

*My Favorite F-86H Story by Harold Speer*



# Sabre Jet Classics

Volume 2 Number 3

Fall 1993



*The Quarterly Magazine Of The Sabre Jet Historical Society*

**WE INTERVIEW LES WALTMAN ON THE F-86H**

**Flying The Dangerous Early Hard Wing "H"s • Cheers!  
Flight Lines • On The Lighter Side • And Much More!**



***The F-86H Story – Part Two***

*Photo Credit: Courtesy of Jim McLennan*

**F-86H vs. MiG-19!**

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## IN THIS ISSUE

- 3..... Flight Lines by Lon Walter  
4..... Cheers!  
6..... 1956 Nellis Gunnery Team from Bruce Hinton  
6..... My Favorite F-86H Story by Harold Speer  
8..... We Interview Les Waltman  
12..... My Favorite Sabre Story by John Pedjoe  
13..... Flying The Dangerous Early Hard Wing "H"s  
by Dick Hefton  
14..... Detailed MD ANG F-86H from Jess Mitchell  
15..... Bulletin Board  
15.... Ballistic NY ANG F-86H from Jim "Skinny" McLennan  
16.... On The Lighter Side! by Curt Burns and by Ed Hurd

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**On Our Cover:** Jim "Skinny" McLennan wins our cover photo selection again with this beautiful 138th TFS F-86H photo, with pilot Ted Yeager at the controls. This NY ANG Sabre was photographed near Syracuse around 1963.

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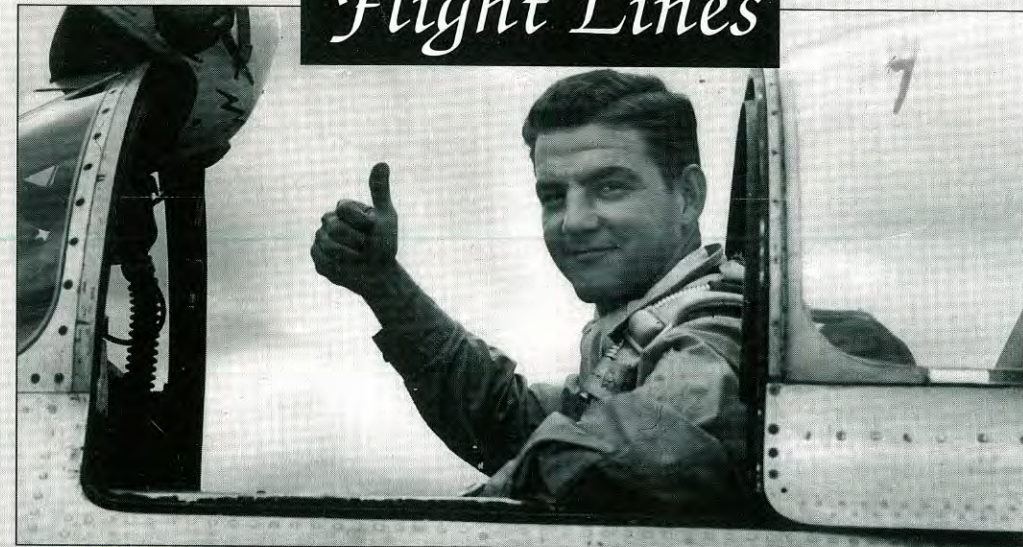
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## Flight Lines



Lon in July 1951, while in Korea.

Photo courtesy of the U.S. Air Force via Terry Gabreski

### Checking Out in The '86 In The Old Days Or, "It's Much Easier Than The '51."

Most Sabre pilots recall their checkout in the Sabre with varying degrees of clarity, but I will never forget my first ride in an F-86! For most folks, the initial flight came after formal ground school and dual seat rides in the T-33, while jocks of recent vintage are well acquainted with the exhaustive education associated with qualifying to fly a new fighter today. But it was not always like that!

In mid-summer 1950, the 335th Fighter Squadron received six new graduates from advanced flying school. They were "Second Balloons" in the jargon of the day. Four had graduated from jet training (T-33s and F-80s at Williams Air Force Base in Arizona), but two came from F-51s at Nellis. All had flown F-51s or F-80s for about 65 to 75 hours, with the rest of their experience was in T-6s for about 200 hours. The 335th was assigned no two-seat jets, but it did have access to a T-6 (which was out of commission when we arrived). The Texan was used for instrument checks and other utilitarian purposes, and there was also an F-51 available which was used for towing targets (when it was in commission, which was a rarity).

As one of the two newcomers arriving with no jet experience, I was awed with the prospect of soon flying the nation's fastest, most advanced jet fighter, the F-86. I had no idea that this thrill would occur so quickly. After an introduction and chat with our squadron commander, Lieutenant Colonel Don Nance, I was ushered into the operations officer's (either Captain Marc Marcum or Captain Nick Farrell - I forget which one had the job then) office. Everyone present agreed I should have no problem learning to fly the F-86, since it was "much easier to fly than the '51". I was issued a two page questionnaire to be completed by referencing the Dash One flight manual, and I was told that I could fly the Sabre when the form was successfully completed.

The questionnaire was done by the next day, and I sat down with my instructor pilot, First Lieutenant Tex Badger, to review it. Tex and I discussed the form, and then he gave me a good run-down on how to fly the F-86. I told him I had never been trained to operate jet engines, but he said

it was not terribly important. The throttle worked in the same manner as the one on the '51 except there was no torque associated with adding power. When we finished, I was ready to go. The weather, however, had socked in, and so my flight was rescheduled for the next morning.

One of the other new arrivals, John Hungerford, had been going through the same ritual with his instructor, First Lieutenant Cal Ellis. John had a major advantage over me, I felt, since he was one of those who had flown jets at Willie. But he, too, was rescheduled for the next morning.

The big day dawned with a low overcast sky, but the weatherman said this would burn off by 0900. John and I and our two instructors trooped out to the line to our shiny new F-86s. Tex and Cal leaned over our cockpits and showed us how to start the engine, then we were to be cleared to fly in the local vicinity around Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland to practice some elementary flight maneuvers. John Hungerford was assigned the Sabre parked next to mine.

When both aircraft started, there was lots of noise. Tex and Cal shouted their final words to each of us over the din of the two screaming J47s. Finally, they both got down and stood beside our aircraft while John and I made our final checks.

At this time, someone ran out from ops and yelled into Tex and Cal's ears. Tex then cupped his hands and shouted to me that the weather was too bad to fly, but I should "taxi around the field" to become familiar with the nosewheel steering. Although disappointed, I understood this decision as the overcast had gotten thicker and lower to about 500 feet. I called the tower to ask permission to taxi around the airfield, and they cleared me to do so. Then I heard John call for taxi and TAKEOFF instructions! I was mighty upset that my buddy would be allowed to fly when I was not, but I attributed this to his previous jet experience.

As I taxied around, I listened to John take the runway. Then I saw his '86 takeoff and disappear into the murk almost as soon as his wheels came up. With gloomy thoughts about my obvious status as a "second class citizen", I finished my taxi trip in about thirty minutes and returned to my parking spot. I shut the Sabre down and walked

back to ops. When I walked in, the ops officer greeted me with a cheerful understanding of my disappointment at not flying by asking, "How did your taxiing go?"

"Fine", I said. "It IS a lot easier than the '51." Then he replied, "Hungerford will find it a lot easier than the '80, too." (The F-80 did not have nosewheel steering). Then he asked, "By the way, where is Hungerford? Didn't he park next to you?"

"No", I replied. "I guess he's still flying." "HE'S WH-A-A-T?", the outraged ops officer, fired back!

With that, the ops officer ran to the radio in our squadron ops office and quickly turned it on. As soon as the radio cycled in, there was John Hungerford calling 335th ops to advise he was about to make an instrument letdown into Andrews to land (ON HIS CHECKOUT FLIGHT). The horrified ops officer gave him a quick (ever so quick, because he was low on fuel) briefing, and told John to be careful (an understatement if ever there was one, but what else could he say?) Then the livid ops officer tried to find out how this could have happened?

To wind up this yarn, John Hungerford got down alright, and I flew the Sabre the next day. It was easier than the '51! But why did John fly that first day? Well, after his IP, Cal Ellis, got the word for him to only "taxi around the airfield", he then relayed these instructions to John by shouting (just as Tex did for me), but he raised his arm and made a circular motion while shouting. John thought he heard Cal say, "Stay right around the field!"

