



Sabre Jet Classics

Volume 6 Number 2

SUMMER 1998

A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association

***ALL KOREA ISSUE!
THE FIRST ACE, RF-86F HAYMAKER,
GLIDING THE F-86 HOME, MORE!***



SabreJet Classics

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 2
SUMMER 1998
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(front cover) Mr. Leo Fournier stands by the F-86A, #49-1319, flown by Captain Jim Jabara the day he shot down his 5th and 6th MiGs in Korea - 20 May 1951. Leo Fournier was the General Electric Radar Tech Rep' to the 4th FIG. (credit - Leo Fournier)

Next Issue;
F-86Hs In The Vietnam War,
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Millikan Record Flight, MORE!

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'. A third goal is to perpetuate an accurate, patriotic portrayal of our national, military,

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HEADS UP!!

Make sure you notice the date change for the '99 Reunion! It's 18-22 April, 1999, and follows right on the heels of the Rivers Rat Reunion. See you there!

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

Since the recent deaths of F-86 Sabre Pilots Association President Bob Ashcraft and Secretary Jerry Weiland, your association has been working hard to meet the daily challenges and to fill the vacancies. In the meantime, please forgive any delay in getting membership packages to new members, or to responding to your correspondence. We expect to be back in afterburner in short order.

The staff of SabreJet Classics is publishing three great issues every year. That's only possible because you, our members, are providing the material needed by Editor Larry Davis and his staff to make the articles as complete and accurate as possible. For that, we thank you! AND DON'T STOP! We've had some complaints over the years, that we devote too much time and space to the Korean War. If that's true, it's simply because we've received many more stories about that turbulent time in our history.

But we've also had some terrific yarns about other times in the history of the F-86 Sabre and her pilots. Remember, everyone has at least one story to tell. Why not share your story with all the members, not just your hanger buddies that flew with you. Besides, they've probably heard that yarn at least a dozen times already. Put YOUR story down on paper, it doesn't have to be fancy, and mail it to Larry Davis, along with any photos or color slides you might have. Don't worry about polish. Larry and his gang will shine it up.

Collecting dues is a problem shared by all associations such as ours. Reluctantly, on 1 June 1998, we were forced to drop 63 members for non-payment of dues. That really hurts. Elsewhere in this issue we've included guidance on how and when to pay your dues. Please heed this and send your checks on a timely basis. Don't be left out! The issue of SabreJet Classics that you miss will surely be the issue that is about your squadron and friends.

Along this line of thought, this is the right time to recruit new members for the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association. The next reunion is

now firm for 18-22 April 1999, at the Monte Carlo Hotel in Las Vegas, and they'll want to be there. For those of you in the River Rats Association, our F-86 reunion begins on the day the Rats Reunion ends. So plan on staying in Vegas and attend both reunions. WOW! What a week that'll be!

As you've read, many MIAs from the Korean War have never been accounted for. But that may change. We've been asked by the US Air Force Missing Persons Branch to publish a request in this issue, concerning any knowledge you may have about Korean War MIAs. Give it some thought! Anything you remember might be the key to finding one of our lost comrades. Additionally, you can help spread the word and get others interested in this problem. It is of great importance to all of us, but most importantly to the families of the MIAs.

Lastly, our thoughts are with the families of Bob Ashcraft and Jerry Weiland, as well as all others that have flown their final mission.

Dee Harper
Chairman of the Board

BREAKING NEWS!!

As we go to press, it has just been announced that we have a new President of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association. Following the untimely death of President Bob Ashcraft, Colonel Bruce Hinton will lead our organization through the 1999 reunion. At that reunion a new election of officers will be held. The date 17 December 1950 was a very bad day for the MiG drivers at Antung. For it was on that day that the F-86 Sabre first appeared in the cold blue skies over North Korea. And on that mission, (then) Lt. Colonel Bruce Hinton, commanding Detachment 'A', 4th FIG at Kimpo, scored the first victory by a Sabre pilot over a MiG. His leadership in that war is legendary. We are fortunate to have him lead our organization today.

Good Luck and Thanks, Pintail Red!

A Letter To The Editor

In 1994, when we took over publication of SabreJet Classics from the Sabre Jet Historical Society, Founder Rick Mitchell gave us some great advice. In the midst of the changeover, Rick suggested that we not let Lon Walter get lost in the shuffle. Rick advised me that Lon was a retired Brigadier General, with the finest writing and editing skills of anyone Rick had encountered in his eleven years of freelance writing. Rick noted that Lon, who also functions as an associate editor for the Fightertown web page, was responsible for a large measure of the polish and professionalism which had characterized the magazine in the past.

Fortunately, we followed Rick's advice, and brought Lon aboard the SabreJet Classics editing staff. Lon's writing skills and attention to detail, have helped to maintain SabreJet Classics as a top notch publication. Knowing that Lon would not approve of such open praise, he was not permitted to edit this letter. It's appearance in this edition of SabreJet Classics will surely come as a complete surprise. Thanks for all the hard work, Lon! From the mail I have received over the past few years, I know our members appreciate the great service you have rendered our association.

Flamm 'Dee' Harper
Chairman of the Board

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Re: Harrison R. 'Harry' Thyng

Harry Thyng is my father. He died 14 years ago. I'm sorry to say that there is no street, no monument, and no testimony to his achievements. Perhaps you have read some of the few words written about him.

It is my purpose to not let him be forgotten. I intend to see his story told. I must. And your members can help. Many members of the Sabre Pilots Assn. flew with my father. They knew him. They followed him

to the Yalu, or when he dove his Spitfire on the Abbeyville Boys, or when he attacked the Japanese mainland.

Help me find the people who knew him and what he did. Anyone that knows anything about Harry Thyng, please contact Col. James R. Thyng, USAF Ret., Redbird farm, 131 Eaton Rd, Pittsfield, NH 03263, or call collect (603)435-6879.

I thank You
James R. Thyng

Member Earl J. Collins advised your Editor that the pilots flying the 417th FBS F-86Fs on the front cover of issue 6-1, were Coleman Baker (FU-656), with Charles Vasiliadis on his wing.

Thanks Earl!

