Sabre Jet Classics

Volume 5 Number 3 FALL 1997

A publication of the F-86 Sabre Pilots Association

50th Anniversary Of The XP-86, First Flight, Formosa Intercept, Last F-86F In USAF, More!

SabreJet Classics

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 3
FALL 1997

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(front cover) North American test pilot George Welch in the XP-86 during early tests in 1947. Welch made the first flight in the XP-86 on 1 October 1947 - 50 YEARS AGO. (credit - North American Aviation)

Next Issue; Pakistani Sabres, Duty On Okinawa, 50th FBW History, MORE!

Start Planning!!
12th Sabre Pilots Reunion
25-29 April, 1999
at the Monte Carlo Hotel, Las Vegas.
See You There!

THE PRESIDENTS NOTEBOOK

Our 11th Reunion was an outstanding success, thanks to Dee Harper's leadership and a great team effort. Hank Buttlemann and Dee were superb presidents, and they left some mighty big shoes to fill. I will give it my best shot.

We are presently planning our next reunion for 25-29 April 1999, at the Monte Carlo Hotel in Las Vegas. The Monte Carlo showed us a first class operation last time, and they promise bigger and better things to come. They've already upgraded the sound system in the meeting rooms, which solves one of the problems we had. And they say we can expect a much better Continental Breakfast. All in all, things look good for '99! And while it may seem somewhat early to be planning a reunion that's still 19 months down the line, we've learned that the sooner we start working with the hotel, the better the service will be during the reunion. I'll keep everyone posted as our plans progress.

We are delighted to see more new members joining us, especially those that flew the F-86D, K, and L. There may still be some of those jocks who don't know that they are eligible for membership. If you have a buddy you'd like to see at the next reunion, please get an application form to him. They are available for downloading from the "FighterTown" site on the World Wide Web <http:www.fightertown.org>. Or just let us know that you need some forms. You might even want to loan him your latest copy of "SabreJet Classics". We all know that the best recruiting tool is one on one. So get off that easy chair and bring at least one new member into the fold.

HELP! We no longer have valid addresses for those members shown on page 36 of our newest roster (1 April 1997 edition). Several have paid their dues in advance, but we can't send them the new roster and "SabreJet Classics". Please check out page 36 and let us know if you can provide the whereabouts of any of the 'lost members'.

STORIES! We need stories and photos (or color slides) for "SabreJet Classics". Dig out your old photos, remember the things that happened at the time, and send the story with photos to Larry Davis, Editor of SabreJet Classics. I'll bet all of us have hairy, weird, or just plain entertaining stories that would make good reading. You don't have to be an English major, we'll work with you.

It seems that all I've done is harangue you about things you can do for the Association. Well, that's because YOU ARE the Association. And the best part of it all is remembering and sharing our memories. Let's maintain this tremendous fellowship and keep it growing and flowing.

See you in '99!

Bob Ashcraft

A SPECIAL LETTER FROM DEE HARPER, OUR PAST PRESIDENT.

This letter was to be published in our last issue but fell through the cracks. Better late than never!

For the last 5 years, working for our Association has been a major part of my life. It was a labor of love. and it is my fervent desire that the Association endures and becomes even stronger. To prevent setting what I think might be a dangerous precedent, I have declined to accept the generous gift of "an all-expenses paid trip to Hawaii" for services rendered. I do appreciate the thought behind this gift, and the camaraderie expressed by those involved in this decision. I thank you, one and all. I know the offer came straight from the heart.

In my judgment, it is too easy for an innocent trend to get out of hand and create dissension among the members. It starts with awards of Life Memberships to all Presidents, then elaborate gifts, expense paid trips, then on to banquets honoring various association executives - and on and on. Before long, such things become regular and costly items in the budget. The members would soon question such expenditures, and the battle would be on. I wish to do everything I can to prevent such a sequence of events. Another major veterans' association, with membership in the tens of thousands, is rapidly approaching a court battle for this reason. In the future, I believe our response for outstanding service must be limited to token awards such as the F-86 model that was presented to our Editor, Larry Davis, at the reunion banquet. Let's keep it that way!

Again, "THANKS TO ONE AND ALL!"

DEE HARPER

I thought I'd offer my thoughts on the 11th Reunion in conjunction with AFA 50. My first thoughts are, if you missed THIS one, don't make the mistake of missing AFA 100 in 2047! It will be a blast, just as this one was!

I saw guys I hadn't seen in 45 years from 52F, including the first cadet I met in Greenville. MS.

Dee Harper & his group of volunteers had done their home work (emphasis on WORK!), and everything went as it was supposed to.

The air show was a marvel of coordination. Just imagine moving 200,000 people from town to the base and back, providing for their care and feeding, and running the show from 9-5 with teams from 6 countries. They made it all happen!

We're glad we went. We'd like to do it again. And we can't wait for the next reunion and seeing all the old faces again!

Dean Abbott, LtCol USAF Ret.

Thank you so much for the article about my late husband Garth's part in the formation of the "Geiger Tigers" and the making of the film. I appreciated it very much, and know Garth would have been pleased. He was very proud of the Tigers and the part he played.

I will share the article with other members of Garth's family and his flying buddies.

Grace Reynolds

WHAT IS IT? Well guys, we stumped you on this one. This F-86E-10 with a 'gloved wing' and faired-in canopy, wasn't identified by any of the members. Many people had guestimates as to what it was, but no one knew for sure. So it'll remain a mystery airplane. I'll roll it back out at a later date. Maybe then someone will be able to tell us something about it. And if you think that one was tough, wait'll you see the F-86 with wingtip tanks! *Editor*

LENGTH OF SERVICE MILITARY RETIREE? OVER 65?

Colonel George E. "Bud" Day, an ex-POW and USAF Medal of Honor winner in Vietnam, has filed a lawsuit against the Secretary of Defense alleging that health care promises made to persons who joined before 7 June 1956 have not been kept. The suit seeks return of expenses caused by the loss of promised benefits. It is a class action lawsuit, and you may be included if you meet the qualifications mentioned above. For details, contact "Class Act Group", 32 Beal Parkway SW, Fort Walton Beach FL 32548, 1-800-972-6275. Or e-mail to <lawsuit@emeraldcoast.com>. On the WWW it's <http://www.classact-lawsuit.com>.

