



SabreJet Classics

Volume 3 Number 3

FALL 1995

A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association

COLD WAR WARRIORS
36TH FDW IN USAFE, 13th FIS F-86Ls,
CA ANG F-86Hs, MD ANG F-86Es



A ZULU ALERT F-86F OVER GERMANY

SabreJet Classics

Fall 1995
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(front cover photo)

An F-86F Sabre from the 53rd Fighter Day Squadron over West Germany in 1955. Based at Bitburg AB, Germany, the pilots of the 36th FDW were in the very front lines of the COLD WAR, being only 5 minutes flying time from the Iron Curtain. The *COLD WAR WARRIORS* of the 36th FDW, and other units in USAFE and NATO, sat ZULU ALERT 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, waiting for an attack from the East, which thankfully never came. (courtesy - Ford Smart)

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EDITOR
Larry Davis

ASSOCIATE EDITORS
Robert F. Dorr
Warren Thompson
Alonzo J. Walter, B/Gen. Ret.

TECHNICAL EDITORS
John Henderson, SOLE-CPL
North American Aviation

David W. Menard, USAF Museum

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THE PRESIDENTS NOTEBOOK

A great speaker, I am told, must: (1) Be Entertaining, (2) Be informative, and (3) Be brief. The same rules apply to editorial writing, I suspect, so I'll try to comply.

Following our last issue, which was devoted exclusively to Korean War stories, we received many plaudits for the overall quality of the stories and appearance of the issue. We're grateful for those. There were also a few suggestions that perhaps our publication dwells too much on the Korean War era. We appreciate those suggestions also. I might add that I've heard talk at past conventions that the Association is too much oriented to Korean War Sabre pilots. I hope I can put this notion to rest, once and for all.

It shouldn't be necessary to point out that while the F-86 is enjoying a long and glorious career (Yes, there are quite a few still flying all over the world!), the Korean War was the "Big Show" as far as Sabres in combat. Not the only one, by any means, but the biggest. Probably for this reason, most of the stories we receive for publication concern that fracas.

We'd like to cover the full range of Sabre service. But unless YOU, our members, send us the material, our hands are tied. We do get some excellent articles dealing with other periods, and in this and future issues, you'll see even more variety. Sabres in Europe, Sabres on Taiwan, Sabres in the Air Guard, in ADC, in TAC, in Canada, Sabres Today, etc., etc. Come on troops, let us hear from YOU! You don't have to be a Hemingway. We've got some pretty good wordsmiths who will work with you. So don't be shy. Send us your words and pictures - we'll take it from there.

Our SOP (Yeah, we've got one of those too!) for SabreJet Classics, emphasizes that "*The goal of SabreJet Classics will be to highlight the history of the F-86 aircraft, the units which operated the aircraft, and the personal experiences of F-86 pilots and support personnel.*" We mean every word. No exceptions.

Looking forward to seeing everyone in September at the 10th Reunion.

Dee Harper
President
F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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NOTICE!

ONE SURE WAY TO OBTAIN A SABRE PILOTS ASSN. WINDBREAKER FREE IS TO ATTEND THE 10TH REUNION OF THE ASSOCIATION, HELD IN LAS VEGAS THE 17TH, 18TH, 19TH, AND 20TH OF SEPTEMBER 1995.

OUR CURRENT WORKLOAD PRECLUDES OUR RESPONDING TO THE MANY REQUESTS TO PURCHASE A WINDBREAKER WITHOUT ATTENDING THE REUNION. WHEN WE MAIL THE NEW ASSOCIATION ROSTER (LATE OCTOBER), WE WILL INCLUDE INSTRUCTIONS AS TO HOW TO OBTAIN ITEMS EXCESS TO REUNION REQUIREMENTS.

THANK YOU

10TH REUNION COMMITTEE

LAST CHANCE - 10TH REUNION FOR COMPLETE INFORMATION CONTACT;

F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSN.
SEPTEMBER 17-20, 1995
SANDS HOTEL, LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSOCIATION
10th REUNION
P.O. Box 97951
Las Vegas, NV 89193

PLEASE NOTE; The best buy in reunion events are the activities scheduled for the ladies. If your wife/guest is attending, be sure she is registered for these events!!!

The SabreJet Classics is published by the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association, PO Box 97951, Las Vegas, NV 89193. The F-86 Sabre Pilots Association is a non-profit veterans organization, with membership limited to individual pilots who have flown the F-86 Sabre aircraft. A goal of the association is to 'perpetuate the history of the F-86 Sabre, the units to which it belonged, and to the men that flew the Sabre'. A second goal is to 'link Sabre jocks with their old comrades'. The SabreJet Classics is published solely for the private use of Association members. No portion of SabreJet Classics may be used or reprinted without permission from the President of the Association and Editor of the magazine. The SabreJet Classics is

published twice a year. All members of the Association are encouraged to forward stories for publication, with appropriate photographs, to the Editor, Larry H. Davis, 4713 Cleveland Ave. NW, Canton, OH 44709. All photographs will be handled with care and returned to the donor individual. If needed, the Editors will work with the donor to polish your article. You will be credited in the SabreJet Classics for both your articles and photographs. Extra copies of The SabreJet Classics can be ordered at \$4.00 per copy, providing copies are still in stock. Since this is an all volunteer, non-profit organization, there will be no monetary reimbursement for submitted materials.

Please Note: The last line in your address label indicates the last year for which your dues are current. If it is earlier than Yr/95, you are currently delinquent.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I HAVE RECENTLY JOINED THE F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSN. AND HAVE JUST RECEIVED MY FIRST ISSUE OF SABREJET CLASSICS. I REALLY ENJOYED READING IT AS IT BROUGHT BACK MANY MEMORIES.

I WOULD LIKE TO OFFER A SUGGESTION. HOW ABOUT SOMETHING ON ADC F-86DS AND LS? THEY MAY NOT HAVE BEEN IN DIRECT COMBAT, BUT THEIR PILOTS PUT IN MANY HOURS IN THE ALERT BARN ON 5, DEFENDING HOME AND NATO SHORES.

THANKS FOR YOUR TIME AND KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK.

