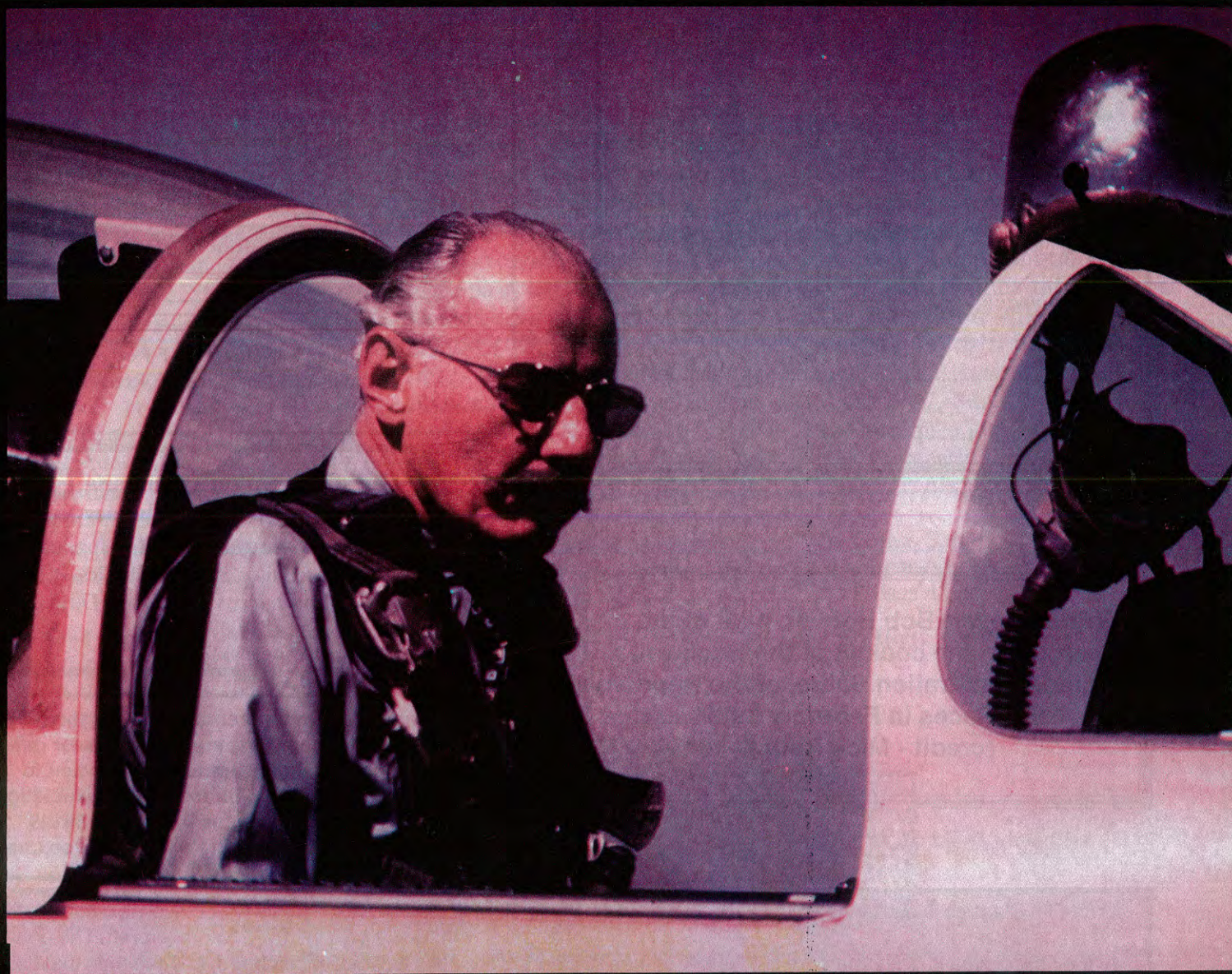


Sabre Jet Classics



Volume 19, Number 2

Summer 2011



*inside – Reunion 19 Report,
Night Intercept,
319th FIS History, More!*

A Publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association

SabreJet Classics

Vol. 19, number 2
Summer 2011
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(Front cover) Bob Hoover, pilot of the.
relaxes in the cockpit of the Rockwell
air demonstration Sabre, at the Reno
Air Races in February 1980.
(credit - Mick Roth).

SabreJet Classics is published by the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association. 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 goals of the association is "to perpetuate the history of the F-86 Sabre, the units to which it belonged, and the men that flew the Sabre"; and 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 the Las Vegas address. Dues are \$25/1 year, \$50/3 years, and \$200 for a Life Membership, \$100 for those over 75 years of age. SabreJet Classics is published solely for the private use of association members. No portion of SabreJet Classics may be used or reprinted without permission from the President of the association and the Editor of the magazine. SabreJet Classics is published three times per year. Extra copies of an issue can be ordered at \$3.00/copy. Subscriptions for non-members are available at \$25/year. All payments should be made payable to "F-86 Sabre Pilots Association", in care of the Las Vegas address.

SabreJet Classics

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the president's notebook SJC Edition

We are into the summer season and well past our 18th Reunion in April. What a reunion it was with over 350 of our members, wives and guests attending. The format was the same as in the past; lots of activity in the hospitality suite, great food buffets and a touch of formality at our banquet with Honor Guards for the presentation of the colors and a sit-down dinner with wine on the table for toasts. What put it over the top was Mr. R.A. "Bob" Hoover being with us and sharing his experiences, for literally hours, as only Bob Hoover can do. It was an experience we all took home that will last for a life time. More details of our reunion are covered later in this edition. We had business concerning two main issues. The first being; an amendment to our Constitution concerning dues and life memberships. In 2005 our Constitution was amended to permit our present members or new members to buy life memberships; \$200 for those under age 75 and \$100 for those 75 or older. Since that time, our life memberships have grown to over 65 per cent of our total membership. That has such an impact on our dues collections that we now pay more for

operating the Association, magazines, rosters, reunions, and operating costs than we take-in. That means we will continue to draw down our financial reserves. To slow this process down, the Board of Directors and our members at the business meeting approved a change to our Constitution that would no longer offer new life memberships as of January 1, 2012. Our present life members and those who purchase a life membership prior to the 1st of January will not be affected by this change.

