

Sabre Jet Classics



Volume 22, Number 1

Spring 2014



*Inside – 56 FEAF Gunnery Meet, Three Flameouts,
54th FIS History, Sabres Over Ubon, More*

Publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association

SabreJet Classics

volume 22, number 1
Spring 2014

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Front cover – A pair of 79 Squadron, RAAF Sabres at Ubon RTAB in 1968. 79 Sq flew 'top cover' over Ubon as the 8th TFW F-4s recovered from missions over North Vietnam. (credit – Jim Flemming)

SabreJet Classics is published by the F-86 Sabre Pilots Assn. The F-86 Sabre Pilots Assn. is a non-profit, veterans organization, with membership limited to individual pilots who have flown the F-86 Sabre aircraft. The goals of the Association is to "perpetuate the history of the F-86 Sabre, the units to which it was assigned, and the men that flew the Sabre"; and to perpetuate an accurate, patriotic portrayal of our national, military, and Air Force history and heritage. If you are NOT a member, but meet the membership qualifications, you are invited to join. Application forms are available on our website or at the Las Vegas address. Dues are \$25/year, \$50/3 years. SabreJet Classics is published solely for the private use of association members. No portion of SabreJet Classics may be used or reprinted without permission from the President of the Association, and the Editor of the magazine. SabreJet Classics is published three times per year. Extra copies of an issue can be ordered at \$3.00/copy. Subscriptions for non-members are available at \$25/year. All payments should be made payable to "F-86 Sabre Pilots Assn.", and sent to the Las Vegas address.

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the president's notebook

By the time this issue of the Classics gets to you, the remarkably harsh winter for many parts of the country will be past along with all the cold and flu bugs that go with it and we can look forward to an enjoyable Spring. There are a few items concerning our association that I would like to share with you. One is the F-86 Sabre hat that we gave to our reunion attendees that left over for sale. Another is an update on our new members. Lastly, it's time to talk Reunion 2015.

As I told you in our Fall issue of the Classics, we sold all 80 Sabre hats we had left from the reunion last April. We had orders for over thirty more that I had to send their checks back. It was decided, since so many of you wanted the hats, we would order another batch of 200 (min. order). It takes several months to get the hats and they weren't available until mid January. By the time the hats arrived, I had over one hundred more orders. I know it was a long wait for some who ordered before Christmas thinking they would have theirs as a gift. That was caused by a communication misunderstanding about when the order would be ready. Anyway, I have sent out over 130 hats with requests for more. There are still hats available.

Our organization has a continually decreasing membership, but we recently picked up a surge of new members, thanks to Butch Bester from South Africa. In the previous Classics, I told you how Butch went back home after our reunion and recruited eleven more members; that made twelve plus Cappy Broderick, who attended the reunion as well. Butch didn't stop there. He recently sent me membership apps for fourteen

more. What a great effort. We now have nearly a full squadron of members from South Africa. Also, a current Sabre pilot from the U.K. joined up with us and plans to come to our reunion in 2015. He is Mark Linney who is the Chief Pilot for Golden Apple Operations. They own and he flies the only flyable F-86A in the world, formerly owned by Ben Hall here in the States. He wants to come and talk to us about Golden Apple's flight operations and air show performances.

Now, I would like to share with you the situation of a new member and what it really means to belong to the best fighter pilots organization in the world. Peter Page called me recently with a special request. He asked if I would join up a former Sabre pilot who he flew with years ago in the Air Guard, Whitey Park. The urgency in Peter's request was that Whitey was in the hospital ICU and it was doubtful if he would pull through. Whitey, thinking he may be making his last flight soon, had a special request. He wanted to become a member of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association. Peter asked if I could make that happen ASAP. He said he would send the money for overnight express if I could get his membership package to him fast. That all happened, and Whitey received his package with his certificate of membership, recent Sabre Jet Classics, a roster and more. When Peter was able to visit Whitey, he was sitting up, speaking full sentences, pumped his fist and said, "Right On" when Peter told him he was now a member. Whitey has since been moved out of ICU. Peter couldn't believe it as during his previous visit, it was very doubtful Whitey would pull through. Now, with the delay at the time of this writing and when you all read of Whitey's story, his recovery situation may have changed. Let's all keep our thoughts and prayers for

Whitey and that he makes it through this battle and flies again.

Lastly, it's time to talk Reunion 2015 (26, 27, and 28 April) as we are about one year out and counting. I still have some planning actions to complete and I will have the information sheet and registration form for you in the Summer issue. The Board agreed to lower the registration fee for our spouses and guests from the previous \$50.00 to \$25.00. That will help, especially for those who bring several guests. As for activities, we will have our Nellis day hosted by the Adversarial Group's 64th Aggressor Squadron. What all that will entail is still in progress. On the night of our buffet dinner, we will have some extra entertainment that we haven't had in the past. That should make for a more enjoyable evening. As you all know, the Super Sabres will not be following us this time. They will be going to Wright Patterson a couple weeks earlier. This will impact our attendance as we have many members who belong to both groups and will not attend both. So, my request to those of you who plan on attending our reunion is to get out and talk it up with old buddies that have not attended our reunions and get them to come. By the way, there was a reunion conflict last April with the Red River Rats reunion the week running up to ours. That will not be the case in 2015. The River Rats will have their reunion on May 15th through 17th, 2015.

Start your reunion planning early and let's have a big turnout in 2015.