FOLDED WINGS

James G. Griswold, September 1996
Harold R. Lagasse, April 17, 1998
Alan R. Ostby, October 26 1994
Gerald R. 'Jerry' Weiland, May 2nd 1998
Secretary, F-86 Sabre Pilots Association

Radar Lock-On



COLONEL ROBERT G. ASHCRAFT, USAF (RETIRED)

PRESIDENT, 4-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSOCIATION

FINAL FLIGHT: JANUARY 27, 1998

Bob Ashcraft was born on a farm near Goodlett, Texas, March 28, 1933. He had three brothers and three sisters. He decided to leave the small north Texas community (1995 population 205) after he graduated from high school, and set out on his own to see the USA. He said later, "I bounced around for awhile, and went where work, money, fun and games were attractive."

Bob joined the Air Force in 1953, and began his long and distinguished career. Starting as an armament and electronics technician, Bob soon came to the conclusion that he'd prefer to fly the airplanes than fix them. He was accepted into the Aviation Cadet program in 1954, and won his wings on March 14, 1955.

Second Lieutenant Ashcraft then went to Nellis AFB for the first time, to be trained in the F-86. It was an event-filled assignment, for he met his lifelong companion, Joy. As has happened so often in Air Force families, they were soon separated, and Bob was off to Osan AB, Korea (and F-86s), for a remote tour in 1955. When he returned home in 1956, it was to George AFB, California. There he was one of the pioneer pilots who flew the F-100 and F-104.

He went next to Wheelus AB, Libya, as Chief of Stan-Eval for the F-100, then returned to George in 1964 as part of the re-activation cadre for the 8th Tactical Fighter Wing. He was assigned to the 433rd Tactical Fighter Squadron ("Satan's Angels"). The 8th deployed to Ubon, Thailand in 1965, and Bob flew his first 100 combat missions over Laos and Vietnam.

Now a combat veteran, Bob came back to Nellis in 1966 to attend the F-4 Fighter Weapons School. He graduated with honors and was selected to stay on as a 4525th Fighter Weapons Wing test and evaluation project pilot and manager. Bob's reputation resulted in his selection to be part of the elite "TAC 85" study group. As usual, he did an outstanding job, and was assigned to Tactical Air Command Headquarters as Chief of Advanced Requirements Branch. There he played a key role in developing the requirements for the F-16 fighter.

Air War College was his reward for a job well done at TAC, and while at AWC, he completed Bachelor of Science degree requirements and graduated Summa Cum Laude from Troy State University.

But there was one more combat assignment in Bob's future. He went back to Southeast Asia as commander of the 421st Tactical Fighter Squadron ("Black Widows") at Udorn, Thailand. His leadership and experience helped forge a mostly inexperienced group of aircrews into an effective fighting force.

Bob's last assignment, as was his first, was to Nellis, as DCS Operations for the USAF Tactical Weapons Center Range Group. He retired from the Air Force in February 1979, and said at that time that he had twenty six good years and no regrets.

He is survived by his wife Joy, a son John, daughters Sherrie and Tina, and six grandchildren. His legion of friends and members of the Sabre Pilots Association share their grief and mourn our loss.

Keep rocking your wings Bob. We'll be joining up.

SABRE REUNIONS

4TH FIW 1998 REUNION
SEPTEMBER 24-27, 1998
AT THE RAMADA INN
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO
CONTACT E. GENE BOSSARD
PRESIDENT, 4TH FIG ASSN.
(941)283-9627

18TH FBW ASSN. 3RD REUNION
OCTOBER 8-11, 1998
ALL FORMER MEMBERS (WW2, KOREA,
VIETNAM)
FORT WALTON BEACH, FL
CONTACT ED SLOWN, 299 S. BAYSHORE
DR, VALPARAISO, FL 32580, (850)678-
7284, OR E-MAIL: FLAJVF@AOL.COM
OR PAUL KNISS, PO BOX 350, JACKSON,
WY 83001, TEL: (307)733-8077

CLASS 55-H REUNION
CONTACT TOM WEEKS,
(800) 231-1056

330th/331st FIS
October 11-14, 1998,
San Antonio, TX
Contact Charles Kern,
513 Rua De Matta,
San Antonio, TX 78232-1115

WANTED - INFORMATION AND PHOTOS OF
USAF F-86 AIRCRAFT AND CREWS.
CONTACT DAVID MENARD, ASC. EDITOR,
SABREJET CLASSICS, 5224 LONGFORD RD,
DAYTON, OH 45424 (513)236-8712

Many things can be said of Bob Ashcraft. He was a proud American who loved his family. He was a fighter pilot's fighter pilot, a patriot, a hero, and a God-fearing man. Not the least, he was very proud to serve as President of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association. This article is but a capsule glimpse at the life of Bob Ashcraft. The following verse is dedicated to him, and to his many comrades who have served their country with honor:

For being one of the anointed,
He has gone to the secret place,
A place so holy that a man can only go on wings -
And only once -
And only alone.

39th FS Assn, (includes 40th & 41st FS)
WW2 and Korea
October 14-18, 1998
at Ft. Walton Beach, FL
Contact: John Dunbar, 68 Marianne Rd,
Waltham, MA 02154
(617)893-7585

CONFEDERATE AIR FORCE
AIRSHO 98
Midland International Airport, Texas
October 3-4, 1998
For More Information
1-800-CAF-SHOW

51st FIW Reunion
(1949-1956)
San Diego, CA, September 23-27, 1998
contact - Clio Morales, 51st FIW Assn.
PO Box 411, Ramona, CA 92065-4078,
ph. (760)788-0709

WANTED - Information and/or
photos/slides of F-105 Thunderchief
operations from Korat and Takhli.
Material to be used for an combat operations
history of the F-105. Especially in need of
1964-1965 material from anyone that was
TDY. Contact Larry Davis, Editor,
SabreJet Classics, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW,
Canton, OH 44709, (330)493-4122



Captain James J. Jabara, Kimpo AB 1951. (credit - USAF)

The First Ace Is Crowned

by Captain James J. Jabara

334th FIS, Suwon AB, 20 May 1951

The following account is based on the after-action report of Captain James J. Jabara, 334th FIS, Suwon AB, 20 May 1951

It was Sunday, 20 May 1951, and history was about to be made. Back home the folks watched Eddie Lopat win his 7th game in a row for the Yankees, who were leading the American League as usual. The National League was led by Brooklyn's Dodgers. People were watching Van Johnson in the theaters, as he led the Japanese-American 442nd RCT in the movie "Go For Broke", while Robert Mitchum was chasing Ava Gardner in the film "My Forbidden Past".

