



Sabre Jet Classics

Volume 8 Number 1

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A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association



*French Air Force F-86K.s,
B-29 Escort In Korea, History--
of the 56th FIS,-More!*

SabreJet Classics

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1
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front cover: A French Air Force F-86K assigned to
Escadre de Chasse 1/13 on the ramp at Colmar in 1958.
(credit - J.M. Deudonne)

the Association and Editor of the magazine. Since this is an all volunteer, non-profit organization, there will be no monetary reimbursement for submitted materials. The SabreJet Classics is published three times a year. Extra copies of the current issue of SabreJet Classics can be ordered at \$5.00 per copy, providing copies are still in stock. A subscription to SabreJet Classics is available for non members of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association at a rate of \$15.00 per year. Back issues, any issue prior to the current issue, are available to members and non-members at a rate of \$3.00 per issue plus a mailing and handling fee. All payments should be made payable to "F-86 Sabre Pilots Association" in care of the Las Vegas address.

THE PRESIDENT'S NOTEBOOK

Larry Davis, our terrific Editor, tells me it's time to crank out another column. I don't have any earth shaking news to report. Your Association is doing fine; finances are in good shape, new memberships are trickling in (although we could all do better as there're lots of potential memberships out there), the Flight Line Store is doing well (Incidentally, Mike Freebairne and Jerry Johnson just finished a very thorough inventory of the Store. Big Job! Thanks Guys!), the hard working staff in Las Vegas continue to keep the organization running smoothly, and our new web site: <http://Sabre-Pilots.org> is getting more activity all the time. So, like many pilot's meetings that we all sat through, I'll just make a few administrative announcements and we can get on with the flying schedule.

If you can't get enough pictures of the beautiful Sabre, and/or your fill of nearly forgotten information about the bird, have we got news for you. Larry Davis and Squadron/Signal Publications have produced a magnificent book, **F-86 Walk Around**.

It's out standing! Now for the good news. We are in the process of procuring copies, which will be available through our Flight Line Store at a lower price than over the counter. I highly recommend it for your library. Watch for further details as they become available.

Elsewhere in this issue you will see a clever cartoon by Bob Matasick, along with a reminder to keep your dues current. We do not want to lose you. Lost wingmen are a concern to us. 'Nuff said.

It's time to start thinking and planning for the next GREAT reunion. It will be 16-20 April, 2001, at the Monte Carlo Hotel in Las Vegas. We will be getting more information to you throughout the next year. When you correspond with your buddies, encourage them to meet you there.

Finally, a subject I approach with a great deal of trepidation, fearing it may be misinterpreted. We all know that the years are accumulating faster on our longevity ribbon than the flying hours in our Form 5. Although as pilots, we have always tended to avoid thinking of our own mortality, we know that we are not immortal. Each of us will make our Final Flight in our own way, but we won't be alone.

When one of our members dies, we all feel the loss. Our friends, buddies, and compatriots, who may only have had a distant relationship, wish to be informed of the loss and remember a departed mate in their own way.

Similarly, the staff at the Association headquarters wants to know so we can send the appropriate condolences to the family, place the notice in the *Sabrejet Classics*, and handle the administrative details. May I suggest you take the time right now, and establish some type of system to notify us when that time occurs? Perhaps a reminder in your files. Or better yet, address a card or letter to the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association with the information already prepared, except for the details of the Final Flight. Then all that is necessary at that grieving time for your loved ones, is to drop it in the mail. Many of my friends have just such a set-up. In fact, because notification to organizations, publishers, etc., is such a problem, why not establish a file with the PREPARED information for all your organizations, publishers, etc.. It is a real thoughtful act of kindness to everyone concerned. Enough of that.

Now let's go fly!

Glenn L. Nordin

13th Sabre Pilots Reunion 16-20 April 2001

Monte Carlo Hotel, Las Vegas
Highlights

Monday, 16 April - Registration and Hospitality Bar

Tuesday, 17 April - Brunch, Ladies Treasure Hunt, Board
of Directors Meeting, Buffet

Wednesday, 18 April - Red Flag Tour, Legends In Concert

Thursday, 19 April - Membership Meeting, Banquet,
Lottery

Friday, 20 April - Checkout

And of course, the hospitality Bar will be open every day!

POLICY STATEMENT

The F-86 Sabre Pilots Association does not participate or endorsement not controlled by, or for the sole benefit of, the association. Readers are cautioned to be wary of any representation in conflict with this policy.

from the Editor

Ili Guys! First an apology for the tardiness of this issue. I had a slight health problem, that now seems to be cured. But it set the new issue back several weeks. We're up and running again, in full burner, and should be back on schedule with the Summer 2000 issue. Many thanks to all the guys that sent their best wishes to me.

I'm very happy that so many of you liked the issue devoted to the F-86D and the crews that stood lonely vigils along the Iron Curtain in that cantankerous bird. We plan to have several other issues devoted to singular subjects, including an all-Air Guard issue, an issue devoted to the guys that flew 86s in USAFE, and others.

But we need the stories, the photos, and other materials to make a good issue. Anyone with old unit patches from the F-86 days, are asked to either loan them to us to have copied, or take them to a good color xerox machine, such as Kinkos or Office Max, and have them copied on good photo paper. Then forward them along to us and we'll put them to good use.

Future subjects in the Classics will include an updated and corrected, fascinating story about the development and operations flown by the RF-86F pilots in the 15th TRS. It's wild! We have an article about flying the D model in the Royal Danish Air Force. Plus plenty of Korea material. And we're going to start re-printing some of the articles from the original magazine that very few of you have.

Of course, we'll keep you updated about the 2001 Reunion, slated for April 16-20, 2001, at the Monte Carlo Hotel in Las Vegas. I look forward to meeting with all my old friends and meeting many new friends at the 20W Reunion. See you there!

Lastly comes my usual plea. If you have stories, photos, color slides, or F-86 oriented patches or decals that you wish to loan us, contact LARRY DAVIS, EDITOR, SABREJET CLASSICS, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OII 44709; or call 1-330-493-4122. SabreJet Classics is the best association publication going, with your help, we can keep it that way.

Always Check 6
Larry Davis

FOLDED WINGS

Thomas J. "TJ" Costello, November 21st, 1999

Ralph G. deClairmont, March 15, 2000

Richard A. Dutton, December 12th, 1999

Charles J. **Hoey**, December 17th, 1999

Maurice L. Martin, October 29th, 1999

Tandy Newland, August 17th, 1999

George J. Ola, June 6th, 1999

Grady C. Spry, September 30th, 1999

SABRE PILOTS WEB SITE & WEBMASTER

A PERFECT MATCH

In our last issue, President Glenn Nordin reported on our very own web site. For several years there was a Sabre Pilots sub-page of the FighterTown web site, thanks to member Lt.Gen. W.W. 'Bones' Marshall. Now the Association has its very own site, posted by webmaster and Sabre Pilot, Col. Bill Weiger, of Seminole, Florida. Of course, you can still find the Sabre Pilots web site by going through FighterTown. But now you can get to our site direct by going to <<http://SABRE-PILOTS.ORG>>.

Our web site is listed on major 'search engines', such as Alta Vista. Simply open Alta Vista, then type "Sabre Pilots", then click "Search". Alta Vista will instantly list several ways of bringing up our site, including the address at the end of the first paragraph.

What does this mean? For one thing, it makes our internet address available to anyone on Planet Earth. And Bill Weiger says we have gotten several messages from Europe as well as the USA, complimenting him on the content and format and asking for assistance in locating Sabre pilots, photos, models, etc. He got one message from a German viewer, written in German! Why? An interesting footnote to all this exposure is that Alta Vista will automatically translate our entire site into a language of your choosing (as long as it's German, French, Spanish, or Portuguese), after you click "TRAnslate".