GodBless America
GodBlessOurTroops
God Bless Sabre Pilots

J.R. Alley, President

FOLDED WINGS

W. B. 'Tex' Badger, September 26th, 2013

Gabriel P. "Bart" Bartholomew,
January 30th, 2014

Harmo A. Dungen, December 30th, 2013

George M. Fox, January 12th, 2012

Ronald T. Golan, January 23rd, 2014

Edison P. 'Phil' Janney, January 17th, 2014

William H. Lewis, February 1st, 2014

Robert K. McCutchen, December 2013

James C. McGrath, December 1st, 2012

Donald A. McNamara, January 7th, 2014

Charles M. McSwain, June 11th, 2012

James W. Miller, November 7th, 2013

Robert R. Moxley, January 29th, 2014

Lothar 'Andy' Olman, January 13th, 2013

Chris J.A. Prins (SAAF), January 10th, 2014

James D. Smith, March 16th, 2014

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ATTENTION ALL SABRE PILOTS!

In the 2012 Spring issue of SabreJet Classics, two artists' conceptions of the Planes Of Fame Air Museum at Chino, California had planned for their Korean War Memorial were presented. A memorial that likely would not be duplicated anywhere in the world with its display of a REAL F-86A Sabre and a MiG-15. Hopefully it was to be completed in the Spring of 2013, but that has not happened. The grounds have been laid and fenced; the Sabre and MiG are ready; but extra costs in doing soil samples to install the pedestal for the '86 that meets California's stiff requirements and some other issues have delayed their progress.

As an organization, we are not financially able to make a significant donation. But we fully encourage any of our members who would like to support this worthy project, that is so close to our hearts, to make a donation. In so doing, make sure you note on your check that your donation is for the Korean War Memorial project. By doing that, it guarantees one hundred percent of your donation will go to that project.

Contact Information: Planes Of Fame Museum, Chino Airport, 7000 Merrill Ave, Chino CA 91710.
Phone (909)597-3722; web site is planesoffame.org

F-86 Association hats

I need to clarify one thing regarding the new F-86 Association hats. Some are sending \$7.00 Shipping for each hat if ordering 2 or more. The postage of \$7.00 for a hat does NOIT mean that they have to pay that amount for each hat ordered. The Association can mail 3 hats in one box. So if they order 1, 2, or 3 hats – it's \$7.00 postage. More than 3 hats, they need to pay an additional \$7.00.

*Send your hat orders to; F-86 Sabre Pilots Association, attn.. Sabre Hat, P.O. Box 34423,
Las Vegas, NV 89133-4423.*



From Elmer Ross

From Jean-Marie Dieudonne, FAF

The French Air Force pilots trained in your country between 1944 and 1955 has a Association, As there was a Class 53A reunion, the association set up a plaque at the US Air Force Memorial, National Museum of the US Air Force, Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio. We were 40 strong for that celebration and there was a lot of emotion for all of us that relived that period when you guys made us "fighter pilots". Thank you USAF for what you did for us.

I live in Tacoma, WA near McChord AFB now but anticipate a relocation to Spokane. Geiger Field, home of the 498th FIS Geiger Tigers, has been deactivated for many years. For this reason I would like to contact any 498th members who may still be living in this area and see if any effort is being made to create a museum dedicated to the fighter squadrons that served at Geiger.

I have a lot of extra copies of ADC Interceptor magazine and other Air Defense Command memorabilia which I would like to donate to such a museum. But I want to know that it is safely in the hands of those dedicated to preserving Air Force unit histories. Anyone interested should contact me: Elmer Ross, 8859 South 'D' St, Tacoma, WA 98444, cell (425)238-8717.

From Cliff Sherrod

In the Fall 2010 (vol 18, no 3) issue of SabreJet Classics, I note an error in the caption under the photo at the top of page 17. It states that the 71st FIS transferred from Pittsburg Apt. to Wurtsmith AFB, MA.

The 13th FIS at Selfridge, in fact became the 71st FIS in August 1955 due to Project Arrow moves at the time. We of the 13th were somewhat less than pleased with the designation change. Gone was our squadron insignia of the angry, snorting bull; to be replaced with the winged, mailed fist of the 71st. Possibly, the most annoying thing was not being told the reason for the change.