A wild story? I swear it's true, and I'm sure it can be matched by many other readers out there. But it could not happen today, could it? Well, could it?!

John Hungerford became an excellent F-86 and later F-100 pilot, but he lost his life in an F-100 accident in the late Fifties. As fate has decreed, of those six "balloons", only the other F-51 graduate, Denny Dennison, and I survive today. Only one of the other four died in an '86, and that happened when he was shot down by a MiG-15. The Sabre never let any of us down.

BY LON WALTER

Hank Buttelmann advises that the *F-86 Sabre Pilots Association* has selected the Sands Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada for the site of its 1994 reunion to be held from April 24 to 27. The format of the '94 gathering will be very similar to that of the '92 reunion, including 90 slots for the *Red Flag* tour at Nellis Air Force Base. Those who attended in April 1992 know what a fabulous event this was. Make plans now to attend next spring! For further information, contact the association at P.O. Box 97951, Las Vegas, NV 89193.

# Cheers!

Our readers write to  
**Sabre Jet Classics . . .**

## Thank You!

Please find a check to renew my father's (James M. Howerton) membership. Although he passed away in November 1991, I am sure he would have renewed were he still here. I am only sorry that he did not get to see what a fine publication has evolved from the first few issues. Please keep up the good work.

James B. Howerton, Des Peres, MO

Gary and I have been enjoying your publication. It really brings to life an important part of my father's younger years. Thanks, and keep it up!

Beverly Walter Myers, Spring, TX

## My Favorite F-86F Story

by Gibb Cornwell

Your magazine is truly outstanding. I really enjoyed the article on "The Ultimate MiG-killer, the F-86F." When Bob Rawlings said the F-86F was one of the most forgiving planes ever built, I am reminded of my favorite F-86F story.

We were a flight of four out of Williams Air Force Base on a high-angle bombing run in the Arizona desert. One of our pilots went into the target at too high an angle and failed to pull out in time. His '86F struck the ground but he was able to get it airborne again. He had wiped out the entire bottom half of his fuselage from the wing roots back. His hydraulic lines were hanging down like spaghetti! The pilot, however, declared the bird was performing *normally!* He dropped his gear and the flaps without incident, and the boards operated normally. He then returned to base and made an uneventful landing. His plane showed grass stains on the leading edge of the wings, and there were multiple small holes in the trailing edge where stones had passed through. *None* of the hydraulic lines had ruptured!

## About Our Second F-86F Issue . . .

I have a couple of inputs you might want to consider. I overlooked an error on the last page. I retired as a Lieutenant Colonel, but from the Air Force, not the Michigan Air National Guard. Small point, but I have to take credit for not having read that page more carefully. I think you did a nice job cleaning up some of my writing, but I did not catch the insertion. Shame on me!

The other item is sad news. Les Erickson (who appeared on page 7) died on December 9, 1992 after a several year fight with cancer. He and Kathy had three children, several grandchildren, and one great-grandson. He and I had flown together as far back as 1946 in T-6s in the Reserves. We flew Mustangs together starting in 1948 in the Michigan Air Guard, then '84s, and the '86 in Korea. My last active duty assignment before I retired in January 1969 was at Langley AFB where Les and I were both assigned. We often flew together. We were both flight instructors. Les was an excellent pilot—one of those guys you could trust to do the right thing; a guy I was pleased to fly with, anytime, anywhere.

Another good guy, gone.

Howard R. "Ebe" Ebersole,  
Flushing, MI

Thank you for the extra copies of *Sabre Jet Classics*, Vol. 2, No.1. You have 16 pages again. Great! I plan to send a few copies to some other people, including a group of technical editors at my former place of employment, the Argonne National Laboratory near Chicago, with whom I worked until I recently retired. I would like them to see not only my pictures but also the overall product in general. I believe they will agree with me that it is a very high-quality, professional publication.

Dick Keener, Corte Madera, CA

I really enjoyed the second issue on the F-86F. Howard Irish, Les Erickson and I

flew together on my very first mission as an element leader on an unplanned alert mission, and I had to take over when Lieutenant Sands aborted. Les and I each scored as we cornered 25 MiGs (the correct number) and were engaged for over 40 minutes at 35,000 to 42,000 feet. This was my very first chance to fire at an enemy, and was it ever exciting! I knew Cal Davey and Asa Whitehead quite well, also. Howard P. Mann and Hans Degner were also friends, so you can imagine the memories that reading Ebe's article brought back.

Cecil G. Foster, Henderson, NV

Look for an extensive article by Cecil on his nine MiG kills in an upcoming issue of *Sabre Jet Classics*.

—THE EDITORS

Thanks much for publishing my "Crew Chief's Recollections" tale. I hope it brings back many memories for your readers.

Norm Kalow, Ravenna, OH

## And Finally . . .

I am just another jock who has had a long love affair with the Sabre, and I commend you on your fine publication. It certainly brings back memories. I was fortunate to have flown all models of the '86 except the "H" and I am still trying to find one I can fly. I would like to make a suggestion for your consideration. As a member of the *F-86 Sabre Pilots Association*, I would like to see a merger. Your publication would be a great addition to that orga-

Do you have a comment about a Sabre-related topic? Write to "Cheers!", c/o *Sabre Jet Classics*, 428 Madingley Road, Linthicum, Maryland 21090, USA and identify your letter for consideration in our letters column. Letters should be brief and to the point. *Sabre Jet Classics* reserves the right to edit or delete any letter for length or style. Unsigned letters will not be considered. Photographs may be published with your letter, depending upon relevancy and space limitations. Cheers!

nization and would provide a super benefit to its members, and also give you a much larger circulation. We all have a common goal and should join our efforts. Give it some thought! Yours should be the official publication of that organization.

Jack Wilhite, Morrison, CO

I have enjoyed the issues so far, especially the article by Lon Walter in Volume 1, Number 2. He and I went through flying school together, flying F-51s in the same training flight at Nellis, and both ending up in the 4th Fighter Wing as our first operational assignment out of flying school. I, too, was a member of the "original 4th" in Japan and Korea, flying 84 missions in F-86As before rotating back to the States a month or so after Lon did. He writes about we junior birdmen being green and inexperienced. We both went through F-51 advanced pilot training and so we had zero jet hours when we reported to the 4th with its F-86s. I got a one hour ride in a T-33, and my second jet flight was my solo flight in the F-86! When we were deployed to San Diego enroute to Korea, we, of course, flew our Sabres from the east coast to the west. *By the time I landed at San Diego, I had doubled my flying time in the F-86!* More fun than a barrel of by-gosh monkeys!

John Ironmonger, Arnold, MD

I look forward to the coming editions of your magazine. Needless to say, I am quite impressed by the quality of the product.

Les Waltman, Baltimore, MD

Thank you for your copy of *Sabre Jet Classics*. I found it very interesting and you will find my application enclosed.

Curt Irwin, North Syracuse, NY

I am enclosing our cadet class list with an asterisk beside each member that I am sure flew the '86. I have enjoyed the issues very much. Keep up the good work.

Bill Dunbar, Northbrook, IL

Enclosed is my check for an annual subscription to *Sabre Jet Classics*. The idea is superb, and as a former F-86E, "F" and "D" pilot, I want to get in on the action. I have many snapshots and a few stories from my experiences that may be in sync with *Sabre Jet Classics*. I am looking forward to becoming an interested reader as well as a contributor.

Ben M. Boykin, Houston, TX



I just received my fourth issue of the *Sabre Jet Classics*, and as always, I read it from cover to cover before I put it down. It caused dinner to be put back awhile, but that is the way it always was for me when I was a line jock in the USAF. Fly first and eat after the flying's done!

In your article on the life of F-86A, 48-178, I cannot confirm that that bird was ever at McGhee-Tyson, but I was the first F-86D pilot with only F-86D experience assigned to that base, arriving in March 1954. I was assigned to the 469th FIS which, at that time, owned 24 brand new Dash 40 '86Ds and six '86As. The 469th had been assigned to Maggie Tyson for several years, at least, by then. Aircraft they had flown in prior years included the F-86A, the P-47 and the P-52 Twin Mustang.

You are correct in saying that the 460th FIS was not activated until 1954, but it was later in that year before they received any personnel or aircraft. They received the new Dash 45 "D"s with drag chutes, and there we were with our Dash 40s.

