“War Stories”
by Russ Caauwe





Russ Caauwe wrote his "War Stories" as follows for his kids.

Subject: Ferrying F94 to Oakland California

Subject: "War Story" # 1

Our squadron was slated to get brand new F89D's soon, so we started ferrying our old weather worn F94's out to Oakland California to be reconditioned and given to Air National Guard squadrons.

The one I was given was flown from Keflavik by Cpt Art Hall. He said the windshield crack had begun right after takeoff from Keflavik. Also he said the starting fuel control was not shutting off automatically during the start sequence. Also he said the hydraulics were very weak which caused the landing gear to extend when you operated the dive brakes. Great.

It was snowing on the morning of departure. We were a flight of two. Sam Decarlo from the other squadron was pilot of the other F94. In Iceland we always did two ship formation take-offs. Not knowing it wasn't allowed at Presque Isle I took off glued to Sam's wing. The controller in the tower was startled to see us go that way. The good thing about it was I was already joined up on his wing when we entered the overcast.

I think our first stop was in Ohio, then on to Chanute Field Illinois, where my brother, Tom, was attending Air Force Radio school. He came out to look at our planes. I would like to have given him a ride but Sam said we needed to press on. We then flew to Lincoln and stayed overnight. My folks cane down and pulled in just as we were landing. We stayed overnight.

The following morning we flew to Albuquerque. Again we stayed there overnight (don't remember why). I told the fuel guy not to fill the tip tanks because the main, long runway was out for construction and we were to use the short one in the morning. I guess he forgot, and filled both tip tanks. We made a formation take-off with me as #2 again. I ran out of runway before my plane was ready to fly….big cloud of dust and the tower is calling us to determine If I had crashed. Fortunately I had not because the terrain sloped downward off the end of that runway which allowed me to gain flying speed. Whew!

From ABQ, our next stop was Williams AFB in Mesa Arizona. After refueling there we took off for Oxnard California. Again I was flying wingman. Right after takeoff I noticed I was pulling off power to keep from overrunning Sam. I gave him a call asked "what's up"? He said he had a flameout, but got it running again. We circled back and landed at Williams again. The mechanics could find nothing wrong, so with our fingers crossed, we took off again for Oxnard.

I can still remember how sweet the air smelled from all the Orange groves there. We refueled and flew up the coast to Oakland with a short diversion over (not under) the Golden Gate Bridge. At Oakland I put a big Red X on the form 1, writing up all the things that were not working. At every descent from altitude when I popped the dive brakes, the landing gear fell down giving me a "bucking bronco" ride until I could get it slowed down. At each departure I got a "hot start" because of the staring fuel control problem. The crack on the windshield had progressed all the way to the other side.

I was lucky to make it all the way to Oakland. Several of our squadron's F94's didn't. Some wound up in small airports, some in farm fields, or on a highway. It was fortunate no one was injured in all of these incidents. Cpt Graff dead-sticked his T33 into a small county airport in the mouth of the St Lawrence river on his way from Keflavik to Presque Isle. He refueled it with tractor fuel and made a successful battery start!

Dad

Subject: "War Story" #2

Since you want these written down, I guess I'll try to do that. These are just for family consumption. :)

After ferrying our F94's to Oakland California, we started ferrying our brand new F89's from the Northrup facility at Palmdale California. Amazingly we were given airline tickets to Los Angeles where we spent the weekend. Northrup (manufacturer of the F89) provided us with some free tickets to some of the TV shows. I remember attending the Red Skelton show, and saw another "act" which was impromptu in the hotel bar! It was Jonathan Winters. It was all ad lib and he had us all laughing so hard.

After our fun week-end, we took the Northrop shuttle (a C-47) up to Palmdale to pick up the new planes. Mine had a grand total of 2 hours: a test flight. I was impressed. It even smelled new! Our squadron at Presque Isle had been the 82nd Fighter Interceptor Sq. Just before we went out to get these planes, they re-designated our squadron the 76th FIS which during WWII had been one of the Flying Tigers squadrons. So…the AF Officer got the base photographer to take our picture with our "tiger" helmet design. The article read Flying Tigers fly again". While at Palmdale I stopped by to say hello to Delbert Kennedy's widow. She was working there in Operations. Delbert was my cousin. He had been a Marine in the South Pacific and saw a lot of action. He was severely wounded when a Japanese tossed a grenade in a foxhole he and some others were sleeping. He is the only one who survived. After a long recovery he made his home in California with his wife, Doris.

I think our first stop out of there was at Tucson. We took off about sundown and climbed into rather stormy weather. As usual, I was flying wing on the other F89. Jim Brown was flying the other plane. I was working pretty hard to hang in there because he had his lights on bright and flashing instead of dim and steady. Also he kept changing radio frequencies which was a challenge for me to do as the radio selector knob was on my right and behind me. I could only group for it in the dark counting clicks as I rotated it all the while flying formation with my left hand.