But at Suwon AB, the men of the 4th FIG were about to take off into history. It was the afternoon mission, a MiG sweep over Sinuiju, 4 flights of 6 with 4 'spares'. Lt.Col. Bruce Hinton led PINTAIL ABLE flight with Col. Herman Schmid, Capt. Sam Pascretta, 1/Lt. Paul Bryce, Capt 'Mo' Pitts, and 1/Lt Rudy Holley. PINTAIL BAKER was led by Capt. Max Weill, with 1/Lt. John Ironmonger, Capt. Ray Janeczek, 1/Lt. Howard Miller, 1/Lt. Ward Hitt, and Capt. Dale Hudson.

AWNING ABLE flight was made up of Lt.Col. Ben Emmert, 1/Lt. Bill Ihrig, Capt. Milton Nelson, 1/Lt James Dennison, 1/Lt 'Hoot' Gibson, and 1/Lt. Lon Walter. AWNING BAKER was led by Capt. J.O. Roberts, with 1/Lt. John Hungerford on his wing; Capt. Jim Jabara led the second element, with 1/Lt. Jack Kemp as his wingman; Capt. 'Sandy' Hesse and 1/Lt Stan Ahrends made up the third element. 1/Lts. Hubert Shackelford, Dick Panter, Bobbie Lee Smith, and Phil Janney flew 'spare'.

About 15 miles SE of Sinuiju, a fight was starting to take shape. Baker 3 and 4, Jim Jabara and Jack Kemp, had just dropped their tanks when two things occurred. First, Jim's right wing tank did not drop. And second, they sighted a large gaggle of Migs in their area. Orders were that any airplane

with tanks that wouldn't drop, especially one with only one tank that didn't drop, was to immediately depart the area and head for home. But this might be Jim Jabara's last mission, and he wasn't going to let one hung tank interfere with his possibly making ace.

Jim Jabara: - "We heard Col. Hinton call out "many bandits crossing the river". We were still approaching the area, coming up on the west coast to the mouth of the river. Col. Emmert ordered us to "Drop tanks!" just as we made landfall. As we approached Sinuiju, I saw about 12 Migs, which turned and

Jim Jabara and his always present cigar, hands his helmet to his crew chief at Suwon in the Spring of 1951. Jabara got his first kill on 3 April 1951. (credit - Larry Davis)





Several pilots mull over the days events next to Jim Jabara's F-86A following the mission that crowned 'Jabby' the Worlds First Jet Ace. Note the right drop tank, which hung up as Jabara entered combat that fateful day. In the foreground with his chute still on, is Capt. 'Hoot' Gibson, who would be the third ace in Korea. (credit - Leo Fournier)

started toward us. It was then that I noticed that my right tank hadn't dropped."

"We were at about 27,000'. They were high, maybe 3000' above us. The Migs continued closing as we turned into them. Two of the Migs fired on us as we closed in a head-on pass. I fired and missed as we passed each other. They missed and overshot badly. I tried to turn and get on their tail. But with that right tank still 'hung', I couldn't get into any kind of position. That tank really screwed me on that pass."

"Kemp called to tell me about 3 more at our 5 o'clock, getting into position. That made twelve of them to the two of us. As these three Migs overshot, Kemp and I cranked her around and broke into them. I picked out the no. 3 MiG, which seemed to be slightly behind the other two. The Mig went into a constant left turn, and we went round and round for awhile."

"At about 25,000' I started to pull within range. I fired once, then again. The second burst caught the Mig right below the cockpit, through the wing root, and across the left wing. It suddenly burst into flames, did a couple of snap rolls, and went into a spin. I could see him the whole time because he was trailing heavy black smoke."

"I kept watching it and thought it was going to go straight in. But at about 10,000', the MiG leveled out just for a minute, and I saw the pilot bail out. The MiG then just exploded. I don't think there was a big piece of it left at all. I made a pass at the pilot with my camera rolling. I almost hit him when I bent down to turn on the camera, and had to pull up to avoid him. He was twirling in the 'chute, and all dressed in black."

"We were down to about 7,000' when the MiG exploded. Jack and I started to climb back to altitude. About 20,000' I spotted 6 more MiGs - four in a fingertip formation, and two more trailing. Somewhere in the climb Kemp and I had seperated. I don't know where he was. They were in a left turn and evidently didn't see me at all. I pulled in behind the number 6 MiG and fired."

"The first four Migs dove down and away. The guy I had staked out just kept climbing straight ahead. His leader was also



Jabara demonstrates how he scored one of his kills to 1/LTs Hampton Miller (l) and Bill Yancey (r). (credit - USAF)

The World's First Jet Ace is crowned - 20 May 1951. Capt. Jim Jabara, flying F-86A #49-1319, is congratulated by Capt. Nick Farrell (center) and the crew chief (r) SGT Joe Heflin. (credit - Irv Clark)





Lt. 'Gene' Holley and Maj. Ed Fletcher carry Jim Jabara away from his airplane following the twin kills he scored on 20 May 1951. Jabara would score 9 more times in 1953 during his second tour. (credit - USAF)



A painting of "Jabby's Big Day" done by artist Troy White, showing the hung right drop tank. A litho of Jim Jabara's Ace Day is available from the artist, Troy White at Stardust Studios, 612 N. Salisbury Ave., Deland, FL 32720.

nowhere to be seen, and I figured he would be coming back at me. I had to keep one eye out for him, and the other on the Mig ahead of me."

"My MiG was still climbing and probably would have gotten away if he'd continued. But he suddenly dove down to the left. I had no trouble catching up with him. I started shooting as soon as I got within range. I got several good strikes. I don't know whether he was on fire or if he flamed out. But he was pouring white smoke out of his tailpipe."

"I overshot him right away, and he started a turn. Well, sort of a spiral - half spin, half spiral to the left. I looked around to see if anybody was on my tail, and put on my speed brakes. I knew he was in trouble, and I wanted to see if he was going to hit. I followed him down to 6500'. I think he was on fire, but I'm not sure because he was smoking like mad. He had definitely flamed out, going very slow, maybe 170 knots."

"All of a sudden, there was popping all around me. There were Migs back there, and they were shooting at me! I broke real hard to the left, as hard as I could, pulled in the brakes and put on full power. I couldn't do much more than 500 knots because the airplane was very hard to control. I had to use both hands on the stick. It kept wanting to dip down to the left, probably because of the hung right tank. Every time I would straighten out, the Migs would shoot at me. Those reddish pink tracers were coming awfully close."

