

As told by:
A1C Storey J. Sloane
111th Fighter Squadron



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS 147TH FIGHTER WING (ACC)
ELLINGTON FIELD, TEXAS 77034

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

09 June 2000

NEWS RELEASE

For more information contact:



Chief Master Sergeant Bob Heinrich
147th Fighter Wing Community Manager
Texas Air National Guard
Houston, Texas 77034-5586
Duty Phone: 281-929-2818
E-mail: robert.heinrich@txefd.ang.af.mil

On June 25, 1950, the North Korean army launched a surprise attack on South Korea. On June 26th, the U.N. Security Council condemned the invasion as aggression and ordered withdrawal of the invading forces. On June 27, President Harry S. Truman ordered air and naval units into action to enforce the U.N. order. Under the Selective Service Extension Act of 1950, General Order Number 148, President Truman ordered Air National guard Units into Active Military Service. It would take three years of bitter fighting to reach an armistice, which was signed on July 27, 1953. As we mark the 47th year since the end of this conflict, the article printed below (Unchanged from its original printing) clearly reflects that the values and courage displayed by Texas Air Guardsmen of that era are not unlike those that 147th Fighter Wing Members display today at Ellington Field. The 147th Fighter Wing's history began many years ago, with men and women dedicated to "FREEDOM." Today, we continue to build on that history and serve proudly!

In the attached article, the 136th Fighter Bomber Wing was formed to fight in Korea, and was made up of the 111th Fighter Squadron (FS) from the 147th Fighter Wing at Ellington Field, the 182nd FS from Brooks Air Force Base, and the 154th FS from Little Rock Arkansas. The 136th Fighter Bomber Wing "Inflicted more casualties upon enemy troops, destroyed more gun positions, supply dumps and boats than any other unit and did more damage to MIG-15's than any other fighter bomber outfit."

TSGT Charles W. Hill, 147th Historian.

As told by:
A1C Storey J. Sloane
111th Fighter Squadron



NOTHING CAN STOP THE TEXAS AIR CORP

As told by (Original Printing from "Texas Guardsman, February 1953)
Airman First Class (A1C) STOREY J. SLOANE
111th Fighter Squadron

As told by:
A1C Storey J. Sloane
111th Fighter Squadron

I was draining my third cup of the morning at Operations' coffee bar waiting for a flight to return for de-briefing, when flight leader John Paladino wobbled in still shaking his head groggily.

"Have I got a roaring headache!" he groaned. "Anyone got a coup of APC's?"

Well, I'm Public Information Officer, not a medic. So not having any of the panacea pills the boys get for everything from double pneumonia to athlete's foot, I just poured Johnny a cup of coffee. Then bit by bit, as Capt. Jack Miller and 1st Looeys Wood McArthur and Bill Howard straggled in, the story behind the headache came out.

The boys had flown an F-84 strike at the marshalling yards of Inaju, near the notorious Yalu River. They'd bombed and strafed--and pulled up off target, climbing high wide and handsome away from MIG Alley and back to home sweet home. They reformed in fingertip formation, and flight leader Paladino called for a routine check-in on damage to targets or themselves. That's all Johnny could recall. Second-in-command Miller took over the story.

Without warning, Paladino's plane exploded into a series of strange aerobatics. Pulling alongside, Miller noticed him tugging fitfully at his oxygen mask. Then suddenly Pal's plane banked sharply to the right and careened into a screaming dive. Thinking Paladino had recognized landmarks below, and they were approaching too close to the off-limits truce talk town of Kaesong, Miller and the others plunged after him.

But Johnny was accelerating too fast--faster than they dared go without peeling off their wings. Johnny flew thru Mach--and his plane pitched toward the sky again, as F-84's always do in passing the sonic barrier. He rose almost perpendicularly--slower and slower, near-stalled, and then fell away in another steep Mach dive. By this time, all three shouted over radio, asking if he was O.K. They heard a feeble "Yes, yes," then silence--and Johnny's jet swept into another wild roller-coaster pattern.