SINCERELY

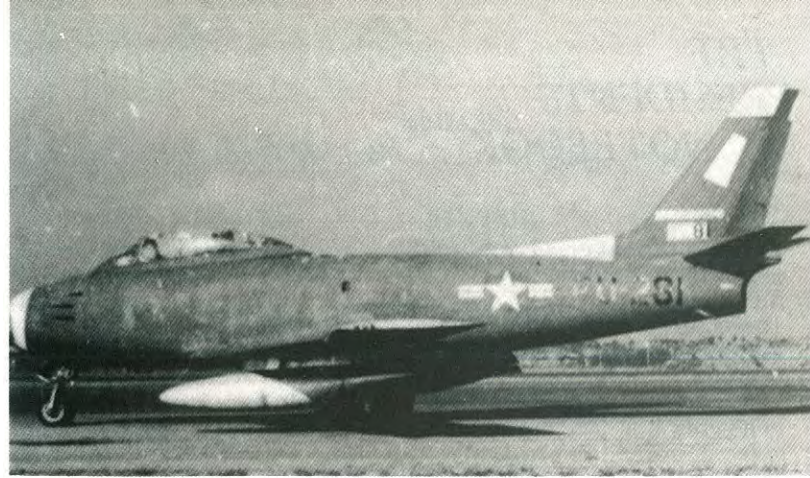
ROGER L. KRAUSE
LT COL USAF (RET)

(WE HEARTILY AGREE AS IS SEEN IN THIS ISSUE. BUT PLEASE, WE CAN'T SIMPLY MAKE ARTICLES UP. WE'D LOVE TO PRINT MORE ARTICLES ON THE COLD WAR WARRIORS IN AIR DEFENSE, NATO, FEAFF, OR WHATEVER. SEND THEM ALONG. EDITOR)

JUST A SHORT NOTE RE. SABREJET CLASSICS, VOL. 3, #1. WHAT A GREAT SURPRISE! I REALLY ENJOYED RICK MITCHELL'S ORIGINAL EFFORT, AND WAS VERY DISAPPOINTED TO SEE IT FOLD. NOW WE HAVE RESURRECTED IT, AND ALTHOUGH IT IS A LITTLE THIN, I'M SURE IT WILL GROW IF ALL OF US DO OUR PART IN SUPPLYING PRINTABLE MATERIAL.

BEST REGARDS
HARVEY L. BROWN
67TH FBS, KOREA 1953

(Rick Mitchell was the original Founder and Editor of SABRE JET CLASSICS)



WHAT IS IT!

Dick Becker and John Moore, both former members of the STRAWBOSS gang that took 4th FIG F-86As to Korea, identified this unusual camouflaged F-86A from last issue's 'WHAT IS IT!' as one of the STOVEPIPE airplanes in Korea. STOVEPIPE was the code name for armed weather recce flights from Suwon and Kimpo during 1951. There were 3 F-86As in varying camouflage schemes, used for the STOVEPIPE flights. The camouflage was Army tank Olive Green, and was applied only to the upper surfaces of the F-86As. Anyone with further information or photos, especially color photos of any of the STOVEPIPE F-86As, please contact the Editor, SabreJet Classics, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709.

NEXT ISSUE

The Straight-Wing P-86,
F-86D vs. The Aluminum
Overcast, Bob Hoover In
Korea, MORE!

FOLDED WINGS

WARNEY L. 'BING' CROSBY - JULY 1995

CLARENCE DUKE - APRIL 1995

WILLIAM E. 'BILL' SHELTON - MAY 1995



The 53rd FDS CO's F-86F sits 15 minute ZULU ALERT at Furstenfeldbruck during the Winter of 1955. ZULU ALERT airplanes carried full 200 gallon drop tanks for maximum combat time. The 36th FDW was equipped with F-86F-25 Sabres with the '6-3 hard wing', the ultimate Sabre MiG-killer. (courtesy - D.E. Butz)

COLD WAR WARRIORS

ZULU ALERT AT FURSTY

by Ford Smart

During the mid-1950s there were a great many Air Force crews that stood silent alert across the borders from the (then) Soviet Union. Their mission - Stand By To Repel An Attack, should one ever come. It was a lonely vigil, with no headlines and very little praise. They were known as the COLD WAR WARRIORS.

I was one of the Cold War Warriors serving with the 36th Fighter Day Wing at Bitburg AB, Germany. The 36th was composed of three squadrons - the 22nd FDS, 23rd FDS, and 53rd FDS. During 1954/1955, we flew the North American F-86F model. Our primary mission was termed "FIGHTER DAY", which simply meant maintaining air superiority over our area of responsibility in West Germany. We sat ZULU ALERT in a 5 and 15 minute status, from 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset. The 36th FDW had no nuke role at the time.

Often we would rotate to Furstenfeldbruck AB, near Munich, on a TDY basis. This brought us much closer (about 5 minutes jet time) to the Soviet Bloc nations of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Soviet-occupied Austria. This was where the MiG threat was the greatest. When scrambled, we would be vectored by GCI into the ADIZ (Air Defense Identification Zone), a 15-20 mile-wide buffer zone inside West

Germany abutting the Soviet dominated countries. Our mission was to intercept incursions from behind the Iron Curtain.

Normally we were airborne daily either training or on an actual intercept of a bogie picked up by GCI radar. Many times we flew within sight of various types of MiG aircraft (15s, 17s, etc) at distances of from one to three miles. We just flew side by side, warily eyeballing each other from across our respective sides of the border, waiting for someone to make a move. Actual engagements were rare in this area. Rare yes, but they did occur, with both sides claiming victories. The last one occurred, I believe, during 1954.

As one can imagine, the notorious European weather was a significant factor in the mix. For example, it was quite common for West Germany to be 'socked in', while the Soviet bases were in the clear. During these weather conditions, the MiGs would often launch what appeared to be a massive attack toward the West. Radar would pick up entire squadrons of MiGs at high altitude and airspeed, dashing directly toward the border. This, of course, was designed to initiate our response, scrambling everything we had on ZULU ALERT - which we promptly did!