The Sabre Pilots web site is professionally done. It contains photos, news letters, reunion information, stories from SabreJet Classics, memberships applications, "Folded Wings", prose & poetry, a Flight Line Store shopping catalogue, and links to related sites such as FighterTown. That's a lot of material, but

Webmaster Bill Weiger has organized the site to make it

highly "user-friendly". Even a computer novice can enjoy what it has to offer.

How Bill Weiger got this job is yet another story which explains why our Association has grown to be the finest of its type anywhere. Talented, hard-working volunteers are the key. At our last reunion, Bill talked to his old friend, Jerry Johnson, our Chairman of the Board, and told him that he had a major hobby - computers. And that he even had a personal 'home page' on the internet. Coincidentally, shortly after the reunion, Bones Marshall asked that we try to find someone to take over the Sabre Pilots link on FighterTown. LOCK-ON! Jerry Johnson contacted Bill, and in short order Bill had our new web site up and running.

Bill is a success story in his own right. After a successful Air Force career, which included flying the F-86 with the 334th Fighter Squadron, 4th Fighter Wing, he launched (no pun intended) a second career in commercial fishing. In 1987 he retired again, and his daughter, who had just started law school, asked him to buy a word processor for her. Bill acquired an early Radio Shack computer, taught himself to use it, and acquired a modem (1200 baud!). This got him started with the internet and again he taught himself how to use it.

Eventually he had a friend build a custom computer for him, and he's now on his third model. Bill Weiger is a busy guy - and a role model for any of our members who've been reluctant to get involved with computers. And by the way, if any of you are interested in helping out with the web site, please contact Bill at <WEBMASTER@SABRE-PILOTS.ORG>. In fact, all of you might drop him an e-mail at that address to tell him what you think of the site, offer suggestions, etc. He'd like to hear from you, and he'll add you to our list of current Sabre Pilots e-mail addresses.

4 ■ Sabre Pilots Assoc^o r



**HOME OF
THE BEST DAMN PILOTS WHO EVER STEPPED INTO A COCKPIT
OF THE F-86 SABRE**

Welcome to the **Net Home of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association. We hope you enjoy your visit and that we are informative to our members and guests.** This is just the beginning and we **hope** to grow. Our Web **page** name is 5ABRf-PILOTS.ORG **You can address any comments to** WFBMASTER@SABRE-PILOTS.ORG **We hope you come back often. If you have a web page please feel free to link us to it. We will gladly reciprocate.**



An F-8611 of the 137th Tactical Fighter Squadron, New York Air National Guard in May 1959. Author Gerry Martas tried in vain to get assigned to the 137th TFS, so that he **could** fly "The Last Of The Sport Jobs", but he kept finding C-119s in his future. (credit - David Menard)

PURSUING A SABRE, BUT DOGGED BY A BOXCAR!

by Gerry Martas

With barely 30 hours of Sabre time, I did not expect to ever have anything to say in Sabre Jet *Classics*. The article, "One Short Tour" in the Spring 1998 issue, however, provided an opening to add to Kingsley Purton's recollections.

That Summer I was a new member of the 93rd FBS, 439th FBW, at Selfridge AFB, Michigan. The 439th FBW was brought to active duty training, 3-17 August 1957, by AF Reserve Order #140, dated 28 June 1957. Squadron personnel traveled to and from the F-86H training site in Memphis, Tennessee, on chartered four-engine airliners. For someone just recently off of active duty, this created the impression that the Reserves really operated First Class.

During that initial tour of AF Reserve duty, I eagerly looked forward to a checkout in the F-86 later that summer. First, along with one other lieutenant, I would have to complete the jet refresher syllabus in the T-33 Shooting Star. Our jet time consisted only of the eighty training hours flown at UPT, and I'd been flying C-119 Flying Boxcars on active duty.

The first week went exceptionally well, with plenty of flying. Then, unexpectedly and suddenly, the Secretary of Defense, took \$5 billion away from the Air Force budget (about \$45 billion in today's dollars!). For nearly a week, almost the entire Air Force ceased flying until the impact of this unprecedented action could be translated into 'flying hours remaining'.

A corollary ramification was the quick transfer of all fighter aircraft out of the Air Force Reserve and into the Air National Guard. Henceforth, the AF Reserve was to be relegated to flying transports!

By Christmas 1957, with C-119 'Flying Boxcar' transition well under way at Selfridge, several lieutenants and a few captains managed to transfer to Air Guard fighter units. For me, it was across the state line to Toledo, Ohio, where the 112th FIS was to re-equip with Republic F-84F Thunderstreaks. (The freedom and ability of Reserve pilots to 'shop around' for fighter slots, and to choose civilian jobs to enable them to fill those slots, or resign, may surprise our active-duty-only counterparts.)

Three years elapsed before another opportunity arose for me to check out in the F-86 Sabre. In the Spring of 1960, after qualifying to fill a vacancy in the 137th IFS, New York Air National Guard (who were equipped with F-86Hs), I accepted civilian employment in New York.

My goal to fly the Sabre was finally achieved. But my elation was brief. In January 1961, I received orders to go a Century Series airplane. The 137th was one of the first and few Air Guard squadrons ordered to convert to — TRANSPORTS! And incredulously, it was again to the C-119! It seemed like that machine, which I had flown on active duty, was persevering to do to me what its US Marine designation (R4Q2) sounded like.

I parted from the Air National Guard until I was able to obtain another fighter slot some months later.



"Purple Shaft". a B-29A with the 93rd Bomb Squadron, is loaded with 500 pound bombs on the ramp at Kadena AB, Okinawa. The B-29s that proved literally invincible against the Japanese Air Force just five years before, were dead meat in the gun sights of the MiGs operating over Northwest Korea. (credit - USAF)

B-29 ESCORT IN KOREA

1Lt Robert Makinney,
334th Fighter Interceptor Squadron
8 July 1951, Suwon AB

The afternoon mission on 8 July was a bomber escort mission for B-29 Superforts attacking the Pyongyang area. This would be my fifth mission of the war, although I hadn't seen any Migs so far. We left K-13 to the south, in elements of two, joining up in squadron formation as we made a 180° turn, passed to the east of Suwon and started north in a 16 ship formation.

I was assigned as wingman to Col. Francis Gabreski, the famous World War Two ace, who had recently been assigned as Deputy Group CO of the 4th. He would lead this mission, and his call sign was Dignity Mike, or Dig Mike for short. Naturally, mine was Dig Mike 2.

