



Sabre Jet Classics

Volume 8 Number 3

FALL 2000

A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association



*4th FDW In Japan,
720th FBS In Alaska,
Complete Reunion Info, More!*

SabreJet Classics

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 3
Fall 2000
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front cover: A flight of 720th FBS
F-86Fs, call sign SHARKBAIT, on the
ramp at Eielson AFB, Alaska in 1954.
(credit - Bill Caffrey)

**Next Issue;
All Korea,
50th Anniversary Issue**

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**PLAN NOW
13TH REUNION, 16-20 APRIL
2001 IN LAS VEGAS.**

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

It's time to do some serious thinking about the upcoming Thirteenth Reunion of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association. Jerry Johnson and the staff in Las Vegas have already done a lot of leg work in preparation for what we believe will be another memorable reunion. We will be back at the Monte Carlo Hotel. They take good care of us. **SPECIAL NOTE:** This reunion will be held Monday thru Friday, rather than over a weekend as was done in the past.

You will see from the Registration Form (included with this issue) that the prices have gone up a bit from the last reunion. Not pleasant news to receive, but if you compare the price for a total package this time, to that of the last reunion, you will find the increase to be a modest 12%. Food costs alone at the hotel have risen on the order of 20+%. So you can see that we are really trying to hold the line as best we can. Mail your registration in before January 2001 and deduct \$10.00.

We feel this reunion should be especially high on every member's priority list. It will be held right in the middle of the truly world-wide commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Korean War. And the role of the F-86 and the pilots that flew it (read US!) was perhaps the most significant of any weapon system. We will be paying special attention to the anniversary. Let US show the people in Las Vegas just who those steely-eyed fighter pilots were!

Another important reason to make an extra effort to attend is more somber - but very much a factor nevertheless. It's right in our title - REUNION. Pause for a moment and reflect if you have lost a buddy or wingman since the last reunion. (On a personal note, I lost one of the finest pilots I have ever known just this last spring.) Project forward to the next reunion in 2003 and mentally look around. That's reality. My old squadron has shamelessly piggy-backed on the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association for the past several reunions to have our own mini-get-together within the big reunion. It's a great idea. Meet your squadron mates AND all the other buddies who flew that wonderful bird. We encourage all of you to adopt the practice.

A couple of comments regarding membership. It looks like we will have to drop about 115 members for non-payment of dues despite repeated notices. And so far this year we have gained only about 50 new members, compared to about 100 new members in previous years. This is a disturbing and ominous trend. We hate to lose any already enrolled member. Check your dues expiration date right now (it's on the mailing label), to see what your status is. And if necessary, send in your payment.

Secondly, we know there are a lot of people out there who flew at least one model of the F-86, and who are eligible to become a member, but aren't. We need you to help us recruit them. Check your old squadron rosters. Check the rosters of your squadron reunion associations. Either contact the men yourselves or send the names to our staff. We will take it from there. Let's get a bunch of FNGs to the Thirteenth Reunion!! (It ain't politically incorrect if you just use initials - is it?)

See you in Las Vegas in April 2001.

Glenn L. Nordin
President

from the editor

Just a quick note to say that the 13th Reunion is fast approaching. I'm hoping to meet all you guys again at the Monte Carlo next April. So get your reservations in early.

We're planning two things for the year 2001. First will be a 50th Anniversary of the Korean War issue. It will feature photos and stories of the men and places in Korea, sort of a 'scrapbook' of Korean remembrances. I invite everyone to send me stories and anecdotes, as well as photos of men, aircraft, and bases in Korea and Japan during the war. The all-Korea issue will be vol 9, #1.

The next 'all-anything issue' will be an all-Air Guard issue (Were there any F-86 units in the Air Force Reserve?). But to have an all-Guard issue, I need stories and photos. Right now we have very few Guard stories, and even less photos. Let's hear from you guys on this one. We'd like to do the all-Guard issue for Fall 2001.

I'm still looking for patches (color xeroxes will do) from any F-86 unit or flight. We attach these to any story about a specific unit - if possible. Contact the Editor, SabreJet Classics and let me know what you have. All for now.

Larry Davis

POLICY STATEMENT

The F-86 Sabre Pilots Association does not participate in any solicitation 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.

Lt.Col. Vermont 'Gary' Garrison

Wanted - information, stories, anecdotes and photos of LtCol Garrison's life, Eagle Squadron, 4th FG WW2, Korea, between wars, Vietnam.

For a story about his life.

Contact: Larry Davis, Editor,

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Patches Wanted

or color xerox of any patches used by

F-86 Sabre squadrons or flights,

especially 'special patches' such as 335th FIS

"Mach Riders", recon units,

air demonstration teams, etc.

For use in SabreJet Classics magazine.

Contact: Larry Davis, Editor, SabreJet Classics,

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WANTED

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FOLDED WINGS

Reginald W. Adams, Jr., July 31st, 2000

Norman E. Cash, March 13th, 2000

Edward J. Hinton, August 8th, 2000

Charles W. King, September 29th, 2000

Keith R. McGinnis, July 7th, 2000

Gustav A. Moldestad, January 26th, 2000

Thomas A. Owens, 1999

REMEMBER "THREE SABRES DOWN!" WELL, HERE'S A FIVE SABRE ACCIDENT!