In your third issue, which featured the "D", I read with much interest the article by Bill Dunbar. He spoke of many events. I well remember some of what he related. The "ops officer" from McGhee-Tyson, who checked out his Terre Haute ANG unit in the F-86A, was (then) Captain Earl S. (Supersonic Sam) Payne, my first flight commander. While he was doing his thing in Terre Haute, I flew in to see him with a clean "D". It was a big weekend at the guest house where there was one huge party. But that's another story!

We had quite a good squadron at the 469th, and we flew two or three consecutive months of over 1,000 hours per month. We pulled the tanks for the next month and went over 1,000 hours again, proving that the real key to our success was our maintenance.

When Bill came down to McGhee-Tyson, I was the one who flew his F-86A. It was my first F-86A flight, and I will always recall the looks of envy on the faces of my squadron mates and those of the guys in the 460th as well. I believe the pilot who was teamed with him that day was Don Schipper who later left us for the Friendly Skies of United.

When my F-86D days were over, now looking back, I cannot single out any one flight to be my favorite. I have about 1,500 hours in the machine, and there are so many things I remember well. I was the first F-86D pilot I know who actually fired the rockets automatically. I am not saying there were not others who went before me. I just never met them.

Once four of us went on a three leg round robin to Scott, Perrin and back to Maggie. We had our leader Captain Payne, Norm Dennis, Mike Hayes and myself. Upon arriving over Scott, the tower advised the field was closed due to ice on the runways. Earl talked them into letting him try a landing, and if he found it to be okay, then the rest of us would land. Needless to say, he made a cautious approach and landed alright, and the tower then approved us to land. That runway was solid black ice, and after I landed, we told the tower they should probably keep the field closed a while longer!

Our second leg was to Perrin, and as we approached the field VFR, we formed a close diamond and performed two consecutive barrel rolls in very good, close formation, right over the field! After we parked, no one, not one tug driver, mentioned seeing us! How excited we were as we taxied in, and how quickly we were humbled by the *total lack* of comment! The flight was a thing of beauty, but nobody witnessed it!

While in the Philippines with the 26th FIS, I ran a streak of 19 consecutive sorties with practice rockets against the towed target without a miss on any pass. Some of the passes were with twelve rockets, but most were with only six. On one, the sharpshooter ahead of me shot the target off, but that was after I had obtained a good lock-on. I pressed the attack, armed 24, and shot the target up as it was falling straight down. Over fifty passes and all were holes in the rag!

I flew the "D" for five and a half years and was then glad to be rid of it. Now I look back, and all I see are great times.

I have heard some pilots say that the "D" was one model of the '86 that saw no combat. *Wrong!* In 1958, during the Chicom shelling of the islands of Quemoy and Matsu, I was flying night cover while supply ships landed on the beaches. Flying exactly opposite us was a flight of MiGs, always 5,000 to 6,000 feet higher, but never venturing out over the water. We could see the runways light up when they landed or took off, but then they would turn them off again. During one SW to NE pass, I guess we got too close to the mainland because the Chicoms let us know how well they had us covered. They threw several rounds of 100mm anti-aircraft artillery, tracking us perfectly, bursting exactly on altitude, and keeping the bursts directly off our wing about a mile or so. Perhaps we did not get into any fights, but we were in the environment and we logged combat time.

Well, I did not have anything to say, and I rambled on for more lines than I thought I could type! I just wanted to say I think you are doing a fine job. Keep it up!

Bill VanDine, Dallas, TX



Bruce Hinton sent this photo of the members of the October 1956 Nellis Weapons Meet team. Standing from the left are Bruce, the team captain, and Lecroy Clifton and Calvin Davey. Kneeling are Asa Whitehead and Thomas Tapper. Asa took the highest scores in dive bombing, air-to-ground, 20,000 foot air-to-air, and air-to-air. Cal won the low angle strafing phase of the air-to-ground. Bruce was also the high team captain. As Bruce notes, "The F-86H was a fine aircraft with great performance." Our sentiments, exactly!

Photo courtesy of the U.S. Air Force via Bruce Hinton

## My Favorite F-86H Story

by Harold Speer

By December 1958, the Air Force was turning F-86H Sabres over to Air National Guard units along the west coast. These Sabres were overhauled at a depot in Ontario, California, just east of Los Angeles. I was fortunate to fly several of these F-86Hs to their destinations. I delivered two or three weekly. Once I delivered them, I flew back via commercial carrier. I began by delivering an F-86H to Boston. I then flew a few more to Martinsburg, West Virginia. Then I was scheduled to fly an "H" to Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, D.C.

I planned my flight in two legs. The first would take me to Hensley Naval Air Station at Dallas, Texas. The time enroute would be two hours and three minutes. The second leg would be to Andrews. The time enroute for this

would be two hours and six minutes. The big F-86H had a limit of about two and a half hours. I would have twenty minutes reserve after I reached each destination.

On this day, the F-86H I was to deliver was not ready until around five p.m. I checked the weather. There was overcast in Texas, and Dallas would be under visual flight rules when I arrived. I pre-flighted the aircraft and saddled up. The F-86H climbed like a homesick angel. I levelled off at 45,000 feet and set my cruise. My first check point was Phoenix, Arizona. Although the sun had set, I was still in daylight. Darkness caught me over El Paso, Texas, and I was flying over solid overcast. The top was at 37,000 feet. I did not know where the bottom was. The air was smooth and the stars sparkled brightly.

I tuned my navigational automatic direction finding radio to the Abilene, Texas radio beacon. I would track both inbound and out from Abilene until I picked up Dallas. If I was lucky, I might find a hole in the overcast and let down visually.

About five minutes before I arrived over Abilene, I felt the Sabre shudder for a second like I was passing through turbulence. I pulled the throttle back a few notches for a smoother setting. Everything then seemed fine.

Suddenly, the *unthinkable* happened. The engine blew up. I jerked my feet from the rudder pedals. I could not believe this! My first reaction was that those missile launching White Sands technicians must have shot me down!

My thoughts returned quickly to the task at hand. Many things were hap-

pening. The jet engine spool, which was rotating at 10,000 rpm, must have now been out of balance. The vibration was so severe that my canopy danced on its rails. The rubber seals had deflated from the loss of engine pressure. Cabin decompression resulted. The cockpit quickly filled with bluish-gray smoke-like condensation as the -60 degree outside air invaded the cockpit, displacing that comfortable 72 degree temperature I was enjoying minutes before. I lowered my head in case the canopy flew off. It might dish as it departed and catch my helmet. I did not want that, especially while my head was still in it!

I did some fast planning. I cut the throttle to prevent gas from pumping into the combustion chamber which was hot and might explode. I trimmed the aircraft for a 180 knot glide. I knew the F-86H's battery was only good for about eight minutes without the generator. I called Abilene with a normal position report. If I declared an emergency, the channels would squawk like Donald Duck with people trying to help. I then stated my intentions. I told Abilene I had flamed out and would attempt a dead-stick landing. I further asked them to notify all traffic on Green 5 Airways within one hundred miles to avoid Abilene for ten minutes. I then turned the radio off to conserve my battery.

I had never landed at Abilene. I found my Western Letdown Book and opened to the Abilene plate. This gave the location, frequencies and the direction to the field from the Abilene beacon as well as the elevation. The big Strategic Air Command field, Dyess Air Force Base, was located eight miles west from Abilene and its elevation was 2,275 feet. Their runway was 11,000 feet long. This was all I needed.

I entered the weather as the needle swung on my radio. I turned the Sabre 45 degrees right from my easterly course. I opened the speed brakes and began my descent on the outbound leg. The slow rate that my speed brakes opened reminded me that my hydraulic pressure was down.

I made rapid calculations to cope with my dead engine approach. I modified my let down. I figured I must pass over Abilene on my inbound leg at 8,000 feet. This would allow my arrival over the runway at 6,000 feet. Then I could make a 360 degree approach to the runway or bail out if I had not broken out of the overcast. I would have 3,000 feet to separate from the aircraft and deploy my parachute if needed.

I made my penetration turn and was inbound to the low cone of the Abilene beacon. I noticed my instruments were fogging inside their glass covers! The

canopy was also fogging. That -60 degree temperature from 45,000 feet had cold-soaked the aircraft. The warm Texas air at low altitude was condensing on my canopy and instruments!

I passed the low cone at 8,000 feet and was still in the soup. A bail out decision was coming. Then at 7,000 feet, I saw the airstrip lights through a hole in the overcast. I would attempt a landing in a few more seconds. I broke out at 5,800 feet over the middle of the runway. I made a 135 degree left turn so I could stay

my battery died, the stick would freeze. A dead battery would have prevented me from raising the nose, and I would have pranged the bird.

