



**THE SABRE – in SAAF Service**



**Willie Burger**



2 Squadron (Flying Cheetahs) was one of the four Squadrons making up the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing in Korea. The other three squadrons were numbers 12, 39 and 67 of the United States Air Force. The Flying Cheetahs completed 10 597 fighter-bomber (air-to-ground) sorties using Mustangs.



The Squadron exchanged its Mustangs in 1953, for the American F-86F-30 Sabre. 39 Squadron (USAF) was withdrawn and the remaining two USAF squadrons in the Wing also converted to Sabres. The Sabre was also used as a fighter-bomber. The Cheetahs flew another 899 operational sorties with Sabres, and lost only one to ground-fire. Another four were lost in accidents, but the South Africans managed to hand back 17 when hostilities ceased.

2 Squadron's Sabres were numbered 601 to 622 and each pilot had a Sabre allocated to him. As with the Mustangs, many pilots also "named" their aircraft. The Officer Commanding of the Cheetahs, Commandant Ralph Gerneke, had Sabre 601 - Code letter "A". He named his aircraft SHERDANOR II - after his wife Sherry, and his sons Dane and Nord. Nord is well known in Pretoria, being the Bossman at JIX. When Ralph returned home, his Sabre - 601 "A" was renamed RENKINS by an unknown pilot. Sabre 602 "J" - named IMP VIII, was flown by Stan Wells, and 604 "K" - BLACK DICK, was flown by Hank Ludick.

The following table contains the Numbers, Codes and Names of SAAF Sabres in Korea, which have been photographed or written about. The list is not complete. Where known, the pilot's name also appears.

<b>No.</b>	<b>CODE</b>	<b>AIRCRAFT NAME</b>	<b>PILOT</b>
601	A	SHERDANOR II/RENKINS	RALPH GERNEKE/??
602	J	IMP VIII	STAN WELLS
603	B	RUTH II/MISS CLOUDEYES	??/??
604	K	BLACK DICK/BEVKENEVE	HANK LUDICK/??
605	C	SHARONNE	ED PIENAAR
606	L	TOMTIT/LITTLE PHYLLIS	??/??
607	D	JUST JOAN	MIKE GEDYE

608	M	(Unnamed) <b>Crashed 28 Feb 53</b>	RODNEY V ROOYEN (E)
609	E	MALOBOLA	??
610	N	CARLYNEVE/GLOW WORM	?? /LIONEL DIXON
611	F	DANNY BOY	??
612	O	STARDUST	JOHN KOEKEMOER
613	G	PRECIOUS POEKSIE <b>Crashed 21 Apr 53</b>	JOHN ROBERTS (E)
614	P	VALERIE <b>Crashed into sea 28 Aug 53</b>	MIKE BOTHA (K)
615	H	KEVRIC <b>Crash landing 19 Apr 53 – W/off</b>	PIET VISSER
616	Q	LADY OF LORETTE <b>Shot down 21 Jul 53</b>	GEORGE THOM (pow)
617	I	HELEN	??
618	R	GAY JANE III	AL RAE
619	M	MONKEY IV <b>Crash landing 19 May 53 W/off</b>	JOHN COETZEE
620	H	KEVRIC II	PIET VISSER
621	G	BEVKENEVE	??
622	Q	(Unnamed)	??

Photographs show three more names painted on SAAF Sabres in Korea; - they are NAUGHTY NELLY, UNJUST BRUNO and VIOLA. Numbers and Code letters were either not in the frame, or the photos were cropped during printing.

The first five Sabres (601 to 605) were delivered in late January 1953. The conversion to Sabres was eased by the fact that all but two of the pilots had undergone Vampire conversion in South Africa. As the first squadron of the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing to convert to Sabres, it was up to the South Africans to develop a training curriculum and documentation. Pilot training began on 4 January with ground familiarisation, conducted by instructors from the 4 and 51 Fighter Interceptor Wings, while flight training consisted of dual time on T-33 jet trainers. The ground personnel had been trained in Japan during November 1952.

After some static cockpit time, first flights were undertaken, and by 7 February all 28 pilots had "gone solo". Training took place in earnest during February and by 12 March the Squadron was fully operational, taking part in four missions over the Yalu River, in the area commonly known as 'Mig Alley'.



During April crews were trained in dive bombing techniques, in which role the Sabre proved to be an ideal platform. Carrying drop tanks on the outer wing stations, and



either two 1000lb (454kg) bombs or napalm tanks on the inner stations, the Sabre had a very effective range. It was during a training mission that Rodney van Rooyen gained practical experience with an ejection seat. Flying **608**, Rodney was on an air to air exercise when his radio compass failed. Following his leader down he became lost in the overcast and when his tanks ran dry he was forced to eject. Fortunately he landed without injury in a rice paddy. Being the first SAAF pilot to leave an aircraft in this manner, he put his experience to good use, lecturing to his colleagues on the do's and don'ts of using a "bang-seat".



