



# Sabre Jet Classics

Volume 6 Number 1

SPRING 1998

*A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association*

*The 50th FBW At Hahn, Formosa Alert, Pakistani Sabres, GUNVAL Mission In Korea, NOLO Sabre Operators, More!*





# *SabreJet Classics*

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 1  
SPRING 1998  
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*More!*

(front cover) - A pair of 417th FBS F-86Fs over Germany in 1954. The Cold War Warriors of the 50th FBW stood the line against communism in Europe during the 1950-1990 era. Note the Sabres have the black and yellow ID bands usually associated with operations during the Korean War. (credit - T.D. Greenwood)

and Air Force history and heritage. 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 three times a year. Extra copies of *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.

# THE PRESIDENTS

## NOTEBOOK

Mid-Winter '97-'98 was a time of deep sadness for members of our association. President Bob Ashcraft died in a Las Vegas hospital on January 27th 1998. He had undergone cardiac surgery late in 1997, and was never able to overcome a series of complications. Our thoughts and prayers are with Bob's family. We have all lost a friend and a leader. Many thanks to Dee Harper and Bob's good friend (and Austin, TX neighbor of mine), fellow Sabre pilot Andy Olman for keeping me updated on Bob's condition.

Then, in early January, while I was talking to Dee Harper about Bob, I detected an odd sound in our Chairman and President Emeritus' voice. Sure enough, he was being hit with that particularly bad flu strain that's been making the rounds this year. Dee then had a violent reaction to the medication, and he too, landed in the hospital. Dee went home for a short while, then suffered a relapse and had to go back in the hospital. As of late January, he is again at home and under the excellent care of his daughter. He asked that I fill in for both Bob and himself in doing this column. I gratefully accepted.

Aside from the problems above, one of the major and continuing problems we, as an association, face is keeping in touch with our

members. We are losing track of too many of you! You'd think that at our age, we'd all have settled down in a 'permanent' residence. But no, we're still getting mail returned from members that have moved. Please guys, take a moment to send us a change of address when you move, even if it's just a vacation or seasonal thing. And if you have a friend that you know has moved recently, ask if he sent the change to the Association.

Another recurring problem our leaders have addressed from time to time, is the lack of stories and photos in the 'IN' basket of *SabreJet Classics*. Take a look at this issue and the back issues you may have. There are some great stories in every issue, all written by people like yourselves. Sabre pilots are not Hemingway's, true, but the *SabreJet Classics* staff will work with you to polish your story. Don't be bashful. Write up a humorous, heroic, or just plain interesting event involving you and the Sabre.

And don't forget those photos you've been keeping in a cigar box all these years. They're needed to accent the great story that you've just written. We'll copy them and return the

original to you, whether in print or color slide form. Or you can have a print made at your local photo lab and send us the copy. But please, no xerox copies, they do not print well. Please help out on this! When the well runs dry, our "*SabreJet Classics*" will dry up with it.

Here's some really good news about one of our members. Howard R. 'Ebe' Ebersole, who has 'appeared' in several stories in *SabreJet Classics*, was enshrined in the Michigan Aviation Hall Of Fame in October 1997. In addition to his F-86 exploits, 'Ebe' was a B-24(!!!) pilot in WW2, a test pilot and project officer for interceptor systems during the late 1950s and 60s, a professor of aerospace engineering, and an engineer for Rockwell International. He has more than 11,500 hours flying time, and 2,670 glider flights. His decorations include the Silver Star, DFC, and five Air Medals. Very special kudos and a hearty "Way to go 'Ebe!'"

I'll close this column on another upbeat note: The F-86 Sabre Pilots Association, your association, finished 1997 with another new membership high of 1850 members. Now if every member would recruit another ---.

For Bob and Dee,  
I'm their wingman

*Lon Walter*

### LENGTH OF SERVICE MILITARY RETIREE? OVER 65?

Colonel George E. "Bud" Day, an ex-POW and USAF Medal of Honor winner in Vietnam, has filed a lawsuit against the Secretary of Defense alleging that health care promises made to persons who joined before 7 June 1956 have not been kept. The suit seeks return of expenses caused by the loss of promised benefits. It is a class action lawsuit, and you may be included if you meet the qualifications mentioned above. For details, contact "Class Act Group", 32 Beal Parkway SW, Fort Walton Beach FL 32548, 1-800-972-6275. Or e-mail to <lawsuit@emeraldcoast.com>. On the WWW it's <<http://www.classact-lawsuit.com>>.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Thank you for publishing the eulogy honoring my late husband, Colonel James K. Johnson, in the Fall 1997 issue. Jim's whole adult life was dedicated to flying, fighting for his country, and looking out for the men under his command. I am especially grateful for the heartfelt poem dedicated to him by his friends and comrades. My sincere thanks go to them.

Finally, I would like to thank Colonel Bob Ashcraft, President of the Sabre Pilots Association, for his kind letter of sympathy and his acknowledgement of Jim's accomplishments.

We laid Jim to his final rest at Arlington National Cemetery.

SYLVIA JOHNSON

---

Sirs,

I'm trying to locate relatives of Lt. Richard S. Drezen, Jr., who was KIA on 16 July 1952 in Korea. He flew with the 25th FIS, 51st FIW at Suwon.

The reason I'm trying to locate his relatives is that Dick flew a ResCap for me when I bailed out into the Yellow Sea near Cho-Do. He found me and vectored the helicopters to me. I just want to tell his relatives thanks.

Gil Mann  
2200 W. Bethany Home Rd.  
Phoenix, AZ 85015

---

I felt compelled to respond to the article "Last Active Duty Sabre" by James L. Reed, published in vol. 5 no. 3, Fall 1997.

I flew the last active duty Sabre in the first week of October 1968 at McClellan AFB. I was checking out in the F-86 for a MAG tour in Ethiopia, where I flew the F-86F, T-33, and T-28A & D. I concur the airplane was beautiful, well loved by the maintenance folks, and flew like a dream. I made loops over Lake Taos until I was dizzy.

I kept my records which prove I flew this airplane for 5 flights in October 1968, and I agree with all of James reed's comments.

Red Yannacone

---

I had to take a few minutes to drop you a note about the convention held in conjunction with "Air Force 50" last April.

I have and still belong to many military/fraternal organizations, working more than my share of conventions. I was privileged to attend my first Sabre Pilots convention since joining many years ago. I have to say, in all honesty, it was the finest convention I've ever attended, bar none. The activities were superb, scheduling was faultless, and the personnel who planned and ran the events were unparalleled in patience and foresight in their handling of the nearly 1000 persons attending.

I cannot recall one complaint from anyone. Nothing but praise from pilot and wife alike. I intend to use this convention as a format for any others I have a say in. Dee Harper and his staff deserve the highest medals for their tireless efforts. Dee's presence and experience will certainly be missed in the daily running of the Association. A hearty WELL DONE, Dee, from all of us.

Thomas Dwyer

## FOLDED WINGS

ROBERT G. ASHCRAFT, JANUARY 27, 1998

*President, F-86 Sabre Pilots Association*

DONALD R. THIEL, AUGUST 20, 1997

HAROLD THORNTON, JANUARY 4 1997

ALBERT C. VOLLMER, NOVEMBER 20 1997



## Radar Lock-On



The Sabre's Radar Is Locked On

### Major General Ralph G. Taylor, USAF (Retired) December 28, 1918 - September 18, 1997

For this issue, the Sabre's radar locks onto a distinguished member of our organization who is no longer with us. Major General Ralph 'Zach' Taylor, of Las Vegas, has fallen to a heart attack. But he left behind a remarkable record of military and civilian accomplishments.

Zach flew the P-38, P-40 and P-51 in World War Two, being credited with six air to air, and seven air to ground victories flying with the 317th Fighter Squadron in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. In Korea he served with the 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing, flying F-86 Sabres.

But he is probably best remembered as the founding father of the Fighter Weapons Center at Nellis AFB. There are many who credit a brilliant briefing he presented to senior Air Staff general officers, for the final decision to locate the FWC at Nellis. He went on to become the FWC's first commander, where he established a tradition of excellence which endures to the present time. His thirty year Air Force career saw him receive the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal with ten Oak Leaf Clusters.

