

188 FIGHTER SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

621 Bombardment Squadron (Dive) constituted, 25 Jan 1943
Activated, 4 Feb 1943
Redesignated 507 Fighter-Bomber Squadron, 10 Aug 1943
Redesignated 507 Fighter Squadron, 30 May 1944
Inactivated, 9 Nov 1945
Redesignated 188 Fighter Squadron and allotted to ANG, 24 May 1946
188 FS (SE) extended federal recognition, 7 Jul 1947
Redesignated 188 Tactical Fighter Squadron, 1 Jul 1964
Redesignated 188 Fighter Squadron, 16 Mar 1992
Redesignated 188 Rescue Squadron, 1 Jan 2013

STATIONS

Key Field, MS, 4 Feb 1943
Congaree AAFld, SC, 5 Jul 1943
Pollock AAFld, LA, 15 Sep 1943
Myrtle Beach AAFld, SC, 4 Nov 1943-13 Mar 1944
Winkton, England, 5 Apr 1944
Chapelle, France, 6 Jul 1944
Bretigny, France, 28 Aug 1944
Juvincourt, France, 17 Sep 1944
St-Trond, Belgium, 1 Oct 1944

Keltz, Germany, 3 Apr 1945
Fritzlar, Germany, 13 Apr 1945
Stuttgart, Germany, 23 Jun-Aug 1945
Drew Field, FL, 11 Sep-9 Nov 1945
Kirtland AFB, NM
Long Beach MAP, CA, 20 Apr 1951
Kirtland AFB, NM 1 Nov 1952

ASSIGNMENTS

404 Bombardment (later Fighter-Bomber; Fighter) Group, 4 Feb 1943-9 Nov 1945
150 Operations Group

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

A-24, 1943
P-39, 1943
P-47, 1944
P-51,
F-51
TF-51
F-80, 1957
F-100, 1958
A-7, 1973
A-7
F-16, 1992

Support Aircraft

COMMANDERS

LTC Frank A. Cronican
Maj Stephen W. Shambaugh
LTC Emmanuel Schifani
Col Walker M. Mahurin
LTC Emmanuel Schifani
Maj Francis A. Williams

HONORS

Service Streamers

American Theater

Campaign Streamers

Air Offensive, Europe
Normandy
Northern France

Rhineland
Ardennes-Alsace
Central Europe
Air Combat, EAME Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citation
Germany, 10 Sep 1944

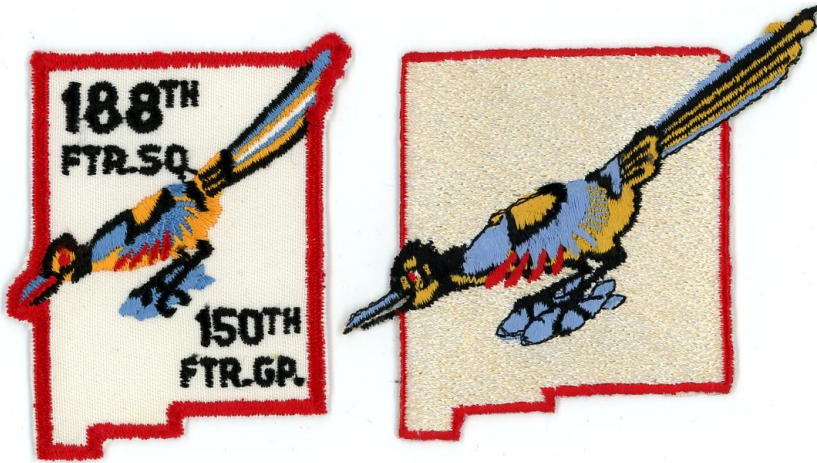
French Croix de Guerre with Palm
29, 30, and 31 Jul 1944

Cited in the Order of the Day, Belgian Army
6 Jun-30 Sep 1944
1 Oct-17 Dec 1944
18 Dec 1944-15 Jan 1945

Belgian Fourragere

EMBLEM





Earlier in the year the Air Force had approved the Chaparral Cock, Roadrunner, Paisano, as the official insignia of the 188, so when the F-80s landed at Casper they sported new decals identifying them as New Mexicans. The 188 had inherited the non-existent history of the 621st Bomb Squadron and with it the insignia, a black panther diving with a bomb clutched to its breast. The 621st had been redesignated the 507th Fighter Squadron, which apparently had no more history than the 621st. In as much as black panthers are rarely seen in the Sandias, the authorized insignia was never deemed appropriate, so a committee of Guardsmen came up with a truly representative heraldic device, to wit: "On and over a white irregular rectangle (the outline of the State of New Mexico), with red border, wider at the right and base, a caricatured chaparral in light blue, black and yellow, red eyes and wing tips in a diving position grasping a silver bomb in each foot." (All evidence to the contrary notwithstanding, the red eyes were not included because of the Elko and other trips.) The significance is as follows: "The chapparel, renowned for its speed in seeking out rattlesnakes, feinting them into striking and then killing them, symbolizes the ability of this squadron. The chapparel, in a dive and carrying two bombs, represents the squadron's mission. The bonfire red and Florida gold are the squadron colors." The insignia was drawn by Virgil I. Partch, a cartoonist of Santa Fe.

MOTTO

NICKNAME

Tacos

OPERATIONS

Combat in ETO, 1May 1944-4 May 1945.

The seventh of July, 1947, a hot summer evening, fifty-six veterans gathered in the Albuquerque Armory of the New Mexico National Guard, and, in the traditional spirit of the militia, took the collective oath of allegiance to State and Country, thereby opening a new chapter in the illustrious history of the New Mexico Guard. These Minuteman volunteers were not cavalrymen, nor artillerymen, as previous New Mexico volunteers had been; they were Air Corps and Air Forces veterans. They were pilots, mechanics, weathermen, radiomen, parachute riggers, motor vehicle mechanics, refuelers, armament technicians, cooks, bakers, and many other classes of aviation personnel.

Present, and/or accounted for, on that July evening were the following members of the 188 Fighter Squadron, 188 Utility Flight, 188 Weather Station (Type A), and Detachment 'C' of the 228th Air Service Group, components of the 137th Fighter Group, 63rd Fighter Wing

Although this small group formed the initial cadre, the units grew rapidly as more men heard of this "home town" fighter squadron, with its promise of P-51, A-26, AT-6, and C-47.

At the time of the announcement New Mexico was under the jurisdiction of 10th Air Force, then headquartered at Brooks Field, Texas, whose Vice Commander was Brigadier General Harry Johnson. A number of meetings were conducted at the Kirtland Field base theater by members of General Johnson's staff, several times with the General present. Questions and answers were the order of the day at each meeting, and most were well thought out. One question in particular, just about brought down the roof. The question pertained to the maintenance of aircraft and the questioner said something to the effect that he "hoped the aircraft weren't going to be maintained by the damned mechanics they had over in China". After a moment of strained silence the meeting continued and was brought to a successful conclusion.

Interested Reservists applied to the office of the Adjutant General of New Mexico, whose personnel reviewed the qualifications of the individuals, coordinated selections with 10th Air Force, and prepared the initial roster. At the appropriate time, Major General Charles G. Sage, the Adjutant General of the State of New Mexico, was advised that 7 July 1947 had been chosen as the date for the Federal Recognition ceremony, at which the 188 Fighter Squadron and its subordinate units would be examined by a board of Air Force officers and enlisted men. Lt. Colonel Frank A. Cronican had been chosen as the Commanding Officer of the New Mexico Air National Guard, and upon the conclusion of the ceremony, the 188 Fighter Squadron, 188 Utility Flight, 188 Weather Station, and Detachment 'C', 228th Air Service Group, were officially recognized as Air Force and New Mexico Air National Guard units.

Frank Cronican had been Stationed with Colonel William Poe for a time during the war, and Poe had been a New Mexico Guardsman before the war. A chance meeting in Santa Fe one day in 1946 brought the two together, and Colonel Poe mentioned to Frank that the AG was looking for someone to command a fighter squadron which was to be formed at Albuquerque. Frank was a natural for the job, and General Sage gave him the responsibility of putting the outfit together.

Shortly after this most important meeting plans began to take shape and it was soon obvious, to most members, that they had signed up with an outfit with great potential. World War II facilities on the west side of Kirtland Field were soon turned over to the State. Hangar T-32, next to the base tower, became the center around which all activities revolved. The old base shops building, the instrument shop, and many other structures were eventually assigned for the use of the 188. An AT-6 trainer was delivered and the newly assigned Air Force Advisor, Major Jack Milne, began to check out the Guard pilots, commencing with Francis A Williams. Then the Mustangs began to arrive and the pilots really began to have fun. Eventually the NMANG was operating with twenty-five P-51s, four A-26s, two AT-6s, two C-47s, a PT-13, and an L-5.