The second issue that the Association faces is the operation of our web site. Bill Weiger has been our web master and run it so effectively from its inception. The site has received very little activity in the past couple of years and Bill would like to step down as the web manager. That means if there is little interest in the site, it is not economical to keep the site on the web. At the reunion business meeting, the general consensus was to keep the web site operational. To do that we will need a volunteer to manage the site. Unfortunately, no one volunteered to take over from Bill. It was agreed by the Board of Directors and our reunion membership to post a notice in the Sabre Jet Classics requesting a volunteer from our membership.

Should no one volunteer, we will close our web site when our renewal is due in the fall. Anyone volunteering should contact Bill Weiger or myself as soon as possible. The normal business conducted at each reunion was the election of board members and the president. I, as existing president and our present board members consisting of Pat Hughes (Chairman), Glenn Carus, Sam Hollenbeck, Bob Matasick, and Alonzo Walter all wished to continue. The reunion membership voted unanimously to continue the present leadership for the next two years.

Finally and back to the reunion; holding our reunion in front of the Super Sabres' has worked well in the past. Both organizations have agreed to continue this concept. The F-86 Sabre Pilots Reunion, number 19, will be held at the Gold Coast Hotel Casino in Las Vegas on 7, 8 and 9 April, 2013. 2013 seems a long way off, but it is not too early to put it into your schedule planning.

God Bless Sabre Pilots
God Bless our Troops
God Bless America

J.R. Alley, President

FOLDED WINGS

Stephen L. Bettinger, December 4th, 2010
Clyde A. Curtin, August 22nd, 2011
Sommers I. Howard, December 25th, 2010
Albert S. Kelly, December 9th, 2010
Martin J. Loftus, May 24th, 2011
Walter P. Paluch, March 11th, 2011
Phillip A. Rand, May 19th, 2011
Emil K. Vollmar, March 15th, 2011

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.

from the editor

Well guys, this issue is very late. My apologies on that. The problem was a little health issue with me, a quadruple bypass issue. And everyone said I was in great health. But Here's the story.

I went to McDonalds for coffee and to read the paper. Felt fine. But I had a bit of nausea when I got home. When I came into the house, the sky fell. My wife looked at at me and suggested we go to the hospital. I felt very rough and said "OK".

I told her that we can stop at the fire station about 1/4 mile away if she wanted to. She did. They came out and "We're going!" Next thing I recall is waking up the next day with all kinds of tubes plugged into me. And I still didn't know what happened.

They'd run a heart catheter into me, which revealed a major blockage. That led to open heart surgery which revealed three more partially blocked arteries! I was in the hospital for 5 days. And when I got out I had a relapse when my heart began racing at twice it's normal beat. That brought a second visit to the ER and another two days in the hospital.

Why am I telling you guys this? Because all my previous checkups detected nothing! My cholesterol numbers were low (which was the culprit), blood pressure was within bounds. Everything that leads to heart disease was NOT THERE! Later on I asked about it and the docs said that I was in the 5% that simply got heart disease for no known reason! Thanks a lot!

So I'm asking you guys to please watch yourselves. If you feel in the slightest way strange, out of your norm, have it checked out. We don't want to lose any more of you guys.

That said, I'm feeling about as good as can be expected. Walking about 1/2 mile twice a day, and getting ready for a rehab stint beginning next week. And getting SabreJet Classics back on some type of schedule. I plan to make the 20th Reunion in 2013 come hell or high water. See you then.

All for now.

Larry Davis
editor

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ATTENTION!

Member Glenn Carus Wishes to announce a "Last Call" for any member to get his or her name on the F-86 Sabre Pilots panel displayed at the National Air & Space Museum in Washington, DC. Please contact: Glenn for details prior to 31 Dec 2011 at: 703-444-3269 or email: gcarus@falconsresidents.org

Letters to the editor:

Re: the Project Arrow article in vol.19-1
From Tom Brewer

On pg 18 of the current issue with a photo of a 445th FIS F-86D. The 445th didn't leave Geiger Field until after Project Arrow as you say; but the 520th FIS, which I was in, was activated at George Field on 1 Dec 1954. I got there from Moses Lake right after Christmas 1954. The 520th was therefore in service long before Project Arrow and was actually the replacement for the 440th FIS, which went to Germany. After Project Arrow, the 520th became the famous Geiger Tigers 498th FIS and the 520th number was inactivated.

Re: George Laven's F-86H vol. 18-3
From David Menard

Latest SJC here and as usual, very interesting. One minor point if I may. The color of the DayGlo bands of all USAF aircraft starting in the late 1950s, was ORANGE not red. I helped paint some 100th BG aircraft before I shipped out of Pease. It was indeed DayGlo Orange.

From Herbert Pederson

I was Squadron CO of the 1st FDS and Laven's "Parrot" was assigned to my squadron. Frosty (Sheridan) is right, keeping 234 painted was a chore, including whitewall tires! The 413th FDG came into being in 1955. In 53-54 Laven was the Air Base Group CO.

From Dick Hefton

The pics of Laven's aircraft with the guys standing with him, came from me. It's not 234 but 327. The guys are (L-R) John Lanieri, Bob Madden, E. Stack Gately, Laven, Dick Hefton, and Bob Schonenberg. The cover photo looks enhanced as it sure is not DayGlo. I can't be sure of the tail number but it looks like it ends in "27".

(editor's answer)

The cover shot of SJC 19-1 is NOT Laven's airplane. It's the 1st FDS Squadron CO's bird, FU-117. Laven's airplane had the "H" on the fuselage side in three colors, as was the tail, nose, wingtips, stab tips, and tank fins. You'll see that Frosty Sheridan is given credit for the photo on page 2. Thanks for your help.

Correction to the foreign roster in vol.19-1

We inadvertently misspelled Dieter Schlehan's name and his email address is:
d.schlehan@gmx.de

Our apologies for any lost emails.

From JR Alley, President

I just received the first segment of the Bob Hoover project that Kim Furst, KB Productions, conducted at the 19th Reunion. I don't have the ability to email this link to the membership but I wanted to put it in the SabreJet Classics so that all the members are able to follow the story as Kim puts it together.

Once on the site, as well as clicking The Teaser Trailer to get to the video, the Note from the Director is interesting as Kim refers a bit of her experiences at our reunion. Eventually, the entire documentary will hopefully be shown on the History Channel and others.

