

Sabre Jet Classics

Volume 9 Number 3

FALL 2001

A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association



**1956 Skyblazers,
20 Years Of Our Association, More!**

SabreJet Classics

VOLUME 9, NUMBER 3
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Display, More!**

(front cover) An F-86F with the 1955 Skyblazers Aerobatic Team on the ramp at the Paris Air Show held in May 1955. The Skyblazers were a team of pilots assigned to the 48th Fighter Bomber Wing at Chaumont AB, France.
(credit - Ron Picciani)

The *SabreJet Classics* is published by the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association, PO Box 97951, Las Vegas, NV 89193. The F-86 Sabre Pilots Association is a non-profit, veterans organization, with membership limited to individual pilots who have flown the F-86 Sabre aircraft. The goal of the association is to 'perpetuate the history of the F-86 Sabre, the units to which it belonged, and to the men that flew the Sabre'. A second goal is to 'link Sabre jocks with their old comrades'. A third goal is to perpetuate an accurate, patriotic portrayal of our national, military, and Air Force history and heritage. If you are not a member, but meet the membership qualifications, you are invited to join. Application forms are available on our web site or from our Las Vegas address. Dues for one year are \$25, three years \$50, and a Life Membership is \$200. The *SabreJet Classics* is published solely for

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The Presidents Notebook

The Red River Rats will have their 2003 reunion in Las Vegas at the same time we are celebrating our 14th reunion April 13-16. Jack Redman, the Vegas CINC Rat, and I are coordinating events so members who belong to both organizations can attend both reunions. The Rats will be at the Riviera and we will be at the Monte Carlo. Make your plans early.

One of the featured articles of this issue is the brief history of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association. Over the last twenty years a lot of good people have worked hard to make this the premier organization that it is today. Every one of them deserves a hearty thank you for a job well done.

The recruiting program and contest contained in the previous issue is not doing well. The big problem is the contacts that Dee Harper was counting on to jump-start this program are either ill or can not be contacted. **We need your help.** There are a lot of former Sabre pilots who have not heard of this organization, and if they knew about it would like to join. The contest rules were posted in Sabre Jet Classics 9-2 and on our web site

SABRE-PILOTS.ORG. Talk it up with all your old buddies whenever and wherever you see them.

The feature article and cover of the summer issue of *SabreJet Classics* was the new Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center air museum at Dulles Airport in Wahington. The walkway to the new museum will feature several large tablets engraved with the names of all associations and individuals that contributed to the completion of the new museum. During the April 16-20, 2001 the attending membership approved \$10,000 for a tablet. Everyone that I talked to was enthusiastic about making a \$100 contribution to have their name included on the association tablet. It was anticipated that a letter from the Udvar-Hazy staff, advising where and when to send your contribution, would closely follow the summer issue of *SabreJet Classics*. Unfortunately as of October 1, 2001 the letter has not been sent. On September 11 the project manager assured me, that the letter was in final staffing. Whatever that means.

I still have Korean War Service pins. If you served on the ground, in the air or at sea around Korea from 25 June 1950 to 27 July 1953 you are entitled to receive the Korean War Service pin. If you have not received your pin drop me a note and it will be my privilege to mail

it to you.

The terrible act of war that was thrust upon this country on September 11, 2001 will live in our minds forever. The destruction of the FBI building in Oklahoma City, as bad as it was, pales in comparison. Terrorists are in our midst and we have to be constantly on alert to avoid harm. I can not recall a greater display and demonstration of national pride than I have seen since the bombing. But it only took two weeks for the communists to organize the professors and stupid college students to march and burn the American flag in an anti-war rally in Washington D.C. These people have the audacity to use the First Amendment of the Constitution to defend their action.

This is an excellent time for members to employ the third and fourth purpose of the Association: **Patriotism.** Perpetuate an accurate, patriotic portrayal of our national, military and Air Force history and heritage. **Service.** Provide civic service to the military and civilian communities where possible and appropriate.

That's all I have.
God Bless America.

Jerry R. Johnson
President

FOLDED WINGS

James B. Burkett, December 9th, 2000
Charles J. Callison, September 1st, 2001
Thomas M. Collie, Jr., April 15th, 2001
Richard E. Gillespie, December 6th, 2000
Francis D. Leonard, August 1st, 2001
John L. 'Jack' Martin, July 24th, 2001
Robert Niklaus, July 2001
Kenneth E. Pearson, April 24th, 1998
William C. Schell, September 1st, 2001
Stewart B. Stabley, June 1st, 2001

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.

news from the Chairman

Two items of importance to me and hopefully you:
1) I am optimistic that by the time you are reading this I will have received and answered a letter signed by Earl Brown, a flying school classmate of mine. Earl is requesting your contribution (\$100.00) that will enshrine your name on the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association plaque leading into the new Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center air museum at Dulles Airport.

This is an important move since the membership at Reunion 13 approved a \$10,000.00 contribution for the plaque, and we want all our members to be listed on that plaque. It would be unforgivable to be left off a tribute that will be so everlasting. These tablets will forever remind the world of the contribution our airplane and its pilots made to our country.

This item is also pointed out by President Jerry Johnson in his "Notebook", so you can see the emphasis we want to give it.

2) I was informed that there are over four hundred!! members of our organization who are delinquent on their dues. That tall figure was hard for me to believe. In fact, I questioned it to a point where I put some money on it being incorrect. But, to my chagrin and the loss of a lunch, the outsized count proved to be quite correct.

It would seem to me that most people would understand that we need for our membership to remain current on their dues if our organization expects to remain viable. So look at the address label on this issue of your SabreJet Classics. Check to see if the date above your name has the year "2001" or less on it. If it does, then YOU are behind. I'm sure you want to remedy an overlooked situation.

All I ask for is your currency. I won't ask any of you to help me cover the lunch tab.

That's all I have for this time other than a reminder to start thinking about our upcoming 14th Reunion, 13-16 April 2003. It will slip up on us before we know it. Stay in touch. My e-mail address is <druens@aol.com>

GOD BLESS AMERICA!
Dan Druen
Board Chairman

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.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

from Ralph Parr

Ralph Parr corrected us on the quote regarding his conversation with the Russian general that joined our 13th reunion in April 2001. It was the Russian general that reflected - "It's a good thing that we didn't serve in Korea at the same time." But it was Ralph that answered - "Yes, because one of us wouldn't be here today!"

Update on "Bones Marshall"

We're happy to report that Maj. Gen. "Bones" Marshall, who was injured severely in an attack outside the Ala Moana Mall in Honolulu on June 7th, 2001, is making a good recovery. Several of his friends have been keeping us informed on the Bones' progress. He is still not 100%, but perhaps is moving closer to 90%. There are still some residual effects of the blow to his head, and he continues his therapy that hopefully will bring about a full recovery. Those of us that have attempted to contact him by e-mail have been disappointed because his computer is also under the weather, and was taken to the shop for repairs. However, his wife Millie says that we can contact Bones by telephone (808-373-1919) and wish him well. Remember that Hawaii is five hours behind Eastern Standard Time.

