

My Favorite Fighter-Bomber Story by Dee Harper



Sabre Jet Classics

Volume 2 Number 4

Winter 1993



The Quarterly Magazine Of The Sabre Jet Historical Society

OUR FIRST MIG-KILLERS ISSUE!

**Nine Was Enough! • Reborn "H" Update • "The Hunters"
We Interview Bob Baldwin • Cheers! • And Much More!**



Two 25th FIS MiG Hunters

24 PAGES!

Photo Credit: Courtesy of Hank Buttelmann

Sabre Jet Classics

WINTER 1993

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On Our Cover: F-86 Sabre Pilots Association's president Hank Buttelmann captures the cover for our first all out MiG-killers issue. Hank was Korea's 36th Sabre ace, with an impressive seven MiG-15 kills to his credit (his interview is featured in SJ11). Here we see two 25th FIS Sabres taxiing at Suwon before a mission in spring 1953. Interestingly, the F-86 on the left was ace Bob Baldwin's NINA II, which is featured on page 21. Fasten your shoulder harness! This will be an adrenaline pump overspeed issue of Sabre Jet Classics!

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while they last. See our Bulletin Board section for details. If you receive any form of reminder letter from the Society, you are urged to follow up promptly in answering the request, which is only to ask for additional information. Remember, incomplete or inaccurate information hurts everyone in the Society. Please don't put off a request! Sabre Jet Classics welcomes Sabre-related photographs and articles. All pictures will be taken care of and returned after use. If needed, we will work with you to polish your article and publish it. You will be credited in our magazine for your photos or articles, however, because we are an all-volunteer organization, there is no monetary reimbursement for submitted materials.



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IN MEMORIAM

This issue of *Sabre Jet Classics*, which we believe is our finest edition to date, is respectfully dedicated to the memory of James A. Gregory who lost his life while demonstrating the capabilities of an F-86 before a crowd of spectators at the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station air show on May 2, 1993. May he and all those who lost their lives flying the Sabre never be forgotten. - THE EDITORS

Thank You!

Sorry I took so long to write-it's been busy in D.C.! The Sabre article (Neil Fossum's "Robin, Don't Come In On This Pass", published in Volume 1, Number 4) was great! I love the old stories and had forgotten that one. Thanks! God Bless.

Sam Johnson, House of Representatives, Washington, D.C.

Many thanks for the copies of your publication. Congratulations on the quality, content and philosophy behind your endeavors. I am impressed with your publication. I would be pleased to give your Historical Society some exposure in our new title, *Warbirds Today Series-F-86*. I would like to include a couple of pieces you have published. I certainly think it would be to your advantage to let us push your association. Keep up the good work!

Paul Coggan, Editor,
WARBIRDS Worldwide,
Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, England

Paul's new book on current day Sabres was published this past summer. - THE EDITORS

Congratulations on your professional, polished, and well layed-out magazine. The many and varied articles are well written and edited, the photographs are excellent, and it is apparent that much time and effort goes into each issue. It is a pleasure to read, and is a fine addition to the world of aviation periodicals.

I wanted to pass on to you just what a real joy it has been for me to see my father, "Big John" Henderson, get so involved in an ongoing project such as yours. I know that it has pleased and flattered him to be a part of *Sabre Jet Classics*, and I can always count on the fact that a good portion of every one of SABRE JET CLASSICS / WINTER 1993

our telephone conversations will be devoted to a discussion of some aspect of the most recent issue! As you have no doubt already discovered, Dad is a pretty darn good source of information when it comes to the F-86, and although I may be a bit biased, I honestly can't think of anyone who knows more about what made it tick.

Being the North American Aviation tech-rep's son that I am, I have been afforded an insider's view of the F-86, even down to the point of being named after Dad's very good friend, Colonel Bruce Hinton of the 4th Fighter Wing! And as a result, it's a personal joy for me to see the Sabre receive the attention that your publication is bringing it. Continued good luck with each and every future issue, and I look forward to them all!

Bruce Henderson, Mansfield, TX

Please consider me for membership in the *SJHS*. I am presently returning an F-86 (Canadair Sabre) to flying condition.

Jack Rosamond, Golden, CO

We're glad to have you! Please tell us more about your Sabre's restoration! - THE EDITORS

I read with interest your story of the rocket-assisted Sabre program. This brought to mind something tried in Korea, probably in the fall or early winter of 1952, most likely JATO-assisted. I did not fly the aircraft, but perhaps some of your readers will remember the program.

I flew 90% of my missions in the "F" model, number 953, which I believe no longer exists. Some pilot tore it up after the war ended as I understand.

Good Luck!
Vermont Garrison, Mountain Home, ID

Vermont Garrison was the 32nd Ace of the Korean War.-THE EDITORS

Cheers!

Our readers write to
Sabre Jet Classics . . .

My F-86H Days

- Part 2 -

"OUR FUN CONTINUED AFTER WE RETURNED STATESIDE, EVEN AT NIGHT!" by Jim "Skinny" McLennan

The *stealth switch* on the F-86 was first used by Eli Culbertson. I was well into a high-side attack when Eli *vanished* one night. He turned his lights off! I immediately doused mine, too! Transmissions from startled wingmen quickly filled the air. "I've lost you, lead" was heard from several directions as a sky full of Sabres went stealth! It was to *have or be had* as I latched onto the glow of Eli's tailpipe and hung on for dear life. Through it all I had no idea who it was, but I later claimed a "kill" in the bar after following Eli that night! Others returned with hairy tales of near collisions and lost wingmen. Our Ops officer could not understand why four flights of Sabres on night instrument training all returned *single ship!*

Another time Eli was leading a flight of four Sabres on an air-to-ground mission to Fort Drum, New York. After the events, Eli sent Numbers Two and Four "home alone". He and I then raced across Lake Ontario to fulfill a promise to several of his golfing buddies. We beat the gophers out of the course and terrified everyone, including *me*, and then we headed home, very, *very* low on gas. Our plan was to intercept Two and Four, recover as a *four ship*, and *no one* would be the wiser! But this was not to be. We touched down with just enough fuel to taxi back and park. Numbers Two and Four had landed long ago! As we strolled into our squadron, Ops officer John Theisen requested our presence in his office. As his door closed, words such as *stupid, idiots, jerks*, and many other unprintables filled his room for one *very* long hour...!



In this issue we are thrilled to publish some incredible black and white photography by former North American Aviation photographer Bill Binder, which came to us via Bill Grover. To the left is Jim Jabara, our first jet ace of the Korean War, and to the right, Vermont Garrison, our 32nd ace. Look for more of Bill's incredible photography later in this issue. - THE EDITORS



About Our First "H" Issue...

I just received my copy of "F-86H: The Last Of The Sport Models -Part 1" which was a great issue I thoroughly enjoyed. It is remarkable that all three squadrons that were called to active duty and deployed to Phalsbourg, France in 1961 contributed to this historical issue. Please send ten copies of this issue so I can distribute them to the other "H" drivers I mentioned in my article and for future subscribers. For those who remember me, the picture on page 9 is suitable for framing! Also enclosed is information regarding the *stealth* switch that few knew the '86 H had!

Jim "Skinny" McLennan, Skaneateles, NY

I just finished reading the summer '93 *Sabre Jet Classics* and I thoroughly enjoyed it! I am currently the Organizational Maintenance Branch Chief for the 174th Fighter Wing at Syracuse, NY, the famed "Boys From Syracuse", and as a former crew chief on the F-86H, it had a special place in my heart. The cover "H", 747, was crewed for many years by now-retired MSgt. Mel Denny, and I am sure he will be extremely proud to see his old jet on the cover of a magazine! The article written by our beloved "Skinny" was interesting, factual (?), and informative!

As I read through the magazine I saw the



Can you identify this Sabre-related handtool? John Henderson carried this one for a number of years in the field. Any guesses??

ad for pilots to join the **F-86 Sabre Pilots Association**. I might ask you to run an article to see if there are any former "wrench-turners" out there who might want to form or join the same. Pilots were not the only ones who loved this airplane! Skinny told me that it was the best he ever flew. Well, it was the best I ever worked on!

I enjoy your magazine and commend you on its inception.

Thomas D. Coldren, CMS, NYANG, Syracuse, NY

I read cover to cover every issue sent so far and I knew personally several people in the magazine articles. I found most enjoyable Skinny's story about the "H". I feel the "H" is the best fighter I ever flew, and having been in most of those situations Skinny describes myself, I really enjoyed the humor with which he told his story.

Ken Haugen, New Braunfels, TX

I received your request on the heels of receiving the latest issue of *Sabre Jet Classics*. I must say your publication is bringing back many memories of the F-86H. Enclosed is an application for future publications.

Bruce F. Tuxill, Colonel, MDANG

Bruce Tuxill is the commander of the 175th Fighter Group flying A-10s at Martin Airport in East Baltimore. He is

the last F-86H Sabre pilot from the Maryland unit who is still in the fighter business.-THE EDITORS

Interesting to know of your connection with the MD ANG. I was at Myrtle Beach AFB in '60 to '62, and as we were some sort of godfather wing to MD, I greatly enjoyed a visit to that group, probably early '61 or late '60. Their weapons qualifications seemed to all be "expert", and the total flying time for each pilot seemed to be several thousand hours, and their "H"s "done good"! See you next reunion!

Frank Street, Crystal Lake, IL

All I can say is that Volume 2, Number 2 is another great issue representing lots of tremendous work on the part of the team at your *Sabre Society*, Fighter Projects, and aptly named, Minuteman Press. I would like to obtain four more copies. I plan to distribute one copy to our MA ANG Museum at Otis ANGB, one to our local EAA Chapter 701's library, and a couple to others. This might stir up some new membership interest for your *Sabre Society* as well as for the **F-86 Sabre Pilots Association**.

Jim Ramsay, Hyde Park, MA

Just want you to know that *Sabre Jet Classics* is one of the most enjoyable publications going. Really appreciate your ability to ask those F-86 drivers to tell us what it was like behind the stick. Also liked the input from the maintenance troops.

The first issue on the "H" model was of special interest to me. I wonder how many times my high school studies were preempted by the twisting contrails of ANG F-86Hs as they mixed it up with aircraft from other units over western Massachusetts in the early

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Today's Sabres: Sabre Society member Tom Wood of Indianapolis has owned and flown this F-86F-30, serial number 52-5139A, since 1989. Tom's Sabre earlier flew with the USAF and then the Peruvian Air Force before passing through several civilian owners, finally going to Tom. His Sabre has F-40 modifications and a J47-GE-27 turbojet, rated at 5,900 pounds of thrust.

Photo courtesy of Tom Wood



Sixties? Standing by the taxiway at Barnes Airport and getting a whiff of JP-4 and a wave from the pilot was no small thrill to this guy when 15 years old!

Tom Hildreth, Chester, VT

Can You Help?

I want to bring up some subject matter that I feel would be of great interest to our readers. It was the flight on May 1, 1952 from K-13 involving the 51st Fighter Group and led by Colonel Al Shintz, the Wing Deputy Commander. I flew his wing on this flight. This was written up in Clay Blair's book, *Beyond Courage*, which tells about our getting hit by a zillion MiGs and Al getting shot down. His 30 days on "Shinz-a-do" Island (which he named) and his survival and rescue from that island are also discussed and are hair raising and most interesting. I have tried to get a copy but it is out of print. I have also tried to contact Clay Blair, but no luck. I provided him with most of the details of that flight. Perhaps one of our members still has the book and would lend it to you. It contains many stories of combat and rescue of our flyers shot down in Korea, and I highly recommend it to all Sabre Jet pilots. Good luck with the publication, and if I can contribute anything, just let me know.

Albert S. Kelly, Huntsville, TX

Do you have a comment about a Sabre-related topic? Write to "Cheers!", c/o Sabre Jet Classics, 730 White Oaks Ave., Baltimore, MD 21228, 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!