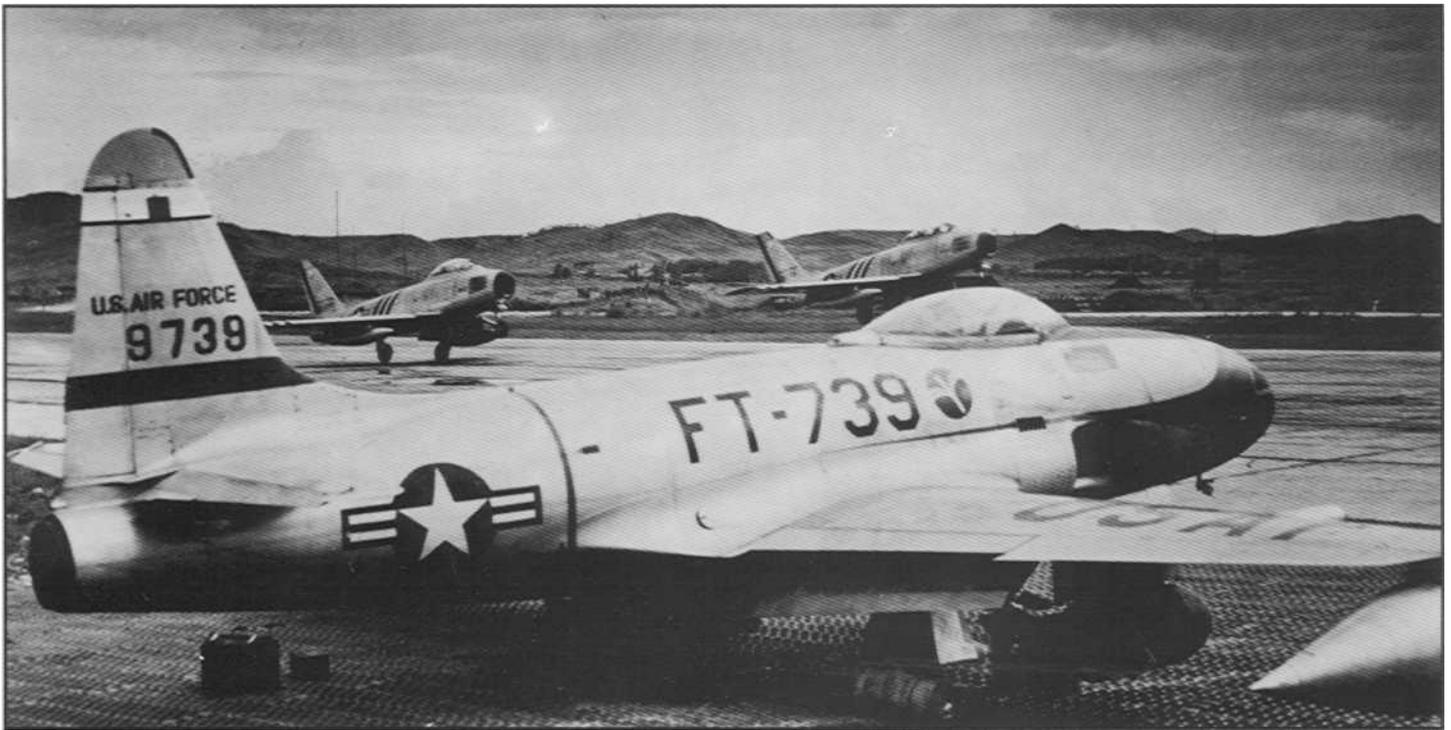
We climbed out on a northwesterly heading, crossed the Haeju Peninsula, and leveled off at 25,000 feet. We rendezvoused with the B-29s as they crossed just north of Chinampo, near the mouth of the Taedong River. We crossed over the B-29 formation and immediately set up a race track pattern to the north of the B-29 flight path. Approaching the target, the radio chatter intensified, and we began to see puffs of dirty black smoke - flak - both above and below the B-29 line of flight.

The bomber commander - call sign Jakeman - announced - "Dignity, this is Jakeman. We are at 'Windy', which was a point in the sky five minutes from 'bombs away'. This was also an advisory call to the flights of F-51 Mustangs that were attacking the flak batteries positioned near the target. When Jakeman called 'Windy', the Mustangs started to head out.

As soon as the B-29s had crossed the target and released their bombs, we made a turn to the south. Filter Lead, the F-51 flak suppression flight, suddenly called - "Dignity, this is Filter Lead. We have bandits in the area!" We continued our escort pattern until the B-29s were well out of the target area. Gabreski called the bomber formation - "Jakeman, this is Dig Mike Lead, we have you clear of the area. We'd like to break off and go help Filter."

1st LT. Robert Makinney, 334th FIS, Suwon AB 1951, showing the effects of Mig cannon fire - a missing canopy! (credit - Bob Makinney)





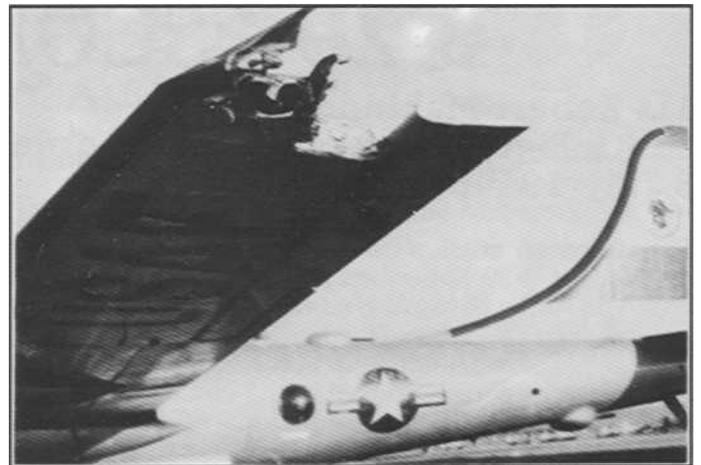
A pair of 4th Fighter Interceptor Group F-86As take off from Suwon AB, South Korea, in the summer of 1951, past a 25th FIS F-SOC Shooting Star. Because of the high MiG threat along the Yalu River, and the fact that the F-80s were at a distinct disadvantage against the much faster MiGs, 4th FIG F-86s had to escort any B-29 missions anywhere in or near 'MiG Alley'. (credit - USAF)

Jakeman replied - "Roger, and thanks!" Gabby made a hard turn back toward Pyongyang, and called the rest of us - "Dig Mike, drop tanks, and let's go to 100%" With the increase in power and having lost the drag of our drop tanks, we started to accelerate immediately, and initiated a climb to altitude. Within a few minutes, we were nearing Pyongyang from the southeast at about .92 Mach, and going through 30,000.

Without warning, Gabby dropped his nose and brought his power back to idle. It was obvious that he'd had a problem or had seen something. It was the latter, and I still hadn't seen a thing. We were now in a shallow dive, and had accelerated to about the F-86s max speed, descending through 20,000 feet. Gabby started firing at something, something that was at an excessive range. I could see the smoke around his gun ports., blowing back across his fuselage. But I still couldn't who he was shooting at.

I slid in closer to Gabby's tail as he fired a second burst, about 50-60 feet below and behind him. There it was, a MiG. I could Gabby's tracers light up the MiG all along the trailing edge of his right wing. The MiG pulled up sharply, and Gabby followed, firing again, and again scoring more hits on the MiG fuselage. At this point, with his greater airspeed because of the dive, Gabby overshot the MiG, sliding past him.

I maneuvered my Sabre into a position where the Mig was in my gun sight. I was sorely tempted to fire, but instinctively thought that it was Gabby's kill, not mine. More importantly, I was a wingman. My leader was ahead of me and needed me to keep him clear. Without another thought, I added power, slid past the MiG and rejoined Gabby, whom I still had in sight in my peripheral vision.



(above) A 93rd BS B-29 shows the damage caused by a single 23mm cannon hit from a MiG-15. **(below)** The crew of "Command Decision" one of two 19th BG B-29As that hold the distinction of shooting down five MiG-15s during the Korean War, pose in front of their "Ace" airplane. MiG jets shot down or destroyed over 100 B-29s during the war. (credit - Larry Davis collection)



