

Sabre Jet Classics



Volume 15, Number 1

Spring 2007



*Inside: Operation BOOMERANG,
Days with the 492nd,
Hassling with F-4s, more!*

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Contents

(front cover) This stunning F-86H was the personal mount of Col. Fred Ascani, when he commanded the 50th Fighter Bomber Wing at Toul-Rosieres AB, France, in 1957. (credit - Major General Fred Ascani)

SabreJet Classics

Questions and/or comments regarding SabreJet Classics articles should be sent to:

the
*President's
notebook*

Welcome to another great issue of *SabreJet Classics*. This will be our last issue before the 16th Reunion at the Monte Carlo Hotel in Las Vegas. I hope to see many of you at the reunion next month.

Out of town Sabre Pilot Association members who will be in Las Vegas during our April 9-12, 2007 reunion and not registered for the Sabre Pilot Association reunion will be welcome to attend our Tuesday night Buffet (cost \$45/person) and/or our Thursday night Banquet (cost \$70/per person) without incurring the Sabre Pilot Reunion registration fee. We realize that some members have been caught in the middle with the two reunions (Sabre Pilots Association & Super Sabre Society) both at the same time. We want you to know we would like to see any or all of you at

the above functions since many of us may not have the opportunity to be together again. If you plan to attend, please contact either myself, Bob Smith, Dan Druen or Rich Geiger at their e-mails listed in this issue so we can have an accurate as possible number for each occasion.

The F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSOCIATION tablets located at the walkway to the entrance of the National Air and Space Museum was started in 2001. The concept was to have members names engraved on the plates for posterity. The cost was \$10,000 by the Association for pedestal and \$100 for each participating member. There are still several spaces available and I would like to see the project finished. Let's face it guys where else can you have your name ensconced on a brass plate showing your affiliation

with a great airplane and group of pilots for \$100. If you are interested send me or Glen Carus an e-mail (gcarus@mindspring.com) or call for an application. Applications will also be available at the reunion.

Finally let me say a little bit about the \$100 cost of the registration fee. The cost includes two brunches and a cocktail party. The two brunches are designed to get the party started and the cocktail party is to help you relax after a busy day. They have been well accepted in the past and I know they will again. We only meet once every two years and it has been my feeling to go first class or not at all. The Monte Carlo has treated us well in the past and I am looking forward to another great reunion.

See you at the reunion.

Jerry Johnson

President

Folded Wings

Ralph Banks, February 2nd, 2007

Garold R. Beck, November 2002

John N. Dick, May 24th, 2005

Sam Dickens, December 29th, 2006

Ronald J. Lang, March 29th, 2006

Paul E. Querns, November 17th, 2006

J. Frank Street, March 4th, 2006

Raymond F. Toliver December 4th, 2006

POLICY STATEMENT

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

from the editor

Hello again from your editor. It's time for a little chastising.

ROSTER UPDATES - Every two years we update the printed roster of Sabre Pilots Assn. members. It happens right before the reunion, and we always ask that the members check their old roster and update us as to current information regarding name, address, phone number, and email address.

And each time we do this, it has a final date of around the first of January of the reunion year, i.e. this roster corrections were due around January 1st 2007. And every time we do, we get changes AFTER the day we go to press. We cannot change it after we go to press. Every change on a page costs us money. Therefore, please watch the magazine for pleas regarding changes and/or corrections that you want in the next roster.

MISSING PUBLICATIONS - If you suddenly stop getting the magazine, please find an old issue and get in touch with someone. Many of you call me or email me about the status of your dues and/or the fact that you haven't gotten the magazine in over a year even though your dues are paid up. I will answer you and forward your question to the proper people. But all that info is in the computer in Las Vegas, and it will delay an answer regarding your problem by contacting me.

If you have any problems with delivery, contact Jerry Johnson, who will check into your problem and get back to you as soon as possible. Jerry can be reached at the *SabreJet Classics* address in Las Vegas, or email him at Jjohn52132@aol.com. Also, please notify President Johnson about anyone that should be mentioned in our FOLDED WINGS section. Often, those names come to me or Bill Weiger and get into the proper column. But there is a protocol regarding such matters that only the President can handle.

UNIT REUNIONS - You will notice in this issue that I only have one reunion notice other than our 16th reunion notice. That being the 51st FIW reunion in the Fall. And that came to me from an enlisted man in the 51st FIW Assn.! I know you guys have reunions for your squadrons, school classes, even bases that you flew from. It's FREE to members and non-members to run a small ad in *SabreJet Classics* listing your upcoming reunion. But please be aware that we need at least 6 months lead time to get the ad into the magazine in time, more time if possible.

As soon as you hear about a reunion that is coming up with Sabre Pilots Assn. tie-ins, jot down the information and send it to me. Also try and tie your reunion in with our association reunion to get the maximum number of people to attend your reunion. Make sure you tell me what it is, where and when it is, and a contact person. I'll take it from there.

OK, off the soap box. I'm really looking forward to meeting and greeting all you guys again at the 16th Reunion next month. It's always a pleasure on my end to attend the reunion, even though I do end up losing money in the casinos.

Well gotta go. See you in Vegas!

Larry Davis
editor

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"The Hunters"

We have received a number of letters and emails regarding where "The Hunters" was filmed. Almost all the letters mention West Palm Beach, Florida; although more than one says Williams AFB, and of course there's that piece of film I have labeled Nellis AFB and showing the fake revetments and Bob Wagner and Bob Mitchum standing by them. That came from a pilot at Nellis that was flying one of the birds. Here goes:

from Bill Madison

"The Hunters was filmed mostly in West Palm Beach, FL to take advantage of the fair weather puffy clouds usually out over the water. The opening scenes and where the aircraft was flying low level over the ground were taken in the Palm Beach, California desert area. The aircraft were deployed out of Williams AFB, with

the air and ground crews TDY at no expense to the government. 20th Century Fox paid our standard per diem rates.

The F-84F "MiGs" were out of Luke AFB. We had 8-12 F-86s, 6 F-84Fs, 3 C-130 photo ships, and a T-33 from Geare AFB as back-up photo ship. Pilots were from Williams, and were assigned to the 3527th and 3528th CCTSs; while the aircraft came from the 4530th Periodic Maintenance Sq.

from Frank Trojcek

I have a number of slides, mostly of the F-86Fs painted up for the movie, and myself when I flew them for the movie. I flew quite a few missions for the movie and was in about as much as Bill Madison. However, I did not take the TDY trip to Florida like Bill did for that filming. I did visit the studio and see the filming there and met and talked to all the actors involved including Jane Powell and her husband Dick Powell.

LAKEVILLE, MINNESOTA VETERANS MEMORIAL

This F-86H Sabre is the focal point of a new veterans memorial at Lakeville's Aronson Park. The memorial was officially dedicated on Veterans Day, 11 November 2006.

The Lakeville Parks and Recreation Department planned the display of the Sabre Jet, which was donated to the City by Bill Studer, a life-long resident, veteran, and retired pilot.

Working with Lakeville VFW Post 210, Lakeville American Legion Post 44, Wings of the North organization, and a group of volunteers, the City raised the funds needed to construct the Veterans Memorial, which honors all branches of the service.