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Can any of our readers help? If so, please contact us.-THE EDITORS

Enclosed is my check for the back issues of the '92 *Sabre Jet Classics*, particularly part one on the F-86F. I was extremely pleased with the format and content of your publication, and I look forward to future issues. Top drawer work!

Please advise where I can obtain a photo of an F-86F in the colors of the 311th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, circa 1956 to 1958 in Korea. Please let me know. The photo album I had was lost in Hurricane Andrew. I was the crew chief of aircraft number 627 at K-55, Osan AB. It was a very forgiving bird with no major problems and an excellent reputation. I hate to think what may have happened to that Sabre.

Joel Ariel, 310 NW 95th Ave., Plantation, FL 33324

Can anyone help with Joel's photo request? If so, please write him at the above address.-THE EDITORS

And Finally...

Received your letter concerning writing an article for *Sabre Jet Classics*. I appreciate your asking me to do this and am honored. My problem is that my memory of those long gone days is not as good as many others! If you will forgive me, I'll let others write the stories. Lon's story was very good and I enjoyed it. To me it was an accurate account. Keep up the good work. You have a good publication and I enjoy receiving it.

Milton E. (Nellie) Nelson, Austin, TX

Nellie sent four MiG-15s to the great North Korean backyard junkpile, including at least one that was trying to clobber a B-29-THE EDITORS

It was in the 334th FS at Langley in 1949 when we received our first F-86. What a thrill the initial checkout was, and when we found we could lay on a sonic boom by a zero "g" pushover from 35,000, we were the scourge of the eastern seaboard! Martin "Joe" Johansen and I were sent to Air Tactical School at Tyndall in April 1950 and were there until August. We talked the Ops people into letting us fly F-51 intercepts for the ground controller course instead of the T-11, with the promise that we would let them look into the cockpit of an F-86 when our Fourth buddies would fly in to Tyndall! Toward the end of the course, sure enough, two F-86s appeared on the flightline, and Joe and I proceeded to do a job on the Officers Club! (Fortunately nobody threatened Flying Evaluation Boards and such!)

In June the Korean hostilities broke out, and when we returned to the Fourth, they had been split three ways. The 334th and Group HQ were at Wilmington, DE; the 335th was at Andrews, and the 336th at Dover. In September, thinking I could get some fighter combat experience, I volunteered on an F-80 quota and ended up in Tsuiki, Japan and then Suwon, Korea. You know the rest of the story! My buddies in the Fourth actually BEAT me overseas, and I spent the next year trying to get back into F-86s. Later I instructed in Sabres at Nellis in '52-'53, and we had the "H" at Gunnery School in 1958. The F-86 stands in my memory as the most fun fighter I ever flew.

I am enjoying the articles in *Sabre Jet Classics* and especially vicariously renewing old acquaintances through them. Keep up the great work. It is greatly appreciated by all of us old "shiny-toed" boot jocks.

Donald J. Ferris, Mesa, AZ



"Cleve" and "Monkey" (Col. Moncavage) in formation near Palm Beach AFB, FL.

These three photos courtesy of Dale Boggie



Dale Boggie (flying as "Pell"), George Panas ("Cleve") and Dave Brown ("Monkey").



"Turkey Joe" Turner flew as the North Korean ace "Casey Jones" in this F-84F. On the trip home to Luke AFB, "USAF" was stencilled to avoid further "confusion"!

Thanks for your magazine and letter. I flew F-86s-"A"s, "E"s and even "D"s- in the States, Korea, and three years in Germany, and in fact had my last jet flight in an "H" years later. Like everyone I loved the airplane. I won a gunnery championship in it when we used to go down to Tripoli. I nearly got killed in an '86 twice; once the plane's fault, once mine.

The Hunters, the book on which the movie was based, was published in 1957, I believe, having been previously abridged in *Collier's*. I think it was bought by Twentieth Century Fox for a producer named Dick Powell who had had a long career as an actor. All that was at arm's length for me as I was still in the Air Force. I had nothing to do with the writing or production/shooting of the movie, nor do I know anyone who was involved. The novel was youthful but not unauthentic. The movie was a movie.

As a writer I've gone on, as perhaps you know, and am writing a book now that is best described as a memoir. A portion of it covers flying

the final movie cut.

The final blowout was a patio party hosted by Charlie Carr, a noted Sabre pilot. The list grows, but of course one cannot leave out Robert Mitchum, Robert Wagner and Mai Britt, and those of us intrepid Sabre jocks who braved the *Wild Blue* to give the world a small review of the people who made up the "fraternity of the Sabre"!

It is good to be a part of *Sabre Jet Classics* and the *F-86 Sabre Pilots Association*. We are indeed a very fortunate few.

Dave Tilton, Las Vegas, NV

I remember very little about *The Hunters* outside of the fact that I was sent there for a few days to fill in for a sick pilot and got several sorties making passes at a B-25 with a camera position where the tail gunner should be, also a T-33 with the back part of the canopy removed. The flying scenes were good with F-84Fs painted grey as MiG-15s. I remember the picture as a "bomb" with many weeping Air Force



A 20th Century-Fox movie publicity photo from *The Hunters*, featuring Robert Mitchum, from 1958. What a film!

Photo courtesy of 20th Century-Fox via Fernando Silva

Replies to

in combat in Korea-I was with the 335th Squadron in the 4th Wing-and some of that portion was in *Air and Space Magazine* about a year ago.

The full text was published in a magazine called *Grand Street* in the spring 1990 issue. That might be interesting to you.

James Salter, Aspen, CO

James Salter is the pen-name for James A. Horowitz, whom some of our readers may remember from their active F-86 days.-THE EDITORS

I was involved with the production of *The Hunters*. In 1958, as Chief of the Fighter Gunnery and Standardization Board at Williams Air Force Base, I was called and asked to give recommendations for pilots to fly the movie roles of several noted Hollywood actors. My memory fades after all the years, but I do remember George Panas and Archie Lorentzen as "Academy Award" potential. I also flew in some of the scenes which were in

"The Hunters"

wives and the usual Hollywood crap. I also remember the Hollywood crowd and their self-centered attitude toward Air Force jockeys. All in all, I would have rather stayed in Chicago sitting alert!

Phil Janney, Salt Lake City, UT

I had the good fortune to be involved with several flying scenes filmed over Florida for the major motion picture, *The Hunters*. I got to fly the F-86 assigned to actor Robert Wagner in the role of Lieutenant Ed Pell, and I also flew on several missions in the C-130 carrying the camera crew.

Several black and white and color photos taken during the filming bring those memories back. Most were taken with a Minox "spy" camera that fit in the sleeve pocket of my flight suit!

I was not one of the primary crew members assigned TDY to the project by the Air Force from Williams Air Force Base (F-86s) or

Luke (F-84 "MiGs"). I had, however, just been assigned to Palm Beach Air Force Base and was still current in the F-86, and I knew the F-86 team chief, Captain George W. Panas, whom I had flown with at Willy. In fact, I had to join up on George one dark, cold night and fly his wing down to touchdown because I lost my airspeed indication! My boss at Palm Beach released me to fly with the movie team, and I truly enjoyed it!

Much time was spent waiting for big cumulus clouds to build, and some days they just did not materialize. When they did, the aircraft would scramble and jockey around so that the camera crew in the C-130 could film their aerial maneuvers against a cloud background with the proper sun angle. The production crew came to Florida because the clouds provided a reference for the speed and action of the dogfight scenes.

One memorable event occurred on

the initial deployment of the jets from Arizona to Florida. There was quite a stir at their enroute base when the F-84Fs stopped for fuel. The movie F-84Fs had been painted pale blue with *big red stars* on them. They *really did* look like Russian MiGs!

I could not get away, but several of the Air Force guys went to Hollywood for the movie premier. It still occasionally plays on the late, late show. I usually watch the first half where most of the good flying scenes are. After that, the action gets bogged down with a love story between the characters played by Robert Mitchum and Mai Britt. *The Hunters* is still a great film about the air war between the F-86 and the MiG-15.

Dale Boggie, Parker, CO



Hero shot of Cecil G. Foster

Photo courtesy of Cecil G. Foster

“Nine Was Enough!”

My Favorite Sabre Stories

by Cecil G. Foster: Korea's 23rd Ace

I flew the F-86A for ten training missions at Nellis Air Force Base prior to my assignment in Korea. I arrived at K-13, Suwon, on May 30, 1952 and was assigned to “D” Flight with the 16th Fighter Interceptor Squadron of the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing. Colonel Francis Gabreski was our wing commander. He was succeeded by Colonel John Mitchell during my tour in Korea. After flying as a wingman for 35 missions, I was checked out as an element leader in early September 1952.

My Mission On September 7, 1952

On September 7, I was enjoying a rare day off. Dressed in my blue uniform, I grabbed my camera and headed for our flight line to photo our Sabres as they returned from a “maximum effort” mission.

I wanted to watch for planes with “black noses” from the gunsmoke they emitted when their .50 caliber guns were fired in combat. Natural curiosity drew much interest from those who were not flying.

I arrived early at the flight line. As no aircraft had returned, I entered our operations building and saw Lieutenant Sands, our “A” Flight commander, briefing three newly assigned pilots on combat theater procedures. Captain C.T. Weaver, our operations officer, was behind the counter when the field telephone from Headquarters jangled. I overheard him confirm we had four in-commission Sabres available. Our squadron was on “strip alert” duty that day, but the alert flight had already scrambled. Captain Weaver said, “Stand by one.” He asked Lieutenant Sands if he could provide manning for the four planes on alert. Lieutenant

Sands agreed, but he did not have a qualified element leader available. I stepped forward and volunteered, but Weaver felt that because this was my flight’s day off, he would ask someone else. He was then directed by Headquarters to man the alert flight as quickly as possible, so he agreed I could fill in until another element leader was found.

Lieutenant Sands, Captain Hunt and Lieutenant Les Erickson started for their Sabres as I ran to our personal equipment building to change into flight gear. At this instant, Captain Weaver yelled, “Scramble!”, and activity exploded! I rapidly donned my flying suit and boots, grabbed my helmet and parachute, and I was given an airplane number as I ran for the revetments. Another new pilot followed me up the side of my Sabre and straddled the nose backwards. He then reached into the cockpit and started my

engine as I was strapping in while aided by a crew chief. Two other pilots performed my exterior preflight check for me, gave the OK signal, and off I went!

I was the second aircraft onto the runway. I took off behind Sands who immediately aborted because his gear would not retract. (The F-86’s emergency gear lowering system, which was often used by maintenance personnel, required resetting prior to departure to permit normal gear retraction.) This left me airborne leading two new pilots whom I had never met to accomplish an entirely unplanned mission. When we formed up, I was told we were to cover the withdrawal of the main force. They were low on fuel and many MiG-15s were airborne forming up. We test-fired our six .50 caliber machine guns as we passed the Bomb Line on our way to the Yalu River. As we passed Chodo Island, I directed Captain Hunt to orbit the island until I was certain Lieutenant Erickson’s plane was okay. I then released Captain Hunt to return to K-13.

As we approached the Yalu at 38,000 feet, I spotted eight MiGs flying two abreast with elements in trail. We jettisoned our droptanks and bounced them from their 7 o’clock position. As I closed to 2,000 feet, Les called a second flight of eight MiGs attacking at our 6 o’clock! The first MiG flight began a left climbing turn to evade. I fired a quick burst at one and then broke left. This caused the

fired a long burst into the seventh MiG-15 of flight number two. We broke hard left and again were able to reverse and roll into the stern position of the third flight. By now, we had three flights of MiGs, totaling 24, as well as our two F-86s, in a high-altitude *Lufberry!* We felt, however, that *we* had the advantage because *we* could shoot at *anybody*, but they had to select the *right plane* before they fired!