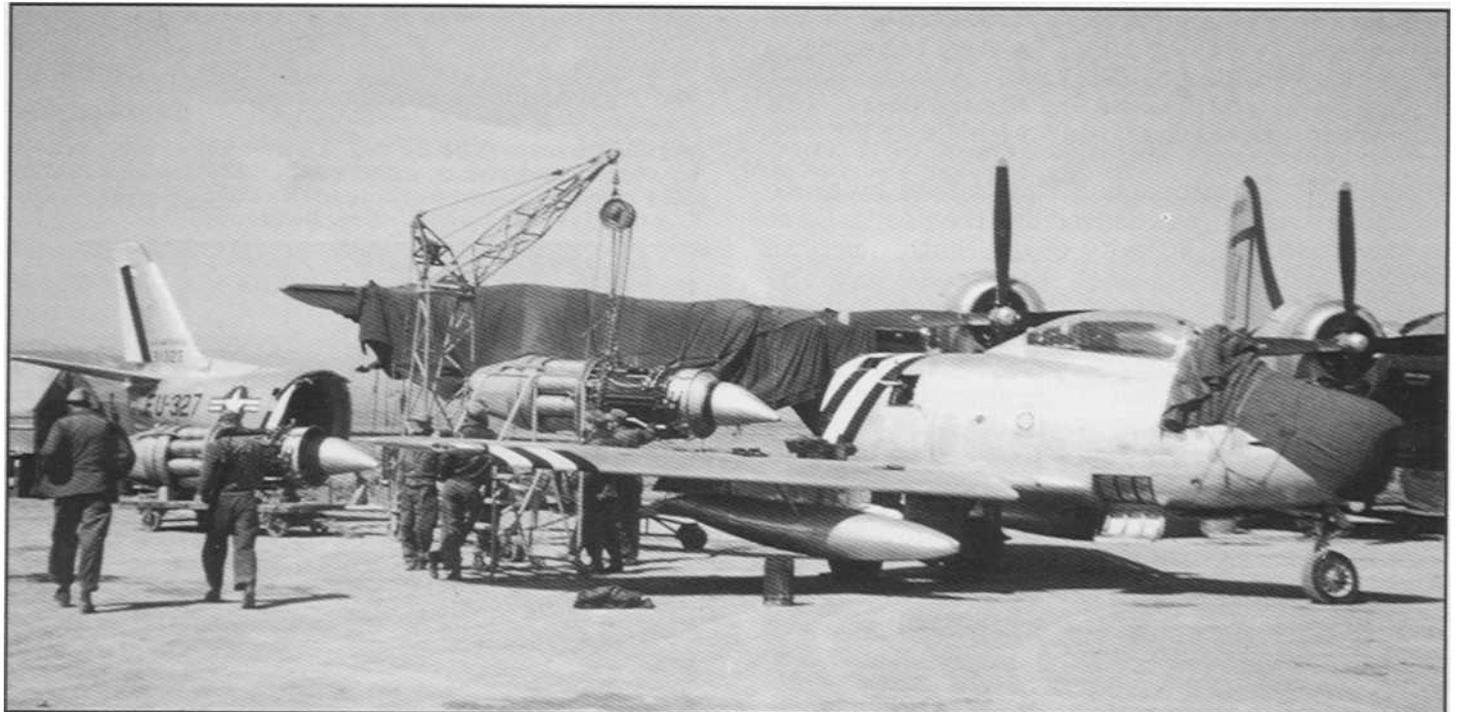


The 'Ace of Aces', Colonel Frances Gabreski leans on the wing of a 4th FIG F-86A at Suwon in the Summer of 1951. 'Gabby' scored 2 kills with the 4th FIG, and another 4 1/2 kills with the 51st FIG, becoming the 8th 'Ace' in the Korean War. (credit - USAF)

As I flew past the MiG, he had rolled inverted, starting an almost vertical dive. I was sure he had lost his engine and would ultimately crash. With that I rejoined with Gabby, who was in a right turn looking for other bandits. I had just regained my position on Gabby's wing, when he again dove for the deck. This time though, the descent was much more gradual. As we leveled off at about 6,000 feet, he opened fire at a MiG at a range of about 1500 feet.

I watched as numerous pieces of the MiG's tail started to come off as Gabby's rounds found their mark. The MiG took no evasive action, continued a slight descending path, crossed the Taedong River, and crashed into a hill on the south bank. At this point, we were both at a

The B-29A behind the 4th FIG F-86A was damaged by MiG cannon fire during a raid on the Yalu River bridges in the Summer of 1951, but limped back as far as Suwon AB where it made an emergency landing. The 307th BG Superfortress suffered extensive damage and never flew again. 4th FIG maintenance people, rigged up some large canvas tarps over the wings and used the B-29 as an impromptu. open-air engine shop. (credit - Iry Clark)



Three 'Aces' equals 16 1/2 MiGs. (l-r) Captain Dick Becker, and Captain 'Hoot' Gibson, receive congratulations from Colonel Gabreski on 9 September 1951, the day both pilots scored their 5th MiG kill. All three pilots are members of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Assn. (credit - Dick Becker)

very low altitude, both at Bingo fuel, and the radio chatter had subsided to the point that it was obvious the MiGs had left, and we started for home.

As we climbed back to altitude enroute back to Suwon, I asked Gabby - "Was that two?" He replied - "Negative." And said nothing further all the way back. At the debriefing, he explained that he had attacked a single MiG, which dove for the deck and leveled off, probably hoping to escape another beating like the one he had just sustained. But Gabby saw him again. It's highly unlikely that he'd have been able to make the 100 mile flight back to Antung anyway. Gabby got the kill and I was a good wingman, which is what they were paying me for at the time.



Insigne de EC 1/13



An F-86K from EC 1/13, on the ramp at Hahn AB, Germany in the Summer of 1960. In 1959, the F-86Ks were modified to fire the AIM-9 Sidewinder missile. French F-86Ks often visited other NATO bases as part of their cross-country training. (credit - David Menard)

The French Air Force & The F-86K

by Jean-Marie Dieudonne

The F-86K was an all-weather interceptor developed by North American for use by NATO air forces in Europe. Based on the F-86D-40 airframe, the F-86K did not have the highly complex Hughes E-4 Fire Control System, although it did use the same radar. Air Force felt the E-4 FCS was far too complex and classified for use by NATO. Therefore, North American developed the MG-4 Fire Control System, a much simpler unit to maintain, that used the readily available, easily maintained, and highly accurate, type A-4 lead computing gunsight.

In addition, the F-86K would not be armed with air-to-air rockets as on the F-86D, instead having four M24A-1 20mm cannons, with a cyclic rate of 700-800 rounds/minute. There were no provisions for carriage of any type of under wing ordnance. However, beginning in 1959, many F-86Ds and Ks in service with non-U.S. air forces, were modified to fire the GAR-8 (AIM-9) Sidewinder heat-seeking air-to-air missile.

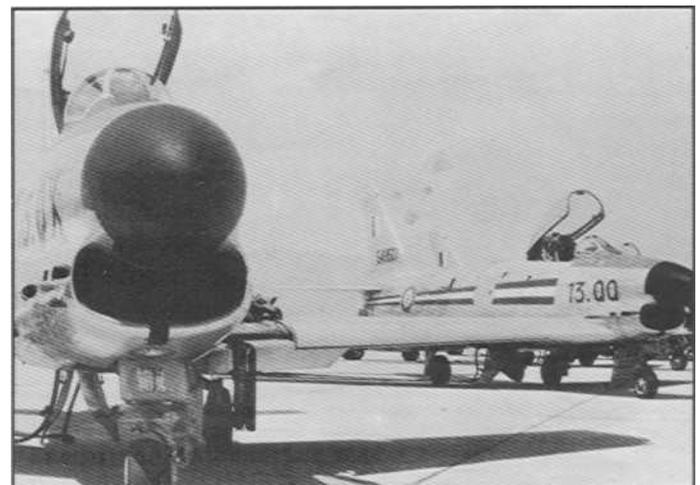
The first of 120 production F-86Ks built by North American Aviation, was delivered to the U.S. Air Force in May 1955. The majority of the North American production run was delivered to Norway and The Netherlands Air Forces. But the main production would be provided by Fiat of Italy. Fiat built a total of 221 F-86Ks, plus taking taking delivery of the two initial prototype F-86Ks, for a total of 223 aircraft. The Italian Air Force received 65 Fiat-built F-86Ks; France took delivery of 60 of the Turin-built Ks; and West Germany received 88.