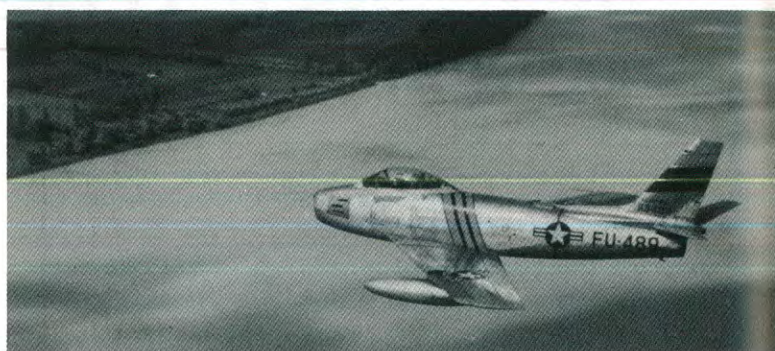


The *COLD WAR WARRIORS* of the 36th FDW would often deploy to North African bases such as Wheelus AB, Libya, for qualifying and gunnery meets. The 36th FDW converted to F-86F-25 Sabres in late December 1953. One year later they are seen at Wheelus for the 12th Air Force Gunnery Meet. In the extreme background are Sabres from the 48th FBW based at Chaumont, France. (courtesy- USAF)

The MiGs would then turn back and return to base, leaving many an F-86 driver sitting high and dry over a solid undercast, with many of our bases 0/0 (WXOFF). The Sabres would usually be low on fuel, and the pilots highly motivated to find *someplace* to land! It was a critical situation. But fighter pilot ingenuity and skill prevailed (with a little bit of devine guidance, I suspect), and we all landed somewhere safely, usually at Hahn AB, Germany, which sat on a hill, usually above the fog level.

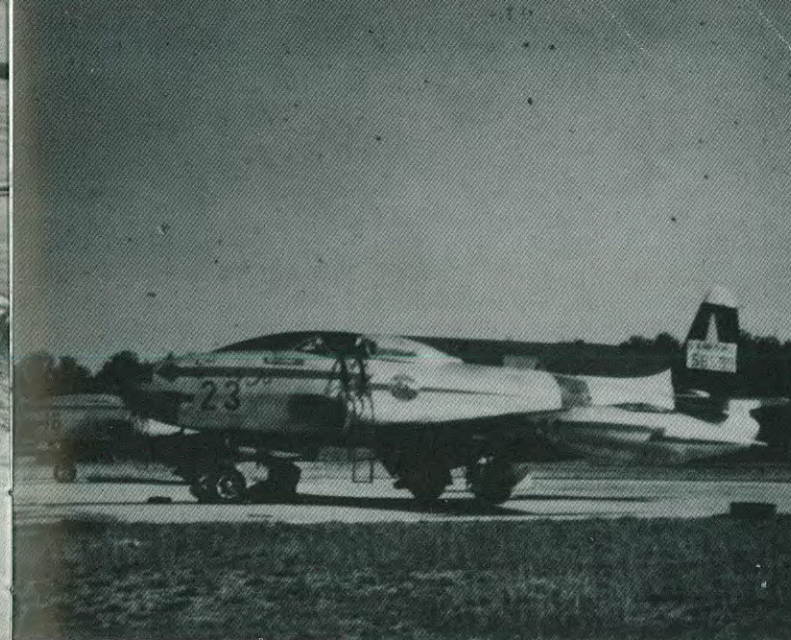
Training and exercises were frequent. Periodically we would go down to Wheelus AB, Libya for qualifying. At Wheelus, we were required to be proficient in air-to-air gunnery, rocket-firing, bombing, and strafing. There was a conventional range inland where we pin-pointed 25lb. practice bombs, fired 2.75 inch rockets, and zeroed in on the strafing panels. Air-to-air gunnery was carried out over a Mediterranean Sea water range. We fired .50 calibre that was dye dipped, on a towed target panel. Occasionally we had some air-ground practice at Baumholder, a small range located inside West Germany.

But our true love was combat air maneuvers, or 'rat racing'. The F-86F was a magical bird for 'rat racing'. Daily we patrolled the skies over Germany, 'hasseling' with anything that we spotted. In those days our most formidable 'foe' (besides our own "Stick Buddies") were the Canadians in their Sabre Mk 5s and Mk 6s, flying out of Zweibrucken AB, West Germany. Many a tale has been told about these encounters with our brothers from up north - THEY WERE TOUGH!

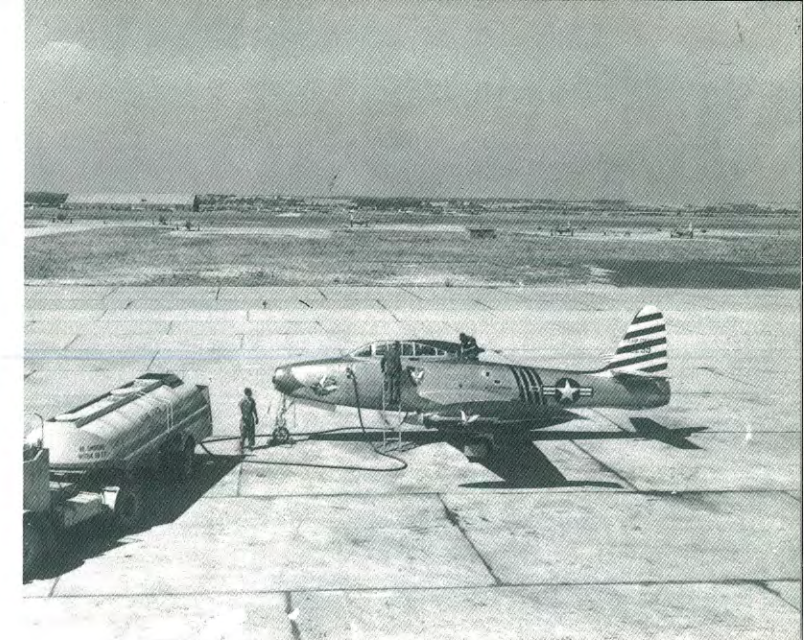


A 53rd FDS F-86F flies low over the Rhine River in late 1954. (courtesy - Ford Smart)

Ford Smart pulls the tail of the 53rd FDS mascot, a panther with tiger stripes, that had been liberated from the German High Command at the end of World War 2. (courtesy - Ford Smart)



The first *COLD WAR WARRIORS* flew Lockheed F-80B Shooting Stars, like TERRY JO that was assigned to the 22nd FS at Furstenfeldbruck in 1949. The 36th FG deployed from Howard Field, CZ to Germany in the Summer of 1948. (courtesy - Dick Kamm)