"Above me, a pair of F-86s were heading for home. It was 'Mo' Pitts and Rudy Holley. Pitts called Holley out the radio and said "There's an F-86 down there getting bounced by two MiGs." I said "I know it too damned well!" and Pitts called me and asked who the pilot was. I must have been in a 10-G turn when I hollered into the radio "Jaaabbbbaaarrrraa!" Mo then said "Call us if you need help!" And I calmly replied that I could sure use some now."

"I kept breaking, then building up my air speed and breaking again. Mo and Holley came down and Holley started firing on the MiGs. One of the MiGs broke for the river. But the other was intent on getting me. He nearly had me now, and was closing the gap the whole time. Holley and Pitts pulled in behind the Mig that was behind me."

"Holley got off a couple of good bursts, hitting the MiG in the fuselage. The Mig started to smoke and dove away from us, heading straight for the Yalu. None of us could chase him down, even though he was crippled, as we were all way below 'Bingo'. We joined up and headed back to Suwon., landing on fumes."

The score for the day was five Damaged - Pitts, Holley, Weill, Janeczek, J.O. Roberts; one Probable by 'Hoot' Gibson, and three victories - Lt. Milton Nelson and two by Captain James J. Jabara.

The two by Jabara were his 5th and 6th, making him the first ace in the Korean War, and the first jet vs. jet ace in history. Jabara's total was 6 Kills, 1 Probable, and 4 Damaged. When Jabara landed at K-13, there was a crowd waiting for him, mostly his fellow pilots and ground crew. Almost as soon as Jim climbed out of the cockpit, Col. John Meyer, 4th Group Commander awarded him the Distinguished Flying Cross. Later, in his private office, he chewed Jabara's butt for violating orders with regards to having a 'hung' tank.

By order of 5th Air Force, Jabara was sent home on the 22nd. He flew first to Johnson AB, Japan. Or rather he was flown to Johnson by C-54. Air Force had their first ace and they weren't taking any chances. Upon his return to the ZI, Jim was initially assigned to the Hq & Hq Squadron, USAF, Washington. Air Force wanted him to be an instructor and show the other pilots bound for Korea, how it was done. But Jabara would return in 1953, much to the dismay of the Mig pilots. They'd already had enough of Captain James J. Jabara.



RECOLLECTIONS OF JIM JABARA

by LON WALTER

As a tent mate of Captain James J. Jabara's at K-13 (Suwon) on 20 May 1951, I had a ringside seat to the events that took place that day. But first, a little background:

Our eight-man tents usually had fewer than that number of occupants, but seldom less than six. I recall only four other occupants of the 'A' Flight tent - Captain Milton E. 'Nellie' Nelson, the flight commander; First Lieutenant Otis P. 'Flash' Gordon, First Lieutenant James J. 'Denny' Dennison, and Jim Jabara, known as 'Jabby' to his friends. Jabby's cot was located in the northwest corner of the tent. Corner locations afforded a tiny bit more privacy. Nellie had the southwest corner. Jabara was not technically a member of 'A' Flight, or even assigned to the 335th Squadron. He was officially assigned to the 334th Squadron. But because he had four victories, and the 334th had rotated back to Johnson AB, Japan, Jabby was 'attached' to the 335th in hopes that he would get his 5th kill, thereby making him America's first Ace of the Korean War.

I remember Captain Jabara as a pleasant and quiet tent mate. He kept a photograph of his wife, Nina, on the small table next to his cot. He was always considerate of others (very important in close quarter living like we had in Korea), and was well liked and accepted by all.

To illustrate the sort of leadership he had, I recall flying on his wing on a mission a few days before he became an ace. We had flown to the Yalu, and patrolled the south bank without seeing any MiGs - except the ones parked on the ramp at Antung across the river. As we returned home, Captain Jabara and I were cruising southbound at about 30,000 feet between Sinanju and Pyongyang, when I spotted a lone, swept-winged aircraft speeding in the opposite direction at a much lower altitude - a MiG heading for Antung. I called the sighting to Jabby, and he replied, "I don't see him. You check him out. I'll take your wing." I called to drop tanks, and we did a split-S to try and overtake the bogey. But we reached 'Bingo' fuel before we could catch him. Understand here that this MIGHT have been Jim's fifth kill, making him an ace, yet he selflessly allowed me to lead the pursuit.



On 20 May 1951, I recall the excitement when Jabby taxied his airplane to a stop. He was immediately surrounded by well-wishers. He had just gotten his fifth and sixth kills. It was mass confusion, with brass and news people everywhere, all wanting to talk with Jim. 'Flash' Gordon and I went back to our tent to await Jabby's return. When he came in, he had a grin that was a mile wide, and proudly accepted our handshakes.

After only a few minutes of relaxation, a major wearing a starched uniform, entered and identified himself as a public information officer (PIO) from Headquarters, USAF. He told Jabby that he had flown his last mission. He was wrong however, because Jabara came back for a second tour and more than

(l-r) 1/LTs. Denny Dennison, 'Jack' Kemp and 'Gene' Holley, at Johnson AB, Japan in 1951. Jack Kemp was Jabara's wingman on 20 May 1951, while Gene Holley chased a MiG off Jabara's tail during the fight. (credit - Lon Walter)





The 'Greater "A" Flight' tent at Suwon in 1951, with the Korean houseboy in the doorway. Some plush digs, eh? Flight crew members lived and flew together in Korea. (credit - Dick Merion)

doubled his victory total. Jim was going home to be hailed as history's first jet ace! He also warned him that he would be living in a fishbowl, and his life wouldn't be his own any longer. He was now a national hero. This had a profound effect on everyone in the tent, and it was with heavy hearts that we bade farewell to Captain Jim Jabara later that day. I don't even think he got to fly an F-86 back to Japan, having to settle for a ride in a C-54.

My own role on that fateful mission (20 May) was undistinguished, and I've thought about it many times over the past 46 years. During the mission briefing, Lt. Col. Ben Emmert, the 335th Squadron Commander, had stressed that we could expect a big fight when we got near the Yalu. Man, was he ever right! Because of this, he said he didn't want anyone to take a 'sick bird' beyond Pyongyang. He didn't want any pilot worrying about the condition of his aircraft in a big fight. I had never aborted a flight, and figured I definitely wasn't going to start THAT day! I think I



A pair of 4th FIG F-86As leave the telltale black smoke plume of the J47, as they leave the PSP runway at Taegu in 1951. (credit - USAF)

was Awning Able 6, flying on 'Hoot' Gibson's wing. As we climbed out from Suwon, it was a beautiful day. We could hear on the radio that the festivities had already started at the Yalu. The Pintail flights (336th Squadron) were heavily involved. There were many Migs in the air that day.