During the War there had been an element of fun in the service, but for the most part there was more work than pleasure; one was stuck in out-of-the-way places, in climates which one wouldn't wish on his worst enemy, with conditions often approximating Hades, with a singular lack of members of that other sex, and few opportunities for real recreation. With the Air Guard a transformation took place; overnight there was fresh appeal to the military. Pilots could fly some of the best airplanes in the world; mechanics could work on these sleek aircraft; armorers could load 50 calibers and bombs; radiomen could work on SCR-522s; the men in the motor pool could maintain the staff car, refuelers, weapons carriers, and Cletracs; and all the other tasks could be performed in reasonably decent surroundings. What made the happy difference was the fact that this was a "home town" outfit, and at the end of the working day Bob Holcombe, Chief Saenz, and Del Ray Echo Hawk could head for TWA, (the site of the bar of the Fred Harvey House), for a little relaxation, while Jim Troy, Vic Prejean, Tony Metzgar, and the Bacas (Tito, Ralph, Eloy, Rafael, and Joe), could head for their respective homes, knowing that there was little chance of their being called back to work in the middle of the night. Here was an opportunity to work with friends from high school days, from the University; here was an opportunity to make 'rum runs' to Juarez (the pilots needed to get in their four hours a month); here was a marvelous opportunity to take off in a '26 and fly out to the coast to visit a friend, or to take the whole flying echelon to Laramie for the New Mexico-Wyoming game.

For the one-night-a-weeker there was an opportunity to put in a couple of hours a week playing soldier, knowing that at 2200 hours one could be back at home in his own sack, and that he wouldn't have to worry about bed-check. Later the system was changed and these people, were able to spend one week end each month performing all the tasks required to keep the airplanes flying, the vehicles running, the radios and guns functioning. Week-end-warriors they were called, but whatever the name this plan allowed civilians to don the uniform and do something different one week end a month. Even for these week-end-warriors there were remarkable opportunities for travel; Rhodes Arnold mentioned to Dan McKnight in class one

day that his parents were returning from several years in Japan and the Philippines. A few days later McKnight, Macurdy, Bill Cornelius, and Arnold took '591, an A-26, and headed for Hamilton Field via Victorville and Bakersfield. It was a fun trip, marred only by Macurdy's repeated entreaties that he be allowed to slow roll the '26. Fortunately McKnight refused. Friends were visited in Bakersfield on the westbound trip and in Fresno on the return leg. There was a little problem with the fuel system when it was noticed that a good part of the fuel had disappeared. Seems the crossfeed valve had been set wrong and a great deal of 100/130 had been pumped out through the bomb bay.

When Bud Holcomb and Howell Lacy graduated from engineering school at the University of New Mexico, they decided to do a little job hunting at Spokane. What better way than to take a '26 and head northwest. Along for the ride were Al Sloan and Del Ray Echo Hawk. Weather in the Great Basin precluded their going through Salt Lake City, so they were advised to go west and up the coast. Arriving close to the coast they were advised that the coast was fogged in and they should attempt to go through Salt Lake City. After checking his fuel, Bud decided he could make it that way, so he turned north northeast. On the way to Salt Lake City the radios all quit working and the radio direction finder didn't seem to be able to find anything. Through holes in the clouds they kept seeing roads, all of which seemed to be heading in the same direction. They reasoned that if they could get down near the roads they could follow one of them and eventually get to a field. Bud dropped down through a hole and right there in front of him was an "iron compass", the railroad tracks. As he followed the tracks the clouds kept getting lower and lower and soon he was practically on the tracks. Suddenly he saw a hole in the side of a mountain and realized that the tracks were entering a tunnel. He hauled back on the wheel, stood the '26 on her tail, and held his breath. He had heard of things like this happening to others, but had never figured it could happen to him. When he had a little altitude and still hadn't hit the mountain, he leveled off and turned east, hoping to outrun the storm which was supposedly moving at about seven miles an hour. Lacy crawled up out of the nose and said, "You dragged me through the trees down there," then laughed and asked how much fuel remained. Bud said he probably had about twenty minutes fuel remaining, so Lacy returned to his post in the nose. A half hour later Bud was still flying solid instruments and had pulled the prop pitch controls back to about 1600 rpm, and had set throttles and mixture controls for maximum distance cruise. Lacy came out of the nose again and asked how much fuel remained. Bud again said twenty minutes. Lacy said, "Bud, I hate to keep bothering you, but a half hour ago you said twenty minutes and now you tell me again, twenty minutes." Bud turned to lacy and said, "Lacy, the handbook says that when the gauges read zero you have twenty minutes fuel remaining. You can see for yourself that they are still reading zero." The confidence drained out of Lacy's face; he checked his parachute 'D' ring, and returned to the nose. He didn't bother Bud again for the remainder of the trip. At one point someone sighted a building through a hole and saw the name Granger on the roof of a Building, so they began to look for a town of that name. One of the others said, "that's a tobacco advertisement, you knucklehead", but the first one was proven correct when the town was found on the edge of the map. The radio had begun to work, so Rock Springs was contacted and in short order the '26 was finally put down at Rock Springs. One engine quit as Bud was taxiing to the ramp. Next morning it was so cold that they couldn't start the engines, even after oil dilution. Bud had to rent a heater from the

airlines, got one engine started, switched the heater over to the other engine, and while it was starting the plugs in the other engine fouled. Bud ignored the problem and pressed on to Spokane, knowing that he could change plugs there. A hairy trip, but that's the way it was back in the good old days!

By the summer of 1948, the Guard was fairly well equipped and the men were ready for summer camp, or field training, in official jargon. The Bureau had not yet devised a plan to send Air Guard units away from home for their two week tours, so, rather than send them to the old established Army summer camp sites, home base was ruled adequate. The facilities at Kirtland were in decent shape and the 188 had acquired enough buildings to provide for practically all needs, so Kirtland was as good a place as any.

Because there were no air-to-air ranges near Kirtland, arrangements were made for half of the pilots and some maintenance personnel to spend the first week at Williams AFB in Arizona, from which gunnery missions could be flown to the Gila Bend Range. When the first group finished holing the targets, the other half of the pilots headed for Willy. Luckily there were no serious mishaps.

On 26 August the 188 pulled a clever attack on the 62nd Fighter Wing when some of the New Mexicans landed a C-47 at Burbank, piled out with drawn 45's, carbines, and Machetes, and proceeded to capture Brig. Gen. Leonard Thomas and his staff. California retaliated on the 27th with F-80, P-51, and A-26 strikes at Kirtland. Luckily some quad-fifty turrets and a 90mm AA gun had been 'borrowed' from the Army Guard facilities (the Army was away at camp at Fort Bliss), and the Californians met quite a hail of flak. The umpires ruled that the air defense at Kirtland had turned the tide of battle, and the Californians had gone down in flames. This first summer camp had come to a successful conclusion without a single serious accident.

Although not serious, there was an accident one evening on the flight line. Frank Cronican was holding a staff meeting in his office in T-32 when there was a horrible sound of screaming, rending metal. Some of the aviators had been aloft getting in a little night time, and during that time someone had parked Able-25 in the wrong place, or maybe the hanger lights were too bright. At any rate, Bob Sands landed, taxied in toward the hangar, and proceeded to chew several feet off the outer left wing panel of Able-25. This gave the maintenance people some good experience, for they had to order a replacement wing, and on the P-51 that meant the whole wing, from tip to tip. The fuselage was removed from the damaged wing and the new wing was then mated with the fuselage. An interesting operation and some good experience.

One day a fellow by the name of Tucker (not Carl) landed a clipped wing P-63, N62995, Race #28, at Kirtland and taxied over to the Air Guard area. That evening he ran into a couple of Guardsmen at the bar in the TWA terminal, and after a few friendly drinks, mentioned that he was trying to get to Cleveland for the Air Races, but was a little short of cash. After a couple of more glasses of lubricant the two Guardsmen suggested that they could give him a pretty good discount on avgas, courtesy of the NMANG. Tucker went out to his King Cobra to get ready for the transfusion, while the Guardsmen headed for the parked refuelers. Starting one of the

tractors, the two soon had a tank of avgas moving down the ramp toward the King Cobra. An alert tower operator saw the refueler moving along the ramp, and noticed that it was being driven without lights, a dead giveaway. He quickly called the Base Air Police and reported the strange goings-on. The trio was quite startled when the AP vehicle arrived on the scene and caught them in the act. Needless to say, Uncle Sam was quite put out about having his avgas peddled to would-be air racers. The two Guardsmen soon became ex-Guardsmen, and Tucker probably had to pay a hefty fine for his attempt to purchase discount fuel.

The training received by the fighter pilot during the war had burned into his mind the notion that he was first among equals when it came to flying. He often looked down haughtily on the bomber pilot, calling him a glorified truck driver, and allowing that the bomber pilot was to be pitied because of his lowly station. There was little the bomber pilot could do to counter this attitude, but one day the opportunity arose. "Frontier Days" is one of the more important festive weeks in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and the 188, needing some formation flying, cross-country and R & R, was directed by the Operations Officer to fulfill the 60-2 requirements by flying, in formation, to Cheyenne on the festive weekend. There the men could compare notes with their counterparts in the 187th Squadron, learn new hunting techniques, and check out the local scene.