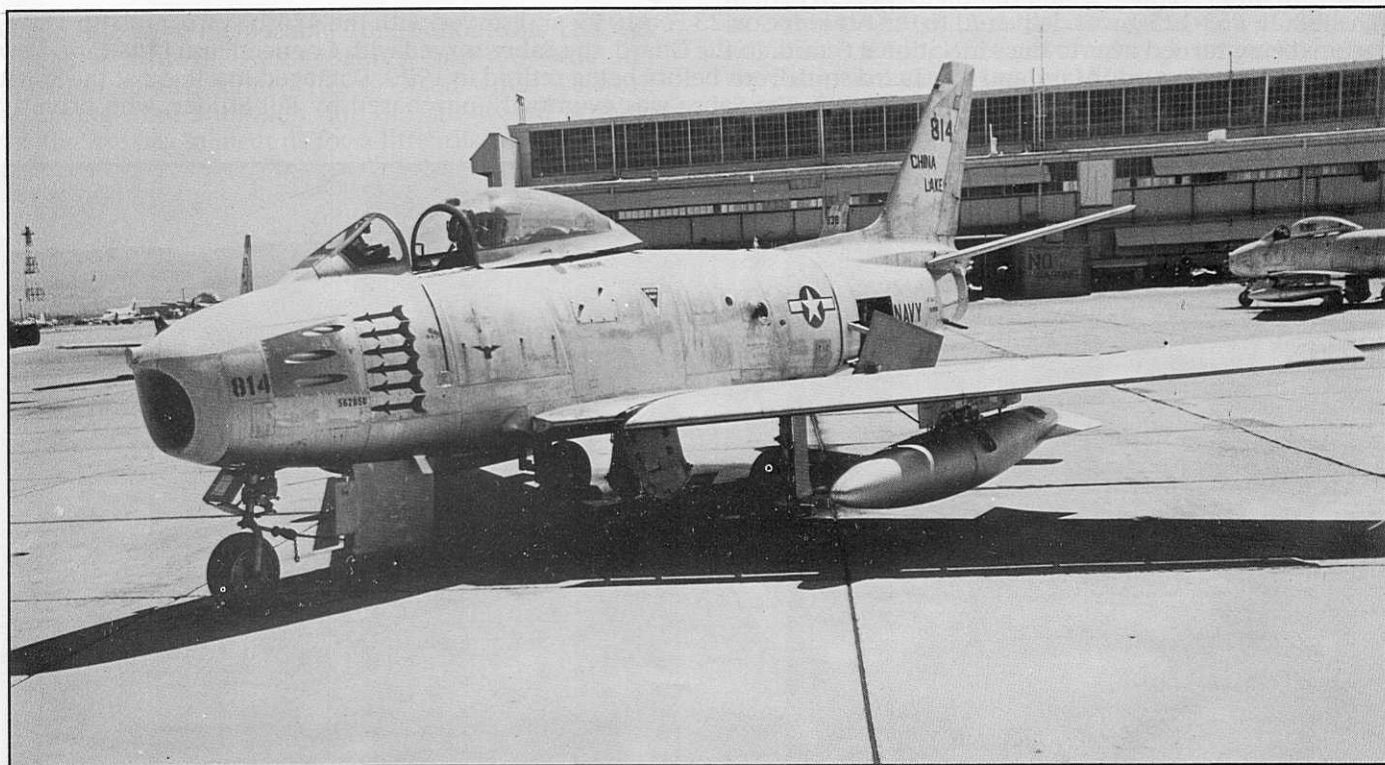
The F-86H, #53-1250, was delivered to the Air Force on 23 Feb 1955, and served with the 474th, 83rd, and 4th TFWs, before being turned over to the Air National Guard. In the Guard, the Sabre served with Connecticut, Delaware, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and Maryland Air Guard squadrons before being retired in 1970. Damaged in a flood at the Spirit Fighters Museum in Chesterfield, MO, in 1993, the Sabre was eventually purchased by Bill Studer, who promptly donated the airplane to the City of Lakeville.



THE FINAL MISSION



The 'final mission' for many F-86 Sabres was the saddest of all, that of being used as a target drone for both air to air and ground to air missile tests. Many Sabres went down at the hands of US pilots as they practiced air combat maneuvering tactics (ACM) over the deserts of the Southwest United States in the 1990s. These two Sabres are but a small example of those that ended their long careers in this manner. (above) "Thumper" was an ex-RCAF Canadair Sabre Mk. 6, #23339, which served for the US Army as a SAM target over White Sands Test Range, New Mexico. It was destroyed on 25 July 1981. (lower) The US Navy had a large number of ex-JASDF F-86Fs that served at China Lake and Point Mugu in the 1980s as part of the TOP GUN ACM training. This Sabre, #56-2858, survived at least 6 missions as noted by the missile 'victories' painted on the nose. (credit - Larry Davis collection)





An RAF Canadair Sabre Mk. 4 enroute from the Canadair factory to England in March 1954. The Canadair Sabre Mk. 4 was the equivalent to the F-86E-6 that served in Korea. (credit - Robb Satterfield)

Four Days with the 492nd

by Charles Keil, Royal Air Force

What could be better? A glorious week in July 1954 and the opportunity to spend four days in France. Not sightseeing but as guests of the USAF's 492nd Squadron based at Chaumont about 150 miles south-east of Paris.

I was a pilot with the Royal Air Force's No 26 Squadron, based at Oldenburg in northern Germany, part of the 2nd Allied Tactical Air Force. We were equipped with the Sabre Mk 4, an F86E built by Canadair. So 26 Squadron had common ground with the USAF's 492nd; we were both part of the 2ATAF in Europe, were both confronting the Soviet forces during the Cold War, and both flew Sabres - though theirs was the hot F86F version.

In fact, it wasn't simply what the RAF called a 'jolly' (a pleasure trip). The intention was to demonstrate that the RAF and USAF Sabre squadrons were interactive and capable of reinforcing each other by operating from each other's bases. So after we had enjoyed our four days at USAF Chaumont, pilots and Sabres from the 492nd were welcomed on a reciprocal visit to operate from RAF Oldenburg.

We flew from Oldenburg to Chaumont, a flight of 1 hour 20 minutes, on 26 July, in two four-plane formations, about half an hour apart. Our first four, callsign Inkstain Red, was led by our Squadron Leader Ken Smith. I was his No 2.

To say that our arrival at Chaumont wasn't quite as planned is something of an understatement. Virtually the whole flight was above cloud and for the descent into the Chaumont circuit or pattern, we split into two pairs. Ken Smith led me down through the clag, leaving

our second pair, led by Flight Lieutenant Jimmy Rideout, to make a separate descent. All went smoothly on our descent. Once below cloud, the base was quickly identified, we ran in and broke for the landing pattern.

With gear and flaps down and airbrakes extended, everything was going well. Over the runway with speed falling off, I made a smooth touchdown and only then became aware that my leader, some 100 yards ahead

USAF reception party greets RAF pilots from 26 Squadron at Chaumont in July 1954. RAF pilots are (L-R) Sq Ldr Ken Smith, F/Lt Jimmy Rideout, F/O Dave Hunt, and F/O Charles Keil. USAF officers are unidentified. (credit - Charles Keil)





492nd FBS F-86Fs on the tarmac at Chaumont AB, France, in early 1954. The mission of the 48th FBW was that of fighter bomber. (credit - David Menard collection)

of me, had - without any indication to me - opened up and was going round again. Chaumont being an unfamiliar airfield and my fuel state not being abundant, I opted not to follow him but to remain on terra firma. Intriguingly, Ken Smith never revealed why he went round again, or asked me why I didn't.

At the end of the runway (and it turned out to be one helluva long runway - nearly twice the length of Oldenburg), waited a jeep with a sign saying 'Follow Me' to the hard stand in front of one of the hangars, where I shut down.

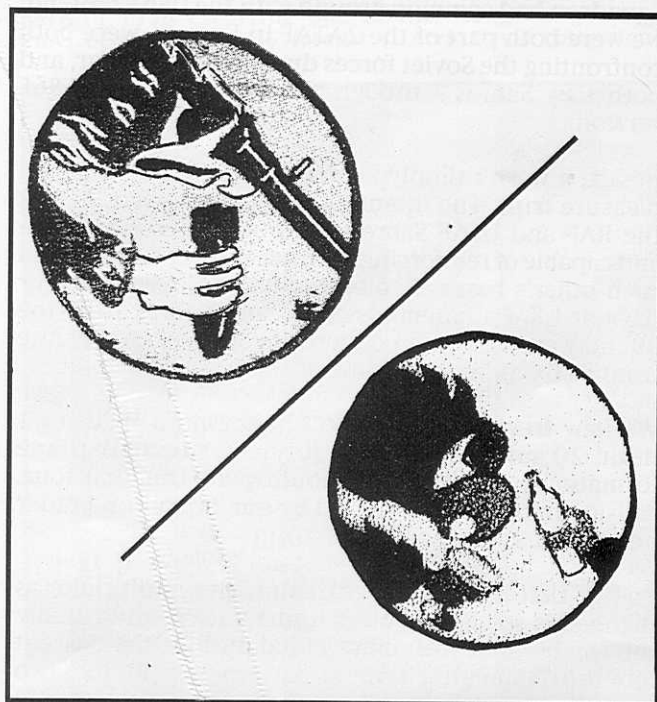
Further embarrassment followed. There before the hangar was a reception committee led by the Base Commander. But understandably they didn't want to begin this official RAF visit by welcoming a junior pilot. Their first objective was to greet our leader, who was still up there in the wild, not-so-blue yonder. So I removed my helmet, climbed out and greeted the ground crew, removed my Mae West, flying overalls and g-suit; then waited for the boss to arrive.

A few minutes later Ken was safely down. More fun followed. Our second pair got separated and couldn't find the field. So there was another delay while we waited for them to arrive. Eventually in they came and we were all introduced to the genial Base Commander and team before posing for a photo with them - three of the RAF pilots still in their flying gear and me in my blue battledress. Then it was on to meeting the pilots of the 492nd and to four large metal bins full of ice and bottles of champagne. The party was underway, and the 492nd certainly knew how to run a party.