Approaching Pyongyang, I made a check of the cockpit instruments. Nuts! The EGT (Exhaust Gas temperature or tailpipe temperature) gauge was pegged to the max. As I tapped the face of the dial, the needle dropped to zero. Then it started wandering all over the dial. Now the EGT was a critical reading of a jet engine's performance, since in combat, our throttles were usually 'fire-walled' at 100% rpm, and an abnormally high EGT would require a throttle reduction. That was something you didn't want with a MiG-15 on your tail! Without the EGT gauge, I'd have no way of detecting an impending overheat. Either I had a bad gauge, or something had happened in the tailpipe to cause the weird readings I was getting.

The flight line at Kimpo AB in 1951. The B-29 in the background had made a forced landing at Kimpo and was then used as the 'engine shop', with only a tarp over the wing to shield the troops from the cold Korean wind. (credit - AWM)





"The Ceegar Kid". Major James Jabara studies at map during debriefing after his 12th victory in 1953. Jabara finished the war with 15 victories. (credit - Larry Davis)



The scoreboard of Jabara's F-86F in June 1953 showing 12 victories, 3 probables, and 6 damaged. (credit - Larry Davis)

I was some kinda POed. But like a good soldier, I gave Hoot the pre-arranged hand signal that I was returning to K-13. Hoot remained with the rest of the flight, tacking on as a 'solo' with Nellie Nelson and Denny Dennison.

All the way back to Suwon, and even after I had landed, I listened on the radio to the progress of the big fight. I realized that I had missed what might be a historic mission. I could have cried, and maybe I did. It did turn out to be a bad gauge. Ever since then, I've wished I had just ignored that silly gauge. If I'd had more time in the '86, I probably would have - I think. Who knows? But I never aborted again. But then, I never had a reason to do so.

In later years, I saw Jim Jabara many times. He was one of those rare individuals who never forgot a name or a face. Once you were his friend, you were always his friend. Although his life was cut short tragically by an automobile accident in 1966, he accomplished many other things after becoming the first jet ace. He was the Operations Officer for the first B-58 Hustler

wing. The B-58 was a true supersonic bomber, technologically well ahead of its time. I ran into (then) Colonel Jim Jabara in 1961 while he was with that outfit. He told me of routinely flying the B-58 for 45 minutes at a speed of Mach 2! Even today, this performance can only be matched by the SR-71 Blackbird and the Concorde. At the time of his death, he was commander of the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing at Homestead AFB, Florida. His next assignment was to have been commander of the 3rd TFW at Bien Hoa, South Vietnam.

As a sentimental end to this little account, in 1972, when I was commander of the 31st TFW at Homestead, my family lived in the last house occupied by Colonel Jabara and his family. His name appeared on several documents, and on the drapes left in the house by the Jabaras. As a wing commander, I saw to it that a street was named in his honor, and a beautifully painted F-100 Super Sabre with his name on it, was placed on a pedestal in front of the 31st headquarters building. It is indeed, a high honor to have known and flown with James J. Jabara, History's First Jet Ace.

"The mailing label on all mail directed to the membership, shows the date your dues expire. Dues are \$25 for one year \$50 for 3 years, and \$200 for a life membership. All dues payments are credited on the date we deposit your check, and handled like a subscription to a magazine.

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(MORE) RECOLLECTIONS OF JIM JABARA

by Paul Kauttu

It was sometime in 1953, and I was telling war stories at the O'Club at Nellis. It was getting late, maybe a little after 9 pm. My CO, Major Bill Whisner, came to me and asked me if I'd do him a little favor. "Paul, would you mind saddling-up a T-Bird (T-33), and flying out to Travis to pick up Jim Jabara?" I asked him when, and he replied "Now." In less than a half hour, I was on my way to Travis AFB in California.

In very short order, I was soon on my way back to Nellis with 'him' in the back seat. The 'him' was Major James J. Jabara, first jet ace of the Korean War. He stuffed his B-4 bag down between the two cockpits, which promptly rendered my ejection seat inoperative. But I didn't say anything. When we reached our cruising altitude, about 20 grand for the short flight back to Nellis, I pulled the power back to about 96%. But almost immediately I saw the throttle advance back to full power. And I heard him mutter something about hauling ass.

Shortly thereafter, the cockpit became polluted with smoke. Quite obviously coming from a good quality Cuban blend. Again, I said nothing, and we pressed on to a smooth landing on runway 20 at Nellis. It was about midnight. It had been a big event for me, and it still is. Major James Jabara was truly one of a kind - flamboyant, respected, friendly. Too bad the likes of he, Whisner, Fernandez, and Kinchloe aren't able to enjoy these later years. They're all greatly missed.

Major James J. Jabara at the debriefing following his 12th victory on 18 June 1953. He would score three more before the war ended. (credit - Larry Davis)



AIR FORCE SEEKS FAMILIES OF KOREAN WAR UNACCOUNTED FOR

The Department of Defense and the four military services are mounting an intense public outreach effort to locate family members of servicemen who remain unaccounted for from the Korean War.

According to Tom Perry, Chief, Air Force Missing Persons Branch, "We have begun to open some doors in North Korea, and we need to re-establish contact with the families of our unaccounted-for servicemen."

As a result of two negotiated agreements, the US has conducted four joint operations inside North Korea during 1996/97 to seek answers, locate and recover US servicemens remains lost during the Korean War.

In the four operations, the remains of what are believed to be seven Americans have been recovered. One has already been identified and returned to his family for burial with full military honors.

Perry added, "As we're able to obtain additional circumstance of loss information, or recover remains from North Korea, we'll need to inform the families. Unfortunately, in some cases nearly 45 years have elapsed since the Air Force has had contact with many of the families. We need to know who the primary next-of-kin is to aid in future identifications. We welcome any lead family members can give us."

Family members of any unaccounted-for Korea-era servicemen are asked to provide their name, address and relationship of their loved one as soon as possible to the appropriate service casualty office.

Air Force families can call toll-free (800)531-5501, or write via e-mail <POW-MIA@HQ.AFPC.AF.MIL>. The Army's toll-free number is (800)892-2490; Navy is (800)443-9298; and Marines (800)847-1597.

"We hope our efforts in North Korea will result in bringing closure to families who have sacrificed so much for so long."