We landed finally at Del Rio Texas which is where the other Jim's family lived. Dinner that night was venison. Unfortunately I was the victim of some very very hot sauce that I put on the venison. A big drink of water was a mistake because it just made the burn go all the way down my throat!

The next day we had intended to fly up to Sioux City, but on the way up, the oil pressure gauge showed zero. I shut that engine down and we decided to land at Lincoln. Huge

mistake! Lincoln by then had become a full blown SAC base. They said it would be 3 months before they could look at it. I said "no thanks". I fired it back up and we flew over to Sioux City. The other pilot flew on back to Presque Isle, while I got to spend the night visiting my parents in Norfolk. The following morning the mechanics at Sioux City had confirmed it was just a faulty gauge. The return flight to Presque Isle was uneventful.

This new F89 had a big soft beautiful red seat cushion. Unfortunately upon arrival at Presque Isle, it was replaced by a survival kit which was hard as rocks. The cushion I'm sure wound up in some mechanics truck. Oh well, in a survival situation I guess I would prefer to have the survival pack than the red cushion!

Dad

Subject: War Story #3

In September of 1950, the Korean "police action" was in full swing, and along with that there was a draft, which if you were called meant you were going to have a career in the US Army. I had completed one year at Norfolk Jr. College, looking forward to the second year so I would be eligible to apply for Aviation Cadet training in the US Air Force.

I was working that summer at French's Camera Shop. One day, a good friend, Wally Reed paid me a visit at work. He said that four or five of our friends had been checking at the Draft Board to see when they might be drafted. He said most would be drafted soon, so they thought we should all enlist together in the Air Force. I double checked with the Draft Board and they said I would be drafted by Christmas. So we all visited our local Air Force recruiter. However, before we left for training all of them had changed their minds. All except Dick Corkle and me. Wally opted to join the Nebraska National Guard.

On the 15th of September Dick and I boarded a bus to Fort Crook in Omaha for induction into the Air Force as Enlisted men. The next day found us on a train going to Lackland AFB in San Antonio Texas for Boot Camp. It was scheduled to be 13 weeks long, but since there were so many inductees like ourselves, the camp was overcrowded. For the first couple weeks we were in tents. Then we finally were moved in to barracks.

We were rapidly processed, getting our GI clothing, shoes, uniforms, etc. We also took a bunch of evaluation tests, and then met with an advisor. We were to indicate our first, second and third choices for our career path and assignment. The advisor suggested that I put down Aviation Cadets" for my first choice even though at that point I wasn't qualified. My second choice was Radar school and third choice was Photography.

After four weeks the camp was so full they decided to ship up out. Of the 70 guys in my flight, most went to Cook & Baker's school or Air Police school. Four of us got other miscellaneous schools. Dick had taken Journalism in college, and was delighted to be assigned to England to work on the base newspaper. I was headed to Biloxi Mississippi for nine months of Basic

Electronics and Airborne Radar Sets training.

More to come…

Dad=

Subject: War Story #4

After only 4 weeks of basic training, we got on a charter flight (National Airlines) to Biloxi Mississippi. We kind of felt like prisoners who have been released from prison. Electronics school was held in a long building with classrooms down each side of the long hallway. We spent one week in each classroom. If we passed the exam at the end of the week, we advanced to the next classroom. If we failed the exam for that week, we remained and repeated the week's lessons. The instructors were very good and almost no one ever failed. One guy, Leo Kupka, in our class had an Electrical Engineering degree, so he didn't attend classes. Instead each night (we were on a night shift) he would simply take the test for the next class. He went through the whole course by simply taking the tests. After he graduated, he applied for Aviation Cadets and was accepted. Sadly, he was killed in training, air to ground gunnery.

After nine months we graduated and filled out a form indicating where we would like to be stationed. I assumed this was some kind of cruel trick and most guys were trying to outsmart the military by putting down the opposite of where they wanted to go. I thought, heck, I'm going to look up some dream place and put that down, figuring it doesn't matter what I put down anyway. I asked to Miami Florida. There was a Reserve Troop Carrier squadron that had been called to active duty, and they shared space on the Miami International Airport. Incredibly I got that assignment. I couldn't believe it!

When I got to Miami and reported to my squadron, I leaned they had asked for 9 Radar Mechanics, and the Air Force sent them 25! So, they asked us what else we would like to be trained for. They did need Radio Operators, and since I already knew Morse Code, I volunteered for that. Before I completed that training, the squadron called me back for my original assignment. What was even better, they had one slot available for one Radar Mechanic to be on flight status. I volunteered for that and was amazed when I got it! So, I started getting flight pay!

While at Miami, the base barracks ran out of capacity, so they moved us into the Miami Springs Motel! We were living “high on the hog”!.