Piet Visser, flying **615**, (KEVRIC), took off on 19 April as one of nine SAAF Sabres in a United Nations force of twenty four aircraft. The formation dive bombed troops south of the Sarwon-Sohung railway and then returned to base. Preparing to land, Piet found that he had a problem; - he could not lower the undercarriage and flaps, or extend the dive-brakes. In an attempt to save the aircraft, he throttled back to stall speed, held the nose up, and brought the disabled aircraft down on its belly. Luckily he walked away, but 'Kevic' was a write-off. The source of his problems was traced to burnt out wiring, which caused a complete electrical and hydraulic failure. Two days later Johnny Roberts ran out of fuel. Guided by a USAF F-84 he attempted to glide to air base K-2. Realising he lacked sufficient height, he ejected and **613** (PRECIOUS POEKSIE) was destroyed. Johnny Roberts was killed after the war when flying a Tiger Moth in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia).



To celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's coronation on 2 June 1953, a flypast was organised. The practice flight on 29 May nearly ended in disaster. On take-off Mike Gedye lost the outer shell of one tyre. Advised of this by the control tower, he calmly decided to continue with the flight. His return proved to be both exciting and a display of superb airmanship. Flying over the threshold he was greeted by a hoard of fire-trucks and rescue vehicles. Gently easing the Sabre down, he landed faultlessly, the canvas and inner tube holding to the end.

It was decided to destroy the Communist held airfields. These attacks began on 23 July and continued up to the deadline of the armistice at 22h01 on 27 July 1953. It was during this campaign that the South Africans lost the only Sabre to be downed by enemy action. 2nd Lt George Thom had recently returned from an leave in Japan, overweight and keen to complete his 100 missions. An armed reconnaissance flight on 21 July was to be his 72nd and last sortie. Al Rae, the flight commander, was forced to abort and George, flying **616**, (LADY OF LORETTE) took over command of the three-aircraft flight. The weather was overcast and miserable and it was pure luck that George spotted some vehicles through a break in the clouds. The Sabres dived on the target and within seconds George felt his aircraft sustain two hits. Warning lights flashed indicating fire in the tail-pipe and forward engine compartment, close to the fuel tank situated behind the cockpit. Adopting standard procedure he cut the engine to halt fuel flow. Barry Ross came up alongside and by radio told George to eject as his aircraft was burning fiercely behind the cockpit. George ejected and was taken POW.

The war was dragging to its inevitable end, radar-bombing operations were no real challenge and the flying had become routine and boring. Because of this, the last day was greeted with a great deal of enthusiasm and effort. On the morning of 27 July 1953, the ground crew proudly reported that 14 Sabres were airworthy, armed and ready to do battle for the last time. The Squadron proved its commitment by flying four missions and establishing a new record (for Sabres) of 41 sorties in one day.

Although a peace agreement had been signed, flying continued. It was important to remain highly visible and continue observation of North Korean activities. The last

SAAF pilot to be lost in Korea was Mike Botha. While engaged in a maritime exercise with HMS Ocean of the Royal Navy, Mike reported that the controls of his aircraft had "locked", and that he could not control the Sabre. He was ordered to fly toward the coast and once over the land he ejected. Instead of landing safely he was blown out to sea and came down a mile from the shore. Immediately helicopters and naval craft rushed to the scene, but in vain. After two days the search was abandoned and Mike Botha was posted as missing - presumed dead. (Mike was flying Sabre – number 614 - Valerie).



2 Squadron had entered the "jet-age" in style, when it received Sabres in Korea. To the pilots and ground crew returning, the Vampires "back home" must have seemed like ox-wagons. However, the Vamps were soon to be replaced as the SAAF's front-line fighter.

The SAAF received the Canadair CL-13 Sabre Mark 6 in 1956. 34 were assembled at 1 Air Depot, Voortrekkerhoogte, and towed by road to Air Force Station (AFS) Waterkloof. 1 and 2 Squadrons were equipped - 16 for 1 Squadron and 18 for 2 Squadron. On the morning of 21 September 1956, the sound barrier was broken for the first time in South Africa. Four Sabres (two from each squadron), were north of Hartebeespoort Dam, the pilots doing individual air tests and evaluation. After the tests, as the aircraft approached Pretoria, permission was given to go super-sonic. Capt John Inglesby was

at an altitude of 40 000 feet (12 000 m) and went first. Captains Larry Eager, Ed Pienaar and Ronnie Nienaber were lower, and climbed to 40 000 ft. Four loud bangs on that crisp Spring morning heralded a new era.