Go to:

www.thebobhooverproject.com



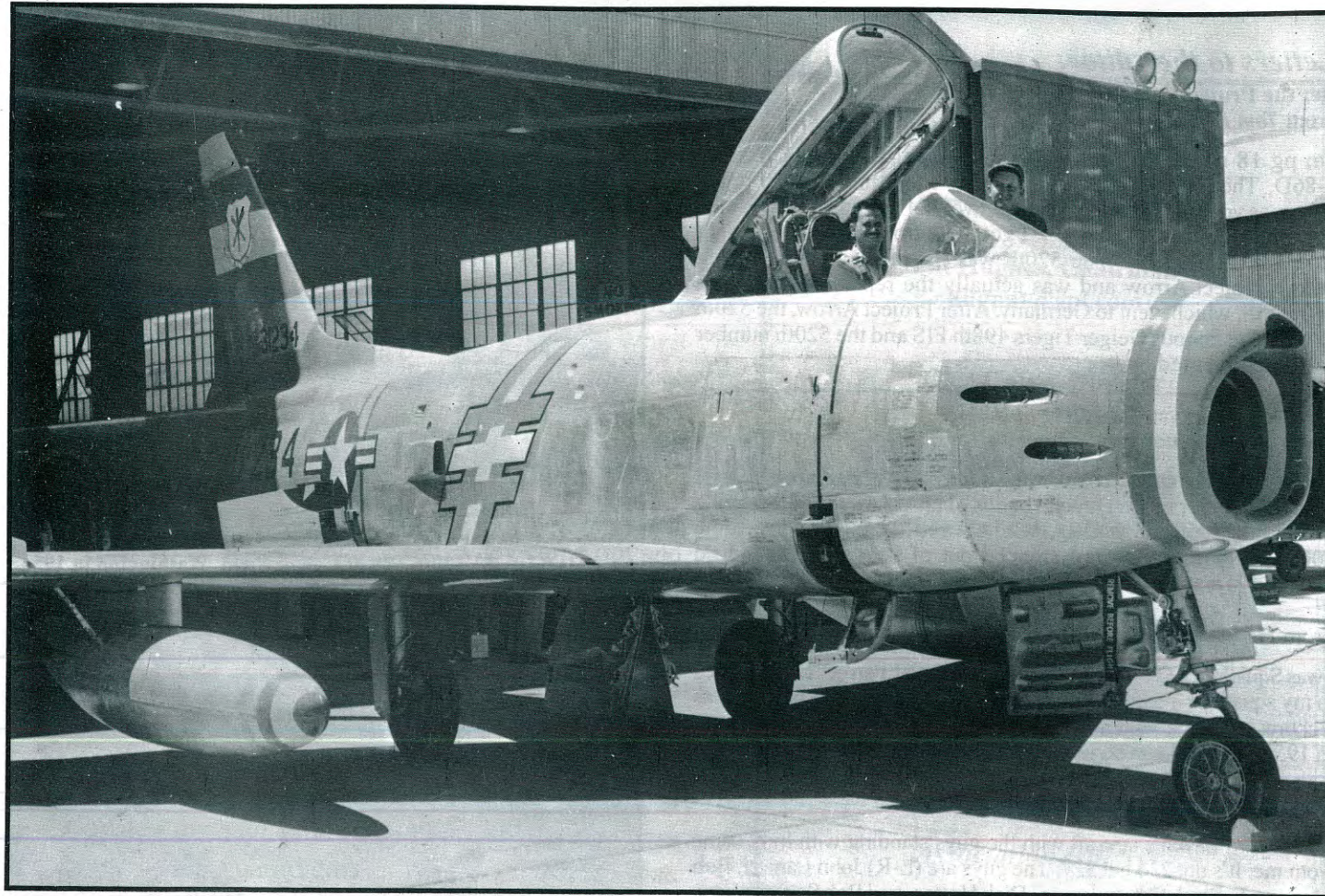
A F-86D from the 520th FIS at Geiger Field, Washington in 1954. (credit USAF)



The F-86H, #52-2117, flown by the CO of the 1st FDS at George AFB in 1956. (credit - Frosty Sheridan)



Col. Laven and several pilots at George AFB in 1956. (credit - Dick Hefton)



Col. George Laven commanded the 413th FDW at George AFB in 1954-55. He flew several F-86Hs all decorated with the very colorful markings that were in red, yellow, and blue Day-Glo paint. This aircraft is 53-1234. Another was the airplane in Dick Hefton's photo, 53-1327. There has been some speculation that the F-86Hs flown by the 413th FDW did not have wing fences. As can be seen, the fence is clearly on the right wing just outboard of the wing tank and in the photo of -117. (credit - USAF)

Sabre reunions:

**19th Reunion of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association will be in Las Vegas
on April 7th, 8th, and 9th, 2013.**

Watch for full information and details. Start making plans NOW!

**NOTICE: As of this date, the Super Sabre Society reunion will NOT be tied together with
the F-86 Sabre Assn 19th Reunion. The SSS has decided to move to a different hotel.
Please contact the Super Sabre Society address for further details.**