I bent my head to see from the canopy. I levelled my wings and landed between the lights without seeing the runway. I hit the runway on my left wheel and bounced. The mains then smacked the runway. I held the nose off, and then it also touched. I opened my canopy which raised slowly. I must have had an excellent battery because that was an awfully long eight min-

Harold Speer today.

Photo courtesy of Harold Speer



utes! close to the runway while planning my final turn. My canopy was so fogged I thought I might jettison it if I could not wipe it with my gloved hand. It was like looking through Coke bottles filled with smoke, I thought I might drop my external fuel tanks if I came up short on final. Fortunately I could see lights on both sides of the runway.

As I made my turn, I realized my landing gear was up. It was risky to restart an exploded engine, I did not have time to execute the emergency procedure and put my head in the cockpit this close to the ground to look for switches. I lit the spark and opened the throttle. The engine warbled and cranked up. I reached 58% and I had hydraulic pressure. I dropped the handle and heard the landing gear lock down. Then the engine exploded again, sounding like a potbellied stove coming apart. I turned final and put the flaps down. The electric motor put a load on my weakened battery, so I pulled the handle back up. I wanted to use my landing lights, but I was afraid the battery would die. The stick was already heavy. The controls are electrically controlled and hydraulically actuated. If

Something suddenly flew by my left wing. I thought I was seeing things! I turned my radio on and asked the tower what passed me? They said that when they did not see any landing lights, they dispatched a firetruck to find the wreckage! I coasted until I was slow enough to turn onto a taxiway. I then asked the tower to send a tug. The operator said that Dyess was a bomber base and they did not have a tow bar for jet fighters! I suggested they send a tug with a rope.

The runway was slowly fogging. I asked the tower to tell the tug not to run into my aircraft! The tug towed my Sabre to a parking apron. I buttoned the aircraft up and thanked everyone. The officer of the day then furnished me with a ride to the civilian airport at Abilene where I caught a commercial airliner. I slept like a baby going back to California that night!

The next day I picked up another F-86H and delivered it to Andrews Air Force Base.



The 104th Fighter Squadron of the Maryland Air National Guard entered the jet age in summer 1954 when it received two T-33 jet trainers. In June 1955, the 104th received its first six F-86E Sabres and began retiring its F-51D Mustangs. In December 1957, the 104th transitioned from the "E" to the F-86H. Maryland eventually flew 68,482 hours in the "H". By August 1970, Maryland's last F-86H Sabres, based at Martin Airport in Baltimore, were replaced by new A-37B Dragonfly fighter-bombers.

Colonel Les Waltman, who is known affectionately as "Uncle Walty" to his many friends, was a fighter pilot with the 104th (later redesignated the 175th Tactical Fighter Group) throughout Maryland's Sabre years. In his interview, he compares flying the F-86H against the F-100, F-105, and the MiG-19.

Q: When did you first fly the F-86?

A: My first flight was in 1955. We had six F-86Es at Friendship Airport. I checked out in the Sabre at summer camp that year. We had the "E" for two years, and then we received the F-86H which was a bigger and much better airplane. I spent 13 years flying the F-86H. My total time in the F-86 was about 3,000 hours of which probably two-thirds were as an



First Lieutenant Les Waltman on the left with Captain Bill Marriott in front of a Maryland Air National Guard F-86E on the ramp at Travis Field, Savannah, Georgia in 1956. Photo courtesy of Les Waltman

## We Interview Les Waltman

instructor pilot. It was all with the Air National Guard. I also had possibly two flights in the F-86F. My time in the "F" was with another outfit's Sabre. We were good in the Air National Guard with sharing airplanes!

Q: Let's talk about your mission against the MiG-19. When did that occur?

A: November 1969.

Q: How was the mission described while you were in Maryland?

A: We only knew it was requested by the Navy who asked for two aircraft and two pilots for a three-day mission. Its purpose was listed as "secret". It was called *Have Drill*. We were met by a Marine Major at Nellis who was the project director and also a pilot for the MiG-19. We were briefed as soon as we got into Operations what we would do each day. Joe Maisch (another Maryland pilot) flew two flights against the MiG-19 and I flew one. They were "canned" missions. We compared the flight envelope of our aircraft against the MiG-19. Needless to say, when the stricter part of the program was over, we had at each other for a few minutes! It was that youthful exuberance!

Q: Were you flying from Nellis?

A: Yes. We had two F-86Hs, but we only used one in the operation. We

pulled the tanks and left the other Sabre configured. We used that one Sabre all three days. We had three successful missions and accomplished everything expected. I believe we found much about the operating envelopes of the F-86H and the MiG-19. Each had certain advantages over the other.

Q: What was your air time flying against the MiG-19?

A: I spent less than 15 minutes against the MiG-19 because we flew 90 to 100 miles from Nellis to the operating area. The MiG operated there. We were restricted without droptanks. When I landed from my mission, I was on emergency fuel. That was how little time we had. From the 15 minutes, about 10 to 12 were programmed: accelerations, decelerations, turns at various speeds and things like that. We went through the canned envelope and flew it at different altitudes. My mission was at 5,000 feet. The missions were canned until the data were recorded. After that, we had enough fuel to have at each other! We started in level flight, made a 90 degree turn in opposite directions and then a 180 degree turn back toward one another. Then the play started with a pass toward each other, and we improvised from there.

Q: How did the F-86H compare with the MiG-19?

A: We had a better roll rate. The F-86H got its wing up and turned immediately. Our roll rate was considerably better than the MiG's. The MiG, however, had a better turning radius. From that, the best F-86H maneuver against the MiG-19 was a "scissors" where we rapidly changed directions. If we got into a turn with the MiG-19, we were in deep trouble! Also, the MiG-19 had large speed brakes and decelerated better. When the MiG threw his boards out, the F-86H kept on going! The answer was never to decelerate with the MiG. If the MiG decelerated going straight ahead, then our answer was to pull the stick back and turn our deceleration into altitude.

The program evaluated Navy and Air Force aircraft against the MiG-19. In what envelopes could we operate against it? Like any other aircraft, it could be taken if we knew what we were doing. The MiG-19 had obvious advantages with its lower wing loading. It was a better turning airplane. With an afterburner, its acceleration was better, and with its big-

ger speed brakes, its deceleration was better. But in roll rate, the F-86H was superior. In fuel load and weapons systems, we were superior. We had other areas where we were competitive. Our mission was to recognize them.

Q: Did you do diving and climbing comparisons?

A: Yes. That was part of the evaluation, but mine was straight ahead acceleration and deceleration. I believe Joe's missions went into climbs and dives. I think the third mission was in those areas.

Q: Were you impressed with the MiG-19?

A: I frankly was not. I felt the MiG-19 had serious limitations. Not in its flight envelope, but in its armament and capability for long range flight. It seemed the MiG-19 was built to force the enemy away from a base and keep it away because it could only fight for a short time and then it had to leave. With that, they were ours.

Q: Do you remember the markings or the color scheme on the MiG-19?

A: No. I do not remember if it had its original markings. I do not believe it was in camouflage.

Q: Did it have United States markings?

A: I do not recall. In the geographic area where it was flown, it did not make any difference. Nobody bothered it there! No one belonged in that air space except those in this or similar programs.

Q: You mentioned earlier about talking to a Marine pilot who also flew the MiG-19?

A: Yes. I got the impression the project was run by aviators from the Marine Corps under the guidance of the Navy. The people I dealt with at Nellis were both Navy and Marine. I felt the Marine pilot was their chief evaluator. The day I flew, I flew against him.