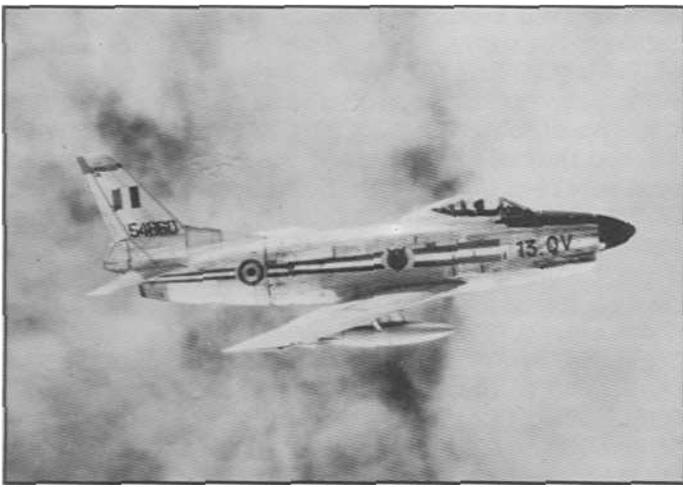
It is the 60 F-86Ks that were delivered to France in 1957 that Sabre Pilot Jean-Marie Dieudonne was very familiar with. "I graduated in U.S. Air Force Pilot Class 53G, flying the T-6 Texan at Kinston, North Carolina, then the T-28 Trojan and T-33 Shooting Star at Bryan AFB, Texas, had gunnery training in the T-33 at Del Rio, Texas, then to Luke AFB, Arizona to fly the F-84E Thunderjet."

"The Armee de l'Aire (French Air Force) received 60 F-86K Sabres that were split into two squadrons - Escadre de Chasse 1/13 "Artois", and 2/13 "Alpes". We were the only squadron in the Armie de l'Aire classified as "Tout Temps", or all-weather fighter. The first squadron, EC 1/13, was created in 1956 at Lahr AB in West Germany. We had twelve pilots that initially were sent for an advanced instrument flying course since we were all coming from day fighter squadrons."

"Our first commander was Colonel Risso, a survivor and great fighter pilot from the French squadron that had operated in Russia during World War 2, known as the Normandic-Niemen Squadron. In late 1956, EC 1/13 began receiving the first of 8 brand new Lockheed T-33 Shooting Star jet trainers, along with the F-86K simulator. The U.S. Air Force supplied two instructor pilots, Captains Linn and Evans, and we were under the overall command of Major Hill. By that time we started to gain more pilots, and we were charged with making them more proficient in instrument flying using the T-33s and the F-86K simulator."

F-86Ks from EC 1/13 on the ramp at Colmar AB, France in 1959. The primary armament of the F-86K was four M24 20mm cannons, working with a simplified MG-4 Fire Control System. (credit - J.M. Dieudonne)





A new F-86K assigned to EC 1/13 over a typical undercast usually found over eastern France. Weather was always **a problem for** NATO units in Europe, which is the reason that many NATO air forces chose the all-weather F-86K as their primary air defense system.

"About the same time as the simulator program began to end, the first of our brand new Fiat-built F-86Ks began to arrive at Lahr AB. This is where the exciting part began - flying that marvelous aircraft. I made my first flight in the F-86K on 11 February 1957.

"It was about that time that we moved from Lahr AB, West Germany, to the eastern part of France and a new airbase - Colmar Myenheim. Here we received the rest of the 60 F-86Ks and we split into the two operational squadrons, EC 1/13 and 2/13."

"Most of our training missions in the F-86K at this time were aircraft identification in both daylight and night-time conditions, and in all types of weather. Often, we would take off from Colmar, make a training intercept, then land at either a U.S. Air Force or RCAF base in West Germany, where we would refuel, then take off for another intercept before heading for home at Colmar."

"Once we became fully combat operational, we would sit alert at one end of the runway at Colmar. The alert pilots lived in tents both during summer and winter. (We had some USAF F-86D pilots visit us, standing alert beside our F-86Ks and living with us in tents during the winter. We didn't see them again so we knew it was very uncomfortable.)"

"I recall that we scrambled several times on one Czechoslovakian IL-18 airliner that was flying from Paris back towards the east. The guy would never follow the flight plan, and we suspected he was taking infrared photos of restricted areas. But he knew where he was supposed to be right away when he heard us approaching for a high-angle identification pass."

"I was also scrambled on one mission to help a pair of US F-101A Voodoo fighters that had an emergency at high altitude above a very thick undercast. They joined up on each side of me and we let down through the cloud deck for a landing at Solingen AB in West Germany. (They sent us a box of whiskey, thank you very much!) Such was our life in EC-1/13 with the F-86Ks."

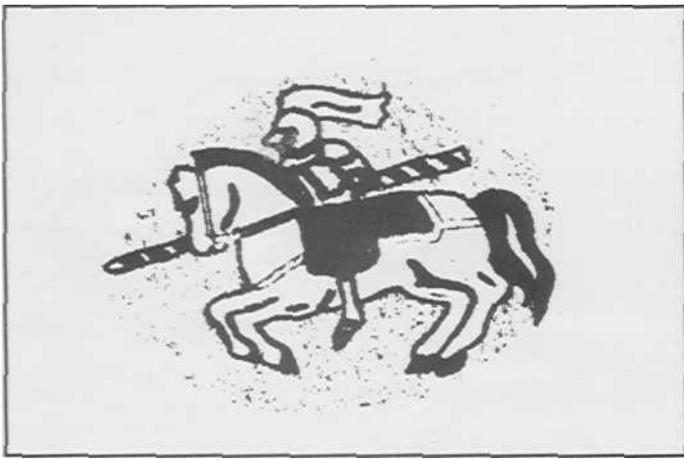


The K used the same **APG-36** radar as the F-86D, but with the simpler MG-4 FCS. (credit - J.M. Deudonne)



(above) An F-86K from EC 1/13 coming in for a landing at Mayenheim AB, Germany in late 1961. EC 1/13 Sabres carried code letters beginning with "Cr. (below) This F-86K was assigned to EC 2/13 as denoted by the code letter "P" on the nose. EC 2/13 was the second squadron to receive F-86Ks in early 1958, and were based at Lahr AB, Germany alongside EC 1/13. (credit - Werner Gysin R J.M. Deudonne)





insigne de EC 2/13

"In 1959, our F-86Ks were sent back to Fiat for modification to the wings. At this time, the airplanes were fitted with the Aero 3B Sidewinder launch rails, and the wingtips were extended with the improved leading edge slats. We didn't get a chance to fly any other type of F-86, and flew the F-86Ks until 1962 when both squadrons were re-equipped with the Dassault Mirage III. What is remarkable about those times, is that during the six years that we operated the F-86K, we had only 22 accidents, resulting in six aircraft being destroyed. And no pilots suffered any injuries."

Beginning in April 1962, the French Air Force began conversion to the Dassault Mirage IIIC, with EC 2/13 transitioning in April 1962, and EC 1/13 converting in September. All remaining aircraft were consolidated into EC 3/13 at Colmar, beginning in April 1962. The last 22 Armie de l'Aire F-86Ks were returned to Italy and sold to Central and South American nations that wanted a first line interceptor to defend their skies against unwanted intruders.

An F-86K assigned to EC 2/13 streams the chute **upon landing** at Colmar AR, France in 1962. The F-86K was built to the latest specifications, which called for **installation** of the drag chute as used on all F-86Ds from D-40 on. The lack of fuselage **squadron insignia would** indicate the aircraft was about to be transferred to EC 3/13, the last F-86K unit in the French AF. (credit - J.M. Deudonne)



STORY BEHIND THE PHOTO

One of our members sent this photo with a newspaper clipping about the F-86 exhibit at the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum during the Air Force 50th Birthday year. After studying the photo, it occurred to us that the name "Enola Gay" in the background might confuse some of today's young people. No kids, that isn't the name of the Sabre. But there IS a connection that might have been forgotten unless we printed the story. So here goes -

In early 1997, the above photo was sent to us by member Sam Jackson. Shortly thereafter, another member sent us a newspaper clipping about the Air & Space "Sabre" exhibit. The clipping had a particularly beautiful photo of the exhibit.

Our President, Dee Harper, knew the photo would be perfect for the cover of Sabre Jet Classics. He asked Jim Campbell, Board Chairman, to try and get us a copy. Jim was well placed to get this done as he was in the marketing business in Detroit, with the right contacts. Jim called the museum and was told that there were no more copies available, and it would take three months to produce one.