The squadron had C46’s when I got there, but soon traded them in for brand new C-119’s. We were constantly doing trips to drop paratroops and equipment on drop zones mostly located in Georgia and other southeastern states. We did do one deployment to Grenier NH for winter maneuvers. While there I bumped into several guys from my hometown (Norfolk Nebraska). The first was when I went to watch a basketball game on the base between Bangor ME and the Grenier NH team. When the Bangor team came out on the floor, I was astounded to see Wally Reed was playing for Bangor!

Visiting with Wally after the game, I discovered that his job on the base in Bangor was to be in charge of the base Nursery!!! It was the result of his prior experience as an orderly at the Norfolk hospital.

The next morning as we were loading up the paratroops for a drop, one tapped me on the shoulder and asked, “Aren’t you Russ Caauwe from Norfolk”? It was Todd Harrison from Norfolk. Another day several days later, we went into

Boston, and at the USO club I ran into Perry Strong also from Norfolk, who was in the Navy. Small world.

Back in Miami one of the other Radar Mechanics, said the Air Force now will accept a "college equivalent" exam for Cadets. At first, I wasn't going to apply, but several of the guys talked me into it. It meant signing up for a new 4 year enlistment and I already had served 2 years on my current enlistment. However, I finally decided to do it.
Isham C Pope immediately took my place on flight status. Sadly, a short time after I left, the squadron went on maneuvers in Alaska and the C-119 he was on hit Mt McKinley at the 11,000 foot level. No one survived.

In September, I reported to Greenville Mississippi to begin my training as an Aviation Cadet.

to be continued….

Dad

Subject: War Story #5

In September of 1952 I reported in to Greenville AFB Mississippi to begin my Cadet Primary training. The training was conducted by Graham Aviation under contract to the USAF. The flight instructors were all civilians, mostly veterans of WWII. My flight instructor was Roger Jones who flew P-38's in North Africa and Italy. He was also moonlighting as a crop duster in Mississippi. Our ground school instructors were also civilians, and the mess hall was civilian as well. The only military on the base were the dreaded check pilots.

Four classes were in training. The class system was similar to college fraternities in that hazing was very much evident. Their mission was to shape us up" and make life generally miserable. Inspections were to the extreme. My roommate was Hans

Van Haastert, from Holland who was destined to become a life-long friend. He was there as a part of the MDAP program. (Mutual Defense Assistance Pact). There was a "gig" arrangement where, if you got so many gigs, you spent your week-end walking off the gigs on the parade ground wearing a parachute. (very uncomfortable). Hans and I thought we had a perfect room for inspection, but got a gig for not polishing the brass on the base of a light bulb! Beds had to be made so perfectly that we usually slept on the floor so they would be perfect in the morning. As fourth class cadets, we were required to memorize all the checklists for the T-6 which we would eventually fly. Also the complete movie schedule for the coming week had to be committed to memory. There were so many other memory items it made my head buzz. We all looked forward to when we would no longer be fourth class-men.

Finally the day arrived when we marched to the flight-line to meet our instructor and to take our first flight in the T-6. My instructor knew that I had a pilot's license, so he let me fly the plane with a little help from him. It went well, although I was not used to sitting so high up in the cockpit. The civilian planes I had flown were much lower to the ground. Because of this, I started my round-out a little late, allowing the main gear to touch down while the tail was still in the air. My instructor said "Very impressive Mr. Caauwe, but we don't do wheel landings in primary!" I was going to explain that it was unintentional but decided that would just sound like an excuse, so I let it pass.

At the first orientation meeting, the Chief Pilot told us approximately one third of us would "wash out". This proved to be true. A few had medical reasons, some just decided this wasn't for them an so they would quit, others just had problems learning how to fly. For those who were struggling, the check ride with the military check pilots was the deciding factor, and they were washed out of the program.

Just before Christmas I went out in the local area to practice some acrobatic maneuvers since I would be doing a check ride after Christmas leave. The sky was overcast except for a large break in the overcast right over the field. Perfect, I thought. So I climbed up on top and practiced. When it got to be about 15 minutes before I was scheduled to get in the pattern to land, I dropped down beneath the overcast to find the airport had disappeared! Knowing I couldn't make my slot for landing, I called the tower and admitted I was unsure of which way to go to get back. The Mississippi river was directly below me, but which way do I go? North or South? The tower said for me to fly to the nearest town and buzz the water tower. I did, and found that I was over Clarksdale Mississippi. Since I had flown

off the edge of my map, I still didn't know which way to fly. The tower said stay there and we will send a plane up to escort you back. The "escort turned out to be my instructor, and, in the front seat, was my best friend, Norman Dennis. He knew how embarrassed I was and was laughing at me!
Back at the field, I reported to the Chief Pilot, who said this usually would have warranted the dreaded 21gigs, but since he didn't want to spoil my Christmas vacation, he let me off with just a don't do that again".