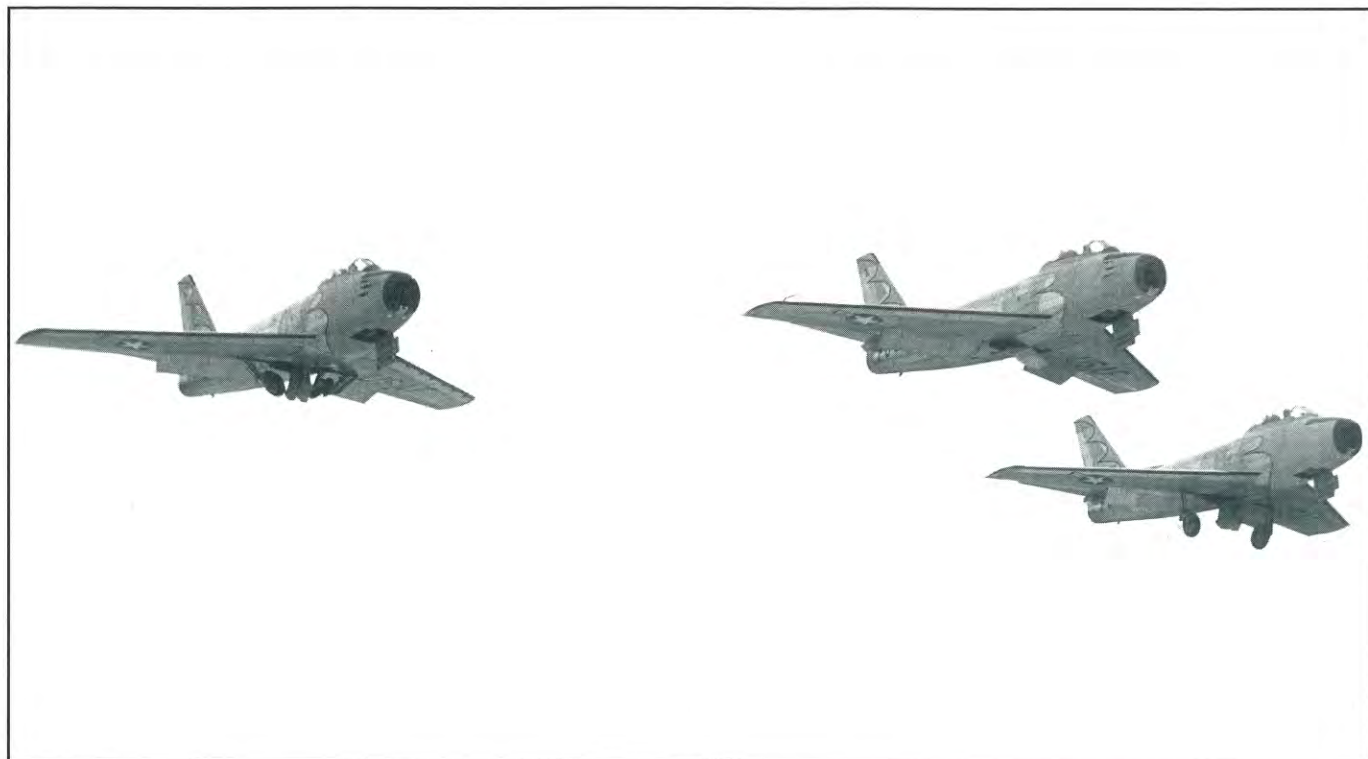
The 'big, brown bull' never quite died however. When the squadron personnel started our bi-annual reunions in the early 1990s, we always gathered as the 13th FIS with the bull on display.



From Paul Perron, USAF 81-07

I'm hoping you and/or your members can help me ID the enclosed patch. I've tried my best but cannot figure it out so I decided to contact the experts. Hope you can help. Anyone knowing anything about this patch, CONTACT: Paul Perron email rudypj63@gmail.com. (editors note - the background shield looks to be a representation of the four wings that operated in Korea between 1950 and at least 1953 (upper left - 18th FBW, R-8th FBW; lower L - 4th FIS, R- 51st FIW)

What Is It? Well we stumped you again. These three F-86A Sabres are an Air Proving Ground Command aerobatic team that flew out of Wright-Patterson AFB in the 1950s. The scallop markings on the nose and repeated on the wings and tail, were painted in DayGlo Red with black trim. No name for the team has been discovered.



'56 FEAF Gunnery Meet

by 'Gris' Grischkowski

Back in the '50s, Far East Air Command (FEAF) sponsored an annual gunnery meet. This was always an intense competition to be selected as a team member for your wing's team. At that time I was a very young Lt., but was quite good at aerial gunnery, thanks to great instruction at Luke AFB.

In '56, the meet was held at Kadena AB, Okinawa. I was stationed there so it was my 'home drome' so to speak. Participants were the 4th FBW at Chitose, 8th FBW at Itazuke, 35th FBW at Misawa, 51st FBW at Osan, and the 18th FBW at Kadena. All the teams flew the F-86F.

Gunnery events included high dive bomb, rocketry and low angle strafe in the air-ground phase. In the air-air phase, both high altitude (25,000 ft) and medium altitude (15,000 ft) sorties were flown.

Competition for the team positions preceded the event. Most of the contenders were seasoned fighter pilots, many veterans of Korea. Scores of any gunnery event in the previous year were compiled. Four additional missions were then flown by each contender, and these scores were then averaged to select the three team members and a spare.



'Gris' Grischkowski at Kadena in 1956
(credit Gris Grischkowski)

In one of the triumphs of my budding career, I won one of the slots in the 18th FBW team. The team leader was always, and correctly so, the Wing Commander. Another slot was won by my best friend Lt. Pat Robinette, who graduated from Luke Gunnery School with me. There was

Four 44th FGS F-86Fs on the ramp at Clark AB in the mid-1950s, The rear aircraft is the CO's bird. Note the Vampire bat on te tail, symbal of the 44th, (credit - USAF)





The 44th FBS team at the '56 FEAF Gunnery Meet, (L-R) GE Tech Rep., 1Lt Davey Williams, Col. Leo Woon-CO, 'Gris Grischkowski, 1Lt Pat Robinette, Capt Karl Kauffman. (credit - Gris Grischkowski)

the 18th FBW had an Aerobatic Team in the Mid-1950's (Front to back) Paul Kauttu, Hart, Bracke, Grischkowski. (credit - Paul Kauttu)



much consternation by the old seasoned fighter pilots when two very young 1st Balloons (who were ex-F-84 Hog drivers) winning the spots on the Sabre team. All pilot team members came from the 44th FBS "Vampire Bats", which led to more consternation from the contenders in the 12th and 67th Squadrons. Intra-squadron rivalries could be intense!

Practice was allowed for one month prior to the meet. This was a real treat. We flew four missions each day, always with 'clean' birds - no external tanks. Every fighter pilot in the world loves to fly a 'clean' jet. And missions averaged 45 minutes each. We flew six days a week during the practice period. I amassed 78 hours in 90 sorties. We would land, taxi in, sit by the plane while being refueled and re-armed, discuss the previous mission, then start up and go again. We converted a lot of fuel into noise in that month. What a hoot!