When we printed "Three Sabres Down!" (vol. 8, no. 2), and declared that it was, to our knowledge, the worst single F-86 accident, we suspected that we'd hear from readers. Mrs. Dorothy Adams, wife of Sabre pilot Lt.Col. Reg Adams, who made his last flight on 31 July 2000, related the following story to us. She also provided several newspaper articles from the time of the accident.

Friday, 4 September 1953, was a memorable day for five F-86 pilots from the 51st Wing at K-13 (Suwon, South Korea). They were in Japan to ferry brand new Sabres from Kisarazu AB to Suwon. As many Sabre pilots will recall, Kisarazu (across the bay from Tokyo/Yokohama) was the processing center for Sabres which had just arrived via ship.

Lt. Reg Adams and the four members of his flight, received a weather briefing for the trip back. But their take-off was delayed (perhaps because of the weather, but we're uncertain of that). They planned to make a stop at Tsuiki AB, a major maintenance center for the F-86. Its location in southern Japan, made it a convenient refueling stop on the trip back to Korea.

Finally, the five pilots were able to launch in their spanking new Sabres. Arriving in the vicinity of Tsuiki, they encountered a "violent weather front that built up suddenly", according to an Associated Press report. An Air Force spokesman added, "They were all equipped for instrument landings, but they had very limited fuel capacity. The weather was vile and apparently they could not make a normal instrument approach." NONE of the Sabres landed safely.

Mrs. Adams says that Reg knew he was going to have to bail out when looking behind, he saw that he had just flown between two mountain peaks! This must have convinced him that the time was NOW! "He pulled the handles".



The five 51st Wing pilots that survived the accident over Tsuiki, Japan. The only apparent loss that day was an F-84 pilot that encountered the same storm. (credit - Dorothy Adams)

As he ejected, he felt a pain in one leg, and he thought it might have broken. After he got a good chute, he watched his shiny new Sabre smash into a mountain just ahead. He landed on the thatched roof of a little house near Beppu, on Kyushu Island. Reg recounted to his wife that as the local populace came to see him, the women seemed more interested in the parachute fabric than in his welfare.

Eventually, a Canadian doctor arrived and told Reg that his leg was badly bruised but not broken. He was placed in a jeep and they drove off just as an attractive Japanese lady in traditional clothing arrived with a tray of oriental delicacies. She seemed disappointed to see the jeep leaving, and Reg said he was too, since he hadn't eaten in some time.

According to another AP report of the accident, a total of six fighters went down in the bad weather that day. One was an F-84. Three pilots crash-landed and received minor injuries, two bailed out, and one was still missing. Evidently, all the Sabre pilots survived as proven by the photo accompanying this story.

SabreJet Classics would like to thank Mrs. Adams for helping us tell this story. If any readers can add names or other details, please let us hear from you.

F-86 Sabre Pilot Association Dues

The mailing label on SabreJet Classics magazine 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.

Dues payments should be sent to the following address:
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An F-86L on the flight line at Reno in 1959. The 192nd Squadron transitioned into the F-86L advanced version of the F-86D interceptor in August 1959, flying an air defense mission until converting to B-57B Canberra light jet bombers in March 1961. This F-86L, nick-named "City Of North Las Vegas", was destroyed in an aircraft accident on 19 August 1959. (credit - Nevada ANG)

"BATTLE BORN!" The Nevada Air Guard & the F-86

Thanks to Lt.Col. Cindy Kirkland, Nevada ANG PAO, for her help in preparing this article

The Air National Guard in the state of Nevada was recognized on 12 April 1948 at Reno AFB, on the California-Nevada border. Equipped with North American P-51D Mustangs, the unit was organized as the 192nd Fighter Squadron, a direct descendant of the 408th Fighter Squadron which had served within the continental US during the war years. During the war in Korea, the 192nd was called to active duty and redesignated the 192nd Fighter Bomber Squadron. Still equipped with F-51Ds, the squadron was based at Bergstrom AFB, TX, George AFB, CA, and Keflavik, Iceland, before being returned to state control on 1 December 1952 and reassigned to Reno.

On 1 June 1955, the squadron was again re-designated, now as the 192nd Fighter Interceptor Squadron with an air defense mission under Air Defense Command.

However, the unit was still equipped with F-51Ds. Less than a decade after the Nevada Air National Guard's humble beginnings, the unit entered another era - the Jet Age. In July 1955, the squadron took delivery of two brand new Lockheed T-33A jet trainers.

The reason for the two-seat jet trainers? The 192nd FIS was going to re-equip with the North American F-86A Sabre, the aircraft that had just recently returned from combat against the Soviet MiG in Korea. Many of the F-86As were combat veterans???? (check serial lists) but still had plenty of flying and fight left in them.

Training in the T-33 'T-Birds' continued throughout the Summer of 1955. Finally, on 1 November 1955, the F-86A entered service with the 192nd FIS at Reno. As a

fighter interceptor squadron, the mission of the 192nd was coastal air defense. With a patrol radius of 350 miles, the aircraft could intercept inbound targets over the San Francisco area, or deploy south to Nellis to help cover the Los Angeles area. Two aircraft were employed on a constant 24 hour alert status, fully armed with 1800 rounds of .50 caliber, and ready to go at a moment's notice.