After his retirement from the Air Force, Zach remained in Las Vegas and became one of the foremost citizens of that community. Consider these accomplishments: President of First Western Savings Bank (now Norwest Bank), named Distinguished Citizen of the Year by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Trustee of the Nevada

Development Authority, and President of the United Way of Southern Nevada, to name just a few. He numbered among his friends the famous and not-so-famous - state governors, four star generals, prominent businessmen, and legions of just plain friends. He was known to all as a man of honor, who was always ready to give his time for a good cause.

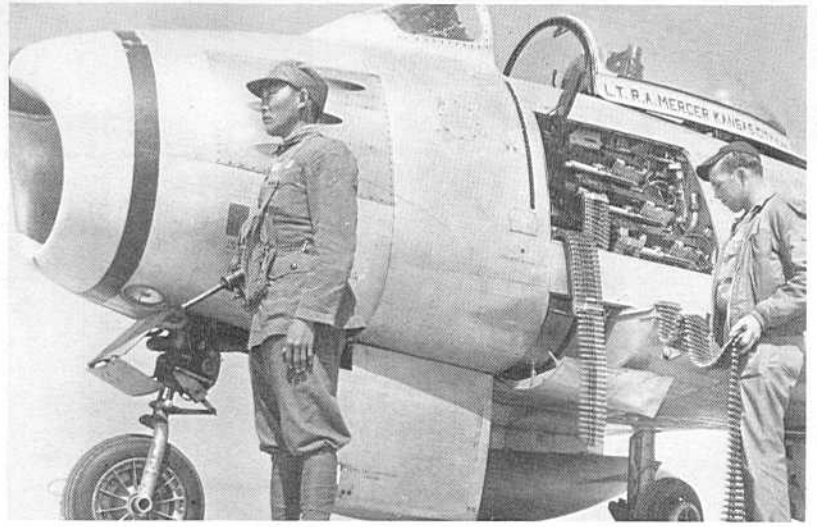
Now the F-86 radar sadly breaks lock on this great Sabre pilot and patriot. His accomplishments will endure forever, and with heavy heart, we look to the sky and give Zach a last "Thumbs Up".

Capt. Ralph G. 'Zach' Taylor, in the cockpit of his P-40F in 1943.. 'Zach' Taylor scored 5 confirmed victories flying with the 317th FS, 325th FG in the Mediterranean Theater during World War 2. (credit - Bob Ashcraft)



# FORMOSA ALERT

by BOBBY E. WALLS



A/1C James Parris loads the guns of a 12th FBS F-86F at Chai-Yi AB on 14 February 1955. 18th FBG F-86Fs were needed to counter the Chinese Reds' MiG threat during the early 1955 Formosa Crisis. (credit - USAF)

We began the move on 3 October 1954, leaving K-55 in Korea (Osan AB), bound for Kadena, Okinawa. The 18th FBG moved everything from both squadrons, the 12th and 67th FBSs, which were equipped with F-86F-30 Sabres retrofitted with the '6-3 hard wing'.

At Kadena, we briefly enjoyed individual rooms, flush toilets, hot showers, and stateside-type facilities. Then we moved to Yontan, an abandoned WW2 airstrip. It was quite a letdown, moving back into tents after tasting the 'good life' at Kadena. The good news was that the 18th was once again a normal three squadron wing, when the 44th FBS rejoined us after having been at Clark since the early days of the Korean War.

On 11 December 1954, the wing moved back to Kadena and hot showers. Hot Dog! But we were there only a short time when the hooch maid calmly told me "Soon you go-fly away, ne?". But no one had told us anything, so I assured her that we weren't going anywhere. We had just returned and we were here to stay!

WRONG! Lo and behold, not long after the maid's announcement, we started getting rumbles about an impending operation. But you know how rumors go. So we paid little attention. Wrong again!

One night in late January 1955 we were in the O-club when wing staff officers started coming into the club and whispering to the pilots to report to their squadrons. We were told to begin planning for an early morning departure for Formosa. FORMOSA!? We were going to fly top cover for the evacuation of the Tachen Islands, currently held by the Nationalist Chinese. However, Red China had made it clear they weren't going to allow the evacuation.

We departed the next morning, 27 January 1955, with all the flyable aircraft, in flights of four. Our destination was Chai-Yi AB, Formosa, arriving without incident. As a flight leader, I was told to immediately

report to the Chinese commander's office, where I joined the 67th FBS CO, the Operations Officer, and all the other Flight Commanders. We learned exactly what our responsibilities were going to be, and given a brief intel briefing on the situation. Then I was told to take my flight and get airborne as quickly as possible to show our rapid turn-around ability, and that we were ready for action immediately. No problem!

A few days after we arrived, the weather turned into crap, 50-100 foot ceilings, with visibility of about 1-2 miles. We still had one flight of four inbound from Kadena, which really puzzled me as to why they launched in the face of the weather. Later we found they'd been given a forecast of 500-1500 foot ceilings for the entire day!

I went down to mobile control to talk them down. The flight arrived overhead and I advised them of the weather, asking if they could go back. The flight commander informed me they had to get on the ground fast as they were all at 'Bingo' fuel, and they had no alternates.

A 12th FBS crew chief stands by his F-86F as a Chinese Nationalist F-84G taxis to the active runway at Chai-Yi AB, Formosa in 1955. (credit - Mike Fox)





Lt. Bob E. Walls and Lt. Edward Rock are greeted by TSgt Alexander Gregg following return to Kadena from Chai-Yi AB, Formosa in February 1955. During the Tachen evacuation, pilots of the 18th FBG flew a total of 180 sorties as MiGCAP for the operation. Although MiGs were sighted, they made no aggressive moves toward either Tachen, the evacuation, or the Sabres of the 18th FBG. (credit - USAF)

They started an ADF approach, but when they had station passage at 500 feet they were still above the cloud deck! They executed a missed approach and started looking for holes in the cloud deck. Shortly thereafter, Griff Mansfield announced that he was down to 100 lbs., and he was going out over the water and eject. Griff was flying MY aircraft. On an earlier flight he'd experienced a brake failure in my aircraft, nudging the barrier. I told him if he ever scratched my airplane again, I'd kill him! Griff ejected successfully, and was picked out of the drink shortly thereafter. I could hardly wait to tell him it was OK about my jet. I really felt bad until I found out he was OK.

The rest of the flight saw a hole and came down through it. Unknowingly, they had skimmed right down the side of a very large mountain, thankfully heading in the right direction. They roared over the base at about 50-100 feet, made a 90-270 turn, and landed safely. It's always better to be lucky than good, anytime, anywhere. Of course, my jet was now a submarine.

At Chai-Yi, we lived in a bombed-out building, slept on cots and ate out of mess kits. Just like Yontan, except we didn't even get hot food for several days. We ate cold cans of lima beans, spaghetti, etc. for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Most of us existed on bananas, tangerines and oranges the Chinese locals brought out to us as we sat strip alert right in the airplanes. They also had plenty of beer.

Strip alert started an hour before sunrise. Security was really tight, and communication between the guards and our pilots was almost non-existent. The Chinese couldn't understand us, and we sure as hell couldn't understand them. With almost no communications, we had little confidence in their being able to understand the system we developed.

The system involved different colored flashlights, red, white, blue or some combination thereof. Sounds like it would work, right? Wrong again! So we started going to the flight line singing at the top of our voices and yelling "DING HAO". That they understood and we had no problems afterward.

We flew missions every day that weather permitted. All the flights were uneventful, as the Chinese Reds played the part of "the Paper Tiger". We were really disappointed with the lack of engagements, as we had hoped to run into some MiGs. We saw them, or at least their contrails, but they were several miles inland over the the Chinese mainland. And they never came out to fight. A few of us started patrolling three miles or so off the coast in the hopes the Migs would come out. But our own radar caught us, and we were told we were there to STOP a war, NOT START ONE! So we stopped 'trolling' along the coastline.

The Chinese commander and his staff threw us a party soon after we arrived. It was a "Kom-Pei Party", the idea being they would get us so drunk we would 'lose face'. Being good, young, aggressive fighter pilots, we accepted the challenge with gusto, even 'warming up' by drinking a lot of bourbon and scotch before going to the party! We held our own fairly well, and even caught the Chinese cheating by tossing their drinks into the plants. With that we announced that we had won.