#### SABRE 361 OF 1 SQUADRON (1956)

The Blue aircraft letter was the only Squadron identification at the time.  
The Springbok Roundel was still in use and the number on the nose was  
the manufacturer's serial number.

A few years ago I got copies of correspondence and tables reflecting Sabre numbers, code letters, which squadron the aircraft served in, and their eventual fate, from Dave Becker. Dave is always on the go and I doubt if he will get around to publishing the stacks of information he has accumulated over the years. But, being on pension and having the interest and patience to delve and cross check, I have compiled the following brief history of the Canadair Sabres which served with 1 and 2 Squadrons and 85 Advanced Flying School. I have used Dave's information and tables, and have cross-checked the deaths, in the SAAF Roll of Honour.





350 - Original 1 Squadron aircraft - Code letter (blue) "A". It was involved in a few minor incidents in its long career in 1 Squadron and 85 Advanced Flying School. It sustained minor damage when it swung off the runway on 31 March 1959 (Lt J.P. Moolman). On 17 October 1959, 2/Lt M. van Staden damaged the tail-pipe while landing - with the nose too high. On 14 August 1961, it struck a tree while low-flying; pilot and circumstances - unknown. It moved with 1 Squadron from Waterkloof to Pietersburg in 1967, and, when 1 Squadron received Mirage F1's in 1975, it was transferred to 85 Adv FS. The Sabres were officially withdrawn from service in January 1980, and 350 was sold with ten other Sabres to a Canadian firm in January 1981. 350 was last seen in late 2000 as N3841V – operating with FLIGHT SYSTEMS in the USA.



351 - Was allocated to 1 Squadron and was given the code letter "B". This aircraft was jinxed from the start. It had tyre bursts and it lost power on take-off. With Capt Ed Pienaar at the controls, it collided with 358 on 18 April 1959, - (both aircraft landed safely). On 8 March 1960, it was damaged by a ricochet on the weapons range - (Lt



J.J. Olivier). On 29 August 1960, 2/Lt M. Meter over-stressed the aircraft to 5,5 G. In 1961, this aircraft and 382 had experimental "day-glo" bands painted on the wings, nose, tail, tail-planes and tail-fin. On 5 June 1962 it collided with 382 and crashed near Pienaarsrivier, north of Pretoria. The pilot, 2/Lt J.A. de Bruine, was unfortunately killed. (See 382).

352 - Original 2 Squadron aircraft - Code letter (red) "C". On 24 May 1957, Capt Ed Pienaar scraped the tail-pipe while landing. The nose wheel failed while landing, on 3 April 1959, and Lt H.J.W. Botha brought it to a standstill with very little damage. In 1963, it was transferred to 1 Squadron and the red fuselage band and code letters were removed, to be replaced by a blue band and code letter - "B", (replacing 351 "B"). Went to Ptbg with 1 Squadron and retired at 85 Adv FS in 1979. It was sold in 1981. In 2001 it was flying with CORPORATE JETS in the USA as N38301.

353 - Original 2 Squadron aircraft - (red) "D". On 9 June 1959, a panel was ingested into the intake and engine on start-up, resulting in severe engine damage. On 10 September 1959, 2/Lt Gawie van Dyk experienced a compressor stall on take-off, and raised the undercarriage to save the aircraft. It was transferred to 1 Squadron in 1963 and became (blue) "S". On 26 April 1966, Lt H.A. Day was killed when 353 crashed near Pilanesberg during tactical exercises.

354 - Originally 2 Squadron "A", - 354 was only involved in one accident while at 2 Sqdn. Flown by Lt D.S. Fourie, it collided with 379 during formation aerobatics on 15 July 1960 at Port Elizabeth. Lt Fourie managed a successful emergency landing. 354 was transferred to 1 Sqdn in 1963 to become (blue) "T", went with 1 Sqdn to Ptbg in 1967 and crashed on 11 June 1968 on the weapons range. Lt J. Viljoen was killed. (The Roll of Honour [booklet] shows the date of Lt Viljoen's death as 11/06/88).

355 - Originally 2 Sqdn (red) "G", the aircraft had two minor incidents while at 2 Sqdn. On 13 November 1956, Capt John Inglesby experienced loss of power on take-off and carried out a successful emergency landing. On 16 October 1958, Capt Tony Vanston hit the flag-type target during air-to-air gunnery. The minor damage sustained in both incidents was quickly repaired. 355 became (blue) "C" at 1 Sqdn in 1963; (it replaced 364). It went to Pietersburg with 1 Squadron in 1967, and on 19 November 1970, it was involved in a mid-air collision with 370. It crashed near Pietersburg and the pilot, Capt J.C.S. vd Merwe, evidently "walked away from the wreck."