The other four 26 Sq Sabres, led by Flight Lieutenant Geoffrey 'Wilky' Wilkinson, soon arrived to swell the celebrations. Wilky was an interesting character who had come to 26 Squadron as a Flight Commander after a tour of duty in Korea flying F84s. A brilliant pilot with a keen analytical mind, he went on to become a test pilot before eventually being appointed Chief Inspector of Air Accidents for the British Board of Trade.

To be honest, I don't remember much about the rest of that day. I can say that USAF hospitality was fantastic and a good time was had by all. The next day, we took an envious close-up look at the 492nd's F86Fs with their extended, slat-less wings, 5,910 lb thrust engines and two huge 200-gallon drop tanks. While enjoying a generally higher all round performance than our Mk. 4s, the F86Fs had, of course, a higher stalling speed and were less forgiving at low speed in a turn. While we flew a final landing circuit in our slatted Mk. 4s that was almost a continuous turn, the 492nd flew a more sensible pattern, coming in straight from a mile or so out to touchdown.

The 'official' patch of the 492nd FBS showing an eagle looking down a bombsight, and the unofficial patch created by RAF 26 Squadron has the eagle looking into an empty champagne glass, (credit - Charles Keil)





26 Squadron patch

Four RAF Sabre Mk. 4s of 26 Squadron, in close formation enroute from Chaumont to 'home plate', Oldenburg AB in Northern Germany. (L-R) "A" - S/L Ken Smith, "M" - F/Lt Jimmy Rideout, "T" - F/O Dave Hunt, and "V" - F/O Charles Keil. F/Lt 'Wilky' Wilkinson took the photo. (credit - Charles Keil)

Fig 2 shows a photograph taken at the time of our visit to Chaumont of a USAF F86F. It is captioned in my scrapbook that it was the Colonel's personal Sabre and certainly appears to have a special paint scheme.

While being welcomed into the 492nd crew room, we observed the sign over the door saying "Through these portals pass the finest fighter pilots in the world". It was tempting to express our appreciation of the USAF's action in having the sign made and mounted there especially to mark our visit, but discretion is always the better part of valour when you are a guest!

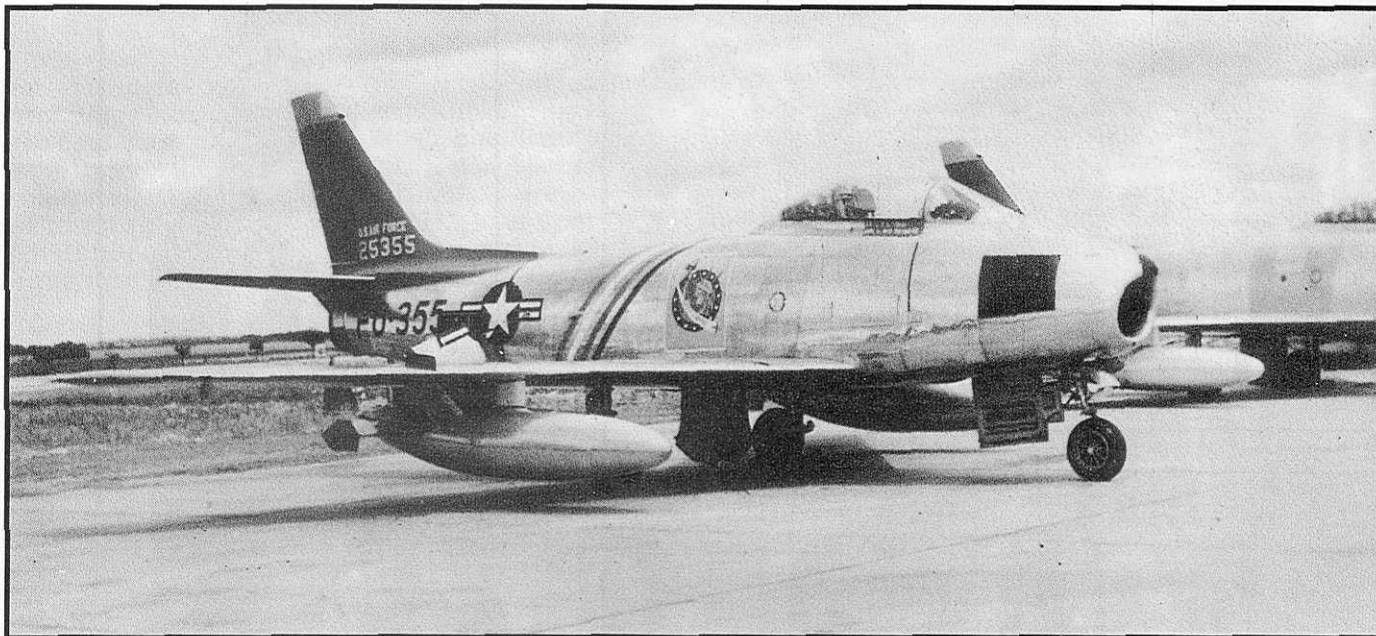
While the RAF and the USAF were flying essentially the same aircraft, the Sabre, many other aspects of our operations were different. 26 Squadron's role was high level interception while, if memory serves me correctly, the 492nd was a fighter-bomber squadron. And USAF flying maps and R/T procedures were different. We were quite envious of the quantity and quality of much of the 492nd support equipment and spares. And the Officers Club proved to be a much more informal place than the RAFs Officers Mess!

The 492nd generously made the RAF pilots honorary members of their squadron and we were all presented with a 492nd badge or patch (see Fig 3) As befitted a fighter-bomber squadron, it shows an eagle peering down a bombsight while holding a bomb in its claw. Some weeks later, we were to welcome pilots from the 492nd to Oldenburg on a return visit. To mark the occasion, our squadron artist got to work on a special version of the 492nd patch, this time showing the eagle holding a champagne glass in its claw while peering disdainfully into an empty champagne bottle (Fig 4). Much more appropriate!

We in turn presented visiting 492nd pilots with 26 Squadron badges or patches (Fig 5). For the record, our squadron was originally formed in October 1915 from members of the South African Aviation Corps and so took as its emblem the head of the South African gazelle or springbok and the motto - in the Afrikaans language - "N Wagter in die Lug", meaning literally "the watcher in the sky".

We flew a number of sorties from Chaumont without any problems, enjoying the spacious runway and even practised GCA talkdown facilities. But we didn't get to tangle with 492nd Sabres. On one of these sorties I was in a four-ship formation led by Wilky. A man who revelled in the spice of life and grasping opportunities, he took us at low level and high speed over Paris, sightseeing from a different perspective. But there were repercussions. Some months later, back at Oldenburg, a signal from Group HQ reported that formal complaints had been lodged about RAF Sabres flying through the Paris Air Traffic Control Zone. The signal went on to say that the RAF had dismissed the complaints because RAF Sabres didn't have the range to overfly Paris from bases in Germany. Whether the powers-that-be had forgotten that RAF Sabres were based at Chaumont for those four days in July 1954 or whether it was a way of getting us off the hook, we'll never know.

After fond farewells, on our return flight from Chaumont to Oldenburg, I flew as No 4. It had been agreed that on that trip we would cruise at altitude in a variety of different formations while Wilky - a first rate photographer - would take a series of pictures. From his Sabre, he would direct us into position before moving into ultra close range to shoot pictures using a 35 mm camera. On some occasions, his Sabre was heavily banked to get a good angle while he held the stick



One of the 'shiny F-86Fs' that Charles Keil encountered on his visit to Chaumont in July 1954, was the personal aircraft of Colonel Chesley Peterson, one of the original members of 71 Squadron, the first of the Eagle Squadrons that fought in the Battle of Britain. (credit - Charles Keil)