We didn't win the overall meet because we had relatively low scores in the air-ground events. I attribute that disappointment to the fact that we flew very few air-ground practice sorties because our range was undergoing major improvements to preparation to hosting the formal event. Therefore, we concentrated on air-air events.

I must gloat somewhat, in that I won the highest overall score in air-air gunnery. That event entailed firing on a



One of the 18th FBW 'FALCONS' team AIRCRAFT on the Kadena Ramp in 1957. The Falcons had special tail markings that were carried over to the F-100. (credit - William Ferguson)

6'x20' nylon towed target, which was towed by another F-86 at 15,000 or 25,000 feet. Each contestant had 200 rounds to be fired from only two of the six guns in the F-86F. The nose of each round was dipped in a different color of paint, which left a distinctive mark as they passed through the target, if it was hit. A score over 15% hits was considered a good score

On one of my officially scored mission at 15,000 ft., I fired 'green ammo', and had 185 hits out of 200 rounds fired - 92.5%. The Chief Judge ordered that banner impounded and rescored to verify the count. It was recounted two more times and verified each and every time. I don't understand how I missed with those other 15 rounds! But when you're hot, you're hot!

Another 'Falcon' F-86F on the Kadena Ramp in 1957. (credit - Bruce Baker)



On one of our first air-air missions, Davey Williams' guns jammed. The rules were that each mission counted after "wheels in the well", so that meant Davey would have to eat the big fat Zero score! I intentionally concentrated on trying to shoot the banner off the tow cable, thereby giving our team another mission with no penalty. On my second firing pass, I shot that sucker off the cable to sink in the East China Sea forevermore. We got another banner to shoot at the next day with no penalty. Sometimes it's OK to be a bit sneaky (but not cheat of course). I believe the overall winner was the 8th FBW, but I'm not certain of that. All in all, a pleasant memory of days gone by. Do I miss it? You bet! I'd do it again in a minute if I could.

"The URGIN VIRGIN" was the personal Sabre of Jerry Houser when thw 44th went to Formosa in 1955. (credit - Jerry Houser)



"Who Needs a 781?"

by Charles D. 'Tad' Foran

I was reading an article in the "Sabre Jet Classics" Fall of 2013 issue about making a non-afterburner takeoff at Albuquerque in an F-86D that brought back memories of flying out of ABQ. I was flying in the 181st F.I.S. outfit with the Texas ANG and a great way to get FTP's and flying time was to do the "Vegas Gig" from Dallas. Since I had a "real" job, much of my flying was done at night and week-ends, like most Guard pilots did. The "Dog" could hardly get out of sight if you used the afterburner on takeoff so the preferred method of getting some range out of it was not use the burner until starting your climb at about 10,000 ft. As the article mentioned, taking off West was down hill and into the valley of the Rio Grande River and if you were patient you could make a no burner takeoff.

I had intended to go to Vegas with a couple of other guys but was held up at my job and didn't get to leave Dallas till just about dark. I got to ABQ and as usual, was in a hurry to try and catch up with my buddies at Nellis before going into town. I filled my clearance and hurried out to my bird and jumped into the cockpit contemplating the long take off roll that I was going to make. As usual, it was a long and bumpy roll before the airplane lurched into the air and started climbing for altitude. All went as advertised and I had a great week-end in Vegas.

I arrived at my airplane on Sunday morning at Nellis. I climbed up into the cockpit and looked behind the

A Texas Air Guard F-86L over West Texas in the early 1960s, probably enroute to Nellis for a "Vegas Gig". Tad Foran flew such a 'mission' in the story. (credit - Tad Foran)



headrest for the 781A to sign off on the airplane. What ho, there was no 781 in the holder! Sometimes the crew chief would stick the 781 in the slat next to the cockpit but I hadn't seen it when I'd arrived at the airplane. I asked the transient crew where the 781 was and they informed me that the airplane didn't have one with it and they had no idea who owned the airplane or even if it was in the Air Force! I asked them if the airplane had been refueled and the reply was: "No". This was a Sunday and I had a job in Dallas that I had to be at on Monday morning and there was no one at Ops in Dallas on non-drill Sundays. After much pleading and almost crying I convinced the chief to fill me up and I departed post haste before anyone changed their minds. I had no idea what had happened to the 781.

I landed on 09 at ABQ and as I was taxiing back to the ramp I noticed some papers scattered around the edge of the taxi way. Suddenly a light bulb went off in my head: "could that be my 781?" Sure enough, I got a ride back to the taxiway and collected my three ring binder that had popped open and scattered the pages along the taxi way. For some reason, the wind or taxiing airplanes had not blown them to Texas or whatever and I think I found all the pages. I never told maintenance about almost losing their most important airplane document. It had obviously been stuck in the slat Friday night and I just forgot to pick it up in the dark and put it in the airplane. It fell off when I taxied out for takeoff.

Moral of this story: Getting in a hurry around airplanes is never a good idea!



A Texas ANG F-86L from the 181st FIS on the ramp at Meridian NAS in the early 1960s. The 181st FIS flew the F-86L until 1965 when they traded their sleek F-86Ls for KC-97 tankers! (credit-Robert Mikesh)



The business end of the F-86D/L Sabre. Instead of having the typical armament of six .50 cal machine guns, the Sabre Dog was armed with 24 2.75 inch air/air rockets. (credit-David Menard)

The sad end to many F-86s of all variants was the boneyard at Davis-Monthan AFB, or being used as a target on some range. This 181st FIS, Texas ANG F-86L awaits the cutting torch in 1971. Credit-Brian Baker)





A Nationalist Chinese Air Force pilot exits his F-86F during the Flying Brothers Gunnery Meet held at Clark AB in 1963. All the CAF Sabres were drawn from ex-USAF inventories, and some were Korean War veterans. (credit – USAF)

Three Flame Out Landings – Same Bird

Author: Sidney M. Yahn

Recently, while cleaning out a drawer in our guest bedroom, I found a pilot log book that had been misplaced and thought to have been lost. While browsing through its pages, I began to recall a number of forgotten, but interesting, memories; but none more so than flights flown in a particular F-86F during my Taiwan tour.