This action was repeated for about 45 minutes. Whenever I rolled out to shoot, Les would cut inside, and then I covered him while he shot. We took turns covering and shooting whenever we could. We alternated between being the *hunter* and the *target!*

Suddenly, Les called a single MiG-15 approaching from our right. This one was not a member of the 24 earlier MiGs. It was joining up with us! Only heaven knows what this MiG was trying to accomplish, and I did not waste any time figuring it out! I made a quick pull up and roll to the right, ending a thousand feet dead astern of the MiG. I fired my remaining ammunition in several bursts. Les and I both saw sparkles on the MiG as my bullets struck. Its wings remained level, but the MiG entered a slow descent, heading to sea. Les then called that one MiG flight was in our 6 o’clock position firing at *me!* We were at our bingo fuel and I was out of ammo, so it was time to exit. We did a modified split-s and turned home at max speed. It was a relief that none of the

On September 26, 1952, I was informed that the Claims Board had upgraded my damage claim from September 7 to my first kill.

My Mission On September 26, 1952

Two weeks after my first successful engagement with the MiGs, I was appointed the flight commander of “D” Flight with the 16th F.I.S. Captain Bartholomew had been designated as assistant operations officer for our squadron.

Communist tactics changed periodically, from enormously large formations to varying numbers of aircraft in flights. Six and eight aircraft formations were probably the most common. Sometimes they used a “live bait” tactic where two MiGs flew at one altitude while six more flew three to five thousand feet higher and about one mile in trail. Their ground controllers would vector the two MiG element in front of an F-86 flight hoping for an engagement which allowed the six other MiG-15s to have an attack advantage.

On September 26, my flight had been “fragged” to fly a combat air patrol (CAP) mission as part of our squadron’s combat assignment. Captain Bartholomew was designated as our flight leader. The Wing pre-flight briefing, flight briefing and pre-flight activities were normal. I was flying as our element leader with Second Lieutenant Al Grenz as my wingman. This was his first combat mission. Our take off, join up, gun checks and combat spread formation followed the usual sequence. Throughout our entire tour we were short on droptanks, so we retained them until combat engagement was imminent.

We flew to the mouth of the Yalu where we turned east northeast, just south of the river. We were flying at 40,000 feet with the sun at our 6 o’clock, with my element *line-abreast* on the right but slightly high so that I could “clear” for our flight leader. There were no contrails at our altitude, although we observed many to the north.

(continued on page 10)

second MiG flight to overshoot. I reversed and rolled back into the stern position on the second flight. As I was positioning on their number seven man, they also climbed rapidly and continued a left turn. Les then called out *another* flight of eight MiGs lining up on our stern to fire at us! Meanwhile, I

MiGs followed!

We returned without incident. During our intelligence debriefing, Les and I both claimed one damaged MiG because that was all we could visually confirm for one another. We were too busy to watch each other shoot every time.

Two 16th FIS Sabres scramble at Suwon.

Photo courtesy of Bob Baldwin



Captain Bartholomew suddenly spotted two MiGs at our 12:30 to 1:00 o'clock position, crossing from left to right but slightly low. He called for our flight to "Clean 'em up!" We began a descending hard right turn toward the MiGs' stern position. This would have resulted in my element being out of position to cover Captain Bartholomew, so I began a climbing left turn to be followed by a rapid reversal to a covering position for our flight leader. About a half second into this, I was startled to see six pairs of *white puffs*, and as usually happens when one engages his mouth before his brain, I goofed! I called, "Flak!", immediately followed by, "No! They're MiGs!" I crossed through the MiG formation with Al hanging with me. The white puffs were caused by fuel spills when the MiGs dropped their tanks.

I made a reversal to the right. I saw the MiGs flying with elements in trail with each wingman close. The MiG flight leader was in a hard left turn so we entered a scissors maneuver. The MiG leader fired much too early. My first reaction was, "You dip! You can't possibly hit us!" I rolled level as I called my flight leader that I was in a scissors with six MiGs, and I could use a little help! As I called, I estimated my lead on the first MiG. I fired a one second burst with my six .50 caliber guns. I watched my tracers fly toward the MiG in what seemed like slow motion while Captain Bartholomew acknowledged my call for assistance. My tracers passed just aft of the lead MiG's tail, and the bullets subsequently stitched a row of hits along the fuselage of its wingman. At that same instant, *the lead MiG exploded* in a very large black and orange fireball, the likes of which I did not observe again until I was in combat over Vietnam 16 years later. Needless to say, I blurted out, "*The MiG exploded!!*", followed immediately by, "And number two is *burning!!*" The unfortunate wingman's aircraft was emitting brown and black smoke as I pulled up sharply to miss the remaining MiGs.

I kept my eyes on the second MiG as it seemed to stop in the air, and my nose climbed almost to the vertical. I continued with a rolling pull over and nearly entered a vertical dive following the crippled, inverted MiG. I lined my gunsight on the MiG. I fired a short burst, but then I suddenly realized I was about to have a mid-air collision! I rotated my aircraft about a quarter turn counterclockwise as my right wing passed *between* the MiG's wing and fuselage (that scare aged me about ten years!). This was followed by an immediate pull up and hard turn back toward the damaged MiG. It was falling like a leaf, still inverted. I then saw the MiG pilot floating with his parachute fully opened and a long, red streamer dropping nearby. I have often wondered if that pilot had forgotten to disconnect

his low altitude ejection lanyard? Why else would someone open his parachute at 35,000 feet?

I asked Lieutenant Grenz, "Are you still with me?!" I don't know how, but he certainly was! We then flew toward the enemy pilot to take a picture with my gun camera after placing my guns in the "safe" position. I wanted my wingman's confirmation for both kills. I did not get the picture though as I was too close before I passed directly over the parachute's canopy. The enemy pilot was frantically waving his arms. He had no helmet and therefore no oxygen. I seriously doubt he survived.

In contrast to my September 7 mission, this combat lasted only seconds. From the time I first spotted the MiGs dropping their tanks to when the second MiG was disabled, about six seconds elapsed. Looking at my gun camera film, I saw that when I nearly collided with the second MiG, it had already lost its horizontal stabilizer and was therefore uncontrollable.

The reader may ask *why* the lead MiG



Ranged out over North Korea!

Photo courtesy of Dick Keener

exploded when my tracers passed *behind* it? Here is the story: Our Wing had received several new F-86s. Number 868 had passed its acceptance check the night before, but there was no time to boresight its guns. This Sabre completed our heavy schedule, and by luck, it was assigned to me. Tracers were only placed in two guns. After this mission, 868 was boresighted, and one gun without tracers was firing *considerably left* from where the gunsight aimed. That was the one that hit the lead MiG and caused its demise. Sometimes one just cannot improve on "dumb luck", right?!

After our mission, I asked Lieutenant Grenz how he hung on during my wild maneuvering? His reply was direct but honest, "You were not about to leave me all alone with those MiGs!! I just kept looking at you and followed in trail!" It must have been

one of the most exciting first combat missions that *any* wingman has flown!

My Mission On October 16, 1952

Fall was in the air by mid-October. I was now firmly established as our "D" Flight commander and had experience as a combat flight leader. I had an excellent assistant flight commander in First Lieutenant Herbert Leichty. Herb was a West Point graduate and a super pilot. We had been assigned aircraft to paint our names on and think of as our own. My aircraft was 738, and Herb's plane was 868, the one I flew on September 26 when I shot down two MiG-15s.

On the 16th of October, our flight was to fly a combat air patrol along the Yalu near the Suiho Dam. I was the flight leader with First Lieutenant Wilton B. (Bing) Crosby on my wing. Herb Leichty was our element leader with First Lieutenant Edmund Hepner as our number four. The air was crisp and cool, like football weather at home, and we were expecting contrails above 33,000 feet. We went through our Wing briefings, flight briefings, and take off data. We were filled with high expectations as we had four combat experienced people, and we had flown together enough to know what each would do in combat.

We took off from K-13 on time, joined up and performed our normal post-take off and pre-combat checks. We test-fired our guns after crossing the Bomb Line and assumed a combat spread formation. We heard other flights on the radio as we flew north. As we reached the Suiho Dam, we paralleled the Yalu and flew an elongated racetrack pattern. We patrolled until we saw eight MiGs flying southwest over the Yalu.

I attacked the stern MiG as the leader entered a hard left turn. We were slightly high and reached maximum speed rapidly. I began to overshoot, so I pulled up to reduce my speed and keep an altitude advantage to then return to a good shooting position. At this time, Herb Leichty called out eight more MiGs that were trying to enter a firing position on us. This made 16 MiGs and four F-86s maneuvering into firing positions in a roller coaster engagement. I got inside the number eight MiG which decided not to maintain its position with its element leader because I had it for certain if the MiG tried that. It was like cutting a cow away from a herd! As I forced the MiG away, it became desperate and headed for the sun. I lined my radar ranging gunsight up the MiG's tailpipe and fired a long burst. When my bullets struck, a large doughnut smoke ring was emitted, followed by continuous smoke from the aircraft. I repeated this aiming and shooting, resulting in more hits as evidenced by successive smoke rings. The

MiG continued flying toward the sun. My aircraft bounced around as I flew through the MiG's engine exhaust while realigning my sight on its tailpipe.

The MiG's companions stayed in their turns too long to catch my flight. After seven or eight machine gun bursts into the MiG, it was still flying, but I was out of ammunition. Our fuel was also at bingo, so I called that I had a MiG crippled, and anyone who could reach it could have it. The MiG was easy to spot as its heavy smoke looked like a contrail. A flight leader from the 39th F.I.S. saw my smoking MiG. We disengaged and returned.

In debriefing, I was informed by the 39th F.I.S. pilot that when I broke off, my burning MiG made a 90 degree left turn toward South Korea and then a flaming descent through another flight of F-86s! The MiG's crash was observed by this second F-86 flight. This brought my total to four MiG-15 kills.

Mission On November 22, 1952

November 22, 1952 was a cold, clear day at K-13. I had returned from flying an F-86 to Japan for rear echelon maintenance. While there, I called San Antonio, Texas to talk with my wife. She had just presented me with our fourth son on November 13, 1952. I told her I would change the name on my Sabre to "Four Kings and a Queen" as a result!

When I arrived at our flight line, I learned I had been assigned as the mission leader for the Wing's combat assignment that day. As such, my duties included briefing the group flying the mission. I was *overwhelmed* as I was only qualified as a combat flight leader. Fortunately, the details had been worked out, and I was able to stumble through the briefing! We were providing air cover for a reconnaissance aircraft photographing damage to previously struck targets near the Yalu. The "rece" aircraft took the runway while my flight lined up behind. Ed Hepner was my number two.

After take off, all flights assumed their assigned positions, flying an "s" pattern to maintain combat speed while retaining the ability to immediately repel any attacking enemy. When our external tanks emptied, I told the mission to drop them, but for some reason *both* of mine stayed! After repeated attempts, I called that I would abort with my wingman and that our alternate mission leader should assume control.

We headed south. I was so frustrated I could have screamed! I went through the procedures again, pushing and pulling circuit breakers. For some reason, on the umpteenth try after reseating the breaker, the tanks separated! I turned north and called our group that I would rejoin. I was



Numerous 51st Sabres had just returned to Suwon from a combat mission in this picture from spring 1953.

Photo courtesy of Hank Buttlemann

predictably unsuccessful. As Ed and I reached the Yalu and turned toward the Yellow Sea, we spotted eight MiG-15s. I initiated an attack, but I soon found we had engaged some *very* experienced pilots! The ensuing action was both at full throttle and maximum aircraft performance. Ed was an outstanding pilot and provided excellent support. There was shooting by both sides, but no one could get a good position, and no visible hits were scored.