FOLDED WINGS

Colonel John V. Back, August 21, 1997
Bernard H. Barton, January 1997
Colonel James H. Johnson, August 22, 1997
Charles W. McGinnis, Jr., July 28, 1997
Patrick L. Robinette, June 3, 1997
Jim C. Schooley, May 11, 1997
M/Gen. Ralph G. Taylor, September 18, 1997

Colonel James K. Johnson, Korea 1953

Colonel James K. Johnson
Born: May 30, 1916, Phoenix, Arizona
Last Flight: August 22, 1997, Las Vegas, Nevada

He was a man of honor, integrity, and greatness, whose spirit was close to all fighter pilots. He walked with legends we can only read about - Doolittle, Goldwater, Eaker - and he became a legend. Wiry and tough, he began his military career on the back of a horse, and ended it with greatness only his friends and acquaintances can know. He was born a Wing Commander and ended as a Wing Commander. And his deeds and accomplishments will live in history because he was history and made history. And he did it with graciousness, understanding, and caring for his fellow man - especially fighter pilots. So here's to you, Jimmie K, and the people who will miss you and remember you. With a glass of red wine lifted high, we toast and salute you, sir, as we throw a nickle on the grass.

Today the journey is ended,
I have worked out the mandates of fate:
naked, alone, undefended,
I knock at the uttermost gate.
Behind is life and its longing,
its happiness, its trials, its trouble, its sorrow;
beyond is the infinite morning
of a day without a tomorrow.
Go back to dust and decay,
body grown weary and old.
You are worthless to me from today--
no longer my soul can you hold.

I lay you down gladly forever
for a life that is better than this.
I go where parting ne'er sever
you into oblivion's abyss.
Lo, the gate swings wide at my knocking,
across endless reachs I see
lost friends with laughter come flocking
to give a glad welcome to me.
Farewell, the maze has been threaded,
this is the ending of strife.
Say not that death should be dreaded--
'tis but the beginning of life.

ICH HABEN EINE A KAMERADEN

-Written by comrades and friends -

Editors note; Colonel James K. Johnson commanded the legendary 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing from 11 November 1952 through 8 August 1953 in the Korean War, He was one of eight pilots to achieve Double Ace status by destroying ten MiG-15 aircraft. During his tenure as Wing Commander, the 4th FIG destroyed 185 MiG-15 aircraft.

North American Aviation Test Pilot George Welch at the controls of the XP-86 in October 1947. (credit - North American Aviation)

SabreJet

XP-86 SWEPT WING DEVELOPMENT

by Larry Davis

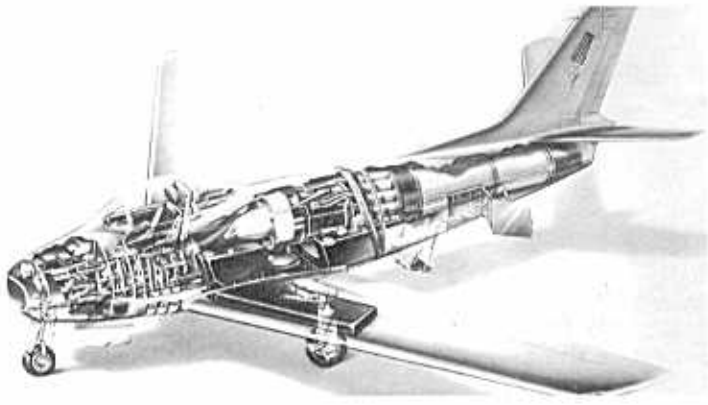
The decision to radically re-design the XP-86 (NA-140) was both easy and difficult for North American officials. Costs incurred on the straight wing jet fighter were absorbed by the company. Some of this would be recovered through the Navy decision to produce the FJ-1 Fury. However, it was easy for North American to make such a drastic move because the NA-140 would never meet the AAF General Operational Requirement (GOR) - a top speed in excess of 600 mph. The thin straight wing simply wouldn't allow that type of speed.

Wing sweep had long been known as one of the answers to lower drag. Drag Coefficient was significantly lower when the wing was swept; i.e. at 0.9 Mach, drag coefficient for a straight wing was 0.05, while a swept wing was 0.01. But the problems associated with wing sweep were as great as the end results. Sweeping the wing did lower the thickness ratio, thus reducing the drag coefficient, resulting in higher speeds. But sweeping the wing just 12 inches created wing tip stall and low speed stability problems that no one had been able to overcome.

In August 1944, Ed Horkey, North American Chief Aerodynamicist, went to NACA at Langley Field to study the effects of a very thin wing operating at high Mach numbers. He was informed that no data existed for such a design. In 1945, Allied forces overran German test facilities, including one conducting research into the effects of wing sweep. The Me-262 jet fighter had a mild (15°) sweep to the leading edge of its wing. It was also discovered that Messerschmitthad been working on a radically swept (35°) version of the Me-262, called the *Pfeilflugel* or 'arrow wing'.

George Schairer of the Boeing Company, went to Germany after the end of the war, with von Karman and Robert Jones (an early NACA proponent of swept wings), to investigate German data on swept wing technology. Schairer was very enthusiastic about wing sweep, proposing that Boeing incorporate it into the new XB-47, and noting that this information should be made available to the US aeronautical industry.

Exploded view of the XP-86 clearly showing the reversed dive brakes and ventral brake door. (credit - North American Aviation)



Larry Green, head of Design Aerodynamics at North American, came up with an answer to the swept wing instability problems. Green had been conducting wind tunnel tests on the Curtis XP-55 Ascender, which indicated severe non-linear instabilities present at high angles of attack over a swept wing, causing an extreme 'pitch up' attitude. Green, Walter Koch (who spoke fluent German), Dale Meyers, and Harrison Storms set up four Recordaks, and began translating the material being funneled to North American by Wright Field. Within the captured material were considerable data concerning the use of wing leading edge movable surfaces, commonly called 'slats' as a possible solution to the instability problems.

The North American Technical Section headed by Ed Horkey, included Harrison Storms as Chief Aerodynamicist, Walt Fellers, Larry Green, Meyers, Bill Wahl, and a host of others. This group finally convinced the powers-that-be that wing sweep would put the XP-86 over the top speed requirement of the G.O.R.. On 18 August 1945, North American received a research and development grant to develop a swept wing XP-86 (RD 1369). Two weeks later a .23 scale model of the swept wing XP-86 was ready for wind tunnel testing. The results were what North American had been looking for, and clearly indicated the drag rise and compressibility had been lowered enough to bring the XP-86 into the 600+ mph range.