This aircraft had been IRAN'd (Inspection and Repair As Necessary) by the Air Asia Organization. The Sabre Jet Classics Magazine (Summer 2006 Issue), contains an article describing Air Asia's F-86 program, therefore, no effort will be made to elaborate any further on that topic.

On April 7, 1957, I was scheduled to test an F-86 Number (No) 315. The first part of the flight was routine, but later, while flying at high altitude, the aircraft's engine suddenly flamed out. A glide was established and after arriving at a lower altitude, several air-starts were attempted. Unfortunately, all effort to start the engine failed, so a flame out (dead stick) landing was executed. Following the landing on Tainan AB, the aircraft was towed into the Air Asia compound.

While discussing the problem encountered during the flight

A rather unusual photo of a CAF F-86F with 'nose art', or rather 'fuselage art'. This Sabre was photographed by member Bill Van Dine at Hsinchu AB in 1958. (credit – Bill Van Dine)



A CAF F-86F makes a pass at the ground targets during the 1959 FEAF Gunnery Meet held at the Clark AB range. It was the first such meet held for SEATO Pact Air Forces. (credit – USAF)

with key maintenance personnel, a Chinese crew chief started the aircraft's engine. This was embarrassing to say the least.

All engine ground checks performed by maintenance personnel were normal, so the aircraft was refueled and I took-off to check the bird for a second time. As you might expect, while flying at a high altitude I experienced the same engine problem and all attempts to obtain an air start were unsuccessful. Again, a flame-out landing was made on Tainan AB. After the aircraft was on the ground for a period of time, the engine operated normally. Of course, by this time, we knew the cause was temperature related, but unfortunately, the problem could not be definitely indentified. Regardless, maintenance personnel were advised not to schedule the aircraft for a test flight until the problem was found and corrected.

A few days later, I was told that F-86, No. 315 was again ready to be tested. Maintenance personnel had installed a new engine in the aircraft but several accessories (including the electric fuel pump) from the old engine, had been mounted on the new one.

All ground checks were normal so a take-off was initiated, followed by a climb to approximately 46,000 ft. It was no surprise when after a short period of time, the engine flamed out. Like the two previous flights, all attempts to get an air start were unsuccessful. For the third time, a flame out landing was made on Tainan AB.

Naturally, after sitting on the ground for a short period, the engine functioned normally.

After further extensive checks, the problem was finally revealed. I was told that the electric fuel control, which had been taken off the old engine and put on the new one, was the culprit. I do not remember all the details, but apparently there was a hair-line crack in the burner pressure



A Nationalist China Air Force (CAF) taxis to the active runway at Clark AB during the 1961 Flying Brothers Gunnery Meet. All the CAF Sabres were converted to F-86F-40 standard by Mitsubishi during the late 1950s. (credit – USAF)

chamber that would contract and break contact, when in cold air, but expand and make contact when in warm air.

I recently met Mr. Robert M. Meyer, who is considered a jet engine expert. While serving in the United States Air Force (USAF), and later with Pratt-Whitney (PW), he acquired an extensive amount of experience on a variety of jet engines, including the J47-GE-27. With no hesitation, he explained the cause for the problem described in this article.

I am happy to report that once a new fuel pump was installed, F-86F, No. 315 checked out O.K., after which, it was delivered to a CAF F-86 Wing. Regardless of experiences like those described, I enjoyed my Taiwan tour. I had the privilege of flying with a number of exceptional Chinese pilots, while accumulating a considerable amount of F-86 and F-84 flying hours. What more could a pilot ask for?

The CAF did have several F-86Ds in the inventory. Only one squadron, the 44th FS, was equipped with F-86Ds, which were drawn from USAF stocks as FEAF transitioned into the F-102. (credit – Bob Hanes)



The 54th FIS

From Ralph Morrow and Larry Davis

One of the more obscure squadrons in Air Defense Command was the 54th Fighter Interceptor Squadron (FIS). It probably was the fact that they were in the center of the nation and nowhere near any of the large media outlets. They just did their job and no one noticed.

The 54th FIS began life as the 54th Pursuit Squadron based at Hamilton Field, CA in 1941. They were then equipped with a variety of pursuit aircraft including the P-36, P-40, and P-43. When World War 2 broke out, the 54th moved to Paine Field, before moving far north to Alaska and assigned to the 343rd FGp, where they were equipped with the Lockheed P-38. They remained part of the guardians of the north at Attu before being inactivated in 1946.

In December 1952, the 54th (now) Fighter Interceptor Squadron, was re-activated at Rapid City AFB, where they were initially equipped with F-51D Mustangs, before converting to the jet era in F-84G Thunderjets, where they were part of the 29th Air Division. However, in 1954, the 54th FIS finally got into a first rate airplane, the F-86D Sabre.