My own experience with the check pilot was unusual. While taxiing out for take-off, I could feel him moving the rudder and brakes while getting out to the runway. Hmm..
Then, during take=off the throttle advanced by itself and the stick was also moving to raise the tail. Well, this is going to be interesting. He was flying the plane with no help from me. So, now what do I do? I decided to continue with very light inputs from me. All went well until I was performing an Immelmann. This is a maneuver where you do a half of a loop, and then while inverted at the top, you roll out to the upright position. It's okay to roll out either direction. I started to roll out with left stick, but felt the stick go rapidly to the right, so it made the maneuver a little sloppy at the top. Next, during the forced landing I picked a field to the left, he turned right. After we returned to the airport, I reported to him for his critique. I was really nervous. To my surprised he said it was a very good check-ride! The only thing that was a little sloppy was the Immelmann!. Back at my instructors table, he asked how it went. I said the check pilot flew a very good ride and gave me a passing grade. He laughed and said that he had heard that about him before.

After a little over 6 hours in the T-6, Roger soloed me. It turned out I was the first in our class to solo. It was traditional that the newly soloed cadet was served a T-bone steak at a special table in the mess hall. The civilian mess hall served incredibly good food, and the T-bone steak was no exception! Or maybe it tasted so good because I was fleeing really high about soloing the T-6.

After we were no longer under-classmen the whole atmosphere took on a country club atmosphere. There were occasional tea-dances on the base. Also there were some things that happened to break up the everyday routine. One was when an MDAP cadet from France, so spoke broken English, got lost on a night cross country trip and ran off the runway trying to land at Vicksburg. The wings tore off, and there was other damage to the plane too. He called the tower and said "Voile, I have crashed!".
He then filled out the Form 1: "Flight #1 okay, Jaques Albert". He had crashed

next to the highway, and could see some lights, so he went over to the what turned out to be a night club and asked to use the phone. He called the base in Greenville, and gave them same message he had given the towner. He gave us another laugh when one day he came running down the hall shouting "I have a Moose in my locker!" "Your know, Mickey Moose" It tuned out that his mom had sent him a birthday cake, which he kept in his locker. A mouse got in there to sample his cake!

By the end of our training at Greenville we had about 130 hours in the T-6.

After 6 months,, we finally graduated from Primary flight training and were given our next assignments. Roger Jones had recommended me for fighters, so my next assignment was to Webb AFB in Big Spring Texas. After a short leave, I reported to Webb AFB.

to be continued…

Dad

Subject: War Story #6

Webb AFB was located in west Texas where the farmers had to plow their fields really deep and it took a lot of water to grow anything. Sand storms were frequent. A perpetual one was located over the field due to the T-33's and T-28's stirring up the dust. You could always find your way back to the field by simply looking for this beehive" of dust in the air. Barracks inspections were a joke, because everything was always covered with dust…new and old.

Our training at Big Spring began with getting checked out in the T-28. This was a faster and bigger plane than the T-6. I never did feel comfortable because it sat on very long landing gear and the engine, at idle, shook the plane like a helicopter. Use of full flaps was prohibited because the view over the nose made it look like you were diving straight down! However there were times I managed to relax a bit and really enjoy flying it.

There were 4 us Cadets at our instructor's table. Capt. Andrus was a veteran pilot of WWII and had flown missions over Germany in B-17's. He was a very good instructor and we all learned a lot from him. Our T-28's did not fare well in the dust of west Texas. One day Capt. Andrus took us out on a formation training flight, and it was the custom to be looking for another flight that we could bounce". We found one below us and we dove down on them. This inevitably wound up in tight circle, eight planes going head to tail. Just as we were ready to break it off at low altitude, Jim Baker (my room-mate) rolled wings level and landed gear up in a plowed field, black smoke pouring out of his plane. He jumped out and waved to us to indicate that he was okay. Capt. Andrus radioed the base and told them where Jim's plane was down. He then

told us to join up to go back to the airport. On the way back another in our flight started spewing smoke from his engine also. It wasn't as bad as Jim's, so he opted to try to make it back. He did, although he had to land downwind on the jet runway, passing a T-33 that was taking off in the opposite direction.. They each moved over a little and they passed with inches to spare.

After we had about 70 hours in the T-28's we moved on to the T-33. This jet was extremely easy to fly. We only got three rides with the instructor and then we soloed it!
My instructor was Lt Douglas, who had just returned from Korea. He had been flying F-51 Mustangs over there. Ground fire had punctured his coolant, and he was forced to bail out, barely making it back behind out lines.