On 17 February, the squadron was alerted to go back to Kadena. The first 'Formosa Crisis' had ended. Almost as soon as I arrived back at Kadena, I rotated back to the States. The unit returned to Formosa again, as did several others over the next 10 years. But my time was done. It had been an interesting month, albeit a little boring while in the air. But we didn't lose anyone and the evacuation of the islands went as planned. And that's what counts.





The 417th FBS Gunnery Team at the 1954 USAFE Gunnery Competition held at Wheelus AFB, Libya. (l-r) Lt. Coleman Baker, Lt. Charles Versiliadis, Capt. Dave Tilton - Top Shooter, Capt. Oakley Allen, Capt. George Hupp, and Lt. Phil DeNuffrins. The 417th FBS was commanded by Lt.Col. Chuck Yeager. (credit - Dave Tilton)

## THOSE WERE THE DAYS!

### THE 50TH FIGHTER BOMBER WING

by Dave Tilton

The 50th Fighter Bomber Wing was activated at Selfridge Field on 15 January 1941 as the 50th Pursuit Group. Redesignated the 50th Fighter Group in May of that same year, the unit was part of the Fighter Command School, training pilot cadres for night fighter units operating in Europe and the Pacific.

The 50th went to England in April 1944, flying P-47 Thunderbolts from RAF Lyminster with the 9th AF, until Allied forces had a foothold on the Continent following the Normandy Invasion. The 50th flew many ground support missions in support of the GIs slugging their way off the beaches during those fateful days in June 1944. Operating from forward bases in France, the 50th leap-frogged across France and Germany, finally ending the war at Giebelstadt AB, Germany. The 50th returned to the US after the end of the war and was inactivated on 7 November 1945.

On 1 April 1951, the 140th FBW, with 120th FBS, Colorado ANG, 187th FBS Wyoming ANG, and 191st FBS Utah ANG, were federalized and re-opened Clovis AFB, New Mexico. They were equipped with F-51Ds at the time. One of our early members was a recent returnee from Korea, an 'ace' with 8 MiGs, and a gentleman many of you know - Captain Robinson 'Robbie' Risner. Robbie was my Ops Officer in the 187th, and a real pleasure and thrill to fly with. He was a real PRO.

On 1 January 1953, as part of the emergency buildup to counter the Soviet threat to the Western nations, the federalized 140th FBW became the 50th FBW, and was slated to fly F-86F fighter bombers. The pilot cadre comprised quite a few 'jocks' with World War Two experience, plus quite a few pilots that had recently returned from the fighting in Korea. Many of the pilots had F-86 training, although there were quite a few that had flown the venerable F-51D Mustang in Korea. And that was a good thing, as the group was equipped with F-51Ds when we were first activated at Clovis.

Capt. Dave Tilton at Hahn AB, Germany in 1954. (credit - Dave Tilton)







The 50th FBW lines the ramp at Clovis AFB, New Mexico on 22 July 1953. The next day the wing departed for Hahn AB, Germany. The 50th was based at Hahn until 17 July 1956 when the wing moved to Toul-Rosieres AB, France, then returned to Hahn on 10 December 1959. They remained at Hahn until the base was closed in the 1990s. (credit - Dave Tilton)

We transitioned from '51s into F-86Fs very soon, spending the next 7 months learning fighter bomber tactics. Our COs at this time, Colonel Gerald Dix and Colonel Al Schinz, demanded only one thing from us - perfection. By the summer, we felt we were ready for anything. And with that kind of attitude, the Air Force put us right in the front lines of the Cold War. On 22 July 1953, we departed Clovis for operations in support of NATO. On 10 August 1953, we began operations at Hahn AB, Germany.

Although the 50th was a fighter bomber group, our mission at Hahn was similar to that of the 36th Fighter Day Wing, (*The 36th FDW was covered in a story in Sabrefet Classics, vol. 3-3 "Zulu Alert At Fursty". Ed.*) When we weren't standing "Zulu Alert", we often would fly border patrol flights. We had to stage through the forward field at Giebelstadt (our old home during WW2), which was about 5 minutes from the border. Taking off from G'stadt, we would rush headlong toward the border, turning back at the very last moment. It usually got the Soviet air defenses all fired up, and sometimes the Migs would come buzzing around.

Near the end of my tour with the 50th, another aviator with 'some experience' came to the 50th. He was my CO in the 417th FBS and his name was LtCol Chuck Yeager. By this time our squadron had transitioned into the F-86H, and it was my extreme pleasure to give the original Mach-buster his 'check-out' in the new 'H. What a ride that was trying to keep up with Chuck Yeager, making sure he knew how to fly it!

About twice a year we would jet down to sunny Wheelus AB, near Tripoli, Libya. Ah yes, Wheelus, that resort on the Mediterranean. There was sun and sand - and very little else. USAFE and 12th AF held gunnery competitions at Wheelus in December 1954 and July 1955. With Chuck Yeager leading our squadron, the 417th won the USAFE Gunnery Meet in 1954. I was fortunate enough to be named the Top Shooter of our squadron. Those were the days. The 50th flew F-86Fs and F-86Hs from 1953 into 1958. before transitioning into the supersonic era with the F-100 Super Sabre. But that's another story.

50th FBW scoreboard at the 1954 competition held at Wheelus AFB, Libya. (l-r) Col. Wally Ford, 50th FBW CO, Capt. Dave Tilton, Lt. Bob Flood and Capt. Charlie Beers. Note that the air-air Top Shooter is the author. (credit - Dave Tilton)





An F-86F-40 assigned to the Pakistan Air Force in 1965. These Sabres were built by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries for the PAF. India and Pakistan fought again in 1971, and Pakistani Sabres claimed over 100 victories, including several Folland Gnats and MiG-21s. (credit - Jamal Khan)

## THE SABRE IN PAKISTAN

by Air Chief Marshal Jamal A. Khan, PAF (Ret)

The Republic of Pakistan turned fifty in August 1997, and so did the Pakistan Air Force. Pakistan is located in an area of crises and disputes, and its airmen play a major role in deterring neighborhood hegemony. During the fifty years, the PAF has had in its inventory over eighteen combat airplanes, from the British WW2 Tempest to the F-16 which the PAF flies today. Between these models there have been several British, American, French, and Chinese-built multi-role airplanes.

Of all the fighters that the PAF has operated, the most popular, by far, has been the F-86. This superb airplane remained in the inventory of the PAF for twenty three years, from 1956 to 1979. During that period, all told, the PAF inducted some 240 F-86s. Despite eighteen years having passed since the last Sabres were taken off flying status, Pakistani senior pilots still speak fondly of the F-86, its agility, handling qualities and exploits in peace and war.

Pakistan, long a Cold War ally (Gary Power's last U-2 flight over the Soviet Union was launched from a PAF base), received its first lot of thirty F-86Fs in mid-1956. By then a group of PAF pilots had already done its combat crew training on the Sabre in Texas and Arizona. This nucleus rapidly trained other pilots in all air and surface attack missions that the F-86F was designed for, and within three years quite a few high time pilots had crossed well over a thousand hours. By the time they went to war many of them had over two thousand hours and this, together with the F-86 itself, proved to be the key to their remarkable success.

The first thirty F-86Fs had "hard" wings that were later modified with slats and wingtip extensions. Their fire control system was based on the older A-4 gunsight and rather temperamental ranging radar. Then arrived the "Sports Models", ninety brand new F-86F-40s, all delivered in 1957. These came with the full upgrades - extended wingtips, additional wing stores capabilities, Sidewinder missile wiring, the latest A-4 gunsight with radar, and separate rocketry and bombing control panels. The J47 engine was fully developed by then, and the pilots experienced only occasionally the troubles they had heard about in America regarding compressor stalls, thrown turbine blades and bearing seizures.