From R. W. Morrow:

"I graduated as part of Class 53C in May 1953, and headed west to Laughlin AFB in Del Rio, TX for air to ground gunnery training. It wasn't in Sabres, but it

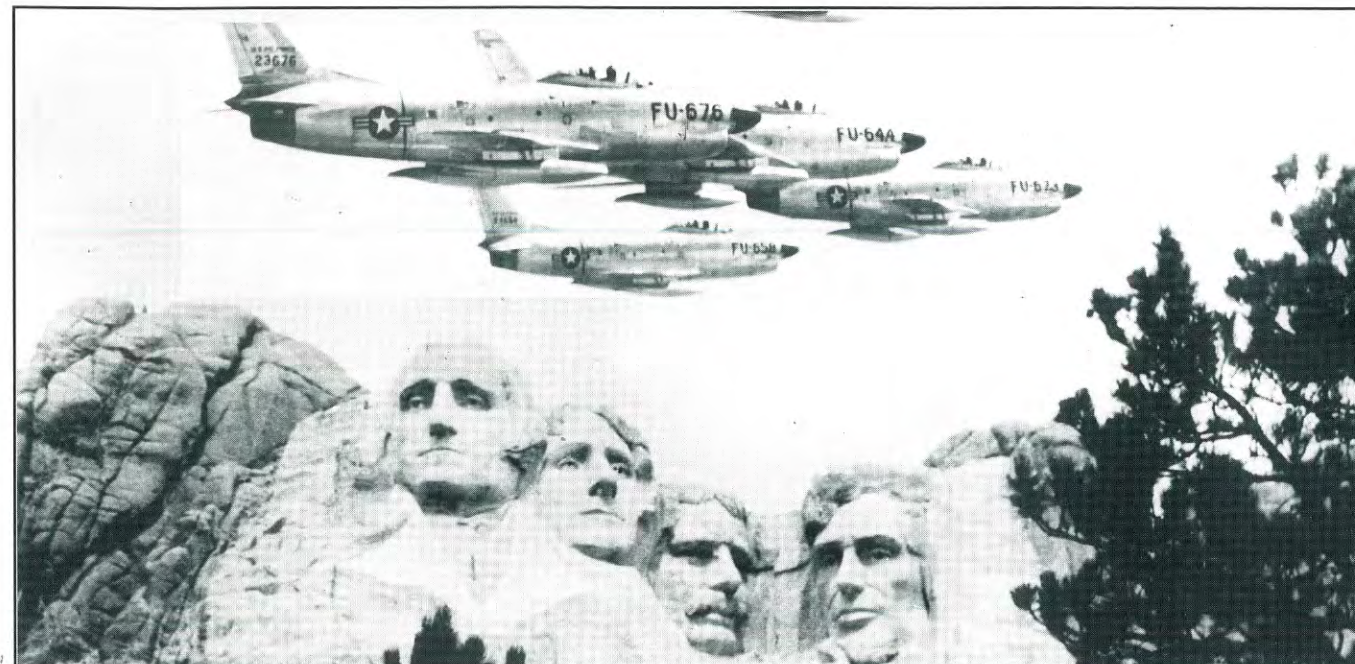


was still a fighter. In September 1953, I was assigned to the 54th FIS at Ellsworth AFB, near Rapid City, South Dakota. Although the 54th was assigned an air defense mission, they were flying Republic F-84G Thunderjets. It was a good, dependable aircraft and I flew it for several hundred hours.

In the Fall of 1954, we began the transition into F-86D Sabres. This was a true interceptor aircraft, with a radar intercept system and an armament meant to kill bomber aircraft - 24 2.75" Mighty Mouse rockets in a tray under the nose. But the transition was not done overnight and some of the pilots were still flying the 84 while others were checking out in the F-86Ds.

One night, with the squadron fully equipped with F-86Ds, a war game exercise was taking place. These

A flight of four 54th FIS F-86Ds over Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota in 1956. At this time, the 54th Sabres carried no squadron markings, but later had red, white, and blue chevrons painted on the tail. (credit - R.W. Morrow)



Four 54th FIS F-86D Sabres make a pass over Mount Rushmore in 1955. The pilots are - 673, Capt. W.C. Norris; 658, Lt D.S. Jones; 644, Lt G. Brannon; and 676, Lt R.W. Morrow. Is that a smile on all the Commanders' faces? (credit - R.W. Morrow)

Because of the very inclement weather that could (and did!) blow in on South Dakota during the winter season, Air Force built Butler Hangers with rotating doors to cover at least the alert aircraft. The Butler sheds were warmed to keep out the near zero cold. (credit - USAF)



The 54th FIS at Yuma in 1956. Each year ADC sent every squadron to Yuma for live fire rocketry exercises. Lt Ralph Morrow is standing in the back minus his cap. Maj Bill Fairbrother, CO of the 54th, is 4th from the right in the front row. (credit - R.W. Morrow)





(L-R) Lt Arnold Weber, Capt. Delap, and Lt Wm. Newell in front of the entrance to the 54th FIS Operations Shack in the mid-1950s. (credit - R.W. Morrow)

could go on for several days. Aircraft were continuously being scrambled to intercept SAC bombers flying in from the north, presumably the route the Russkies would take.

There was no wind, and the aircraft were taking off AND landing in opposite directions. An F-86 landed and was rolling down the southern most side of the runway. I took the runway for takeoff in the opposite direction of the landing Sabre. My Sabre was nearly airborne as we passed, and in a moment of silence from the distressed tower, the other pilot said "I knew you were going to do that!"

One night when my flight was on alert, the weather was socked in with a light snow falling. I put my name up. As Flight Leader and alert team captain I scheduled the order of pilots scrambling first. It seemed less stressful than being concerned about other pilots going up with conditions so unfavorable. We'd already lost one member of our flight while standing alert with another team.

A scramble of one aircraft was received, and soon after takeoff IFR was necessary. Leaving the tower channel, I contacted GCI for directions. GCI directed the to the target transmitting headings, altitude, and speed of the 'target'.