The P-51s took off and headed north, formed up in a perfect formation, and proudly set course for Cheyenne. The "bomber pilots" fired up the four marvelous A-26s, took off and followed the Mustangs. One can imagine the chagrin of the fighter jocks when the Utility Flight boys, with a little advantage in altitude, put their noses down, picked up some speed, feathered one prop on each ship, passed the formation of '51s, un-feathered, and kept right on going. It hath been said that eventually the worm may turn, and so it did!

Undoubtedly there were many Guardsmen who longed to get away from home for a couple of weeks, and the summer of 1949 was their first chance. But what a chance. There are many interesting bases in the continental United States, but some jokester in the Bureau threw a dart at a map of the US and it stuck at a place called San Marcos, Texas, which had last seen active service as a helicopter training base. When the advance detachment arrived in one of the NMANG Gooney Birds, the members were aghast at the poor shape of the buildings and other facilities. But orders are orders, so the crew fell to with a will. Boxcars full of ammunition, bombs, toilet paper, and other necessary materials, and flatcars loaded with refuelers, trucks, handling equipment, and a Cletrac, were spotted by the railroad people so that the Cletrac could be unloaded first. With that versatile vehicle on the ground, the rest was easy. The Cletrac was used to spot the rail cars where most convenient, and with it the other vehicles were quickly towed off the cars and prepared for use.

The day following the arrival of the advance detachment the other Gooney Bird landed rather gingerly. Wally Depew remembers this flight all too well, for as he says, "There was an advance flight from Albuquerque to San Marcos on August 10, 1949. Steve Shambaugh was the pilot, Gus Lumry was the crew chief/engineer, and I sort of had been drafted from the squadron as the co-pilot. "We took off to the south, using every inch of the 10,000 foot north-south runway, then slobbered along for what seemed to me about five minutes before we gained 1,000 feet. I

never did see the weight and balance form (if there ever was one), but we had to have been grossly overgrassed. "The rest of the flight was uneventful. The shock came after landing. It was then that Shambaugh confided in me that our cargo had to be flown to San Marcos because it had arrived too late in Albuquerque for rail shipment... and that it consisted of all the rockets the fighter squadron would fire down at Matagorda Island. "Remembering the take-off, and knowing, of course, that the rockets carried their own propellant, I damned near fainted on the ramp".

When the 3200 members of the 63rd Fighter Wing arrived on the 14th of August, the Cajuns, Arkies, Okies, Texans, and the 188 felt that they had been shipped out of the country as punishment for some imagined wrongdoing. The Chamber of Commerce billed San Marcos as the "Gateway to the Hills," but for New Mexicans accustomed to the beautiful Sandias and Manzanos, the "hills" were mere pimples on the plains of Texas. The spring-fed San Marcos was said to have a daily flow of 200,000,000 gallons of crystal clear water, and Spring Lake was billed as "nature's fairyland," but there was no fairyland at the base. The heat and humidity were fierce, and the second week the area was treated to an invasion of locusts, grasshoppers, crickets, or some such plague. Walking, or driving, on the slippery streets was a real experience. The streets were literally coated with living and smashed bugs. Apparently the Guardsmen were being tested.

As in the previous summer, gunnery had to be flown some distance from home base, so the range at Matagorda Island was utilized for this purpose. Howard Shockey decided to bring home the target with his P-51, but bunged up the right gear and wing somewhat. Whitney Sullivan had to land on one wheel at Brooks Field when the other gear refused to come down; Williams followed him down to make sure all was well. One aircraft came back with a bullet hole caused when one of its own 50 cal slugs bounced off the rocks and joined up as the '51 pulled up from a strafing run. It has been alleged that Delbert Lewis test fired his guns on the ramp, but it has also been alleged that he has denied any knowledge of such an event. Unfortunately the historical record is not clear.

On the middle Saturday of the encampment the P-51s were called to demonstrate the skill of the Guardsmen. Bud Holcomb, Kirk Wimberley, Bob Sands, and Del Lewis had been practicing an aerobatic routine, so they were detailed to show what the 188 could do. They took off with full fuselage tanks, planning to burn off at least twenty gallons before show time, but they were called to perform before they had reduced the excess weight, so down they went.

Flying in tight formation the four ships came in low over the crowd, pulled up to perform a loop, throttled back slightly on top so they could maintain position, then came down bringing the power back in and climbed back up to repeat the maneuver, doing three loops, one after another. Then they went across the field at about three hundred feet doing line abreast rolls. Wimberley told each pilot to look straight ahead and do a roll on an imaginary point, then roll out and see if they would run over each other. Holcomb was always glad to get past that point without a mid-air collision.

Then they came across the field in a string, but as Wimberley started his roll Holcomb saw the ship hesitate, then recover and complete the roll. Sands did his roll next and his ship seemed to stop rolling, then recovered and finished the roll. Holcomb thought to himself, in fighter pilot fashion, "I'm better than those guys and I can handle it." When he got upside down the '51 stopped rolling and the nose started slowly drifting down and Bud could see where the nose was going to hit the runway. He had the stick all the way over to the left and the rudder all the way in, shoving as hard as he could, but he could see where he was going to splatter. About that time the '51 did a high speed snap and turned over and Bud caught it before it could hit the ground and started climbing. He took his foot off the rudder pedal and put it on the floor; it sat there and bounced up and down because he had been pushing so hard on the pedal. He had no sooner recovered and was climbing back up when Clay Keen called him on the radio and said, "Goat Smell 15, your engine is smoking." Bud didn't know that his words were going to be broadcast to the crowd when he answered, "If you were doing 61/3000 you'd smoke too!" The crowd thought it was a great air show; little did they know how close the pilots had come to crashing just because there was too much fuel in the fuselage tanks.

Sometime after summer camp there was a need for a cross country formation flight and a requirement that a landing be made at a strange field. Accordingly the flying echelon flew to Elko, Nevada, one Saturday. Finding the natives quite friendly, messing facilities better than average, and liquid refreshment readily available, the formation commander decreed that the entire group would RON. During the evening a fog descended on the area, enveloping a number of intrepid aviators in its ghastly grasp. Sunday morning, after appropriate services by the resident chaplain, consumption of enormous quantities of coffee, and some prayers, the entire squadron managed to stagger into the air, going on pure oxygen to overcome the effects of the fog. By the time the happy 188 entered the Kirtland pattern all were in good shape, and excellent landings were made by just about every man.

Between summer camps Guard activity was fairly routine, what with week end drills, normal maintenance on the aircraft, and casual flying by pilots who could spare time from work or from classes, but 1950 was to see some unusual happenings.

In early January, Waddill was out tooling around southwest of Albuquerque in AT-6C, 41-32934, when his engine quit. He was flying at about 2,000 feet, so he had very little time to look for a good spot to set the Texan down. He tried to call Kirtland tower, but his message was not understood. The tower operator asked for a repeat, but by that time John was landing the ship on the mesa. He made a fine landing, stopping just short of a large prairie dog town. He stayed with the aircraft from about 16:30 until 23:30, hoping that someone would spot the AT-6 from the air. Finally he started walking north toward Route 66, traveling all night and covering about fifteen miles. Once at the highway he had a little difficulty catching a ride, but eventually he was picked up and brought back to town, little the worse for wear, but dog-tired.

That afternoon Carl Hogrefe took some mechanics, a forty foot flatbed trailer, the C-3 wrecker, and a convoy of interested Guardsmen out to the site of Big John's embarrassing mishap. Daniel McKnight and Rhodes Arnold went along for the ride. Upon arrival at the AT-6 the crew chief

climbed into the cockpit, started the engine, checked it out thoroughly, and opined that it was in fine shape. After a short discussion of the problems incident to hauling the aircraft back to base on the flatbed, McKnight volunteered to fly the bird back to Kirtland. Base operations was called on the radio for helicopter support, just in case, and soon an H-5F arrived, flown by Capt. Patterson of the Air Force. Arnold, never having ridden in a helicopter, saw his chance and approached Patterson. A base photographer had ridden out with Patterson, but there was ample room for another passenger, so Arnold climbed aboard and was soon delivered to Kirtland. As for the engine stoppage; it was probably caused by carburetor ice, a common affliction for unwary aviators: McKnight took off without a bit of trouble and had an uneventful trip back to base.

On the ground that winter one Air Guard truck and trailer tangled with a city fire plug when Derral Smith, of Tech Supply, was rounding a corner at Central and Washington. The accident was probably due to icing (of the streets, not the truck).

In March the 188 suffered their first real casualty when John Lynn, the armament chief, was pulled out of an A-26 while occupied on a tow target mission. Duane Lang and Harold "Ballpoint" Macurdy were driving the '26 up and down the Rio Grande valley, using flaps to keep the airspeed down around 170, when they felt a jolt. Macurdy said "Wonder if someone fell out back there?" A minute later Lawrence Wise, the squadron photographer, called on the intercom, with great agitation, to report that John had Disappeared.