In September 1945, the straight wing XP-86 fuselage was mated to a 35° swept wing and tested in North American's low speed wind tunnel. The results were satisfactory and seemed to indicate that the slats were *probably* the answer to the instability problems. On November 1st 1945, General Bill Craigie, head of R&D at Wright Field, gave North American the go ahead for the swept wing XP-86.

Slowly but surely, North American's engineers brought the design to its final shape. But the slat design remained a problem. Finally, an entire Me-262 wing was flown in from Wright Field. North American's engineers disassembled the slats and modified the slat track mechanism to fit the XP-86 wing, using the Me-262 slat lock and control switch. Although not perfect, it was a start and the slat worked. In fact, the first seven aircraft used Me-262 slat locks and tracks.

Both 5 and 6 aspect ratio wings were tested before finally settling on a 5 ratio wing with a 35° sweep. The trailing edge of the wing was extended 4" at the root, thus reducing trailing edge separation which had caused some loss of aileron control. Modifying the trailing edge angle increased the amount of overall sweep to 35.2°.

Originally, the swept wing proposal retained the tail assembly from the straight wing design. However, by the time the XP-86 mockup was built, both the vertical and horizontal tail surfaces were also swept at 35°. Additionally, the horizontal stabilizer was fully

The #1 XP-86 in the work area of the North American's Inglewood plant in early August 1947. The XP-86 rolled out into the California sunshine on 8 August 1947. (credit - Larry Davis)

George Welch in the cockpit of the XP-86 prior to the first flight on 1 October 1947. The flight almost ended disastrously, when the nose gear failed to extend fully. (credit - Larry Davis)

Rear view of the XP-86 with the slats extended. The XP-86 had automatic slats as compared with the mechanical units of the Me-262, cranked out only for landing. (credit - USAFM)

The #1 XP-86 inflight during late October 1947. Note that the ventral brake 'door' has been fastened shut and sealed with black tape. At this time, the aircraft still carried the 'P' for Pursuit designation, (credit - North American Aviation)

During early December 1947, a new aft fuselage was installed, equipped with the final speed brake configuration. The aircraft was initially painted Light Grey overall, which was soon removed as the paint peeled badly at high speeds. (credit - Ken Chilstrom)

trimmable to achieve a better balance between low speed control and high speed requirements. Sweeping the tail surfaces caused the overall fuselage length to increase from 35.5' to 37.54'.

The cockpit sat high on the forward fuselage with a PlexiGlas canopy offering excellent all-round vision (360°) for the pilot, something not matched in a fighter aircraft until the McDonnell/Douglas F-15 Eagle was unveiled some 25 years later. The XP-86 had three speed brakes - a pair of small doors on the rear fuselage sides that opened at the rear; and a larger slab door under the rear fuselage.

The XP-86 had six .50 caliber M3 machine guns in banks of three on either side of the cockpit. Ammunition bays in the bottom of the fuselage held a maximum of 300 rounds per gun, although 267 rounds was the normal load. The gun muzzles were recessed behind individual frangible 'doors' that opened in 1/20th of a second when the trigger was pulled. All radio and radar antennas were enclosed in fibreglass fairings within the design of the aircraft. The engine powering the prototype was the Chevrolet-built, General Electric J35-C-3 rated at 4,000 lbs static thrust. However, production aircraft would be powered by the GE TG-190 (J47) engine offering 5,000 lbs. thrust.

The design of the wing wasn't the only new innovation found on the XP-86. The wing was of a totally new construction and manufacturing process. The conventional 'rib and stringer' wing construction was replaced by a double skin structure with 'hat sections' between the layers that provided room for installation of self-sealing fuel tanks. The wing skins were tapered throughout their length and width, being .250" thick at the wing root, tapering down to .064" at the joint with the outer wing skin, and .032" at the wing tip. So complex were these tapered skins that they required special milling machines, taking 45 minutes to complete a single skin. The fuselage was unique in that it was divided into two sections, joined near the wing trailing edge, providing easy access to the engine and accessories.

On February 28th, 1946, the mockup received AAF approval. In August 1946, basic engineering drawings were finished and metal was cut. So excited was Army Air Force over the prospect of the new swept wing XP-86, and its projected much higher performance, that a contract was awarded on December 20th, 1946, to build 33 production P-86As. No YP-86 service test aircraft were built. On August 8th, 1947, the wait was over. The doors of North American's Inglewood factory opened to reveal the first swept wing production aircraft in the world - XP-86 #1, serial 45-59597.

During the next month, taxi and brake tests were conducted at Mines Field, adjoining the North American factory. On September 11th 1947, the XP-86 was disassembled and trucked to Muroc Dry Lake Army Air Base, now known as Edwards AFB. The XP-86 was re-assembled, and all systems retested and adjusted. On the morning of October 1st 1947, George Welch, Engineering Test Pilot for North American, taxied the XP-86 to the edge of the runway at Muroc, released the brakes and pushed the throttle forward. Three thousand feet down the runway, the XP-86 lifted smoothly off the dry lake bed for the first time. Everything went smoothly, and 30 minutes later Welch made a final circuit, pulled the lever to lower the landing gear, and began his landing approach.

Ed Horkey recalls; "Ed Virgin, Head of Engineering Flight Test, Jim Sullivan, and I were clustered around the radio listening to George's excited chatter about the first flight. The first flight went very smoothly, with each item on the First Flight Card being checked off. George could tell from the speeds he was obtaining, versus the power settings, that he was riding something pretty fast. After about a 30 minute flight, it was time to land and George lowered the flaps and gear."

"The main gear lights were in the green, but the nose wheel light didn't show the gear down and locked. We had him make a pass. We could clearly see the nose gear was down about 45°. George tried everything he and we, could think of. Nothing worked. Decision time was rapidly coming upon us. Ed Virgin and I were immediately unamimous in letting George make the decision on whether to jump or bring the airplane in. The company would not influence a decision to save the airplane if it meant jeopardizing George's life."

"George radioed that he would stay with the airplane and try to bring her home. But he was going to land on the dry lake bed, not on one of the runways. He made a smooth, very nose high approach. Touching down on the lake bed, George let the airplane just coast along with no brake application. As the airplane slowed and the nose started irretrievably over, the nose gear swung forward and locked into place, with George quietly exclaiming "Lucky! Lucky!""