Two events from that night: As the F-86 climbed through the night storm, the planes surfaces and the atmospheric conditions created an electrical charge. Thin blue streaks and miniature lightning flashed across the canopy and wings. It was quite spectacular. This went on for about a quarter hour and about that



Members of the 54th FIS rocket team examine the 'rag' at Yuma in 1956. Note the very large holes caused by the 2.75" Might Mouse rockets. (credit - R.W. Morrow)

time the 'target' began to paint on the radar.

The clouds at altitude thinned but conditions were still IFR. The bogie was visible about three hundred =feet ahead. Coming in closer and alongside, revealed a commercial airliner. I radioed GCI, who then said they had finally received notification of the aircraft's clearance. The second of the night came a few days later when the pilot of the airliner filed a complaint that his aircraft had been 'endangered'. The matter was reviewed and found in favor of the Air Force pilot. The 54th went to Yuma for rocketry live fire exercises. We stayed at Yuma for a month. A wager was placed with Capt. Wm. Norris, that my flight would score more hits than his. The losers would pay for dinner and drinks back at Ellsworth. Norris did score the most hits with 15, followed by Maj. Bill Fairbrother, the squadron CO. I was 3rd with 11 hits. But the rest of my flight brought our score total ahead of Norris' flight. The losers paid the wager. And, since my gang chose the place and dinner, it was not inexpensive. Ah, the ineffable pleasure of dining and drinking at someone else's expense."

In the Fall of 1957, the 54th traded in their almost supersonic F-86Ds for Northrop F-89J Scorpions. Not exactly an even trade. They remained in the Scorpions until Christmas Day 1960 when the Air Force once again inactivated the squadron. The squadron was reactivated in 1987, and returned to duty in Alaska. This time in F-15 Eagles and based at Elmendorf AFB. The unit was inactivated again in April 2000.

SABRES OVER UBON

BY JIM FLEMMING

In 1962, as a response to a threat to Thailand from across the Laotian border, four member Nations of SEATO, the U.S., Britain, New Zealand and Australia sent armed air units to create a holding force in Thailand. These units were intended to withstand any initial attack until full scale reinforcements could be sent.

Australia's contribution would be No. 79 Fighter Squadron equipped with big engined CA-27 Avon Sabre jets to be based at RTAF Base Ubon. Australia's version of the Sabre flew in on 1 June 1962. Four days later the Sabres were operational . . . and they would remain so for the next six years.

The airfield at Ubon had not much in the way of facilities, except for a runway and a control tower. Our tents, ground support equipment and squadron supplies were flown in from Australia by C-130 Hercules, and we established our operating base.

The Squadron's primary role was the air defense of the area, but because of political restraints were unable to contribute to the shooting war in the North. To achieve this role, during daylight hours, two Sabres armed with 30mm HE ammunition and AIM-9B Sidewinder missiles would be scrambled within a two minute alert time.

As the war in Vietnam intensified, a large buildup of the base was undertaken by the USAF. And eventually it became a major F-4 operating facility, and home of the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing - the 'Wolfpack'. By

In 1962, as part of the SEATO Treaty, Australia sent four CL-13B Sabres to Don Muang AB in Thailand as a 'show of force' commitment. No. 79 Squadron, RAAF, then moved into Ubon on the Thailand-Laos border, where they would serve for the next 6 years. (credit - USAF)



Jim Flemming, Ubon RTAB 1968 (credit - Jim Flemming)

this time, the RAAF had a more permanent camp with accommodation and recreation facilities on one side of the runway, and a maintenance hangar and aircraft keyways on the other. The USAF called our RAAF camp and our maintenance area 'Kangaroo Valley'.

To maintain a constant state of readiness our two alert aircraft were usually scrambled at least twice per day, then guided by ground radar to intercept the Phantoms returning from combat. These intercepts had been organised by Colonel Robin Olds due to his concern that many of his new pilots from the States





A no. 79 Squadron CA-22, mk 32 Sabre on the alert ramp at Ubon in 1968. At this time, 79 Sq mission was air defense over Ubon covering the returning and usually out of fuel F-4s of the USAF 8th TFW, who were flying top cover over the F-105 Thunderchiefs bombing targets in North Vietnam. (credit - Tom Brewer)

had little or no air to air combat experience.

The F4 had no gun. So air combat training had been denigrated in favour of missile tactics. With the cooperation of the RAAF commander [after the returning aircraft had been air-refueled] Col. Olds planned and organised an effort to give his returning pilots some 'air combat experience.' Now, F-4's returning from combat missions, were bounced regularly by the Australian Sabres. Colonel Olds' flight leaders were notified of the 'attacks' by the Sabres, but the returning element leaders, wingmen, and the back-seaters were not advised.

Because of the high performance of the larger-engined, modified Australian Sabre, and its very low profile, it was an ideal substitute for a simulated MiG attack. The RAAF pilots, who were frustrated by political direction that they could not cross the borders of Thailand, had a great time 'hassling' with the returning F4's. And many memorable 'dog fights' took place over the Laotian border.

Quite a few 'newbie' F4 pilots got a big fright when they thought they were being bounced by MiGs. Later, on the ground, until the situation was explained... some very terse exchanges occurred between members of the 8th and the Australian pilots.