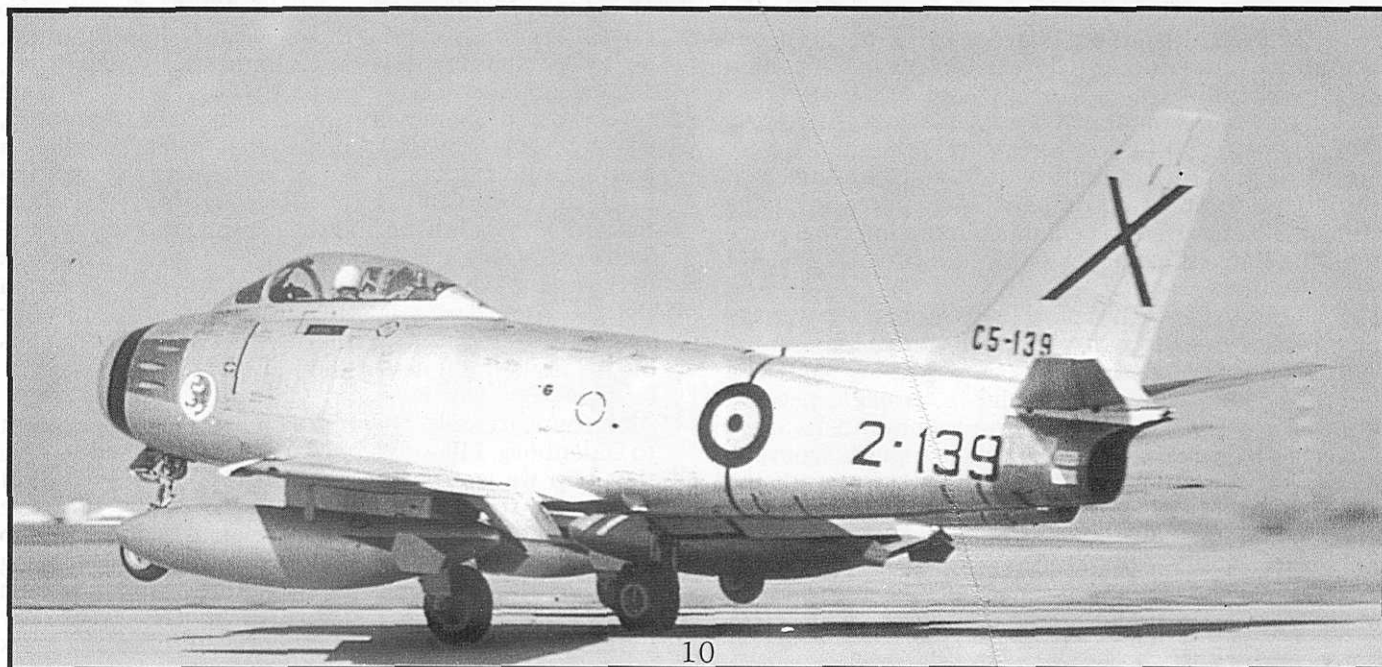
between his knees and the camera in his hands.

When we moved to echelon port formation, making me the one closest to him at the end of the line, while concentrating on keeping station with No 3, I can recall seeing out of the corner of my eye the sky filled with Wilky's Sabre on its side while he shot pictures through the top of the canopy; a mid-air collision seemed a possibility. Yet when that picture was developed and printed, the formation appears to be at quite a respectable distance from the cameraman. The camera does lie!

The picture that Wilky took of the four 26 Sq Sabres in echelon port formation on that trip back from Chaumont (see Fig 6) was used that year on the 26 Squadron Christmas card and also won first prize in an air-to-air photo competition run by the British magazine "Aeronautics". As I write a framed print of that four-ship formation hangs before me on my study wall alongside the 492nd squadron patch - constant reminders of four wonderful days with the 492nd at Chaumont.

Sabres Around the World

Sabre pilot Jerry Eldridge caught this Spanish Air Force F-86F on takeoff from Torrejon AB in the late 1960s. Spain received 270 F-86F aircraft between 1955 and 1958. All were from blocks F-20, F-25 and F-30, but were brought up to F-86F-40 standard by CASA during their time with the Spanish Air Force. Spain operated the Sabre well into the 1960s.





The "California Boomerang" on the tarmac at Van Nuys Airport following the record flight of 21 May 1955. The "Boomerang" was a standard F-86A-7 Sabre in service with the 115th FIS, California Air National Guard. The F-86A-7 was a standard F-86A-5 that had gone through a complete overhaul at the North American Aviation plant in Fresno, CA, to include installation of the AN/APG-30 ranging radar and type A1CM gun sight assembly. (credit - David Menard)

THE FLIGHT OF THE BOOMERANG

by John Henderson,
North American Aviation Tech Rep

It's Saturday, the 21st of May 1955, - Armed Forces Day 1955. At 0600 hours precisely, a California Air National Guard F-86A Sabrejet lifts off the runway at Van Nuys Airport. Destination - Van Nuys Airport the long way around. Wheels in the wells and cockpit lights in the green, the Sabre accelerated through the San Fernando Valley fog layer, breaking out on top of the cloud cover and headed east. Destination? Lunch in New York.

The first light of dawn revealed a large Australian aborigine throwing club, commonly known as a 'boomerang', painted on the polished nose of the aircraft. On the bent club were the words "California Boomerang". And as everyone knows, a boomerang returns to its thrower.

It was known as Operation BOOMERANG, an attempt to fly from California to New York and back in record time. The pilot was 1Lt John M. Conroy, a pilot in the 115th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, California Air National Guard. The flight was officially timed and financially supported at the request of North American Aviation. Radio and television coverage kept the world informed on the progress.

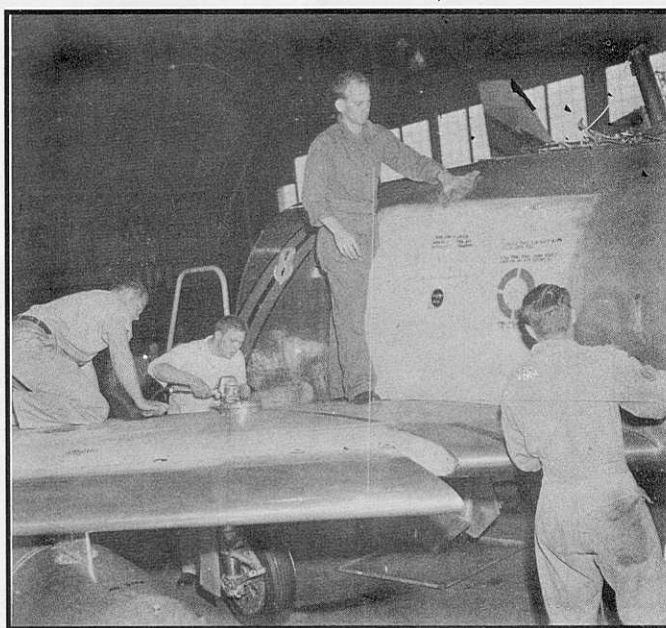
The California Air Guard used the Armed Forces Day flight to promote national recognition and recruiting attention. But the official endeavor was to outrun the sun and establish a historical first in aviation annals. No one had ever attempted to fly coast-to-coast and back again during the daylight hours, sunrise to sunset, on a single day.

It had taken the men of the 115th FIS, CAANG over two weeks to get the F-86A Sabre ready for the record attempt. T/Sgt. James Elledge, M/Sgt Michael Jacobbauski, T/Sgt David Kitchen, T/Sgt Charles Crumrine, M/Sgt Pete

Mortensen, and many others took a tired six year veteran F-86A-7 Sabre, serial 49-1046, from the 115th FIS, worked on the old girl round the clock, and made her look and perform better than new.

Rivet heads were shaved, every panel was made to fit perfectly and then the seams were filled. The gun ports were covered with fabric, and then painted with many coats of dope, until the panel was one smooth piece. After all that, the entire airplane was polished and painted into one flawless surface.

California Guard maintenance people separate the major fuselage sections of "Boomerang" to allow more elbow room while they upgrade the J47 engine and airframe during the 2 weeks prior to the record flight. (credit - Calif ANG)



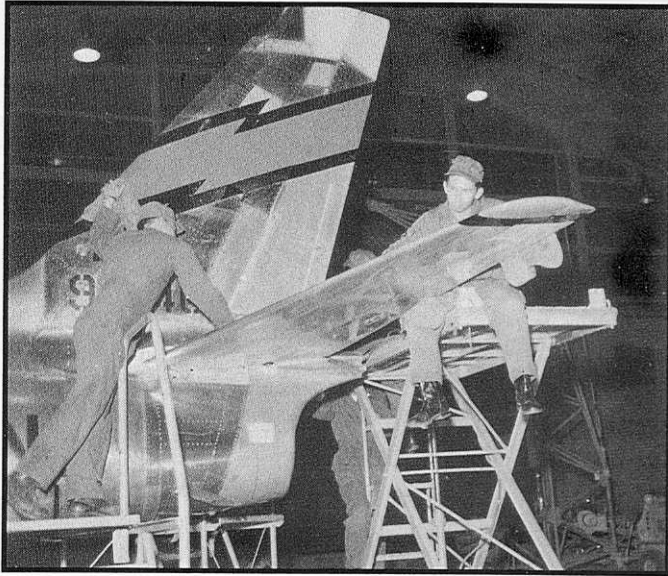
The J47 engine was completely disassembled and reassembled using new parts when possible. Many nights were used to try to coax just "a little more thrust" using all the tricks in the book. Then flight test and last minute problem solving. Finally, the drop tanks were painted red to aid the timers. Now could 1Lt John Conroy, a bomber and airline pilot with only 250 hours in fighters, be the first man to fly to the East Coast and return

between official sunrise and sunset.