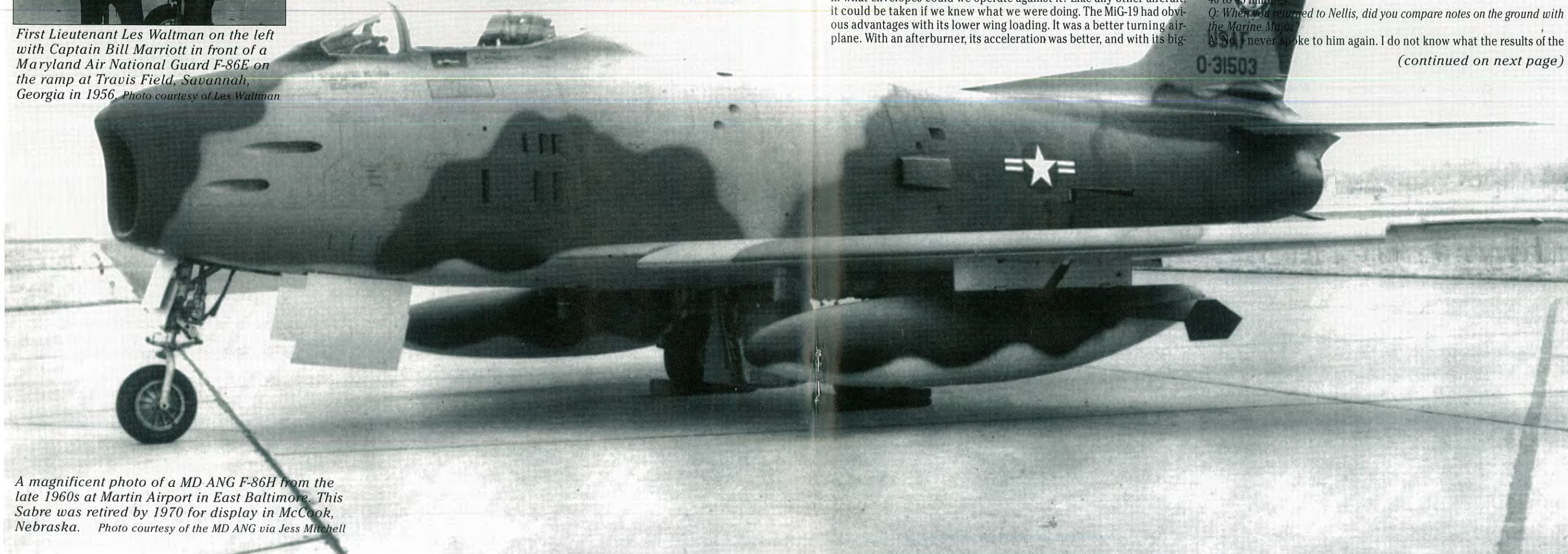
Q: So you met the pilot you flew against?

A: Yes, and I believe he flew all three missions with the MiG-19. They were very short. In his case, probably 25 minutes. In our case, probably 40 to 45 minutes.

Q: When you returned to Nellis, did you compare notes on the ground with the Marine Major?

A: No. I never spoke to him again. I do not know what the results of the

(continued on next page)



A magnificent photo of a MD ANG F-86H from the late 1960s at Martin Airport in East Baltimore. This Sabre was retired by 1970 for display in McCook, Nebraska. Photo courtesy of the MD ANG via Jess Mitchell

evaluation were. The only thing I received was a letter of appreciation from the Chief of Naval Operations:

Department of the Navy  
Office of the Chief of Naval Operations  
Washington, D.C. 20350

From: Chief of Naval Operations  
To: Chief, National Guard Bureau  
Subj: Letter of Appreciation

1. Recently the Navy requested the use of two Maryland Air National Guard F-86H aircraft of the 175th Fighter Group for a special evaluation as part of a classified Navy project. With only one day notice, the F-86s were moved from their base at Baltimore, Maryland and repositioned at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada in support of a phase of Project HAVE DRILL. This rapid response by the Air National Guard contributed materially to the overall success of the program. The information gained from the participation of these aircraft is of significant value and will have an impact on all of the Services.

2. The initiative and professional ability demonstrated by the Air National Guard pilots, Lieutenant Colonels Joseph J. Maisch, Jr. and Leslie H. Waltman, were appreciated. With their excellent support, the entire phase involving the F-86s was completed exactly as scheduled.

3. The cooperation and support of the Air National Guard in this important project is appreciated.

W.D. Houser

By Direction

Q: When you flew against the Major, did you talk to him?

A: Yes. We talked back and forth. It was not like combat. In an evaluation, if we saw I could get an advantage doing something, or if we saw he could get an advantage, we called one another. I would say something like, "Can you get another 20 degrees of bank in there?" If he could, I said, "That is your edge". We were determining what the edge was for him as well as for us. If we knew where they were best, then we stayed away from that envelope. We talked a lot. Naturally, we talked about fuel because it became a problem. In the evaluation, we never tried to prove who was the better pilot or which was the better airplane. The evaluation obtained as much information as possible about the performance envelope of the MiG-19.

Q: Were you debriefed after the mission?

A: Yes, but by telephone only.

Q: Was there any follow-up?

A: Not that I know of. I believe that Major called us before we left. He thought the evaluation went well and they developed much information. I do not recall discussing it later with anyone. At that time, the mission was classified "top secret" because the fact that the United States had a MiG-19 was top secret. Nothing was ever discussed. They learned what they wanted from the canned part of the mission plus a few observations we made while we were having at it. We knew when a maneuver was working and when it was not. The same happened when a maneuver was working against us. When the MiG hit me and I put in a beautiful break and left him hanging behind, and then I turned around and he was turning inside me, there was no ques-

tion the MiG had far better wing loading. In any turning maneuver, the Sabre lost. It was also obvious that I could break and get into a turn before he got his wing up. We beat him on the wing roll. The thing for us was to roll back and forth in a scissors maneuver. He could not roll that fast. The same with deceleration and acceleration. He had those over us. The only way to stop an F-86H was to pull the nose as high as we could get and use the underside of the aircraft as an airbrake, otherwise we never stopped with the MiG! At the same time, we got altitude. These are the things evaluations develop.

Incidentally, earlier I participated in two Feather Duster operations flying F-86H missions against the F-100 and the F-105. We flew these at Nellis in 1966. Feather Duster evaluated all operational American aircraft against the MiG-19. Since the F-86H was the closest thing to a MiG-19, we went as the "enemy". We flew the high-level portion with four Sabres flying for two weeks. They did not approve the low-level portion because of flight safety. After four weeks, they advised we would do the low-level portion. I went back with one F-86H and our war readiness materiel. The Puerto Rico Air National Guard sent four F-86Hs, four pilots and four crew chiefs, and we ran a joint operation at Nellis. I was the detachment commander. I stayed for three weeks and ran flight evaluations against the F-100, F-104 and the F-105. Then Captain Fred Blahus flew against the F-4 and F-5.

We worked our fighter tactics against theirs. It became obvious in a turning fight the F-86H was a superior airplane. We tore them up! All those aircraft were faster than the F-86H, so we tried to put ourselves in situations where we had an initial speed advantage. We wanted an altitude or airspeed advantage, or preferably both. But if both airplanes were in combat at altitude and we had to lose airspeed, then we traded our airspeed loss for an altitude gain whenever possible. We always traded altitude for airspeed, and vice versa. The faster airplanes wanted to get as high as possible or get their noses down and run away as fast as possible.

The Air Force had that problem in Vietnam with F-105s in particular which brought about this exercise. The F-105s would say, "MiGs in the area", and would often dump their bombs and run. For the MiGs, that was as effective as shooting our airplanes down. If the F-105s dropped their bombs in the ocean, then the MiGs had thwarted our mission. We had to find what we could do against the MiG threat. That was what Feather Duster was about.

Of my two missions, Feather Duster was more noteworthy than Have Drill as far as the F-86H was concerned. We only lost two missions because of weather. Everyday we flew four airplanes in the morning and four in the afternoon. We had only five airplanes there, but most of the time one was down because it needed an engine. With four airplanes, we lost only one mission due to maintenance. With five crew chiefs and one supply man for a maintenance support element, that was an incredible mission accomplishment! The F-86H performed beautifully.

Q: How would the F-86H have compared with the F-100 and the F-105 if the Sabre had another 500 to 1,000 pounds of thrust?

A: There is no question in my mind that it would have been better than both. In any envelope except nose down and full throttle, the F-100 was inferior to the F-86H. The same was true with the F-105, which to me was actually a single-engine bomber. As I wrote in my final evaluation reports:

Subject: Feather Duster II, F-86H vs. F-100

To: Captain Mike Muskat

1. The following is a resume of the sortie accomplishment of the F-86H detachment for the week of 16-20 August (1966):

Sorties Programmed	28
Sorties Scheduled	36*
Sorties Flown	33*
Weather Aborts	2
Maintenance Aborts	1

\*Includes three orientation rides

2. The following conclusions are based on discussions with the involved F-86H pilots and reflect their ideas on the series of tests conducted against the F-100 at low altitudes:

a. The F-100, flying at slower speeds (350 knots or less), has a serious disadvantage when attacking the F-86H. At speeds in excess of 400 knots, this disadvantage is greatly reduced. At the higher speeds, the F-86H must use more violent maneuvering to disengage from a gun or missile attack, and the subsequent loss of speed of the defending F-86H, coupled with the high rate of closure of the attacking F-100, enables the attacker to more effectively escape if forced into an overshoot. A climbing turn away from the defender's break on the part of the overshooting F-100 helps to preclude a missile launch from the defending F-86H.