Get well Bones!

from your Editor

Lastly, just a short note from your editor regarding the 9-11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, and the loss of both civilian and safety workers lives. Those of you who know me know that I am a firefighter for the City of Canton, Ohio, a thirty-three year veteran. I felt a true loss and shed more than my share of tears when those two buildings came crashing down. I knew that I had lost many, many brave brothers in the fire service. Happily, the toll wasn't anywhere near what I thought it might be. Unhappily, any loss of life was too much.

But I want to thank each and every one of you for your thoughts and prayers and support that I know all of you contributed in the weeks since the attack. I was on alert to go to New York to help out for some three weeks. And I still might go. Normally, like you guys that flew the F-86, I would really look forward to the bell going off for any type of call. It meant ACTION. But not this time. I'll go when called, but there'll be no smiles at any time.

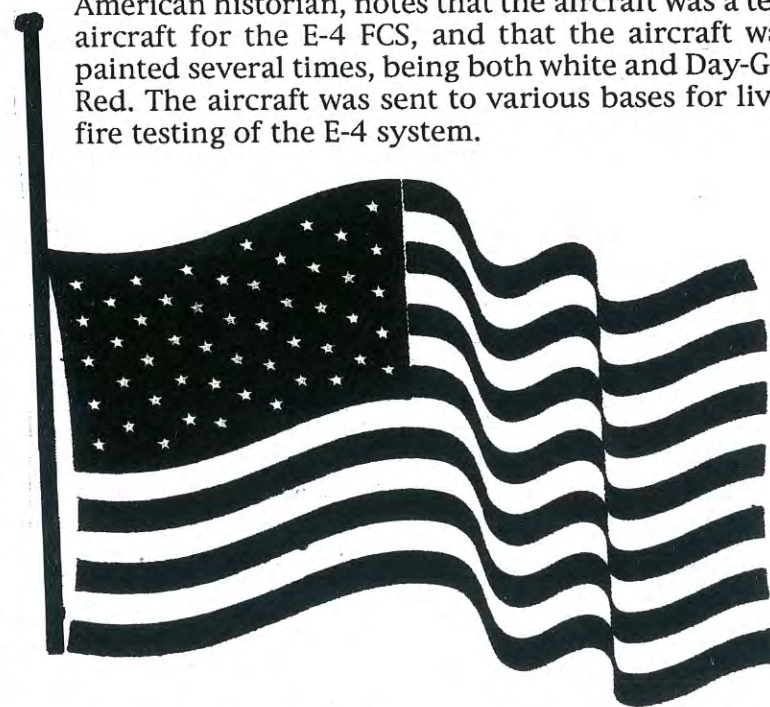
Years ago, Dennis Smith, a New York City firefighter wrote - "You have to be crazy to run into a building that everyone else is running out of!" Now everyone knows what he meant!



WHAT IS IT? We had two answers to our question about the overall orange F-86D #50-494. Mike Jungers writes: "50-494 is an F-86D-5 and was the 'live-fire' test aircraft for the Hughes E-4 Fire Control System. It was fitted with six forward firing cameras in fairings on the fuselage, tail, and wings. The aircraft was painted Day-Glo Red overall. The photos was probably taken at either the Hughes facility just east of Sepulveda Blvd in West LA, or (most likely) at the North American plant at what is now LAX."

Joe Cannon writes "The F-86D on the back of the Summer 2001 issue is most certainly sitting on the ramp at Eglin AFB, FL, as part of the 3200th Fighter Test Sq in 1952. As a test pilot there at that time, I took part in the first tests run on the 2.75" 'Mighty Mouse' rocket in the '86 Dog."

Mr. Ray Wagner, noted aviation writer and North American historian, notes that the aircraft was a test aircraft for the E-4 FCS, and that the aircraft was painted several times, being both white and Day-Glo Red. The aircraft was sent to various bases for live-fire testing of the E-4 system.



9-11-01 Never Forget !

THE 1956 SKYBLAZERS

by Warren Efting

So tell me. How does a second balloon get selected for one of the premier Air Force pilot slots in Europe? I only know the final chapter of the process. The events that led to my selection died with our leader, Captain Jim Reynolds. He never told me. I don't know if he ever told any other team members how they were selected. They never said a word either.

It started when I was due for my 1955 proficiency check. I dreaded the thought of having to prove my flying abilities to someone I didn't know that well. The 48th Fighter Bomber Wing at Chaumont, France was pretty much a closed corporation. We knew the guys in the other two squadrons, but when we were TDY we became 'one' outfit, defending our lack of streets, ankle-deep mud, frequent power and water outages, and the rotten weather.

Actually that last was a relative term. Chaumont was the 'best' reporting station in NATO, being VFR 49% of the time (Pittsburgh, PA, was the 'worst' reporting station in the ConUS with 51% VFR!). The ops clerk collecting 175s at Fursty used to look over the counter and remark - "You must be from Chaumont, I can tell by za mud on your boooots." (We flew in four-buckle overshoes most of the year). We were usually doing the normal thing - looking for a shower (the water being off at Chaumont for several days, we were getting a bit 'ripe') and a decent hamburger and fries.

One Saturday in May, my phone rang and it was Capt. Reynolds, a member of the Skyblazers team and a member of the Stan/Eval Board, asking me if I was available for my proficiency test. The squadrons always had a couple of birds tweaked and ready for flight in case of an alert. Jim was the brother of New York Yankees ace pitcher, Allie Reynolds. Although Jim was a pro-football left halfback and the Leader of the Skyblazers, Allie got all the ink. But I never saw Jim flinch when asked about his brother Allie.

I met him at the 493rd, his squadron, we briefed all the normal stuff, grabbed our gear and headed for the flightline. I just got my wheels in the well when Jim said, "Take it in trail and stay there." Then it got real interesting. We were just through 1,000 feet when he rolled left, then right. Then he leveled off, built up the speed to 350 or so, and pulled up into a loop. I got to see the French countryside through the combining glass - up close and personal. This was before the days of all the restrictions we came to hate.

Then a Cuban Eight and he called me, "Take the right wing. At the top of the roll, go back in trail." Meaning flat on my back, I had to change positions from wing to trail. They didn't teach this stuff in pilot training! This, I learned later, was in preparation for the Ech-



elon Roll, a maneuver the 'Blazers were famous for all over the Continent. Strictly a 'pilot pleaser', I doubt the viewing public knew what they were watching.

After about 30 minutes, I heard this call, "How's he doin' Gil?" And the response was, "He's hanging in there." Just someone else's R/T, I guessed. Far as I knew, we were the only birds airborne. It turned out that 'Gil' was Bill Gilmore, one of Jim's 'Blazer-mates. He'd been shadowing us throughout the flight.