Member Ron Anderson flew Sabre Dogs with the 82nd FIS, and has this license plate on his car. Anyone else have a personal plate reflecting his time in Sabres? (credit - Ron Anderson)



GLIDING THE F-86

The Ultimate Range Extender

by Robert W. Smith

Ed. note: Bob Smith had a remarkable career in the Air Force. In Korea, he destroyed two MiGs, with one probable and two damaged. Between wars, he set a World Altitude Record of 120,800 feet in the NF-104A at Edwards AFB. During the Vietnam War, as a squadron commander in F-105s, he was awarded the Air Force Cross. He also holds the Silver Star, 5 DFCs, and 13 Air Medals. After he retired from the Air Force, he had a successful twenty year career with the Martin Marietta Company. He is retired in Montverde, Florida, and enjoys golf and traveling. The story which follows is presented in two parts. Part II will appear in the Fall issue of Sabrefet Classics.



1LT. Bob Smith, 4th FIG, Kimpo AB 1951.
(credit - Bob Smith)

You invited stories about the F-86H. And this is one. But I must preface it with a related tale from a thousand hours I enjoyed flying the F-86A, E, and F. Only a fool would tell this story, but I've been judged worse, so here goes. This fool flew more than 50 military aircraft types, and never enjoyed any of them more than flying the Sabre.

This F-86 story really began upon my graduation from Class 50C at Williams AFB, flying the F-80 Shooting Star. It was 24 June 1950, the day before the Korean War started. Those of us who had orders to Japan were reassigned stateside within days. I lucked out and went to the 1st Fighter Interceptor Group at March AFB, then to Griffis AFB, where I spent a year and 340 flight hours learning and enjoying the F-86A.

I also spent 20,000 feet learning to recover from a flat spin during my one and only flight in the F-51D Mustang. This occurred after I intentionally entered a normal spin for fun - only to have it become the dreaded flat spin. All this because I had a full fuselage tank, which I later learned was a big no-no. I found out recovery is possible in the Mustang, but only below 3,000 feet.

My good fortune with Sabre assignments then led to the 335th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 4th Fighter Interceptor Group at Kimpo AB, Korea, and my first combat tour. Although I ultimately got two MiG kills, a probable and two damaged, I like to think that my record would have been better except I lacked the eyes of an eagle, and not aggressiveness and gunnery skill, which are the other traits of the great aces.

After a couple of weeks at Johnson AB, Japan, home plate for the 4th, I joined the 335th at Kimpo (K-14).

There, I was assigned to the tent of Captain Ralph D. 'Hoot' Gibson, who showed the kind of leader he was by always putting the new guys on his wing for their first mission. Others might have done it differently, since he was so close to becoming the second jet ace of the war. But not Hoot.

So there I was, on his wing, and we had cruised south of the Yalu for quite a while, when I got my first look at the awesome sight of a large (make that huge!) gaggle of MiGs approaching in the cons. We jettisoned our empty tanks and engaged the MiGs. But before long I was a spectator watching Hoot shoot down a MiG. I was trying diligently to check our 6 o'clock while we were tracking the MiGs. But I confess, I was fascinated by the sight of tracers and the many, many hits on the MiGs. They looked like big sparklers to me. Watching a MiG kill for the first time seemed almost surrealistic.

A flight of 4 F-86As from the 27th FIS in 1950. Bob Smith was assigned to the 27th FIS prior to going to Korea. (credit - Bob Smith)



That MiG was history in no time, and Hoot closed on another one and began hammering him. Soon, other MiGs were cutting us off and closing to near firing range behind me. I told Hoot about the MiGs closing at our 6, but he told me to let him know if I had to break off. The lead MiG on my tail started shooting far enough out that his 'golf ball' tracers were falling short. But he soon closed the gap and fired a burst that passed right over my right wing.

I'm sure he was using the Mig's big 37mm cannon, because the red balls were so large, and the rate of fire was slow. Right then, I called Hoot and told him that I was breaking hard right. Then told him that all four Migs were sticking with me! He asked if I needed help, and pride and bravado prompted me to say that I could handle it! I thought I could easily shake these birds. However, we were near 'Bingo' fuel, so I knew I had to do it quickly. We were high enough that I could make a diving turn to gain a speed advantage as I had been taught (the Sabre was much faster than the MiG in a dive), pulling just enough g's to make it unlikely that the Migs could draw a lead on me.

I pulled hard while holding aft trim, since my 'A' model was in the speed range where the elevator pulled like a gigantic rubber band, but produced little g response unless you used elevator trim. Suddenly something occurred that I had never encountered. I found my head down in my lap as I felt many g's for an extended period of time. Because I didn't feel the side load associated with a snap roll, I have always surmised that I had runaway trim. And since I never used shoulder straps as a wingman in Korea, I literally could not look outside.

All my efforts to push the stick forward and retrim the airplane, were useless. Although I was still concerned about the MiGs, I finally extended the speed brakes, pulled the throttle to idle, and found that I could raise my head again. My Sabre and I were down to 4,000 feet,

1LT. Ralph D. 'Hoot' Gibson on the ramp at Suwon AB in July 1951. 'Hoot' became the 4th FIG's third jet ace, getting his 5th MiG on 9 September 1951. (credit - Leo Fournier)



1LT. Bob Smith (center with can in both hands) and the other members of the 335th FIS in the O-Club at Kimpo in 1952, otherwise known as "SWIG ALLEY". (credit - Bob Smith)

and we were climbing steeply somewhere between Anju and Sinanju.

At this point I had real fuel problems and turned towards home as I continued to climb. And the four Migs were still there! They now began a series of high-side firing passes on me that looked like gunnery school. I found that I now had very little roll response - slow and sluggish. The Migs took advantage of my vulnerability and continued their passes. I couldn't understand why they didn't just slip in behind me for an easy kill. Maybe they didn't know my problem, and didn't want to force me to break.

This went on for what seemed an eternity, and I continued working my way south. I tried to increase their angle of attack by turning into them as best I could without varying too much from my southerly heading. As Elvis said, I was "all shook up", since my breaks were so gentle. I thought each of their passes would be the end of me. Suddenly my fear turned to blind fury, and I emptied my six .50s in one long burst at the next MiG

An F-86A from the 335th FIS on the ramp at Johnson AB, Japan in 1951. The underwing fuel tanks in the grass are 120 gallon 'combat tanks' specifically developed for the F-86. (credit - Larry Davis)





F-86As of the 4th FIG on the ramp at Suwon in the late Spring of 1951. The black and white stripes were added to all 4th FIG Sabres as a quick ID marking since the Sabre and MiG were similar in shape and size. The stripes were changed to black and yellow in 1952. (credit - USAF)

that passed in front of me. Of course, it was futile, because I wasn't able to get my sight on him until he was long gone. To this day, I can visualize the .50 caliber rounds tumbling out of burned-out barrels before the last shot left.