Further, with the initial high rate of closure and subsequent overshoot, the attacking F-100 may elect to trade a great deal of this energy for altitude and once again initiate an attack. As long as high Mach is maintained, the F-100 may elect to remain in the fray for a limited number of turns taking heed not to let his airspeed dissipate. Should the F-100 allow his speed to bleed off too far, he can no longer accelerate out of the engagement, and the superior roll and turn rate of the F-86H will eventually allow the defending F-86H to slide into the six o'clock position for a gun or missile kill.

b. The F-86H attacking an F-100 flying at speeds in excess of 400 knots is able to maintain a tactical advantage, however, the F-100 had success in negating missile and gun firing attacks by jinking (constantly changing altitude and direction, and never flying straight and level). The jinking is successful only so long as it removes the airplane from its line of flight at the start of the maneuver. In addition, airspeed may be built up during the jinking maneuvers so as to eventually affect separation.

c. Superior flight tactics enabled the F-100s to show well in the 4 vs. 4 phase of the evaluation. However, when the flight of F-86Hs developed better tactics, they were able to completely outmaneuver the F-100s, and by aggressive flying, were able to penetrate the F-100 flight and achieve successful results. I feel that flight tactics properly applied and executed on several flights were able to negate the

aircraft differences between the F-86Hs and the F-100s. At the very least, the F-100s were able to get into the fight, and though a successful attack may have been made on one of their elements, the other element was able to retaliate in kind.

3. In conclusion, high airspeed and good flight tactics seem to have evened somewhat the obvious advantages enjoyed by the F-86Hs at lower airspeeds.

Subject: Feather Duster II, F-86H vs. F-105

1. The following is a resume of the sortie accomplishment of the F-86H detachment for the week of 23-27 August (1966):

Sorties Programmed	28
Sorties Scheduled	30
Sorties Flown	29
Maintenance Aborts	1

2. The following conclusions are based on discussions with the pilots of the involved F-86H aircraft and generally reflect their analysis of the tests conducted at low altitudes against the F-105:

a. When the F-86H was defending and flying at lower speeds (350 knots or less), the F-105 closing at a higher rate (usually .9 or better), because of a rapid rate of closure, was not able to do any great amount of tracking and was immediately susceptible to an overshoot, particularly if the F-86H broke hard. With its superior speed advantage, the attacking F-105 was generally able to complete separation. The few times the F-105s were coaxed into a low speed attack, positive kills were generally achieved by the F-86Hs.

When the roles were reversed and the F-105s were in a defensive posture at lower speeds, the defenders were unable to effect a separation and were generally easy kills. Overshoots were run by the attacking F-86Hs.

b. At higher rates of speed, the F-105 in a defending role was highly successful in escaping gun and missile attacks by aggressive jinking close to the deck. This jinking makes gun tracking extremely difficult, and remaining close to the deck tends to counter a missile attack. Jinking to the extent of actually turning seems to also commit the attacker to a turn as well, since he cannot know if the defender is jinking or actually starting a turn. The F-105 was able to maintain a Mach of .95 or better during the maneuvering and eventually gain separation by merely streaking off along the deck, and a few miles separation was attained by jinking.

c. As in the F-100 tests, flight tactics seemed to be a large factor in achieving successful engagements. The F-105 in the 2 vs. 2 attacks were able to combine their speed with wider separation and pose a serious problem for defending F-86Hs. The double attack method allowed either one or the other of the attacking F-105s to position himself for high speed attacking on the "breaking" F-86Hs. The defending F-86Hs were generally unable to retaliate until both F-105s were visually located, and by this time, they usually had made their pass and were gone for separation.

Attacking at the higher Mach number, the F-86Hs had a slower rate of closure and had to close inside the wide flying F-105s thus exposing themselves to an attack by the faster flying F-105 wingman. The only solution for the F-86Hs seemed to be to sacrifice flight integrity and attack one vs. one. The higher speed of the



Uncle Walty and his F-86E, 51-2743, at Friendship Airport in 1957.  
Photo courtesy of Les Waltman  
Opposite page: Two Maryland "H"s touch down at Martin Airport.  
Photo courtesy Douglas Sturgeon and the MD ANG

F-105s allowed them to come to the support of one another much faster than the F-86Hs.

The situations were pretty much the same in 4 vs. 4. As long as the F-105s kept their Mach high and did not try to assume the role of day fighter, but were content to press in, take their quick burst and then press on, the F-86Hs could do little more than just get out of the way. As in the case of 2 vs. 2, with wide element separation and high speeds, the F-105s were able to provide some degree of mutual protection as long as they did not commit to a low speed, turning fight.

3. The most successful maneuvers seemed to be jinking while hugging the deck and, of course, maintaining a high Mach number. Hugging the deck until separation can be achieved seems to be a safer prospect at the lower altitudes than a climbing spiral. Wide jinking not only makes a gun attack almost impossible but also seems to be capable of foiling a missile attack.

Leslie H. Waltman, Major, ANG  
Maryland Air National Guard

Q: How did you feel when the F-86Hs were phased out of the Maryland Air National Guard?

A: How would you feel if your kids left home?

Q: Awful!

A: You better believe it! In my life, people always said, "Why did you never get married?" I said, "Because I have a 13,000 pound girlfriend. I love her, and that is all that counts". The F-86H was as much a part of my life as an arm or a leg. It was a very, very beautiful airplane. It was totally forgiving, and I mean totally forgiving. We had to mess the airplane up. It never messed us up. If we were in a spin, we got our hands off everything, sat there and left the airplane alone. It got out of it. I am talking about regular or inverted spins. If we stalled out, the nose came down and we started flying again. It was totally stable, totally forgiving, and no matter what we did to mess it up, it forgave us. Most of the guys I knew who flew the "H" felt the same way. It was a part of our lives.

Q: Do you have a favorite Sabre story?

A: When I came home from active duty in

early 1969, I thought I was leaving the Guard. I had three rides in the F-86H before I left. I had an instrument ride, a night cross-country and a gunnery ride. Each was flown highly professionally, and the F-86H was an airplane to do exactly that in, to perform like a professional. There were many fun rides, but I think those three rides, since they seemed to be my swan song, were the best. I decided not to go out with a lot of foolishness or break regulations or rules at the field, but to go out like the consummate professional. That is exactly what I did. The missions and the people I flew with were excellent. They showed respect for my abilities considering that I was leaving and these rides may be my last. They were as satisfied as I was to make them first class operations.

Q: Do you have any final thoughts on the Sabre or your mission against the MiG-19?

A: Have Drill was extremely professional. There is no question that the Air National Guard could supply professional people for any needed occasion. Both Joe Maisch and I had over 2,000 hours in the F-86H. We were highly skilled pilots. We had an aircraft that functioned properly. We went to Nellis and did a good, professional job. It is a reflection on the Air National Guard that it supplied people with tremendous skills. The F-86H, and F-86s in general, were, without a doubt, the "Last of the Sport Models". We now have technological airplanes. The F-15 is apparently one incredible piece of equipment, although I never had the pleasure of flying it. I know that what we recommended to the Air Force after Feather Duster, about the next generation of fighters, became the F-15. The F-86, even though it was a great war machine, was a fun airplane, pure and simple. We enjoyed it. We all came away from the F-86 with the same feeling. It was a love affair. To paraphrase Will Rogers, "I never met a man who didn't like the F-86."

Thank you, Uncle Walty!



# My Favorite Sabre Story

By John Pedjoe

"There I was, flat on my back at 30,000 feet . . ." How many times have you heard a fighter jock start his war story with those words?! Well, here is another one! But first, a little background is in order.

After graduation from advanced flying school at Nellis in April 1955, I said good-bye to my instructor, Hank Buttlemann (I waxed him once, but he will not admit it!), and travelled to Denver where I was one of 70 Lieutenants selected to be Air Training Officers (ATO) for the first Air Force Academy class. As an inducement, the powers-that-be promised us we could have F-86s to play with. Of course, the fact that Bill Yancey and Ben Cassidy, my bosses, also wanted to fly Sabres had nothing to do with it!