356 - Spent its five-year lifetime at 1 Sqdn as (blue) "E". Lt Smuts was piloting 356 on 13 January 1961, when he flew into the flag-type target towed by another Sabre. Minor damage was sustained. On 2 November 1961, 2/Lt M.H. Meter ejected after colliding with 375. (Both a/c were written off).

357 - Originally 1 Sqdn (blue) "D", this aircraft was transferred to 2 Sqdn in 1960/61 to replace 379 (red) "Q". In 1963, it was transferred back to 1 Sqdn where it became (blue) "Z". On 11 May 1966, while air-testing the orange smoke for the "SA Flag flypast"

at the Republic Festival, the aircraft hit the ground with its one wing and crashed. The pilot, Lt I.P. Roos, was killed.



358 - Original 1 Squadron aircraft - (blue) "N". Spent its life with 1 Sqdn and 85 Adv FS. On 18 April 1959 while being flown by Lt John Boardman, it collided with 351. Both aircraft landed safely. On 24 October 1962, it sustained shrapnel damage, and Lt Theuns van Breda landed with a lot of bomb or rocket bits in the wings. In 1969/70, 358 hit a Vampire above Pietersburg Base, as the Vampire popped out of the clouds. The Vampire crashed, but 358, with a severely damaged right wing, landed safely. 358 was the first SAAF Sabre to be camouflaged. After serving with 85 Adv FS from 1975 until 1979, it became a Gate Guardian at Pietersburg Base. It was in the Municipal Gardens in Pietersburg, but has evidently been removed and is at AFB Louis Trichardt.



359 - Originally 2 Squadron (red) "F", it suffered two tyre-bursts on landing, with little damage. It was transferred to 1 Squadron to become blue "U". On 4 March 1966 Capt Denis Earp experienced engine failure in flight, but landed safely. It went to Ptbg and served with 1 Squadron and 85 Adv FS until it was grounded in 1979 and sold in 1981.

Frank Borman – American Sabre pilot in Korea and astronaut – has bought and restored 359. It is flying as N186FS in USAF “display” colours.



360 - 2 Squadron (red) "B". Transferred to 1 Sqdn in 1963, to become (blue) "W". It crashed near Louis Trichardt on 26 June 1965, killing Lt L.B. Schlesinger.



361 - Original 1 Sqdn aircraft - (blue) "F". This aircraft suffered two tyre-bursts and a power loss during landing. It also sustained slight damage after touching 381 during a formation exercise on 9 February 1965. Both 2/Lt's - Adelaar and Roos, landed safely. 361 moved with 1 Sqdn to Ptbg and was evidently not camouflaged. It flew for the last time on 16 February 1972, when it was withdrawn from service due to corrosion. It went to the SAAF Museum (Snake Valley) in April 1976 and was taken to Atlas Aircraft Corporation in April 1977, for rebuild. It moved to Lanseria Airport, where the Museum

kept its non-flying aircraft, in 1979. It is still with the Museum, now at Swartkop, as a static display.

362 - 2 Squadron (red) "L". Became 1 Sqdn (blue) "R". On 18 February 1971 at Ptbg, it was written off when it lost power while landing, and "arrived" back on mother-earth, about 5 km short of the runway. The pilot, 2/Lt Skillie Hartogh, walked away.



363 - Originally 2 Squadron (red) "K", it appears to have been on loan to 1 Squadron in 1959. Records show that on 20 March 1959, 2/Lt H.J. Mason of 1 Squadron twisted the airframe while doing a slow roll above the safe roll speed. The aircraft was transferred to 1 Sqdn in 1963, and became (blue) "V". On 26 August 1966, while being flown by Maj Buks Crafford, it was damaged by a ricochet on the bombing range. It went to Pietersburg, where it flew with 1 Sqdn and 85 Adv FS until it was withdrawn from service. It too was sold in 1981. It is flying with CORP JETS as N3842H.

364 - Original 1 Sqdn (blue) "C". In a matter of four months in 1961, it was involved in four incidents. On 5 Jan '61 - bird strike (2/Lt C.C. Basson). On 7 Feb '61 - damaged by ricochet (2/Lt C.N. Venter). On 2 March '61 - explosion in flight (Lt H.J.W. Botha landed safely). On 14 April '61 - stalled on landing; - (Capt J.M. Moolman force landed short of runway at Waterkloof). A/c written off.