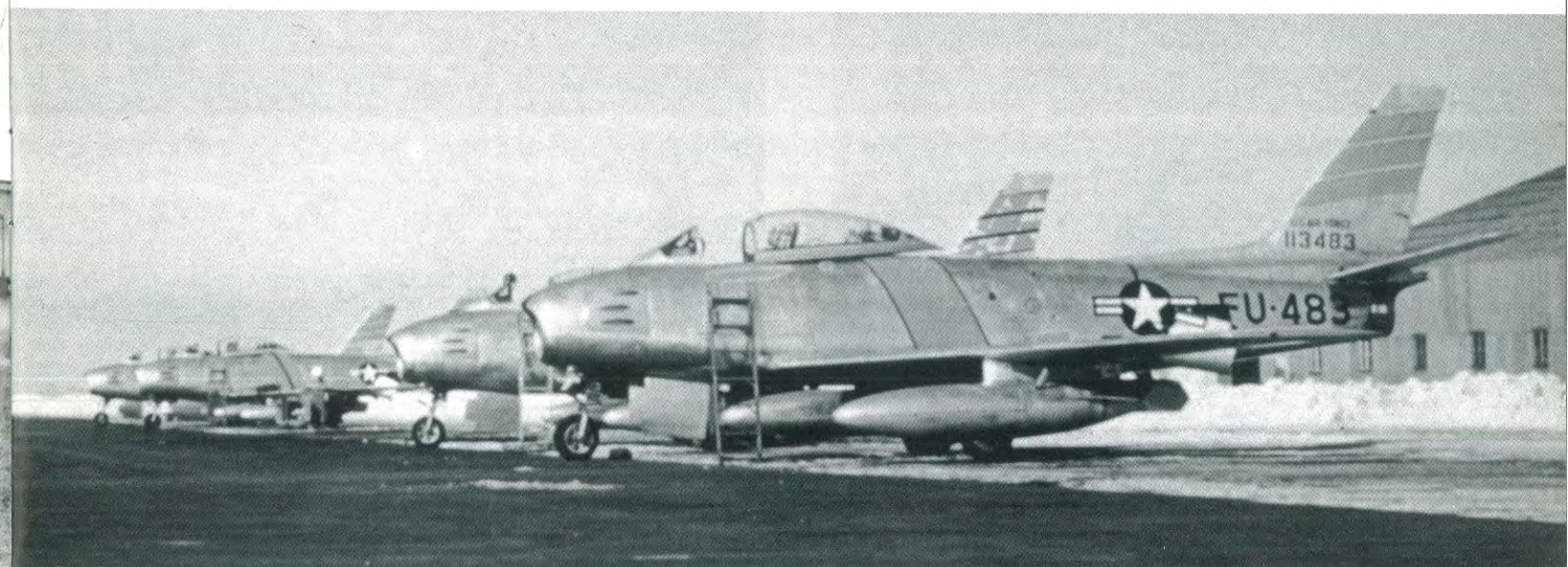


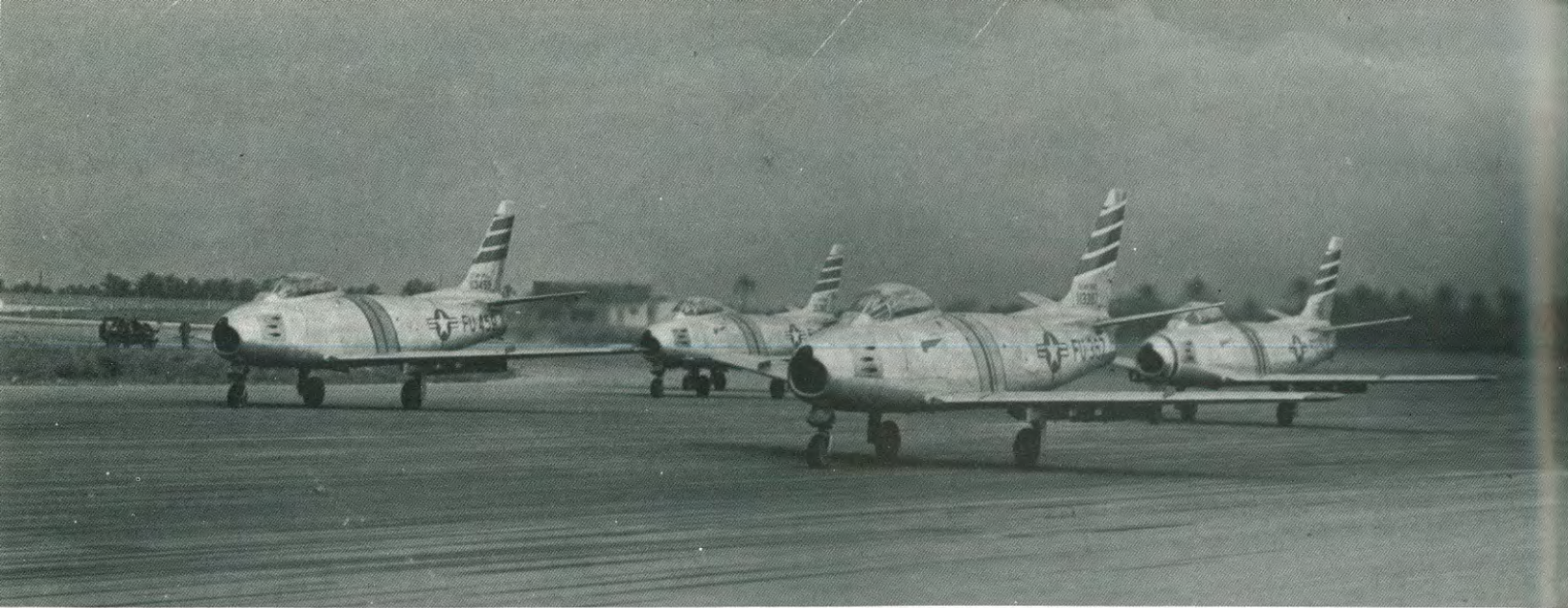
The 36thFG converted to Republic F-84E Thunderjets and the fighter-bomber mission in 1950. Colonel Robert L. Scott, the ex-Flying Tiger ace, was the Wing Comander in 1951 and flew this F-84E marked with 'Flying Tiger emblems' to denote his famous past. (courtesy - USAF)

Exercises for the Cold War Warriors of NATO were constant and continual. Many concentrated on air superiority; others dramatized 'invasion' and support of NATO ground forces and base defense. On one particular base defense exercise, I recall flying 12 missions in one day at Bitburg! The aircraft were 'clean', i.e. no underwing stores or drop tanks. We took off in one aircraft, engaged in a blur of aerial combat, landed and hopped into another waiting Sabre and repeated the scenario. Some missions were as short as 15-30 minutes in length, within 50 miles of Home Plate since we had only internal fuel available.

