

IN KOREAN SKIES

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ALTHOUGH both the Luftwaffe and the RAF employed jet aircraft during World War II, there were no engagements between the jets of the two air forces. It was not until the Korean War that jet versus jet combats took place. Then, the *Sabres* of the USAF won against *MIG-15s* with a kill ratio of 10 to 1, despite heavy odds. Among those *Sabre* pilots was a score of Canadians who contributed their share, shooting down at least nine *MIGs* and damaging many more.

At the outbreak of the Korean War the UN air forces under American command quickly eliminated the small North Korean Air Force. When the Communist Chinese intervened in the fall of 1950, they introduced a new factor in the air war. On 1 Nov. 1950 six *MIG-15s* crossed the Yalu River and attacked a flight of F-51 *Mustang* fighter bombers.

The swept-wing *MIG-15* was the most advanced Russian fighter of the day, superior to every UN plane in Korea at that time, and was being supplied in growing numbers to the Red Chinese. Although American F-80 *Shooting Stars* and F9F *Panther* jets were able to shoot down a few *MIGs*, it was clear that the newer aircraft threatened UN air superiority, vitally needed to stem the enemy's overwhelming strength on the ground. The only comparable airplane in service in the West was the North American F-86 *Sabre*. In a crash program, the USAF moved one wing (the 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing) from Wilmington, Delaware, to the Far East in November 1950. One of the pilots was an RCAF officer on exchange duties, F/L (now S/L) J. A. O. Levesque, who became the first Canadian to participate in all-jet air battles.

Omer Levesque was an old hand on fighters. During World War II he had resigned a commission in the Royal 22nd Regiment to join the RCAF. As an NCO pilot in No. 401 Sqn. he had destroyed four German fighters before being shot down and taken prisoner in Feb. 1942. Now he was on his way to another war.

The 4th Fighter Interceptor Wing could only operate its *Sabres* from Kimpo airfield, north-west of Seoul. The field was already crowded with bombers and fighter-bombers, so the wing's commander, Col. G. F. Smith, left a large part of the unit at Johnson Air Force Base in Japan. He then established Detachment "A" at Kimpo with pilots drawn from the Wing Headquarters and all three squadrons, the 334th, 335th, and 336th. Levesque was among the pilots sent to Korea.

The *Sabres* flew an orientation flight on 15 Dec. and two days later they took off on a sweep over North Korea. Lt. Col. B. H. Hinton shot down one *MIG*, the first of many which were to fall to the *Sabres*. Initially flying at about Mach .62 in order to save fuel, the *Sabre* pilots were at a disadvantage, as they first had to accelerate before countering the high-flying *MIGs*. After several inconclusive combats, the *Sabres* switched to cruising at Mach .85 or more, and this paid off. They shot down five more *MIGs* in Dec. for the loss of one of their own.

Early in Jan. 1951, advancing Communist armies forced the *Sabres* to abandon Kimpo and return to Japan. However, late the same month the American 8th Army opened a counter-offensive, retaking Suwon airfield on 28 Jan. and Kimpo on 10 Feb. The airfields were badly damaged, and when the *Sabres* returned to Korea they had to be based temporarily at Taegu, using Suwon for staging. In February, however, the 334th Sqn. moved to Suwon, while the 336th, based at Taegu, staged its *Sabres* through the more advanced field and *Sabres* and *MIGs* resumed their duel.

On 30 Mar. 1951 a force of *B-29s* was sent to bomb the bridges over the Yalu at Sinuiju, under the very noses of the *MIGs* based in Manchuria. The 334th Sqn. was included in the escort, and Levesque was flying as wingman to Major Edward Fletcher, one of the flight leaders.

The *MIG* response that day was feeble, and only a few brushed with the *Sabres*. Fletcher and Levesque attacked two, which split up, each with a *Sabre* in hot pursuit. Levesque's *MIG* made a few evasive manoeuvres and then levelled off, as if the pilot thought he had shaken the *Sabre*. At more than 600 yards Levesque opened fire and the sleek enemy fighter went spinning down, crashing on the Manchurian side of the Yalu River. It was Levesque's fifth victory in two wars.

He remained with the wing until May 1951, when his exchange tour expired and he was returned to Canada. He came home wearing the ribbons of the American Air Medal (for having flown 20 missions in Dec.) and the American Distinguished Flying Cross (for his combat on 30 Mar. 1951).