365 - 2 Sqdn (red) "O" - later became 1 Sqdn (blue) "Q" in 1963. It had a fairly uneventful life. On 1 April 1959, while being flown by Capt Cliff Melville, it was damaged by shrapnel during a rocket attack. It went with 1 Sqdn to Ptbg in 1967, was passed on to 85 Adv FS and was sold in 1981. Registered as N106JB at WAR EAGLES AIR MUSEUM, NEW MEXICO, USA. Displayed in SAAF colours and bearing the "message" – BUY MORE KRUGERRANDS – on both sides of the cockpit.

366 - Spent its whole life at 1 Sqdn as (blue) "G". On 29 April 1960 the nose wheel door came off in flight - (Capt P.J. Moolman). On 21 Feb '62 it flew into the target tow-cable - (2/Lt Ollie Holmes). On 29 October 1962, it hit a secretary bird on take-off - Capt Jean de Wet landed safely. On 11 June 1965 a camera panel came off in flight - (Cmndt Bester). It went to Ptbg and crashed near Bandolierskop on 29 October 1968; - 2/Lt C.F. du Toit was killed.



367 - 2 Sqdn (red) "E" became 1 Sqdn (blue) "E" in 1963, (replacing 356). Apart from two bird-strikes, it had an uneventful life. It went with 1 Sqdn to Ptbg, and flew until 1978 with 85 Adv FS. It was transferred to 15 Air Depot, Snake Valley in 1978. In January 1997 it was transported by road to AFB Bloemspruit. It has been restored to flying condition at Bloemspruit, and after its test flights, was flown to Swartkop. Its first public appearance was on 15 April 2001, when it followed the Mustang in the Bays Hill Memorial Service Flypast. It is now painted in its original 2 Squadron (red) E colour scheme, and was seen as such at Bloemspruit on 21 October 2001, when it was officially handed back to the Museum by the restoration team. It is now at Swartkop and is part of the Museum's "flying" collection of aircraft.

368 - Spent its life as (blue) "K" at 1 Sqdn. It had a bird-strike on 5 November 1963, (Lt Ollie Holmes). On 11 Nov 1968, Maj J.P. Moolman carried out a successful emergency landing, when the nose wheel failed to lower. At Pietersburg, on 26 Nov 1969, it had a motor cut after a touch and go. Maj J.P. Britz was killed when he ejected too late.



369 - One of 1 Squadron's original aircraft, (blue) "H". The records I have, (1956 to Nov 1968), show it had a pretty uneventful life. It moved with 1 Squadron to Pietersburg in 1967, was passed on to 85 Adv FS and is now mounted on a column, in flying attitude, at the western gateway to Waterkloof, the base where it first flew, in December 1956.

370 - Originally 2 Squadron (red) "H", it became 1 Squadron (blue) "D", - Replacing the original (blue) D (357). It went to Ptbg, and on 19 Nov 1970 it was involved in a mid-air collision with 355, (which crashed). 370 landed safely. On 10 April 1975 it caught fire, over Roodewal Bombing Range (near Ptbg), after being hit by shrapnel or a ricochet. It crashed on the range, and the pilot, Capt F.W.C. Brits either ejected or walked away from the wreck.

371 - 1 Squadron (blue) "M". Apart from a tyre-burst (Maj Mike Muller) on 28 August 1961 and being damaged in a thunderstorm in March 1962 (same pilot), 371 was well behaved. It went to Ptbg and was one of the eleven aircraft sold in 1981. Crashed as N3842J at EL TORO air show in 1993.



372 - 2 Squadron (red) "P". On 5 May 1960, Lt John Boardman had an engine flame-out, caused by a ricochet. A successful forced landing was carried out. It became blue "X" in 1963 and went to Ptbg in 1967, where it was later camouflaged. It was kept for the Museum, and was transferred to the Ysterplaat branch of the Museum. It became very scruffy and found its way to Thunder City at DF Malan Airport. It was returned to the Museum and was stored "on the farm" (the old 35 Squadron complex on the eastern side of the airport). It has since returned to Ysterplaat and was restored by a team led by Jon



Durant. It is on static display in SAAF "Korean War" colours as – 601 – "A" – SHERDANOR II.

373 - 2 Sqn (red) "X", it had a bird-strike on 12 November 1962 (Lt K.P. Gobel). After joining 1 Sqn, (becoming [blue] "AD"), it suffered minor damage on two occasions. On 3 June 1965, it had a nose wheel burst on landing at Waterkloof (2/Lt Roos), and on 7 February 1966, it ran off the runway in heavy rain at Pietersburg (Cmdt de la Harpe). It was also sold in 1981. Flying as N3844E with AMJET, MINNESOTA, USA.