John, who weighed some 200 pounds, had latched on to the only 28 foot chute, a seat pack, in Personal Equipment and insisted on wearing it every time he flew. Crossing over that open hatch in the rear belly of the '26 seemed a little dangerous, so he wanted to be prepared. Unfortunately, being prepared this time was the wrong approach. As John stepped across the hole to get a target his D ring caught on something, his seat pack opened, the pilot chute popped out, was immediately pulled through the open hatch by the draft, and was quickly followed by the main chute. Larry was looking the other way at the time and did not see John leave, but leave John did!

The hole through which John was pulled was about two feet square (Arnold was unable to get his shoulders through the opening), but the enormous force exerted by the opening chute was sufficient to pull John backward through the hatch. He was doubled up and jerked through so quickly that he had no chance to react. The plywood floor and the aluminum skin were badly buckled, and, of course, John was badly injured as his shoulders and legs were forced through the opening. Both legs and his collar bone were broken at the time he left and he was knocked unconscious. The canopy had ripped because of the enormous force required to pull John through the hatch, so his fall was far faster than might have been expected. Had he not fallen into a tree, John undoubtedly would have died.

As he was falling through the air from the 12,000 foot level at which he had departed the aircraft he was seen by Mrs. Carey and a Mrs. Murray, who were driving to Albuquerque. They watched him disappear in the brush between the Santa Fe tracks and the Rio Grande. They

then stopped at a phone and called the State police to report what they had seen. Within forty-five minutes John was in the emergency room at the Veterans Hospital, where it was found that both legs were broken, and that one leg had compound fractures. At that time Air Technicians, state employees paid from Federal funds, had no insurance coverage of any sort, so the future for John was quite bleak. He had been so badly broken up that it was unlikely that he would ever be able to return to his duties. Eventually Senator Dennis Chavez was able to get a special bill through the Congress authorizing payment of some sort for John. Larry Wise was heard to say that he would never fly again; the experience had shaken him badly.

Carl Tucker had a minor accident one day in Able-8. He landed nicely and was waiting for the airspeed to bleed off as he headed for the end of the runway. Unfortunately, he had neglected to lower his flaps, so the sleek, hot Mustang just kept rolling along. When Carl realized that he was

going to hit the adobe wall near TWA, he uttered the first words which came to mind, "Oh Shit!" His mike button was depressed, so everyone listening on the tower frequency heard those never-to-be-forgotten words. This little collision with adobe put one each Able-8 in the shop for awhile.

A pilot has to be prepared, like a boy scout, for any eventuality, but some incidents are hard to be prepared for. And so it was, on a beautiful New Mexico day, when an intrepid airman took a ship up for a spin over the mountains, that one of those unusual incidents occurred. The pilot felt so good about flying that he decided to look at the scenery from a different perspective. He rolled the ship over on its back, paused for a moment, but before he could roll it over, he realized that there had been some precipitation in the cockpit. Looking down into the canopy, he was appalled to see a pool of yellow liquid. It didn't take more than a fraction of a second for him to realize that some other pilot had used the relief tube and that it had become plugged. The word "dilemma" came quickly to his mind, for he very obviously had one!

Popping the canopy was one solution; the other was quite distasteful, but finally the intrepid airman, comparing the cost of a new canopy with the cost of having his flying suit cleaned, bravely closed his eyes, held his breath, and rolled the ship upright. This selfless action might well have qualified the airman for the prestigious "True Grit" award, but, to his everlasting credit, he was too modest to file an application.

Kirtland was the field training site for the second time, probably because there was a problem of some sort over in Korea and all the Air Force facilities were pretty well tied up with preparations for extensive opportunities for travel in the Far East. There was a feeling that New Mexico Guardsmen might soon be allowed to participate in the fracas out there in the Orient. On or about the Fourth of July, the 188 was directed to fly ten of its P-51s (now F-51s) to McClellan AFB for preparation for overseas shipment, so it seemed only a matter of days before the troops would also be prepared for overseas shipment.

Because plenty of barracks were available and because of the tense diplomatic situation, the Commander decreed that all personnel would sleep at the base. Accordingly this third field

training session was somewhat like the second, but with a difference; the facilities belonged to the 188 and were located in a wonderful climate. Gunnery training had to be held in Arizona again, but this time half the pilots spent the first week at Luke Field, across Phoenix from Williams Field, where they had been accommodated in 1948. And, of course, the other half spent the second week at Luke.

Out west of Los Lunas there was an old World War II bombing range which was frequently used by the 188 for practice bombing. The Army had left quite a batch of smoke canisters out there, so the 188 would send someone out there to light up a pot or too so that the wind direction could be seen by the fighter-bomber pilots.

With the worsening situation in Korea there seemed to be little chance that the 188 would escape a recall to active duty, and as might have been expected from the Regulars, they 'invited' the staff and other senior members of the 188 to visit Robins AFB between Christmas and New Years, a most convenient time for pre-re-call instructions. So on the day after Christmas a Gooney Bird was cranked up and loaded with the appropriate passengers.

Late December is not exactly noted for excellent flying weather, and this December was a corker. Take off was no problem, but by the time the Goon arrived at Barksdale the warm frontal conditions had covered most of Texas and the southeast. An instrument letdown was executed at Barksdale and the '47 was refueled. By the time the bird had reached the runway freezing drizzle had caused the airdrome officer to close the field, so the crew and passengers sat for about an hour waiting for clearance. Finally the word came and the C-47 climbed up through the nasty, wet clouds, leveling off on top. No sooner had the aircraft reached cruising altitude than the radios decided to retire. With only the radio compass operative the Gooney Bird continued eastward, all aboard hoping that somewhere ahead there might be some nice weather. Maxwell AFB was seen though a hole, but the cockpit crew was dedicated and they pressed on, bound and determined to get to Robins that day. Luckily "Willie" Williams was up on his radio compass letdown procedures and the Goon broke out right over a drive-in movie in the town of Warner Robins, but all the spots were taken, so the C-47 continued on to Robins.

Next morning the Air Force people met with their counterparts from the 188, explaining the marvelous travel opportunities ahead, the requirements for recall, and all the other rather mundane actions which had to be taken prior to recall. After fifteen minutes (or maybe twenty) the 188 were told they could return home without delay. The only nice thing about the meeting was the bald (but untrue) statement that the 188 would be kept together as a unit and would go overseas as a unit. The Guardsmen had a great deal of pride in their squadron and were looking forward to showing what they could do as a unit.

A check with Base Operations revealed the unpleasant news that the Field was closed because of freezing drizzle, and that it might be closed the next day too. Warner Robins and Macon were not noted for recreational facilities, and the New Mexicans, used to beautiful Southwest weather, didn't have any real desire to play golf, or anything else, for that matter. Next day the forecast was the same, and the next day, the same, and the next day, the same. Finally, on the

morning of New Years eve, the go signal was given, and the stir-crazy bunch climbed aboard.

No sooner had the Gooney Bird broken ground when the right engine started running rough. Keen, in the left seat, turned back to look at all the passengers for their reactions. To a man all waved him on! He climbed on up though the stratus and set course for Hensley Field, the old bird shaking all the way, but not a soul wanted to spend another night in a place like Warner Robins, so the effort was worth the risk. The stratus ran out just east of Dallas and a nice landing was made at Hensley just before sundown. With the aircraft parked, the engineer unbuttoned the cowling on the rough engine, disconnected the ignition harness and drained at least a cup of condensation from the harness. Some knowing sports fan mentioned that there was to be a bowl game the next day, so the bird was quickly tied down for the night. The remainder of the flight to Albuquerque was made without incident, other than a collision with a duck, which caused some damage to the nose of the Gooney Bird. Obviously, the duck bought the farm.

When The official announcement was made to the press that the New Mexico Air Guard was to be called up for service in the Korean "Police Action", there was a notice that volunteers were needed to fill many vacancies. As word got out to the cities and towns men flocked in to Albuquerque to enlist in this home town squadron, assuming that the Squadron would be kept together as had the 200th Coast Artillery. As an example, Celedon Trujillo hitch-hiked to Albuquerque from Clovis, eager to enlist and become a supply man in this New Mexico squadron. The response was most gratifying, and by 1 February 1951, the Squadron was at more than 150 percent of authorized strength, an excellent exhibition of patriotism.

A couple of birds went to the shop on 8 February. Licht was about to touch down when he heard Dave Schmuck in the tower warning him that another P-51 was overtaking him. Sure enough, Hurst was right behind him, unaware that he was about to land on Licht. The warning from Dave probably averted a really serious accident; Hurst tried to avoid Licht, but he landed just to the right of Licht's fuselage. His propeller tore up the right horizontal stabilizer and the right wing, tore itself loose and flipped over his wing, stopping with the tip of one blade embedded in the left star of Hurst's bird. Hurst's left wing creamed the rudder and fin of Licht's ship, and Hurst's left landing gear leg was knocked off. Luckily, neither pilot was injured, but the two ships, 44-73357 and 44-73565, were pretty well chewed up.