**Class 53A Reunion
November 10-13 In New Orleans, LA.
Contact Tom Calkins, (941)792-8723
Email: Reunion53A@aol.com**



REUNION 18 F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSOCIATION

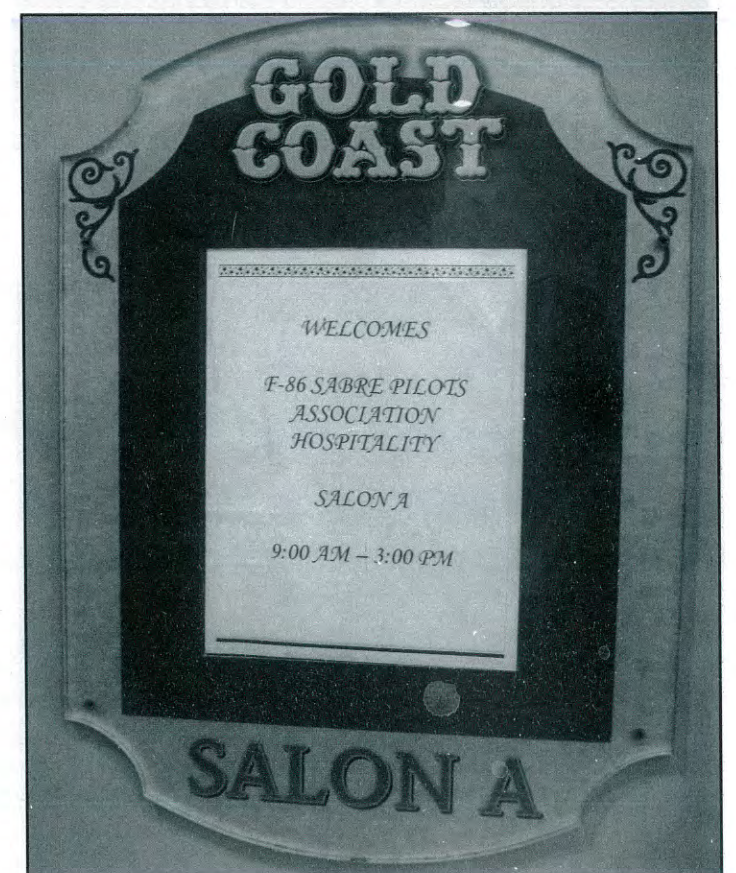
From JR Alley

Our reunion, at the Gold Coast Hotel/Casino held 10 - 12 April 2011 was an overwhelming success. Our member turnout was excellent with over 350 attending. The weather was typical Las Vegas great, the food was excellent, the scheduled events went off as planned and were enjoyed by all. Our trip to Nellis AFB and the briefing given by the USAF Weapons School was enjoyed by those who attended. We filled three bus loads with 150 members, wives and guests. Lt. Col. Gary Rose, former commander of the 433rd Weapons Squadron, present Weapons School Deputy Commander, and his instructors must be commended for the informative briefings they provided on the latest Weapons School missions, their awesome aircraft and some of the latest high-tech equipment used by our fighter pilots.

While the group was at Nellis, the ladies who didn't go, were enjoying a luncheon with entertainment provided by Fran Jennings's Happy Hoofers dance group. Her routine was expanded from the previous reunion's routine to include an Elvis Presley impersonator and a very patriotic dance routine that brought a standing ovation from all the ladies.

As for the members business meeting activities, please see the Presidents Notebook for details, especially a change to our constitution concerning life memberships and the status of our Sabre Pilots web site.

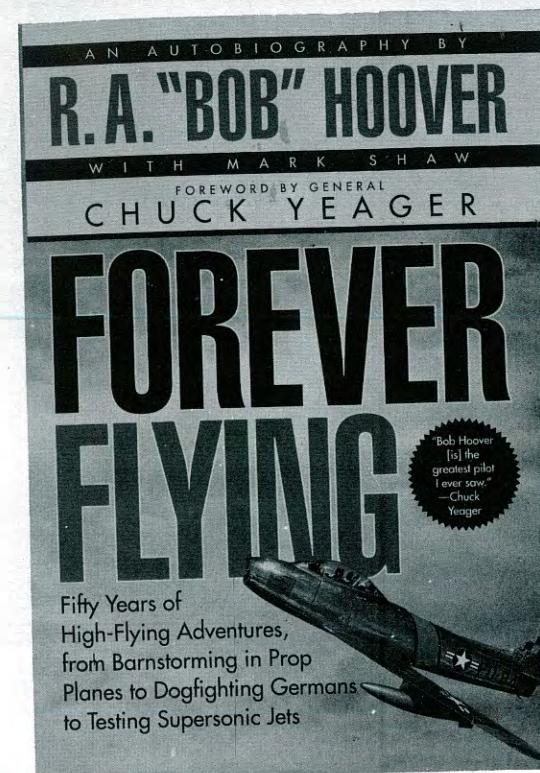
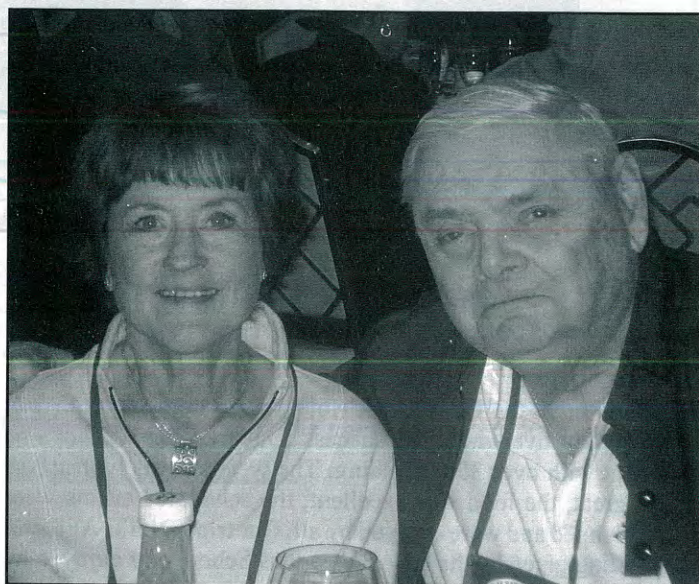
The flame that lit the fire to Reunion 18 was the pleasure of having Bob Hoover, an honorary member of our great association, attend our reunion not just as our guest speaker, but to attend nearly all our events and as he says, "Be with the guys I love so





GOLD COAST HOTEL & CASINO
EVENTS FOR MONDAY, APRIL 11, 2011

> **F-86 SABRE PILOTS ASSOCIATION**
Hospitality & Registration / Nevada Ballroom Salon A / 7:00am-6:00pm
Directors Meeting / Salon G (near NV & AZ) / 10:00am-1:00pm
Ladies Luncheon / Nevada Ballroom Salon C / 12:00pm-2:00pm
Bob Hoover Briefing / Nevada Ballroom Salon B / 2:00pm-3:00pm
Dinner Buffet / Arizona Ballroom / 6:00pm-10:00pm
> **HOMELAND SECURITY WORKING GROUP**
California Ballroom Salons K&L (near Bingo) / 9:00am-5:00pm