In December 1956 the 36th FDW mission was diversified and the squadrons dispersed. The 53rd went to Landstuhl AB, while the 22nd and 23rd remained at Bitburg. The mission became, that of fighter-bomber in anticipation of the arrival of the North American F-100C Super Sabre, which we subsequently flew on VICTOR ALERT with nukes. But that is another story. The men of the 36th Fighter Wing were some of the original Cold War Warriors, sitting ZULU ALERT in Lockheed F-80s as early as August 1948. Today the 36th is relegated to air base group duties somewhere within PACAF, one of the casualties of the frenzy toward 'leaning down the military'. What a way to end a glorious career!

These four 53rd FDS F-86Fs sit 5 minute ZULU ALERT at Bitburg in the Winter of 1955. The 5 minute alert pilots normally were assigned 24 hour shifts, and lived in nearby alert shacks. The MiGs would often launch and head directly for the border, only to turn back as soon as the Sabres were airborne. (courtesy - Col. R. B. Smith)





A flight of four 22nd FDS F-86Fs begin their takeoff roll from Wheelus AB, Libya to compete at the 12th Air Force Gunnery Meet held in December 1954. Competition included air-to-air gunnery, plus bombing and strafing. Air Force units from throughout USAFE were invited to participate.

KOREA LAND OF THE MORNING CALM?

Forty Five years ago, in June 1950, saw the beginning of three long years of war on a small peninsula jutting from the Asian mainland toward Japan. That country was Korea, a peaceful little nation that never seemed to have a destiny of its own. When World War 2 ended, Korea was occupied by troops of both the Soviet Union and the United States. In 1948, the United Nations decreed that Korea be unified under its own government, with both occupation armies leaving as soon as elections were held. The elections were held, but only south of the 38th Parallel. The Communists didn't want to take a chance on losing their portion of Korea, north of the 38th Parallel. The 38th Parallel became a dividing line between the (now) two Koreas.



Task Force Smith was wiped out. By September, the UN forces were holed up in extreme southeasterh Korea, around the port city of Pusan. It was known as the Pusan Pocket.

Both sides wanted to unite Korea under one flag. South Korea, being a free democratic nation, wanted negotiations and free elections - the UN policy. The North, being forced the communist manifesto from Moscow and Peking, was adamant not to let that happen. Their goal was re-unification too - under communist rule. And they began building an army that would do just that by military means.

Here the line held. With US airpower blunting the Red tank spearhead, US Army and Marine troops held a line along the Nakdong River. General Douglas MacArthur now began thinking of retaking South Korea. MacArthur gambled that the Red advance left their rear completely unprotected. He was right! On 15 September US Marines landed at Inchon, deep in the rear of the Red advance. The next morning elements of

At 0400 hours on 25 June 1950, almost one year to the day after the withdrawal of US troops from South Korea, North Korean tanks crossed the border into South Korea. There wasn't a whole lot that South Korea could do to stop the communist takeover. The South Korean Army wasn't much more than a police force, with no tanks or heavy artillery. They had virtually no air force at all, with only a dozen light Piper Cub types, and three T-6 Texan trainers.

GIs of the 27th Infantry Regiment pass a North Korean T-34 tank that has been knocked out by 5th Air Force F-80s during the Summer of 1950. (courtesy - USAF)

Lt. Warren Brown describes to LtCol D.S. Glover, CO of the 53rd FDS, and Frank Weage of North American, his encounter with Soviet MiGs during which he was shot down in a 36th FBG F-84E. Now flying F-86Fs with the 53rd FDS, Lt. Brown is looking forward to another encounter with the MiGs. (courtesy - North American)



Lt. Ford Smart leans on the wing of his F-86F when he was assigned to the 53rd FDS at Bitburg in 1954. At this time the mission was 'Fighter Day', or air superiority. (courtesy - Ford Smart)

36th FIGHTER GROUP



53d FIGHTER



One of the best times for the *COLD WAR WARRIORS* was 'hassling' with other NATO fighters. The Royal Canadian Air Force, flying Canadair Sabres like this Mk. 5 from 434 Squadron at Uplands, gave every bit as good as they got. (courtesy - Larry Davis)



The North Korean invasion went unchecked, and the heavy tank spearhead rolled into the capitol city of Seoul. When news of the invasion reached President Truman in Washington, he had only one thought, the safe evacuation of US citizens in South Korea. President Truman ordered the Far East Air and Naval Forces (FEAF and NAVFE) to begin the evacuation as soon as possible. When FEAF C-54s touched down at Kimpo AB the morning of the 25th, it was the first US reply to the invasion. It wouldn't be the last.

Although North Korean Air Force (NKAf) Yaks destroyed a FEAF C-54 at Kimpo, the evacuation was completely successful. But the North Korean tanks rolled on. Early in July, the first US ground troops deployed to Korea. But the rust of occupational duty in Japan, plus a lack of intelligence regarding the strength of the North Korean Army, took its toll and





The Korean War is often referred to as THE COLDEST WAR, and anyone who was there will definitely support that statement. Here some frost-bitten Marines fire a 105mm howitzer at the Chinese from the Hagaru-ri Airstrip during the -30^o march from the Chosin Reservoir. (courtesy - USMC)

the US 8th Army broke out from the Pusan Pocket. The Red armies, caught by surprise, were cut off from their supplies and reinforcements. FEAF and Navy fighter-bombers swept the roads clean of North Korean tanks and troops attempting to escape. Seoul was retaken on 28 September, and the invasion forces linked up with the advancing 8th Army a couple of days later.