"We found out later that someone in landing gear hydraulics wasn't impressed with the nose gear load data furnished by the wind tunnel crew. They installed a cylinder/piston size on the nose gear retraction system that was too small - not the one called for. Normally, nose wheels rotated down to the rear, so that air loads would force the gear down even if the hydraulics failed. However, the XP-86 nose gear rotated down to the front, *against* the air stream! The immediate fix on the XP-86 was to use two of the original cylinder/pistons, then replace them later with the correct one."

Other than the nose gear problem, Welch had only one complaint. The J35 didn't have enough power! With only 4,000 lbs. of thrust, the XP-86 had a rate of climb of only 4,000 ft/min. But since the J35 would not power the production airplanes, no one got too excited. Production P-86As would have J47 power with 5,000 lbs thrust available. Especially in light of what happened next while still using J35 power.

On October 14th 1947, Chuck Yeager took the rocket-powered Bell XS-1 beyond the magic number of Mach 1.0 - the first piloted vehicle to do so. But George Welch may have beaten that date in history during some of the routine tests with the XP-86.

Ed Horkey: "Had George gone Mach 1.0 before October 14th 1947? It's an intriguing question. Recently discovered data in the North American archives indicates that possibility. During the Phase One Flight Tests, George had been telling me that he was getting oscillation of the air speed and altimeter readings, indicating Mach 1.0 on the pitot head. (During flight close to Mach 1.0, shock waves will affect both the airspeed and altimeter readings.) But at that time, North American had no way of calibrating airspeed indicators at that speed."

"NACA had a flight test operation at Muroc. They put a tracking theodolite (like a surveyers transit) together with a large radar receiver which measured speeds very accurately at any altitude. It was the same system that had tracked Yeager in the XS-1. We heard about it and talked Walt Williams, NACA Director, into tracking George in the XP-86. They asked Welch to dive the XP-86 in a certain pattern. Lo and behold, George hit a reading of Mach 1.02! The date was October 19th 1947 - five days after Yeager's flight in the XS-1. The tests were flown again on the 21st with the same results. But George had been performing some of those very same flight patterns before October 14th 1947!"

"Just like the people involved in the XS-1 program, everyone involved in the XP-86 flight test program was immediately sworn to secrecy. In fact, Stuart Symington, the first Secretary of the new independent United States Air Force, called Dutch Kindelberger, and told him not to let anything out concerning the XP-86 going over Mach 0.935. It would remain a secret for many years!"

The North American Aviation Flight Test Crews for the XP-86 and XB-45 pose with the #1 XP-86 at Muroc Army Air base in the Fall of 1947. (credit - North American Aviation)

Phase II Flight tests flown by Air Force pilots, began in December 1947. Maj. Ken Chilstrom was the Phase II pilot - "In late November 1947, North American called Col. Al Boyd, Chief of Air Force Flight Test, reccommending delay of the start of Phase II flight tests because of heavy rains at Muroc, that flooded the dry lake bed. Colonel Boyd suggested I visit Muroc and inspect the conditions to determine if I could operate from the runway at North Base. After a few days at North Base evaluating the lake bed, the runway, and the XP-86, I called Colonel Boyd and reccommended we proceed."

"Colonel Boyd notified North American that the Air Force would begin flying the Phase II tests of the XP-86 *immediately*. North American expressed concern because of the extremely short runway conditions. However, the Air Force prevailed and I made my first take off on December 2nd 1947. This flight was a get acquainted flight, and since there were no squawks, I asked that the XP-86 be refueled for a second flight that day! This allowed for performance checks and speed points at intermediate altitudes."

"I was very impressed with the XP-86's speed improvement over the Republic XP-84 with the same engine, but having a straight wing. The maximum speed for the XP-84 was 615 mph, while the XP-86 maximum speed was in excess of 650 mph! Our remaining Phase II flights were accomplished in 11 flights totaling 10 hours and 17 minutes - all in six days! The XP-86s performance envelope was investigated up to Mach 0.9, and altitudes near 45,000 feet. My conclusion to the Phase II tests, and supported by our data, was that the Air Force now had the very best jet fighter developed to this date, anywhere in the world."

In early 1948, XP-86 prototypes #2 (45-59598) and #3 (45-59599) were finished. They were different from the #1 airplane, as well as from each other. Both #1 and #2 had different fuel gauges, a stall warning system built into the control stick, a by-pass for emergency operation of the hydraulic boost system, and hydraulically- actuated slat locks. The #1 bird was the only one with an on-board fire extinguisher. The #3 was the only one with automatic slats that opened at 135 mph, and full armament.

The #1 airplane was the only one with the rear-opening fuselage speed brakes, and a ventral brake under the fuselage. A new aft section had been constructed for the #3 prototype, with production-style speed brakes installed. These brakes had hinges at the front, and opening out and down. The ventral brake was eliminated. Air Force had approved the new brake design, but the new aft section would not be finished until late 1947. It was installed on the #1 prototype in late January following test flight #77. The other two prototypes were completed with production-style speed brakes.

North American Aviation's Engineering Test Pilot, George "Wheaties" Welch in front of XP-86 #3 in 1948. (credit - North American Aviation)

George Welch taxiis the #2 prototype past a row of P-82Bs at Mines Field, home of North American Aviation, now Los Angeles International Airport. Note one-piece nose gear door, (credit - North American Aviation)

The #3 XP-86 with a full load of 5" HVAR rockets on the ramp at Muroc AAB in 1948. The #3 XP-86 was the only prototype with full armament. (credit - USAFM)

The #1 XP-86 with one of the early drop tank configurations that was faired into the underside of the wing**. (credit - USAFM)

George Welch at the controls of the #2 XP-86 prototype during the Spring of 1948. The XPs were retired from service in 1953. (credit - USAF)

The spring of 1948 saw many significant events take place in the early P-86 development. In March, the first P-86A, 47-605, come off the assembly line. In May the rest of the world was informed that George Welch had exceeded Mach 1.0 in the XP-86, the first *airplane* to do so (airplane being defined as a vehicle that takes off from the ground, flys, then returns and lands - under its own power). But the date was April 26th 1948, and George Welch wasn't the pilot.