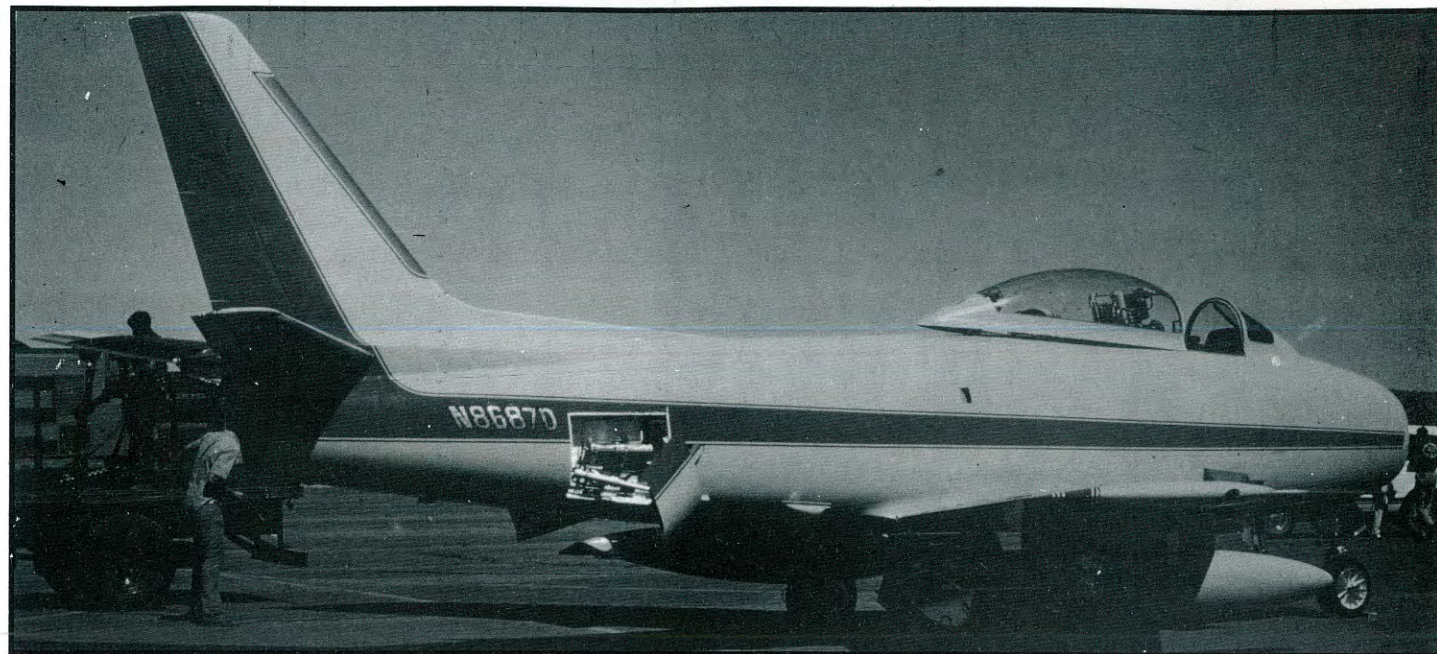
"Forever Flying" was the autobiography of Bob Hoover with Mark Shaw. Published by Pocket Books in 1996, the book tells about Hoovers 50+ years of flying in World War 2 to testing jets with North American Aviation, to crowd pleasing air demonstration flights all over the world. The book can still be found online and at better libraries.

much." Bob certainly lived up to his word and much more. For the two sessions set for him to speak to our members, an afternoon session and as our guest speaker at the banquet dinner, Bob spoke for over five hours total. Not only is Bob noted as a world renowned aviator of unequal talents, but he is a master story teller as well. Of those hours of sharing his experiences with us, he could have gone on for hours more and not repeated one of a vast array of stories from those gripping seat of your pants stories testing Sabres to ones of great humor.

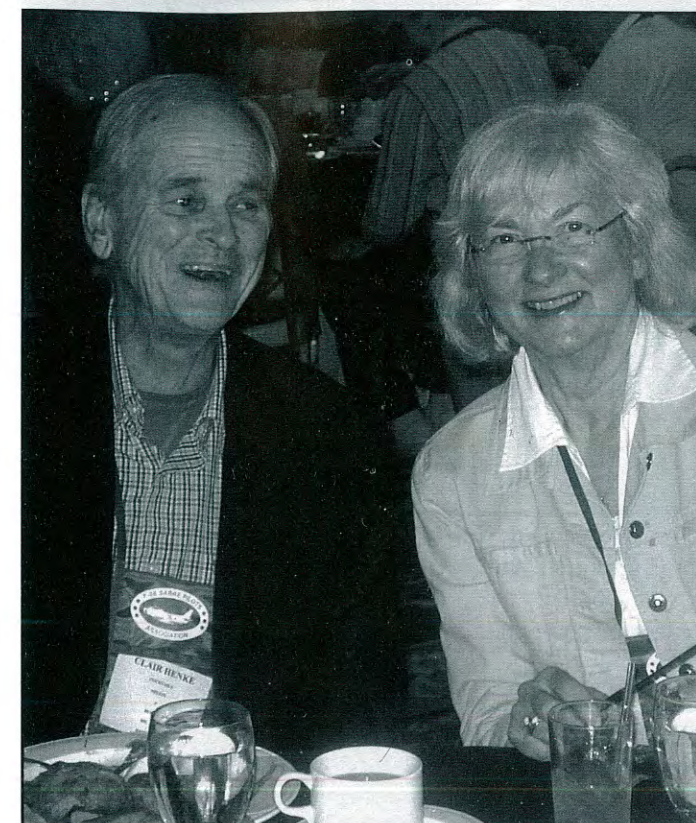
Bob had a book signing session for those wishing to buy his book, "Forever Flying." For anyone who wanted an autographed book by Bob who didn't get one, they can contact Michael Brasier, Bob's Vice President of Fuels for Jet Fleet International at 7701 Woodley Ave, VanNuys CA 91406 or emailmichael@jetfleetinternational.com. Mike was Bob's special assistant during the reunion to assist him with his audiovisual presentations, book signing and other tasks Bob needed. Mike was especially helpful to us in coordinating Bob's plans and activities. By Bob's side during all

The gorgeous all-yellow P-51 D Mustang that Bob Hoover flew in air demonstrations all over the nation in the early 1980s. The airplane was restored by Rockwell International. Here, Bob Hoover taxis to the active runway at Reno in 1980. (credit - Mick Roth)





The F-86F Sabre that Bob Hoover flew as a Rockwell demonstration aircraft at Reno in 1980. The aircraft is a restored Canadair Sabre mk 5 as denoted by the additional cooling scoops aft of the wing. (credit- Mick Roth)



these activities was his lovely wife of 65 years, Colleen Hoover. Another interesting aspect of Bob's attendance at our reunion was a team filming a documentary of Bob's life. The Director/Owner of KF Films, Kim Furst and her two technicians attended and filmed most of Bob's activities at our reunion which included interviews with certain of our members. Of special note, was the fact that Kim and her crew kept to the side lines and did not in any way interfere with our reunion activities. For this, Kim must be commended. At some future time, it is hoped that we will be able to view Bob's documentary on the History or the Military TV

Andy Meyer's 'gang'. (credit- Andy Meyer)



Channels. As for our next reunion in 2013, we and the Super Sabre Society (SSS) have agreed to have our reunions as, we have the past two times; at the Gold Coast Hotel Casino. Our F-86 Sabre Pilots reunion will be on April 7, 8 and 9 with the SSS's on April 9, 10, 11 and 12, 2013.