Hot pilots are always to be found, and the 188 had at least one. James Savage might possibly have qualified for that MOS, for he once called Kirtland Tower for a gear check, did a slow roll as he passed the tower in an A-26, and allowed the tower people to look Down on the bottom of the '26. The tower operator said, "Your gear is still up." I thought it might be." replied Savage, as he applied the power and completed the roll. Joe Galassini was sitting on his toolbox in the nose, without a seatbelt, and he didn't leave the floor, the roll was so well coordinated. Galassini was with Doc in an A-26 back east towing targets, and when he reeled in the cable one time, he found that he had only fifty feet of cable left. He called Savage and reported that the gunners had gotten a little too close. Doc told Joe to let out another target to about 2,000 feet,

then he went back out to sea, turned and headed back toward the AA encampment. He low leveled the area and had Joe drop the target right on the tents. When he landed he was asked if he had lost a target, and he mentioned that one had been shot off, leaving only fifty feet of cable. He was then asked if he had put on another target; he professed ignorance, and denied that he had attached another target.

On another day Doc saw a flight of Navy Corsairs down below and headed downhill toward them. As he approached the formation he feathered both props and slow rolled through the Navy gaggle, un-feathered and left the Swabbies wondering what had happened. Galassini was along for that one too.

Just before the Robins trip, Steve Shambaugh had moved to Oklahoma and the Squadron had been taken over by Emmanuel "Chief" Schifani, who assumed command just in time to get mobilized. (Obviously, his crystal ball was AOCP). His tenure with the Squadron was quite short, for someone in the high command decided that he should attend Command & Staff School.

Training missions, alert missions, and the general run of training activities were all being accomplished with vigor, even though the CO had departed. Then late one afternoon a T-33 landed and parked near the P-51s. A youngish looking pilot climbed out, asked if he was at the 188, was given the affirmative, and walked into Operations. He greeted the lounging pilots something like this, "Hi Guys, I'm Bud Mahurin, your new CO." After a moment of stunned disbelief, the pilots gathered around this young 'bird' colonel, full of questions. After a few moments, Bud said, "Anybody want to get checked out in the T-Bird?" He didn't have to ask a second time. He flew one pilot after another until just before midnight, then announced, "I've got to go home and sleep with my wife; see you guys again in the morning." And sure enough he was back again first thing in the morning. Not long after Bud's arrival, the staff was informed one morning that the 188 would be moving to Long Beach Municipal Airport but the subordinate units would be disbanded and the personnel integrated into the Air Force. This came as quite a blow to many individuals they had looked forward eagerly to serving as a unit, now all the dreams were dashed. There was a general feeling that many Regulars had a strong distaste for Guardsmen, probably because of jealousy, and that Guardsmen would be denied promotions which many felt they deserved, and probably did!

But such are the fortunes of war. The railroad started moving in boxcars and flatcars, and the poor supply men were faced with the problem of determining which tools were organic to the Fighter Squadron and which had to be too turned in to the Air Force Base Supply on the east side of Kirtland. Organic vehicles, power units, oxygen carts, and all the many items belonging to the Squadron were loaded and shipped off to Long Beach. In the meantime the most necessary items of equipment and tools were being carried out to Long Beach aboard Air Force Reserve C-46s.

Even the Squadron C-47 got into the act, hauling its share of parts and people to the smog-filled paradise on the coast. On the final day of hauling the Gooney Bird was loaded with a tug, placed well forward, a heavy steel warehouse cart, the C-47 towbar, and quite a few boxes of

.50 caliber ammunition. Robert "Soapy" Casteel was the lucky driver for the last trip, and last it almost was.

Just before take-off Soapy was advised that he should avoid a forced landing at all costs; a sudden stop would undoubtedly cause the tug to exit the aircraft through the cockpit, probably removing the nose and its two occupants. The C-47 staggered into the air and Soapy set course for the west coast. Just after passing Needles, California, one engine coughed and retired. With that load, probably a wee bit over allowable gross, Soapy didn't have a prayer of keeping the Goon in the air, so he quickly consulted the charts and found that Dagget, a former Navy field, was straight ahead. Soapy executed one of the most careful and smooth landings of his career; he had learned the ropes on the old "one a day in Tampa Bay" Martin B-26, so he was well versed. He parked the tired bird on the ramp, and thanked his lucky stars. Examining the "good" engine, he and the engineer found that it was leaking oil badly and probably would have quit right over Cajon Pass.

Soapy called George AFB at Victorville and they sent over a 6-by to haul the crew over there. Upon arrival at George Soapy was told to ferry an AT-6 to Long Beach. He had little time in the Texan, and none in the recent past, so he had to ask the line chief how to start the old trainer. Once started the rest was a breeze and Soapy was soon quaffing suds with the other 188 at the Long Beach club.

The flying echelon, which had flown out in formation, led by Bud Mahurin in his T-33, was already flying "hot-gun" alert missions under the control of the First Fighter Group and the 27th Air Division. Although the designation, 188 Fighter Squadron, was physically located at Long Beach, it soon ceased to be a New Mexico Air National Guard squadron, as pilots, supply officers, clerks, mechanics, and other personnel were transferred to the Far East, Alaska, and other interesting places.

In spite of this difference, the 188 made history on 9 September, when the machine guns on one of the aircraft, parked facing North Long Beach, malfunctioned at about 0545 hours. The guns were loaded as the aircraft were flying alert with hot guns, and when the system somehow was activated, the guns spewed ball, tracer, and explosive ammunition toward what was referred to as "millionaires row". Luckily no one was hit, but a number of houses were damaged and trees, streets, and sidewalks were chewed up a little. It should be said here that "Hot Guns" had nothing to do with this episode, although he was present in the area. And, although the headlines said that the Air Force had shot up Long Beach, the fine print mentioned that the 188 was a New Mexico Air National Guard squadron.

Pilots used to the marvelous weather in New Mexico were somewhat annoyed by the conditions at Long Beach. Because of the inclement (a nice word for rotten) weather so frequently encountered at Long Beach, the pilots had to develop a procedure to cope with the situation. Returning from an alert mission they would fly from San Geronio peak out to sea, let down over the water, fly to the coast, then down along the coast to the Long Beach pier. Once over the pier they took a known heading to the airfield, made close-in approaches to the

runway, and greased them in every time!

While some of the Guardsmen were fighting the battle of Long Beach, with all of the problems attendant to being stationed stateside, near Los Angeles and its dens of iniquity, near the beaches and their riptides and undertows, many others were fortunate enough to get paid visits to Japan, Korea, Okinawa, England, Kirtland, and Alaska. Howell Lacey and Daniel McKnight were assigned to Special Weapons at Kirtland, and Dan got in a little B-29 time with the 4925th Test Group, witnessing A-bomb drops. "They also serve who only take cold showers" should be the title of Dan's experience with the 4925th, as related in the following paragraph.

Dan flew through the mushroom clouds of four tests at the Nevada Test Site, riding in the nose of a B-29 monitoring the radiation emitted by the clouds. On his first "combat" mission (Dan is the sole survivor of the people with whom he flew, the others having died of cancer; wonder if his pipe smoking helped?), Dan saw the blast, but by the time the cloud arrived at the altitude of the B-29 it was almost indiscernible and the crew had to fly through the cloud a number of times to pick up sufficient samples in the pods mounted under the wings. They chased the clouds to a point north of Los Angeles, then returned to Indian Springs, landed, and were told to exit the aircraft without touching any part of the structure.

The decontamination team, safely garbed in white coveralls and protective masks, approached the crew and were perceptibly appalled at the level of radiation exhibited by the crewmen. They were told to enter a vehicle, were then driven to the "decon" center, were ushered into the structure and told to shower very carefully, making sure that ample soap and water be applied to remove all traces of radiation. Unfortunately, the contractor had not yet hooked up the hot water system, so the worried troops were subjected to the ultimate indignity, cold, cold showers! After the first shower the men were checked with the radiation device and told to return for more cleansing. When finally free of radiation the men were sent to a supply counter where they were issued new clothing. One poor fellow wore size 14EEE shoes, so he had to go barefoot for a time.

The weary airmen then repaired to the dining facility (known to old hands as the mess-hall), and proceeded to satisfy their bellies. While so engaged they were surprised when their "contaminated" clothing was unceremoniously dumped on the floor near them; seems the radiation counter had not been calibrated prior to use. In his four trips through clouds, Dan accumulated a little less than 5r of radiation, and considering the apparent attrition rate of his fellow airman, is probably quite lucky to be alive. They also serve who fly through nuclear clouds.

Bud Holcomb checked out in the F-86 at George AFB and fully expected to go to Korea, but higher headquarters ruled that his work with the AEC precluded his going out of the country, so he, too, was assigned to Kirtland for a time. Bud eventually was shipped out to Travis AFB in California. Duane "Pinky" Lang went to England with Howard Myers and flew F-86s, watching out for the King and Queen, another case of very rough duty.