We eventually reached our bingo and disengaged. We made a diving turn and rolled out at maximum speed heading for home. We saw that the MiGs, however, were not ready to quit, and they were soon in our stern position, 4,000 to 5,000 feet behind. We kept watching them gain. One MiG lined up on Ed and one on me! Ed was on my right line-abreast. When they closed to 2,000 to 3,000 feet, the MiG behind Ed fired. I told Ed to break right as I also broke right to shake the MiG, but my call was blocked when Ed called me that he was breaking left. Then a cannon shell hit Ed's Sabre near his canopy. Ed lost his canopy and most of his instrument panel in the explosion, and he was unable to hear any further transmissions. I rolled up and over Ed and the attacking MiG to pull out underneath and behind. I fired a burst directly up the MiG's tail while my aircraft was buffeted in the jetwash. The MiG stopped in mid-air after losing its engine. I went to idle with my speed brakes extended, and I returned to a stern firing position behind the MiG and gave it another good burst into its engine. I was still overrunning the MiG, so I pulled

up and rolled inverted, but then I saw the MiG pilot eject.

I called Ed but heard no reply. The other MiG had left me to attack Ed. It had disengaged from Ed about the time my MiG pilot ejected, and we never saw that MiG again. I flew around looking for Ed or some sign of him. I feared he had been shot down. I was trying to locate him on the ground when I heard his call that he was transmitting *in the blind*. He was near Chodo Island and would eject as he had no instruments and did not know how much fuel he had.

I then headed home and listened on "Guard" channel. A helicopter called that he had Ed in sight and was ready for his rescue.

I returned to K-13 without incident. Ed was rescued after only 30 seconds in the water. But when my film pack was removed from my '86, my camera had taken *no* pictures! There was *no* confirming evidence of my fifth kill!

I was immensely relieved that Ed was recovered with only a sight head wound, but I was also chagrined that I had a kill but no proof. Our intelligence officer said he was going to Fifth Air Force Headquarters the next day and for me not to give up hope. I was never informed of what intelligence source was used, but four days later, our intelligence officer returned with news that my fifth kill had indeed been confirmed, and I was now officially the *23rd American jet ace!* There was a *small* celebration at the Club that night, but there was *much more jubilation* when Ed Hepner returned!

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Most people remember November 22 as the day when President John Kennedy was assassinated, but I have another reason to remember that date, as does Ed Hepner.

My Mission on December 7, 1952

December 7, 1952 was a cold, wintry day, and the countryside was blanketed with snow. My flight was assigned a combat air patrol along the Yalu. This day showed promise as the MiGs had been flying in large numbers. I assigned Ed Hepner to be our flight leader and I would be our element leader. I promised Ed he would fly as our flight leader until he avenged his being shot down on the day I scored my 5th kill! Besides, I was training him to take over as our flight commander when I rotated home. My earlier assistant, Herb Leichty, had assumed command of another flight.

Our normal preflight requirements were accomplished and we departed as scheduled, joined up in a combat spread formation, and scanned the northern skies for contrails. We armed our .50 caliber guns after crossing the Bomb Line, rechecked our IFF for proper mode and switch position, and soon dropped our tanks. There was much chatter on the radio as other flights spotted the enemy. There were numerous contrails, both active and inactive. When we arrived at the Yalu, we set up a racetrack pattern and searched for MiGs. We finally spotted a lone MiG-15 near Sinuiju, heading toward Manchuria. Ed made an excellent attack and scored hits all over the MiG which then went into a spin. He continued his attack until near the ground when we observed the MiG's crash.

As we pulled off, I was on Ed's right and spotted two more MiGs, in trail, heading north. I set a climbing cutoff attack, taking a stern position on the second MiG. A moment later, I saw the second MiG fire a burst at the lead MiG who then entered a spiral, spinning toward the earth! I could not reach the MiG that fired, but I did latch on to the crippled MiG. I entered a spiral, shooting at the MiG every time my sight neared it. I scored several hits until my wingman, Wilton Crosby, called to pull out before I hit the ground! I immediately leveled my wings and pulled maximum g's to recover. I was unable to watch the MiG explode as it crashed near Namsi-dong, North Korea, but my flight members confirmed my sixth kill. Only three minutes passed between Ed's MiG crash and mine. I have always admitted that I owed *half of that credit* to an unknown enemy pilot! This MiG had very shiny surfaces with several fences on the top of its wings. I have never heard anyone report seeing such a modified MiG-15. Years later, a friend suggested that may have been a MiG-17, but I honestly do not know.

After that MiG crashed, we headed home. Our fuel was low and I felt we had a good day's work! This story is one of the *weirdest* I heard during the Korean War.

My Final Combat Experiences in 1953

January 1953 in Korea was extremely cold with much snow. We dressed heavily in the event we ejected. All pilots were issued "poopy suits" for cold water survival. I was near the end of my tour and looking forward to returning to my wife and family, including my newborn son, Ronald. I was given additional duty as an instructor for newly assigned pilots to the 51st Fighter Group. I gave ground school and theater checkouts as well as flew their first combat mission as their leader. These missions were not likely to result in combat, so I logged them as *training* flights while the others were credited with combat missions. I logged 94 combat missions by January 21, 1953.

My flight was to fly a combat mission on January 22. The MiGs had another class of pilots engaging us who were operating at our altitude. I continued my philosophy of training my flight members as element and flight leaders. As an element leader this day, I was very satisfied with how we were covering one another. After flying several racetrack patterns, we saw many contrails north of the Yalu and were eagerly searching for a target. Finally, we saw a large formation at 11 o'clock crossing at a right angle. I was on the right in a better position to attack. I cannot estimate how many MiGs were in the formation because they were widely spread, but there were more than 20. I rolled out in a stern position at 4,000 feet.

I was at 100% power when we saw the MiGs. I entered a shallow dive and nearly reached compressibility before I eased my nose up and allowed my radar ranging gunsight to lock onto a MiG. When I was 3,000 feet away, I began shooting. I saw several hits, but they did not slow the MiG. I fired at a second MiG, but with the *same* results. I dove and fired again at another MiG, with *identical* results! I had fired at three MiGs but they all stayed in formation! The next time I waited longer before I fired a good burst into the third MiG who then emitted smoke. The MiG formation began a sweeping right turn, but then we were attacked by six MiGs. We broke left, but as quickly as the MiGs appeared, they were gone. No one was hit. We returned to the hunt, but targets were not found.

After our mission, I claimed three damaged MiGs, but before our debriefing was over, a pilot from another flight said he saw our action and my third MiG had burned, entered a dive and crashed. This brought my score to seven kills and two damaged.

I flew combat mission number 96 on January 23, but it provided no scores. On January 24, my flight was scheduled for a morning and an afternoon mission. Captain Dolph Overton, another flight commander, had scored his fourth kill on the 23rd. He requested we fly together as a flight which was granted. His wingman was Captain Irish and mine was Ed Hepner.

Shortly after arriving over the Yalu, enemy action separated us into elements. We tangled with some mighty good MiG pilots, but the result for my element was a standoff. Later I spotted MiGs crossing from left to right but high. I cut the rear MiG off, slid up from below, and then fired a nice long burst at 2,000 feet. Firing my weapons while climbing dropped my speed, and I was unable to keep my firing position. This aircraft burned heavily and crashed in North Korea. Dolph Overton also scored a kill. This gave him five MiG-15 kills and *ace status!* I now had eight kills and two damaged.

On my afternoon mission, I flew as our number four as I planned to checkout a young lieutenant as an element leader. As his wingman, I did not expect any shooting. Things, however, changed. We spotted a gaggle of *at least* 16 MiGs. Our flight leader attacked, and half the MiGs entered a hard right turn with the other half swinging wide. I guided my element leader onto the rear two MiGs, but one swung wide to attack him. I told my element leader to shoot at something while I held the MiG off. He hesitated while I told him to *shoot!* The trailing MiG was very agitated, but it would not pull in to shoot as I faked toward it. Eventually I took the initiative. I told my element leader to cover while I attacked the trailing MiG. This MiG departed *immediately* when I maneuvered, so I turned toward the other MiGs and lined up 2,000 feet behind one. My radar ranging gunsight locked on, and I fired several bursts scoring hits. Again, I believed it would only result in a damage claim, but the MiG spun and crashed.

After we debriefed, I was told I could *call it a war* if I wanted. Dolphin Overton thought it would be great if we left the theater together. I subsequently agreed that *nine was enough!* My war was over, and I went home.

The good Lord certainly assigned me a great guardian angel. I had several other brushes with death that are not described here. Someday I hope to write about them.



From the left, Don Griffith, Bill Todd and Billy Dobbs.
Photo courtesy of Don Griffith

Lieutenant Billy B. Dobbs' First MiG-15 Kill

By Don Griffith
Preface

I have thought about recording some Korean War history by printing exciting stories of MiG-15 kills. In my case, my MiG-kill mission was not that exciting. If we found a MiG below us, especially a loaner, he was *dead meat*. I got in and out quickly because in my case a flight of six more MiGs was trailing.

I recall missions like our four Sabres flying into the front of a flight of 60 MiGs, or another time when our flight was turning behind a flight of four MiGs. Seconds before I was in firing position, I flamed-out! We went from *offense* to *defense* in a hurry. I was flamed-out for twenty minutes and my wingman was shot down, but my flight members did some *super* flying to save me. Not a successful mission but certainly exciting!

One of my wingmen got his first MiG-kill while flying with me. Again it was a case of finding a lone MiG below us, but I like his story.

Billy's Story

February 21, 1952 was a brisk, clear day. I was on our schedule as a spare lead for the 4th Fighter Wing. Billy B. Dobbs was assigned as spare two. All aircraft lined on the runway for take off with our spare element behind. Black smoke engulfed us as we bounced around in their jet wash. All Sabres got off and crossed the Bomb Line with no aborts, so we were on our own!

We flew north to the combat area looking for action. I spotted a lone MiG at 9 o'clock low with two F-86s in chase. They were out of firing range in a 45 degree climb. I had been in that position many times, so I knew who was going to win that race! We zipped over there, and as I pulled in behind the MiG, I overshot. That put Billy right in its 6 o'clock position. He

called, "Let me have it!" I said, "Take it!" I rolled out of my bank and flew loose formation on the MiG's left wing. I next got the pilot's attention. He was looking at me as Billy lit up his plane with hits.

It was over quickly. Billy regained his position on my right wing. I took my hands off my stick and throttle and gave him the old boxer's victory signal: two fists over my head. Billy returned the signal and then *disappeared* in a dive! He was pumped and did not realize his Sabre was trimmed nose down!

We returned to Kimpo with no further encounters. Billy overshot the runway twice in his excitement before landing!