Flying Officer (1Lt) Jamal Khan during F-86F flight training at Williams AFB, AZ in 1956. (credit - Jamal Khan)



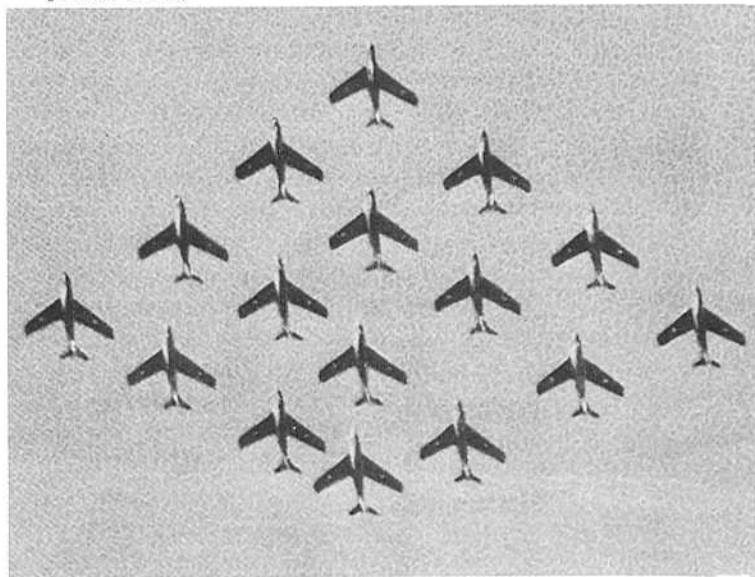


The latest series of slats worked flawlessly, giving the Sabre its superb maneuvering qualities to handle the toughest dynamics of air combat. Within a few years these outstanding attributes were tested in the wars of 1965 and 1971 with India, both of which confirmed the already high reputation of the F-86. During these conflicts, the PAF F-86s were frequently pitched against rival jets that enjoyed far better thrust-weight ratios. The Sabre nearly always outfought them and proved its ruggedness as well. After one of the air-to-air encounters, an F-86 returned with several holes in its aft fuselage and minus half an elevator, but the pilot barely noticed a minor vibration. The cumulative exchange ratio for both wars worked out to 1:5.6 in the Sabre's favor.

The PAF F-86s also lived up to this fighter's high reliability and in-commission rates that, for many years, remained above 80%. It regularly came out best in many gunnery meets and Allied CENTO/SEATO joint exercises. During the mid-1960s, the PAF managed to bolster its dwindling Sabre force by purchasing ninety ex-Luftwaffe F-86Es. These used machines had the more powerful Canadian Orenda 14 engines that could take the plane to well over 50,000 feet. The F-86E too became a favorite, one of them even shooting down a MiG-21 that tried to turn with it.

The F-86 played a leading role in projecting the air force image among the Pakistani youth, with regular air shows and open days at the air bases. The longest lasting formation acrobatic team of the PAF - the "Falcons" - performed with Sabres for over a decade. The team progressed through four, six, nine, and finally reached sixteen F-86Fs. The 16-ship loop, reported by the international aviation press as a first, was performed during one of the public displays in 1958.

The PAF "FALCONS" air demonstration team, in their 16 ship loop during practice over Karachi in 1958. Seven of the F-86s would break off after the loop, letting the remaining nine F-86s become tighter and fully acrobatic in their subsequent maneuvers. (credit - Jamal Khan)

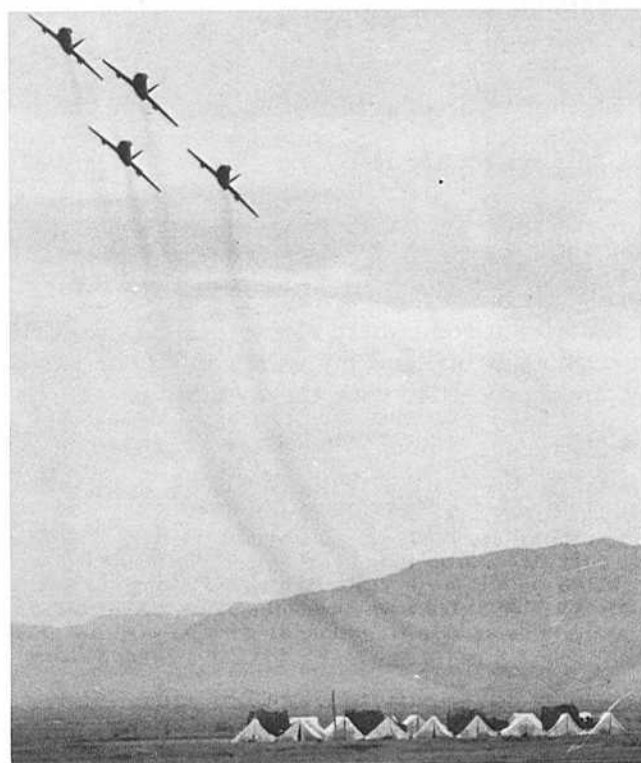


This PAF F-86F returned safely from a tree-top melee during the 1965 war with India, after suffering some battle damage. Post-war records from India noted that an Indian Air Force pilot was awarded a 'kill' for this F-86F, which was back in action two days later. (credit - Jamal Khan)

The F-86 appears as centerpiece of many war paintings of the PAF and carefully burnished Sabres can be seen mounted at the gates of the largest Pakistani air bases today. The Official History of the PAF pays this tribute to the Sabre: It was perhaps the finest of the generation of jet fighters which still permitted classic dog fights between adversaries, where the skill and determination of the fighter pilot remained the sole deciding factor."

note: The contributor of this piece checked out in the F-86F at Williams AFB, AZ, and flew the F-86 for the next eighteen years, including the three years that he was an F-104 Squadron Commander. Such weekend bargains were usually struck by offering his F-86 counterparts Mach 2 rides in his F-104B! The air marshal was the Chief of Staff of the PAF before he retired in 1988.

Four PAF F-86Fs wheel over simulated targets during a fire power demonstration in 1968, which was set up at a gunnery range. (Jamal Khan)





The GUNVAL ramp at Kimpo is full of F-86F-2s in March 1953. The GUNVAL project was attached to the 335th FIS. GUNVAL project pilots were assigned from stateside commands, and flew many of the missions in Korea. A select few pilots from the 4th FIG checked out in the heavily armed Sabres, and flew many of the combat missions into MiG Alley. Aircraft FU-867, is the airplane Lt.Col. George Jones flew during the encounter reported here. It was Col. Jones' 5th victory. (credit - Paul Peterson)

## TEST FLIGHT

by Lt.Col. George Jones

**SECRET**

**SECRET**

4th FIG Mission #J-01

F-86F-2 #52-2867 date: 29 March 1953

Pilot: Lt. Col. G. L. Jones Position in Flight: #3 in a flight of four.

Type mission: Fighter Sweep of the Yalu River. Altitude: 42,000 feet

Weather: Clear. Contrail levels: 30,000 to 38,000 feet. 460 rounds loaded.  
92 rounds fired. No stoppages. No attempt was made to 'fire out' the guns.

The date was 29 March 1953, during the Korean War, a mission that remains vivid in my memory. I remember it so well because it was a mission whose outcome pivoted around the reactions of two wingmen in a combat situation - my wingman and his enemy counterpart in a MiG-15.

We were flying F-86Fs at the time. Ordinarily the F-86F is equipped with six .50 caliber machine guns. However, in our aircraft (F-86F-2s), the machine guns had been removed and replaced with four T-160 20mm cannons, capable of firing a high explosive shell at high velocity. Our mission was to find and engage MiG-15 aircraft in air to air combat to test the effectiveness of the new guns.

Originally, we had a flight of four aircraft scheduled for the mission. But somewhere along the line, two of the flight didn't get off, and my wingman, Major Wendall Brady, and I proceeded with the mission as a flight of two.

Climbing out from K-14 (Kimpo), we crossed the no-bomb line, turned on our gun switches, and fired a short burst into the clear air to check the weapons. They worked perfectly, and we continued north, climbing through 20,000, past 30,000. We maintained radio silence shortly after leveling off around 35,000 feet.

Far behind us, we heard the chatter of the rest of the mission taking off. Some six flights of four checking in radio as they also climbed out to the north, taking the same track we had taken. Flicking my left wing down for the cross-over signal, I moved my wingman to the left side and gave him the "Heads Up!" signal. I knew there were plenty of MiGs in the area and I wanted no surprises. Rather selfishly, we hoped that the large formation of Sabres behind us would be the focal point of attention on the enemy radar scopes. Our small flight might have a good chance to make a surprise 'bounce' on the MiGs trying to intercept the north-bound flights.

As we approached the Yalu River, I spotted a glint in the sky high above us and to the right. I waggled the stick, rocking my wings to get my wingmans attention. Wendall looked across and I silently signaled to "Drop tanks!". They arced down, empty of fuel, tumbling slowly to the brown earth far below. Again a silent signal to push up the throttle, and we started a slow turn under that 'glint' in the sky.