After an agonizingly long time, we got our (Canadian) slat-winged F-86Es, and we proceeded to continue the training we had picked up at Nellis, such as the fluid four, one-on-one, start at 30,000 feet and end up on the deck over Limon, Colorado, and so forth.

On one particularly memorable flight, I was in a tight, climbing right turn at the five o'clock position at about 30,000 feet. We all remember the tricks we used to stay behind the other guy, such as sneaking down some flaps, cracking the speed brakes open, and max power with drag. Well, I used them all, and naturally when we were flying against another '86, our relative performance was about equal. Our speed on this one-on-one was down to about as low as it was going to get, but I had to get this guy!

Even though I was not really going to shoot, I wanted to pull the lead and get my nose out in front of him (that is why Hank said I did not get him). Can you see this one coming? You guessed it! In my zeal, I put in a "skosh" too much bottom rudder, and then, "Oh, shoot!". The next thing I knew, I was flat on my back, but up against the canopy, in an inverted flat spin. As near as I can figure, my right

"Pedj" at Nellis in 1955.

Photo courtesy of John Pedjoe



slat must have come out but the left one did not, and it *flipped me over!*

As I flopped through the sky out of control, I tried all the standard spin recovery techniques, but none worked. By this time, I was probably through 20,000 feet, still on my back, and still on the way down. My buddies, seeing what a mess I was in, were yelling for me to eject, but again you guessed it, *I could not*. Since I was up against the canopy, I could not reach the handles. Lucky thing, though, because as you will recall, the canopy ejected *straight back* along its rails if we blew it. Had I accomplished the first part of the procedure, I would not have been able to do the second, because *my head* would have gone off with the canopy.

By this time, I was down to about 15,000 feet (time and altitude fly by when you're having fun!), and I remembered one last thing to try. Since the stick was ineffective no matter what I did, I used my trim button. You guessed it again, earlier I had trimmed all the way back during the rat race. I then found the solution to my problem: trim to neutral (yellow light on), throttle to idle, and *hands off*. My trusty ol' '86 flew itself right out. When I got flying speed again, I did a low "g" split-s and then limped

home. When I calmed down enough to look at my "g" meter, I was amazed to see +9 and -3 locked into the dial! Surprisingly enough, however, upon examination, the ground crew could find *no damage* to my trusty Sabre. The same, though, could not be said for *me*. For the next month, I was sporting the flashiest pair of *red and blue eyes*. There just was *no white* to be seen!

After I retired in 1977, I went to work for Cubic Corporation, the makers of the Air Combat Maneuver Range (ACMR) system. Once on a commercial flight from Europe in 1984, I was talking with some Lockheed engineers. During the course of our conversation, we got around to our military histories. When I mentioned I flew F-86s at the Academy, they said, "You're the guy that was in that inverted flat spin!" They could have knocked me over with a feather! As we came to find out, their boss, Frank Drew, was in that gaggle of Sabres with me, and he had told them my story! Frank is now a retired Brigadier General who worked for Lockheed in Austin, Texas. Small world, isn't it?



First Lieutenant Richard R. Hefton, who later retired as a Brigadier General, in the cockpit of a 34th Fighter-Day Squadron early F-86H from George Air Force Base in 1955. Note the **lack of leading edge slats** on this "H" Sabre. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Air Force via Dick Hefton.

## Flying The Dangerous Early Hard Wing "H"s

By Dick Hefton

The later model F-86Fs came out with a hard wing to make them faster and more controllable at altitude. The pilots who flew them, however, had all kinds of trouble because of no stall warning and higher final approach speeds. Then came the F-86F-40s with their extended wings and leading edge slats which were praised as the final answer. I flew earlier F-86F-25s with slats so I was not aware of the difference. Stu Childs worked the tests at Edwards and swore by the F-40 wing's changes.

In the meantime, the "H"s were under construction at Columbus. I imagine the contract for the hard wing was still in effect and thus North American delivered the first F-86Hs that way. For whatever reason, my squadron got them as did the other units at Nellis, Cannon and George who took deliveries in 1955.

As for speed, the early hard wing F-86H was outstanding although I do not know whether the later models with slats were any slower. But I can tell you the early "H"s were *killers* in the traffic pattern as had been true for the later "F"s with hard wings.

I had a reputation for tight patterns and often had to slip rather drastically to put the bird on the end of the runway. I did a heavy-legged slip one day coming back from a chase ride, and my "H" snapped a half-roll and reverse on me before I could catch it. I held off on the power, which was wrong, and it snapped *again*, this time all the way over to the left, *inverted*.

At this point I had only one chance, I simultaneously went full stick forward, rolled easily to the right, and went to the firewall with the throttle. Those who flew the "H" knew how instantaneous

its power response was. So with this combination, and the fact that I had some altitude, which was the condition that invited the slip attempt in the first place, I nursed my mush out over the Joshua trees and made a new pattern. Fred Gray, who was on mobile, came over the radio with a breaking voice and told me, "*Don't ever do that again.*" That amused me just enough to bring me back to reality. I then made a nice, neat, *wide* pattern.

I briefed our squadron on the need to treat that baby *nice*ly when so close to the ground at low airspeed and high-load situations. I guess it did not take because I lost a student on a repeat of his T-10 ride on that same runway about two weeks later. We were making separate patterns. When I saw him start his turn onto final, I looked down to check my gear. When I looked back up, he was *not where he was supposed to be*. I looked further down and he was making the *red ball*. He had pitched slightly inside my break, which I worried about, but I thought it may have been more my own tentative attitude following my recent brush with the snap. When he was in the midst of a good turn to final, I thought his situation was under control. I was wrong *again*.

I got out of the Air Force a few months later and went back to school. I came close to getting back into the "H" with the Reserves, but things did not work out. I did not get close to another "H" until the late '60s when the Massachusetts Air Guard flew their "Last of the Sports Models" complete with whitewalls. Theirs, incidentally, had *slats*.



# The Canadair Sabre

BY LARRY MILBERRY

A grand book about a grand fighter. The Sabre was adopted by the RCAF in 1949 as its primary day fighter. *The Canadair Sabre* details the story from the first talks between Canada and the US, to training the first techs in California, and introducing the Sabre to RCAF pilots. Next comes start-up of production at Canadair, first flight in August 1950, then the most detailed look ever into the Sabre in action: formation of the NATO Air Division squadrons, overseas ferrying, all the details of squadron ops.

*The Canadair Sabre* also includes training at the OTU, RCAF pilots fighting MiGs in Korea, development of all marks to the legendary Mk.VI; Sabres in the Air Reserve; and aerobatics with the Fireballs, Sky Lancers and the incomparable Golden Hawks.

The Sabre era in the RAF and Luftwaffe is here, with plenty of photos and first-hand accounts, as are squadrons in Italy, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia. An intriguing section deals with the Sabre at war in the Pakistan Air Force and its successes against the Indian Air Force (even against the MiG-21), as well as Sabres with the South African Air Force and in the Congo and Honduras.

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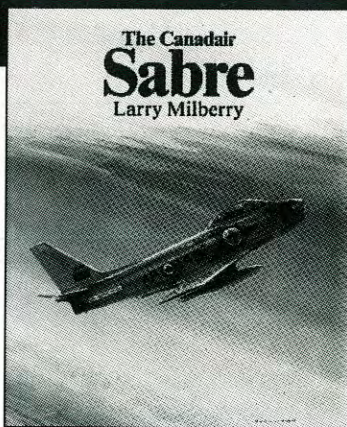
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A detailed posed picture of a Maryland Air National Guard F-86H, taken between 1959 and 1962.