The day fighter era ended in 1958, when the 192nd transitioned into the all-weather interceptor era in the F-86L. The first of twenty-five F-86Ls arrived in April 1958. Assigned to the 28th Air Division, the 192nd was completely equipped and combat ready in the all-weather F-86L on 1 August 1958. With the F-86L, the alert status was changed from two to five aircraft on 24 hour alert. Group status was achieved on 1 April when the 152nd Fighter Group(Air Defense) was organized as the parent unit to the 192nd FIS at Reno.

A F-51D Mustang assigned to the 192nd FS, Nevada Air National Guard at Reno in ??????. The 192nd Squadron flew the F-51D from activation in April 1948 until conversion to the F-86A Sabre in 1955. (credit - Balogh)





Nevada Governor Grant Sawyer gets a briefing on the F-86L from BrigGen Jack La Grange soon after the arrival of the first of the new interceptors at Reno in late 1957, as the 192nd anticipated the conversion from F-86A to F-86L. The F-86L incorporated the SAGE (Semi-Automatic Ground Environment) equipment, a data link that tied the interceptor to the ground controller. (credit - Nevada ANG)

Many of the F-86L aircraft were personalized with the names of towns in Nevada, such as City of Las Vegas, City of Tonapah, City of Elko, etc, all painted upon the state map which adorned the vertical tail. The Group Commander flew aircraft #53-0915 "City Of Reno".

Aircraft markings included a varying number of stripes to indicate rank, either in the unit or in the air - four stripes was the Group Commander, three for Squadron

The ramp at Reno in 1955 showing a flight of F-86As from the 192nd FIS sharing the ramp with a pair of 84th FIS F-89D Scorpions, and a T-6 Texan and C-47 Gooney Bird from the Nevada Guard. The Texan was used for training and target towing, and carries the emblem of the 144th FBW, the parent wing, on the cowling. (credit - Nevada ANG)



LtCol Joseph I. Geach, Jr. in the cockpit of a 192nd Squadron F-86A on 19 April 1958. The date was significant for two reasons; Colonel Geach's appointment as Group Commander, and it was the first day the 152nd Fighter Group officially became the parent unit for the 192nd Squadron. (credit - Nevada ANG)

CO, two was the Operations Officer, and one stripe was a Flight Commander. The aircraft were all in natural metal, except for Day-Glo bands applied in 1959.

In the Spring of 1961 the Sabre era ended. The 192nd was slated to transition into the Martin RB-57B Canberra jet bomber. As such, it was relieved on its air defense mission on 31 December 1960. The last F-86L flight took place on 31 March 1961. One F-86L remains and is displayed at Idlewild Park in Reno.



Interceptor class 60-C pose in front of a 3553rd FTS F-86L, for the Moody AFB Public Affairs cameraman on 30 October 1959. The author, George Marrett, is third row, 2nd pilot in from the left. (credit - George Marrett)

“MACH BUSTER”

by George Marrett

After graduation from Basic Flying School at Webb AFB, TX in April 1959, my wife and I packed up again, our third move in my twelve month Air Force career. My next assignment was a six month Advanced Flying School at Moody AFB, near Valdosta, GA, flying the F-86L advanced version of the F-86D *Sabre Dog*, assigned to the 3553rd Flying Traing Squadron.

Our 1958, robin's egg blue MGA roadster made the trip from Texas to Valdosta, GA, which was located about 80 miles east of my Primary Flying School assignment at Bainbridge, where I'd flown the T-34 and T-37 only six months earlier. The Moody flight training area encompassed the Okefenokee Swamp, a huge wildlife refuge that consisted mostly of moonshiners and alligators.

The F-86D/L was a single seat, all-weather interceptor. Over 2500 were produced by North American during the 1950s. With the Hughes E-4 fire-control radar, 12 inch extended wingtips, 24 2.75" rockets, and an afterburner, the F-86L was an interceptor stationed at bases along both coasts and the northern border with Canada. Under control of Air Defense Command, the F-86L mission was to intercept and destroy Russian bombers attempting to penetrate to the heartland of the US. Although unglamorous compared to its day fighter brothers, the *Sabre Dog* held several world speed records while defending the Free World during the early stages of the Cold War.

Checkout in the F-86L consisted of a ground school, simulator and flying training. The simulator training focused on aircraft performance, emergency procedures, and airborne intercept tactics. Since there was no dual control F-86 for pilot training, passing the final simulator check was all that stood between me and my first solo. After much study and hours sweating out the multitude of emergency procedures, I finally passed my simulator 'check ride' and was scheduled for my first flight.

Four years earlier, my cousin had married a jet pilot - Major Charles 'Chuck' Teater, a veteran of World War Two and Korea. At that time, he was a Dog pilot flying out of Sioux City, IA. Chuck was the first jet pilot I had ever met, and he invited me to be an usher at his wedding. But in 1959, Chuck was an instructor at Moody, and would chase me on my first flight in the *Sabre Dog*.

Climbing into the F-86L was easy enough, once my knees stopped shaking from excitement. The view from the cockpit was excellent. You sat much higher above the ramp than in the T-33. Looking back at the wing, I became conscious of the drooping leading edge slats and the odd excitement of a wing sweeping back at 35°. The F-86L had a combined one piece movable stabilizer and elevator. The flight controls were light in both pitch and roll. As I made a full sweep of the cockpit, I was ready to taxi.