Now we could see many other flashes in the sun up ahead. "Keep your speed up!" I thought. "Turn slow, look for the 'climbers'." All of a sudden I saw them. First there was nothing in front, then they jumped into focus. A flight of 8 MiGs in loose trail, climbing as they crossed the Yalu heading south. Ever so gently we



increased our rate of turn and started an easy climb behind them. I swung in behind their last man, but still too far out to shoot. We had to close on them.

I watched the range dial unroll - 2800 feet, 2600, 2400. We were closing on them, but slow. I edged around in my seat and glanced behind. Bad news! Coming in from below, almost in position for an attack on me, was a MiG. I realized now that I had cut between the last two MiGs, between the Leader and his wingman! Jerking around I looked to my right for my wingman. Wendall was right there. As I watched, he dropped his wing as if to start a firing pass on the MiG coming up.

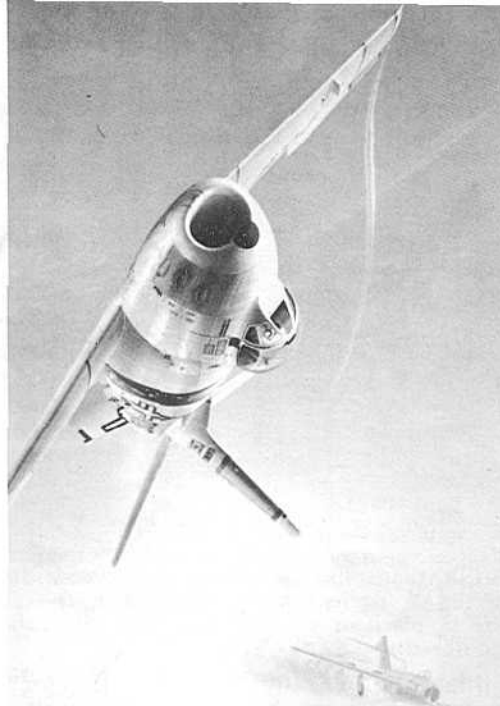
Good boy! I snapped my head around to the left. The MiG which had tilted his wing down for the start of a slanting pass at me suddenly straightened up and leveled out. No attack this time. Evidently, the MiG pilot realized if he jumped me, Wendall would swing in behind him for a firing pass.

By now we were climbing through 40,000 feet. The MiG I was chasing was closer. The range gate marker stood at 1800 feet. I wanted 800 feet. I wasn't sure how long the game between the two wingman, the Mig leader's and mine, would keep up. Each feinting an attack, one at me, one at the other.

In the back of my mind I remembered the engine compressor stalls which had been occurring when we fired the new cannons at high altitude, a stall which robbed the engine of power, leaving you a sitting duck unless you could recover by diving to a lower altitude for a try at an air start. I dismissed the thought - "Shoot first! Worry about the stall later."

Now the range dial on the A-4 gunsight indicated 1,000 feet. But the Mig pilot at my rear was getting frantic. For the first time during the flight, Wendall broke radio

Lt. Col. George L. Jones in the cockpit of a standard F-86E at K-14 in 1953. Col. Jones flew with both the 4th and 51st FIGs, shooting down a total of 6 1/2 MiG-15s. (credit - George L. Jones)



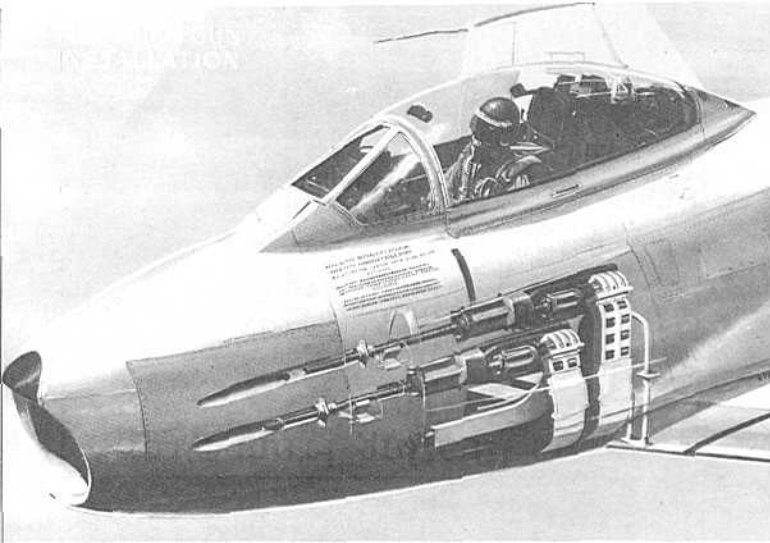
"GUNVAL MiG Killer", a painting by Mark Styling, shows Lt. Col. George Jones after he scored his 5th victory on 29 March 1953. A lithograph of the painting can be obtained by contacting Warren Thompson, 7201 Stamford Cove, Germantown, TN 38138.

silence - "I can't hold him much longer. Get out of there! Get out of there!" "Watch him", I said "Call if he turns in." I eased the nose of my 86 up, the pipper was just under the MiG. "A little more.", I thought, "Up a little, easy, don't lose air speed."

The pipper was on his tailpipe now. The range dial at 800 feet. The little orange colored diamonds of the sight reflected on my windscreen, circled the MiG perfectly. I pressed the trigger. Instantly a stream of incandescent flashes exploded in rapid succession on the MiG ahead. Bursting out in fire and smoke, the MiG seemed to stop in mid-air. I was momentarily fascinated by the sight. Then with an awful start, I realized that I was about to run into him.

Before I could do anything, I was completely enveloped in smoke. I felt there was a solid wall of debris ahead in the darkness. Instinctively I retarded the throttle, my thumb jerking back the speed brake switch to slow down. Now I could only pull back on the stick and try rolling upside down in a barrel roll, hoping to get out of the way. Suddenly, I was out of the smoke. Looking through the canopy, I saw the MiG. The canopy was gone, the cockpit empty. It was starting down with debris, smoke and flames trailing behind. I rolled upright.

It was then that I first noticed the sound of my engine in a compressor stall. It was a roaring, buzzing noise that vibrated the whole airplane. At that point I wasn't too worried. I knew what to do about it - point her nose down. In the past, we usually recovered from these stalls around 30,000 feet. However, when I passed through 30,000 with the engine still stalling, I began to worry. At 25,000 nothing had changed.



The F-86F GUNVAL installation was a combined North American and USAF project that mounted four T-160 20mm cannons in place of the standard M3 .50 caliber machine guns. (credit - NAA)



"Carol", one of the GUNVAL F-86Fs assigned to the 335th FIS at K-14 in March 1953, has obviously been in a fight as evidenced by no drop tanks and dirty gun ports. (credit - Larry Davis)

The stall really had my attention now. I remember thinking, - "At 18,000 feet I'll have to pull out. Maybe I can glide out to the Yellow Sea" - although the sea looked awfully far away.

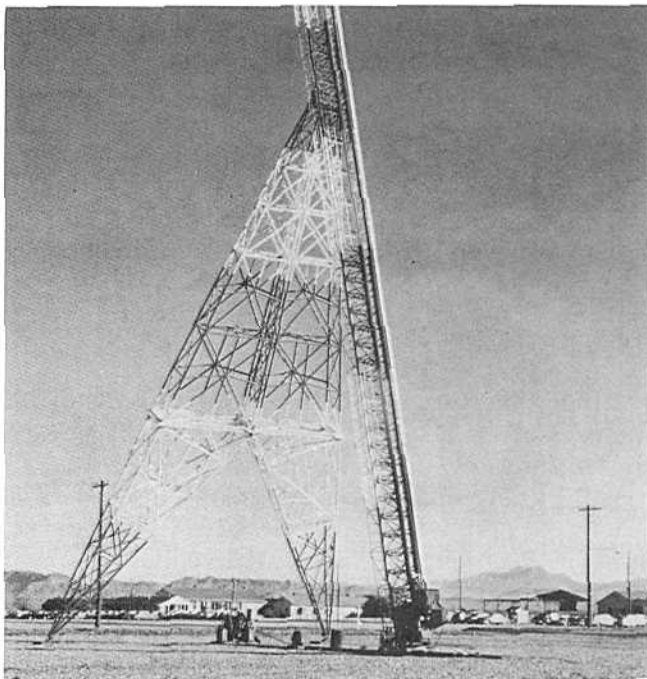
Then I noticed that my speed brake switch had broken off, and the brakes were still open, and still slowing me down. I pushed my index finger down between the thumb guard to the nub of the switch and edged it forward. All at once, the brakes closed and I felt the aircraft accelerate. With the increased speed the buzzing stopped, the engine smoothed, and the compressor stall broke. I eased the power on. It was 18,000 feet. I took a deep breath.