Rhodes Arnold walked into the headquarters of the 57th Fighter Group at Elmendorf and was amazed to find Stan Jennings and Elwin "Burr" Laxson waiting to meet Colonel John Mitchell, a well known fighter jockey from WWII, CO of the 57th and its three squadrons of F-94Bs. The adjutant went in to announce the presence of the three 188, and Mitchell was overheard to ask, "Where are these guys from?" "From the New Mexico Guard," answered the adjutant. Mitchell, not realizing that his every word could be heard by the waiting trio, said, "Some more of those damn worthless Guardsmen." The three were then ushered into the inner sanctum, saluted in proper military fashion, shook hands with the Colonel, and were then invited to be seated. After a little polite chit chat the "boss" started looking at the Form 66s of the three; much to his surprise he found that Stan and Burr had recently graduated from all-weather fighter-interceptor school at Tyndall and were the only two qualified all-weather pilots he had. He also noticed that Arnold was a graduate of the Supply School and had been a Base Supply Officer for two years. Later he was heard to say that Jennings and Laxson were two of the best pilots he had in the group. Stan and Burr found that their recent training and their flying experience gave them an in with many of the regulars, and in short order Jennings and Laxson were 1st Lt. flight leaders, with little chance for promotion, unfortunately.

Joe Murray, one of the early transfers to Korea, went to the 67th Tactical Fighter Squadron, where he flew the F-51 on ground support missions. He was on an armed reconnaissance mission over enemy territory on 18 July 1951, when he encountered flak while making a bomb run on a target. Another pilot saw flames come from the underside of Murray's ship, then saw one wing break off. The '51 crashed, apparently without any attempt on Murray's part to bail out. Bob Lucas, another early transfer to Korea, also was killed on an F-51 mission, but details of his death are not known. These two men were the only losses during the first ten years of the New Mexico Air National Guard's existence.

Although the war in Korea was not yet over, the Air Force in mid-'52 began releasing Guardsmen, returning them to state control through the medium of Air Base Squadrons, New Mexico being allotted the 8188, commanded by one Armando Nasci. When the 188 was finally reconstituted, and the 8188 disbanded, there were thirty four charter members back in harness, along with eighty-six other pre-Korea members. Operations commenced in late '52 with one P-51H, one T-6D, one C-47A, and Dale Elliott, sole pilot on the roster at the time.

Because the Air Force had taken over the Guard's facilities in 1951, the 188 led a hand-to-mouth existence for a few months, using borrowed rooms and borrowed equipment. Eventually, though, the westside facilities were vacated by the Air Force and returned to state control. Then F-51Ds began to fly in, along with two more T-6s, and things really began to return to normal. Later a C-45H was added to the inventory, principally for the use of the Governor and the State Staff. The rumor mongers were sure that jets were on base leg and would be parked on the ramp before summer camp in 1953, but when summer camp time rolled around, the Mustang was still in the old corral.

June of 1953 found the 188 quartered in tar paper shacks at the old bomber base at Natrona

County Airport near Casper, Wyoming. Now a part of the 140th Wing, the 188 joined the 120th from Denver and the 187th from Cheyenne, both still equipped with the Mustang, but this was to be the swan song for the popular fighter. The Air Force had built large numbers of F-86s and F-84s for the Korean War, and the F-89 and F-94 were now available for the regular units, so the Guard was slated to get the older jets, the F-80. There were still ample stocks of P-51s in storage, but experience in Korea had revealed that the jet was here to stay. To compare Casper with San Marcos would be like comparing California with Florida; both states have oranges but there the comparison stops. The accommodations were not exactly like the Alvarado Hotel, but the country was beautiful, the weather was comfortable, and the natives were friendly. Probably the most popular activity was the wild game barbecue arranged for and served by the members of the Retail Council of the Chamber of Commerce up on Casper Mountain. Bear, elk, deer, antelope, and moose were mixed in the delicious meal, along with the usual trimmings. A German band provided an hour of good music before dinner, and ten gallons of ice cream with white and chocolate cakes, polished the evening off. The hungry Guardsmen consumed 200 pounds of meat, 200 pounds of potato salad, 600 buns, two gallons of pickles, two gallons of olives, a case of cabbage, 10 dozen bunches of radishes and onions, and they drank 16 cases of soda pop and 30 gallons of coffee, not to mention milk and buttermilk. That was sterling western hospitality.

In Casper one could relax at the Riverside and a number of other recreational facilities, and on weekends, those with cars could visit Yellowstone, the various reservoirs southwest of Casper, Ten Sleep Pass, Lake De Smet, and other fishing holes. San Marcos may have had plenty of water for fishing, but flat land places just can't compare with the Rockies and the other western mountains. Except for a few complaints about the facilities at the base, the troops seemed to be quite satisfied with Casper.

Since the return from the Korean business everyone just knew that the jets were just around the corner, and in August the first F-80 arrived. Base supply had already received instructions to order parts, handling equipment, and all the other materials needed for a change of mission aircraft. Mechanics had been sent to jet engine school, and specialists had also been retrained to handle the systems peculiar to the jet. With the receipt of the '80s, the 188 entered a new era, equipped with America's first combat jet; an aircraft which had served so well in Korea in the early days of the war. Seeing the old Mustangs being retired evoked a certain sadness, but the general mood was quite upbeat.

Back in about 1950 the Squadron had replaced the Star and Bar on the fuselage sides with the beautiful Zia sun Symbol from the New Mexico State flag. Thus adorned the ENCHILADA aircraft were most attractive, but when the Air Force IG team made their annual visit the head honcho took exception to this scheme and summarily decreed that the aircraft be restored to proper markings. Oklahoma had painted their aircraft with an Indian head in headdress, also quite attractive, but the Indians bit the dust also. There seemed to be a lack of imagination in the ranks of the regulars.

When the F-80s were received they were "B" models, but the Bureau decided to run them all

through Lockheed Air Service to have new engines installed, along with other modifications, thereby causing all of the aircraft to be redesignated as F-80Cs. To help in the transition to the new jets, the Bureau furnished a T-33A, 52-9826 in April of '54 and the program of training continued apace as the '80s went in for rework, and returned as practically new birds.

That first summer camp with the F-80s was rather difficult; some pilots were not too sure that the Shooting Star would fly from the 5,000 foot plus altitude of the Casper airfield. Hard landings wore out tires at an alarming rate, and parts seemed to wear out more rapidly than expected, so the C-47 was kept busy flying to San Antonio for parts and tires. Lockheed sent Tony Levier, famous test pilot, to Casper to demonstrate that the F-80 would, in fact, fly better than a bird. He put on quite a show and convinced most of the doubting-Thomases. McKnight had a partial flameout just after a pass at a tow-target about fifty miles from base. He peeled off and turned back, chatting with the troops at the base. He was told what to do, but nothing worked. The engine was running fast enough to let him stretch his glide, so he had no problem getting back to Casper. He made a straight-in approach and landed safely. Such experiences also helped convince the newer troops that the '80 was safe to fly.

The previous summer General Joe Moffitt, Commander of the Wing, had been told that many GI vehicles had been seen at different watering holes in the Casper area. Accordingly, when the troops arrived for the '54 session there was a notice posted on each bulletin board to the effect that no military vehicles would be used for trips to bars, nightclubs, or such R & R facilities.

Gunnery competition that summer at Casper put the 188 in the driver's seat. Bob Sands took the honors, with Soapy Casteel a close second. Because of this fine performance, the 140th Wing chose a team of two pilots to attend the Air National Guard Gunnery Meet to be held in October at Boise's Gowen Field, home of the Idaho ANG. Walter Williams, of the 120th Squadron in Denver, was team captain, and Bob Sands, of the 188, was the other pilot.

Assembled at Gowen Field were more than seventy pilots from forty-eight states and Puerto Rico. Along with the F-80s of the 140th, there were F-84s, F-86s, and F-94s, all relatively modern jet fighters. As a team, Sands and Williams scored 803 points out of a possible 1000 points in air-to-air gunnery, air-to-ground, skip-bombing, dive-bombing, and rocketry. Second place, with a score of 790, was taken by the team from Washington state, followed by California with 778 points.

Because of this outstanding performance, Williams and Sands were selected to attend the Regular Air Force gunnery meet at Nellis AFB, Nevada, in June of 1955. The two received personal trophies and won a large trophy for the 140th. In all, fifteen of sixteen trophies were taken by the pilots of the 140th. Assisting Sands at Boise were Joe Galassini of Engineering, Earl Eckerson, Armament Chief, and Bob Griffin, Armorer. As the "top gun" at Casper, Sands was awarded the Strombery Trophy, donated by Jack Stromberg of Stromberg's Men's Wear. Soapy Casteel, Sands' alternate, was an employee of Strombergs and is well known to many of Albuquerque's best dressed men.

Although never equipped with the F-86, the 188 did use several Sabres, borrowed from another ANG unit, and marked as NMANG birds. They were used in 1955 at the USAF Fighter Gunnery and Weapons Meet at Nellis AFB in September, where Bob Sands beat out the regulars at their own game.

Nineteen fifty four had been a good year for the 188; they had walked off with the High Team award for gunnery at Casper and the Tactical Squadron High Score for air-to-air gunnery. This wasn't a bad record for their first summer camp with new aircraft.

