

CHINO MiG KILLER



WE GO ALOFT WITH THE PLANES OF FAME AIR MUSEUM'S F-86F TO CAPTURE ITS NEW PAINT SCHEME HONORING MiG ACE CLIFF JOLLEY

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The 23rd of May was a very pleasant day as we orbited at about 2000-ft southwest of Chino Airport. I was in the back seat of the Planes of Fame's veteran Texan — an aircraft we had used numerous times for a photo platform. This particular variant features the swiveling seat that was added to accommodate student gunners — giving the gunner, as well as current-day photographers, an outstanding “field of fire” to the rear. Up front, Mark Moodie was doing the driving. Mark is another Chino long-timer and he currently is a project manager/shop foreman for Aero Trader where he brings his considerable skill set to Aero Trader's many and var-

ied projects. Mark also has a racing T-6 that he has campaigned at Reno and although it is faster than the POF aircraft, we decided to utilize that plane because of the photographic advantage.

“Sabre's on the roll,” came Mark's voice over the headset.

I turned to look forward and could make out the Sabre accelerating like a silver arrowhead tracking down the runway's centerline with the J47-27 turbojet spewing its characteristic dark trail.

Turning back to face aft once again, I spotted Steve Hinton pass under us at a distance and then zoom climb to several thousand feet above the Texan while entering a graceful descending turn. Rolling onto his left wing to keep us in

sight, Steve popped out the speed brakes to start slowing the sleek F-86F. Coming down to our altitude, Steve kept the Sabre's nose up a bit while he smoothly came into position off our right wing.

Sounds easy, doesn't it? Well, that would be far from the truth. Even though built by the same company, there is a world of difference between the two machines. The rugged Texan was created as a late 1930s advanced trainer while the Sabre was a cutting-edge first-generation swept-wing fighting machine. To say their speeds are incompatible would be an understatement. As with so many of the diverse aircraft Steve flies, he made this whole maneuver look simple and easy to

accomplish when, in fact, it was anything but.

Hinton then began edging the fighter — which I personally consider to be one of the finest American-built aircraft — into the photo position. This allowed me a couple of moments to reflect back on the first time that I had seen this particular Sabre.

I have to travel back to 1982. I was in Argentina covering the Falklands/Malvinas War from the Argentine perspective. It was a difficult time for everyone involved. The Argentine Air Force had been taking some heavy losses, but the Brits were also unexpectedly suffering — especially the Royal Navy who seemed to be losing a ship a day from the dedicated young Argentine pilots that would press their attacks home in the face of what seemed to be a wall of anti-aircraft fire and surface-to-air missiles.

The British were stunned by this opposition and were reeling as ship after ship went down or had to withdraw from

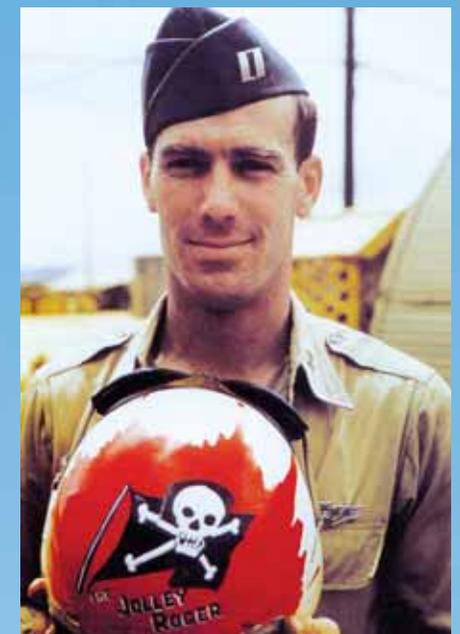
the field of combat due to battle damage.

One morning, I picked up a newspaper and there on the front page was the photo of a North American Sabre pressing home a dive-bombing attack on a British frigate. It was pretty exciting stuff, but there was just one problem — the photo was fake.

Now, this fact would probably not have been immediately noticeable to the average man/woman on the street but noticeable so to anyone familiar with the Sabre.

Running through my mental checklist, I was pretty certain that a Sabre flying from the most southerly of Argentina's bases would not have the range to reach the British shipping — unless it was a one-way suicide attack. The next day, I would be visiting the main base for the Sabres and I made a note to find out the facts. Quite honestly, I was surprised that any of the elegant fighters were still flying.

During the 1950s/early-1960s, Argentina was undergoing a period of modernization with its military forces. The *Fuerza Aerea Argentina* was in the process of becoming the most powerful air arm in Latin America in a number of ways. First, a great deal of German and Nazi technology had transferred to that nation as



Captain Cliff Jolley with his very distinctive helmet in Korea.

some of the best scientists and engineers managed to escape capture by the Allies and Soviets and were quickly absorbed into the nation's indigenous aeronautical industry and were soon developing their own jet fighters. Also, through their strong ties with Britain, Argentina was obtaining strategic bombers in the form of Avro Lancasters and Lincolns.

From 1957, a total of 90 FMA

Steve Hinton displays the Planes of Fame Air Museum's F-86F Sabre in the new markings of Korean War MiG ace Clifford Jolley.