Now I felt better about the situation and looked around for my wingman. There he was, just off my right wing, staring through the oil-smearred canopy at me. I couldn't have been happier. I started to relax a little and gave him a signal meaning, "Let's get the hell out of here! I'll buy the drinks tonite!" For the second time during the entire flight, he broke radio silence, "You're all heart Lead!"

He was 'there' all the way, a great wingman, Major Wendall Brady was an accomplished flier to whom the flick of a wing tip spoke volumes. If not for a great wingman today, I would not have been able to make 'ace'.

GEORGE L. JONES, Lt. Colonel, USAF  
DCS/Operations, Hq Fifth Air Force

(note: Colonel George L. Jones, USAF Ret., passed away on 18 February 1997.)



*Do You Remember This?* The ejection seat practice catapult at Williams AFB in 1952 was always an enjoyable ride!!! How many times did it get stuck at the top? (credit - Dick Gilbert)





# A Fighter Pilot's Sky

by Stephen L. Bettinger

(dedicated to the fighter pilots who have 'been there.)

A young fighter pilot sits in the cockpit of his aircraft on the tarmac. He leans his head back and observes the sky around him. The sky can be a beautiful maiden to a fighter pilot. Dressed in delicate blue, with a mantle of soft white clouds, she is hard to resist as she beckons him skyward. A gentle wind, filled with the fragrance of flowers in bloom, is like a soft kiss on the pilot's face. He longs to join her, to mount his steed and fling himself into her bosom, and to wheel and soar in the upper reaches of her sunlit body.

But alas, like so many women, this delicate, fragile beauty has a dark side. Storms, rain, snow and hail, can dash this love affair as the maiden turns beauty into terror. But there is an escape, if the pilot knows where and when to turn, to penetrate her and come out on top - the victor! Then, having enjoyed her charms, the fighter pilot will return to earth. She will have changed by now, moving the dark storms away and returning to her sunlit splendor. The pilot, after landing, will silence his aircraft, and sit in the warm sun, surrounded by his trusty flying machine. And the gentle wind will again waft across his face. And in his heart, he will set another time to meet this maiden, and enjoy her again, and again, and again.



General Joe Cannon, Commander of Tactical Air Command, speaks with a very rigid Lt. John 'Deacon' Russell, when he inspected the 8th FBG at K-13 in October 1953. Note the thin nylon flying suit and spit-shined flying boots. 'Deacon' Russell flew 54 combat missions in Korea. (credit - John Russell)

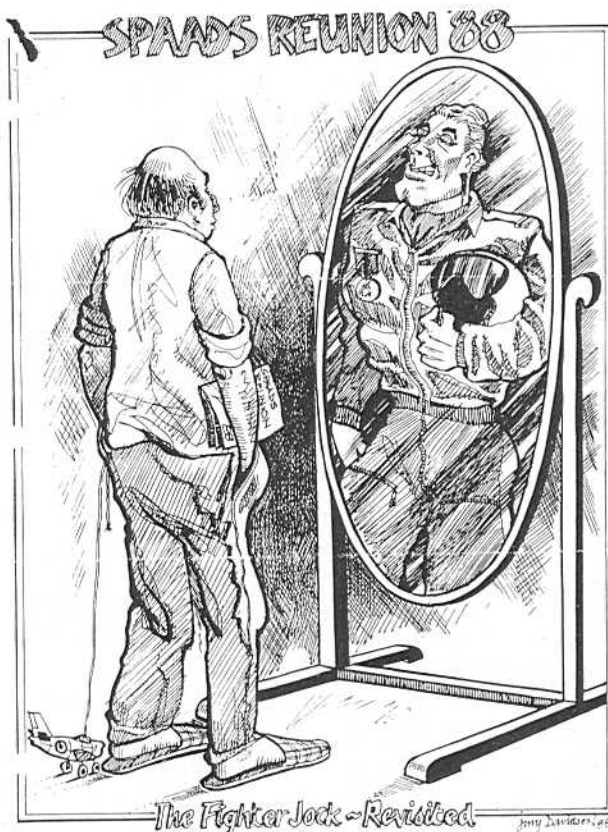
## Home Heating From Drop Tanks

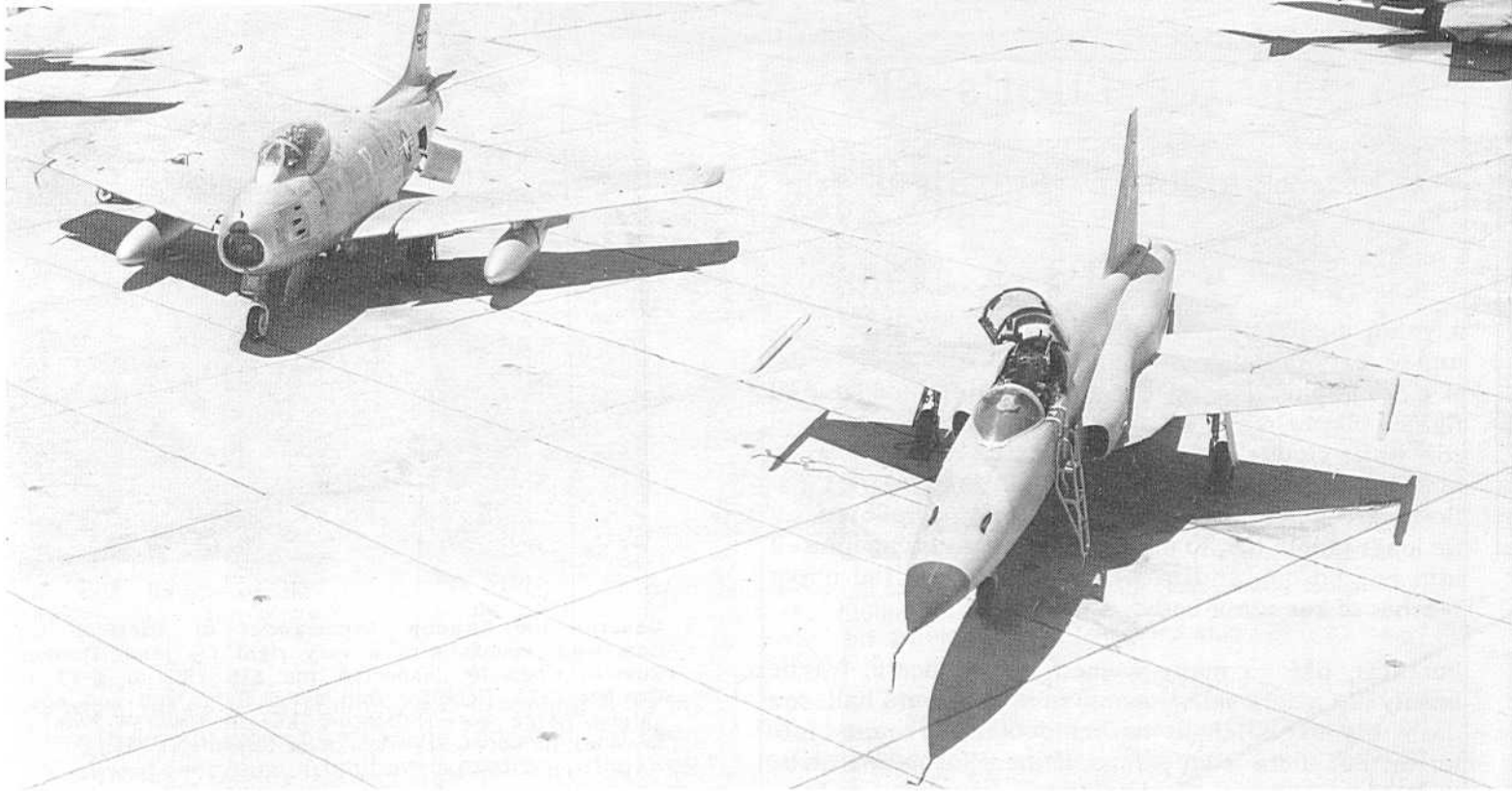
by Robert Mikesh

The demeaning use to which Americans used surplus F-86 drop tanks is baffling to Japanese that hold esteem for the engineering quality of these tanks.