The flight was a historical 'first', consisting of a 5,058 mile round trip between the San fernando Valley Airport in Van Nuys, and Floyd Bennett Field, New York. Two fuel stops were scheduled heading east, and three on the return flight because of head winds. Fueling would be accomplished with the engine running - strictly against

F-86As from both the 115th FIS and 195th FIS, California Air National Guard, on the ramp at Van Nuys ANG Base in 1955. All of the aircraft, including the -48 model in the foreground, have been taken to F-86A-7 standard, and many are veterans of the Korean skies. (credit - Larry Davis collection)



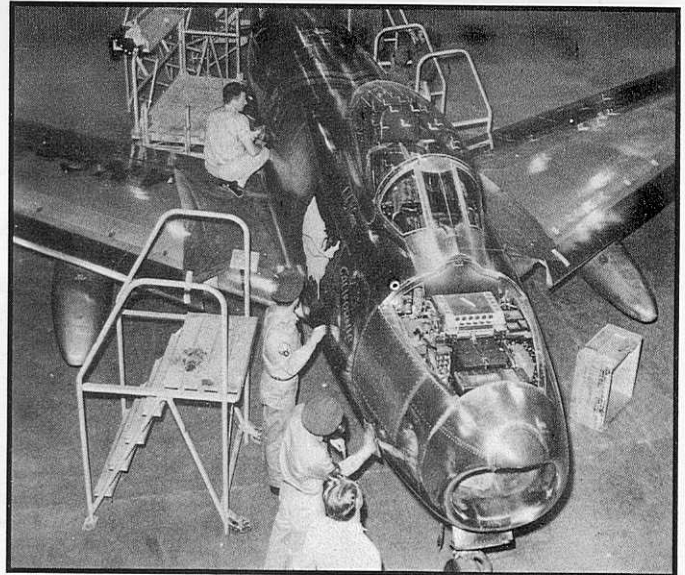


One of the things done to "Boomerang" before the record flight was shaving the rivet heads, making sure the panels fit precisely, and then filling and sanding all the panel seams. (credit - Calif ANG)

peacetime regulations. Conroy would fly at approximately 40,000 feet, hitting speeds in excess of 600 mph.

Excellent radio, TV, and newspaper coverage was maintained throughout the flight, thanks to the efforts of Major James Reid and others. Thousands of people would 'sweat' with Lt. Conroy whenever he had a problem like fuel fumes in the cockpit or when a landing gear position light failed. North American Aviation handled the expenses of timing the official record. Air Guard units along the way handled the refueling chores and cost. Navigational assistance was provided by 27th Air Division members.

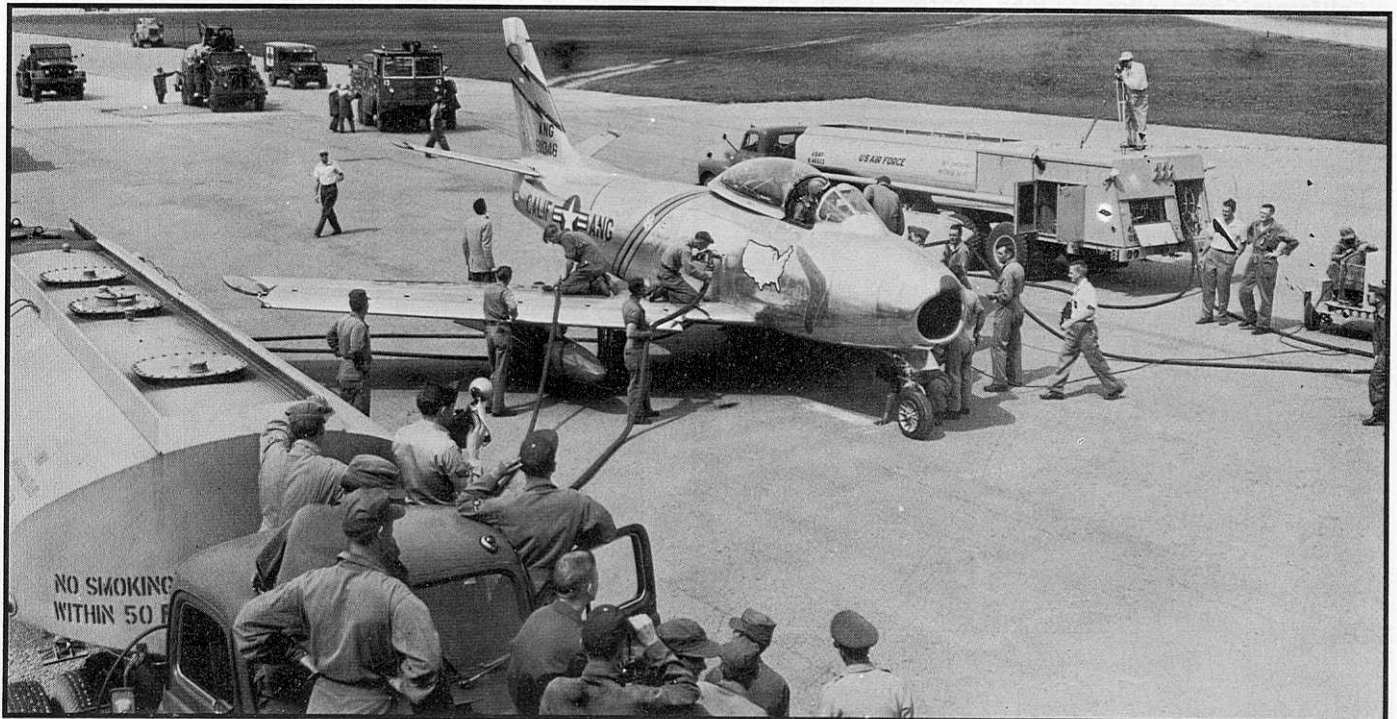
Members of the Ohio Air Guard quickly and efficiently refuel "Boomerang", while Lt. John Conroy sits in the cockpit with the engine running, during the west to east portion of the flight. Lt. Conroy had breakfast in LA, lunch in New York, and returned home to LA for supper with his family. (credit - USAF)

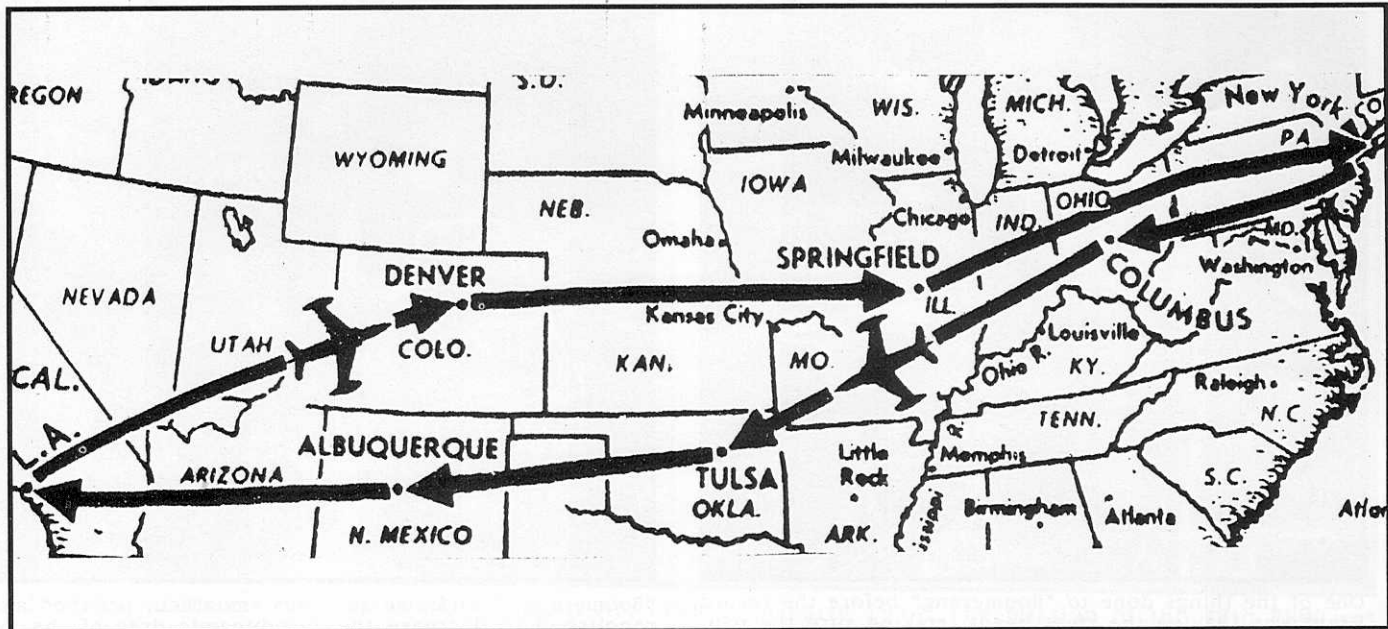


"Boomerang's" airframe skin was smoothed, polished and repolished to decrease the aerodynamic drag of the air flowing over the surface of the Sabre during the record flight. (credit - Calif ANG)

Conroy left Van Nuys at 0600 local time, landing at Denver at 0748. He was on the ground 6 minutes as Colorado ANG troops handled the refueling. Conroy turned around on the runway and took off in the opposite direction. Next stop was Springfield, Illinois landing at 0932 hours local. The Illinois troops beat Colorado's time by a full minute. Conroy landed at Mitchel Field at 1119 hours, where he had a quick lunch while "Boomerang" was being refueled.