When the control tower cleared me onto the runway, I thought I could hear my own heart beating. In takeoff position, I set the brakes, ran the engine up to military power, and checked the flight controls one last time. Releasing the brakes, I lit the afterburner, remembering to make sure the variable nozzle opened. My instructor had warned me that if the nozzle didn't open, the back pressure in the engine would cause the RPMs to slow down. Then the electronic fuel control would sense the low RPMs and add more fuel, which caused even more back pressure, which dropped the RPMs even more and still more fuel would be added to the fire. After 14 seconds of this, the aircraft would explode in a ball of fire.

I finally found the nozzle gauge on the instrument panel - OPEN! But by the time I looked up again, I had exceeded the takeoff speed. Pulling back hard on the control stick, I made one of the fastest rotations and steepest takeoffs ever made at Moody. I retracted the gear as soon as I could find the handle, and started to climb. At about 180 knots, the slats retracted and Chuck joined up with me. We leveled off at 20,000 feet and I got my first chance to maneuver the Sabre as the designers had intended.

Unlike the T-33, with its slow roll rate caused by the weight of two wingtip fuel tanks, the F-86L rolled smartly with just a small amount of aileron movement. Using 250 knots as an aim speed, I slowly rolled into a 3G turn. Both slats started to creep open. Chuck warned me that if only one slat came out, the added lift on one side could cause the bird to roll inverted and possibly fall off into a spin. But it didn't. My Sabre flew like a dream. I felt like I'd been flying the Sabre forever.

Next I got to push the power up to full military, dive at 30° and accelerate to 400 knots. With a smooth application of 4Gs, I looped the Sabre, going over the top at 150 knots. Next came several Immelmans and a Cuban Eight. For the first time in my life, I was flying a jet fighter. It was a dream come true. I rolled into a high 'G' descending turn and pretended I was closing on a Russian MiG. "Pow-pow-pow", I spoke to myself in the oxygen mask, making sure I didn't transmit over the radio. Chuck might think I'd lost my sanity.

After feeling the Sabre out at altitude, it was time to enter the traffic pattern. Chuck followed me as I made multiple low approaches, before making the landing. Concentrating on holding the correct pattern speed, I rolled out on final and called Moody Tower for clearance to land. The tower cleared me to land on the one runway, then cleared Chuck to land on the other, parallel runway.

I heard the transmission, but thought the tower had cleared me to land on the parallel runway. I angled over to the other runway. Seeing my mistake, the tower cleared Chuck to land on the runway I had originally been assigned. Again, upon hearing the new radio call, I thought it was intended for me and reversed back to the first runway and landed. Meanwhile, Chuck was doing S-turns behind me planning to land on whichever runway I didn't use! After landing, Chuck remarked that we looked like an aerobatic team.

One entire training flight in the F-86L was devoted to supersonic flight. Using the 'burner, I climbed to 40,000 feet, leveled off, and accelerated to .9 Mach. Still in full



Captain Charles 'Chuck' Teater climbs into an 405th FIW F-86D at RAF Manston. Captain Teater was an Instructor Pilot at Moody when George Marrett was going through Interceptor School. (credit - George Marrett)

power, I rolled the aircraft inverted and pulled the nose straight toward the ground, aiming at an imaginary moonshiner's still in the heart of the swamp. At about 30,000 feet, the L exceeded the speed of sound and created a sonic boom for all the 'gators to hear. For me, there was no physical sensation when I broke the sound barrier. All I could see was a jump in the Mach meter. In seconds it was over. The boom ended, most of the fuel was depleted, and I was back in the Moody landing pattern. For breaking the sound barrier, a pilot received a North American Aviation 'Mach Buster' card and tie tack. It was another rung in the ladder to becoming a fighter pilot.

In October 1959, with 77 flight hours in the *Sabre Dog* and the end of my advanced flying school program fast approaching, I anxiously awaited my first permanent assignment. I had been promoted to 1st Lieutenant by then. The assignments were based entirely on class standing, not on recommendations from instructors. All 39 graduating pilots gathered in the base auditorium. There





Captain George Marrett flew "Sock It to 'Em", an A-1H Skyraider, commonly called a 'Spad', when he served with the 602nd Air Commando Squadron at Nakhon Phanom RTAB in 1967-68. The 602nd flew the extremely dangerous SANDY missions into North Vietnam to bring our guys back. "Low and slow with SANDY LOW Lead." (credit - George Marrett)

were 39 assignments listed - from fighters to bombers, with base location and aircraft type chalked on a blackboard. The top ranking pilot had his choice of any squadron and airplane type listed. After he chose, the squadron that he selected was erased and the next highest ranking pilot would choose.

My position was 9th, plenty high enough to assure that I would get a fighter assignment. But now I had raised my personal expectations - I wanted to fly the Century Series fighter aircraft, and somewhere other than the hot and humid South. The Century Series fighters were the newest aircraft in the Air Force, and all flew faster than the speed

of sound in level flight, not in a dive as required by the F-86.

Luck came my way. This time the blue MGA roadster would cross the entire United States, ending in California. My new squadron was to be the 84th FIS at Hamilton AFB, CA. And I was flying the Mach 1.73 McDonnell F-101B Voodoo. I was anxious to leave Georgia for California. But I was very thankful that I had had a chance to fly the Sabre for at least a few hours. And of course, with all my supersonic experience, my assignment in Vietnam was in the low and slow Douglas A-1 Skyraider, nicknamed the "Spad" for obvious reasons.