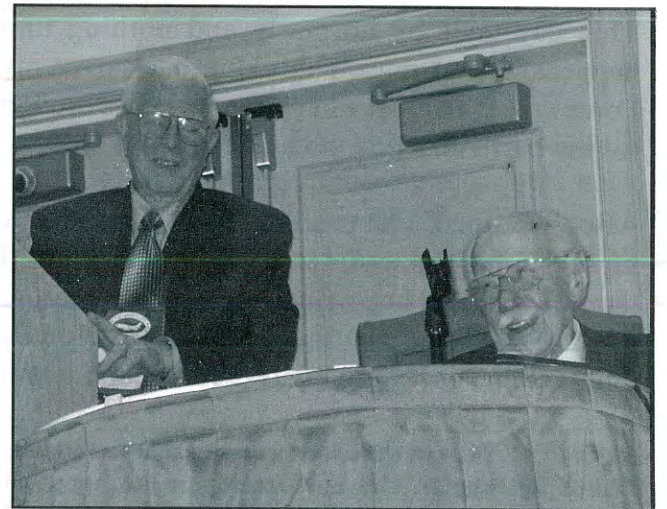
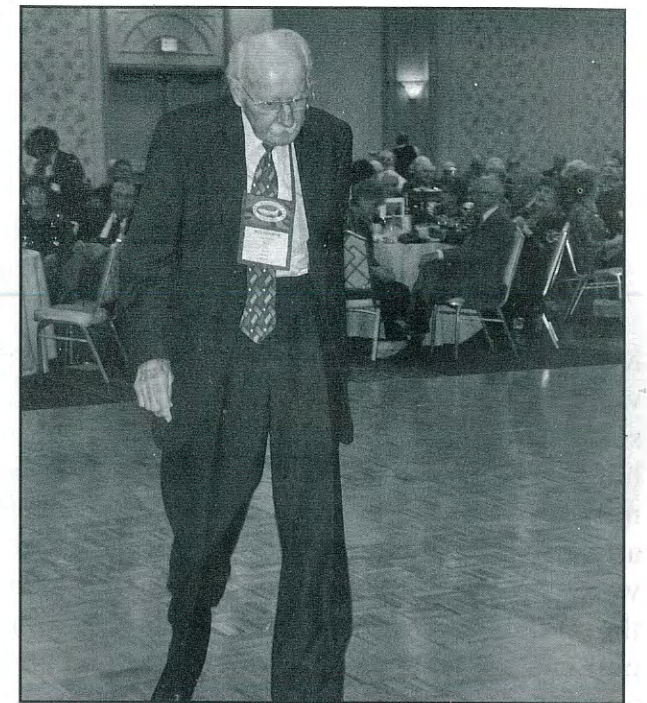
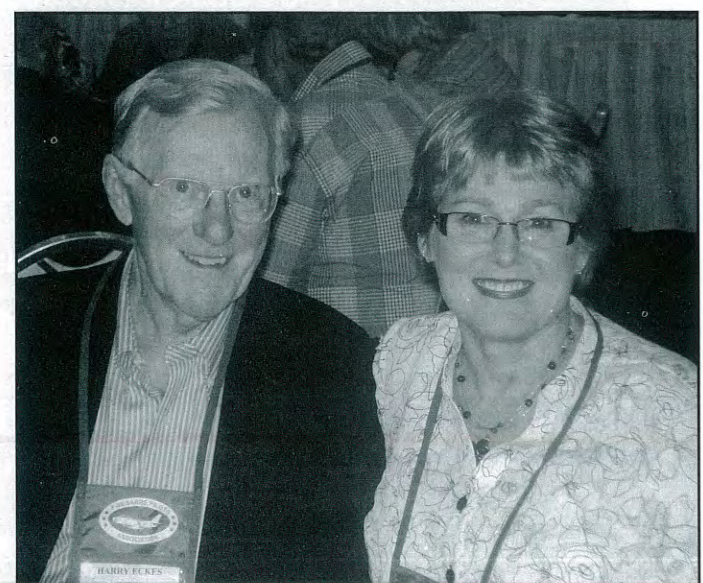
All photos courtesy of JR Alley except as noted.



Chick Cleveland, newly crowned 40th Ace of the Korean War. (credit - Andy Meyer)



(credit Andy Meyer)



NIGHT INTERCEPT (ALMOST)

By John Redrup

March 1957 - winter in Hokkaido, Japan. cold, snowy, windy, not the best time to be flying and I'm scheduled to be in the alert hangar for the next 24 hours, ready to take off and be airborne in five minutes to intercept and identify all unidentified aircraft in our area. There are two of us on call and we keep busy reading, our ears anxiously waiting for the scramble horn to start the adrenaline flowing. We pull this alert duty about once a week and are well aware of the procedures.

This day goes by normally and nothing unusual happens. I find myself thinking back over my Air Force career and just what circumstances brought me to this particular time and place.

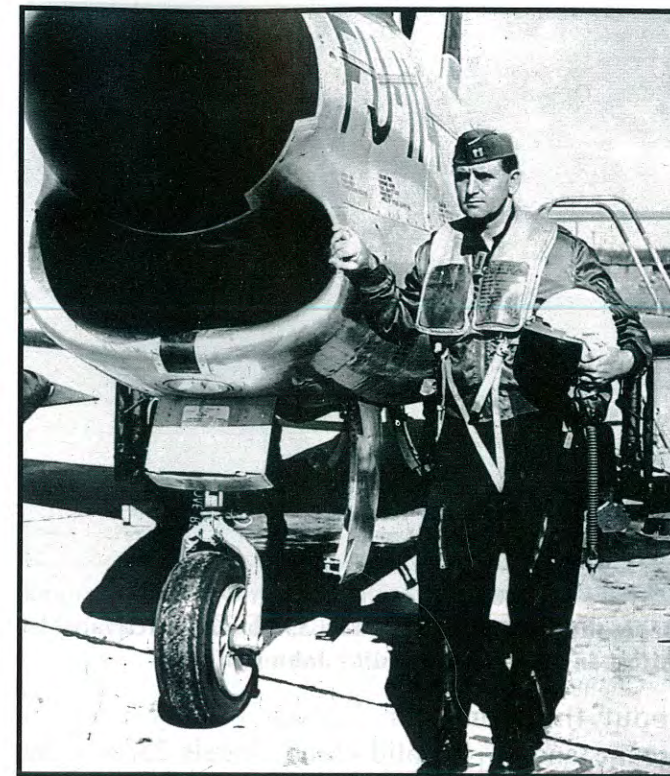
After Aviation Cadet training, I was fortunate to find myself in the fighter interceptor business. I'd flown the P61, F82, F94 and finally the greatest aircraft of all; the F86D North American Sabre. However, I didn't attend any night fighter school, and was lucky

339th FIS F-86Ds line the snow covered ramp at Chitose AB, Japan, in 1956. The 339th were attached to the Korea veteran 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing at the time. (credit - John Redrup)



enough to learn my trade on the job. I did go to F86D transition training making me well versed with the Sabre. I'd made intercepts all around Okinawa, Japan, and off the east coast of the U.S.. Many of these were at night so I felt comfortable with my ability to handle the aircraft in all sorts of weather.