After my three rides with Lt Douglas, I got scheduled to do my solo in the T-33. I was a little shocked to learn it was a "tip less T" which meant it didn't have fuel tanks on the tips of the wings. This meant it only had about 45 minutes of fuel. I guess I was pretty nervous when I lined up on the runway for take-off, because my legs were shaking so hard I couldn't hold the brakes very well. Mobile control told me to skip the rest of the checklist and let it go before I ran out of runway. Funny. So I did, and while it was rolling down the runway all I could think of was I sure hope I can get it back on the ground again. Once airborne I kind of settle down, and began to enjoy it. Yay! I'm flying a jet!

One day we experienced the Ejection Seat Trainer. It consisted of a cutaway cockpit of a T-33, and the ejection seat was attached to a rail. When you sat in the seat and fired it off, the explosion (a 20mm canon shell) shot you up in the air, attached to the rail, and then lowered you slowly back down to the cockpit. Shortly after we did our training in it, the Air Force discontinued use of it due to too many injuries to the spine.

One night we were scheduled to fly a night cross country trip to El Paso and back. That afternoon my friend Dennis and I were in town and stopped by a diner where there was a waitress that was smitten by Dennis. He had asked if they had any chocolate pie the previous time we had stopped there, but they didn't. This time she pulled out a chocolate pie she had made herself, just for Dennis. So…the two of us consumed that whole pie. Later, that night, while on my way to El Paso I was feeling a little strange. Thinking it might be something wrong with my oxygen system, I'll called it in. They told me to return to base. My instructor was quizzing me about what I was experiencing, and the chocolate story came up as a possibility. After that, I took a lot of ribbing about my "Chocolate pie hypoxia".

We had two fatalities at Big Spring. One was a cadet who, in spite of being told spins were not allowed because the T-33 tended to spin flat and was usually unrecoverable. He chose to try it out himself. When he saw he couldn't recover, he ejected but his parachute failed to open. The other was a MDAP student from Belgium. He went buzzing over the desert at low altitude, but failed to see some high tension wires. The other Belgium student who was with him, called in the crash. He didn't survive.

My mom came down for our graduation. I was now a 2nd Lieutenant and had those silver USAF pilot's wings. My friend Dennis's parents and sister came down for graduation also, and we all went out to celebrate. I traded cars and now had a yellow '53 Chevy Bel Aire convertible. Life was good!

Instrument flying was my favorite, so when it came time to choose assignments, I put in for F-94 training. My next stop would be Moody AFB in Valdosta Georgia.

Dad

Subject: War story #7

Moody AFB was in Valdosta Georgia, just a few miles north of town., and right next to the Okefenokee swamp to the east. The F94 was capable of supersonic flight, but only in a dive which produced a sonic boom. So, we had to do our dives over the swamp to avoid breaking windows in town or farms in the rural area. I imagine the Alligators didn't appreciate the sonic booms either.

At Moody we first spent several weeks getting extra ground school training, and more dual instruction on flying instruments. Moody was perfectly located for this as we experienced lots of low foggy weather. My instructor there was going through a messy divorce and only showed up long enough to get in the flight training, so I really didn't get to know him. Next, we were checked out in the F-94C. which was fun to fly. It had an awesome afterburner which really pushed you back in your seat on takeoff. There were no trainer models, so our checkout consisted of a couple days of ground school and a ride in the back seat with the instructor up front. There were no flight controls in the back seat, just a radar set. All the instructors in the F-94C were great!!

During our night flying training, for some reason, I was assigned each plane that had just come out of the hangar for a landing gear modification. When I entered traffic to land the first night, I got an unsafe gear light. I tried everything I could think of to get three green lights to say the gear was down and locked. The first time, I was finally successful by going back to altitude and pulling a lot of G's while operating the Emergency Hydraulic Pump. The next night, was the same. The third night, I had no luck, and very low on fuel, I had no choice but to land without a safe gear indication. I came in with a little extra speed, not knowing if the gear was locked or not. When I pulled the drag-chute handle, the chute fell off on the runway. It hadn't been installed properly. The end of the runway was coming up fast and the only way I could think of to get it stopped, was, in addition to using the brakes, was to open the canopy. This proved to be a very effective way of getting stopped, although the RO in the back seat got beat up from the wind knocking him around pretty good. The tower was calling me and when I told them I had turned off the runway onto the taxi way, they were much relieved. They had the fire trucks looking for me off the end of the runway!

Fighters now can go supersonic while climbing! Our F-94C would only go supersonic in a dive. The procedure was to climb to 40,000 feet. Increase the elevator ratio to 11 to 1, and roll over into a dive. As the plane went transonic the rudder would lock either left of right, and the ailerons would set up a vibration. Then the plane would go supersonic. At 20,000 feet it was time to start pulling the nose up. That's the reason for the increase in elevator ratio. Recovery would occur around 10,000 ft. Lookout Alligators, here comes the boom! The swamp is a very dark hole at night and was the cause of one fatal accident. The pilot apparently misread his altimeter. After that, the instructors suggested that when descending at night over the swamp we confirm altitude each 5,000 feet with our RO.