The first Skyblazers team were pilots in the 36th FBG and consisted of (l-r) Bill and Buck Patillo, Harry Evans, and 'Dag' Damewood. They flew F-80 Shooting Stars. (credit - 'Dag' Damewood)



Showing that aerobatics were not their only qualifications as fighter pilots, members of the 1955 team pose with the trophies awarded at the 12th AF Gunnery meet. (l-r) Lt. Jim Reynolds (strafing), Maj. Don Gravenstine (Best squadron score), Lt.Col. Arthur D Thomas (Commander's competition), Capt. Bill Gilmore (Best Air-to-Air Gunnery). Note the Skyblazers markings on the 48th FBW F-86F. (credit - USAF)

A normal approach and pitchout, and then we were shutting things down. Jim beat me out of the cockpit, came over, and asked if I'd like to join the Skyblazers in the Slot. He said the other positions were filled and that we'd be practicing over the field starting next Monday. I said "Yes!" and the team was formed.

Jim started with Bud Homan, the new #2, practicing the whole show with him until he was satisfied. Then he added Jim Foster, and the three of them practiced the show. Lastly, I came aboard. The show was a 'scripted' thirteen minutes. Doesn't seem like much but at the end of the season, my right forearm was twice the size of the left. It took a lot of pull to hold diamond formation in the 720° turn and stay inside the field perimeter. My flight suit was soaked after every show.

Our first show was in October 1955 at Evreux AB, France, where the resident troop carrier wing was having an Open House. Three fourths of the town showed up to watch. It was the first time I saw the 'white hankerchief' salute by the onlookers. Someone had to explain the significance to me. Then the weather turned to low visibility & ceilings in Central France, and there weren't a lot of opportunities to practice or put on shows.

This was when we practiced the 'horizontal show', which could be put on under a 2500 foot ceiling. We eliminated the vertical stuff and stuck with rolls and low-pass turns. At least we didn't disappoint the spectators who often stood in pouring rain to watch. Even their hankies got soaked.

We did practice over Chaumont whenever weather permitted. But what we really needed was a period of concentrated training before starting the '56 season. In March 1956, we flew down to Marseille and prac-

ticed for two solid weeks. An RF-80 pilot named Russ Tansy was down there with us and took most of our publicity pictures. When I asked him how he got some of them, especially the shot of us vertical, he said, "I use the second welded seam on the left drop tank."

While we were down there, one of the crew chiefs came running up as we approached the planes yelling that the launch would be delayed. During the intake inspection, they found little piles of stones near the engine screens! We were at a civilian airport, and in the mid-1950s, the communists were very active.

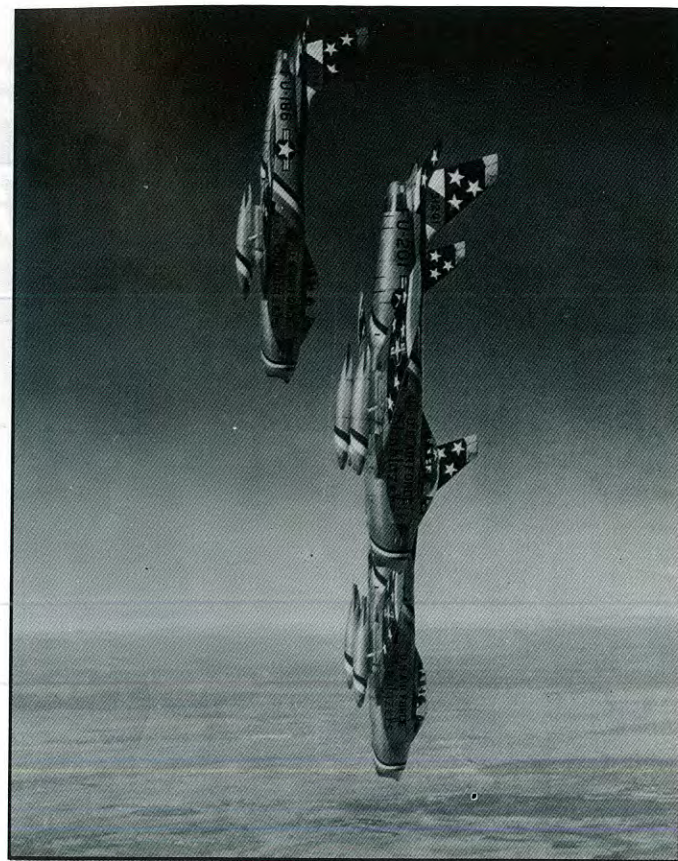
We opened the '56 season at Dreux, then Toulouse-Blagnac and Bordeaux, where we used smoke for the first time. We saved it for the 'Bomb Burst' and the 'Thread-The-Needle' so the crowd could keep track of us throughout the maneuvers. We really hit it that day, and the 'Thread-The-Needle' looked like four aircraft heading for a huge mid-air. Fifty thousand people lined the taxiways to watch. The Bordeaux mayor was so impressed that he gave us a just-bottled case of Chateau LaFite-54 as his way of saying thanks from the people. I was a beer drinker then, and gave my share to Jim. I'd kill to have those bottles back today. The wife of the President of the Aero Club of France presented Jim with a silver cup commemorating the occasion.

Then it was on to Zurich and the International Air Show. It would be our first real test against other aerobatic teams. They were expecting over a million people at Dubendorf Airport on 26/27 May, and we weren't permitted to practice there, so we'd have to use Gardermorn, an auxiliary field some miles away. We could survey Dubendorf from the observation deck at base ops to get a feel for the layout.



(left) A Skyblazers F-86F over France in late 1955 exhibits the interim markings adopted by the team.

(right) The 1956 Skyblazers coming down the back side of one of their patented formation loops, with Warren Efting in the Slot. Note the finalized Skyblazers markings used throughout the 1956 season. (credit - Warren Efting)



diving to get out of the way on the far hillside.

The rest of the show was just as spectacular, if the press notices are to be believed. We nailed the "Thread-The-Needle" using the little shack as our focal point. The show coordinator then asked us to hold clear of the field until the Swiss Vampires finished their demonstration.

We landed without incident and the white hankies were fluttering. We felt pretty good about the performance. Then someone keyed the mike to ask, "Where's the wooden shack?" It seems the Swiss demo was a napalm attack on the little wooden shack and it was still smoldering when we taxied in. What would we have done for a vertical checkpoint if they had preceded us? Chaos! Anyway, it was a great birthday present as the 27th was my 23rd birthday. In September, we did three shows on the 20th at Spaak, Biggin Hill, and Hucknell for Battle of Britain Day. Busy day, but the Brits really appreciated our efforts.

Coming back to the Continent from Norway and Denmark after shows at Oslo, Stavanger, and Copenhagen, we were going to make our night landing at Weisbaden for General Cook's retirement ceremony the next day. Nothing out of the ordinary about this, right? Well, it was moonless and we were all on 'bright/flash' when we left the high cone. Before we hit the soup, we switched over to 'dim/steady'. All except Jim. I never realized just how bright 'bright/flash' really was.