374 - 2 Sqn (red) "N", - it was involved in only one incident while at 2 Sqn. Just prior to its transfer to 1 Sqn, it had a bird-strike on 31 Jan 1963. It became (blue) "Y" and moved to Ptbq in '67. On 22 June 1971, 2/Lt J. Allison carried out a forced landing short of the runway, after an explosion in the engine and loss of power. The aircraft was written off.

375 - 1 Sqn (blue) "L", - it was damaged by a ricochet on 24 August 1960 (2/Lt H.A. Roux), and was written off on 2 November 1961 when it collided with 356. 2/Lt C.C. Basson ejected to safety.

376 - Original 1 Sqn (blue) "Q". It led a charmed life until 16 August 1960. The aircraft had, for some unknown reason, not been refuelled. It had an engine flame-out near Pretoria, and 2/Lt Venter was forced to eject.

377 - Original 1 Sqn (blue) "O". First incident was on 30 Jan '61, when 2/Lt J. Bartholomew had a tyre-burst on landing. On 25 Jan 1965, 2/Lt Keiser had to force-land due to a shortage of fuel. On 21 June 1967, just prior to moving to Ptbq, 377 was involved in a very unfortunate accident. During an engine ground-run, Air Mechanic A.H. Schoeman was killed when he was sucked into the intake. 377 was

written off after a forced landing, (piloted by 2/Lt B.H. Arnold), at Bloubergstrand on 26 March 1971.

378 - Original 1 Sqdn (blue) "J". On 6 October 1959, it was damaged by a bomb arming vane (Capt Ed Pienaar). It went to Ptbg and there, it soldiered on until it was sold in 1981. It is now owned and flown by Al Hansen, MOJAVE, USA as N38453.

379 - Original 2 Squadron (red) "Q", - this is the only Sabre to be lost by 2 Squadron. It collided with 354 during formation aerobatics at Port Elizabeth on 15 July 1960. The pilot, Lt H.J.W. Botha, was forced to eject.

380 - While serving with 2 Squadron as (red) "R", it suffered a bird-strike (Lt D.S. Fourie) on 21 Nov '59 and had a tyre-burst while landing on 22 Nov '60 (2/Lt K.P. Gobel). It went to 1 Squadron in 1963 and became (blue) "AB". After an evidently uneventful stay at Ptbg until 1979/80, it was also sold. It went to Canada, and then to the USA - to Flight Systems Incorporated. It was put up for sale, and was bought by Jack Rosamund in March 1993. It crashed at an air-show on 2 June 1997. Jack was killed and the aircraft was a write-off. The aircraft (N86EX) was a write-off.



**Canadair-built CL-13B Sabre N50CJ.**

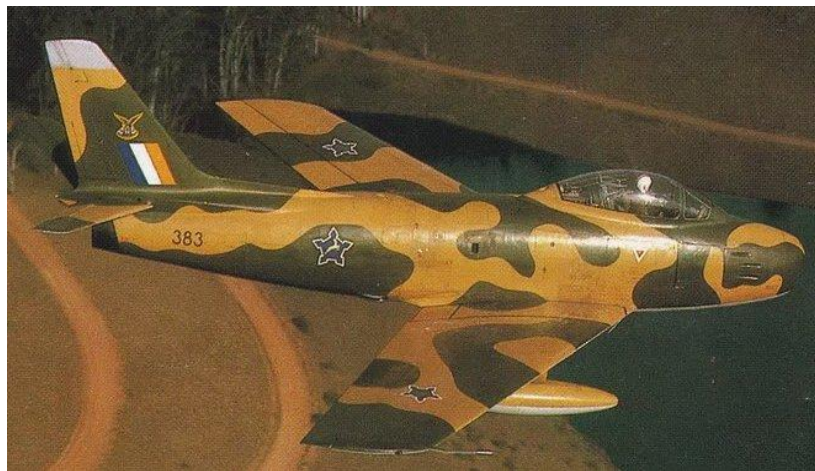
PHOTO – COURTESY OF FLYPAST AVIATION MONTHLY

381 - Originally 2 Sqdn (red) "J", it was incident free while there. It was transferred to 1 Sqdn to become (blue) "AC". On 9 Feb '65, it suffered minor damage when it touched 361 during a formation exercise (2/Lt Adelaar). On 26 Aug '66, Capt Paul Nesor had a tyre burst on landing. It went to Ptbg and returned to Snake Valley in 1982. It was sold with the ten others. In 2001 it was with CORPORATE JETS (N50CJ) as a target tug. In August 2006 FLYPAST magazine published an article on the TENNESSEE Museum of Aviation. On static display, in immaculate condition, is Sabre N50CJ with the tail number FU 740. Ex SAAF 381 is still beautiful and getting the attention every Sabre deserves.