My roommate at Moody AFB was Don Watkins from Pueblo Colorado. Don had taught country school there. He was a rather small in stature and could easily be taken for a teen-ager. He joked that one day he and his RO who was also small, land somewhere and get out of the jet wearing beany" hats with propellers on the top. I was on second shift, so after lunch I came back to the barracks to catch a nap before going for night flying. Don was just leaving to go the Flightline His instructor was taking his four students out for some formation work. At one point he led them down in a dive and then pulled up. The first three made it, but Don's plane struck the treetops and crashed, killing him and his RO.

On graduation from our Instrument training, and transition to the F-94C, we drew cards for our next assignment. I drew the 8 of spades which was the third highest card drawn. The choices were: 1. Okinawa F86D for 2 year tour. 2. Alaska F94B for 2 years, and, 3. Keflavik Iceland F-94B for one year. I chose Iceland, not because it was for a shorter tour, but it just sounded more exciting that the other two. Also if I had picked Okinawa, my RO (Bill Sims) would have had to do the whole Moody training all over again since the F86D was pilot only. No RO. No back seat.. This had already happened once to him. So girls, you're getting born was all decided when I drew the 8 of spades. I still have that card in a box in the garage.

Next stop…Keflavik Iceland!

Dad

Subject: Addendum to "War Story #8

Terry asked the following questions.

How did I meet your mom and her family?

Bjorg worked in the PX at the counter where they sold toothpaste, shaving stuff, etc. Actually there was a double date to the base movie, and she was the other guy's date.
The next time I asked her out and we had good time. After that, I pretty much always asked her out. It's surprising that I did, because often she would say no, she had to wash her hair, or some other lame excuse. But I was persistent. Eventually I was invited to visit her parents' home in Gardur. Her younger sister, Thora, was very shy and pretty much hid out in another room. Her

dad worked on the base and spoke pretty good English. Her mom did not speak or understand English at all. Bjorg's brother Runni drove a taxi and frequently I rode with him. Her older brother Gummi lived miles away, up north, in a small village near Olafsvik where your mom was born.

How do I find out about Della Hoffman?

I was assigned to be the pilot in the tower one day. We always had one there to assist in case of any emergency with our jets in the air. The Icelandic tower operator noticed I was reading one of the Norfolk Daily Newspapers. He said "I have a sister who lives in Norfolk". I said, "Yeah but I'll bet it is the Norfolk in Virginia". He said "No, it's Norfolk Nebraska. He didn't realize what a one-in-a-million chance that was! Anyway I got the name of his sister, and when we moved back to Norfolk after getting out of the Air Force, Della and your mom because best friends. It was fun to listen to them talk on the phone. They would start out speaking Icelandic, but little by little English words would creep in. Later in the conversation it would be the opposite…English with a sprinkling of Icelandic.

How did Bjorg adjust to living at Presque Isle?

She was surprised that we bought groceries just once a week, and they all could be bought in the supermarket. In Iceland, they only bought groceries for one or two days. Separate trips had to be made for meat, bakery goods, etc. The supermarket offered larger varieties of meat, vegetables, etc. The first time she asked "can we afford this?"
On a trip to the department store, she was fascinated by the escalator. There were a lot of things like this that were new to her, and it was fun seeing her experience some of these things for the first time,
I tried to teach her to drive, but I guess I was too impatient and I intimidated her. When we got back to Nebraska, I hired the High School teacher to do it. It only took her a couple sessions and she was all checked out!

Dad =

Subject: War story #9

I was not involved in flying the squadron's planes from Keflavik to Presque Isle, but there were so many things that happened, I thought I would include them here.
First, as I said previously our fighters had a limited range and could not carry enough fuel for the trip. To allow more fuel in the tip tanks, the front of the tank which had the fuel cap, was rotated on a seam so the cap was on top instead of at the 10 o'clock position. It turned out there was a reason for this. It needed this space for the pressurization to force the fuel to feed into the fuselage tank. The planes were towed to the end of the runway to save fuel. As they fired up, fuel was squirting out of the pressurization ducts into the cockpit!!!. Nobody aborted take-off. They just kept going.

One flight of four departed, not aware that the leader's gyro compass was off by 60 degrees. So instead of flying toward Blue West 1, they wound up way north over Greenland with an almost solid undercast below them. Just as they were running out of fuel, a break in the undercast showed a black runway! It was BW 8 on the west coast of Greenland. All four flamed out from fuel starvation, either on the way down, or while taxiing after touchdown.

The squadron was stuck at BW1 for nearly a month, waiting for the weather to clear the route to Goose Bay Labrador. When it finally did clear, one by one the squadron lifted off from the runway out over the bay. Dean Rydholm, flying the squadron T-33 over-rotated on take-off and stalled on the ice covered bay. The helicopter picked him off just as the T-33 broke through the ice. He told the Navy diver he could have the case of Scotch that was in the back seat if he would recover his uniforms. He might as well saved his Scotch, because the salt water had ruined his uniforms.