We were in diamond formation as we started down when Jim's lights went on. Blink! There he was - adjust position. Blink! He's gone, hold what you have. Blink! Adjust. Blink! Hold. All the way down to breakout at about 2000 feet. It was a bit of a nail biter. Jim was



The 1955 Skyblazers team in formation over the French countryside in October 1955. The 1955 team was Capt. Bill Dillard - Lead, Capt. Bill Gilmore - #2, unknown at #3, with Lt. Jim Reynolds in the Slot. Capt. Jim Reynolds moved up to Lead on the 1956 Skyblazers, with Lt. Warren Efting in the Slot. (credit - USAF)

one of those gifted stick and rudder men who could pull something like this. You always knew where he was or was going to be. He was rock-steady in the cockpit.

When we stopped on the ramp, all three of us stormed over to Jim's bird and started yelling. He just smiled

The 1956 Skyblazers make a formation pass over the headquarters building of the 48th FBW at Chaumont, France. Nice tight diamond with at least six feet of overlap! (credit - USAF)



Dubendorf sat down in a bowl, with mountains sloping away from the runway on all sides. It'd be an interesting challenge. There was a wooden shack between the runway and the taxiway - almost exactly in the middle of the airport. That would be our vertical focal point for the 'Thread-The-Needle'. The viewing stands were already in place on the ops building side of the runway, and the hills across the runway were available for additional spectators.

On the 27th, we were next to last on the schedule, just ahead of the Swiss Air Force Vampires. There were the flyovers of big stuff, team demonstrations and single ships. We inched our way to the head of the line and finally we were airborne. We were east of the field when the call finally came to proceed with our show. Normally, we opened from behind the crowd in trail and then pull up into a loop in front of the crowd and switch to diamond where they could all see us. Not having practiced at Dubendorf, Jim wasn't familiar with the terrain contours as we approached. We had to climb (thereby losing valuable airspeed) to clear the small hills as we approached. When Jim called "Go Diamond!", we all clobbered it to get into position.

As we proceeded into our loop, something strange happened at the top - a feeling of lack of control! I could wipe out the cockpit with the stick and nothing happened. Same for the rudder. Four airplanes all falling in formation, and there wasn't a thing we could do to make corrections. In an effort to keep everyone calm, I keyed the mike and gave the guys the first line of "Cruisin' Down The River on a Sunday afternoon" (it was Sunday afternoon), and by the time I finished, we had control again. But the crowd was coming up at a very rapid rate. The 300 knot loop made our pull-out rather low. I wouldn't say it was dangerous, but when I looked out the combining glass, spectators were



The 1956 Skyblazers team consisted of (back row l-r) Lt. Jim Foster - #3, Capt. Jim Reynolds - Lead, Lt. Bud Homan - #2, and Lt. Warren Efting - Slot. The ground team were very highly rated by the pilots, and included S/Sgt. Billy Hammack, A/1C Marvin Case, A/1C Robert Ryan, A/1C Robert Stimpson, A/1C Travis Robinson, A/2C Glen Benson, and A/2C Harold Schultz. (credit - Warren Efting)

Bud Homan flew Left Wing, and Lt Jim Foster was Right Wing. Bud and Jim were always there, ready to fly, whether it was a practice or a show, pumped and primed. I was just the guy in back. Bud really controlled the formation. He had to be very precise in his placements because (especially in the Echelon Roll where you start out in left echelon and end up in right echelon) if Bud moved even a foot or two too far forward, he could throw off the entire formation. Talk about steady. We kept to a five foot wing overlap and I could read the 'mil. spec.' on the wingtip nav light while in the diamond!

Being a "Blazer" meant you had to fill all the same operational squares as the regular squadron jocks. But at 5 o'clock, we got to practice over Chaumont - just in time for Happy Hour at the O-Club when every critic in the wing was watching.

Looking back over the forty-four years since we flew together, a lot of things came flooding back. As the junior birdman of the team, I supervised the refueling of our aircraft. We had just landed at Weisbaden for General Cook's retirement ceremony where they employed German transient maintenance people. Jim wanted me to hang around and make sure the tanks got topped off properly. I was up on the wing filling one of the tanks when I noticed a strange looking aircraft with outriggers under each wingtip, being towed out of the hanger.

The ground crew spotted the aircraft pointing west on an east/west runway, giving it only about 1,000 feet of concrete for takeoff. 'Must be a full-power runup check, not a takeoff.' I moved the refueling hose over to the other wing so I could see the aircraft better, and had just started filling the tank when I heard the roar of full power. I looked up and saw the aircraft lurch forward. Rolling about 500 feet, the outriggers dropped off and it pulled up into a 45° climb and disappeared through a 2500 foot ceiling. Stunned by what I had just witnessed, I shouted, "What the hell was that?" The transient maintenance guy, without even blinking, said "Das ist der new Messerschmidt, ja!" It was a U-2 of course, and the maintenance guy knew he had a sucker on the hook, and reeled me in.

In all, the '56 Skyblazers did twenty-six shows around Europe, Scandanavia, and North Africa, in front of an estimated 3 million people. Hopefully, we helped sell F-86s to our NATO allies. That was our official mission. But along the way, we shared a lot of experiences together. Flying with the same three guys for eighteen months builds a bond not easily broken. We trusted each other with our lives - any mistake could lead to disaster. We were fortunate to finish our tour as 'Blazers with nothing more than a wrinkled aileron and a dimpled drop tank. Too much overlap!

TWENTY YEARS OF THE F-86 ASSOCIATION

In 1980, Bill Demint put into action an idea he'd had for some time. He'd seen many ads pertaining to pilot reunions - P-38, P-51 and other such groups, and wondered about a Sabre pilot reunion. Along with his buddy Frank Satterfield, they decided to go for it! They enlisted the aid of Warren Thompson, a writer and aviation historian who had collected information from many pilots for a book he was writing. Warren provided Bill and Frank with a contact list and planning began for our first reunion. The response was very enthusiastic.

In October 1981, the first reunion was held in Little Rock, Arkansas, Bill and Frank's hometown. Thirty-five Sabre jocks attended. Warren Thompson hosted the second reunion, June 1982, in Memphis. Lloyd Irish hosted Reunion 3 in St. Louis in October 1983. Membership by then was about one hundred.

To make membership affordable, annual dues were set at \$10, and this barely covered administrative costs. Warren Thompson was rewarded for his vital assistance by being appointed as the first Associate Member. Bill Demint was the first President, serving from January 1980 to October 1983.

The second President was Dick Keener, from October 1983 to July 1985, followed by Jim Gregg, from July 1985 to April 1986. Reunion 4, co-hosted by Ed Hosbach and Bob Grozer, was held in Dayton, Ohio, with the highlight being a visit to the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson.