To pilots that flew the F-86, and those with aeronautical minds, they recognize that the F-86 drop tank was one of the most aerodynamically designed tanks of the era. The later F-104 Starfighter had an extremely long tank designed for volume, yet it wasn't very aerodynamic. Even the renowned Japanese Zero had a barrel-shaped tank with less than the best aerodynamic lines. The F-86 drop tank remains an excellent example of quality in design and construction.

However, because of this note of quality, it was not uncommon in the late 50s and into the 60s, to find one or two of these F-86 drop tanks perched on racks outside hundreds of American domestic homes throughout Japan, as well as O-Clubs throughout the world, filled with kerosene to feed the heaters that supplied warmth for the structure. To Japanese at that time, this seemed to be not only an extravagance, but a degrading purpose by placing these highly engineered objects of aviation history out in the weather, covered with dirty fuel oil and bird droppings. (Ed. SabreJet Classics will have an article in a future issue covering the design and development of the F-86 drop tank)





The flight line at NAS China Lake in June 1978 looked more like South Korea 35 years prior. China Lake had a squadron of F-86 aircraft, used for live fire exercises against modern Navy fighter aircraft and missiles. The Fs in the picture are ex-Japanese F-86F-40s, while the Hs came from the Maryland ANG. The F-5E is one of the TOP GUN aggressor aircraft. (credit - Joe Bruch)

## **THE NOLO SABRES**

### Civilian Operators and Army/Navy Drone Sabres

by Larry Davis

During the 1970s, the US government acquired large quantities of Sabre air frames, mostly Canadair and Mitsubishi manufacture. Their use varied from that of target tug to unmanned drone. And more than a few were flown as aggressor aircraft, much to the chagrin of unknowing F-14 and F-4 pilots. Flight Systems Incorporated, based at Mojave, California, was one of the main civil contractors to use the Sabre. They acquired some 55 Canadair CL-13A Sabre Mk. 5 aircraft, 6 CL-13B Sabre Mk. 6s, and a number of Mitsubishi F-86F and RF-86F aircraft.

The Sabres were used as high altitude remote piloted vehicles, commonly called a Full Scale Aerial Target or FSAT. Most were modified using the Vega Precision Laboratories ground control system, or the IBM Drone Formation Control System (DFCS). Externally, the F-86 drones usually had no gun ports, and had a small antenna either atop or underneath the nose intake. There were large, black antenna panels midway down the fuselage sides, and a Vega System antenna cable on the left side of the aft fuselage. Some had large antenna panels in the fin tip.

The FSI aircraft were used to test new munitions, ECM pods, flares; and to test new air-to-air or surface-to-air missile systems. Except for 'live-fire' missile tests, the Sabres were flown with a human pilot aboard. On 'live-fire' missions, the Sabres were flown by a controller in the Vega Systems van on the ground. 'Live-Fire' missions used missiles without warheads. If the 'live-fire' mission resulted in a hit or near-miss that crippled the drone Sabre, the aircraft had a self-destruct panel so that the ground controller could destroy the Sabre.

The US Army utilized a number of these FSAT Sabres during tests of the Stinger shoulder-fired, heat seeking surface-to-air missile at Holloman AFB, New Mexico, and to monitor the 'live-fire' test flights of the new Pershing II missile. The US Navy had a similar operation utilizing FSAT Sabres, both F and H models, at the Naval Weapons Center, China Lake NAS. The US Air Force operated several FSAT Sabres for weapons tests at Edwards AFB.





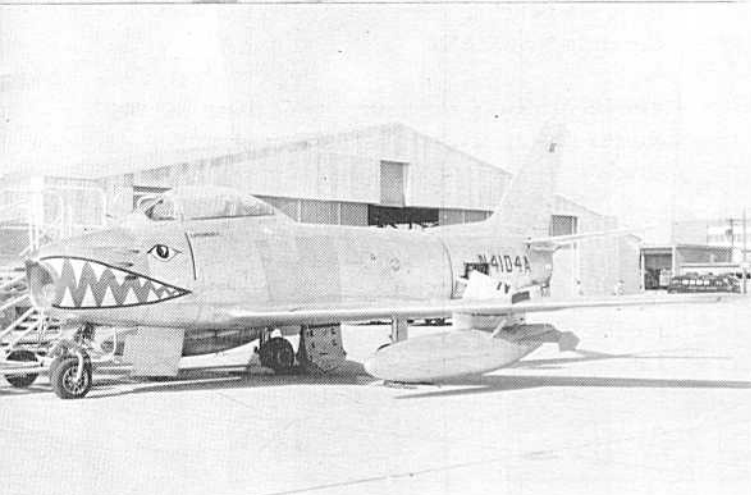
Mojave Airport is the home of Flight Systems Inc. FSI conducted many test flights for both the Air Force and Navy on various underwing stores and ECM systems. This F-86F was one of the Canadair Sabre Mk. 6s flown by the RCAF Golden Hawks aerobatic team in the early 1960s. (credit - FSI)

Army drone Sabres were all designated QF-86E, as most owed their ancestry to Canadair Sabres of some type. Air Force and Navy designated their FSAT Sabres based on the original type, i.e. QF-86F-40 and QRF-86F. The Navy had a number of ex-National Guard Hs, that were operated by VX-4 as aggressor aircraft in the TOP GUN program. The QF-86H looked and flew a similar flight envelope to the MiG-17, which US forces were still encountering in the skies over North Vietnam.

The drone Sabre 'live-fire' missions are flown NOLO, or No Onboard Live Operator. Since no warheads were fitted to the 'live-fire' missiles attempting to shoot down the FSAT Sabres, the drone aircraft could be flown again and again, unless an unlucky hit resulted in catastrophic damage. It was then that the Vega ground controller would use the self-destruct mechanism. However, the Sabres were a tough breed, and one Army QF-86E survived 17 missile attacks.



(left top) "Thumper", one of the ex-RCAF Sabre Mk. 5s assigned to the Army missile test program at White Sands during the early 1980s. The black panel beneath the canopy is the self-destruct mechanism in case anything goes wrong during NOLO flight operations. (left bottom) A shark-teethed Sabre Mk. 5 used by Raytheon Corp. as a chase aircraft in the late 1970s. (below) Lt. Rosemary Conatser, USN, was one of the only Navy female pilots to fly fighters in the early 1980s. Her F-86H was assigned to VX-4, whose pilots referred to themselves as the 'Polish Squadron', adding the Polish insignia to the fuselage. The Playboy Bunny insignia is a VX-4 unit badge, or was prior to the Tailhook scandal. (credit - Larry Davis)



## SABRE REUNIONS

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REYNOLDSBURG, OH 43068

330th/331st FIS  
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San Antonio, TX  
Contact Charles Kern,  
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San Antonio, TX 78232-1115

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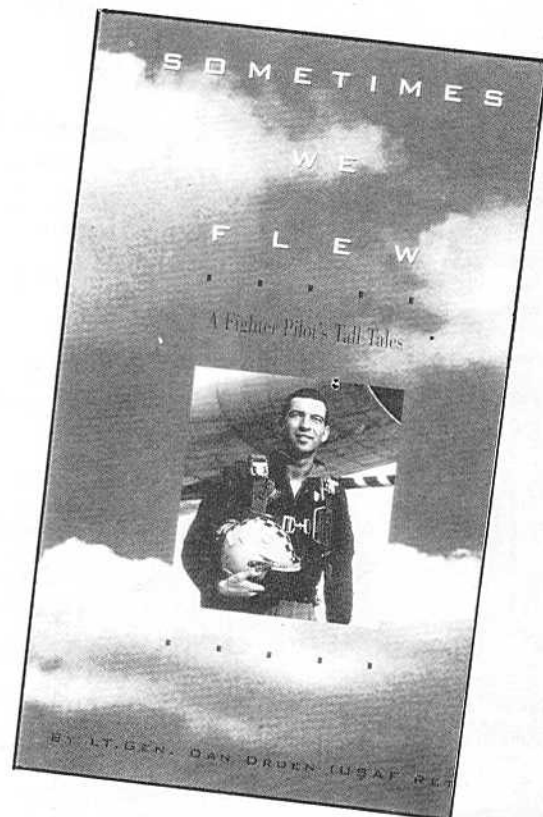
## BOOK REVIEW

### A MiG-15 To Freedom by No Kum-Sok

254 pp. w/photos. Hard cover; \$31.50 from  
McFarland Publishing,  
(800) 253-2187

This is the autobiography of Lt. No Kum-Sok, a North Korean Air Force pilot that defected, with his MiG-15, to freedom at Kimpo AB, South Korea on 21 September 1953. The book documents life during the Japanese occupation of Korea during World War 2 as seen through the eyes of a young Korean boy, and life behind the Bamboo Curtain after the Allies 'liberated' Korea from Japan. Lt. No details how he got into flying for the North Korean AF, and what it was like flying against the American Sabres in the skies over MiG Alley.