On the way to Goose Bay, Billy Randall suddenly rolled over and was headed straight down to the ocean. His leader followed him down constantly talking to him to get him to come to. His oxygen regulator had failed. Just in time, he came to and recovered from the dive. After that experience, he quit flying single engine fighters and transferred to multi engine transports.

Capt. Von Wiedenfield arrived at Presque Isle and his wife was there at the Flightline anxiously awaiting his arrival. Much to his chagrin, the canopy would not open! They finally had to remove a panel and get him out through the nose wheel well.

Considering the poor shape most of our F-94's were in, all made it across the North Atlantic, in the winter time. This was not true for the next leg, going across the US to California.

Next… Presque Isle Maine..

Dad =

Subject: Re: War story #10

Yes, the hospital in Limestone Maine was located on Loring AFB And was a military hospital. The doctor who delivered you was Dr Lippy. He was the spitting image of Jerry Lewis!
You weighed in at 8lbs and 15 1/2 ounces. Just 1/2 ounce short of 9 pounds.

Russell Caauwe
Russ46@me.com

On Jun 3, 2019, at 1:55 PM, Terry Annable <terryannable@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dad your guardian angel must have been exhausted constantly keeping you safe ha-ha.
I always wondered why my birthplace had so many names. I never knew whether I should say I was born in Presque Isle, Limestone or Loring Maine. But I'm guessing it was Loring (is that a base with a military hospital or was it civilian?)
Also, the story of you being stuck in Florida for 9 days reminded me of when we lived in Okinawa, Japan for 1 year. Alex was born there by C-section. Kate was 2 and 1/2. We lived on the 3rd floor of an apartment with no elevator. Jim has the opportunity to fly to Hawaii and maybe some other places for 2 weeks. This was 2 weeks after Alex was born. I told him "go ahead because it may be your only chance to do this good deal flight".
I did ok until I needed groceries. Then I had to figure out how to get a 2 1/2 year old, a newborn baby AND the groceries up 3 flights of stairs. I couldn't leave the babies alone in the apartment or the car! Finally I asked some neighbors (who I didn't know that well) if they could watch the kids while I carried my groceries in. I was a little surprised they didn't offer to carry my groceries up. Oh well we survived and I have a good story and plenty of ammunition to make Jim feel guilty ha-ha.
Terry

Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone

On Monday, June 3, 2019, 2:36 PM, Russell Caauwe <russ46@mac.com> wrote:

Presque was a pretty little town in northern Maine. It is the location of Aroostook County, largest county in the United States. When they built the runway at Presque Isle somehow they managed to perfectly align the runway heading with Aroostook mountain. It was of primary importance

to turn either left of right Immediately after takeoff when departing to the south. Winters were very cold, much colder than Iceland which is warmed by the Gulf Stream.

Terry was born at Loring AFB, 22 miles away while we were at Presque Isle. It was 22 miles of icy highways and it was 20 below zero. Before making that run to Loring AFB (Limestone Maine), I had to re-install my car battery. We had no garage, so we took the car battery out every night and set it beside the stove.

Our housing at Presque Isle was in little shacks meat for southern climes. Floors were pressed wood and the house was actually mounted on cedar posts.. When we ran the washing machine, the house actually shook! Heat was provided by a single oil stove in the kitchen. Finally someone complained to Margaret Chase Smith, the congresswoman and when she made a trip up to Presque Isle to see for herself, she was appalled. Construction began almost immediately on new wherry Housing units.

About once a month the whole squadron of 26 planes put on a formation flyby. Wives and kids went out on a perimeter road to watch us land.

The first Christmas I got to fly" the Sears Santa Claus in. (Actually we just taxied to the end of the field and made a high speed run down the runway). We brought the kids from an orphanage in town down to the flight-line to see Santa arrive. Then we had a party for them at the Officers Club. Presents were of gloves, sweaters, scarves and other warm clothing. Also we gave them bags of candy.

One day we were to fly down just offshore of Bar Harbor to practice making instrument firing runs on a target towed by a B-26. A chase plane flew beside me to ensure I wasn't locked on to the B-26 instead of the target. Suddenly I felt a jolt a loud noise. the B-26 pilot said "you got a hit…I could feel it". I told that hit was my jet hitting the cable! The radar

had jumped lock on the target and crawled up the cable. The chase plane hadn't noticed. I checked the plane over for damage. The cable had tore a large gash in the right tip tank, slices the leading edge of the wing, and sliced the top of the canopy right over my head. I returned to Presque Isle uneventfully.