On this night I was stationed at Chitose AB with the 339th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 4th Fighter Wing. I was proud to be in this great outfit with three F86 day fighter squadrons and our night/all weather squadron.



Capt. John Redrup, Japan 1957. (credit - John Redrup)

Now it's night and the weather is just about at minimums and still we wait. While waiting I look over the -1, the Air Force publication that outlines all the information needed to fly this aircraft which is powered by a 7500 pound thrust engine built by General Electric, and is capable of exceeding Mach 1. However you must be in a vertical dive from 35,000 feet with 100 percent power and afterburner. You would usually slide through the speed of sound at about 25,000.

It was a heavy machine, weighing 20,000 pounds gross. The fire control system was electronic (vacuum tubes), armed with twenty-four 2.75-inch, folding-fin rockets which were fired from a rocket package under the forward part of the fuselage. This system was unique in that the radar directed you in on the target on a 90 degree flight path and the rockets fired at the proper time. The pilot was extremely busy during the firing run because in addition to flying the aircraft on instruments he had to operate the radar antenna with another small control stick and keep the target centered on the scope. It was an effective system and we scored well on towed targets.

We wear the winter protective garments, better known as the "moon" suit, consisting of a quilted



inner liner and a canvas-like outer shell. The shoes are built in, tight fitting rubber outlets circle neck and wrists. Just recently one of our pilots had to bail out over the Pacific Ocean. Not wearing the suit, he didn't make it, even though he was picked up shortly after entering the water. Despite the discomfort we wore it.

After midnight I felt pretty tired, and lay down to sleep fitfully. As could be expected, the alert horn sounded. The room exploded in sound and fury as ground crew and two pilots thundered down the stairs and ran to the aircraft. At the same time the doors at either end of the hangar were opening onto the taxiway. We leaped into the cockpit and with the crew chiefs help, fastened all the belts and connections. We'd pre-flighted the 86 earlier so that every switch and lever was prepositioned for flight. While buckling in, I hit the start switch and the engine started to whine and spool up. Throttle to idle and I was ready to taxi to the nearby runway. As we moved out, the tower cleared us for take off. With afterburner on and a tail of fire we lifted off into the black night. I was the wingman this time because the flight lead was the one who

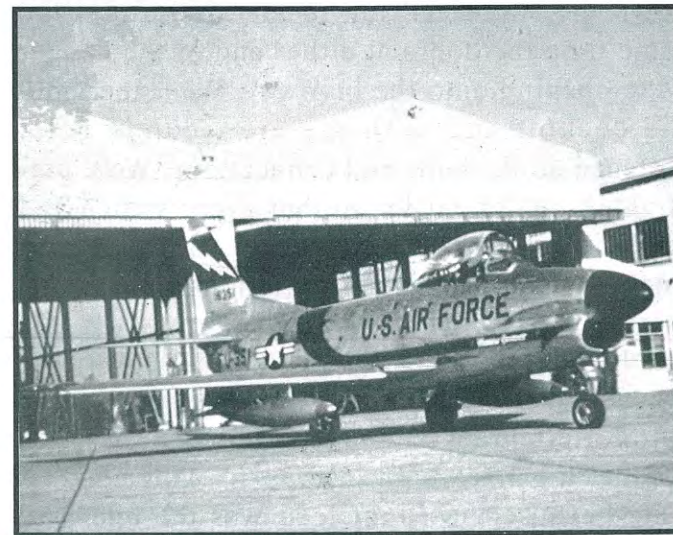


Another 339th pilot flies very close formation with John Redrup over Japan in the Spring of 1957. (credit- John Redrup)

reached the runway first. He was a First Lieutenant who was younger than me and highly motivated.

Gear up, flaps up and climbing out, we received our instructions from GCI - "Vector 290, Angels 25, 125 miles, Gate" (Course 290 degrees, altitude 25,000 feet, distance 125 miles, afterburner) We entered the weather immediately after taking off and were definitely on the gages. I was able to keep flight lead in "sight" by using my radar, as he was about one mile ahead. We leveled off at 25,000. Because we were over the Sea of Japan, GCI told us to skin our tanks and we were on internal fuel.

The 339th FIS F-86Ds carried some of the most colorful markings of any F-86 unit. The fuselage band was black with red trim (and usually carried a name), while the tail was black with red trim and a white lightning bolt. (credit - John Redrup)



A 339th FIS F-86D sits in the snow at Chitose AB, Japan during the Winter of 1957. The 339th was reactivated at Chitose in July 1954. (credit - John Redrup)

About this time I reflected on my present circumstances - in solid cloud, angels 25, roaring through the night at 400 knots over the Sea of Japan headed for Vladivostok, Russia, 100 miles ahead. I'd been awakened from a light sleep, jumped into the aircraft and was airborne in five minutes. Now in this small cockpit, dimly illuminated by red light, the wind and engine noise muted, the only sense of motion the flickering needles of the engine and flight instruments, I felt a sense of loneliness. There was no outside, just me inside in this snug compartment with an occasional radio message for company. I was wide-awake by now and my mind was catching up to my present environment. But I couldn't help thinking, what was I doing and why was I here at this exact time and circumstance. It was as if I was somewhere else and watching this all happen to another pilot. It was a very strange experience, but I soon realized that I'd better get back to work. The fact that my brief rumination was made possible by hardwork-orientated ground crew who kept my single engine and radio working as advertised.