AROUND THE WORLD IN (THE) F-86 DAYS

Certainly some of the prettiest Sabres were those serving with West German Bundesluftwaffe squadron JG-71 'Richtoffen'. Wearing the black, white and red tulip pattern on the nose patterned after JG-71s Commander, Erich Hartman's World War 2 ME-109. Seen here at Ahlhorn AB, West Germany in 1961, the Canadair Sabre Mk. 6s were delivered in natural metal, and later camouflaged in NATO colors of grey and green. General Hartman scored 352 victories in World War 2 flying a ME-109 on the Eastern Front. (credit - Merle Olmsted)





720th Fighter Bomber Squadron emblem. (credit - Bill Caffrey)



1Lt Bill Caffrey, 720th FBS 1953-1955. (credit - Bill Caffrey)

CALL SIGN - SHARKBAIT

The 720th Fighter Bomber Squadron

by Bill Caffery

The 720th Fighter-Bomber Squadron was activated at Ladd AFB, Alaska, on 25 December 1953, with the call sign SHARKBAIT. Our first Squadron CO was Lt.Col. Harold Graham. The mission of the 720th was three-fold: Maintain air superiority over the Alaskan Territory (It wasn't a state yet.), provide close air support to Army units in that theater, and gather operational/maintenance cold weather test data. Upon activation, the 720th received twenty-eight brand new F-86's - twenty new F-30s from North American/Inglewood, and eight Columbus-built F-25s.

Most of the thirty-six squadron pilots were in place by April 1954, with many of them coming in fresh from Class 53F at the Nellis AFB Fighter School. Unit personnel occupied an old WW2 hangar, and personal equipment was very limited. We had to share everything with a TDY SAC unit. Following a short orientation schedule, the 720th began flight operations in February 1954.

On 17 May 1954, the squadron moved to Eielson AFB on the Tanana River, about twenty-six miles from Fairbanks. At Eielson, we again shared the base with a TDY SAC outfit. Operations worked out of four portable 'shacks' that were adjacent to a very large hangar. Again, we had to share the hangar with first B-36, then later, B-47 maintenance crews.

We had five flights within the 720th - A, B, C, D, and E. I was in Flight D. Our aircrews rotated alert duty between Ladd, Eielson, Galena AB (about 250 miles west of Fairbanks on the Yukon River), Nome Field (on the Seward Peninsula adjacent to Norton Sound), and Kotzebue Field (just north of Seward Peninsula across the Kotzebue Sound). All the aircrews had to complete the three day Alaska Air Command Arctic Indoctrination School, at Fairbanks.

Stomping through the snow during Arctic Survival School are Lts Horely, Hartin, and Atkins. And you guys that went through Snake School thought it was tough. (credit - Bill Caffrey)