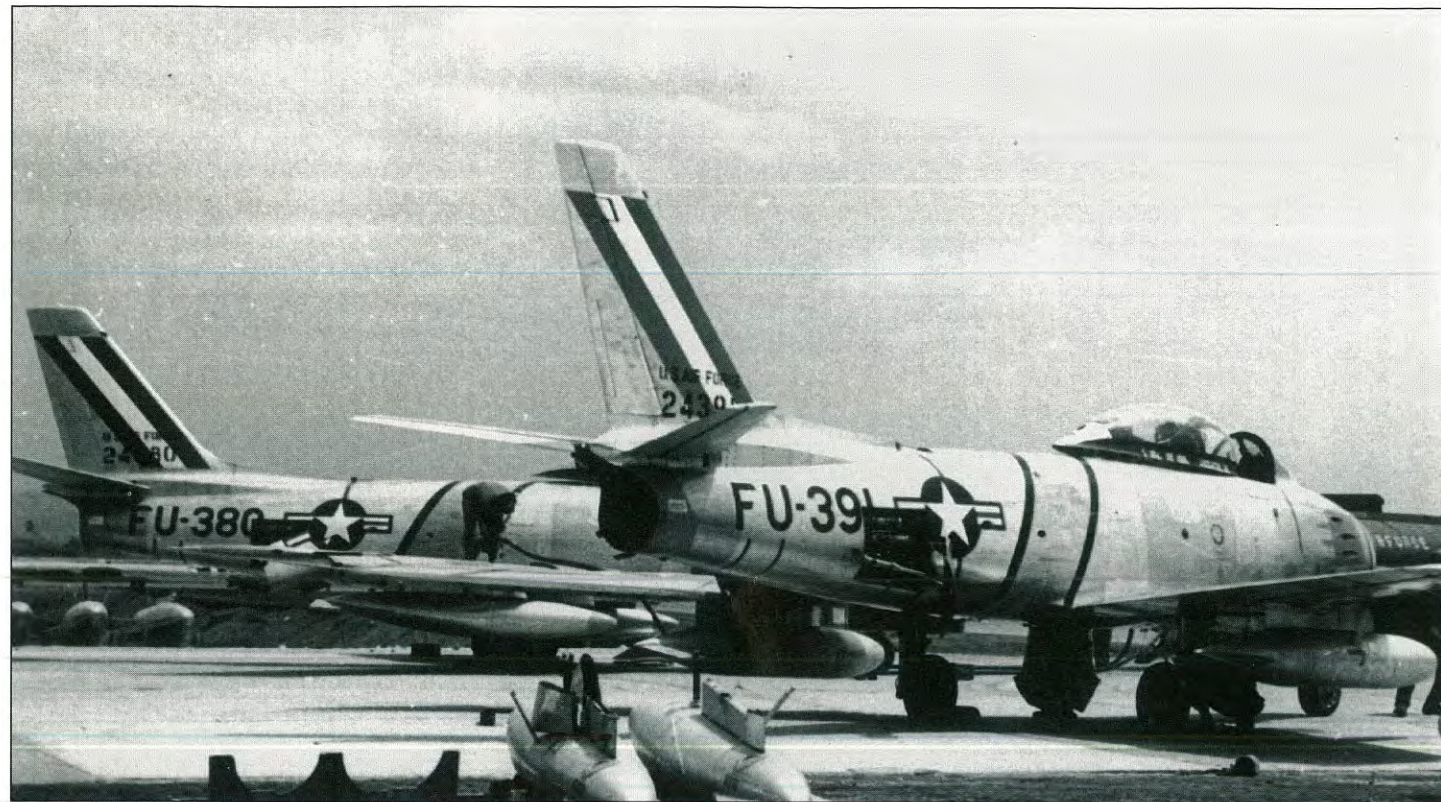
It was a great day for our old "E" Flight of the 335th Fighter Squadron, but I was surprised at the reaction of others. We found that our Squadron Ops Officer was chasing that *same* MiG, and he pouted and said we stole *his* MiG! Others asked why I let my wingman shoot that MiG down? This led to a discussion over roles and missions, and the reason for *putting ammunition* in the wingman's guns.

Lieutenant Billy B. Dobbs was a junior member of our flight, but by this time a seasoned wingman. Our flight commander, Bill Todd, and I soon returned to the States. Billy became a flight leader. He got his second MiG on March 11, and eventually five (four confirmed) before he was through. He was like a kid brother to us, and I like thinking that Todd and I trained him *well*.

I was proud to serve as Billy's best man at his wedding in Fontana, California. But about six weeks later, Billy was killed in a T-33 crash at Nellis Air Force Base while flying as an instructor.

Billy B. Dobbs was a wonderful individual and a super fighter pilot. He had many incredible flying experiences, but none more exciting than his first MiG-kill.





A pair of 18th FBW Sabres are refueled at Osan during a mission turnaround. Photo courtesy of Dee Harper



Dee Harper in early 1953. Photo courtesy of USAF via Dee Harper

My Favorite Fighter-Bomber Sabre Story

by Flamm D. Harper

Editor's Note: Dee Harper is currently the secretary of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association in Las Vegas, Nevada.

This story will break tradition. It is about a truly unique fighter-bomber mission flown by the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing near the end of the Korean War. The sorties flown were never authorized by 5th Air Force Headquarters! In addition, the mission was possibly the first large-scale, night fighter-bomber operation conducted in combat. And to top that, it was probably one of the most effective fighter-bomber missions ever flown, with results having an immediate impact on the war and the peace talks at Panmunjom, Korea. Have you heard of

an instance where 120 fighter-bomber sorties stopped a million man enemy offensive? My story has never been published but can easily be verified by 5th Air Force and 8th Army records. No, I have not lost my mind, nor have forty years fogged my memory enough to disqualify my statements. But during our 1992 F-86 Sabre Pilots Association reunion, I was advised that even pilots who flew several sorties against these targets were unaware of their impact. My purpose therefore is to clear the record as to what the men of the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing accomplished on the night of July 15, 1953.

Prior to the resumption of peace talks in Korea in April 1953, ground

activity along the front was at a standstill. The lines for the United Nations' and North Korean forces were heavily fortified and deeply dug in. Many U.S. 8th Army bunkers consisted of three or four underground levels. They contained not only essential fortifications, but also all the comforts of home! To minimize losses, Headquarters for 5th Air Force established a 3,000 foot minimum altitude for our air attacks. This limitation had been in effect for many months.

After the peace talks resumed, the Chinese became more aggressive whereas the efforts of UN Forces were directed toward the status quo. The Chinese launched a major ground offensive by mid-June to gain an advan-

tage at the peace talks. The main thrust of their attack broke through our defensive lines and was out in the open on the main road to Seoul, located approximately sixty miles southwest. 8th Army did not have the reserves to stop this. Their actions were limited to attempting to close the hole in our line, thereby blunting the enemy's spearhead. It was therefore up to 5th Air Force to neutralize it, and so minimum altitudes for ground attacks were eliminated. Our frag orders for the first time included fighter sweeps, and our effort was directed at the breakout area. So many flights were scrambled supporting the Tactical Air Control Center's (TACC) requirements that it was difficult maintaining the ground alert status directed in our frag orders. Even with this, though, it was rare to find a real, worthwhile target. For the most part, they did not exist during the last year of the war!

On July 15, 1953, both Colonel Frank Perego, our 18th Wing Commander, and Colonel Maurice Martin, our 18th Group Commander, were attending a conference in Tokyo. Lieutenant Colonel Glenn Stell was our acting group commander. At this time I was a Captain with a spot promotion to Major. I was the Group Operations Officer for the 18th Fighter-Bomber Group. I was a junior officer who had not yet learned the fine art of "keeping my buttocks covered."

By 1700 hours we completed every mission assigned, or about 92 sorties. Two flights were still north of the Main Line of Resistance (MLR), but at the Combat Operations Center, we were putting the day's activities to bed. Harry Evans, commander of the 12th Squadron, was leading a flight still north of the MLR. At this time Harry contacted our Combat Operations Center by radio and said he had located about 100 enemy boxcars in a marshalling yard near the front. Everything they shot exploded, indicating munitions! He also said another nearby marshalling yard was loaded with boxcars! He then gave the map coordinates. Finally, a real target emerged!

By definition, we were a day fighter outfit, but night was rapidly approaching. I knew that by morning the munitions would be dispersed and this prime target would no longer exist. *Instant action was required.* While the Combat Operations Center's duty officer relayed the "scramble" order and target data to our two flights on alert, I contacted the duty officer in the Combat Operations Center at 5th Air



Bombing up for another mission. Photo courtesy of Bill Binder, NAA, via Bill Grover

Force Headquarters. I gave the data on the targets Harry located, and I stressed the need for immediate action. I advised I would launch our alert flights against these targets while he obtained the necessary authority.

Considering the seriousness of the situation, I never once thought we may not receive such authority. The duty officer at the Combat Operations Center at 5th Air Force was also advised we would load and man all available aircraft for immediate strikes against these targets. Within fifteen minutes we were ready to launch 16 additional aircraft. Again I contacted the duty officer at 5th AF for authority. I was advised that the commanding general was at dinner, and they did not want to disturb him. Again, I advised the duty officer that we would launch the flights that were ready. Meanwhile we would turn everything around upon landing as well as augment the force as rapidly as possible. He agreed to work on the necessary authority for conducting our operation.

At this point, I told the duty officer in our Combat Operations Center to keep 5th Air Force advised on all actions we were taking.

By now this had become a major operation at K-55 where we were sta-

tioned. Bombs and munitions were moved from the dump to the flight line. Maps with appropriate photography were supplied to aircrews by our intelligence office. Every organization on base was putting on a maximum effort to support our operation. At this time, I was the *only one* on base who knew that *none* of this had been authorized or directed by 5th Air Force.

We continued launching flights. The sun set and darkness arrived. I was advised by the commanders of both the 67th and 12th Squadrons to continue. The fires within the targets were so extensive that our pilots could read their instruments without their cockpit lights! I later heard from some that, "The whole valley in the target area looked like daylight." Another recalled, "We did not need maps or photos. We just headed north, and when we got to 6,000 feet, we could see the fires on the horizon." The drama continued. As the night wore on, stratus clouds moved between K-55 and our target. Our aircrews were logging about 40 minutes of weather on each sortie.

We were fully aware of the danger. Colonels Evans and Stanton, commanders of the 12th and 67th, took turns controlling the attacks as they

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reported into the target. After sustained attacks had been underway for several hours, a C-47 with a forward air controller arrived to take charge.

Two officers and a sergeant manned the Combat Operations Center to coordinate the operation. Due to the press of events, I had not advised Colonel Stell we lacked authority for the sorties, a serious breach of command authority, because up to this, I had not considered 5th Air Force approval to be a problem. In my mind, I knew approval was imminent. I was just busy doing my job hacking through the red tape.

As an aside, both Colonel Stell and I were in DNIF status. He was recovering from burns received several weeks earlier while pulling Captain Tex Beneke from a burning F-86 that had crashed on take off. I had bailed out of a burning F-86 and was seriously injured upon landing in North Korea on the 29th of June. I had only recently been released from a hospital and was still recovering.

I continued contacting the Combat Operations Center at 5th Air Force Headquarters for authority. At one point I requested they order me to stop or else obtain authority, but neither occurred! In my opinion, the response from the 18th had been so fast and of such a magnitude that after the general completed dinner, no one wanted to tell him he had missed the war! But by 2100 hours, I knew I had been hung out to dry! At best, I figured 5th Air Force would sweep the operation under the carpet. In my defense,

we were striking the only *real* target I had seen during the seven months I was in combat. I was also aware that after going this far, I had better finish the job. I made the personal decision to remain silent about the authority. There was no need for anyone else to be open for court martial. *Operations continued.*

Shortly after midnight, we lost one pilot and two Sabres from groundfire. Lieutenant Don Forbes bailed out and was in No Man's Land. Because of these losses, I knew our operation could not be swept under the carpet. We shut down shortly thereafter feeling assured our target had been destroyed. For the day, the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing produced 212 sorties, of which 120 had not been authorized.

Memories fade over the years, and I no longer recall who was lost. Don Forbes was more fortunate. 8th Army successfully recovered him. He was with friendly forces before dawn and enjoyed a hearty breakfast. Undoubtedly, his was an event with high drama if the story could be told. Years later, unfortunately, Don was killed in a C-47.

About 0300 hours on the 16th, I met the 5th Air Force courier to pick up our frag order. Included in the coming day's tasking was a message for Colonels Perego and Martin directing them, "To return to 5th Air Force Headquarters immediately. Do not stop at K-55 enroute. Repeat, do not stop at K-55 enroute." I was well aware of the significance. The investigation

into our nighttime activities had begun before I went to bed!

After notifying the appropriate units about our tasking for the day, I went to bed. After the day's events, I was totally exhausted and extremely shaken, considering that I was not in good physical shape to begin. With visions of a court martial and a possible sentence in Leavenworth, I went into shock prior to falling asleep.