This ended participation by the RCAF in the air war for some time, although No. 426 (Transport) Sqn. was then actively engaged in the Korean airlift, flying *North Stars* across the Pacific. The RCAF was only beginning to equip its fighter squadrons with *Sabres*, and had neither enough machines or trained pilots to send to Korea.* Some Canadian pilots, reading of the bitter battles in "MIG Alley", longed to be sent to the Far East, but at that time they were plugging a large hole in the defences of NATO.

* Moreover, as these did become available No. 1 Air Division in Europe claimed priority for them, as there were no other first-line fighters in Europe in 1951-52 apart from the RCAF *Sabres*.

As early as Jan. 1951 the commander of the Far East Air Forces, Lt. Gen. G. E. Stratemeyer, had expressed his willingness to rotate Commonwealth jet pilots through USAF formations in order to give them combat experience. The then-Chief of the Air Staff of the RCAF, A/M W. A. Curtis, noted that Canada was in no position to accept the offer at that time. However, he instructed the Canadian Air Member in Washington, A/C W. W. Hendrick, to open discussions with the USAF to lay the basis for future exchanges. The result was the exchange program of 1952-53.

The plan agreed upon was that RCAF pilots with at least 50 flying hours on *Sabres* should be attached to the USAF fighter-interceptor wings for a tour of 50 missions or six months, which ever came first. Two pilots would be sent initially, and one a month thereafter.

Accordingly, on 10 Mar. 1952, F/Os S. B. Fleming and G. W. Nixon** were posted to Korea. They were sent at a time when all the details had not yet been worked out, such as the length of the tour and the criteria for acceptance of foreign decorations. Indeed, Fleming's ap-

pearance in Tokyo was the first indication to the Canadian air attaché, G/C R. W. McNair that RCAF pilots were being assigned to Korean combat duties.

** Both subsequently left the service. Fleming is now a test pilot with Canadair.

Fleming was a veteran of World War II, having flown *Beaufighters* with No. 58 Sqn. RAF. He was attached to the 4th Fighter-Interceptor Wing, now based at Kimpo, where he joined the 334th Sqn., while Nixon went to the 51st Fighter-Interceptor Wing at Suwon, where he flew in both the 16th and 25th Sqns. While in Korea they were given verbal instructions to complete 50 missions and return home. This was not immediately confirmed in writing, nor was the USAF informed of the 50-mission limit, so Fleming went on to fly 82 missions on sweeps, escort duties, reconnaissance, and interceptions.

On 13 May, in the course of escorting an *RF-80*, he spotted 16 *MIGs* preparing to attack. He led his element into the first four *MIGs*, scattering the enemy and sending a few running for Manchuria. He then attacked two *MIGs* which were firing on the *RF-80* and its close escort of two *Sabres*. One *MIG* went down and was later assessed as "probably destroyed". Fleming kept up the fight until the *RF-80* had withdrawn safely, and then returned to base, low on fuel and out of ammunition.

He also damaged two *MIGs* during his tour, one on 1 Apr. and the other on 21 May. In addition he scored hits on several ground targets while strafing, an unusual job for the *Sabres*, whose prime duty was running interference for the bombers and fighter-bombers. Subsequently, F/O Fleming was awarded the American DFC.

Flying Officer Nixon flew the prescribed 50 missions, but although he participated in many combats, often against heavy odds, he made no claims. He completed his tour in July, and was later decorated with the American Air Medal.

The pattern was now established, and these two pilots were followed by F/O (now F/L) J. D. Donald and F/L (now S/L) L. E. Spurr in Apr. 1952. Donald was reposted before he was combat-ready, but Spurr went on to do the full 50 mission tour with the 25th Sqn. of the 51st Wing. On 14 July, while leading a flight of *Sabres* which were screening for fighter-bombers, he became separated from his No. 3 and 4 men. Spotting ten *MIGs* above, he saw two aircraft which he took to be his comrades. Suddenly he realized they were also *MIGs* and closed in to attack. The lead *MIG* was shot down, burning and out of control. His wingman then called that the top *MIGs* were coming down, so the *Sabres* beat for home. Spurr's victory was the second *MIG-15* shot down by a Canadian. It was also the second jet on which he had fired — he had damaged a *ME-262* in Europe in 1945. Spurr was eventually awarded the American DFC.