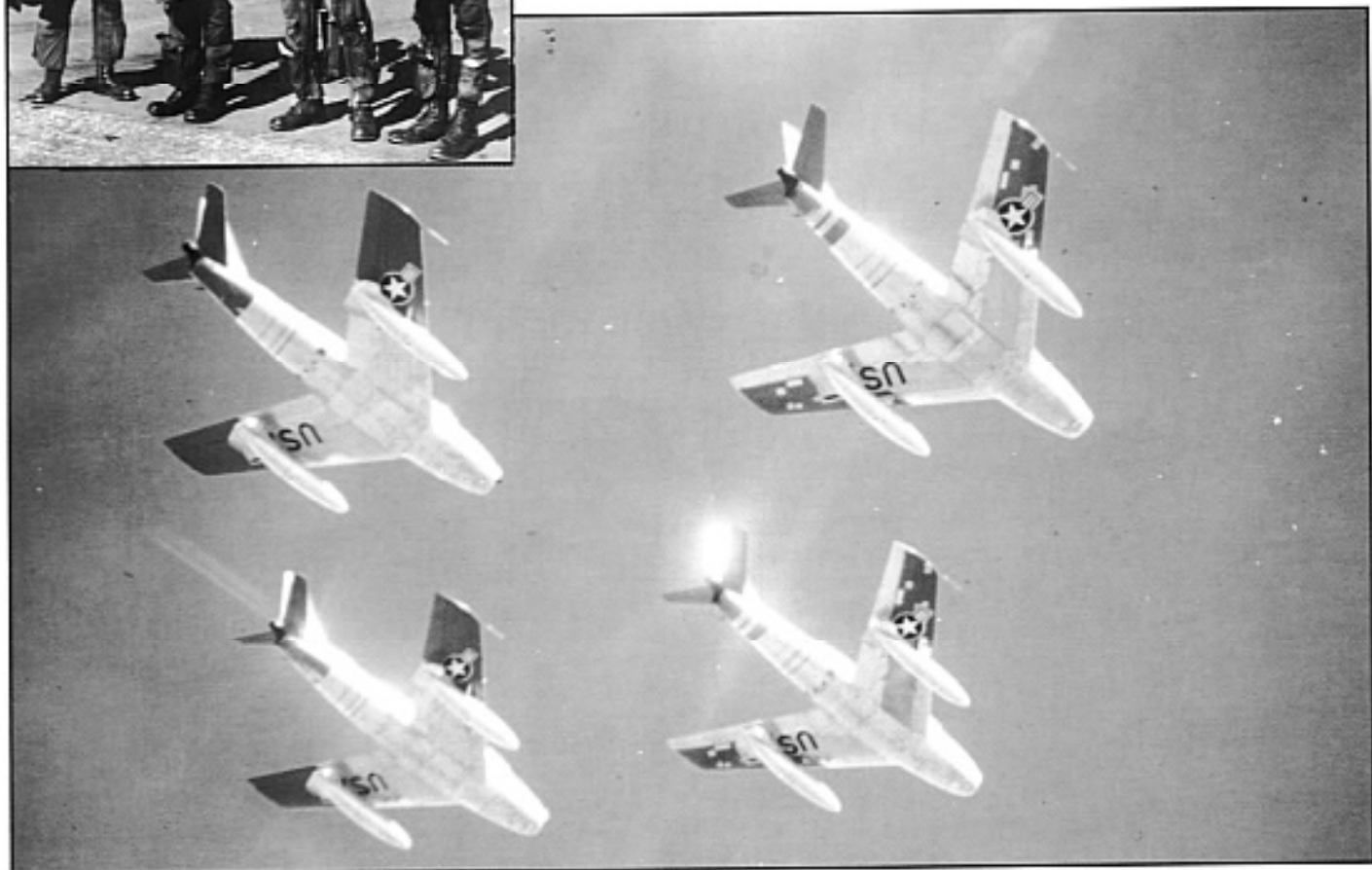


Lt.Col. Harold Graham commanded the 720th FBS when this photo was taken in May 1955 at Elmendorf AFB, Alaska. His Sabre, F-86F-30 #52-25149, was a brand new airplane built by North American in Los Angeles. Most of the other airplanes assigned to the 720th were new Columbus-built F-25s. (credit - USAF)



The 720th FBS air demonstration team "Arctic Gladiators", included (l-r) Capt. T.B. Stables, Slot; Lt.Col. Graham, Lead; Capt. Lew Lynch, Right Wing; and Capt. R.E. Ross, Left Wing. (credit - Dave Hartin)

Nice tight diamond formation by the Arctic Gladiators team. The 'Gladiators' put on air demonstration shows in the Alaskan and Yukon Territorys during the mid-1950s. (credit - Bill Caffrey)





The 720th FBS on the ramp at Eielson AFB, Alaska in 1955. Note the variation in markings, with the first three aircraft having nose 'art' applied under the letter 'U'. However, all aircraft have the specified arctic markings in red on the wingtips and tail. (credit - Bill Caffrey)

During 1954 and 1955, the squadron participated in various missions. Air to air gunnery missions were flown west of Eielson, while air to ground missions were flown at the Blair Lake Range, which was about 20 miles west of Eielson. Many close air support practice missions were flown in conjunction with Army units stationed at Fort Richardson. We also flew support missions from King Salmon Field near Bristol Bay with US Navy units.

Weather was a major problem as you can imagine. And the problems lasted for about eight months in any given year. Aircraft had to be moved into the main hanger, or heaters were used on the flightline to keep fingers from freezing when touching the ice cold metal skin. There was also a problem with a lack of field maintenance support, including experienced F-86 mechanics and specialists. An in-house training program was conducted by the two North American Tech Reps assigned to the squadron.

But that was just the beginning. A lack of field maintenance support presented a problem with spares and test equipment. Spare engines, repairable assemblies, and many items of test equipment were not authorized for use in the tactical squadron maintenance operation. For example, there was a lack of tailpipe temperature calibration equipment. This resulted in heat damage in the combustion chamber after about 3-400 hours of operation. A special inspection of all the J47s revealed an extensive problem, and additional engine parts had to be requisitioned. Some time later, the proper calibration equipment arrived, and all tail pipe temperatures were quickly re-calibrated, cockpit gauges were replaced, and the consumption of parts returned to normal.

A true cold weather problem was that of ice crystals forming in the JP4 jet fuel. Pilots began reporting rough engine operations and fuel flow fluctuation. But the condition couldn't be duplicated on ground run-ups. One day, one of the Sabres landed, the engine was pulled immediately due to a pilot 'write-up' for the above



Lt.Col. Graham 'flies' his hands as he makes a point with (l-r) Lts Dave Hartin, Hal Wheeler, and Dick Atkins. (credit - Richard Atkins)

Formation flying with B Flight over the Alaskan Territory in 1955. (from top) Capt. Lew Lynch, Lt. Hal Wheeler, Lt. Jim Harrison, and Lt Dave Hartin. (credit - Richard Atkins)





At times, the 720th would put detachments of four aircraft into remote air bases such as Galena AB, about 250 miles west of Fairbanks on the Yukon River. Although designated a fighter bomber squadron, the main mission of the 720th was air superiority over Alaska. (credit - Bill Caffrey)

conditions. When the fuel filter was removed, it was clogged with ice crystals. Fuel additives and water separators alleviated the problem. Most of the problems could be traced to the fuel being delivered in 55 gallon drums, which could develop a moisture problem.

One of the most notable accomplishments of the 720th FBS was its safety record - we NEVER lost an F-86. After the squadron became operational (February 1954), it maintained a high OR rate, logging over 1000 flying hours per month in June, July, and August 1955.