During my dealings with the Combat Control Center at 5th Air Force the following day, no one discussed the previous day's operations.

About 1430 hours, Colonel Martin walked into my office. I said, "Do you know when to be off base!" He replied, "Kid, you had a pretty busy day yesterday, didn't you?" After a considerable pause, he continued. "As Air Force officers we are all required to make decisions. Yesterday, you made the *right* decision. If you never make another decision, you have earned your pay for the rest of your career." He told me that 8th Army Headquarters' Intelligence had hard information that the Chinese intended to launch a *million man offensive*, but it *never* came. During the previous night the 18th destroyed *the munitions required* for the attack. I was also informed I would not be court martialed for my audacity, but neither would I be decorated nor cited. In fact, this was the last I would *ever* hear about this. It took forty years to realize the truth of that statement.

It was not until our 1992 *F-86 Sabre Pilots Association's* reunion in Las

Two 12th FBS F-86Fs begin their take off roll.



Photo courtesy of Don McNamara via Dee Harper



Final checks on a 12th FBS Sabre prior to a mission.

Photo courtesy of Bill Binder, NAA, via Bill Grover

Vegas while speaking with James Neale, Donald McNamara and James Campbell (the latter two are former presidents of the *F-86 Sabre Pilots Association*) that I realized that the pilots who flew those sorties did not know their positive contribution. Stopping a million man offense *before it started* had a major impact on the peace talks. The Peace Treaty for the Korean War was signed on July 27, 1953, less than two weeks after our strikes. How does one evaluate the consequences of an event that "never" occurred, such as a major Chinese offensive in the closing days of the war? If we could answer that question then we have the answer to the following question: Would the date and terms of the Korean peace treaty have been the same if the Chinese had successfully launched their attack on July 16, 1953? These thoughts had never before entered my mind. It is highly probable that air power had a greater impact on securing peace than is currently credited by most historians.

I developed this article to let my fellow F-86 pilots from the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing, and many other sup-

porters, know the importance of those night combat sorties. Yes, this is *my* favorite Sabre story. Possibly because it is imprinted in my mind with indelible ink and I did not end up in Leavenworth.

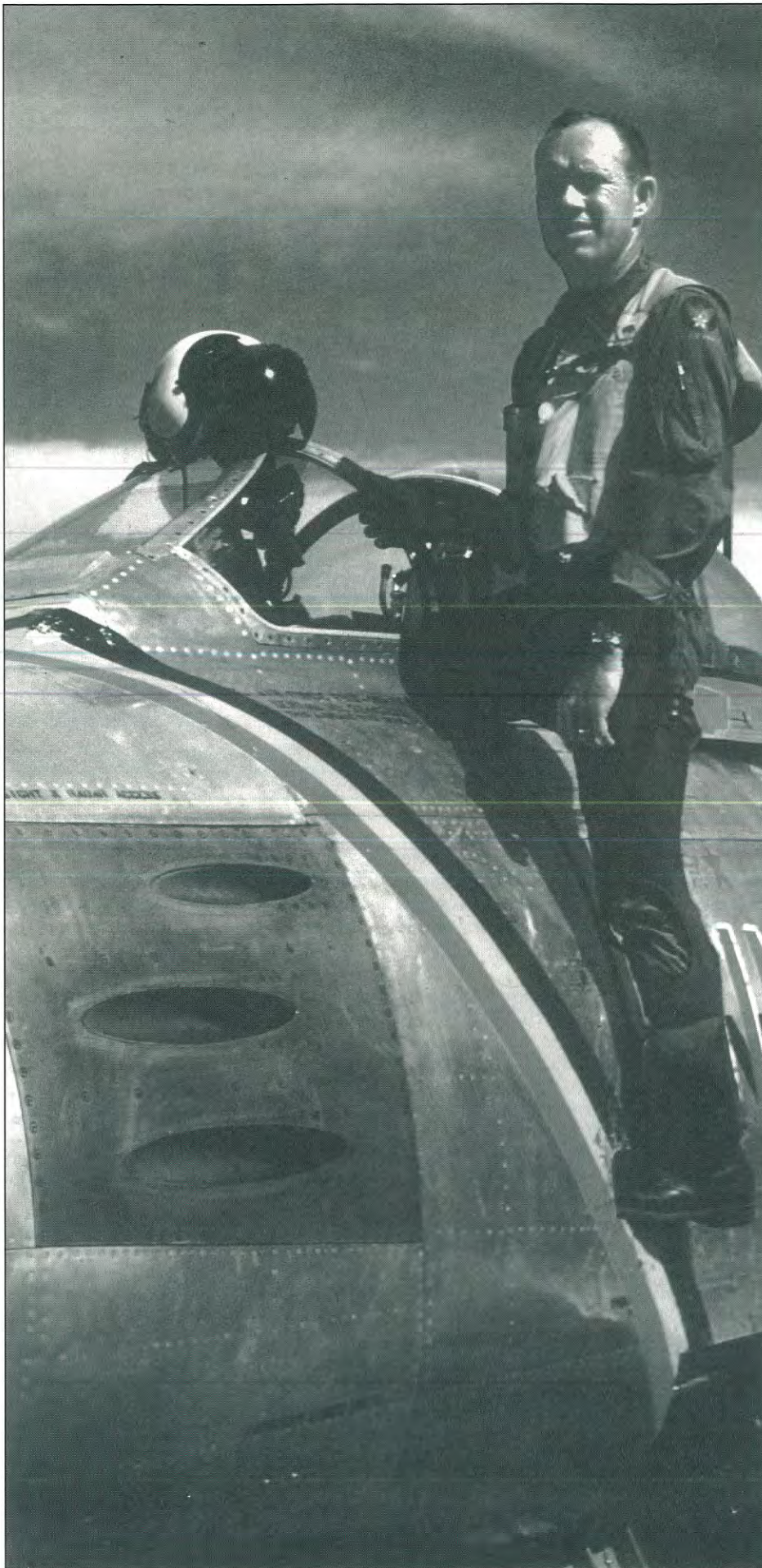
Before I finish, I will pay tribute to Colonel Maurice L. Martin. I worked for him prior to Korea. He was one incredible commander! He *demand*ed our best. With his bushy eyebrows and piercing eyes, he could look through a man, but at the same time, he was *extremely* fair. If we were right he would support us all the way. I do not know what transpired with 5th Air Force, but I credit "Marty" with protecting my backside through those discussions.

After witnessing the Air Force's expertise in *Desert Storm*, no one questions the value of the realistic combat aircrew training conducted at Nellis Air Force Base or the value of the USAF Fighter Weapons School and *Red Flag* exercises. Only a few old timers know that it was Colonel Martin's vision and grasp of tactical air operations that began the evolution that training underwent at Nellis.

Colonel Martin was the Training

Group Commander at Nellis when the Korean War started. Overnight the mission at Nellis changed from F-51 advanced flight training to combat crew training in F-80s. "Marty" recognized the value of realistic combat aircrew training and was willing to accept the casualties rather than pass them to the combat commands. He staked his career on this. Both he and Colonel Bruce Hinton supported these concepts before a Congressional Committee investigating aircraft losses at Nellis. Pushing his vision, he started the Fighter Weapons School at Nellis to improve the quality of instruction throughout the Air Force. Concurrently, Army surplus tanks, trucks and other older equipment were moved onto the gunnery ranges north of Nellis as tactical training targets. We know the evolution this has undergone. Colonel Martin prepared the ground work for this. Generals John Roberts, John Giraud, Alvin Tacon and many others later contributed toward making "Marty's" vision a reality.





Q: Bob, when did you receive your wings?

A: In June 1940 with Class 40-C at Kelly Field.

Q: What was your first fighter?

A: The P-40.

Q: May we review your career between 1940 and the Korean War?

A: I was sent to Randolph Field for eighteen months as a flight instructor because the Second World War was coming with a great need for more pilots. I then went into engineering and flight test for two years and flew almost everything: fighters, bombers, transports; the whole works! Then I went overseas to Italy. I took a repair squadron over, which repaired and flight-tested battle damaged aircraft. I later transferred to the First Fighter Group as the commander of the 71st Fighter Squadron. We flew P-38s on air-to-ground missions and bomber escort over Germany and Austria late in the war.

After the war, I returned to flight test, logistics and maintenance. I ran the only jet engine overhaul facility in the Air Force in San Bernardino, California. Later we moved to Tinker Field, Oklahoma City, which was the major jet repair facility in the Air Force. After a short stint in command and staff school, I transferred to the 56th Fighter Group at Selfridge Field as their wing operations officer and was finally back in a tactical unit. We flew F-80s in 1950.

My first contact with the F-86 was when I was sent to March Field, California as a project officer. We received new F-86As from the factory, flew them to March Field, shook them down and processed them, and then called for ferry crews to deliver them to Selfridge. After two years, I transferred to Air Defense Command in Colorado Springs as an operations officer. That was when I made my first flight in an F-86D, which was an experimental Sabre at Edwards Air Force Base.

In December 1952, I transferred to Korea and became the group commander of the 51st Fighter Group. We flew F-86s, the "E"s and the "F"s, and I started flying combat. As group commander, I flew with all three squadrons in all positions. By the end of the war, I had five kills and became an ace, but this was not my primary purpose. As group commander, my job was to get everyone experienced in air-to-air combat tactics because this was the

world's last eyeball-to-eyeball combat where the pilot aimed the airplane to direct its weapons. We did not have missiles or rockets in Korea. We had the same armament we had on P-51s from World War Two: six .50 caliber machine guns.

We worked against MiG-15s in Korea. Like any aerial combat, the pilot on top had the advantage. We flew combat at 35,000 feet, but we ended fighting air-to-air at 45,000 feet which was 10,000 higher than the F-86 was designed for. We stripped weight from the airplane so we were competitive with the MiG. The MiG was 4,000 pounds lighter than the F-86 and more

cannons, it shook the whole aircraft. The gun mounts must have been flexible. I was fired at twice almost at point blank range but was not hit.

I cannot say enough good things about the F-86. It was a beautiful bird. It had essentially the same wing and airfoil as the F-86D and the F-86H. The "H" was the Sabre we wanted in Korea, but it did not finish production tests in time. The F-86H had additional thrust, and had pre-turbine fuel injection. It was like an early model afterburner. It would have given us more thrust and more speed in Korea.

Q: What were your total hours flying all Sabre models?

We Interview Bob Baldwin The 35th Ace of the Korean War

Hero shot of Bob Baldwin taken in 1953.

Photo courtesy of Bob Baldwin

maneuverable. The only way we could offset its increased maneuverability was to operate at top speed. The MiG was capable of speeds approaching 700 miles per hour, but so was our F-86. The weight differential made a difference. Wide open, the MiG and the F-86 were about the same, and we flew at full throttle all the time. Our maneuverability was the same as the MiG as long as we kept our speed up. Since the MiG had a major advantage because it was lighter, we had to cripple it very quickly. If we did not, it was soon above us, and we were either all alone or at a serious disadvantage.

We flew finger four formations made of two elements of two Sabres. We insisted on better air discipline and better coordinated air tactics. By the end of the war, the 51st had as good a kill ratio as the 4th. We had as many kills, but we lost fewer pilots. At the end of the war, we had a kill ratio of 16 to 1, and while I was there, we lost only two in my group. We recovered one pilot. We lost the other in the Yellow Sea.

The maneuverability of the F-86 was exceptional at high speeds. The F-86 was easy to fly, maneuverable and very forgiving. It was a very rugged machine. One of our major advantages was that the MiG was apparently a poor gun platform. It had one 37mm and two 23mm cannons. When they fired their

A: Over a thousand. I spent more time in the F-86D after the Korean War than any other model.

Q: How many missions did you fly in Korea?

A: I had 85.

Q: Where were you based?

A: We were at Suwon, 30 miles south of Seoul, out in the "boonies"! The 4th was at Seoul which was closer to the Yalu. Our missions were 60 miles longer!