Records pertaining to these formative years of the association are sparse, making it difficult to outline each administration's accomplishments and/or problems. However, the difficulties are easy to visualize. Care had to be exercised in the expenditure of every dime, plus maintaining contact with a highly mobile membership.

Reunion 5 coincided with the Air Force Association's 1986 "Gathering Of Eagles" celebration in Las Vegas. There the membership wisely voted to hold all future reunions in Las Vegas. In retrospect, this decision was 'right'. After all, in 1954 alone, over 300 F-86s were assigned to Nellis AFB, 'Home of the Fighter Pilot'. Besides, Las Vegas is a great place for a reunion.

Jim Campbell was elected President, and Dick Keener was Treasurer. Jim served until May 1988, and made giant strides in establishing our association as one of the premier fighter pilots organizations. He increased the membership and reunion attendance; and started work on an F-86 memorial at the Air Force Museum.

Jim donated much of his companies assets, including secretarial help, bulk mail account, and toll-free telephone access. He designed a new membership card. Don McNamara produced a gold plated F-86 lapel pin for issue to all members. Both items are still included in our new member package.

Reunion 6 was held in April 1988 at the Sands Hotel. For the first time, organized tours of Nellis AFB and a RED FLAG briefing were offered. The attendees elected Don McNamara as President, with Dick Keener returning as Treasurer. Jim Campbell continued to support the association for two more years.



During Don's Presidency, the F-86 memorial in the Air Force Museum's became a reality, being dedicated on 15 October 1988 in a ceremony attended by twenty-three association members.

Reunion 7 was held at the Desert Inn Hotel in May 1990. Highlights included a two day golf tournament and an F-86 display courtesy of 'Combat Jets'. Guest speaker at the banquet was Brigadier General Robinson "Robbie" Risner. As Don McNamara's term in office ended, membership had increased to 560 Sabre jocks.

Hank Buttlemann, youngest ace of the Korean War, was elected President, and Wally Carson became the new Treasurer. Hank served until April 1994. In 1992, Flamm "Dee" Harper joined Hank's administration as Secretary. The membership roster stood at 560.

Under Hank's leadership, all association records were transferred to Las Vegas, a bulk mail account was opened, and a new association address was established in Las Vegas. He initiated a membership drive and by April 1992 the total membership stood at 700.

Reunion 8 was held in April 1992 at the Sahara Hotel. Guest speaker at the banquet was Colonel Alton Whitley, Jr., Commander of the F-117 Stealth Fighters in DESERT STORM. Yet another recruiting campaign was launched and by April 1994, the roster showed 1275 members.

By the end of 1996, the membership had grown to over 1700 members, including more than eighty-five flag officers, four of whom were full Generals, a U.S. Senator, a U.S. Congressman, three Astronauts, several North Ameri-

The airplane we all know and love was demonstrated to the public first in 1947, then again in 1997 for the Air Force Fifty celebration at Nellis. (credit - Tom Slee)





A ceremony was held at the U.S. Air Force Museum on 15 October 1988, which dedicated a permanent memorial to the F-86 Sabre and the pilots that flew her both in the hot combat of Korea and during the Cold War. The enemy was the Soviet Union and the F-86 Sabre was the best airplane in the arsenal of democracy. (credit - Larry Davis)

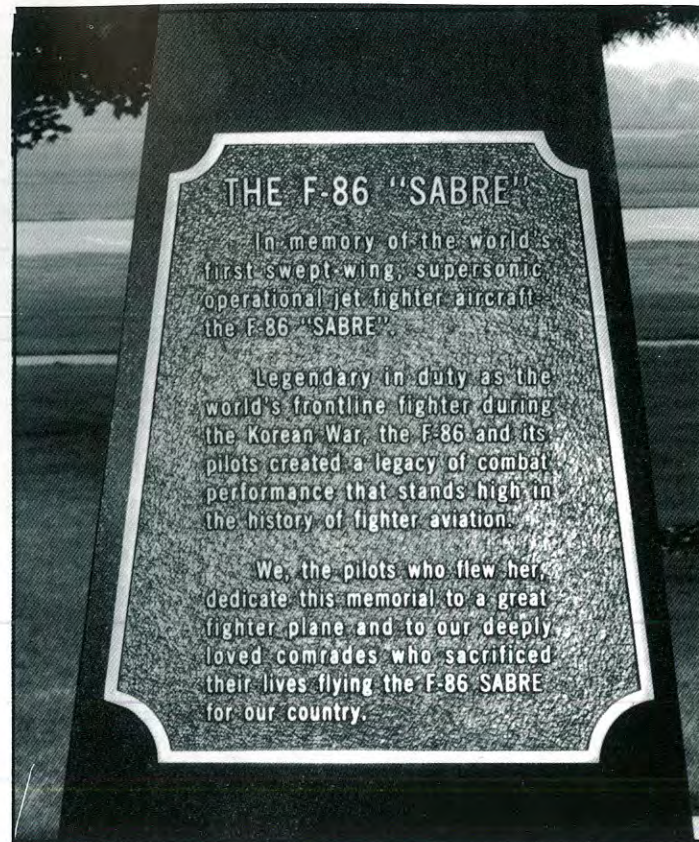
can Aviation test pilots, and most of the surviving Korean War aces. We had also become an international organization, with members from Canada, Great Britain, South Africa, Jordan, Pakistan, Philippines, and Taiwan.

In April 1994, during Reunion 9 held at the Sands Hotel, a static display F-86E was dedicated in Freedom Park at Nellis AFB, fulfilling a long time goal of the association. Over five hundred members and fguests attended the event. Special thanks are due Hank Buttlemann and Lt. Gen. Thomas Griffith, Commander of the USAF Weapons and Tactics Center for their perseverance in attaining this goal. Many obstacles were overcome by these two men. The association footed the bill for transportation of the Sabre from Buckley ANG Base in Colorado, to its new home at Nellis.

"Dee" Harper was elected President for a term until the 11th reunion in 1997: Secretary was Gerald Weiland, and Dick Geiger became Treasurer. Members authorized a Lifetime Membership for \$200.00, and established a Board of Governors and by-laws to run the association. The first Board of Governors included: Chairman, Jim Campbell; and Directors John Giraud, Alonzo Walter, Don McNamara, Robert Carter, and Secretary Howard "Ebe" Ebersole.

Reunion 10 returned to the Sands Hotel in September 1995, and was a smashing success. Guest speaker Maj. Gen. Richard Betherum, Commander of Weapons and Tactics Center at Nellis, recognized our group as pioneers who passed on a proud legacy to today's fighter pilots.

During Dee's term, he tightened up administration of association affairs and instituted several innovations. The association Headquarters was moved from Michigan to Nevada. Our roster published in 1995 became the



envy of other associations. A colorful membership certificate screamed "Frame and hang me!", was sent to all members in late 1994. In early 1995, the *SabreJet Classics* magazine became the association's literary link to members and friends. About this time, the Sabre Pilots Association was included on the "Fighter Town" page on the world wide web (www.fightertown.org), thanks to webmaster and Sabre ace Lt.Gen. "Bones Marshall.