Another source of pride to all former members of the 720th was the aerobatic team. They were known as the Arctic Gladiators (UGH!), with Lt.Col. Graham as

Leader; Capt. R.E. Ross on Left Wing, Capt. L.J. Lynch on Right Wing, and Capt. T.B. Stables in the Slot. Strangely, our Supply Officer - Capt. Bill Patillo - wasn't a member of the team, even though he had been with the Skyblazers and Thunderbirds teams. All performances were limited to the bases in Alaska.

On 8 August 1955, the 720th FBS designation was changed to the 455th FBS, with Major Bob Bell as Squadron CO. In November 1955, the squadron launched, on schedule, for its next post - Bunker Hill AFB, Indiana, where it was assigned to the 323rd Fighter-Bomber Wing, transitioning into the F-100A Super Sabre in late 1956 in preparation for the coming of the new F-100D. The 720th Squadron was re-activated at Foster AFB, but was now designated a Fighter Day Squadron, and was equipped with F-100Cs.

Members of the
720th FBS in 1955

included
(front row, l-r)
Lts. Hartin,
Howell,
Binckley,
Houley,
and Smith;

(back row, l-r)
Lts. Boettcher,
Atkins,
Fickel,
Harris,
and Lee.

(credit - Bill Caffrey)





334th FDS emblem, Chitose 1955



1Lt Ken Ekberg, 334th FDS, 1956. (credit - USAF)

ALL IN A DAYS WORK

by S/SGT H. Deanne
submitted by Ken Ekberg

When the war in Korea stopped on 27 July 1953, the 'short TDY to a theater of temperate climate' stint that the men of the 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing began in November 1950 continued. The 4th FIW remained at K-14, Kimpo AB, South Korea, until late 1954, flying combat missions on a daily basis, just as they had throughout the war. The only difference was they could no longer fly over North Korea to the Yalu River. But there was plenty of MIG activity just the same.

On 1 November 1954, the 4th moved from Kimpo to Chitose AB, on the Japanese northern island of Honshu. Their mission at Chitose was air defense of Northern Japan. At Chitose, a fourth squadron was attached - the 339th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, flying the F-86D.

During the Formosa Crisis in late 1954, the 4th moved back to Korea, at least the 335th Squadron moved back. This time they were based at Osan AB, about 50 miles east of Kimpo. They remained at Osan until Summer 1955, during which time they recorded several additional MIG kills (see Sabrejet Classics, vol. 3, no. 2), before returning to Chitose on 8 March 1955. The 4th was re-designated as a fighter bomber wing, and then re-designated the 4th Fighter Day Wing on 26 April 1956, with primarily an air to air mission once again.

In 1956, the 4th took on a new job - training Japanese pilots in the new Japanese Air Self Defense Force (JASDF), to fly the F-86F Sabre. In December 1957 the 'short TDY' finally ended. But only the unit designation returned to Seymour Johnson AFB in North Carolina. The air and ground crews remained in Japan. The men were assigned to different units like the 58th FBW which was still in Korea. Some continued the training of JASDF pilots. Several were transferred into B-57 Canberra jet bombers at Yokota (Ygh-h-h!). The Sabres were ferried to other units in FEAF, or transferred to other air forces. Most of the 335th Squadron Sabres went directly from Chitose to Formosa and were turned over to Nationalist China. The next time the 4th Wing would be in the Far East would be seven years later, in a country named Vietnam.

The following story appeared in the 4th Wing magazine "Fourthmanship" on 1 April 1957.

Even a Sabrejet fighter pilot settles into a routine like those of us who work in offices and other earth-bound jobs. He awakes in the morning to the insistent clanging of an alarm clock, showers, dresses and eats breakfast. Then after a quick husbandly kiss, is off to work at his 'office'. However, his 'office' is an alert hangar or pad, and his 'desk' is an F-86 Sabre fighter plane. He works at his job daily and returns home to dinner with his wife and kids. Afterwards, he might take in a movie or a relaxing evening at the O-club.

His 'job' is defending Northern Japan against Communist aggression. But it settles into a routine for pilots like 1st Lieutenant Ken Ekberg, who flies with the 334th Squadron at Chitose. His squadron is pretty typical of Air Force squadrons operating in the Far east. In place of a pen or typewriter, Lt. Ekberg uses the throttle and control stick of his F-86F as his working 'tools'. His 'punctuations' can be formed by the sting of his six .50 caliber machine guns.

Lt. Ekberg rise before the chickens - 0315. (credit - USAF)





(upperleft) Lt. Ekberg kisses his wife 'Mike' goodbye and heads for the base. "I hope I'll be home for dinner, dear." (upper right) The preferred method of transportation at Chitose in 1956, a Tohatsue motor scooter. (lower left) Lt. Ekberg pulls on his helmet and prepares for the next mission. Will it be training or 'for real'? (lower right) Lts. Duke Ellington, Ed O'Neill, Ken Ekberg, and Bill McCloud go for a winter swim to test their 'poopy suits'. (all photos credit - USAF)

Much of this "jet jockey's" time is spent training for the squadron mission. The balance of his time is employed in waiting, just waiting. It's one of the hardest jobs a man can perform. Just ask any soldier, sailor, or airman. The vigil of the Sabre Sentry helps keep the peace in the Free World.