Jim said he knew the business and it shouldn't take more than three days. Furthermore, he might have to call on our favorite congressman, Sabre Pilot Sam Johnson (K-Texas) to help us out. Five days later we got the photo and it appeared on the cover of Sabre Jet Classics, vol. 5-1, Spring 1997.

It turns out that Sam had recently been selected by the Speaker of the House to be a member of the Smithsonian Institution Board of Regents. Are you starting to see why we got the photo so quickly? You may be interested in our take on why and how Sam Johnson became a Smithsonian Regent.

Before all this, in the mid-1990s, there was a huge flap about the proposed exhibit of the "Enola Gay", the B-29 that dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima) in the Smithsonian. Many WW2 veterans and veterans' organizations opposed the exhibit on the grounds that it emphasized the casualties caused by the "Enola Gay", and did not reflect adequately the positive side of the mission, which arguably saved millions of lives on both sides, by bringing the war to a speedy end.

Air Force Magazine was a leader of this opposition, and the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association joined the fray with a flood of letters (on our letterhead) to both Smithsonian and sympathetic Senators and U.S. Representatives. Perhaps the most vocal (and credible) critic of the proposed exhibit was Sam Johnson. Happy Ending - the 'good guys' won! The exhibit was changed for the better



The Smithsonian Air & Space Museum **display** showing an F-86A from the 4th FIG in Korea. This F-86A, #48-260, actually did **fly** combat with the 4th. (credit - Carolyn **Russo, Smithsonian Institution**)

and Sam was appointed a regent of the Smithsonian Institution.

Congressman Sam Johnson and his lovely wife, Shirley, attended our 11th reunion in 1997, where Sam was the principal speaker at the banquet. (See Sabre Jet Classics, vol. 5-2, Summer 1997)

So we think you'll agree that there is quite a story behind the photo of the F-86 with an "Enola Gay" sign hovering over it. The Sabre is no longer on display at the Air & Space Museum, but we think it can be seen either at the Smithsonian's Garber facility in Silver Hill, Maryland, or at the new Dulles Airport facility when it opens. By the way, the "Enola Gay" sign refers to the entrance to that display, which was just behind the Sabre display.

Congressman Sam Jackson (R-Texas) uses a video camera in front of the **F-86 display** in March 1997. Note sign pointing the way to the "**Enola Gay**" **display**. (credit - Sam Jackson)



Jacqueline Briand

Without the heroism of Jacqueline Briand, the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association might be a very different organization, or might not exist at all. She played a big role in the survival of 2nd Lt. Flamm D. Harper, the distinguished Chairman-Emeritus of the Board Of Directors of the Sabre Pilots Association.

"No. 1 SNAFU", the story of how Dee Harper was shot down, evaded, and rescued in Korea, was told in the Fall 1996 issue of *SabreJet Classics*. That was the second time Dee was shot down and evaded capture to return to his unit. In so doing, Dee became one of only two American pilots known to accomplish this feat.

Dee was downed for the first time on 15 July 1944, while flying a P-38J Lightning on a fighter-bomber mission near Montmorillon, about 100 miles south of Paris. (The story was recounted in the Spring 1999 issue of *The Daedalus Flyer*, a publication of the Order of Daedalians (The National Fraternity of Military Pilots).) While flying element lead in a flight of four led by 1st Lt. Robin Olds, Dee's Lightning was either hit by flak or debris from a bomb dropped by another flight member. His aircraft severely damaged and at very low altitude, Dee rode it down to a wheels-up landing in a farmers field. Dee swears he had very little to do with the successful landing and calls it "miraculous".

As Dee crawled out of the wreck, he saw a French girl standing alongside the meadow. She beckoned him to follow her. Bloody, battered and bruised, he followed the young lady to her grandparents' nearby home. The family fed him, tended to his injuries, sheltered him overnight, and provided him with civilian clothes. Then her father assisted Dee in evading German troops, finally placing him in the hands of British SAS (Special Air Service) troops, and the French Maquis underground. After a series of adventures with these folks, Dee finally returned to England on 6 August via a behind-the-lines pick-up by an RAF Hudson.

But it all began with the 14 year old French girl who had the courage to assist the American pilot, saving him from almost certain capture by the Germans. Her actions, and those of her family and other French citizens who helped, placed them at great risk had they been discovered. The Germans were well known for severely punishing anyone who aided the Allies.



Jacqueline Briand and Dee Harper meet for the first time in 55 years during October 1999. Ms. **Briand** was 14 years old when she helped (then) Lt. Dee **Harper** escape the Nazis after his **P-38** crashed in France. (credit - Las **Vegas** Review Journal)



(above) Jacqueline Briand stands between her two cousins in Paris during 1944. She was 14 at the time. (below) U. Dee Harper, 8th U.S. Army Air **Force**, 1944. (credit - **Jacqueline** Briand & Dee Harper)



Dee didn't learn the name of the French girl until 1998, when they were placed in touch with each other by a French archeologist, who was working at the site of Dee's crash. This began an exchange of correspondence between Dee and his rescuer, Jacqueland Briand. In October 1999, Jacqueline, now 70 and a great-grandmother, along with her husband, visited Dee at his home in Las Vegas. It was their first visit to the USA, and Dee arranged a marvelous itinerary of sightseeing and partying for the Briands. The event was covered in grand fashion by the *Las Vegas ReviewJournal* on 1 November 1999.

The F-86 Sabre Pilots Association sends its sincere thanks to Jacqueline Briand for her heroic actions which helped Dee Harper survive to fight another day, and to lead our great association in the last decade of the Twentieth Century.

FIRST FLIGHT SURPRISE (A Dog Of A Checkout)

by **Jim Hancock**

In October 1956, fresh out of pilot training and sporting a shiny new 'brown bar', I began my rated flying career as a T-33 Instrument Instructor Pilot with the 3558th Combat Crew Training Squadron (Advanced Interceptor) at Perrin AFB, Texas. Major Gus Sonderman was the Commander. Two years later it was time to upgrade to the F-86L as an all-Weather Interceptor IP. My checkout IP was Capt. A.U. Stanley.

The checkout consisted of ground school, simulator, and flying training. Simulator training focused on aircraft performance, emergency procedures, airborne intercept tactics, emergency procedures and more emergency procedures! About 20 hours worth as I recall. Lots of sweat was generated in 'the box'. Finally, having passed my 'sim check' early one morning, I was scheduled for my first flight later that day. It would not be a dual ride (There was no dual scat '86D/L). 'AD' would chase me.

"Sabre Flight of 2, cleared for takeoff." Into position, brakes SET, power FULL MILITARY, engine/flight instruments CHECKED, blood pressure/heart rate MAX, light the 'burner, check nozzles OPEN, EGT, RPM and fuel flow STABILIZED, brakes released and AWAY WE GO!

I could almost hear and feel the vacuum tubes in that 'state of the art' electronic fuel control as they tried to optimize performance in the big J47. Outside, I knew the whole base could hear the roar. What a blast! Man, was I pumped! 'AD', my IP, rolled three seconds later.

At just about rotate speed (we didn't use Vr in those days), I began to hear and feel power surges accompanied by fuel flow and nozzle fluctuations. I'm thinking, "This isn't really happening. I'm still in the simulator - right?"

"Sabre Lead aborting!", I yelled into the mike. Throttle CUT-OFF, speed brakes OUT, drag chute DEPLOY, drop tanks JETTISON, brakes AS REQUIRED - just like the book said. Fortunately the tanks rolled off to the right as AD was coming up fast on my left. Naturally, the tanks ignited, resulting in a rather spectacular infield fire which caused the Runway Safety Unit (RSU) crew to evacuate. The field was subsequently closed. My Sabre Dog and I came to a screeching halt at about the 2000 foot marker of an 8000 foot runway.