A 'country store' operation was started by Mike Freebairn after the 10th reunion, and continues to this day. Administratively, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were developed and published to cover all association activities. In late 1996, the association purchased a new computer, and our records have been maintained on it ever since. One benefit to tightening control of our administration was that during 1996, over 90% of our members dues were current. In past years, the norm was that 50% were delinquent in payment - a major improvement.

The dramatic increase in new members (1190) added to our ranks during Hank and Dee's presidencies (1990-97), can be attributed to their leadership, cooperation from our membership and Col. Charlie Carr, Chairman of our Recruiting Committee. Our thanks go to all involved in this great effort.

Approximately one thousand members and guests attended Reunion 11, held 22-26 April 1997 at the Monte Carlo Hotel. Held in conjunction with the "Air Force Fifty" celebration sponsored by the Air Force Association, this event attracted over 100,000 people and included the "Golden Tattoo" USAF air show at Nellis, which included several mock air battles, including a Sabre once again on the butt of a MiG! (Report & photos was included in vol. 5, no.2 issue of *SabreJet Classics*.



A portion of the crowd that attended the dedication of the F-86 memorial at Nellis in 1994. Members of the association, led by Hank Buttlemann and Lt. Gen. Thomas Griffith, stand in front of the new memorial in Freedom Park. (credit - Jim Ramsey)



Reunion 9 was held in Las Vegas, NV in April 1994. The biggest thrill for all those attending was the unveiling of a static display F-86E in Freedom Park at Nellis AFB. (credit - Jim Ramsey)

Guest speaker was Congressman Sam Johnson (R-TX). An association logo decal developed by Jim Campbell, was part of each reunion 'welcome' package. We now carry the decal in our Country Store. All attendees agreed the reunion and air show was a classy affair and everyone had a great time. Bob Ashcraft was elected President, and Dee Harper became Chairman of the Board. Dan Druen, Alonzo Walter, Bruce Hinton, and Glenn Nordin completed the Board. The membership was advised that the legal headquarters of the association had been established in Nevada. A new constitution governing the association's affairs was then approved unanimously by the attending members.

On 27 January 1998, Bob Ashcraft, President of the Association, died after a short illness. On 15 February, the Board of Directors appointed Hank Buttlemann to fill the position of President. However, Hank was forced to resign for personal reasons on 15 May. The Board then appointed Bruce Hinton to the Presidency, serving until the 12th reunion in April 1999.

Tragedy struck again on 2 May when the association's Secretary, Gerry Weiland passed away following a long fight. His wife Diane volunteered to stay on as our Secretary, and she has done a superb job in that position. Jerry Johnson became the Staff Executive Officer, and Glenn Nordin became the Vice President.

Because both Bruce Hinton and Glenn Nordin both resided outside the Las Vegas area, Jerry Johnson, as Staff Executive Officer, provided the single point of contact between the two major officers and the staff in Las Vegas. This coordination insured the command element was fully supported with the information needed to be effective in their respective positions. During the first half of 1998, the administrative staff in Las Vegas proved their mettle by retaining a steady hand during the most crucial era in the association's history - Good Show gentlemen and ladies! We are grateful to one and all.

It was back to the Monte Carlo for Reunion 12, conducted between 18 and 22 April 1999. The following slate of

Late in 1994, the association launched the *SabreJet Classics* magazine, which quickly became the primary vehicle for information to the members. Featuring F-86 history articles, any news of concern to the members is also included in the pages.





Hank Buttleman chats with Mike Freebairn during the F-86 memorial ceremony. Hank was President from 1990 through 1994. Mike Freebairn is in charge of the Flightline Sales store. (credit - Jim Ramsey)

officers were installed - President, Glenn Nordin; Vice President, Alonzo Walter; Chairman of the Board, Jerry Johnson; with Directors Dan Druen, Bruce Hinton, Bob Matasick, and Tom Griffith. Because of his long, faithful, and productive service to the organization, Dee Harper was named Chairman Emeritus of the Board. Dick Geiger and Diane Weiland continued as Treasurer and Secretary, respectively; and Larry Davis was enthusiastically renewed as editor of *SabreJet Classics*.

As the handout (i.e. 'freebie') for the 12th reunion, all attendees were given a duplicate of the Mach Buster pin, Mach Buster certificate, and Mach Buster decal, previously awarded to F-86 pilots by North American Aviation. Mike Freebairn spearheaded this project, including getting copyright permission that allowed us to proceed; and near perfect duplication of all three items.

At the Air Force Fifty celebration, the Air Force held a Golden Tattoo air show at Nellis AFB. The highlight of the show was watching a flight of four F-86s chase a MiG-15 around the sky to the delight of the crowd. (credit - Dick Keener)



"The Old Man" - Dee Harper at the podium during the 1996 Reunion 11 festivities. Dee held office from 1994 through 1997, and was responsible for modernizing the association fundamentals, being elected Chairman Emeritus in 1999. (credit - F-86 Association)

Mike and his lovely wife Ardith, have been instrumental in making our reunions a big success, year after year. Among many other things, Ardith has managed the Treasure Hunt for our ladies, stuffed 'Welcome' packages for attendees, and registered attendees and guests, not a small job and done to perfection. Mike accepted the responsibility for setting up and management of our Country Store, donating numerous hours to assure that this enterprise is a highlight of our reunions.

In October 1999, Bill Weiger established an F-86 Sabre Pilots Association web site on the World Wide Web (SABRE-PILOTS.ORG). It has been a real benefit to the organization, and receiving over 13,000 'hits' since it was first posted. The site provides information about the



Mike and Ardith Freebairn run the Flightline Sales store which sells literally anything you could want in regards to F-86s - hats, shirts (with pocket), jackets, pins, decals - even Mach Buster certificates. (credit - Larry Davis)



A portion of the banquet crowd at Reunion 13 held at the Monte Carlo Hotel in April 2001. Sabre Pilot reunions are held every two years, and have been in Las Vegas since Reunion 5 in 1986. All reunions have a Hospitality Room featuring a cash bar, and often have up to five brunches and banquets to feast on. (credit - Larry Davis)

association, membership applications, listing of deceased members, articles from *SabreJet Classics*, reunion information, letters from readers, advertising for Flight Line Sales, pictures and other good stuff.

Reunion 13 returned to the Monte Carlo Hotel on 16-20 April 2001. Four hundred eighty-five members and guests had a great time. The 50th Anniversary of the Korean War formed the backdrop, and Sabre pilots who flew in that war received the Korean War Service pin awarded by the Republic of Korea. Several mini unit reunions were held within the scope of our reunion. The Freebairns hit another 'home run' by providing blue golf shirts (with pocket!) for the men and lap robes for the ladies. They also arranged, through their friendship with show producer John Stuart, a special "Legends In Concert" show honoring Sabre pilots.