The book left this reader very pleased with its accuracy regarding events during the Korean War. Several times I questioned his remarks about certain events, such as the 'lifting of the UN sanctuary of the Yalu River in April 1952'; only to find that his statements were backed up by pilots that were questioned during my review. I thoroughly enjoyed the book. It really gave a good look into 'the other side of the Yalu', which I had never known before. I highly recommend it, especially those that flew combat in the cold blue sky of northwest Korea.





# ONE SHORT TOUR

by Kingsley Purton

While most pilots claim their experience to be long and varied, I lay claim to be the world's least experienced F-86 pilot. In July, 1956, my Air Force Reserve unit, the 439th FBS at Selfridge AFB, Michigan, gave up their F-84Es, and were going to re-equip with F-86Hs. The Air Force was going to send 100 F-86Hs to Memphis NAS, Tennessee, to be used by four different Air Force Reserve groups for initial checkout. Each group would receive their aircraft at the end of the summer..

The first group went to Memphis and all was well. My unit proceeded to Memphis and I flew 6:55 in six flights between August 5-10. On the second Monday of field training, flying was suddenly canceled and we all reported to Group Headquarters for an important announcement. Our group commander, Colonel Gary King, told us we were getting an aircraft change. As usual, we figured he hadn't looked out the window lately. Col. King then announced we were getting Century Series aircraft. "F-100s?", I gasped.

But my hopes were crushed when he calmly replied "No, C-119s." It seems as if the Air National Guard had more pull than the Air Force Reserve, as that was where our F-86Hs went. Not being anyone's fool, I too went to the Michigan ANG where, guess what, we were re-equipped with, no not F-86s but F-84s. I flew my first F-84 in January 1952, and my last in July 1996. I guess I just wasn't meant to be a hero.



Not to be outdone, the 121st TFS, D.C. ANG, took a crew chief along on all cross country flights. That's Sgt. Charlie Williams in the 'side car' of Capt. Frank Mattingley's F-86H. (credit - Bob Railey)

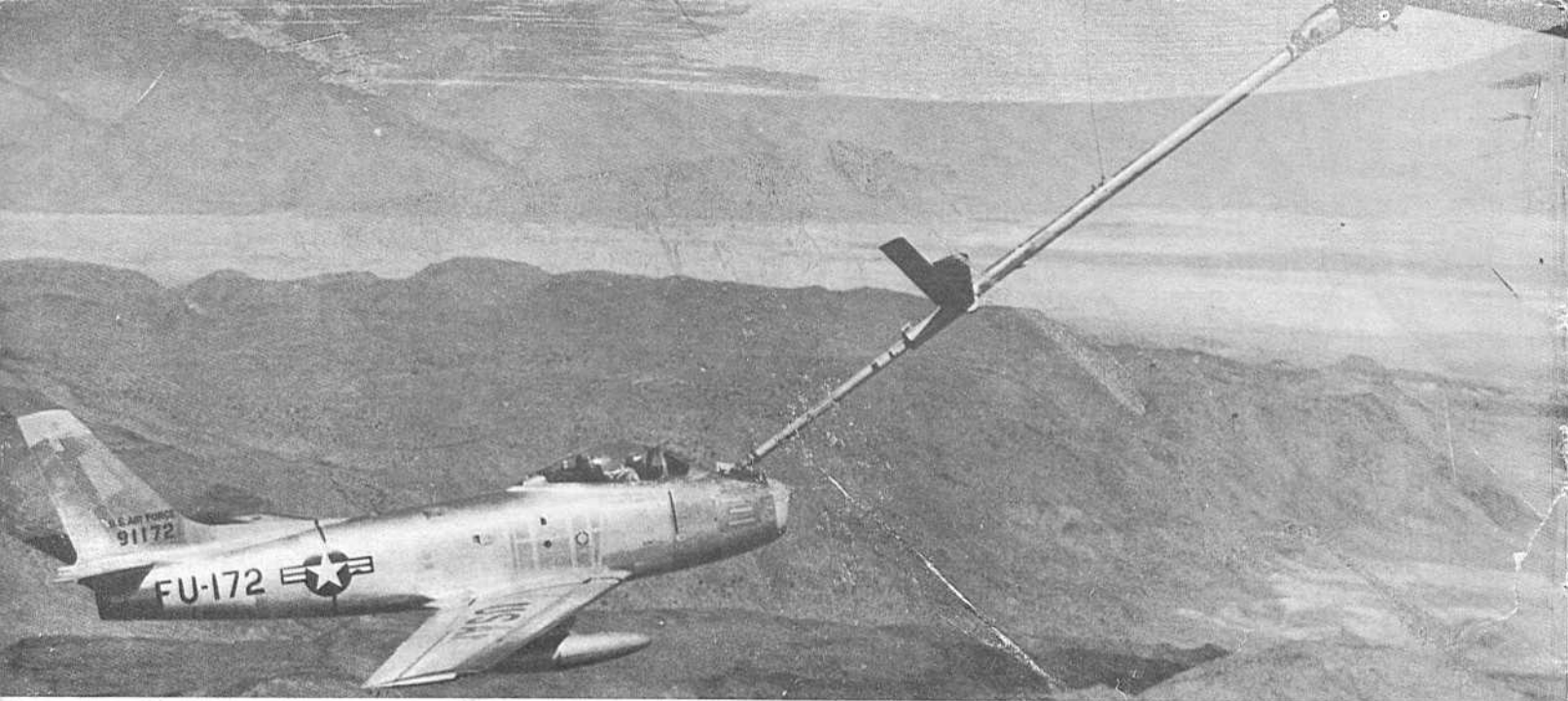
**WANTED** - Information and/or photos of Maj. James Hagerstrom, 28th ace of the Korean War. Jim Hagerstrom flew with both the 4th FIW and 18th FBW in Korea. To be used as a story in *SabreJet Classics*. CONTACT LARRY DAVIS, EDITOR, *SABREJET CLASSICS*, 4713 CLEVELAND AVE. NW, CANTON, OH 44709 (330)493-4122

**WANTED** - Information and/or photos of RF-86A ASHTRAY and RF-86F HAYMAKER aircraft operating with the 15th TRS at Kimpo during the Korean War. For an article in *SabreJet Classics*. Contact Larry Davis, Editor, *SabreJet Classics*, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709, (330)493-4122

## AROUND THE WORLD IN (THE) F-86 DAYS

The Republic Of Korea Air Force was one of the first Asian nations to obtain F-86 Sabres. And South Korea purchased both F-86Fs and F-86D all-weather interceptors. The ROKAF obtained some 40 F-86D-50s in the late 1950s. Suwon, May 1968 - this 10th Fighter Wing F-86D-50 was modified to fire the Aim-9B Sidewinder missile, augmenting the normal 24 2.75" Mighty Mouse rockets in the fuselage tray, flying them into the late 1960s. (credit - Stephen H. Miller)





**What Is It?** This is the only F-86 of any type that was equipped for inflight refueling with the Boeing Flying Boom system. The aircraft, F-86A #49-1172, had the APG-5C radar unit completely removed to make way for the refueling receptacle. Tests were flown in 1951 with a Boeing KB-29 tanker. Does any reader know anything about the tests? Who was the Sabre pilot? How many tests were flown? Who did the modifications? Anyone knowing anything about the IFR tests conducted with this airplane, please contact Larry Davis, Editor, SabreJet Classics, 4713 Cleveland Ave. NW, Canton, OH 44709. SabreJet Classics wants to do a story on IFR Sabre.

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