Now it was the UNs turn to reunite Korea. A week into October 1950, UN forces crossed the old border at the 38th Parallel and began advancing north. The North Korean Army had been decimated during the invasion and subsequent encirclement by UN forces. UN airpower had literally destroyed the North Korean heavy tank force. Nothing was in the way of a UN victory. Or so it seemed.

Late in October a new element entered. Fresh troops began to appear. And these fresh troops were NOT Korean, they were Chinese *volunteers*. The UN forces continued their advance north. On 19 October the North Korean capital of Pyongyang fell. US troops of the 7th Division were soon overlooking the Yalu River near Hysanjin. They would be the only UN forces to actually look across the Yalu.

The UN forces had split during the advance. A mountain range lay between the US 8th Army on the west coast, and the 10th Corps, including the 1st Marine Division, on the east coast. In these mountains the Chinese were assembling - hiding during the day and silently moving into position at night. On 26 November they attacked! Half of the Chinese forces, 250,000 men, attacked the positions held by the 8th Army. The other half attacked the 10th Corps.

The Chinese 9th Army, totaling well over 100,000 men, cut off the 1st Marine Division at the Chosin Reservoir. It was during these attacks that the term

'horde' was born. "Boy, what a night!", the Marine told the reporter, "I killed 2 or 3 hordes!" The Marines were cut off and surrounded. Only gallant fighting, the will to survive, and some timely air drops by Air Force cargo planes, allowed the Marines to escape the trap.

The Chinese advanced back down the peninsula, recrossed the 38th Parallel, retaking Seoul and Kimpo in early January 1951, before finally being halted on 25 January south of Suwon. The UN troops held and slowly began retaking what they had lost the last two months. By early April, UN forces were again across the 38th Parallel. The line stabilized in this area, remaining so the rest of the conflict.

Throughout the war, the air over Korea was controlled by UN air forces, mainly US fighters and bombers.

5th Air Force airpower kept the North Korean Air Force grounded throughout the war, as attested by the wreckage of these NKAF Yaks at Kimpo in the Fall of 1950. (courtesy - Larry Davis)



Naval air power was in abundance during the Korean War. Carrier strike forces, such as those aboard USS Princeton, carried out attacks against communist targets deep in North Korea, in spite of the fact that none of the Navy aircraft were anywhere near equal to the MiG-15. This photo shows a typical Navy air group in Korea, with F4U Corsairs and AD-2 Skyraiders as primary attack aircraft; and F9F Pantherjets flying top cover.

FEAF at first ruled the skies with F-80 Shooting Stars, which kept the NKAF grounded. The NKAF Yak was a good match for FEAF and NAVFE propeller aircraft, but no match for the F-80 jets. The Chinese intervention in November 1950 brought with it the Soviet MiG-15 jet fighter.

At first the MiGs were flown by Soviet pilots, who quickly gained air superiority. Had the MiGs been deployed further into North Korea as the Chinese ground troops advanced, it would have made the retaking of South Korea much more difficult. But they weren't, instead they were launched from Red bases safely across the Yalu River. They made life miserable for F-80 and B-29 crews operating anywhere near the Yalu. But as soon as the MiG made an appearance in the Korean skies, FEAF requested the latest, and best, fighter be sent to Korea - the F-86.

How cold was it in Korea? Actual temperatures went as far as -40^o, with wind chill factors approaching 80 below! Similar to the conditions in Russia during World War 2, the crews often had to leave vehicles running all night, with fires burning under the oil pans to keep the engines from freezing. These Army M46 Pattons sit in the snow waiting for the next batch of Chinese 'hordes' to attack. (courtesy - USA)

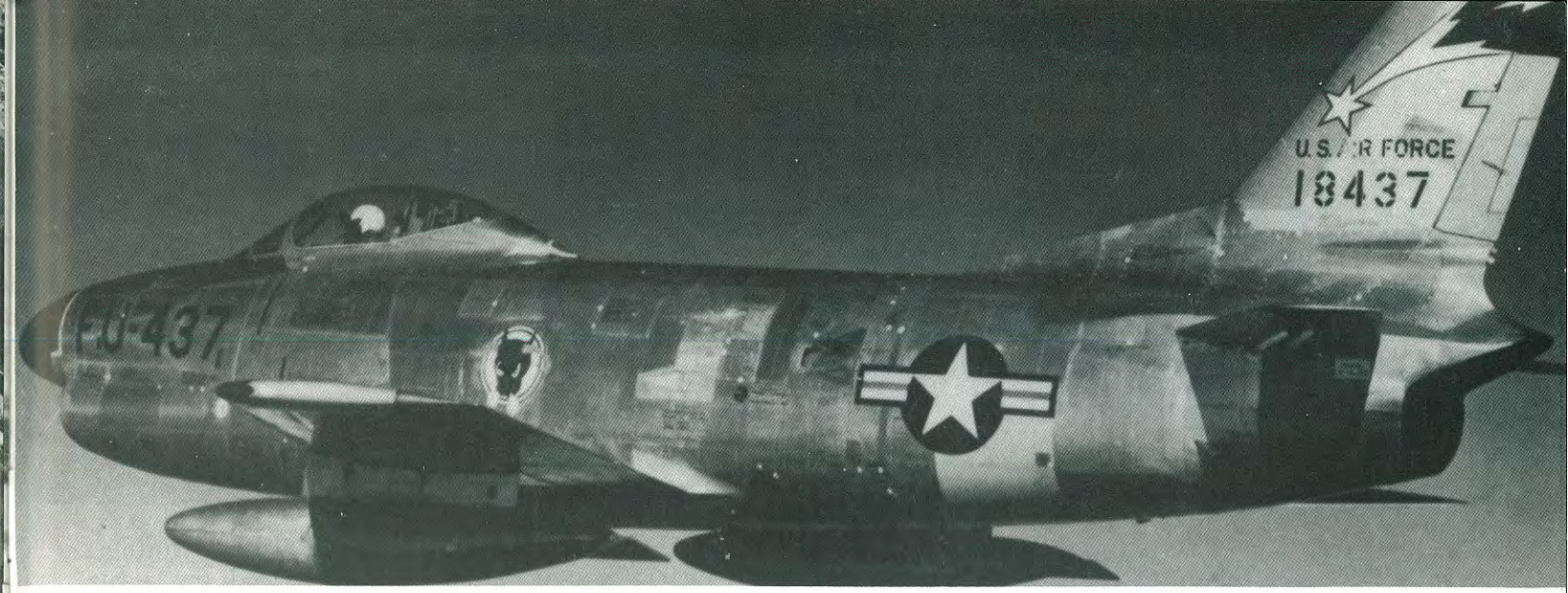




Without F-86 escort, the B-29s were mincemeat against the MiG-15. Even after the arrival of the F-86 in Korea, the B-29s were forced to abandon daylight attacks in October 1951. This veteran 98th BG B-29 crew is readying for another night mission in July 1952. (courtesy - USAF)