For the Air Technicians July 27th and August 6th, 1955, were unusual days, for Albuquerque was plagued with floods, and the men were called out to evacuate people from their homes. Using Army National Guard trucks, which could easily operate in the waist-deep water, the Guardsmen waded from house to house, checking for residents, and, in many cases, finding elderly people who were in need of assistance. Some residents were carried bodily out of their homes and taken by truck to higher ground where the Red Cross could then take over their care. An unpleasant part of the experience was the overflowing of septic tanks in the area around North Second and Candelaria, where modern sewers had not yet been installed. The Guard was tested and found true to tradition; nary a complaint was heard.

The life of the Air Technician was generally quite routine, but the twentieth of August 1956, a call went out to the full time members of the 188, directing them to assemble for a trip to the mountains north of Pecos. This trip had nothing to do with the normal mission of the Air Guard; it was a mission of mercy. A little boy had been lost several days before in the wilds of the Sangre de Cristo mountains. A concerted search had been made without results, so it was decided that a large number of Guardsmen could make a sweep, keeping fairly close together as they went through the woods. Approximately sixty men assembled and went by convoy to the beautiful mountain scene.

The F-80 years were quite pleasant and the safety record was excellent marred only by one 'minor' accident, when Ken Sarason had brake problems, causing him to wrinkle the nose of an '80. He stopped in a ditch bending the nose upward, without injury to himself, but the poor Shooting Star was scrapped there at Casper. The winning of numerous trophies the selection of the 188 as the Outstanding ANG Tactical Flying Unit in 1956 the Spaatz Trophy, the 14th Air Force Flight Safety Award, and the Air Force Association "Unit of the Year" award, all could be viewed as evidence that the 188 was a damn fine squadron, as good as any in the nation and better than most

The last flights of the F-80s at Casper in 1957 marked the end of the era of summer camps at Casper, and the dawn of a new age, the Century Series fighters and summer camps at Volk Field in Wisconsin, the eventual employment of the 188 in Viet Nam with a newer version of the F-100, and the selection of the 188 to be a part of the Rapid Deployment Force. Twas an interesting era.

Rum runs to El Paso were a fringe benefit of membership in the Guard. The old C-47, '882,

made many a flight to El Paso International, where the passengers and crew rented cabs and headed for the Guadalajara de Noche Businessmen's Club, or to the San Luis Bar, where Los Alacranes and another Mariachi group could be heard, one after another. At the Manhattan Bar one could listen to the old man and his son playing beautiful Mexican tunes on the Marimba. And, of course, there were plenty of liquor stores, bars and night clubs.

One of the early rum run flights had landed at Biggs AFB, but SAC had very narrow attitudes about strangers landing at their bases; Guardsmen were treated as if they might be commies, or some other types of undesirable characters. Once was enough; El Paso International was a friendly place to land, so it became the gate through which many a bottle of booze passed, and through which many an inebriated, or even drunk, Guardsman was carried.

The word, inebriated, could be applied to an individual who returned from a foreign city in the company of two, more or less sober, fellow officers. When the cab arrived in front of the quarters at Fort Bliss, this inebriated pilot told the cabbie to take him home. Knowing that this airman had to fly an F-80 over the Army National Guard parade at 0900 that same morning, the other two officers finally hauled the pilot out of the cab and took him into the barracks. The bed assigned to the pilot had been sequestered by another, probably inebriated, officer, so the two friends stretched the pilot out on the floor between his bed and another, concerned that he be allowed to sleep at least an hour or two before flying the Shooting Star. At 0700, just two hours after being laid out on the floor, our pilot friend was awakened, led to the mess hall, immersed in coffee, dressed in his flying suit, and led to his aircraft. Being a 'natural-born pilot, he climbed into his steed, took off, joined up with the others, and flew, in perfect formation, with the other 188. They just don't make them that way anymore.

Even the C-45 was used for a rum run now and then, usually with members of the state staff aboard. If El Paso and Juarez seemed too conspicuous, one could always vary the plan and try Douglas and Agua Prieta, where Guardsmen were rarely seen and one didn't have to worry about the Fort Bliss MPs.

The P-51 sometimes had problems with the coolant system, and often, after a flight, the seals would allow a small amount of Prestone to leak out. This sweet tasting liquid usually collected on the ramp under the radiator, which was under the belly of the airplane aft of the cockpit. Vic Prejean had a habit of putting his finger in the liquid and tasting it to assure himself that it was, in fact, coolant. Orlando Sanchez had observed this habit, and had warned Vic that this was an unsafe practice. One day Vic reached down, put his finger in the liquid, put it to his mouth, made a wry grimace, and exclaimed, "That's piss!" Seems Orlando had also observed crew chiefs relieving themselves, conveniently, under the radiator, where the action and results might not be readily noticed.

After a Wing meeting at Buckley Field, Colorado, one day in the mid-'50s, old '882 was approaching Albuquerque from the northeast, coming in behind the Sandias. Apparently the C-47 was off course, at the wrong altitude, or something, for suddenly off the right wing there appeared an F-86 from the 93rd, vectored out to identify this suspected intruder. The pilot of

the '86 pulled in beside the Goon with speed brakes extended and throttle pulled back, recognized the Guard Gooney Bird, waved, and peeled off to head back to Kirtland. As he applied power the engine flamed -out, and with only 4,000 feet of altitude above ground, the pilot had no chance of getting an air-start, so he punched out and floated safely to earth under the big white canopy.

The F-86 continued downward, heading for a bean farm in the Estancia Valley. When the Sabre hit the ground there was a large explosion and a beautiful orange-lined black mushroom cloud was sent skyward. Clay Keen, piloting '882, took the Goon down close to the ground to make sure the pilot had landed safely, and he was observed rolling up his chute and waving at the Guardsmen. Clay circled a couple of times, then turned toward Tijeras Canyon and Kirtland. Just as he started to climb a little so as to clear the terrain in the canyon, both engines quit, causing some browning of britches. Coolhead Clay quickly adjusted the mixture controls, the engines caught, and the Goon resumed its climb. Keen turned back to the passengers and said, with a grin, "no sweat, GIs!"

Old '882 was taking the "wheels" to San Antonio for a meeting of some sort one time and Clay was driving. The 522 radio was acting up, so Clay took out his trusty screwdriver, made an adjustment and returned to his seat. Later, as the C-47 was approaching Kelly Field, Clay was advised that he would have to orbit at 11,000 feet for some time, and for some time it was; an hour and forty five minutes! Conditions in that part of Texas were really texas-crappy; practically solid overcast from 1500 feet up to Venus, with tornados and thunderstorms in all quadrants.

The orbit was quite interesting; most of the time was spent in the thick soup, but there was one area, somewhat like a funnel, where one could see an A-26, another C-47, and several other aircraft at different levels. Glancing upward the passengers could see a B-36 and a B-29, orbiting the same point above Texas. National Guard 882 was finally advised to commence descending, so Clay followed instructions and the Gooney Bird started down. Down, down, down the old bird went, turning this way and that way as advised by the controller. Suddenly the crew and passengers were treated to an excellent view of the countryside somewhere in Texas, but there was no sign of Kelly or San Antonio.

Clay calmly called GCA and said, "GCA, this National Guard 882. We are down below cloud bases, but there is no sign of Kelly Field." There was a pause, a long, embarrassed pause, as the controller tried to figure out what had happened. He had obviously landed someone at Kelly, but it certainly was not New Mexico 882! An apologetic voice finally came over the airwaves, to wit: "Sir, would you mind climbing back up to 1,800 feet and doing a 360?" "No sweat, GCA.", replied Clay as he started the climb back up into the soup.

Once again the controller called 882 and said, "I have you now, Sir.", and a few minutes later Clay was landing at Kelly. Apparently there was another National Guard 882 up in that rough, nasty crap. How both aircraft were able to descend from different levels at the same time without becoming close acquaintances is almost beyond comprehension. But that is what made

air travel so interesting back in the good old days.

December 1959. After a huge snowstorm isolated ranch families in eastern New Mexico, the state's lone ANG C-47 dropped 60 to 70 tons of hay over a seven-day period saving an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 sheep and an untold number of cattle.

7 April 1961 B-52B 53-0380, "Ciudad Juarez", of the 95th Bomb Wing, Biggs AFB, Texas, shot down by inadvertent launch of AIM-9 Sidewinder from a 188 Fighter Interceptor Squadron, New Mexico ANG North American F-100A, 53-1662. Two F-100s, piloted by 1st Lt. James W. van Sycoc and Capt. Dale Dodd, had made five passes at the bomber when, on the sixth pass, pilot 1st Lt. van Sycoc radioed "Look out! One of my missiles is loose!" The heat-seeker missile struck one of the BUFF's engine pods on the port wing causing failure of the wing structure, and subsequent break-up of the bomber. Pilot, co-pilot, crew chief and tail gunner successfully eject, but three other crew are KWF when the B-52 crashed on Mount Taylor, New Mexico.

In January 1968, the group was activated as a result of the Pueblo Crisis, and in June of that year the group's 188 Tactical Fighter Squadron and approximately 250 maintenance and support personnel were deployed to Tuy Hoa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. Remaining group members were assigned to various bases in South Korea. The unit flew more than 6,000 combat sorties in the F-100 and amassed more than 630 medals and decorations before release from federal active duty in June 1969. Capt. Michael Adams was killed in action and Maj. Bobby Neeld and 1st Lt. Mitchell Lane were listed as missing in action. The unit received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with a bronze "V" for valor.