Thank goodness, the Migs then left. While I like to think that they had had enough of that crazy American, the truth is, they were probably also low on fuel. I climbed toward home base until I had between 15 and 20 gallons showing on the fuel gauge. Then I shut down the engine to save those precious few gallons for the landing. It was still over 175 miles back to K-14, and I started the long glide home. I knew it could be done as others had done it before me.

However, that little bit of knowledge didn't make it any easier on my nerves. As I approached Kimpo, I called the tower and told them of my situation. They didn't have to clear the pattern as I was the last airplane returning

from the mission. At the right time, I made an air start, and landed after a long, straight-in approach. Everyone else had landed long ago, and Hoot had already written me off!

Major Winton W. 'Bones' Marshall, the 335th FIS commander, met me on the ramp and we inspected the airplane. There weren't any holes, but that was the only consolation. The wing stress plates were severely damaged. And the ailerons were so deformed that they were physically binding. The resettable 'Max G' needle (removed on later airplanes) was pegged. If my memory serves me (and it often doesn't anymore), that was 12-14 g's. That mission began my use, or abuse, of power-off cruise descents. In my own defense, I think I did better on my next 99 missions, and even had the honor of leading the wing on a mission as a first lieutenant.

- to be continued -

A pair of F-86's with No. 2 Squadron, South African Air Force take off from Osan AB in 1953. The "Springboks" were attached to the 18th Fighter Bomber Group, flying both F-51Ds and Sabres. (credit - Larry Davis)



**SABRES
OVER KOREA**



Two of the three RF-86F 'Haymaker' Sabres on the 67th TRW ramp at Kimpo in May 1953. All the Tsuiki-modified RF-86s had horizontally-mounted cameras that used a set of mirrors to reflect the image back to the camera lens. Although several of the RF-86Fs retained their gun ports, none were actually armed since gun vibration could knock the mirrors out of adjustment. Plus FEAF didn't want its recon pilots out chasing MiGs! (credit - Larry Davis)

RF-86F HAYMAKER

by Larry Davis

Towards the end of 1952, the 15th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron sought authorization to re-equip with newer aircraft. The F-86F was already in service with both the 4th and 51st Fighter Interceptor Groups, and new aircraft were arriving each day. North American Aviation was working on a factory-built RF-86, but it was still many months away. Far East Air Material Command authorized a conversion of several F-86F aircraft to RF-86F under Project HAYMAKER. Several brand new F-86F-30 aircraft went to the Tsuiki Rear Echelon Maintenance Combined Operation (REMCO) facility in Japan after a short combat stint with one of the groups in Korea.

At Tsuiki, the aircraft had all armament, radars, and the gun sight removed. A camera suite identical to that of the ASHTRAY RF-86A was then installed, but using K-14 cameras in place of the slower speed K-9s. Again, the K-14s had to be mounted horizontally, shooting through a mirror complex with an aperture in the bottom of the fuselage. The K-14 dicing camera was now mounted between the two vertical cameras. As with the RF-86A, the underside of the forward fuselage was bulged to cover the camera suite installation. The Tsuiki REMCO facility built 3 HAYMAKER RF-86F-30s, serials 52-4330, -4357, and -4529.

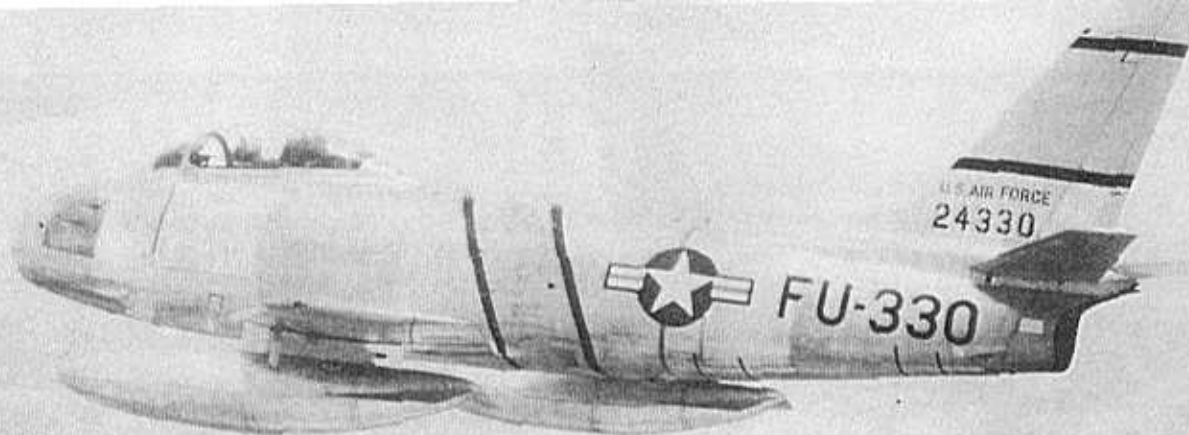
The HAYMAKER RF-86F-30s began equipping the 15th TRS at Kimpo in 1953, flying side by side with the ASHTRAY aircraft that remained in service. Once again, the RF-86Fs were marked identical to aircraft of the 4th FIG, including painting fake gun ports on

the blank gun panels. The mission profiles were identical to the RF-86A. Takeoff as Lead in a flight of four 4th FIG F-86s. Near the target area, often north of the Yalu River, the RF-86F broke down and away from the rest of the flight. The RF-86F pilot would then make a high Mach run over the target while the rest of the flight orbited nearby.