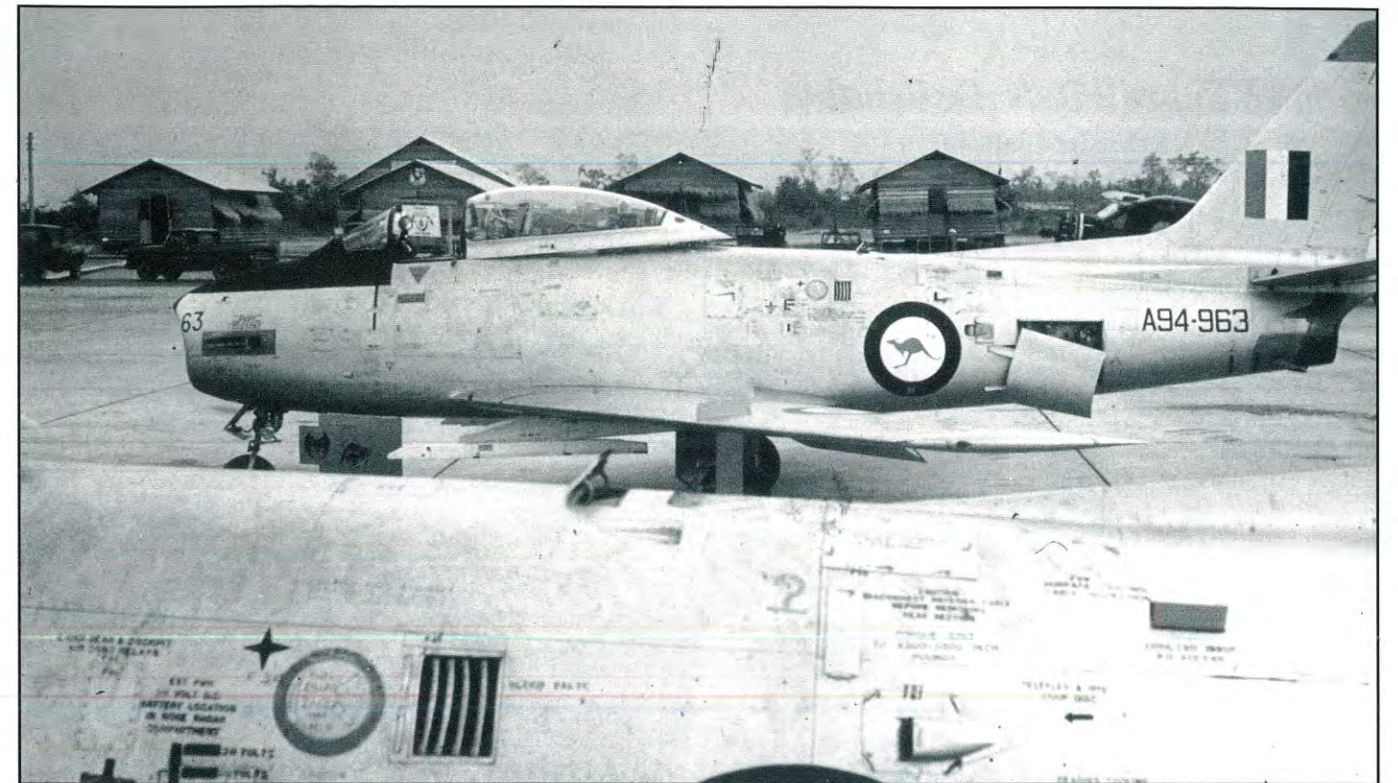
Some of the USAF squadron commanders with Korean experience remembering several shoot downs across the Yalu near Antung airfield recalled the landing MiGs' vulnerability. In particular, 'Hoot' Gibson, Commander of the 433rd TFS 'Satan's Angels', was insistent that all his combat crews were to be intercepted by the Australian Sabres, at every opportunity. Although uncomfortable for the returning tired operational F4 aircrews, he said that this training,

was invaluable in assisting to ensure their survival around 'Down Town' Hanoi.

Later, in a "Bell Ringing" ceremony in the USAF Officers' Club, the 8th CO praised the 79th pilots, stating that "many of the aircrews in the 8th TFW who were present owed their lives to the lessons learned while hassling with the 79th RAAF pilots." The 79th Squadron Commander and the RAAF Base Commander were then awarded Lifetime Honorary Memberships in the 8th Tac Fighter Wing as a token of its appreciation.

This more than made up for the few black eyes and fat lips incurred earlier in the programme. And the esprit and camaraderie of the USAF and RAAF remained at the very high level - where it has always been - and WHERE IT STILL IS - TO THIS DAY!

A 79 Squadron Sabre sits alert at Ubon armed with a pair of AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles in addition to the twin 30mm cannon armament in the nose.. (credit - Jim Flemming)



The photo that brought the story. Jim Flemming sent a note (and the story) about this photo in SabreJet Classics, vol 20, no. 1, that shows him sitting in the cockpit of an alert 79 Sq. Sabre on the ramp at Ubon. The Sabres of 79 Sq remained at Ubon until 1968. (credit - Warren Thompson)

Sabre Reunions

Sabre Pilots 20th Reunion April 26/27/28, 2015 in Las Vegas. Start planning now to make the trip. More details to follow in future issue of SabreJet Classics!

The Super Sabre Society will be holding their 2015 reunion on April 9-12, 2015, in Dayton, Ohio. Contact: Duane Clawson, 611 Andersen Rd, Enon Valley, PA 16120, (724)-336-4273, or email deweyclawson@hotmail.com

Lt Ron Berdoy

WANTED: Anyone with information about Lt Ron Berdoy when he served with the 334th FIS at Kimpo in Summer 1952, is asked to contact Col Rod Kontny, USAF Ret., who will pass the information to Lt Berdoy's son.
CONTACT RKontny@aol.com,
or phone (505)292-6434.

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What Is It? Can anyone identify where this Sabre is located. And was this truly the original aircraft of Capt. Joe McConnell, top scoring ace in Korea. Please contact your editor, Sabrejet Classics, 6475 Chesham Drive NE, Canton, Ohio 44721, or email sabreclsx@aol.com