Conroy left Mitchel at 1158, landing at Lockbourne AFB, OH, at 1258. Seven minutes later he was off again,





Map showing the route Lt. Conroy and "Boomerang" took on 21 May 1955. (credit - Calif ANG)

arriving at Tulsa, OK, at 1426, another 6 minute refueling stop. Conroy touched down at Albuquerque, New Mexico at 1558 local, refueled in 7 minutes and took off on the final leg, landing at Van Nuys at 5:26:18 pm Pacific time.

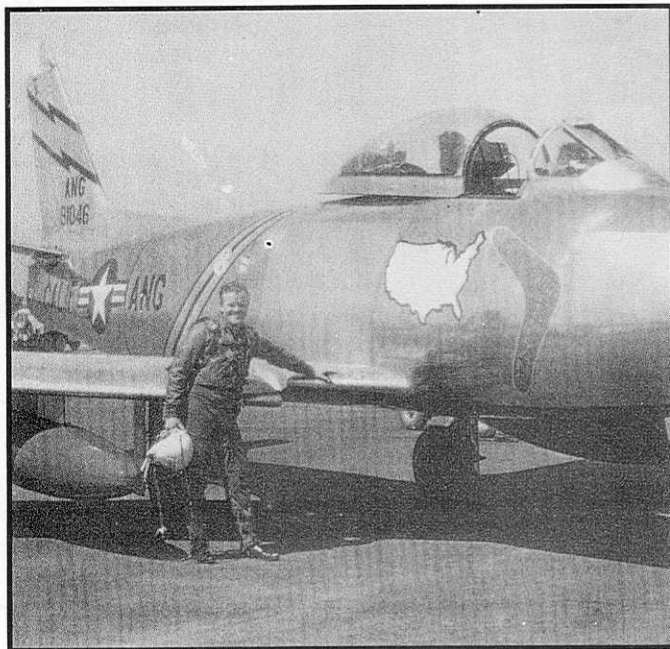
Eleven hours, twenty six minutes and thirty-three seconds after takeoff, the crews at Van Nuys had their answer when Conroy and the "Boomerang" passed low over their heads and pulled up into a graceful arc, reflecting the setting sun off its chrome-like wings. It was the first time any aircraft had ever taken off at sunrise on the West Coast, crossed the United States, and returned to California before sunset. Within a few years, jet airliners would be performing that same feat on an everyday basis.

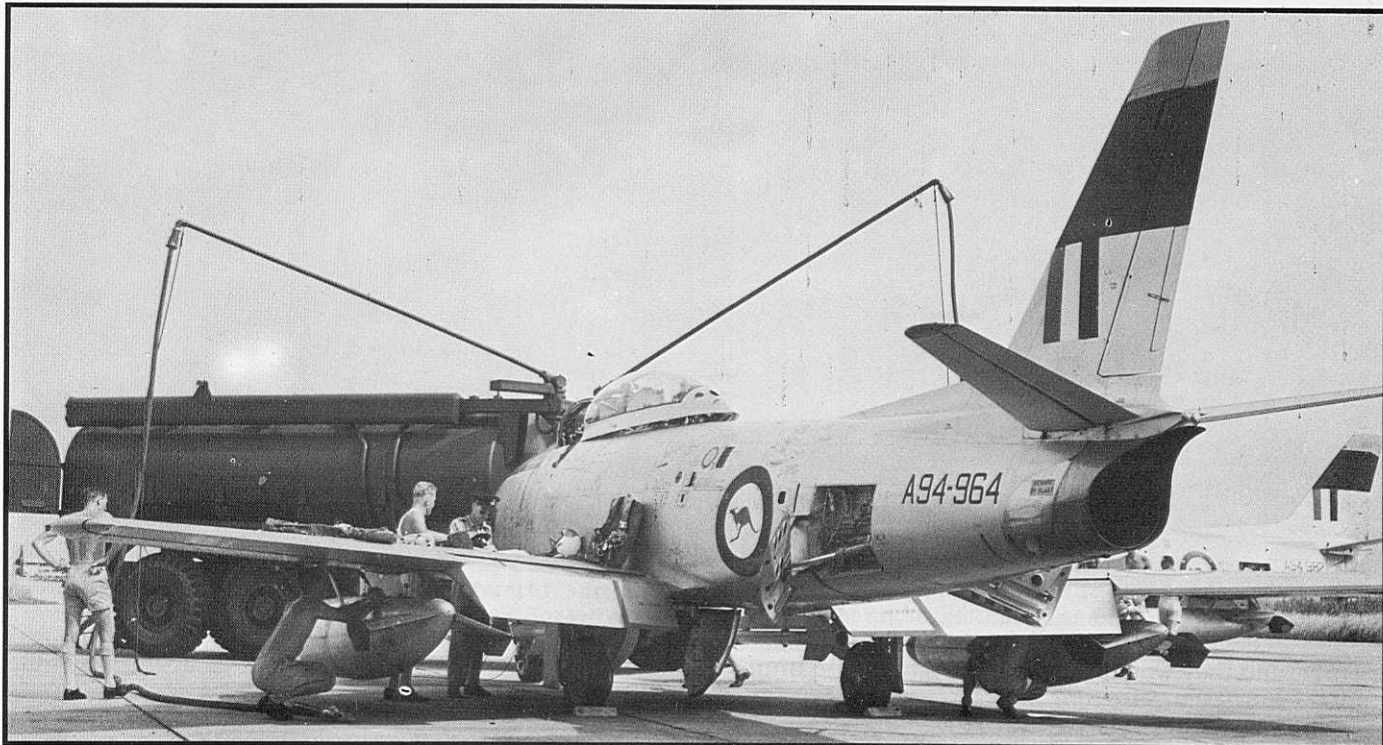
California Guard pilot Lt. John Conroy, 115th FIS, with the "Boomerang" Sabre at Van Nuys ANG Base just prior to the record flight of Armed Forces Day 1955. Note that the gun ports were filled in, sanded, painted, and polished. (credit - Calif ANG)

Conroy and the "Boomerang" had averaged 445 mph for the trip, counting all the refueling stops.

1Lt John Conroy, had indeed had breakfast in California, lunch in New York, and returned to California in time for dinner. However, after landing back at Van Nuys, Conroy found that after a couple of bites of a steak at the airport restaurant, he was just too tired to eat. "I can't eat right now. It'll take me a couple of hours to settle down" But he immediately added that he would later attend the officers dance of the 146th FBW, California Air National Guard, at the Biltmore Hotel in Van Nuys. The "Boomerang" had returned.

Following the record flight of "Boomerang", the Sabre went back into normal service with the 115th FIS, seen here in 1956 escorting one of the orange target tug F-86As of the 195th FIS (credit - Larry Davis collection)





A Commonwealth Aircraft Company CL-13B Sabre from no. 79 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force, is being refueled at Don Muang Air Base, Bangkok, Thailand, in June 1962. No. 79 Squadron had a detachment of Sabres based at Ubon as the war in Southeast Asia began to heat up in 1964. (credit - USAF)

HASSLING WITH F-4'S AT UBON

by Jerry Eldridge

In 1964 I was based at George AFB, California, in the 431st TFS. We had been a F-102 Squadron based at Zaragoza, Spain, when the base was shut down to caretaker status. The squadron was moved to George AFB without any planes. But that soon changed quickly enough as we were to be one of the first units to get the brand new McDonnell-Douglas F-4C Phantom II. We checked out in the new F-4C at Davis-Monthan AFB, and then went to pick up our brand new Phantoms at the McDonnell factory in St. Louis.