The results of both the ASHTRAY and HAYMAKER programs were successful in spite of the shortcomings of a 'field-modified' installation. No HAYMAKER aircraft were lost. In June 1953, the first North American RF-86F production aircraft began arriving in Korea. The factory-built aircraft were a vast improvement over the HAYMAKER aircraft. Using all

Ralph Newman stands by one of the Tsuiki-built RF-86Fs in late 1953. Tsuiki modified 3 F-86Fs identical to the RF-86A, with forward mounted cameras that shot through a mirror. (credit - Ralph Newman)





An RF-86F from the 15th TRS over Korea in May 1953. This aircraft was originally an F-86F-30 fighter bomber assigned to the 18th FBG before being modified to an RF-86F at Tsuiki REMCO facility in early 1953. (credit - Bob Archibold)



Ozzie Niedermann, North American Aviation Tech Rep at Kimpo in 1953, stands by one of the factory-built RF-86Fs. The bulged gun bay covered the camera body and film magazine of the vertically-mounted camera suite. (credit - Ozzie Niedermann)

the available information that was coming in daily from the pilots of the 67th TRW in Korea, North American engineers fixed all the problems that

The camera suite was the latest high speed unit, using a pair of K-22s and a K-17 dicing camera. However, it was not mounted horizontally, and used no mirrors in the installation. The K-22s were mounted vertically. However, the vertically mounted K-22s, with their longer focal length, took the main camera body and film magazines, outside the fuselage contours of the F-86. North American solved this by simply designing a large bulge on the gun bay door, which covered the film magazine.

Ballast totaling almost 750 lbs, needed to re-align the aircraft center of gravity, was added to the forward fuselage. The canopy of the factory-built RF-86F was elongated to counter a buffet caused by the bulged fuselage. All camera windows had sliding doors. And the factory aircraft had the new '6-3' hard wing with leading edge fences.



Photo recon in Korea was the job of the 67th TRW. Based at Kimpo, the 67th was made up of 12th TRS RB-26Cs, 15th TRS RF-80s and RF-86s, and the F2H-2P Banshees of VMJ-1. (credit - Larry Davis)

North American built 8 RF-86Fs for the US Air Force (serials 52-4377, -4379, -4492, -4800, -4808, -4822, -4823, and 4864). None of the factory-built RF-86Fs were completed in time to join in the combat during the war in Korea. However, all the RF-86Fs were involved in clandestine and standard reconnaissance missions after the war ended, including many missions into China and Soviet Union air space which remain classified to this day.

In spite of the success in combat of the RF-86A and F programs, Air Force chose a reconnaissance version of the Republic F-84F as their next generation tactical recon aircraft - the RF-84F Thunderflash. However, interest in the RF-86F by Japan, South Korea, and Nationalist China, kept the type in front line service into the 1980s. North American Aviation provided conversion 'kits' to Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, who were in the process of assembling F-86F-40 aircraft.

Mitsubishi converted at least 18 aircraft to RF-86F-40 standard. The 501st Hikotai (squadron) finally turned in their RF-86Fs in favor of RF-4E Phantoms on 1



Members of the 15th TRS pose for a 'family portrait' in front of an RF-86F at Kimpo in late 1953. The 15th TRS had 3 combat-ready RF-86Fs before the war ended in July 1953. (credit - Bob Archibold)



October 1979. South Korea had one squadron of 10 RF-86Fs still flying missions in the late 1980s. These aircraft were made up of F-86F-25 and -30 air frames, which were brought up to F-40 standard, then converted to RF-86F. The Taiwanese Air Force on Formosa had 7 RF-86Fs, all modified similar to the South Korean RF-86Fs.

Several RF-86F aircraft survived the many years of front line service, only to be used up in the US Navy target drone program at China Lake NAS. One of the original North American Aviation built RF-86F-30s

assigned to the 15th TRS, #52-4492, had been a 'gate guard' at Bergstrom AFB, Texas until the base was closed. It is now at the US Air Force Museum awaiting a complete restoration back to its Cold War markings of the immediate post-Korean War era.

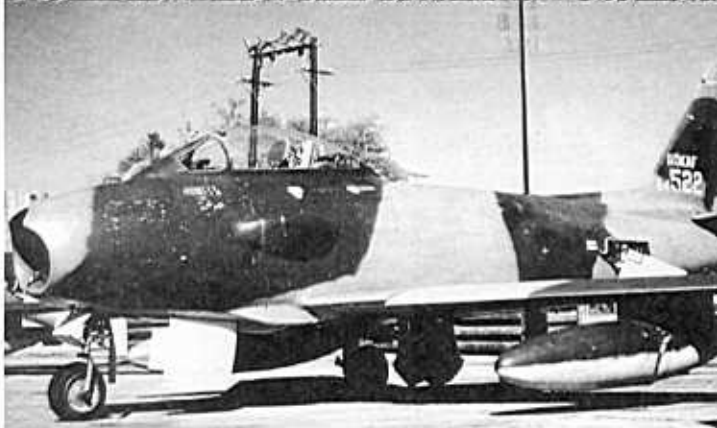
The SabreJet Classics Editor is working with the restoration people at Wright-Patterson and would like to hear from any member that might have stories and photos of 15th TRS RF-86Fs, especially the aircraft being restored. Please contact Larry Davis, SabreJet Classics Editor, 4713 Cleveland Ave. NW, Canton, OH 44709.



A flight of 15th TRS RF-86Fs over Japan in 1955. During this time, the 15th TRS RF-86Fs were flying missions across both the Chinese and Soviet borders. (credit - Larry Davis)

A ROKAF RF-86F on the Suwon ramp in the early 1980s, wears tan and green camouflage paint. The ROKAF had one squadron of RF-86Fs, modified from standard F-86Fs by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries in Japan. (credit - Jim Sullivan)

Several of the remaining RF-86Fs from the JASDF were used as target drones for live-fire exercises by Navy TOP GUN crews. The Sabres were based at China Lake NAS in 1979. (credit - Dave Begy)





Eight Sabre Pilots Equals 76 1/2 MiG-15s! Eight aces from the Korean War pose for the camera at the National Air Race, held at Dayton Airport in 1954. From left to right: Capt. Joe McConnell, 51st FIG - 16 victories, Capt. 'Hoot' Gibson, 4th FIG - 5, Maj. Jim Jabara, 4th FIG - 15, Capt. 'Pete' Fernandez, 4th FIG - 14.5, unk., Maj. Frederick Blesse, 4th FIG - 10, Capt. Dick Creighton, 4th FIG - 5, and Col. Royal Baker, 4th FIG - 13. Capt. McConnell was the top scorer in Korea, while Maj. Jabara was the Worlds First Jet Ace. The final tally in Korea according to a 29 July 1953 FEAF communique reported in Stars And Stripes, was 818 MiGs shot down for a loss of 58 Sabres - a 14-1 ratio! (photo credit - Larry Davis)

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