Ed Horkey - "A visiting British pilot came over and checked out in the XP-86. He was told about the phenomenon he might encounter (i.e. breaking the sonic barrier), and the secrecy restrictions. Unfortunately, he had an open radio channel and all the nearby towers got an earful when he went through Mach 1.0. The facts soon became common knowledge throughout the aviation industry. I suppose the media never brought it to the public's attention, as it would tarnish the otherwise exotic story of Yeager and the XS-1. The June 14th 1948 issue of Aviation Week announced to the world that the XP-86 had gone supersonic."

It has been said that the April 26th flight took place after the XP-86 had been re-engined with the General Electric J47 engine. But that didn't take place until later in the XP-86 test program. On May 20th, the first flight of a production P-86A took place. On May 29th, Air Force officials placed a verbal order for an additional 333 P-86As, bringing the total production of the P-86As to 554 airplanes.

On September 16th 1947, Congress made the Air Force a separate branch of service from the Army. In June 1948, the new US Air Force re-designated all Pursuit aircraft to Fighter aircraft, changing the prefix from P to F. Thus all XP and P-86A aircraft became XF and F-86A. The three prototypes continued to serve in various test and evaluation programs into the 1950s, unofficially re-designated YP-86 following J47 installation. The #1 airplane crashed and was destroyed in September 1952, while #2 and #3 were retired from service in April 1953 and finally scrapped.

** (The full story of the development of the F-86 combat drop tank will appear in a future issue of SabreJet Classics.)

Go-Around - In SabreJet Classics, vol. 5-1, we had a photo on page 13 of a group of pilots walking down the ramp at North American Aviation, ready to deliver a group of F-86Ls to their unit, the 332nd FIS. Member John C. Brown not only IDd the pilots in the photo (he was one of them), but also corrected us on the event. The photo was indeed at North American, but they weren't delivering F-86Ls. They were delivering the last of the F-86Ds. He also sent another photo of the group prior to departure for McGuire AFB. Pointing is LtCol. Robert 'Pappy' Myers between two North American representatives. Behind 'Pappy' Myers are (l-r) Lt. Mason Anderson, Lt. John Clark, Lt. Thomas Dobbs, Lt. Jack Gresham, and Lt. John Brown. The date was 30 Sept 1955. THANKS JOHN! (credit - John Brown)

Two 16th FIS pilots race to their waiting F-86Ds during an alert in 1955. Alert aircraft were always 'cocked and ready' for the SCRAMBLE!! call to intercept incoming bogies coming from Red China. (credit - USAF)

The First Hot Intercept

by E. Riggs 'Monty' Monfort

The night was no different than any other on the alert pad at Naha in early 1955. The 25th FIS was standing down and my 16th FIS had the duty. The mission of the 51st Fighter Wing was to protect our nuclear strike force based at Kadena, and Okinawa in general. The 51st FIW had been moved from Korea where it had served with great distinction as a day fighter unit, and given the role of all weather interceptors. That means we took all the intercepts on incoming unknown aircraft during any weather conditions and at night, weather or not! It was now "A" flight's turn on alert. We were particularly proud of the "A Flight" patch, an F-86D coming through a Japanese Shinto Torii. The top of the Torii was emblazoned with Japanese characters for D-O-T-F-R. It was all innocent enough but we knew the letters stood for Defenders Of The F—ing Rock.

At every opportunity we would prod the day guys when we were on a day training mission in bright sunshine. While running a practice mission out west of the Rock, we would call the GCI center to announce we had seen a cloud and did the day fighter unit want us to take over the alert? I think they got a little tired of our joking but we were faster than they were so they never caught us. At night we always had the alert. Few people realized that the Air Force mission remained hot in those days whether there was a declared war or not.

We had checked our birds with everything ready for the fastest scramble in the West. The radio was tuned to Naha's Jig Nan on 370 Kc. It wasn't lost on us that we were flying an all weather mission with no high frequency navigation available. We depended primarily on vectors from Mother and our own radar. Navigation was critical as after a few minutes into a 'Gate' climb we didn't have enough fuel to go anywhere except back to Jig Nan. On particularly stormy nights the low freq equipment was sometimes useless and we knew that GCA couldn't pick our small birds out of a rainstorm for a precision approach. A lot of our success was due to training, practice and skill. But more than once just old fashioned dumb luck resulted in a safe recovery.

Each piece of equipment and each strap was placed in a precise location for rapid access. It was a point of great pride that once we hit the cockpit and the throttle had been moved to 100% for an automatic start, we could be strapped in and hooked up before the engine hit 100%. We had only a finite amount of time as the automatic control lit the fires then slowly accelerated to 100%. By the time we finished buckling our chute and harness, had the safety pins, APU, and chocks pulled, the engine reached 100%. More than one rookie left the pad with a shoulder

1st Lt 'Monty' Monfort, Naha AB, Okinawa 1955. (credit - 'Monty' Monfort)

An 'alert' Monty Monfort waits for the klaxon to sound at Naha in 1955. Note the hat with the 'A Flight' torii symbol. (credit - Monty Monfort)

16th FIS pilots pose for the camera at Naha AB in 1955. Monty Monfort is in the middle of the first row with the A-Flight patch on his flight jacket. (credit - Monty Monfort)

harness loose or something else hooked where it shouldn't be. It took a time or two to settle in to the routine of a hot scramble regardless of how many times you practiced.

As we reached the runway we would light the burner, lock the brakes. and wait for the AB to stabilize. The tailpipe temp would give a little bounce as it hit 100% then go a little wild as the AB lit. The crew chief would pray the electronics would work and we didn't have an overtemp. A hot scramble was one of the few times we ever trusted the automatic system because the salt air environment of Naha was not conducive to reliability of any electrical devices including our radar and radios.

The alert shack was a small square hut standing on some concrete blocks and literally strapped to the ground by heavy steel cable. That made it typhoon proof, which I can vouch for. Two typhoons came through during my tour and the shack always survived. Several nights, while being the back up element, I remember sleeping through the primary element scramble even when they went into afterburner a few hundred feet from the shack. The crew chief had to wake me up to take over primary alert after the primary element had been airborne ten minutes. I am still amazed at that phenomenon and how we tuned out anything that interfered with good sack time. The aircraft were outside, unprotected from the elements where they remained, rain or moonshine. Diving into a cockpit in a rainstorm wasn't one of my favorite activities.