Q: When you arrived in Korea, what briefings were you given about the MiG's capability?

A: When I was notified I was going to Korea, I checked with the Pentagon to find out which assignment I was getting. It was to be with the 18th, flying F-51s and F-80s. I did not want that. I had a friend at Nellis Air Force Base who was conducting training for Korea. I called and asked, "I am heading for Korea. Can I get some refresher training in the F-86?" He said, "Sure. I cannot set up anything special, but you can jump in the program and stay with us as long as you can." I was there for ten days flying missions. I received a good indoctrination into air-to-air combat because the people running the program were all ex-Korean War combat personnel.

When I arrived in Korea, I was sent to Personnel at Fifth Air Force, Rear. The general asked, "Where did you

come from?" I said, "Nellis". I did not tell him it was not the full 90 day course. "Oh", he said, "F-86s! We are looking for an F-86 group commander." "Great!", I said, "I'll take it!" That is how I got the 51st! I then flew three missions on the wing of the previous group commander. He had served his tour and was leaving. I took the group after those three combat missions.

Combat was something we talked about day and night, and we learned plenty. We were well indoctrinated in what the MiG was capable of and what its tactics were, as well as our own tactics. We developed some new tactics which worked to our advantage. After analyzing the MiG's procedures, we simply countered them.

We kept seeing MiGs flying at 52,000 feet. There was always that urge to get up there with them. Finally, we developed a "hot rod" flight that could get to 52,000 feet. We stripped weight from the Sabres. Instead of carrying 500 rounds per gun, we only carried 250. We removed armor plate from the seat bottom. There were two flap motors and two alternators. We took out one each. We stripped 1,500 pounds from the airplane. Then it operated at 52,000 feet, but maneuverability was poor. If a MiG blundered into us, we could engage it, but we could not maneuver much because of the poor handling at that altitude.

There was one period during which the MiGs' tactics had us stopped. None of the F-86 groups were able to successfully engage the MiGs. Every time we engaged a flight of four MiGs, within about three minutes four more MiGs joined the fight. If we chose to fight with these odds, in a few more minutes, four more MiGs joined the fight. At that point it was smart to head for the deck and leave the fight for another time. As I recall, this period lasted about two weeks during which our MiG kills stopped.

Our group operations analyst was a second lieutenant ROTC graduate from MIT who majored in mathematics. He figured out what was happening. The communists had set up what Hollywood later called "Casey Jones' railroad." They flew flights of four MiGs south from Antung to the Chongchon River, made a wide turn, and flew back across the Yalu River at the Suiho Reservoir. Their flights followed this track at three minute intervals. If we engaged a flight of MiGs, we became badly outnumbered in short order.

(continued on page 20)

In order to counter this tactic, the 51st Group changed tactics. We laid out a "racetrack" pattern directly across their "railroad". Since this would be a prescribed pattern with known turning points, we flew flights of six F-86s at three minute intervals. The results were astounding, and the number of aircraft involved in these engagements was unbelievable! For a period of ten days, we were the only ones getting kills. Everyone wanted to fly the number five or six positions in the flights as they were unexpected by the MiGs and therefore the most successful. After about ten days, the MiGs stopped flying the "railroad", and we disbanded our "racetrack".

Q: How was the F-86 better than the MiG and vice versa?

A: With regard to armament, the MiGs had three cannons and we had six .50 caliber machine guns. This sounds obsolescent when we remember that that was what our P-51s had in World War Two. But it was like using a shotgun versus a rifle to shoot at birds. Our six .50 calibers were deadly! I saw MiGs ripped apart by our .50s. They looked like the kind of scraper used for grating carrots! Their fuselages were shredded after our .50 caliber shells went up their backs! Our armament was more appropriate under those conditions.

The maneuverability at high speeds was about the same because we had a cleaner airplane. They had a little less weight, but they had a "dirtier" airplane aerodynamically. At higher speeds, their drag took over. At lower altitude wide open, both speeds were about the same. The major benefit the MiG had was that it was 4,000 pounds lighter. If we jumped a MiG but did not quickly cripple it, if its pilot was smart, he started a climbing turn. We lost it very shortly because it was lighter and climbed better.

We had a radar-ranging gunsight. I do not know what the MiGs had, but I believe they had a gyro-stabilized gunsight. Our radar-ranging gunsight was new and somewhat difficult to maintain, but it gave us automatic range which was a big advantage, except when we got in close combat.

The MiG was also more flexible and fragile. The F-86 was built like a bridge. Our escape maneuver was heading straight down. They could not stay with us because they went into a wing roll when their wings twisted. We went supersonic straight down, but they could not follow. When we got into trouble, we dove from it. When they

Bob with "Hoot" Gibson at K-13's runway control.

Photo courtesy of Bob Baldwin



got into trouble, they climbed.

Q: Was the MiG prone to spinning if it went into certain attitudes or maneuvers?

A: Yes. All ammunition in the MiG was held in a rack beneath the cockpit, forward of the center of gravity. If we teased the ammunition from the MiG, it became progressively more tail heavy. Then if the MiG went into a panic hard turn, it tumbled. That was its only poor flight characteristic other than at very high speeds, because the MiG was so light and flexible, when it went into a high speed dive, the ailerons acted like trim tabs. Instead of working normally, they twisted the wing. It aggravated their situation. When they were close to supersonic speeds, most MiGs developed wing flexing which suddenly terminated the engagement! The MiGs then went into a roll. The only time we saw them spin was when we damaged their controls or they became tail-heavy from expending the cannon ammunition in their nose. Then they became tail-heavy and very unstable.

Q: Please describe your first MiG victory?

A: It was at high altitude while patrolling the Yalu River. I looked to my left and saw a flight of four MiGs two miles away. We were crossing ahead of them. They looked like they were on a training mission. I called my flight, "Heads up! We are turning back on these guys." We made a right turn

heading north in their direction, and they ended behind us. This is an indication of the poor maneuverability at that altitude.

As we headed north, it was like walking on eggs with the MiGs alongside about a quarter mile away. They were preoccupied while we were flying alongside. We then gradually moved behind. Now they were at our maximum gun range. We had been two miles ahead, made our turn and moved behind them by 2,000 feet. It was a long shot, but the radar gunsight ranged a little better.

I picked the last MiG in the flight and gave a short burst. We had tracers loaded one in every ten rounds. Nothing happened. I raised the gunsight more and gave another short burst. Again nothing happened. I raised by gunsight a little more. Now I began slowing down because I was pulling my F-86's nose up. With that burst, I hit the MiG. Then I gave a good, long burst, and the MiG caught fire. It started burning, and down it went.

Q: Where were your first hits on the MiG?
A: In the aft fuselage. They finally hit the saddle tank beneath the engine. It flamed like a big skyrocket.

Q: Were your five victories over a six month period?

A: Yes.

Q: Which kill was the most difficult?

A: The one when I put 10 g's on the airplane, my fifth MiG kill. We were in and

out of the clouds between 25,000 to 30,000 feet. We encountered a flight of MiGs flying in our direction almost directly below us. We were too close to nose over, so I did a loose barrel roll and ended up about 100 feet behind the leader. I fired at the MiG which immediately started to burn. The MiG pilot dove into the clouds, and I trailed the MiG through the clouds by tracking its black smoke. As soon as we broke out of the clouds, I fired again. That happened four times.

In the process of tracking the smoke, I became disoriented. The next time we broke out we both were in a vertical dive at 12,000 feet near Mach 1. I made a reflexive pull out as the ground was coming up fast! The pull out was hard enough to force my helmet blast shield and my head down. I was looking at the floor and everything was dark! I could not pull my head up to see if I was going to make it. It seemed I wrestled with this dilemma for some time. I had to ease up on the pull out at the proper time, because in my blinded condition I was eventually going to hit the ground. Eventually, I relaxed my pull and raised my head. I was in a canyon. Very soon I was going straight up. I looked at the "g" meter, and it was pegged at 10!

Q: While you were pulling out, was the MiG going in?

A: The MiG went straight in. I lost my wingman when I followed the MiG into the clouds. My gun camera film showed the MiG burning like a torch, but I could not confirm its impact.

Fortunately the pull out happened in front of one of my other flights. The flight leader said the MiG never tried to pull out. It hit the ground so hard it did not even burn. I called the tech representative when I returned and said, "I bent your airplane!" They flew a crew in from Tokyo to set the Sabre on jigs. They found it was perfectly alright with nothing wrong!

Q: Did it take prolonged firing of the .50 caliber machine guns to knock a MiG down?

A: It depended on where we hit the MiG. I once set a MiG on fire with as few as a hundred rounds. If we hit a MiG in the right place, such as a fuel tank, with our armor-piercing incendiary shells, the MiG burned immediately. It depended on how good of a shot we were, and whether we put shots in a fuel cell or the engine. We had to be careful, however, because prolonged firing could ruin our guns.

Q: Was there a specific location where the MiG was particularly vulnerable?

A: We only shot at their engine, and the saddle tank was beneath it. Those burned very well! If we damaged their engine, then we had the MiG. It could not get away.

Q: Did MiG pilots bail out?

A: Yes.

Q: Were you hit while flying in Korea?

A: No, although twice they fired point blank at me from less than a hundred yards away but missed. But I was not sitting still, either!

Q: Was their cannon fire more deadly although slower firing?

A: Yes. It was lethal when it hit. They used explosive shells. Once one of our younger pilots was hit in the wingtip. The flak damage along his fuselage was extensive. He was stunned, and had been cut on his forehead. I located him and was able to nurse him back to Seoul. He could not talk because the microphone cord from his helmet had been cut. He could receive but could not transmit. I told him to go on 100% oxygen and said, "Follow me. I will steer you home." He landed on my wing because his airspeed indicator was out.

Q: Did you see F-86s lost due to the MiGs' cannon fire?

A: I never witnessed it, but once I watched gun camera film that was startling. It showed a MiG firing on an F-86 in the 4th Fighter Group. Behind that MiG was another F-86 firing on the MiG! The F-86 being fired upon turned hard while the trailing F-86 fired at the MiG. Then one of the MiG's cannon shells shot the wing off the first F-86! The second F-86 recorded this on gun camera film. The first F-86 was hit in the wing root and its left wing came off.

Q: Did the F-86 pilot bail out?

A: Yes, but he became a prisoner of war.

Q: One shot from the MiG's cannon blew the left wing off that Sabre?

A: Yes. Once we had an F-86 in the 25th Squadron return with an unexploded cannon shell embedded in its wing root. That Sabre belonged to another flight. It had a 23mm cannon shell jammed in the wing's main spar.

(continued on page 22)

A beautiful early 1953 shot of NINA II, one of Bob's early Sabres, with two kills. NINA II was lost in a mid-air collision, and NINA III, it's successor, was lost to ground-fire during the last North Korean breakout. Fortunately, Bob was not flying during either incident. He finished the war flying NINA IV.

Photo courtesy of Bob Baldwin



Q: Was it removed?

A: We contacted an explosive ordnance disposal crew who pulled it out. That Sabre went for a major overhaul!

Q: If that shell had exploded, would it have destroyed the Sabre?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you fly any F-86s in Korea that had the hard wing?

A: Yes. Our "F"s did.

Q: Did that make any difference in combat?

A: Not really. It was a little faster. Our "E" models had slats and were a little heavier.

Q: Please describe MiG Alley?

A: It was mostly open country with a few small villages. It was not highly populated. The weather was generally good. On rare occasions we had clouds that interfered. The MiGs as a rule did not fly through overcast, and those were the days we worked below it. There were beautiful days where everyone left contrails. Very soon, the sky looked like a plate of spaghetti! The Yalu River flowed west through the Suiho Reservoir. It then travelled to the coast at Antung and dumped into the Yellow Sea. There were no mountains, only rolling hills. It was semi-agricultural, with small plots of land and open brush.