One of the primary targets for the Navy and Air Force bombers and fighter-bombers, was the road and rail network throughout North Korea, including any and all bridges. (courtesy - Larry Davis)



A 13th Fighter Interceptor Squadron F-86D over Michigan in 1954. The 13th FIS was based at Selfridge AFB until Project ARROW re-assigned the squadron number to the Sioux City Munciple Airport on 18 August 1955. The 13th FIS was equipped with F-86D and L Sabres from 1953 to 1959, when they converted to F-101B Voodoos. (courtesy - Ken Buchanen)

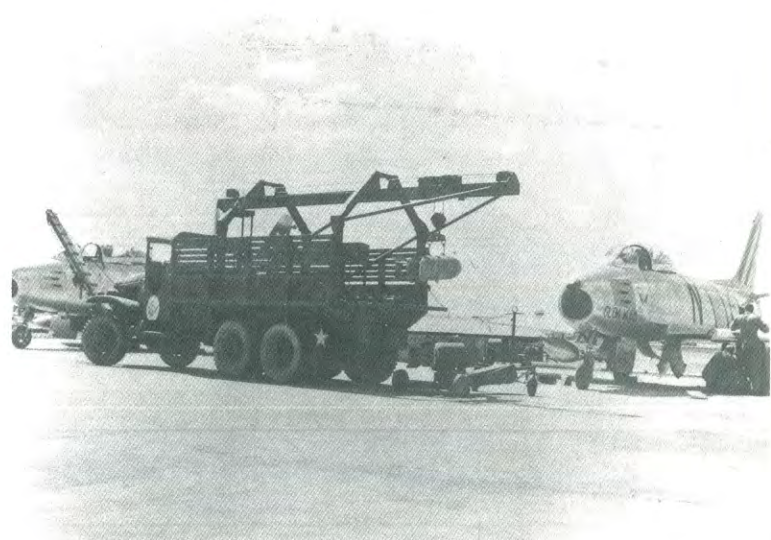
At least 47 Sabre pilots were killed in action, with a further 65 being listed as MIA.

Forty five years ago the Korean War began. It ended three years and one month later. The cost was tremendous. America lost 54,246 young men, including 33,629 killed in action. Well over 100,000 were wounded. South Korea lost an estimated 400,000 men in the struggle to remain free. North Korean and Chinese losses have been set at over 2,000,000. The results of three bloody years of war - South Korea remains today a free nation, albeit under the constant threat of attack from North Korea.

This year, as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War 2, America is finally becoming cognizant of what is known as *The Forgotten War*. On 27 July 1995 a memorial was unveiled in Washington to express the gratitude of the American and Korean people to the 1,319,000 US servicemen that braved the extreme cold of the Korean winter to stop communist aggression. The Korean War ended in July 1953, not in complete victory as in World War 2, but certainly not in defeat. The UN accomplished its goal - restoring South Korea's freedom. Let us drink a toast to all who served there, and another to those who never came home.

The Korean War was truly a United Nations conflict, with no less than 22 nations actively taking part in combat operations, including South Africa, whose No. 2 Squadron flew these F-86Fs from Osan in 1953. (courtesy - SAAF)

The MiG-15 could have turned the entire air war around if it had been employed correctly. But not when it was in the gun sight of a Sabre. (courtesy - Pete Fernandez)



MY FAVORITE F-86L STORY

by Bill Van Dine

As cadets, we were ingrained with certain responses to specific questions, such as the *correct* answer to the age old question - "What kind of pilot are you?!" I never had the opportunity to answer that question after I graduated from flight training until I met up with the F-86L.

I got my equipment and went off to fly my first F-86L. Colonel Bell chased me through the sortie and evaluated my wire recording after landing. It was only an everyday practice mission, but I did manage to *bury the dot*. And my instrument approach and landing were good. The only comment I heard from the good Colonel was what I overheard as he passed our Operations Officer following the evaluation of my recording. "Call Division and schedule a check pilot for Van Dine as soon as possible." I guess I backed up my boast!

My greatest thrill with the F-86L involved two intertwined sorties with the 13th FIS at Sioux City, Iowa. After I had flown the 86D for five years with the 469th FIS and 26th FIS, I was re-assigned to the 13th FIS at Sioux City. The 13th was scheduled to move to Glasgow, Montana and transition into the McDonnell F-101B Voodoo. But when I arrived, the 13th still had their F-86Ls. I was only 25 then, wearing one white bar. But most of the other young pilots assumed I was reporting directly from Perrin AFB and newly graduated from pilot training.

I flew with the check pilot, but we had to land at an alternate field because of a snowstorm. We returned the next day and I received my EXPERT designation! Such was my introduction to the F-86L. It had the updated systems and was equipped with SAGE, but it flew and handled the same as the D model. I never truly considered the F-86L to be a different species.

Our squadron commander was LtCol Robert M. Bell. He took me into his office on my second day to discuss my flying experience. During our conversation, I told him about my marksmanship streak of 19 consecutive sorties where I fired on every pass and scored a hit on every pass. I was proud but not bragging. Just about then he popped that timeless question - "How do you rate yourself as a pilot?" I thought for a moment and then answered - "Colonel Bell, you now have the *finest* F-86D pilot *in the Air Force* assigned to your squadron!" This response not only caught him off guard, but also startled him into action. He then asked what size flying boots I wore, and when he heard that his boots were my size, he handed me a spare pair from behind his desk, saying - "Go get yourself a flying suit, helmet, jacket, and chute. We're going flying RIGHT NOW!"

Walt Miakinoff, Bill Van Dine, Marty Kasichke, and Mike Hayes, won the 1956 Yuma Rocket Meet for the 469th FIS. (courtesy - Bill Van Dine)



"POP THE CLUTCH"

by PAT MCGIRL

This is my favorite Sabre story, and it concerns the F-86H model, the last of the 'sports jobs'.