Hot scrambles were more than a rush of adrenalin, they made you feel like you were one with the finest pieice of equipment known to man and the two of you were in perfect harmony. Until this time all my scrambles ended before any airborne contact was made and they were not at the level of threat of tonight's bogey. The Chinese would regularly send out feelers to see if we were awake and just as soon as they detected our response they'd turn for home. Tonight was different.

A lone bogey had been picked up by our ground radar, coming from the general direction of the Chinese mainland. It was night, with moderate to heavy weather. Two of us had a smooth and uneventful scramble from the pad. GCI asked us to go Gate and gave us the numbers as we broke ground, then continued to vector us into position where we could split. One of us would stand off in position to make a firing pass, while the other would go in for an identification pass. The rules of engagement said that they had to fire first. That would mean that the ID pass aircraft would likely get a snootful which would be the signal for your buddy to make a 90° beam intercept with his 24 rockets.

I was vectored around to approach the bogey from the rear and work my bird down to a speed that would give me a closure rate to synchronize with the bogey. In the final phase of the ID pass our speeds would match perfectly, joining in what could be a deadly formation. I began closure using my own radar. This is what we trained for but now it was for real. A blind joinup and ID at night while 'Popeye' in heavy weather!

The speed and altitude suggested a propeller aircraft or perhaps one of their jets flying low and slow to simulate an airliner? As I got close the bogey

"VULGAR VIRGIN", the F-86D-45 flown by Lt Monty Monfort in the 16th FIS. Checkerboard tail was a carryover from the 51st FIG Korean War tour. (credit - Monty Monfort)

A 16th FIS F-86D over Taiwan in 1955. The 51st FIW sent detachments of F-86Ds to Taiwan during the Cold War crisis' of 1955 and 56. (credit - E.P Wallaker)

rapidly changed altitude about 1000 feet. I advised control and my buddy that the bogey had taken evasive action. They should now be thinking about a firing pass. It would take only one airplane and one bomb to neutralize Okinawa and we were well aware of that. On the second try he changed altitude again. We were now becoming convinced we had a bandit trying to sneak through our interceptor screen.

I made the decision to try one more ID. The bogey had now given every indication of being a bad guy except he hadn't fired. Our backup 16th fighters were getting ready to scramble by now. My buddy had armed his rockets and was beginning the beam intercept that we practiced almost every day and night. He would be calling "Judy" any second. I knew I had very little time before the rings on his E-4 fire control would begin to collapse into the final stages of firing.

I was not satisfied and wanted to actually see this guy in the worst way. Why hadn't he fired on me? I insisted on one more pass and as if a higher authority willed it, we broke into a momentary clear patch. I was able to see the paint of Japan Airlines and actually get part of a number off the DC-4. He appeared to be a Friendly. I just about crushed the mike button as I called "Skip It" to abort the firing pass. The airplane was off course and schedule big time and was not reporting to the proper ground controllers.

I remember feeling cool and comfortable throughout the intercept. Now I could feel the sweat under my helmet. I realized how close we had come to killing unsuspecting civilians through no fault of theirs but because of the incompetence of one pilot who I hope was grounded. We stayed as close to the airliner as safety would permit in those weather conditions for several minutes until the identity could be verified. Then we got a steer for a somewhat shaken return to Jig Nan and a penetration to Home Plate.

I had been thoroughly trained and prepared to use this weapon of destruction but I'm glad the rules of engagement protected us from a dreadful accident. I also thank whoever gave me the instinct to make that one last pass after we were all but convinced we had a bandit.

AROUND THE WORLD IN (THE) F-86 DAYS

Philippine Air Force F-86F-25s assigned to the 7th Fighter Squadron, line the ramp at Edwin Andrews AB (Zamboanga) in the 1960s. The Philippine Air Force received 40 ex-USAF F-86Fs in 1957, equipping 4 squadrons. The Sabres were retired in 1979. (credit - B. Anido via David Menard)

The last active duty F-86F, serial 52-5298, with our author at the controls in 1968. Sadly, the author reports that "Old 298" went to the scrapyard shortly after this photo was taken. (credit - James Reed)

THE LAST ACTIVE DUTY SABRE

by JAMES L. REED

When I graduated from flying school at Webb AFB, Texas, in November 1954, I swapped an F-86D assignment at Perrin AFB, TX, for an F-86F assignment in Europe. I definitely wanted to fly day fighters, not all-weather interceptors. As it turned out, there was a SNAFU while the F-86F wing was being ferried to France *(Ed: Look for this story in a future issue of SJC)* , and I got stuck in C-119s for three years. Actually, it turned out better than I thought because we did some great flying and saw lots of Europe.

But I felt cheated because I had missed out on flying the F-86 Sabre. I thought.

In 1966, I was assigned to McClellan AFB, California, with the Air Force Technical Applications Center. It was a good job, but to my disappointment, a non-flying billet. Never the less, I found out that the last flying F-86F on active duty with the Air Force, F-86F #0-25298, was there at McClellan as an "E" coded airplane. This was a special coding because McClellan had responsibility for supporting all F-86s used by the Military Assistance Program (MAP) foreign countries. 'OLD 298' was used to evaluate new modifications and procedures for the MAP Sabres. The maintenance guys treated her as their 'baby', taking real good care of her as evidenced by the beautiful red, white, and blue accents painted on her.

The airplane was assigned to the Flight Test Section of the Sacremento Air Material Area (SMAMA), and I found out that it was rarely flown. I cajoled and pleaded with them for a checkout, and from then on I flew the airplane just about anytime I wanted to, using it to go on all my TDYs instead of by commercial means. I found out that the great maintenance care went well beyond the paint job. She flew like a dream, What a deal!

On one of my trips, I landed at Indian Springs AFB, Nevada. An old master sergeant in charge of Transient Maintenance showed up and wouldn't let any of the younger troops touch the Sabre. We walked around it together, and with tears in his eyes, he'd feel around in the wheel wells for familiar parts. He had crewed Sabres in Korea.

It was a wonderful and exciting time for me, and I wanted to share a photo of 'OLD 298' with my fellow Sabre pilots. That's me in the cockpit. It was taken from a T-39 Sabreliner in 1968, over the Sacremento Valley just north of McClellan. It may be the last photo of the last active duty USAF F-86F. I wish this story had a happier ending, but 'OLD 298' ended up in the boneyard.