382 - It was brought on charge on 11 October 1956 at 1 Sqn, Waterkloof as (blue) "P". In 1961 it also received "day-glo" bands (see 351). It is ironic that Sabres 351 and 382 suffered this insult or honour, and it is unknown whether these two aircraft were still wearing the "day-glo" bands when they collided during exercises on 5 June 1962. Sabre 351 crashed and the pilot was killed, but 382 (flown by Lt Tienie van Staden) landed safely after the accident. It went with 1 Sqn to Ptbg in 1967. It was one of the eleven sold in 1981. Now flying as N87FS with TRACOR, MOJAVE, USA.



383 - Originally 2 Sqn (red) "M", it was damaged by a ricochet on 13 Nov 1959 while being flown by Maj Bob Rogers. On 14 Aug '61, it suffered a bird-strike (2/Lt F.D. Malan). In 1963 it was transferred to 1 Sqn and became the second (blue) "L", (see 375). It went with 1 Sqn to Pietersburg in 1967, and served with 1 Sqn and 85 Adv FS until 1979. It arrived at 15 Air Depot, Snake Valley on 1 March 1978. It was then given to the Kempton Park Technical College, where it remained until 1999. It was then standing at Lanseria, with a new canopy, and was "For Sale". It left the Country and has been found at the Royal Australian Air Force Museum. It is intended to rebuild it in RAAF colours.

The following seventeen Sabres were camouflaged while serving at Pietersburg: 350, 352, 358, 359, 363, 365, 367, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 378, 380, 381, 382 and 383. This was half of the original number bought, and counting 361 (the uncamouflaged survivor), a survival figure of 18 out of 34 (at that time), was excellent. 370 crashed in April 1975 leaving 17 survivors. Of the 17 Sabres lost in South Africa, only FOUR were attributed to mechanical failure, ONE to ground crew negligence and the remainder to mid air collisions and crashes due to pilot error.

### **Sabres Lost – How – Reason**

351 – ERROR – Midair Collision with 382  
353 – ERROR – Flew into ground during Tactical Exercise  
354 – ERROR – Crashed on Weapons Range  
355 – ERROR – Crashed after Midair Collision with 370  
356 – ERROR – Midair Collision with 375  
357 – ERROR – Flew into Ground at Waterkloof – Low level roll with only one droptank  
360 – ERROR – Crashed near Louis Trichardt  
362 – MECHANICAL – Engine Failure – Loss of power – Fuel Pump?  
364 – ERROR – Stalled during Night Landing at Waterkloof  
366 – ERROR – Crashed Bandolierskop 1968  
368 – MECHANICAL – Engine Failure – Suspect bearing failure?  
370 – ERROR – Shrapnel Damage after low weapon release – Crashed on Range  
374 – MECHANICAL – Engine Explosion – Suspect Fuel leak?  
375 – ERROR – Midair Collision with 356  
376 – NEGLIGENCE – Flame out – Aircraft not refuelled  
377 – MECHANICAL – Engine Failure – Forced Landing  
379 – ERROR – Midair Collision with 354

The Sabre was a very comfortable aircraft to work on. Engine replacement was simple, the instruments and radio/radar equipment were reliable and accessible and it was an armourer's dream. You sat on the wings to work on the guns, which were behind two panels on either side of the cockpit, and the bomb racks or rocket launchers under the wings, were at eye-level when you sat on the ground.

The Sabre's ejection seat does look different, from the Martin-Baker seats in the Mirage, Impala and Buccaneer. The Sabre was fitted with an American designed, WEBBER ejection seat. The Webber seat separated the pilot and seat, very soon after ejection, irrespective of ejection altitude.

The SAAF Museum at Swartkop has two Sabres (361 and 367), one of which, (367 [blue] "E"), has being restored to flying condition – as [red] "E". Camouflaged Sabre - 372, moved to the Ysterplaat Branch of the Museum, and has been restored to represent an F-86 flown by 2 Squadron in Korea. It can be seen there as 601, "A", named SHERDANOR II. One aircraft - 358 (below) was mounted in the Pietersburg Gardens, but has been moved to Louis Trichardt. One (369) is mounted as a gate guard at Waterkloof, and the one (383), which was at the Kempton Park Technical College, and later at Lanseria, was sold and is in Western Australia.

FOR QUICK REFERENCE, The following list contains the numbers of all 34 Sabres received in 1956. It shows, alphabetically (CODE LETTERS), the Sabres which were on 1 Squadron strength in January 1964, what their original 2 Squadron code letters were prior to transfer, and their eventual fate.