"Throttle back, throttle back;" they shouted. And with a last effort, Johnny did. His ship leveled off, climbing slightly and still streaking through the skies at 500 mph or better.

Instantly Miller radioed McArthur. "Woody," he called tensely, "get in front of Pal and give him a jet blast. Maybe the bouncing will revive him. No--hold it," Paladino had suddenly slumped over the stick.

Miller thought fast. Back in the barracks in Japan, he and the boys had often wondered what could be done in just such a spot as this. Miller had advanced a plan that was crazy, but maybe not so crazy. They'd all laughed it off, including Miller.

As told by:
A1C Storey J. Sloane
111th Fighter Squadron

But here was Paladino with oxygen system malfunction--a few more minutes would wash him out for good. Another roller-coaster could peel off those wings like banana skins. No, he had to try that crazy scheme--or watch his buddy die.

"Woody," Miller cried, "slip under and catch Pal's right wing tip. I'll get the wing on this side. We've gotta get him downstairs."

Gingerly, McArthur and Miller slipped in parallel to Paladino's speeding ship. The slightest error could mean a three-plane crash. Gently, cautiously, they tapped and patted their buddy downward--never actually touching, always with a several-inch slipstream cushioning their wings.

Back of them, Howard gnashed his nails and talked to himself. "Holy smoke," he said, "they're crazy. They're crazy. But they're doing it. They're gonna do it!"

Down they went, steadily down, at 1000 feet a minute, shouting, "Snap out of it, Johnny. Snap out of it!" all the way. Once McArthur's wing flicked up too hard, snapping Paladino's plane almost into a sharp uncontrolled bank to the left. With lightning speed, Miller dipped his wing under again, cautiously tapped him back to level flight. At 17,000 Paladino shifted uneasily. At 15,000 he shook his head groggily. And at 13,000, with his buddies urging him on, he lefted it, muttered, "Oh, my aching head," and fuzzily took over the controls.

His combat teammates had flown the ship for him for 15 minutes in one of the most unorthodox episodes in the history of flying. Thirty minutes later--acting as calm as though this was a routine thing--they were pouring cream in their coffee back at the base.

I phoned Combat News Section a few minutes later, with what seemed to me the hottest human interest story to come out of the war--but the sergeant who took the facts had a "you don't say air that told me he believed the story about as much as a Pravda editorial. But an hour later his section chief was burning up the lines, asking me for more poop and pictures.

I had already asked Howard if he'd shot pictures of the fantastic rescue with his camera. "Hell no! He'd answered. "My 50-calibres are on the same trigger as the camera. Nervous as I was during that 15 minutes--even if I'd thought of it--I know darn well I'd have pulled the wrong switch and shot all three of them down."

That wing tip wingding was the most spectacular single example of teamwork and flying skill the 136th displayed. But through the outfit's 13 months of Korean combat, it forged an all-over record few units in history can equal.

F-84's were built for strafing and bombing, not for interception, so our orders told us to avoid and evade MIGs whenever possible. They were too fast for us--it was the job of the glory-boys in the Saberjets to take them on. But on many occasions, our boys turned and shot them

As told by:
A1C Storey J. Sloane
111th Fighter Squadron

from the skies. And a check of all records available shows we built up the best box-score of any fighter-bomber outfit in Korea or World War II for knocking off enemy planes--5 destroyed, 7 probables and 69 damaged.

The thousands of missions flown were not without cost. We lost 35 of our original 195 pilots--either killed, missing, or POW. And that included our Wing Commander, two Group Commanders and one Squadron CO.

It was the wonderful spirit of that Wing CO, Col Prendergast from the 111th FS, that infected the entire unit. The Old Man had four sweet kids, the sweetest wife you ever saw, and a thriving insurance business. But the budget-slicers had whittled our Air Force down to a point where Al feared we'd be caught with our cannon spiked--just as we had at Pearl Harbor.