Editor; Does anyone know when the last F-86H was phased out of service? Let's hear from you guys on this one.

from Dee Harper
The "F-86 Sabre Pilots Association Book", being published by Turner Publishers Inc., has been forwarded to the printer. On behalf of our members, I want to thank John Lowery for being the point man on this project. John has accomplished all the editing and patched the stories together to insure an outstanding product. Thank You John!

LtCol Syd Burroughs, RCAF May 1994

LtCOL Syd Burroughs, AFC, CD, (RCAF, Retired)

You say, "What's a Canadian doing in *SabreJet Classics*?" Well, read on, and you'll meet a truly unique Sabre jock, a brother-in-arms from our northern neighbor.

Syd joined the Royal Candian Air Force in November 1950, at the age of 20. He progressed through pilot training flying Harvards (T-6s) and Vampire jets. From Vampires, he moved directly into Sabres with 434 Squadron at Uplands, Ontario. To quote from his check-out sheet in the Sabre: "You reported in, talked to the boss, wrote a brief exam, studied the engineering orders, then went out to fly the Sabre! Someone else had to start it (that was kind of tricky), but you just got in and flew it, and that was that." Sound familiar?

Although he didn't make the Korean War, Syd's accounts of flying the Sabre with the RCAF in Europe, give one a definite feel for combat. In one of his stories published in "Take Off" (an excellent British publication similar to "*SabreJet Classics*" in many ways), he describes approaching a Dutch F-84F head-on, and both of them at an altitude of 20 (yes, 20!) feet during a simulated attack on an airfield. Of course, it was no sweat, says Syd, since he went under the '84!!

What sets Syd apart from just about anyone else who flew the Sabre, occurred during another low level mission over Germany. At the time, he was a member of the RCAF Air Division's aerobatic team, although not flying as a team member. Syd was flight commander of a four ship formation of Sabre Mk. 5s flying from Zweibrucken to Baden-Sollingen, at 500 feet above the ground and at 400 knots.

With no prior warning, Syd's Sabre had a nasty run-in with a bird, which took out his canopy and caused him to give thought to immediate ejection. He was covered with blood, and thought himself totally blind. But he was able to turn his head into the windstream just enough to deflect the blood, and enable him to see with his right eye. Since the bird had taken out his radio compass along with the canopy, Syd followed a wingman down for a safe landing.

How bad was it? Syd says that when he figured out how to hold his head so as to see with his right eye, he noticed some meat on the gunsight. But feathers in the cockpit reassured him the meat was not his own! Syd lost his left eye in the incident (a piece of the canopy did irreparable damage), but later returned to flying status, becoming the RCAF's first one-eyed pilot! He flew the CF-18 Hornet in 1994 at age 64, just for fun.

Today, Syd Burroughs lives in Comox, British Columbia. He is the founder in the Sabre Pilots Association of the Air Division Squadrons - the SPAADS - and remains active today. Their membership exceeds 1,000, and they had over 700 people attend their reunion in 1996 in Calgary. Sounds like our F-86 Sabre Pilots Association has a lot in common with these troops. Currently, Syd is the National Director of the Air Force Association of Canada. Here's a *THUMBS UP* to you, Syd, and we hope you'll send us a story or two for publication in *SabreJet Classics*.

(Ed. -Dee Harper was fortunate to spend about 30 minutes with Syd during our 1995 Reunion. He reports that Syd is a character to be remembered, and a delightful personality. Syd and his wife, Bec, registered for our 97 reunion. Unfortunately, Dee did not meet him this year.)

F/Lt Syd Burroughs, RCAF, stands by a Canadair Sabre Mk. 5 in December 1952.

LtCol Syd Burroughs about to board an RCAF CF-18 Hornet in 1994.

(all photos credit - Syd Burroughs)

RCAF DIDJA KNOWS

We learned these interesting facts from Brig. Gen. Paul A. Hayes, RCAF (Retired)

During the Korean War, Canada manufactured and supplied 60 Sabres (F-86E-6) to the USAF. These were part of the 1,815 Sabres built by Canadair Ltd. between August 1950 and 9 October 1958, serving with the air forces of a number of nations around the world.

Twenty-two RCAF pilots flew a total of 1.036 missions with USAF units in Korea. They scored 9 kills, 2 Probables, and 10 Damaged. Ten pilots were awarded the Air Medal, six the USAF Distinguished Flying Cross, and one received the RCAF Distinguished Flying Cross.

The first RCAF pilot serving on exchange duty with the USAF, was Flt. Lt. Omer Levesque, who was assigned to 334th FIS, 4th FIG. Levesque is credited with 1 kill. The top Canadian was Flt. Lt. Ernie Glover, who also flew with the 334th FIS at Kimpo. Ernie recorded 3 Destroyed and 3 Damaged in 50 missions in 1952.

AROUND THE WORLD IN (THE) F-86 DAYS

AF Sabres defended both North America and NATO countries between 1951 and 1964. (l) A CL-13 Sabre Mk. 2 from No. 416 Sq during Exercise CORONET on 24 July 1953. (r)CL-13B Sabre Mk. 6s of No. 441 Sq at Marville in 1962.
(credit - DND and Brian Baker)

"Animal" - T/Sgt Motronga, "Oink" - Capt J.R. Donovan, and "617", Maryland ANG 1955. (credit - Les Waltman)

ANIMAL, OINK AND 617

by Les Waltman

Animal, Oink and 617, Beast and Machine,
A pair of duds and a hanger queen!

This fabled trio of the ANG,
Was often the source of much raillery.

You can search far and wide, but you'll never see
Anything to equal this trio of mediocrity.

Dark and droll, with a shoulder droop,
Described the animal of this group,

And 617 was a noble bird
Whose engine roar was seldom heard.

While midst the trash and beer can glitter
Was fearless Oink, among the litter.