Searching ahead, all I could detect was the other F-86D, no sign of the intruder. GCI had the bogie about 50 miles away. At our closure speed of about 800 knots we should be able to pick it up in a matter of seconds. This was good news since we were now about one hundred miles from home plate and even closer to Russia. At max



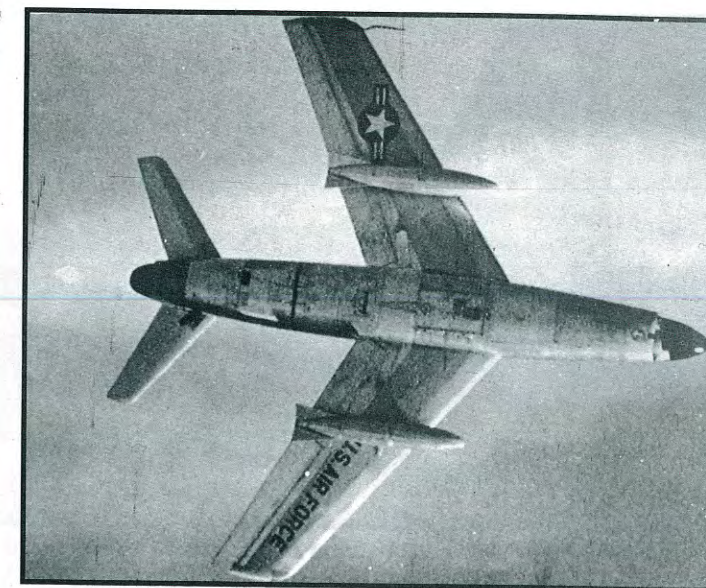
A 339th FIS F-86D sits ready alert at Chitose on a cold (often way below ZERO!) in the Winter of 1957. (credit - John Redrup)

power, our fuel was rapidly depleting and our aircraft could not refuel while airborne.

Our concern was then alleviated when GCI reported that our target was in a 180 turn back toward his homeland. Thus ended another case of cat and mouse that the Soviets and we played. This was a time of many scrambles and no intercepts. They would take off, head for Japan and we would take off, heading for Russia. And very seldom would we ever meet.

I remember another mission that was more satisfying. This time it occurred during a bright and clear day in the intercept area although our home base was covered with clouds. GCI had scrambled two F86D's and I was number two again. Over the Sea of Japan we visually sighted our target. I was high and I can still remember the sight of a silver TU-16 Badger, below me as I raked into a tight turn over him. The bright red stars on his wings was evidence that it belonged to Russia - an exciting moment for me. We flew loose formation with him and took a number of pictures with our 35 mm cameras. We were in and out of afterburner to keep pace with this jet bomber and after about thirty minutes we broke off and turned toward Japan as he turned back toward his base. Low on fuel we diverted to Misawa AB and turned over the film to the intelligence authorities. A satisfying mission.

Returning to the present: Turning back, we let down



A 339th F-86D banks away from the camera over Japan in 1957. The 339th was equipped with F86D-45 aircraft which had the drag chute installed for short field landings. (credit - John Rudrup)

through the weather, picking up Ground Controlled Approach (GCA) and broke out of the dark clouds at minimums and landed. Though it had been an interesting and exciting hour, after debriefing I felt pretty tired and laid down in one of the bunks to try to sleep. It was just another day and night at work for hundreds of pilots around the world during the Cold War. Tomorrow it would happen to another pilot somewhere and I wondered if he would have the same feeling of aloneness at I experienced and ask, however briefly "Where was I and why I was there at that particular time and place?"

In 1957, the usually bogus alert turned real when John Redrup intercepted a Soviet TU-16 Badger let bomber over the Sea of Japan (credit John Redrup)





"Our Little Lass", an F-82G from the 339th F(AW)S based at Yokota AB, Japan in the Summer of 1950. Major James Little, CO of the 339th F(AW)S, shot down a North Korean Yak on 27 June 1950, one of the first kills of the Korean War. (credit - Merle Olmsted)

339th FIS History

by Larry Davis

The 339th Fighter Interceptor Squadron was one of those units that had a long history with both the Army Air Force and the US Air Force, starting on New Caledonia and Guadalcanal as part of the Cactus Air Force in October 1942 flying P-39 Bell Airacobras.

By the start of the Korean War, the 339th was part of the Occupation forces of Japan and stationed at Yokota AB before moving to Johnson AB to be closer to the action in Korea. They were flying F82G Twin Mustangs when Maj. James Little scored a Yak-9 kill on 27 June 1950, one of the first victories of the Korean War.

In 1951, the 339th Squadron transitioned into the Jet Age, flying brand new Lockheed F-94B Starfire jets. Based at Johnson AB, Japan, the 339th was now designated a Fighter Interceptor Squadron. (credit- Larry Davis coll.)

In 1951, they traded their venerable F-82Gs for new Lockheed F-94B Starfire jets, flying defense over the Japanese Home Islands from Johnson AB on Northern Honshu.

In July 1954 several things occurred that changed the 339th FIS. First of course, was the end of the war in Korea. 5th Air Force began bringing home various units that had deployed to Korea for combat. One of those was the 39th FIS, that had been assigned to the 51st FIG at Suwon.

The 39th FIS had originally been assigned to the 35th FIG before Korea, but had moved initially to the 18th FBG in F-51 Ds before assignment to the 51st FIG at Suwon and



In 1951, the 339th Squadron transitioned into the Jet Age, flying brand new Lockheed F-94B Starfire jets. Based at Johnson AB, Japan, the 339th was now designated a Fighter Interceptor Squadron. (credit- Larry Davis coll.)

transition into new F-86E Sabres. However, in August 1954, the 51st FIG returned to their home base at Naha, Okinawa. At least the two original units, the 16th and 25th Squadrons, did. What to do with the 39th?

In September 1954 the 39th FIS was sent to Johnson AB, Japan, and temporarily assigned to the 4th FIW. Then a strange thing happened. The 39th FIS went back to its' parent unit, the 35th FIW. But 5th AF needed an all-weather defense for Northern Japan and the 39th was taking their F-94Bs with them to Yokota.

The pilots remained at Johnson awaiting the arrival of brand new F-86D interceptors, which began to be delivered in late 1954. These were the new F-86D-45 aircraft with a drag chute in the tail to stop the bird on the shorter runways in the Far East. Along with the new Sabres, 5th AF changed the unit designation to the 339th FIS and the unit was assigned temporarily to the 4th Fighter Wing.

F-86D transition was completed in December 1954, and the unit shared the air defense mission with the F-86Fs of the 4th at Chitose AB until the unit was deactivated in January 1958.

Painting of the unit markings of a 339th FIS F-86D during the mid-1950s. (credit - Chris BanyaiRelhl)



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WHAT IS IT? This F-86E-10 was photographed at the National Air Race in 1951. The F-86E was based at Edwards AFB Flight Test Center but was used for a specific purpose when it carried these markings. Later in 1951, the airplane was transferred to the 51st FIG in Korea and was written off on 29 Jan 1952 (credit - Peter Bowers)