At Reunion 13, newly elected officers were: President Jerry Johnson; Vice-President Alonzo Walter; Chairman Dan Druen; with Directors Bruce Hinton, Glenn Nordin, Bob Matasick, and Lloyd Ulrich. Appointed positions confirmed included Secretary Diane Weiland; Treasurer Dick Geiger; *SabreJet Classics* Editor Larry Davis; Web Master

Bill Weiger; and Flight Line Store Sales Manager Mike Freebairn.

The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum is building a new facility, the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, to house additional artifacts. It will feature a walkway lined with large tablets engraved with the names of associations and individuals that contribute to the completion of the new facility. Attendees at the 13th reunion voted unanimously to contribute \$10,000.00 to have an "F-86 Sabre Pilots Association" heading on one of the panels. Association members who contribute \$100.00 will have their names displayed under our heading.

The last announcement at the 13th reunion agenda was the announcement that Dee Harper will head a new recruiting campaign. The goal is to establish a membership of 3000 by the 14th reunion in 2003. Sabre pilots with airlines, ANG and AFRES, and foreign nationals will be targeted. Our membership today exceeds 1800 members. If everyone recruits just one new member during the next two years, we will easily exceed our goal. Let's GO FOR IT!!

Thomas G. Davis His Last Flight

As with most great men and women of history, stories abound which shed light on the source of their greatness. With this in mind, SabreJet Classics presents another in a series of anecdotes received from you, our members. Brig. Gen. Lon Walter, USAF (Ret), of Austin, TX, tells the following story. We invite other members to send their memories of the great ones they have known.

The subjects of the first two stories in this series were great fighter pilots who also happened to be famous. This is a story about a great fighter pilot who I believe would have become famous but...read on.

Tom Davis and I reported to the 335th Squadron, 4th Wing, at Andrews AFB in the Summer of 1950, part of a contingent of second lieutenants ('slick winged second balloons') who were fresh out of flying school who were privileged to fly the Air Force's newest fighter, the F-86 Sabre. Tom quickly established himself as a bright, friendly, and eager fighter pilot. The more experienced pilots sought him out as a wing man. He never disappointed them.

Early in the Fall, the Fourth and its new Sabres, were ordered to Korea to counter the MiG-15, which was having its way with slower American aircraft. The young second lieutenants had about 75 hours of experience in the F-86. The remainder of their training would be conducted in the crucible of combat.

Tom Davis continued his progress, and became one of the best wing men in the outfit. He learned his trade well, even downing a MiG while flying with Ralph D. "Hoot" Gibson, who later became an ace. When Tom finished his tour, he returned to the Air Defense Command at Griffiss AFB, NY, then went to Tyndall AFB, FL in 1954, to fly the F-86D. It was there that he achieved greatness.

On a dark night in December 1954, Tom was over the Gulf of Mexico in an F-86D when his cockpit lighted up with the red glow of fire warning lights. Smoke and a loss of power confirmed that this was much more than a malfunctioning warning circuit. Suddenly he had only one option. After making the "Mayday!" call, he initiated the ejection sequence.

Night is NOT the preferred time for a fighter pilot to find himself alone, in a parachute, and descending into a large body of water. But Tom Davis, as he had so often in the past, was up to the task. Although he had a terrific headache, he oriented himself enough to decide that he could



(l-r) Lt. Tom Davis is congratulated by Capt. 'Hoot' Gibson on downing a MiG in the late summer of 1951. (credit - Ted Boland)

paddle to land if he could get rid of his chute once he hit the water; then inflate his dinghy and board it.

Again he performed flawlessly, and eventually reached a beach in northwest Florida near Appalachicola Point. Alone, having survived an ejection and water landing, and now dog-tired, Tom shouted for help, set out his emergency flares, then walked up and down the beach trying to locate someone who could help him notify his unit that he was OK. Finally, and with his head still aching, he decided to wait until daylight for the searchers who would surely find him.

The dinghy looked like as good a bed as he had available, and he decided to lay down with his head on the inflated side of the raft. When he did so, the fractured spine!! he had unknowingly suffered during the ejection, and the cause of his headache, shifted just enough to sever his spinal cord. He died instantly and painlessly, and was found the next day by searchers.

Much of what I have written was deduced from his footsteps on the beach, the flares, and other indications of his last heroic moments. Tom Davis was a fighter to the end. On his last flight, he conducted himself with greatness and courage, just as he had done in every severe test of his young life. He was a GREAT fighter pilot.

SPLIT-FLAP ANYONE?

by Erroll Williams

I was in the final three months of Class 53B at Webb AFB, TX, flying the T-33, when the subject of a "split flap" was briefly discussed. I wondered if I would recognize the condition, and take corrective action to prevent a deadly outcome. However, the odds of this happening were so remote that I quickly dismissed it. Years later I would be put to the test.

Following three years flying the F-89 Scorpion, I returned to the 115th Squadron, California Air Guard at Van Nuys, where I flew several models of the F-86. On 27 February 1958, I was flying an F-86E. No other aircraft was with me as I entered the traffic pattern for runway 34. I made a normal pitch-out and selected FLAPS shortly before turning onto final. As the desired bank angle of 35-40° was reached, I centered the stick. But the bank angle kept increasing!

The stick was at 'full right' with no effect. Impulsively, I slammed the flap control UP. To my relief I was again in control. A go-around was initiated and the tower informed me that I had likely experienced a "split flap". I flew down over the Santa Monica Mountains to check the flaps with lots of light from a full moon. Both flaps responded to "DOWN" control and I proceeded back for a normal landing. Appropriate entries were made on the Form 1!

Sabres Around The World - The Honduras Air Force operated five F-86K Sabres beginning in 1969. Showing how venerable the Sabre design was, the Honduran F-86Ks were originally operated by the Norwegian Air Force, who then transferred them to the Venezuelan Air Force, before finally coming to Honduras in 1969. Honduras received F-86Ks from both Norway and West Germany in 1969. All Honduran F-86Ks were scrapped at Tegucigalpa except for one aircraft in the museum at the same base. (credit - Jim Bassett)



The next day maintenance informed me that they could not duplicate a "split flap" condition, suggesting that I might have experienced an asymmetrical speed brake extension.

The following weekend was our monthly guard duty. At the first briefing, Maj. Swift, our Air Force Advisor, mentioned my flight. He began by saying he had flight tested my aircraft as I had written it up for a 'split flap' incident. He had climbed to altitude and checked the flaps. Everything was normal after two flap cycles, and he concluded that "Williams didn't know what the hell he was talking about!"

However, just to be sure, he cycled the flaps one final time. Moments later he found himself upside down with a "split-flap"! You'll recall that each flap had its own motor, with an interconnect between them to keep the flaps synchronized, and to allow one flap motor to operate BOTH flaps should either motor fail. In the case of my aircraft (and Maj. Swift's), it was found that the left motor operated intermittently. The redundancy of the interconnect was negated as it was found to be sheared. Therefore the flaps were operating independently.