Photo courtesy of the MD ANG via Jess Mitchell

SABRE JET CLASSICS / FALL 1993

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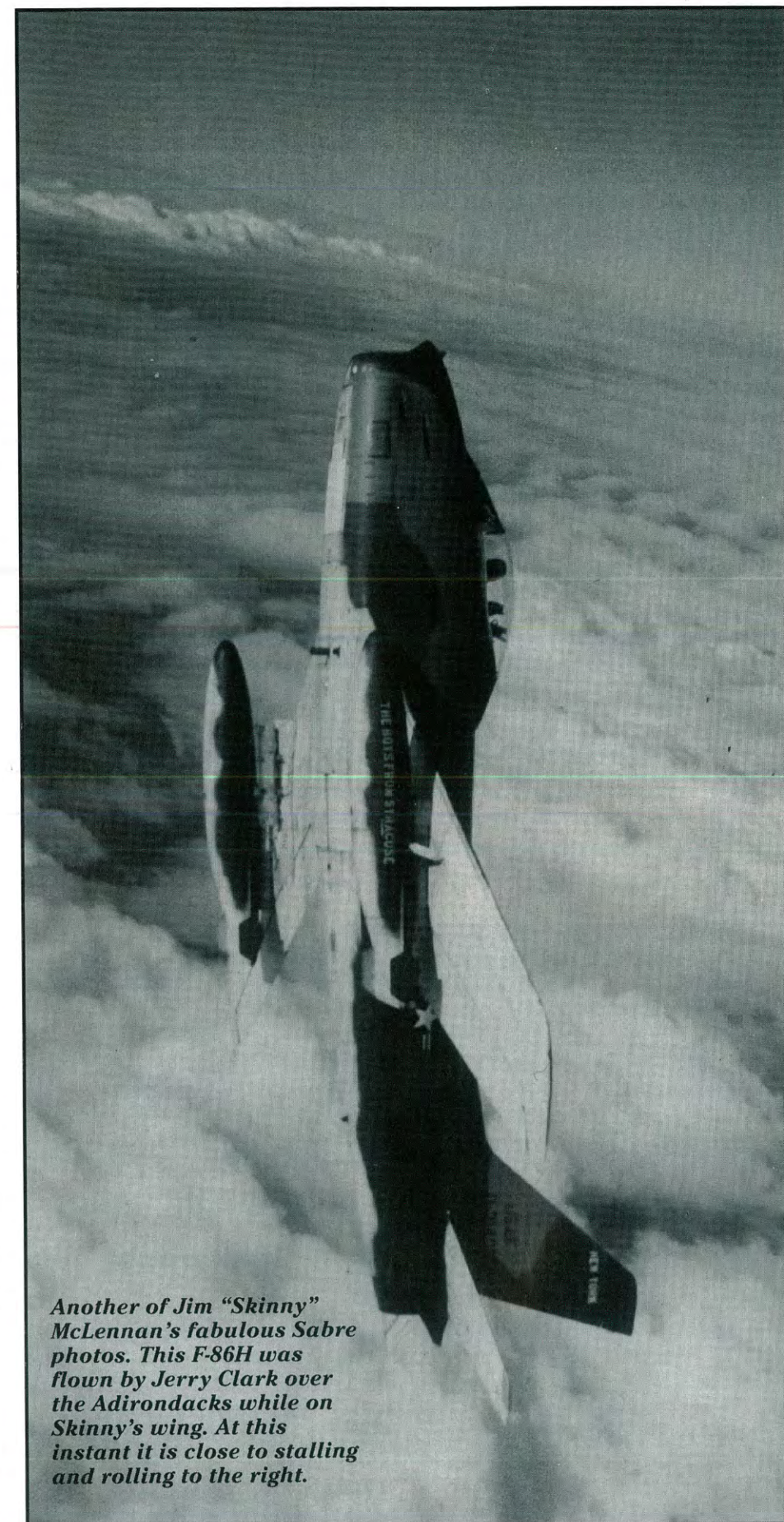
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Sun Air Parts has several zero time and several other low time J47 jet engines for sale, along with a good inventory of J47 parts. Contact: Dennis P. Nobile at Sun Air Parts, 26007 Huntington Ln., Valencia, CA 91355-1145, or call (805) 257-7708, or FAX (805) 257-7710.

Did you fly the F-86? If so, then you should belong to the **F-86 Sabre Pilots Association** which exists to perpetuate the history of the F-86, the units to which it belonged, and the pilots who flew the Sabre. Write for an application to: F-86 Sabre Pilots Association, P.O. Box 97951, Las Vegas, NV 89193.

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Another of Jim "Skinny" McLennan's fabulous Sabre photos. This F-86H was flown by Jerry Clark over the Adirondacks while on Skinny's wing. At this instant it is close to stalling and rolling to the right.



The F-86F Sabres we flew at Williams Air Force Base in 1956/57 were terrifically fun to fly and very forgiving, but they did not have some of the automatic features that were taken for granted on later jet aircraft. For example, they did not have seat belts that opened automatically upon ejecting, and this led to this unusual ejection experience:

An instructor pilot returning from a training flight at Willie Air Patch pitched out with the usual bank and yank technique. The problem was that the aileron was stuck and the airplane wanted to continue rolling to the right. He found that with all the left stick he could get and full left rudder, the airplane stabilized in a 45 degree bank/skid to the right. With full power, the aircraft held a climb attitude heading south. He was able to get up to about 8,000 feet, and he figured it was enough for a safe ejection since the airplane was going to corkscrew as soon as he released the controls, and there was no assurance of ejecting upward. He ducked his head, released the controls, pulled the armrest up and squeezed the trigger. The canopy jettisoned and the seat ejected normally. After ejection, he manually

unfastened the seat belt and kicked the seat away, reaching with his right hand up to his left chest for the D-Ring. He got a *hand full of flying suit*. No D-Ring! Looking back, he saw the parachute pack attached only by his two leg straps. In those days with the non-automatic configuration, we clipped the aircraft oxygen hose to the parachute chest strap, plugged the hose to the oxygen mask into the hose connector, and wrapped a short piece of cloth tape around the chest strap to keep the oxygen mask hose

### By Curt Burns

from stretching out like a rubber band until it broke its connection and slammed back into our face. What happened was that the restraining tape had unfastened his parachute harness' chest strap buckle during seat separation. Anyway, our calm and collected pilot reached back and got both arms through the shoulder straps, but seeing the desert coming up fast, he figured he did not have time to refasten the chest strap buckle, so he pulled the D-Ring. After

the parachute opening shock, he found himself hanging head down from the leg straps, with the desert floor even closer. He only had time to pull himself up and get one arm through the shoulder straps before he hit the ground. After collapsing the chute, our pilot sat down on a boulder to catch his breath. Looking over, he realized he had come down only a few hundred feet from the main Phoenix-Tucson highway, and quite a few cars had stopped along the road. About this time, a fellow ran up to him from the highway with a pint of whiskey in one hand and a lit cigarette in the other. He said, "My wife and me saw you comin' down in that-there parachute upside down, and she told me, "Now there's a man who's gonna need a drink and a cigarette!"

Epilogue: Our intrepid fighter pilot failed his blood alcohol test which was taken after the accident, but the flight surgeon allowed as how he had a good reason for it. After the accident, we pilots were warned to always wrap our oxygen hose restraining strap around the parachute chest strap either to the left or the right of the buckle, but not over it.



## On The Lighter Side!

I was a member of the Arizona Air National Guard in 1953. My previous flying experience included lots of P-47 and P-51 time. To add to that, we had been flying T-33s to get a bit of JET flying time! Guessing, I would say I had maybe 10 to 12 hours in the T-33.

The checkout procedure for the F-86A was not much in those days. There was maybe a lecture or two, a cockpit check, and then off into the wild blue yonder. It did not seem to be that difficult, and my first flight went off without a hitch. My second flight, though, is the one I want to mention.

I was flying over Phoenix at maybe 25,000 feet, straight and level, when I got into a "control problem". The plane wanted to fly with the right wing low, and there was not much I could do to correct it. We had an officer on runway control, and of course the

tower was in operation, with both on the same frequency. I called "Copper Mobile" stating I was having flight control problems. The response was quick, "Go through your checklist on flight control failure!" I knew I had a checklist in my flying suit, but I had *never* looked at it! Furthermore, I was not about to dig it out and study it in the middle of an emergency!

### By Ed Hurd

I called Copper Mobile and said, "Could you read the checklist off so I don't make a mistake?" The kind man in the control jeep did in fact read the checklist items. I soon landed the fast craft without incident. I was instructed to turn off the end of the runway, park, and shut down. My

commander, Major Donald Morris, who was always gracious and no doubt heard all the transmissions, came up to my cockpit while I was unstrapping.

"Ed, nice landing!", he said. "There were no doubts about the procedures in the checklist, were there?"

"Oh no," I replied, "I just wanted to be sure I made *no mistakes* in handling the problem!"

\* \* \*

As the years went by, things changed *considerably*. Tech reps came to the squadrons and gave specific lectures on the various systems in the aircraft. We not only had a checklist that stated exactly how to handle problems, but we were THOROUGHLY TESTED ON ALL OF IT before we went up and flew!