"Scramble!" Lt. Ekberg runs to his waiting Sabre to intercept the unknown bogie approaching from the north. Airline or MiGs? (credit - USAF)



Lt. Ken Ekberg's F-86F when he was assigned to the 334th FDS at Chitose was named "Mike's Maverick". (credit - Ken Ekberg)

There are such compensating factors in Lt. Ekberg's Air Force career as his wife, "Mike", and daughter "Sharmi". He lives a normal family life in his Air Force community as a member of the 4th Fighter Day Wing.

Lt. Ekberg, while in the Navy, got his high school diploma through the GED program. After joining the Air Force, he received his commission through the Aviation Cadet program. He says that anything is possible if you want it bad enough and work hard enough. "I like the Air Force and intend to make it my career", the Chicago native added.

A pair of 334th FDS F-86Fs over northern Japan in the winter of 1955-56 looking for the elusive 'unknown bogie'. It was almost always an airliner off course. (credit - USAF)



fourthmanship magazine, a publication of the 4th FDW in 1956. (credit - Ken Ekberg)

Mike' and Ken Ekberg relax at the Chitose O-Club following a hard day at the F-86 'office'. (credit - USAF)



HASSLING THE METEOR

by 'Tex' Henry

I graduated with 53-B at Foster AFB, TX, and was excited to be on my way to the fighting in Korea. Then the war ended. Our orders (there were five of us) were changed and we headed for Europe. RAF Manston to be exact, by way of the all-weather school at Moody AFB, GA. The diversion to Moody made a lot of sense later after being exposed to the English weather.

The RAF base at Manston had been built during World War Two as a primary recovery station for shot up aircraft returning from missions against Nazi Germany. It was the most eastern base in England, and right on the Channel just north of Dover. Manston had a 750 foot wide runway, plenty wide enough to accommodate a four ship takeoff and landing in the Sabre, which we performed on a fairly regular basis. The main runway had a diagonal grass strip that many of the RAF aircraft, like the Meteor, Vampire, and Venom, used. Their aircraft weren't as sophisticated as ours and could use the grass strip with ease.

When we arrived at Manston, we were assigned to the 406th Fighter Bomber Wing, in one of its three squadrons - the 512th, 513th, and 514th. The 406th was still equipped with Republic F-84E Thunderjets, but were about to receive new F-86F Sabres. I was assigned to the 512th Squadron, checking out in the '84 and flying it for about 25 to 30 hours before transitioning into the Sabre. At the time, I was one of fourteen second lieutenants assigned to the squadron.

Once we got into the Sabre, we spent much of our airborne time hassling with the RAF. Their first line fighter was the Gloster Meteor Mk. IV. They hadn't received any of the Canadair Sabre 4s yet. The Meteor was the jet replacement for the Spitfire, and had about the same turning capability - very tight. The British believed in aircraft that turn. And more than one RAF pilot claimed that the Meteor could be cart-wheeled! Some of that was in bar talk, but some was in earnest. I was told you could roll the thing into a 90° bank, throttle the low side engine back to idle, go full bore on the high side engine, and with full low side rudder - BAM! End over end! However, I never saw one do it.

One day eight of our Sabres had engaged a similar number of Meteors a bit north of London. In the melee that ensued, I ended up behind a Meteor in an excellent bounce position. I pulled in behind



2nd LT J.D. 'Tex' Henry on the wing of the F-86F he flew when assigned to the 512th FDS at Manston. (credit - JD Henry)

him and started taking gun camera film of him when suddenly, his right engine blew up, with turbine wheel and pieces flying off. I followed him down to see if he would make it into an emergency field. But anyone who has ever flown in England knows that you are seldom out of gliding distance of some kind of airstrip.

The Meteor pilot made a safe landing and our flight rejoined to return to Manston. Suddenly, there was another Meteor flying with us. And not just with us, he was flying on my wing. Later on, I found out that he was checking to see if my gun ports were blackened. They thought I was using live ammo and had shot down the Meteor! Upon my return to Manston, I was met by the DO of the 406th. He asked if I had taken pictures of 'the event'. I replied to the affirmative, whereby he took my film to show it to the RAF and prevent a flap with them. I never heard any more about it, so I guess we avoided a second Battle of Britain.

In early 1954, the 513th and 514th Squadrons converted to F-86D all-weather interceptors. We in the 512th kept our '86Fs and in late 1954 moved to Soesterberg AB, Holland (the envy of all the USAFE troops). In September 1955, the 512th Squadron was re-designated the 32nd Fighter Day Squadron and assigned to the 36th Fighter Day Wing at Bitburg, Germany. The Royal Dutch Air Force was equipped with British Meteors, so we continued our 'aerial combat' with them - with an occasional joust with the RCAF guys and their new Sabre Mk. 6s based in France. Now that was a real 'hassle'. I departed Soesterberg in early 1957 and was reassigned to Nellis.

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What Is It? This very strange F-86F has not one but three retractable rocket launcher trays, two in the position of the old .50 caliber machine gun bays; with a third, much larger launcher mounted under the fuselage as found on the F-86D/L all-weather interceptor. Each of the side-mounted launchers held forty-three 2.75" rockets, while the under fuselage tray held over eighty rockets, a total exceeding 160 rockets. The most powerfully armed operational interceptor was the Northrop F-89D with 104 2.75" rockets. Anyone know anything further about this airplane and the program it was involved in, please contact the Editor of SabreJet Classics. (credit - NAA)

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