In the Fall of 1965, on very short notice, the squadron

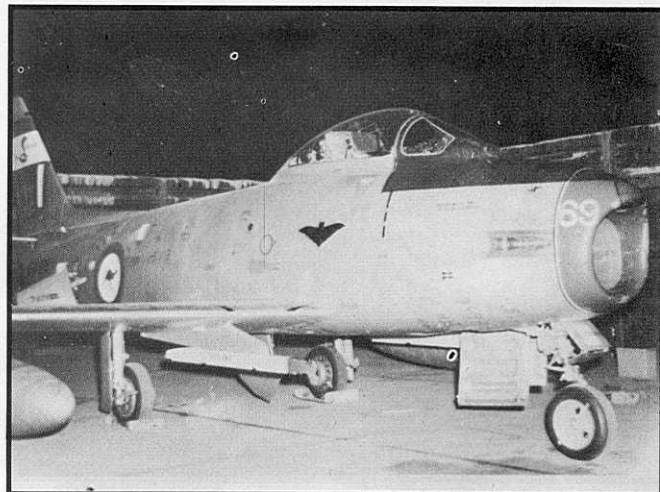
A no. 79 Squadron Sabre sits 5 minute alert on the ramp at Ubon in 1965 armed with a pair of AIM-9B Sidewinder missiles in addition to the 30mm Aden cannons in the nose. 79 Squadron Sabres were charged with air base defense against a possible attack by North Vietnamese Air Forces. (credit - Jerry Eldridge)



went TDY to Ubon RTAB, Thailand. The Vietnam War was heating up and we would be flying missions into North Vietnam and Laos. Ubon was still fairly primitive at this time, and we were sleeping in open air hooches. There also wasn't a club, which came later - just a chow hall.

You can imagine my surprise when I discovered that base air defense was being handled by Sabre Jets! Australian Sabres no less. The Aussies had a small group of Commonwealth Aircraft Company CA-32 Sabres, which flew top cover for us both going to and coming from the war. It was no. 79 Squadron, Royal Australian

This 79 Squadron Sabre was "captured" by members of the 25th TFS at Ubon, who promptly 'zapped' a 25th TFS bat on the fuselage. (credit - Al Piccarillo)





A pair of 79 Squadron Sabres buzz the Ubon ramp over the F-4Cs of the 431st TFS in 1965. Note that at this time, the F-4Cs were just starting to be camouflaged. (credit - Jerry Eldridge)

Air Force, and they would remain on alert at Ubon until August 1968. (see *SabreJet Classics*, vol. 14-1 for the full story of the CAC Sabre)

Since we had no club, the Aussies would invite us to cross the runway and visit their very informal club. It was always well supplied by a cargo airplane that flew up from their homeland. Often it was a Hastings, which looked like a C-54 but a taildragger. I'm pretty sure that it's main cargo was mail and beer, Australian beer! Darts was a popular game with the Aussies, and they obviously had more practice. They would often distract the American shooter by placing a dart very close to his boot just before the critical time of release.

One of the more memorable things about this TDY was "hassling" with the Aussie Sabres. And they wouldn't play fair at this game either. Often when we were returning from a mission, the GCI site would arrange for the Aussies to meet us for a little dissimilar ACT or Air Combat Training. The Aussie Sabres had altimeters that weren't very accurate since they would always be a

This RAAF Hastings delivered "supplies" to 79 Squadron troops at Ubon. However, most of the "supplies" were simply mail and beer. (credit Jerry Eldridge)

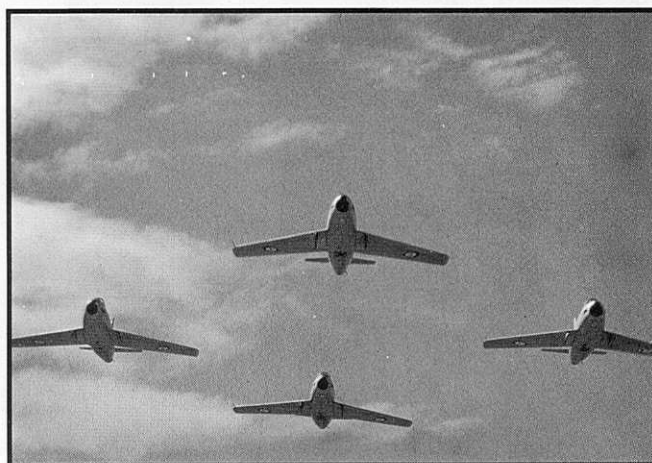


bit higher than they said they would be, giving them an altitude advantage.

The "hassling" was always encouraged for the purpose of a little dissimilar ACT, since the Aussie Sabres had a lot of flight characteristics similar to the North Vietnam MiG-17s. At least that was the 'official' excuse to have a lot of fun. When fuel was running low, we would join up in one large mixed flight and return to Ubon. And like any fighter pilots, the Aussies enjoyed buzzing the base, and would often fly in right over the heads of the F-4 ground crews.

I guess that wouldn't be very politically correct any more. The Aussies would come screaming down the ramp in 2-ships, 4-ships, 5-ships, diamonds, you name it. It was always a thing of beauty. And when it came to looks, the Sabre and the F-4 were't in the same league. Right off the bat, the Sabre is a beautiful airplane. The F-4? Well you have to be around the F-4 to appreciate that it's just different. But then, the Sabre couldn't do twice the speed of sound, which is a thing of beauty in itself.

A tight diamond formation of 79 Squadron Sabres make a low level pass over the Ubon ramp in 1965. The Australian pilots knew how to fly the Sabre, and would give the Phantom jocks all they could handle - to a point. (credit Jerry Eldridge)





A 79 Squadron Sabre forms up on the wing of Jerry Eldridge's F-4C for a little casual ACM following one of the missions into North Vietnam in early 1965. The Aussie pilots delighted in being able to turn inside the big Phantom. (credit - Jerry Eldridge)

But when the F-4 crew tired of this little 'game' between the Aussie Sabres and their big Phantoms, they simply kicked in the burners and said "Goodbye!". (credit Jerry Eldridge)

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Did you fly the early F-4C/D during your career after flying the premier dogfighter, the F-86 Sabre? I am looking for photos and stories of Air Force F-4C/D Phantoms for a new book on the subject. Please contact your editor, Larry Davis, 6475 Chesham Dr. NE, Canton, OH 44721; or email sabreclsx@aol.com

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Attention Hun Drivers!
If you are interested in starting up an F-100 Super Sabre Society, let me know. Contact Les Frazier, Life Member of the F-86 Sabre Pilots, at 702 River Down Road, Georgetown, TX, 78628-8240, ph. 512-930-3066, or e-mail supersabresociety@cox.net

Beating up the Canadiens

by William McCollum

The cover picture and article in the Spring 1999 issue of SabreJet Classics reminded me of an amusing incident that I was a part of.

In 1956, I was in the 388th Wing (561st Squadron), at Etain AB, France. We had been TDY to Wheelus AB, Libya, and Herb Kochman had done something to upset the squadron CO, Howie Poulin. When we returned to Etain, the CO sent Herb TDY to England for 90 days as punishment. He was ferrying F-86 aircraft from England to Italy.

On one of his early trips, Herb stopped at Etain and remained overnite, and gloated quite a bit about his new 'punishment' assignment. At the club that evening, I talked him into letting me fly his "E model" Sabre, actually an RAF Canadair Sabre Mk. 4, the next morning before he departed for Italy. The aircraft did not have USAF markings like the photo on the cover. It only had very small numbers on the tail, camouflage paint, and 120 gallon drop tanks. Quite different from USAF F-86Fs, which were all shiny and had 200 gallon tanks.

I took off from Etain rather sedately, departed the area, descended to low level, and proceeded to Gros Tenquin, where I commenced to beat up the airfield. I then left and headed straight for Marville, where I performed the same stunt. I left Marville and descended to VERY low level and went back to Etain, entered the pattern very sedately and landed just as innocently as possible. I told herb that I enjoyed the flight. He refueled and departed for Italy.

For quite some time, we heard stories from the Canadiens about the two RCAF units that accused each other of an airfield 'attack'. I think I told herb about it some time MUCH later. But I'm not sure. In any case, if either or both of the Canadien commanders are still around, I'm pretty sure the statute of limitations has probably expired on the incident. But if we do meet sometime, I owe them a round.