Needless to say, there was considerable 'Monday Morning Quarterbacking' about my flight. I was feeling

a little sheepish, yet I knew I had correctly followed the procedures that had been drilled into my head. I must have related the incident a dozen times - first to 'AD', then to Flying Safety, Maintenance (they did confirm a fuel control malfunction), my squadron CO, Group CO, Wing CO, and Lord knows who else. However, all concurred that I had responded properly to the situation. But maybe I was a little too aggressive! Had I had more experience in the F-86D, I probably wouldn't have 'punched off the tanks'. 20-20 hind sight, it's great!

The next morning 'AD' and I finally accomplished my initial checkout flight and I went on to instruct in the 'Dog' for another two years. Eventually, our squadron converted to the F-102. Guess who checked me out in the Deuce? 'AD' of course. This transition went as advertised. But 'AD' did cut me a little slack on takeoff when he chased my first 'Deuce' flight. Six seconds this time!

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Sabre Squadrons

56th Fighter Squadron "World's Finest"

from Henry Head

The 56th FIS evolved from the 56th Pursuit Squadron, a unit within the 54th Pursuit Group, at Hamilton Field, California. The 56th PS was activated on 15 January 1941, defending the war industry in Southern California until June 1942. On 20 June 1942, the 56th (now) Fighter Squadron, took their Bell P-39 Airacobras to Nome, Alaska, where they won a Distinguished Unit Citation for operations against the Japanese in November 1942. In 1943, the 56th FS returned to the ConUS, and were based at Bartow Army Air Field, Florida, where they converted to North American P-51 Mustangs. One year later, on 1 May 1944, the 56th FS was disbanded.

Re-constituted and activated at Selfridge AFB, Michigan in November 1952, the 56th (now) Fighter Interceptor Squadron was assigned to the 4708th Air Defense Wing, and equipped with North American F-86F Sabres. In February 1953, the 56th FIS began conversion to F-86D interceptors, and was assigned to the 575th Air Defense Group.

On 18 August 1955, under Project ARROW, the 56th FIS designation was transferred from Selfridge AFB to Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, initially under operational control of the 4706th Air Defense Wing, then the 58th Air Division (Air Defense) on 1 March 1956, where the squadron was the primary air defense unit for southwestern Ohio and the research facilities at Wright-Patterson.

A 56th Fighter Squadron P-39D Airacobra **taxying** through the mud of an Alaskan airfield in 1942. The 56th FS operated the P-39 until the unit rotated **back** to the ConUS in 1943. (credit - David Menard Collection)



In the Spring of 1957, the 56th FIS began re-equipping with the North American F-86L Sabre, an improved version of the F-861) which incorporated the Semi-Automatic Ground Environment system, or SAGE. The unit, commanded by Lt.Col. Harad 'Axe' Askelman, became proficient with both the F-86L and SAGE, and won an Air Defense Command "A" award for live rocket SURE-FIRE missions in the late summer of 1957.

The transition into the F-86L was short-lived however, as the squadron began transition into the 'missile-with-a-man-in-it', the Lockheed F-104A in May 1958. The 56th FIS was now under operational control of 30th Air Division (Air Defense), before being transferred to the Detroit Air Defense Sector in April 1959. The Stith FIS was deactivated at Wright-Patterson on 1 March 1960.

Henry Head graduated as part of Advanced Fighter Training Class 57-C at Perrin AFB, Texas. (credit - Henry Head)



Advanced Fighter Training
Class 57-C

Perrin Air Force Base
Sherman, Texas



1st LT. Henry Head, 56th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, Wright-Patterson AFB, September 1957. (credit - Henry Head)

A 56th FIS F-86I) on the ramp at Selfridge AFB, Michigan in 1954. The 56th FIS converted from F-86Fs to F-86Ds in February 1953. (credit - Brian Baker)



An F-86I) assigned to the 56th FIS during early 1955, when the squadron was under the control of 575th Air Defense Group. (credit - Marty Isham Collection)

Black and yellowed checked tails of 56th FIS F-86Ds on the ramp at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio in 1956. On 18 August 1955, under Project ARROW, the 56th FIS number was moved from Selfridge AFB to Wright-Patterson AFB. While at Wright-Patterson, the 56th FIS was under control of the 58th Air Division (Air Defense). (credit - Henry Head)



An F-104A assigned to the 56th FIS at Wright-Patterson AFB in 1960, is armed with a pair of AIM-9B Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. The 56th FIS was deactivated on 1 March 1960. (credit - Larry Davis Collection)



Memories Of Great Fighter Pilots

-This Issue:

Frederick C. "Boots" Blesse

by Earl Brown

As with most great men and women in history, stories abound which shed light on the source of their greatness. With this in mind, *Sabre Jet Classics* presents the second in a series of anecdotes received from you, the members. Lt.Gen. William E. 'Earl' Brown, USAF (Ret), of Alexandria, Virginia, sent us the following story. We invite other members to send their memories of the great ones they have known.

I was a 24 year old 2nd Lt. when I met Captain 'Boots' Blesse. We were in the 334th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 4th Fighter Wing, based at K-14 (Kimpo), South Korea; and we were flying F-86 Sabres into North Korea looking for Soviet MiGs. 'Boots' was clearly the best pilot in our squadron and probably the best in the 4th Wing at the time. Not only could he fly and fight in the Sabre, he could tell others how to do it.

He was also the natural leader of the squadron. I had the impression that if we were all on a desert island, with no visible signs of military rank, 'Boots' would've still been the leader. He used to say that "Rank is your ace in the hole. Don't use it until it is necessary!" He led by example. He was a ferocious competitor. In every game he played, he refused to lose. An exceptional fighter pilot needs the same skills and attitude as a superb athlete.

First start with DESIRE TO BE IN THE GAME. Many people train to be fighter pilots, but not all will fly to the 'sound of the guns'. 'Boots' was always listening for the 'sound of the guns', and would go uncommanded to that sound. Like Michael Jordan, when the game was on the line, he wanted the ball.

Second, hand-eye coordination and physical strength and stamina are absolute requirements. I try to tell my civilian friends that there can never be old men flying actively as fighter pilots. The physical demands are too great. Strap on the oxygen mask for an hour and a half, maneuver to pull Gs that magnify your body weight by 4, 5, or 6 times, maintain your awareness of the situation around you in three dimensions, anticipate your enemy's moves, plan your own moves, fly the airplane within its prescribed limits of airspeed, altitude, engine temperature - and do these things continuously during the flight. 'Boots' did all these things all the time, and did them exceedingly well.

Third, calculate and think about the tactics of the engagement between two fighter aircraft. Scheme about ways to maximize your aircraft's advantages, and zero in on the opponents weaknesses. 'Boots' had thought about the problems of air-to-air combat for many years. He had trained and practiced and honed and polished tactics over and over during those years.

I have been told that he has been an excellent golfer for many years. The skills he learned in observing the effects of tiny changes in the angle of the club head



Major Frederick "Boots" Blesse, sits in the cockpit of his **F-86E on the ramp at K-14, Kimpo AB, South Korea, in September 1952.** His Sabre shows 5 MiG kills, and 3 damaged. Blesse made 'ace' on 4 September 1952. (credit - Larry Davis collection)

and velocity of the swing, translated almost directly into the sensitive handling of the Sabre at the limits of its flying envelope, when the aircraft is very close to stall at high altitude. Or when you are turning as hard as you can at maximum speed at low altitude.

Most fighter pilots could fly the Sabre well in the heart of the envelope defined by maximum and minimum speeds and altitudes. Only a few could get top performance from the airplane while flying at or near the limits of the airplane's design. 'Boots' delighted in taking young pilots up and showing them how to fly at the edges of the airplanes capabilities.

There was one mission when he shot down a North Korean YAK-9, a Soviet propeller-driven fighter that looked like a cross between a P-47 and a FW-190. Col. Royal Baker, 4th Group Commander, had engaged two Yaks and was attacking them. As he closed to firing range, the YAKs would pull into a tight turn and evade his bullets. 'Boots' heard the melee on the radio and we flew to the fight location, i.e. "to the sound of the guns." 'Boots' set up an orbit high above the fracas and watched Col. Baker make two or three passes on the YAKs. Each time the YAK pilots would simply out-turn him as he reached firing range.