Weekends we could request a plane to do some cross-country training. Of course this usually meant flying home for a visit. One cold winter week-end however, Capt. Osborne and I decided to go down to Florida and soak up some sunshine. All went well until we prepared to fly back to Presque Isle. My right engine would not start. Removing the cowling, we discovered the reason. A mechanic had left one of his tools on top of the starter/generator and it had welded itself to the positive and negative cables. The base at Orlando had nobody trained on the F89, nor did they have any parts. Osborne knew the Maintenance Officer at Moody AFB and arranged with him to loan us a mechanic and the replacement starter/generator. It took the mechanic several days to do the repair, so each night Oz would fly him back up to Moody AFB and every morning he could go back up and bring him down to Orlando to work.
All this time Bjorg was stuck in that little shack in winter, and to make matters worse, Kristin came down with Chicken pox. Also Bjorg did not know how to drive yet.
After being gone 9 days, I was expecting a frosty welcome home.

While at Presque Isle our squadron sent several aircraft down to Yuma Arizona to the Air Force rocket meet. On the way down a stop was made in Wichita Kansas. On departure, Lt Carter noticed Capt. Gregg's left engine was on fire. Capt. Greg told his RO he would pull up to 2000 ft and they would ten eject. The RO just hear "eject" and he did,,,, immediately while they were still very low to the ground. He made one swing in his chute and hit the ground without injury. Capt. Gregg also ejected with a very minor injury.

At Yuma, Lt Mattingly and his RO were making a run on the target sleeve using a technique he was convinced would improve his score. He had described it in a meeting at which I suggested it might be dangerous. The tech-rep from the company that made the fire control system voiced the same opinion. Lt Mattingly's theory fell apart when he collided with the steel bar on the front of the target, blowing an engine off of the plane. He and the RO both ejected at 35,000 feet. The RO pulled his chute almost immediately. For some reason he took his billfold out and checked to see his money (He had just been paid) was still there. Then he passed out from the extreme altitude. Below 10,000 feet he came to, and landed in the desert. Mattingly delayed opening his parachute until he was below 10,000 feet. He said he was afraid the helicopter would not see him in the desert, so he looked for something to use to flag them down. He pulled out a red sock which had got in his flight suit pocket in the wash. The helicopter pilot got a good laugh out of this really tall guy out in the desert waving that little red sock.

Kris was just a toddler, but it was amazing how she could put two and two together. One day she was playing outside of our new housing unit, she got curious about a piece of heavy equipment parked there. I told her it was a bulldozer made by Caterpillar. Later she spotted a furry little bug crawling along the ground. She asked what that was. I told her it was a Caterpillar. She said "nice old bulldozer". I lost it. Those were the days before seat belts. Kris usually sat next to me in her car seat (not the high tech ones like we have now). As we drove through the front gate to the base, the guard always saluted me, and Kris, without fail, always returned his salute! He had a hard time keeping a straight face.

Northern Maine is heavily forested. Of course survival gear and training were essential. I always carried lots of flares and smoke flares in my flight suit. I figured if I ever had to eject I wanted to be sure they had no trouble finding me! Survival training consisted of a couple days of ground school. Then were transported deep into the woods on tracked vehicles, following a logging trail. Each two man group were giving a half of a

parachute and a few canned rations. We made a tent out of the parachute with a space in the middle for a fire to provide warmth, and at night it served as a lantern for search parties to spot us.. We were supposed to fish and hunt for food, but most of us just ate the canned food. In a few days, the tracked vehicles came back and picked us up.

There was only one fatality while we were at Presque Isle. Capt. Ward had gone somewhere to pick up some parts. Flying the T-33 he arrived at Presque Isle where the field was experiencing dense fog. He crashed beside the runway in a junk yard.
It was unclear why he was so far off to the side of the runway.

A competition was started to come up with a new Paint job which would include our Flying Tiger logo for our planes. I was pleased to learn I had won the competition, and work was started immediately to get the planes ready for the Rocket Meet at Moody AFB in Georgia. Crews worked around the clock putting on masking tape and spray painting the planes. A template was made for painting the logo on the vertical tail.
A few of the planes arrived in Georgia with large strips of paint peeled off because it hadn't been allowed long enough to dry thoroughly. A picture of the paint job is in the book First Lines which I gave to each of you. It consisted mostly of red and white candy stripes on the tip tanks and on the rudder.

September of 1956 marked the completion of my six years of active duty in the US Air Force. We hooked up a one-wheel trailer behind our 53 Chevy and headed home for Nebraska!

Kris gave us one more laugh on the way home. We had stopped for the night, and Kris was taking a bath. After what seemed like a really long time, we checked in on her. She had a washcloth in her hands, and with a big sigh, said "I washed ALL the walls!". I guess she felt it was so important to have a clean motel bathroom.

Dad

P.S. Well, that's the end of the war stories I guess. Terry suggested that if I think of anything interesting that I left out, I should write an addendum for the one where it was missing. Perhaps I will.