It was a cold day at Nellis Air Force Base in January 1959 where I landed during a cross-country trip. I wanted to refuel prior to returning to Van Nuys Airport, California, 'Home Plate' of the 115th TFS/California Air National Guard. The Nellis Line Chief was anxious to get me on my way and asked if he could roll out the air and electric start cart. I told him that I was having a problem with my F-86H accepting air, and I needed three men on each wing to push the bird forward and get it rolling.

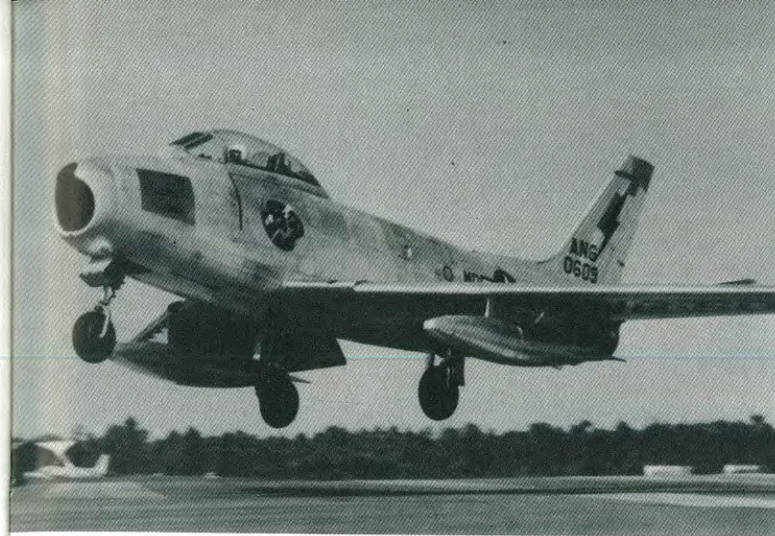
The Line Chief gave me a very questioning look, sort of a "Who are you kidding Bub?" look. However, after gathering some nearby mechanics, the Chief was ready to comply with my unusual request. Again he looked at me as if I were a little strange. I guaranteed that I would be gone after this unusual ground maneuver. As

the Nellis ground troops began pushing me forward, my wingman yelled from his cockpit - "Pop The Clutch!"

I immediately hit the brakes, simultaneously hitting the fuel/air starter switch. Low and behold, the beast came to life breathing fire! My wingman started his Sabre in the conventional manner, and we were on our way. To this day I know a Nellis ground crew that hates F-86H pilots. But when I waved, they all laughed, and everyone got a kick out of the gag.

The F-86H was among the greatest of all the Sabre variants. It could give (and has!) the F-16 a 'go' today - with the right driver behind the stick. I flew the F-86A, E, F, and H with both the California and Puerto Rico Air National Guards. We picked up several F-86Hs from North American Aviation that had only two to three hundred hours on the airframes. Did they ever fly well! These Hs were definitely some of the best of the "Last Of The Sport Jobs!"

A flight of four F-86H Sabres assigned to the 115th TFS based at Van Nuys Air National Guard Base in 1959. The 115th TFS had been equipped with F-86As for the interceptor mission, but converted to F-86Hs when the mission was changed to fighter-bomber. So little is known about the short term use of the F-86H model Sabres in the California ANG, that most historians completely overlook it when listing aircraft flown by California ANG squadrons.



A 104th FIS/Maryland Air Guard F-86E lifts off from Friendship Airport at Baltimore in 1955. The 104th FIS was one of four ANG Sabre squadrons within the 121st FIW. (courtesy - NGB)



One of the other squadrons in the 121st FIW was the 142nd FIS/Delaware ANG based at New Castle AFB in 1956. This 142nd FIS Sabre is one of the 'hard-wing' F-86E-15s. (courtesy - Bob Esposito)

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

by LES WALTMAN

This event occurred in the mid-1950s when I was a member of the 104th Fighter Interceptor Squadron of the Maryland Air National Guard. We flew from Friendship Airport (now Baltimore-Washington International Airport), just to the south of Baltimore. The 121st Fighter Interceptor Wing was made up of squadrons from the Maryland, Delaware, DC, and West Virginia Air National Guards, all of which were equipped with the North American F-86E Sabre.

In those days each unit flew a fairly heavy evening schedule. One of our prime activities was to bounce everything airborne in our area. On this particular evening we were trolling along Maryland's eastern shore. I was flying Number Three in a flight of three Sabres. Element Lead was another Maryland pilot, Joe Russell, an acknowledged champion of air-to-air tactics. We

spotted a two-ship flight of F-86s from the Delaware squadron.

Russ commenced his attack on the unsuspecting Maryland Sabres, supported by me in a high position. He was, however, too aggressive in his attack and it looked like he was going to overshoot. I saw him suddenly yank back on the stick, complete what certainly looked like a one-turn spin, and drop neatly into the 6 o'clock position, and within range of his target - the Maryland ANG Leader. Somewhat in awe at the extraordinary tactics employed by his attacker, the Maryland Flight Leader voiced over the radio, "What am I supposed to do now?!"

I quietly replied through my mask mike - "APPLAUD!"

WANTED - INFORMATION, PHOTOS, AND/OR COLOR SLIDES FROM THE AIR FORCE WORLDWIDE ROCKET MEETS HELD AT VINCENT AFB IN YUMA, AZ FOR SABREJET CLASSICS STORY. CONTACT LARRY DAVIS, EDITOR, SABREJET CLASSICS, 4713 CLEVELAND AVE. NW, CANTON, OH 44709 (216)493-4122

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WHAT IS IT! Our subject Sabre for this issue is a real colorful, but very strange airplane. This photo was taken at an airshow in California about 1955. The aircraft is an F-86A, #49-1189, that has been modified with the addition of RF-86F bulged gun bay doors, but without any camera bays, and painted this very gaudy paint scheme, thought to be various Day-Glo colors. Anyone knowing anything at all about this wild-looking Sabre is asked to contact the Editor, SabreJet Classics, 4713 Cleveland Ave. NW, Canton, OH 44709. A color photo of this airplane would definitely grace our cover if one can be found.

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