Q: What were your guidelines for staying away from Antung?

A: We had what we called the Truman Doctrine which said, "You will not cross the Yalu River". It was not only Antung, but also the entire Yalu River. That prevailed for a long time until General Barcus came. He flew several missions with us. His policy was, "You may pursue a MiG across the Yalu River if it is on fire or about to come apart." If we severely damaged a MiG, we could proceed across the Yalu River to finish it, otherwise we were told to stay on the south side of the Yalu River.

Q: If you were flying on the south side of the Yalu, could you see the MiGs at their bases near Antung?

A: Yes, but I personally never went there. The rule was, "Thou shalt not cross the Yalu River". I was the group commander, so I had to follow it!

Q: Were you involved in raids on Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea?

A: No. We did not fly any air-to-ground operations, nor did we provide air cover.

Q: Did the MiGs use other tactics against the Sabres?

A: No. They seemed to use a random, roaming, search and destroy pattern. The MiGs generally did not fly south of

the Chongchon River in North Korea. They flew across the Yalu in flights of four, turned and went back. This process continued until they organized the "railroad."

Q: Did they attack in greater numbers?

A: The MiGs usually flew flights of four, as we did. As a result, most fights were four against four.

Q: What was your perception of the average MiG pilot?

A: There were good and bad. The one that nearly led me into the ground had a big red dragon painted along the length of his airplane. We could not tell for certain who was flying the MiGs.

Q: Were there periods when the MiG pilots were better, and then were replaced by lesser pilots, followed by



Two 39th FIS Sabres from Suwon scramble during 1953.

Photo courtesy of Bob Baldwin

more good ones?

A: No. It seemed there were good and bad ones, but they were mixed together. We were thinning them at a good rate. Gradually they became less capable as they apparently lost their experienced pilots.

Q: Did you see incredibly poor tactics?

A: Yes. Sometimes we shot at a MiG, and the pilot held the MiG still during the whole process! We heard later they were afraid to turn because their armor plating would not protect them. They waited until the MiG fell apart, and then bailed out.

Q: Did you see any situations where a MiG was attacked, but before taking any hits, the pilot bailed out?

A: No.

Q: Did you see evidence of Russian pilots flying MiGs?

A: I do not know for sure other than we heard there were "soldiers of fortune" or mercenaries flying. Someone once knocked a MiG out of the air, and the

pilot bailed out losing his helmet. He had red hair! We were in the area, and someone said, "Hey! There is a red-haired pilot!" So, we flew by to take a look!

Q: Did you see MiG-15s in different color schemes possibly indicating they were from different countries?

A: Yes. There were camouflaged MiGs as well as aluminum ones. Some had different insignias, but most wore Russian insignia. Once in a while we caught one with North Korean or Chinese insignia. They were basically all in Russian colors.

Q: Do you know about any Chinese pilots who became aces, or where their pilots' names were publicized?

A: No. We never heard that.

Q: Did you ever inspect the wreck of a MiG-15 on the ground while in Korea?

A: No. The only MiG we saw in Korea was the one that defected.

Q: Have you flown a MiG-15?

A: No.

Q: What was the condition of your air field in Korea?

A: Our base had a 13,000 foot runway. We were well equipped. We had two Wings. The 8th was on the south side and we were on the north. We never had problems other than some congestion from so many Sabres.

Q: Do you have a favorite Korean War Sabre story?

A: Yes. I have two. There was the time when I almost stuck the F-86 into the ground! The other was when I found the injured pilot and led him back to his home base. He was blind in one eye and needed help badly.

Thank you, Bob!



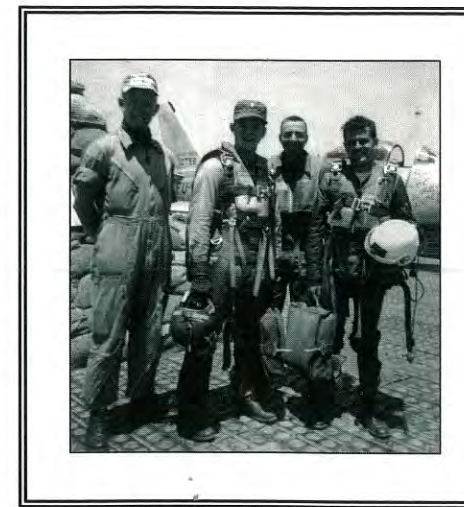
My MiG-15 Kill

by Ken Shealy

I graduated from Williams Air Force Base as a Second Lieutenant in October 1950, I spent the next several months flying F-86As at Selfridge AFB with the 61st Fighter Interceptor Squadron of the 56th Fighter Group. In March 1951, I went to Edwards AFB in California to fly accelerated service tests in the F-86E. From there I went to Wright Patterson with the 97th FIS, one of the first units to receive the "E".

Not long after this, I transferred to the 51st Fighter Interceptor Wing's 25th FIS. I went with our Sabres in November 1951 aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Cape Esperance* from Alameda, California to Yokosuka, Japan. Our aircraft and personnel next transferred to Suwon Air Base (K-13) in Korea to begin test and training missions, and I logged my first combat mission on December 15, 1951.

I got my MiG-15 kill on December 28, 1951 during my fourth combat mission. We were still flying squadron formations. Our commander, Major William T. Whisner, briefed us and led



Ken's "C" flight.

Photo courtesy of the author

our group north to Sinuiju. I was number two in our last flight and had Paul Roach as my flight leader. We proceeded north and ran head on into a massive flight of MiGs flying south. Both opposing flights turned back toward each other and then the shooting began.

Sometime during the battle, several MiGs lined up on our flight of four. I called for a break. After that, I found I was alone! I flew to the predeter-

mined orbit point and joined up with my flight commander, Clifford Brossart. We then turned north toward the Yalu River where we spotted a flight of two MiGs heading south climbing through the contrail level. Cliff turned in behind and below the MiGs to remain unobserved and overtake them. I kept checking our six but did not see anything. When we got in range, Cliff took the MiG on the left. I checked behind again, and when I looked forward, I saw Cliff's MiG-15 pilot bail out! I then started firing at very close range at the other MiG. I hit the right side of the MiG's fuselage and wing root with a fairly long burst. Then I jinked to the left and sprayed that side. The MiG started smoking, rolled right and headed down. We followed. At this point we were at our bingos, so we climbed and turned south for home. Our gun camera film confirmed both kills.

I finished my 100 missions in June 1952 with 148 combat hours. I flew test and training for another month, and then returned home to my next duty assignment in Michigan.



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Wanted: Photos and/or slides of 45th and 357th FIS F-86Fs in North Africa for book on 1950s USAF. Contact MSgt. Dave Menard (USAF, Retired) at 5224 Longford Road, Dayton, OH 45424 or by calling (513) 236-8712 (evenings).

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.

I am interested in contacting anyone with information on the F-86s flown by the Taiwanese Air Force, especially in the mid-'50s to early-'60s. I am interested in the air battles fought by the Republic of Taiwan's jet fighters and the ChiCom MiGs during that period. I would also like to borrow photos or slides from this era. Contact Mike O'Connor, 702 S. Fifth Avenue, Wausau, WI 54401, or call (715) 848-0160.

Brief notices may be placed in **Bulletin Board** on Sabre-related topics at no charge by members of the **Sabre Jet Historical Society** only. Each notice should be identified for placement in **Bulletin Board**. All requests must be signed. **Sabre Jet Classics** reserves the right to edit or delete any notice at the editor's discretion. Please do not abuse this free service.

Today's Sabres

by Ed Buerckholtz

As of March, we seem on the verge of a breakthrough, though it may be unwise to suggest it, if we can find some good mechanics. We, of course, are not superstitious, but like Napoleon, we believe in the incompleteness of information and the reality of luck. We have one very craftsmanlike young man who appeared on our hangar apron after finishing a *Casa Seata* using only crudely translated Spanish manuals originally written with a disdain for detail. We inspected his work and found quite a creditable job. His attention to detail in the very cruddy nosegear compartment of our Sabre "H" has been remarkable. His restoration of the nosegear alone is a work of art that we display in our general offices. Now we are looking at two more folks with *F-86* backgrounds who are being laid off by a certain St. Louis-based aerospace company whose federal largesse has been somewhat squeezed of late. If we can make a deal with them, we may begin April with cautious optimism.

Our wings and aft section are done. Our landing gear systems are almost done. We have someone to inspect our J73. (A casual inspection shows a most disturbing array of cracks in its aftercase, but weldable, according to the book!) We sure could use an illustrated parts bulletin (J73-GE-3), but we cannot find one. The ejection seat's hardware remains a thorn in our side. Every instrument has to be checked and/or overhauled, but we have no manuals. Terror grips as we face the task of designing an entirely new avionics package capable of coping with modern airspace, as hostile in its demands in some ways as the one the old Sabre was designed to penetrate. We want it to look and act military but also be modern and user friendly. Our limited panel space cries for multi-function displays, and the cockpit's big combining glass would be ideal for a heads-up display. We will never have a true HOTAS (Hands On Throttle and Stick) capability, but there are a few extra grip switches that could do something else since we will not shoot 20mm any more. Then there is our M-39 cannon question. We would prefer having the right side open up for a first

class display, with belts and ammo. And what about a Mark 12 nuclear weapon? Is there a training shape somewhere we could trade for? The only one I know about is in the National Atomic Museum at Albuquerque. If we seem to have many questions and few answers, that is because we do!

Much water has flowed down the Rock River in Illinois since May 28, 1970 when a Lieutenant Colonel from

the Maryland Air National Guard named Joe Radoci landed **53-1250** for the last time at the town named for a nearby crossing. A few more gallons will escape before the old Sabre flies again, but now we are bold enough, for the first time, to assert that it *will*.

As always, we are on the alert for F-86H stuff. Call Ed or Bob at *Spirit Fighters, Inc.* at (314) 532-2707, or Fax us at (314) 532-1486.

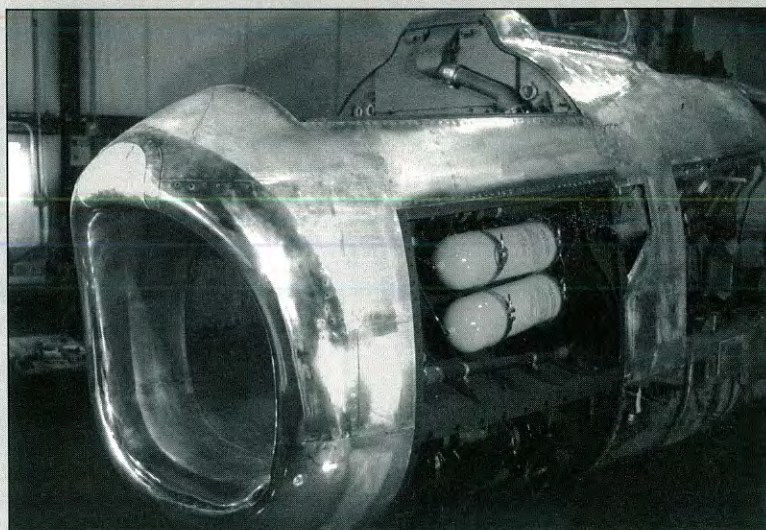
(To Be Continued)



The longitudinal actuator and all vital castings in the rudder and fin had to be overhauled, inspected and tested. Note the massive size of the horizontal stabilizer mount.

AN F-86H IS REBORN

- PART FOUR -



Two bays are completed on the left forward side. Visible are two oxygen bottles, various ECS ducts, and the air cycle machine with heat exchanger. The "horse collar" has been polished as paint retention is doubtful. The radome will be finished in black whereas the aircraft will be painted metallic light grey overall. The hot section in the tail will only be polished.

Both photos courtesy of Ed Buerckholtz