So almost single-handedly, he organized the Texas Wing of the Air National Guard. He enlisted bank officers, businessmen, guys with families who believed as he did that it was vitally important to serve as week-end warriors to defend the country that had been so good to us all. The men were such high-caliber that when we, as the first ANG unit ever federalized as an intact group for overseas service, were alerted for Langley Field, Classifications was amazed to discover that 87% of the enlisted airmen qualified for OCS. The boys didn't go though; we were a unit, and meant to stay that way.

Before Langley, we'd been Texas' own Air Corps--unofficially anyway. But the 181st Squadron was ordered to remain at Hensley Field as protection for the Dallas-Fort Worth aircraft production area. It was replaced by a Little Rock, Arkansas, outfit--the ANG's 154th Squadron. At first, we were like strange dogs, sniffing suspiciously, but we fused quickly, and openly announced the marriage the day we arrived at Langley--marching 1500 strong through the streets singing "The Eyes of Texas" and "The Arkansas Traveler."

We proved to skeptical Army regulars that our MinuteMen had the stuff when Gen. John K. "Uncle Joe" Cannon ordered a firepower display for Gen. Mark Clark, and other top brass. We'd had our jets only a few days, but we flew daylight to dark for five days, and then put on the demonstration. The Old Man didn't have to wait for the generals to tell him how his boys did--Gen. Cannon's earlobe-to-earlobe grin told him.

We were all puckered for Paris when the orders came through--reading Korea. French phrase books sold at an all-time low. We left a squadron at a time to phase in gradually replacing the hottest outfit over there--the 27th Fighter Escort Wing. First week over, I spent a couple of hours on the carpet for disagreeing with one of their boys when he allowed as how no outfit in the world could replace the 27th--especially not a flock of bank cashiers and real estate salesmen.

We set out to prove pretty quick he was wrong. Some of the boys had less than 30 hours in jets. One boy fired his machine guns for the first time when he let fly at an enemy concentration. But right off the bat, guys like Lt. Ollie Oligher and his wingman, Lt. Bill McMurry, started breaking records and setting precedents.

As told by:
A1C Storey J. Sloane
111th Fighter Squadron

Now, jets are the thirstiest airplanes know to man, and almost as big an enemy as the flak was the problem of sucking up your last spoonful of fuel and having to ditch. If a guy stayed

over the target three or four minutes too long, he was taking his life in his hands--exactly why MIG's liked to bounce the boys on the return trip when they didn't dare waste time fighting.

Ollie and Bill had flown escort for B-29's in one of the heaviest daylight raids of the war--and flak and MIG's were thicker than chiggers at a picnic. One of the 29's had been shot down south of Chongju, just a chopstick's throw from the Yalu River, and the crew had chuted into the bay. Another element of the 136th had run too low on fuel to risk flying Combat Air Patrol (CAP) for the downed fliers, so Ollie and Bill hovered to fend off potential captors. Meanwhile, they called in a Gruman Albatross.

"Dumbo" landed in the choppy bay, and the boys got set to take off jubilantly--with barely enough fuel to reach the nearest friendly airstrip. They circled once to make sure everything was OK and realized the seas were so high the Dumbo couldn't see three of the floundering airmen.

Ollie and Bill radioed the Dumbo to taxi along in a line under a straight line they'd draw above them--and they'd reach each man in turn. Dumbo followed the plan, which took ten minutes to complete, and picked up all survivors. Ollie and Bill debated quickly after a look at the fuel gauges whether to ditch right there while they had Dumbo to rescue them, or try to make it back to base. They had less than 100 gallons each--barely enough for two or three circles of the airstrip if it should be socked in or an emergency landing.

They decided the planes were too sorely needed to be lost, and Ollie signaled, "Let's go home." They climbed quickly to 31,000 and stop-cocked their engines, completely cutting off all fuel. By this time, they knew they had only enough fuel to control a landing. That meant no margin for error on approach, no margin for emergency at the field or other ships, and plenty of trouble if the engine got too cold to start up.

But they had no choice. It was the only card left in the deck. They glided back in the longest dead-engine jet plane glide I've ever heard of--more than 125 miles to base. In sight of the strip, they attempted air starts--really sweating it out, as the engines failed to respond; finally sparked, and roared on.