Finally, 'Boots' asked if he could make a pass. Frustrated, Col. Baker reluctantly approved. 'Boots' started down in a classic high-side approach, just as though he were setting up on a towed target. As he slid into range, the YAK, almost casually, racked into a hard turn, surely thinking - "Another dumb American!" Was he surprised when, instead of over-shooting and zooming up for a re-attack as Col. Baker had done, 'Boots' simply popped the speed brakes on his Sabre and slowed to just a mite faster than the YAK! He continued to close and could now match the turning capability of the propeller plane, while hosing the YAK fuselage with bullets. The YAK went down.

This maneuver is one 'Boots' had used in training against P-51s, and he knew from experience that it would work.



1st I.T William Earl Brown, shakes hands with another pilot with the **334th** FIS at K-14 in 1952. (credit - Earl Brown)

Especially if the prop pilot wasn't expecting it. The danger was, that once he had the speed brakes out and slowed down, he only had the one pass to make the kill. His Sabre could not accelerate as fast as the prop plane, and if he missed, he'd be a sitting duck for the enemy pilot. But he knew that he would not miss. He had done this before in training and had the film to prove it.

In 1970 (I think), 'Boots' was commander of George AFB and a one star general. The mission of George AFB was F-4 Phantom replacement training. The general came down to the squadrons almost every day, and flew to the gunnery range as a member of the training flights. It was a custom for each flight member to put up a quarter for each event, and the high scorer in that event won all the quarters. Usually if a higher ranking officer flew and won the quarters, he would turn them back to the young pilot officers. 'Boots' not only always won the quarters - he also always kept them.

I'll always remember 'Boots' Blesse as a competitor, a winner, and a leader. He had the guts and he deserves the glory!

(Editor: Retired Major General Frederick 'Boots' Blesse is a member of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association, and lives in Melbourne, Florida. A Korean War ace, he is credited with ten victories in that war. His hook, No Guts - No Glory", is legendary among fighter pilots)

WANTED - The Calgary area F-86 drivers have restored an F-86 and donated it to the Calgary Aero Space Museum. But it lacks a **type A-4 gun sight** and camera. Anyone knowing where an A-4 sight/camera assembly can be found is asked to **contact:**
Richard Kiser,
624 Lake Moraine Way SE,
Calgary. Alberta, Canada T2J 3A5
e-mail <fodick@cadvision.com>

WANTED - Old **F-86** squadron **Christmas cards** for display in SabreJet Classics. Contact **LARRY DAVIS**, Editor, *SabreJet Classics*, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709 or e-mail <sabreclsx@aol.com>

WANTED - **Sabre squadron patches** for use in SabreJet Classics.
Make color xeroxes of your patches and **send to**

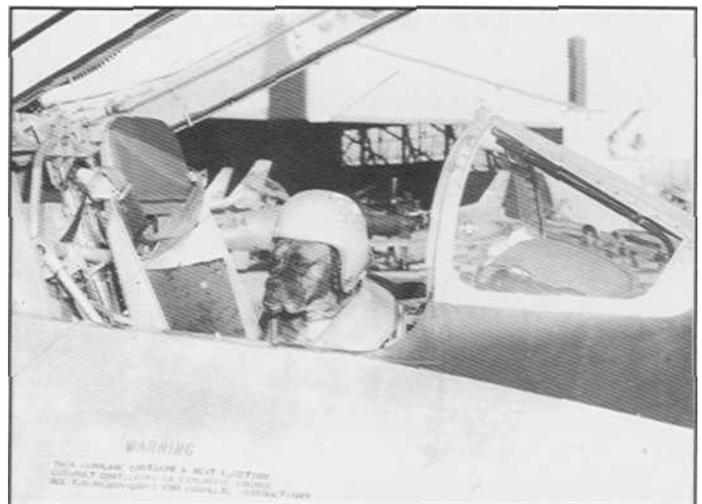
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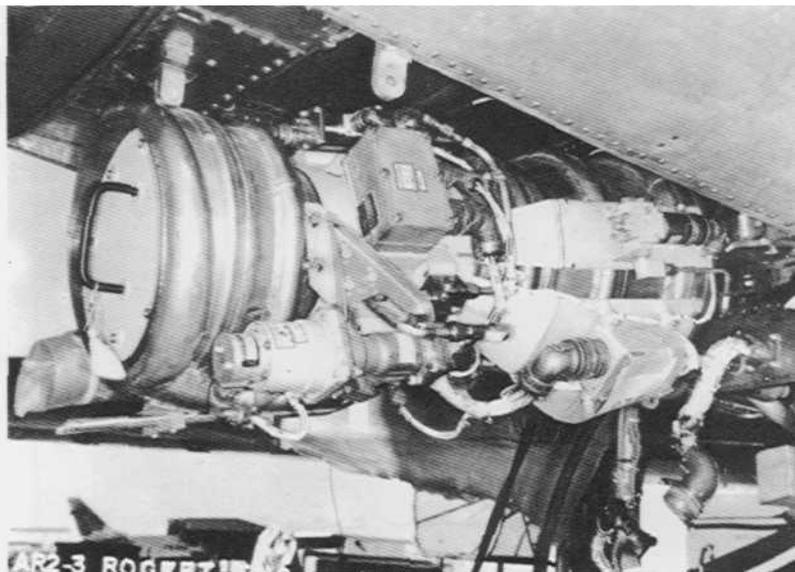
WANTED - CONTACT WITH ANY MEMBERS OF THE **F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSN.** WHO WERE RESCUED FROM BEHIND ENEMY LINES OR HOSTILE WATERS DURING THE KOREAN WAR.

CONTACT FORREST L. MARION,
AFHRA/RSO, 600 CHENNAULT CIRCLE,
MAXWELL AFB AL 36112-6424,
e-mail <forrest.marion@maxwell.af.mil>

WANTED - Contact with former members of the **3555th FTW/CCTW** at Perrin AFB, TX during the 1950s, especially those with time in the F-86D/L. Contact the **Perrin Field Historical Society**, PO Box 2152, Sherman, TX 75091-2152,

"Pepper, an F-86I) 'dog' pilot with the 331st Fighter Interceptor Squadron at Suffolk County AFB, Long Island, New York in 1954. "Pepper" was the official mascot of the 331st FIS. Rumor has it **that** he was the best 'dog pilot' in the unit. (credit - Emil Kotalik)





WHAT IS IT - This F-86F-30, #52-4605, was modified by the Air Force and North American Aviation, with the installation of a Rocketdyne AR2/3 rocket engine mounted just aft of the fuselage field brake. The AR2/3 engine was throttleable, with thrust varying from 3000 to 6000 pounds, and used standard JP-4 with a hydrogen peroxide oxidizer. The performance of the rocket-powered F-86F was phenomenal when compared with a standard F-86F. Maximum speed was over Mach 1.2 at 60,000 feet. Time to climb to 60,000 feet was 16.7 minutes from brake release. Compare these figures with the standard F-86F-30, which had a maximum speed of Mach 0.95 at sea level, a service ceiling of 48,000 feet, and a rate of climb of 9800 feet/minute. Transonic control and stability was satisfactory. The aircraft was armed with the standard six .50 caliber machine guns, and a pair of GAR-8 (AIM-9B) Sidewinder air-to-air missiles. Following installation of the Rocketdyne AR2/3 engine, the aircraft was redesignated JF-86F-30. The JF-86F made a total of thirty one test flights over Edwards AFB, attaining a maximum altitude of 71,600 feet, and a maximum speed of Mach 1.22. The last we heard in the Editors office, F-86 Pilot Bob Scott had purchased the Worlds Fastest Sabre, and was about to begin restoration. Has anyone heard of the progress on this airplane? (photos credit - US Air Force Museum)

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