholarly work.

Dr. Werrell’s closing words will surely ingratiate him to fans of the beautiful Sabre: “...the F-86 remains the most successful air to air fighter of all time.... It’s outstanding success in Korea won it and its pilots a well-deserved place in aviation history.”

Definitely recommended reading.

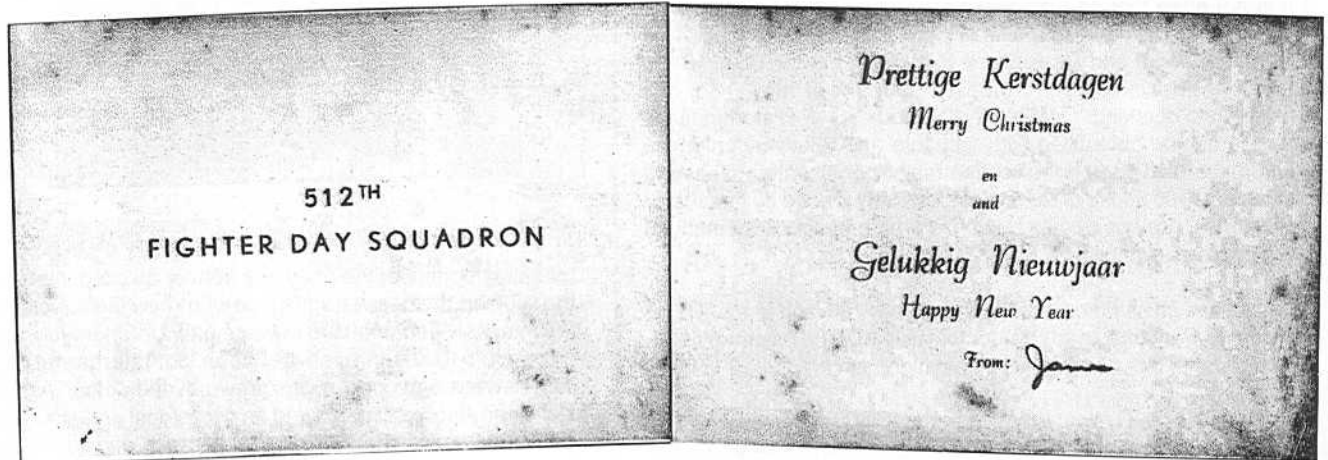
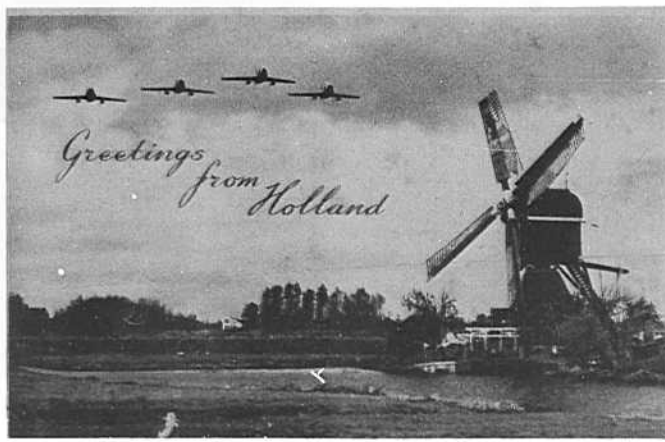


book preview

“We Pushed the Limits”

Hard cover book of flying stories by five former F-86 pilots: R.E. Carmichael, Robert A. Condie, E. Stack Gately, R.J. Holland and Kendall Hopkins.

Available from R.A. Condie,
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