The 188 TFS "Tacos" were federalized for active duty on January 26, 1968, under the command of Lt Col Fred J. Fink. Preparation for deployment to SEA consisted of sea survival training at Homestead AFB, Florida, a 3 day survival school at Kirtland AFB, and night attack training at Cannon AFB, New Mexico for all pilots.

Orders for deployment were received in May 1968 with a deployment date of 4 June, 1968. Out of a total of 800 personnel activated within the 150th TFG, the parent organization of the 188 TFS, only 28 officers and 334 airmen were authorized to deploy to Vietnam.

In addition, aircraft to be deployed consisted of 20 F-100Cs and 2 F-100Fs (two-seat versions). After some minor en-route mechanical issues, such as two jets with inoperative radios and a fuel leak in the tanker aircraft's refueling hose, the 188 TFS reached Tuy Hoa Air Base, RVN with 18 F-100Cs and 2 F-100Fs on 7 June, 1968, and was subsequently assigned to the 31st Tactical Fighter Wing. The last two F-100Cs arrived on 8 June, completing the authorized deployment of 22 F-100s and 25 pilots. The 31st TFW was the largest wing in SEA and the only fighter wing that had been fragged, as of the end of 1968, for all of the Corps areas on a daily basis plus about 40 sorties into Laos. The arrival of the 188 TFS brought the number of tactical fighter squadrons in the 31st TFW to five.

Pilot checkout began on 13 June, which consisted of one backseat ride in an F100F, one front

seat ride in an F-100F, and 18 F-100C missions as wingmen to become flight leads. By 30 June, the 188 TFS had 22 pilots operationally ready and had flown a total of 352 combat sorties. Enthusiasm was running high among the members of the 188 TFS. According to the Commander of the 188, "the only complaints were from those people he had to leave behind in New Mexico."

For example, on 23 July the HQ Provisional Corps Vietnam commended Taco 51 flight for its "professionalism" and "outstanding accuracy" for their part in a mission in the A Shau interdiction program. Again, in October, 1968 Taco 01 flight was commended by the TACP from the ROK Capital Division for delivering "all ordnance" within "ten meters of the point requested." The Fighter Duty Officer of the TACP commented that this was "commendable under ideal conditions and almost unbelievable under the actual conditions."

During July the 188 TFS had the highest number of hours flown among the five fighter squadrons of the 31st TFW. The 188 TFS repeated this feat in August and September. Additionally, the 188 TFS had the highest "C-1" rating (92 percent) of the entire Wing during the July-September quarter.

By the end of the year the Tacos had ranged the skies over SEA from the Mekong Delta to the Steel Tiger area in Laos, passing their 6000th hour of flight time in country. The 188 TFS regularly encountered 23 and 37 millimeter automatic weapons fire and had two aircraft hit by enemy groundfire during this quarter. Both aircraft managed to reach a safe haven without further damage. The last quarter of 1968 also saw the highest KBA of the squadron to date, with 119 confirmed and 72 estimated.

Others noticed the experience and expertise of the Taco pilots, as well. By the end of the year two Taco pilots were TDY to Phu Cat as part of the then-top secret, and extremely challenging, "Misty" FAC program which flew interdiction missions in North Vietnam and Laos. As of 31 December, Captain Cassaro had just left the squadron to join the program and Captain Kretz was scheduled to return in mid-January. There were additional Taco volunteers for the "Mistys" but the number of Misty slots authorized was then presently filled. At the turn of the New Year the Taco pilots averaged 150 combat missions and 220 hours of combat time.

Unfortunately, like the other ANG fighter squadrons, close calls, and eventually tragedy, found the Tacos as well. On 31 January, 1969, Captain Jerry N. Williams, flying an F-100C, lost elevator control returning from a combat mission due to battle damage. The aircraft crashed but the pilot ejected and was picked up about 40 minutes later. On 4 January 1969, Major Bobby Neeld and 1Lt Mitchell S. Lane were returning from a day combat mission when they apparently crashed at sea while diverting, due to weather, to Phan Rhang Air Base, RVN. No wreckage or aircrews were found, and the pilots were subsequently listed as missing-in-action (MIA). Lastly, Captain Michael T. Adams was killed in action on 4 May, 1969, when he made a high speed ejection from a rocket pass. A chute was sighted but he was reported dead on recovery.

The Tacos continued their outstanding ways until they departed on 18 May, 1969. Parting

laurels included those of 1Lt Gordon Denton, 188 TFS, who was one of the first pilots to win the newly established 31st TFW "Top Gun" Award in April, 1969. When the Enchilada Air Force finally returned home, they had accumulated 8 Silver Stars, 29 Distinguished Flying Crosses, 26 Bronze Star Medals, 270 Air Medals, 3 Purple Hearts, the AFOWA, the Presidential Unit Citation, the Vietnamese Gallantry Cross with Palm, 3 Vietnamese Gallantry Crosses with Silver Stars, the Vietnamese Air Service Medal (Honor Class), 289 Air Force Commendation Medals and one Army Commendation Medal.

15 November 1980. Personnel from the New Mexico ANG's 150th Tactical Fighter Group and eight of their A-7s arrived at Egypt's Cairo West Airport for "Bright Star," an exercise sponsored by the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. It marked the beginning of Air Guard training deployments to the Middle East outside of Turkey to prepare for possible U.S. military intervention in that critical region.

No modern flying tale would be complete without mention of the sighting of unusual phenomena, better known as UFOs, and the tale of the 188 is no exception. There were sightings and there were sightings; some mind boggling and others rather mundane. One of the mundane sort involved a sighting of a bright light almost directly overhead at high noon. Kirtland Base Ops called the 93rd Fighter Squadron and asked that a couple of F-86s be sent up to investigate. The Sabres took off and started to climb, intending to close on the intruder and identify him in standard ADIZ fashion. A visitor from the Motor Pool stopped at Base Supply and mentioned the strange object in the sky and the fact that two '86s were attempting an intercept. The Base Supply Officer, who also was commander of the Weather Station, took a look and saw, directly overhead, a very bright spot of light. He had taken a course in astronomy at New Mexico Western in the summer of 1946 and had learned that a certain object could be seen in the sky on very clear days, and that it always appeared to be a crescent. He got out the weather station theodolite, set it up and focused on the bright object. Sure enough, it was a bright little crescent. The Wx Officer called the local Weather Bureau and asked that the forecaster check the nautical ephemeris to determine the location of that particular celestial body on that date at that very time. A quick check revealed that, on that date, at that time, Venus would be directly overhead. The Sabre was one damn good airplane, but the wing tanks just weren't big enough! Base Ops was called and given the name of the intruder, which had not yet been picked up on the radar, so the 93rd boys were advised to return to base.

The other type of UFO is something else again, and cannot be explained away so easily. Frank Cronican, the first Squadron Commander, was returning to Kirtland from Oklahoma City one night in the C-47. He was in the vicinity of Anton Chico when he noticed what he thought might be an F-86 approaching with its landing lights ablaze. As the "thing" palled up even with the Gooney Bird, Frank and the co-pilot were astounded by the sight; it was almost as if they were peering into the maw of a white-hot blast furnace. The object stayed off their right wing for a short time, then drew away, climbing to the north. In a few minutes it was lost among the stars. Joe Galassini was the engineer on this flight and was equally astounded.

Another time Doc Savage was out flying a P-51 when he spotted a strange object in Tijeras

Canyon. He reported it to the tower and the operators soon advised him that they had it in sight. He flew around for some time trying to get close to the thing, but never succeeded. When he landed he was told to taxi over to Area "E", a restricted area on the east side of Kirtland, where the airplane was examined and he was interrogated. Nothing was discovered on the airplane and his interrogation produced negative results.

The 150th was partially activated in support of Operation Desert Storm. On Dec. 11, 1990, 44 members of the 150th Security Police Flight and other unit personnel deployed to Saudi Arabia. All members returned home by May 1991. In February 1997, the unit and six aircraft deployed to Aviano Air Base, Italy, in support of Operation Joint Guard. In April 1998, the 150th participated in Operation Southern Watch in Kuwait as part of the ongoing enforcement of the "no-fly" zone in southern Iraq. Approximately 100 guardsmen and six aircraft participated. Most recently, the unit was again partially mobilized in support of Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The "Tacos" have been deployed to every continent except Antarctica. The ops tempo of the unit is ever increasing with the advent of the Air Expeditionary Force and ECS participation. At any given time, a New Mexico Air Guardsman is deployed somewhere in the world.

Over 100 members of the 150th FW of the NM ANG headed to Kuwait in April 1998 for a six week deployment to support Operation Southern Watch. The unit sent six F-16s to Ahmed Al-Jaber AB via stops in Canada and Spain. Pilots flew missions the day after arriving in Kuwait and amassed 208 and a mission capable rate of 96%.

USAF Unit Histories
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