### **SABRE Mk 6 - 1 SQUADRON - WATERKLOOF 1963 - 66**

CODE	No.	2Sqn	REMARKS/NOTES	EVENTUAL FATE
A	350	--	Original 1 Sqn a/c, went to Ptbg 67	Resold 1981
B	352	C	Replaced orig B (351) which crashed 6/62	Resold 1981
C	355	G	Replaced orig C (364) which crashed 4/61	Crashed 19/11/70
D	370	H	Replaced orig D (357) which went to 2 Sqn	Crashed 10/04/75
E	367	E	Replaced orig E (356) which crashed 11/61	SAAF Museum
F	361	---	Original 1 Sqn a/c, went to Ptbg 67	SAAF Museum
G	366	---	Original 1 Sqn a/c, went to Ptbg 67	Crashed 29/10/68
H	369	---	Original 1 Sqn a/c, went to Ptbg 67	Gate Guard WKLF
J	378	---	Original 1 Sqn a/c, went to Ptbg 67	Resold 1981
K	368	---	Original 1 Sqn a/c, went to Ptbg 67	Crashed 26/11/69
L	383	M	Replaced orig L (375) which crashed 11/61	Sold – In Australia
M	371	---	Original 1 Sqn a/c, went to Ptbg 67	Resold 1981
N	358	---	Original 1 Sqn a/c, went to Ptbg 67	Ptbg > Louis Trcht
O	377	---	Original 1 Sqn a/c, went to Ptbg 67	Crashed 26/03/71
P	382	---	Original, Experimental Daglo 1961	Resold 1981
Q	365	O	Replaced 376 which crashed 8/60	Resold 1981
R	362	L	Transferred from 2 Sqn 1963 > Ptbg	Crashed 18/02/71
S	353	D	Transferred from 2 Sqn 1963	Crashed 26/04/66
T	354	A	Transferred from 2 Sqn 1963 > Ptbg	Crashed 11/06/68
U	359	F	Transferred from 2 Sqn 1963 > Ptbg	Resold 1981
V	363	K	Transferred from 2 Sqn 1963 > Ptbg	Resold 1981
W	360	B	Transferred from 2 sqn 1963 > Ptbg	Crashed 29/06/65
X	372	P	Transferred from 2 Sqn 1963 > Ptbg	SAAF Museum YPT
Y	374	N	Transferred from 2 Sqn 1963 > Ptbg	Crashed 22/06/71
Z	357	(2nd Q)	Orig 1 Sqn "D" > 2 Sqn "Q" > 1 Sqn '63	Crashed 11/05/66
AB	380	R	Transferred from 2 Sqn 1963 > Ptbg	Resold 1981- Crashed 06/97
AC	381	J	Transferred from 2 Sqn 1963 > Ptbg	Resold 1981
AD	373	X	Transferred from 2 Sqn 1963 > Ptbg	Resold 1981

This table contains all Sabres except orig 2 Sqn "Q" 379 (crashed July 1960).



### Canadair CL-13B Sabre Mk 6

Country of origin	:	Canada
Manufactured as	:	Canadair CL-13B Sabre Mk 6
Served with	:	1 & 2 Squadrons and 85 Advanced Flying School
Role	:	Fighter and Ground Attack
Power Plant	:	One Orenda 14 turbojet engine, delivering 3 300 kg of thrust
Wingspan	:	11,27 m
Length	:	11,72 m
Max take-off mass	:	7 988 kg
Max speed	:	Mach 0,93 (1 142 km/h) at sea-level
Max range	:	2 405 km
Armament	:	-Six .50 inch (12,7 mm) Browning machine-guns, (3 on either side of the nose) -Two 250 kg bombs, under the wings -Two 18 tube, (68 mm) rocket pods -(Originally), 24 X 3 inch rockets

References : Copies of correspondence and notes obtained from Dave Becker.  
Own notes and recollections, having worked on Sabres (1 Squadron) from  
September 1963 to January 1965, as an Armourer.  
The SAAF at War - Bouwer and Louw  
Flying Cheetahs in Korea - Dermot Moore & Peter Bagshawe  
F-86 SABRE (Modern Combat Aircraft 4) by Maurice Allward  
Very valuable inputs from Guy Ellis, who did much of the legwork on the  
history of the Korean theatre Sabres.  
Piet van Schalkwyk and Dave Cooke sent me, via Guy Ellis, a list of  
names and codes of the 2 Sqdn Sabres in Korea, thereby allowing me to  
(almost) complete the first table of this narrative.

Willie Burger  
August 2016