Ollie came in neatly, cleared the runway, and turned off into the taxi strip. His engine died right there. Bill touched the ground, raced a few hundred feet down the runway--and flamed out before he stopped. Neither ship was so much as scratched. After that, it became common practice to stop--cock and glide home, and many a pilot's life, including other groups that picked up the trick, from us, was saved thereby. Ollie chortled gleefully, "I always told you guys there was 100 miles in this plane nobody ever used!"

A few months later, our boys executed the greatest mass glider feat of the war. The Infantry was having it rough and the weather, according to the "the world's greatest staff weather

As told by:
A1C Storey J. Sloane
111th Fighter Squadron

officer," Capt. Reila Griffiths, was all clouds and no silver lining. Ceilings were low as 100 feet and getting lower. Joint Operational Control (JOC) called for a strike, but no other outfits thought they could make it, because a sock-in on all Korean fields was expected shortly. It would be nothing but mass suicide with no place to land--and most Korean strips surrounded by 2500-foot mountains.

"Well," said the Old Man, "They need us--let's do it!" And with the colonel personally leading the flight, 32 of the boys climbed into their F-84's and flew out. It was weather all the way, with everyone on instruments and barely able to see one another's wingtips to avoid mid-air collisions. The only opening came over the target area for a few minutes--and they made the most of the Commies not expecting visitors in that soup, then turned and headed back to our Korean strip.

It was socked in tighter than a un-Sanforized girdle, so the colonel headed the boys back toward our auxiliary base in Japan, 120 miles across the waters. But they'd had to stay on target longer than expected waiting for a break in the soup, so fuel was mighty low. This could have been the end of 32 F-84's and their pilots if anyone had panicked. But the colonel had expected the weather "Up to 35,000 feet," he told them, "then throttle back all the way. We're going to glide to Japan."

Well, they sweated plenty on that trip. It was still weather all the way, and flying instruments with 32 ships is like spending Halloween in a cemetery. Its nerve-wrecking stuff. But the boys were mighty good on blind flying and one by one they circled and landed without losing a ship. Were they ever happy to be home? Capt. LeeRoy Chadwell sank back in his seat, pulled off his helmet, and sighed as he pulled the T-handle of his parking brakes. "Crump! Crump!" went two empty tip-tanks, thudding down off his wing tips. The veteran captain's relief was so great; he pulled a 30-day wonder boner--yanking the wrong handle.

We weren't always so fortunate. Many of our men were captured after bailing out in enemy territory. Others escaped under heavy fire, in dinghys, swimming, and wading through rice paddies until 'copters, destroyers, or Dumbos picked them up. Just how it was done is still top secret--the commies would love to know, and since their Washington embassy takes every magazine published in America and mails them to Moscow for study, this is no place to tell them.

But I can tell you about the funniest damned rescue we ever had--of Capt. Jim Crump of Houston. Crump was hit by flak on Dec. 8, east of Sinanju. He couldn't hold altitude long enough to bail out, so he bellied her in on the mud flats of the Chong Chong estuary. Bullets were still exploding all around him, and Jim grabbed his dinghy, inflated it and started paddling for dear life.

Well, the heavy flying clothes got in his way, and the tide was against him. To make matters worse, details of enemy troops were headed out in small boats to capture him. Dumbo

As told by:
A1C Storey J. Sloane
111th Fighter Squadron

circling overhead was alerted on his crash, and came in for a landing--but progressed too slowly for old "Sniff" Crump. Figuring he was too big a target in his dinghy, he splashed into the water, headed for Dumbo.

He didn't get to swim any faster than he rowed, but the Dumbo finally got to him and hauled him aboard. Well, in December, any resemblance to Korean waters and those of Miami Beach is purely coincidental. So when they got "Old Sniff" back to our base and I got a look at him, he was still shaking and quaking--and as blue as a three-cent stamp.

I ought to brag a bit about our ground crews too. While the flyboys were setting records in the sky, the airmen were setting precedents at maintenance. Because it took more than an hour to load or unload pylon tanks, they designed a tool that cut time in half--adopted by the Air Force, and now manufactured in the states as part of regular kits.