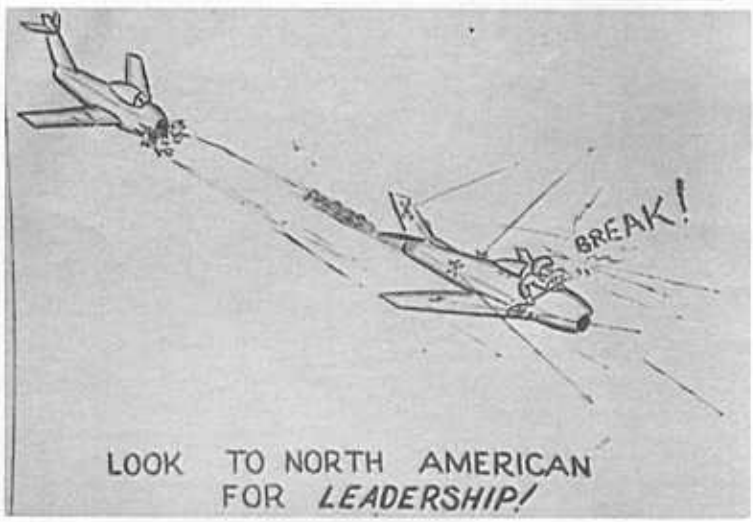
But who am I to cast aspersions
Upon the Gods and their diversions,

For this was a union made in Heaven;
Animal, Oink and 617.

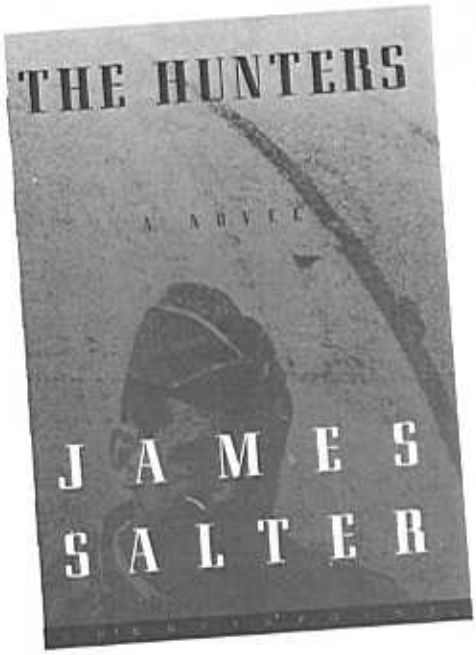
<u>WANTED</u> - Information and/or photos of RF-86A ASHTRAY and RF-86F HAYMAKER aircraft operating with the 15th TRS at Kimpo during the Korean War. For an article in SabreJet Classics. Contact Larry Davis, Editor, *SabreJet Classics*, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709, (330)493-4122

Association member Jim Walker recently purchased an F-86E with history. The airplane is F-86E #50-600, and was assigned to the 51st FIG at Suwon during the Korean War. The name on the airplane at that time was "JOYOUS JOYCE". At some point the airplane was also assigned to the 336th FIS in the 4th FIG at Kimpo. Jim wants to restore the airplane, possibly as a flying example, and wants it to carry the correct markings. He wants to hear from anyone in the Association that ever flew the airplane or has photos of it in Korea. Contact Jim Walker @ (602) 945-6207.

Go Around - vol 5-2 "11th Reunion Report" should have included the following: "We had 26 General Officers, including three 3 Stars, sign up with us and attended the 11th Reunion. This has to be some kind of record!"



THE HUNTERS

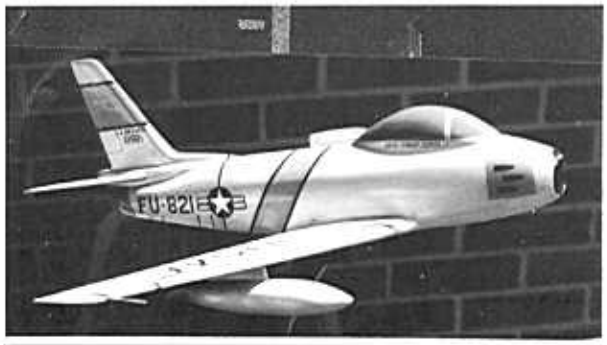


by James Salter
248 pages, $22.00
Published by Counterpoint Books

Counterpoint Books has re-issued a revised edition of "The Hunters", a novel about air combat in the Korean War. Originally published in 1956, author James Salter takes the reader back to those incredible years in frigid Korea with vivid imagery, both in the air and on the ground. The story deals with the tour of one pilot, and his battles with both his commanders and flying mates, as well as with the MiGs. Those of you that have read the original will note only one change. Inexplicably, author Salter has changed the main characters name from Cleve Saville to Cleve Connell. Those of you that have only seen the movie (loosely based on the book) will be amazed that the book and the movie share the same name. I enjoyed the book when I read it in high school in 1956, and again when I re-discovered it in 1976, and still again this past summer. A priceless, fictional remembrance of Korea and the men that served there. HIGHLY RECCOMMENDED!

Available from Counterpoint Books, PO Box 65793, Washington, DC 20035-5793, ph.: (202) 887-0363.

(still) WANTED - Information and/or photos of ROBERT H. MOORE, 9th ace of the Korean War. Bob Moore flew with both the 4th and 51st FIWs in Korea. CONTACT LARRY DAVIS, EDITOR, *SABREJET CLASSICS*, 4713 CLEVELAND AVE. NW, CANTON,OH44709(330)493-4122



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A MiG-15 To Freedom
by No Kum-Sok

The story of the MiG pilot that defected to Kimpo on 21 Sept. 1953. 254 pp. w/photos. Hard cover; $31.50 from McFarland Publishing, (800) 253-2187
(to be reviewed next issue-Editor)

WANTED - INFORMATION AND PHOTOS OF USAFE F-86 AIRCRAFT AND CREWS. CONTACT DAVID MENARD, ASC. EDITOR, SABREJET CLASSICS, 5224 LONGFORD RD, DAYTON,OH45424(513)236-8712

Those wonderful men and their flying machines. These are the guys that put on the F-86/MiG show at the Air Force 50 Celebration at Nellis AFB in April 1997. (from left) Dave Graben, Ft. Worth, Texas, Michael Keenum, Chicago, Illinois; Ron Iberg, Austin, Texas; Jack Rosamond, Golden, Colorado; and the MiG driver (Boo! Hiss!) Terry Klingele of St. Louis, Missouri. Sadly, 'Smilin' Jack' Rosamond made his last F-86 flight on 31 May 1997. (credit - Terry Klingele via Ron Iberg)

ATTENTION MEMBERS! It is essential that you keep us informed when your address changes. We make about six mailings each year to all members. If your address is invalid and cannot be forwarded, the Postal Service notifies us, but we then have no recourse but to remove you from the mailing list. No more *SABREJET CLASSICS* and no more reunion notices! Please help.

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