My long dormant question from Class 53B was answered - I had taken timely action and survived.

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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, SabreJet Classics,
 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709,
 ph: (330)493-4122,
 e-mail <sabreclsx@aol.com>

Patches Wanted
 or color xerox of any patches used by
F-86 Sabre squadrons or flights,
 especially 'spwcial 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, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW,
 Canton, OH 44709, e-mail
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WANTED - Capt. Thomas M. Collie
 Capt. Collie's son would like to hear
 from anyone that flew with his dad at
 Nellis in 1954-55. Contact Deane Collie-
 Beard at CollieDeane@aol.com

UNCLE SABRE WANTS YOU!

Don't forget the recruiting drive is on. We want to reach a total of 3000 members by Reunion 14 in April 2002. To do that we all have to get at least one person to join this great association.

To make it worth everyone's while, we have the following prizes for the Sabre jock who recruits the most new members (20 member minimum) - 1st Prize will be \$1000.00, 2nd will be a free reunion package. The contest will end on 31 March 2003.

So if you know anyone in your squadron association, or an airline pilot that flew '86s, possibly a fellow guard member when your unit was equipped with '86s, civilian pilots that flew the F-86 in flight tests - SIGN THEM UP and put your name on the sponsors line.

For more information contact:
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THE 4TH FIGHTER WING
in the Korean War
 Larry Davis

This book covers the history of the 4th Fighter Wing, from reactivation in 1946, through the end of the "short TDY" to Korea in 1957. The early history covers the entire F-80 era, including the first jet aerobatic team, and the introduction of the legendary F-86 Sabre in 1949. From daily squadron diaries, the coverage on Korea begins with the move to Korea in November 1950, through the first operations in December, including a first person account of LtCol Bruce Hinton's first MiG kill. Dozens of MiG reports are included in the various chapters, with another first person account of Capt Jim Jabara's fifth and sixth kills, making him the first jet ace in history. Pilots from the 4th Wing accounted for 502 of the 792 MiGs shot down in the Korean War, and had twenty-five aces of the total of thirty-nine aces crowned in Korea. Photo coverage include.s mo.ct of the aces and their aircraft, maintenance, and airfield scenes. A complete list of every victory, and all the losses, is also contained. Interviews with pilots, crew chiefs, and factory tech reps tell the complete story of the "Fourth But First" before, during, and after the Korean War.

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Season's Greetings

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94TH FTR-INTCP. SQ.

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS
 from the staff of SabreJet Classics and the members of the Association

HOME OF THE SABRE KNIGHTS

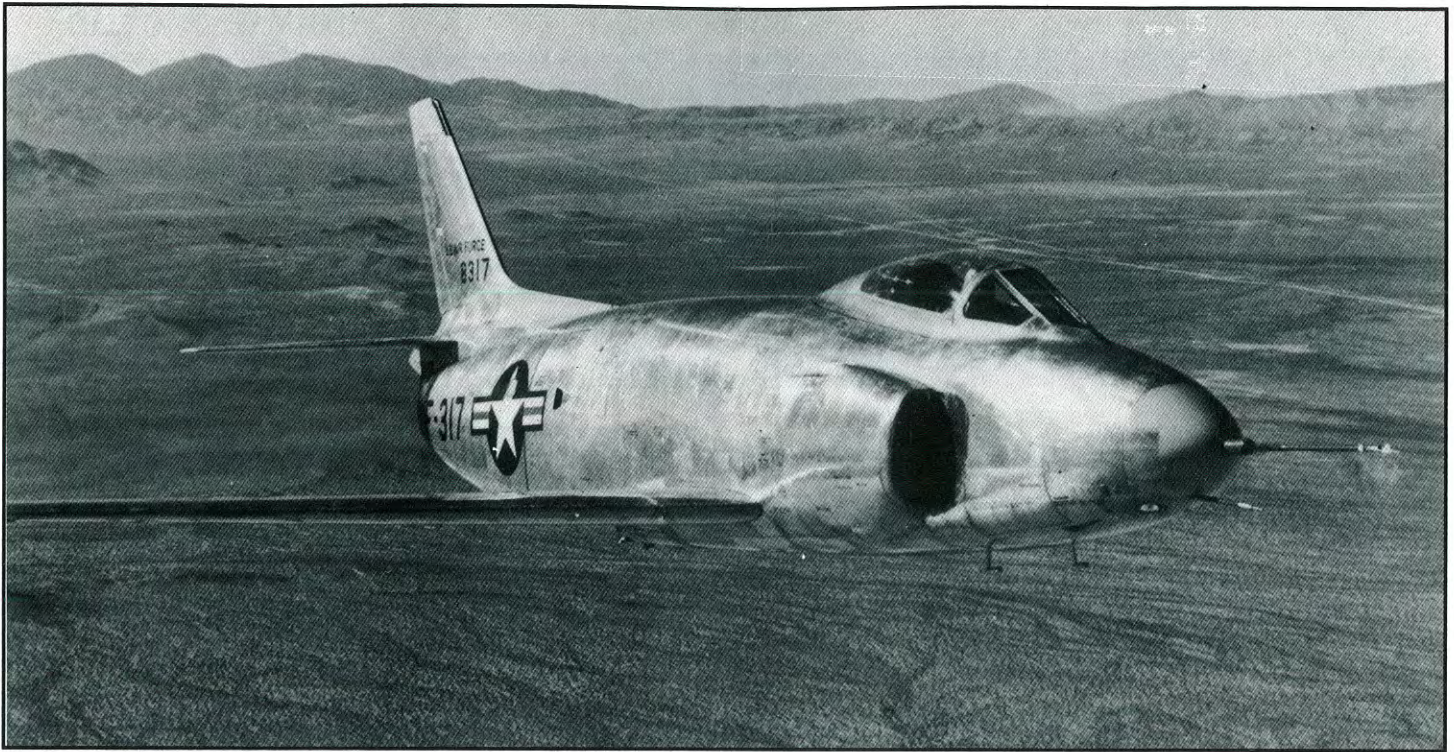


SEASONS GREETINGS

from
 325th F. I. S.
 Hamilton A. F. B., Calif.

45th Fighter Day Squadron
 SIDI SLIMANE, FRENCH MOROCCO

— OUR MISSION —
 "Peace On Earth"



What Is It? Boy it sure doesn't look like an F-86 - or does it? That's an F-86A v-shaped windscreen. And the vertical tail looks like a Sabre. The wings are obviously swept. But no F-86 had side-mounted air intakes and a solid nose - did they? And the serial number "48-317" doesn't fall into any F-86 sequence. So what is it? If anyone knows anything about this airplane, and especially those that have photos of the bird at any time, please contact Larry Davis, Editor SabreJet Classics, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709; or e-mail at sabreclsx@aol.com.

Happy Holidays and
GOD BLESS AMERICA

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