Because hinges were breaking on elevators in dive-bombing, they manufactured a modification in our machine shops. When new hinges finally came through requisition channels, ours were proven superior--and were adopted by the Air Force. Malfunction of radio compass spindles made things rough for our pilots who flew in all kinds of weather--mostly bad. Our ground crews, operating with businesslike efficiency, manufactured them in our own shops 90 days before they came through.

But even our terrific ground crews couldn't make interceptors out of our fighter-bombers, so we didn't have any aces in the outfit. Ollie gets credit for 1/2 destroyed, 2 probables, and 5 damaged. And how a guy gets 1/2 a MIG is a story in itself. He and Capt. Harry Underwood were part of a B-29 escort near MIG alley on the Yalu when one of the boys spotted a MIG wagging his tail under Ollie. Ollie rolled over for a look and then realized that the MIG's superior speed would let it spurt out of sight before he could roll back right-side up to pursue him. So Ollie let him have a burst from upside-down position. He followed him for miles, firing burst after burst, until he just plumb ran out of ammo. He'd scored hits, but hadn't downed him--and was he mad.

But Underwood slipped onto the slowed-down MIG's tail, and give him the coup de gras. They bot followed him down and watched him crash. Ollie was one of the few "foreigners" in the outfit--he'd joined us at Langley from Pittsburgh. But after that bag, we made him a naturalized citizen of both Arkansas and Texas.

Our slower jets didn't allow us to be aces in the original sense of the word, so we created another sense. Any guy who knocked out five locomotives became a Locomotive Ace. Every guy who sealed up five tunnels--usually with North Korean trains full of supplies and men hidden inside during the daytime--became Tunnel Ace. We had our Bridge Aces and Truck Aces too. And Capt. Paul Straw of San Antonio turned out to be the world's only Camel Ace--he got five out of a North Korean pack Safari.

As told by:
A1C Storey J. Sloane
111th Fighter Squadron

Yes, there are tall tales told about Texas--and I've told a few myself. About ranchers so rich they wear chinchilla chaps and diamond studded boots. Or land so rich a hound dog struck oil while burying a bone in the backyard. But what I've told you about the "Texas Air Corps"--with due credit to the Arkansas Squadron--needs no lily-gilding. The truth speaks proudly for itself.

The boys are back behind their desks now, and changing diapers of the babies born but a few months after they shipped to Korea. And the insignia of the Indianhead, the Ace in the Hole, and the Eagle over the Alamo are winging over Texarkana again instead of Taejon.

But none of us will ever forget the JATO take-offs and the instrument landings, the murderous mountains surrounding our airstrips, and the murderous MIG's and flak surrounding out F-8R's.

We proved what we set out to prove--that an Air National Guard unit made up of citizen-soldiers could stand up with the Regular Air Force's best. We were the best in everything we did--from setting the all-time Air Force safety record of 105 consecutive accident-free days to knocking out more enemy planes than any other fighter-bomber wing in history, and even placing three men on the all-Far East hoop squad. We were the best because we worked to make it that way.

Guys like Capt. Russ Crutchlo brought planes in though blinded by shattered glass and bleeding from both eyes. And Russ and the rest worked their hearts out because of the inspiration of the citizen-soldier who led us into battle and then died there himself--Col. Al Prendergast.

The Old Man, got it on his 22nd mission--a lot more than a Wing Commander with 2000 men under him needs to make. His own words are his best epitaph: "It doesn't matter if I miss the target," he said, "just so long as the boys know the Old Man's up north with them."

It was that kind of leadership that made us break records and precedents and made us chase MIG's when they were supposed to be chasing us. And it brought a particularly welcome wire on the occasion of the bag of our first MIG:

"At the risk of reopening an old controversy, it appears the commies from up North made a grave error in tangling with the 136th from down Texas-Arkansas way. Congratulations on your first MIG in so short a time in combat. Proud to have you on our team.--(Otto P. Weyland, Commanding General, Far East A.F.)