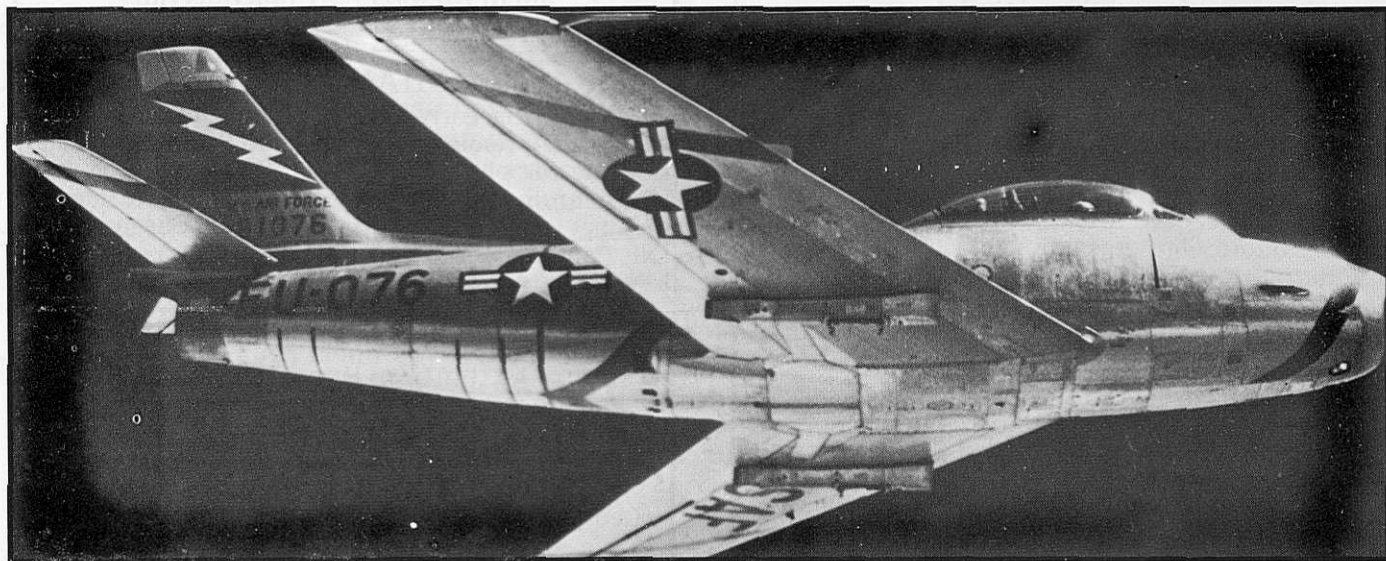


The photo that got this story started. This RAF Sabre Mk 4 is enroute from England bound for service in the Italian Air Force in 1956. As the RAF phased the Sabre out of service, other NATO air forces would put them into service, and US pilots would deliver them. (credit - Gary Sparks)



An ex-RAF Sabre on the ground at Etain AB, France in 1956. The Sabre Mk. 4s were completely refurbished prior to delivery to Italy, including a brand new paint job. The US markings were put on with water-based paint which was supposed to wash right off upon delivery - NOT! (credit - Larry Davis collection)

One of the 'shiny Sabres' of the 563rd FBS, 388th FBW, which was based at Etain AB, France, during the time when Bill McCollum made his unauthorized "attack" against the RCAF air bases that were nearby. (credit - USAFM)

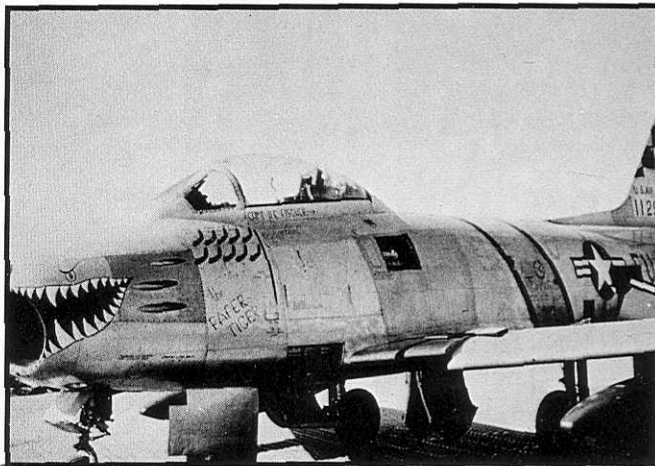


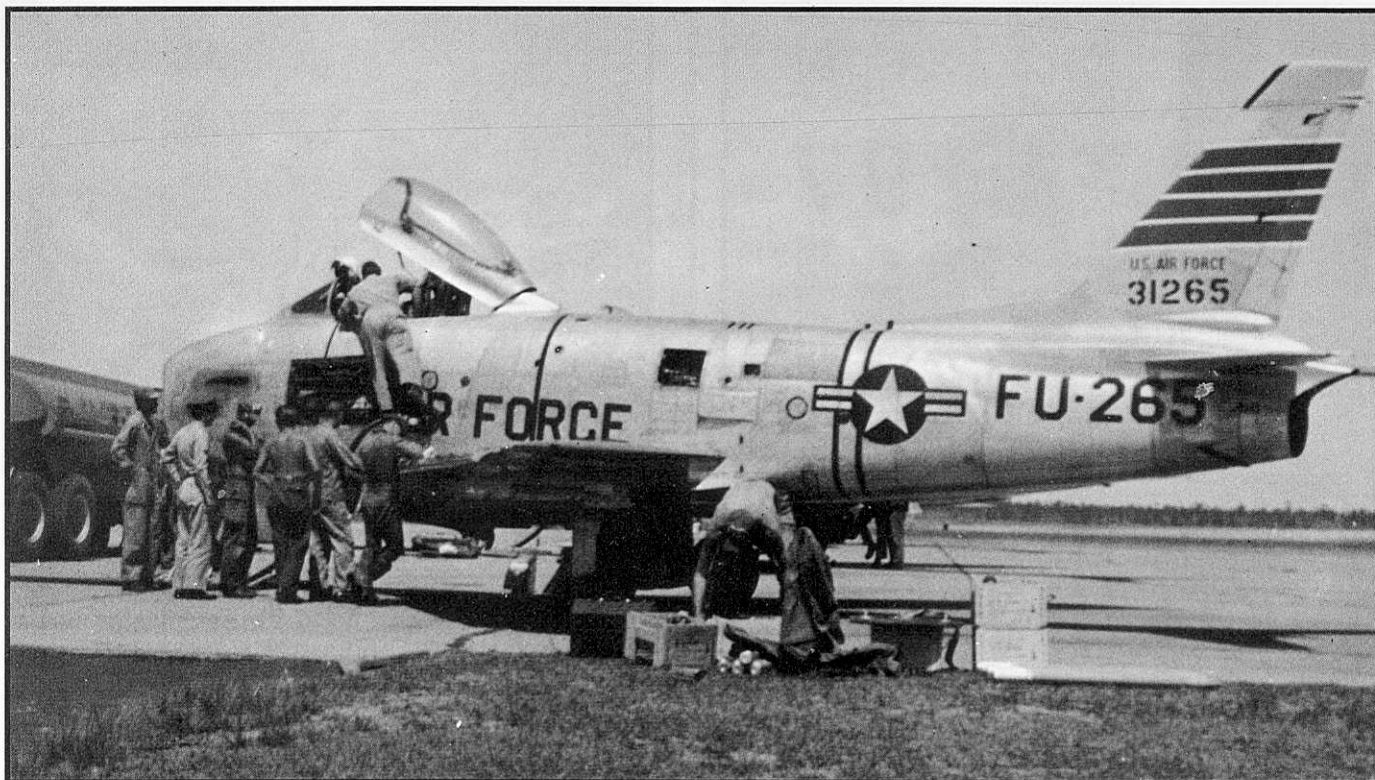
Aces and Their Aircraft



Major Dick Creighton has just scored his 5th victory in Korea. The date is 27 November 1951, and Major Creighton is the 4th US pilot to become an 'Ace' in the Korean War. Major Creighton flew F-86A-5 #49-1225 for most of his victories in Korea. However, on this mission, he returns with his drop tanks still attached, a sure sign that MiGs were not encountered. (credit - USAF)

"Paper Tiger" was the personal mount of Capt. Harold Fischer, a pilot in the 39th FIS at Suwon in 1953. Capt. Fischer shot down 10 MiG-15s in late 1952/early 1953 to become the 25th Ace in Korea and 4th 'Double Ace' with 10 victories. Capt. Fischer was shot down on 7 April 1953 and was held prisoner by the Communists until 1955. (credit - Emil Shutt and USAF)





WHO IS IT? Members are asked to look closely at this photo and attempt to identify the unit markings. All we know are the following: the aircraft is of course, an F-86H-10, #53-1265; the color markings are blue bands with white trim, and the photo was taken in 1957. It is believed that the airplane was based at Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina, possibly with the 83rd or 4th Fighter Wings. If you have knowledge of the markings and/or unit, please contact Larry Davis, Editor - SabreJet Classics, 6475 Chesham Dr NE, Canton, OH 44721, or email at sabreclsx@aol.com. Thanks

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