The highest ranking RCAF officer to fly in Korea was G/C (now A/C) E. B. Hale, DFC. The commanding officer of the RCAF's No 1 Fighter Wing at North Luffenham, he was sent to study tactics and to report on how the rotation program was working in the field. He came with orders written especially for him by A/M Curtis. Hale reported to the 51st Wing on 29 Apr. 1952 and flew his first mission on 1 May. That day was a sobering one. His roommate, Col. A. W.

Schinz, was shot down — to be rescued almost a month later from an island in the mouth of the Yalu.

During May G/C Hale formed a fast friendship with the commander of the wing, Col. F. S. Gabreski. He also flew 23 missions in 24 days, including a number of days when he flew two or three sorties. Col. Gabreski wrote that "the officers and men of the 51st Interceptor Wing were impressed by the courage and ability of G/C Hale, and amazed by his boundless energy. He spent most of the time in his flying suit at the operations office with the rest of our pilots."

Group Captain Hale was involved in four scraps with *MIG-15s*. He was awarded the American DFC for an action on 25 May which was especially dangerous. He was leading two flights of *Sabres* which were to escort some F-84 *Thunderjets*. The fighter-bombers were late arriving, and part of the escort force had to turn back. G/C Hale and his wingman decided to do "one more sweep" and picked up the *Thunderjets* just as four *MIGs* closed in. Although low on fuel, the two *Sabres* attacked, drove off the *MIGs*, and escorted the F-84s home.

By this time word of the exchange scheme had spread through the RCAF and scores of pilots were clamouring for Korean duty. At No 1 OTU, Chatham, F/O (now S/L) J. C. A. Lafrance found himself far down the list. Preference was being given to instructors. Lafrance approached the CO, pointing out that he was the only instructor without operational experience, the others having seen action during World War II. As a result, he was placed at the top of the list and in May he joined the 39th Sqn.

He flew his first mission on 28 May. On 5 Aug., as a newly-promoted F/L, he was flying his 22nd mission as No. 3 man in a flight of four *Sabres*, with 2/Lt. Vandeventer as his wingman. Near Sariwon, F/L Lafrance spotted two *MIGs* and broke into them, closing on the leader. He opened fire, scoring strikes on the enemy plane, and the pilot ejected. He then turned on the second *MIG* and chased it to the Yalu River before heading for home with his fuel running low. It was the third *MIG* credited to an RCAF pilot, and the exploit brought Lafrance an American DFC.

At this point it might be advisable to explain the circumstances under which the pilots were fighting. As early as Nov. 1950 the UN Command had been warned of the dangers of spreading the war to Red China, which would possibly bring in wider intervention and perhaps even Russian participation. Consequently, the enemy bases in Manchuria had been declared "off limits" to all pilots. The *MIGs* had only to fly across the Yalu River to escape the *Sabres*. They could be seen taking off or parked in neat rows at their fields at Antung, Tapao, Tatungkou, and Takashan.

These peculiar restrictions also applied to the enemy, who had a large force of *IL-28* bombers which he feared to use from Manchuria lest this provoke retaliatory raids on the Chinese bases. The Reds, therefore, frequently tried to rebuild their bases in North Korea so as to open an air offensive from Korean fields. However, these efforts came to naught. The enemy did not have air superiority south of the Yalu, and *B-29* bombers pulverized the Korean fields as quickly as they were repaired. The UN had won the airspace south of the Yalu, and had permitted the

Communists to control the sky to the north, and because of these two facts neither side could fully exploit what it had.

In combat the *MIG-15* was superior to the Sabre in many ways, especially in climbing, high-altitude turning radius, level speed, and ceiling. Frustrated *Sabre* pilots, whose aircraft were wallowing at 47,000 feet, could often see *MIGs* in seemingly effortless manoeuvres at about 53,000 feet.

Evaluation of a *MIG-15B* flown to Kimpo by a North Korean defector in Sep. 1953 showed the *MIG* to have many faults. At high speeds it suffered directional snaking, making it an unstable gun platform. It also had fore-and-aft instability. In a tight turn it tended to do a snap roll and fall into a spin. To add to the troubles of the enemy, the *MIG* had insufficient stall warning. The heavier calibre of the *MIG's* guns (one 37mm and two 25mm) was offset by their slower rate of fire — a distinct disadvantage in fighter vs. fighter combat. The *F86E* and *F* narrowed many of the differences. The former employed a radar gun sight which enabled top pilots to score hits at 3000 feet, and a modified wing in this same model made the Sabre a formidable opponent.

The trump card for the *Sabres* was pilot training. Contrary to the popular conception of the youthful, fresh-faced "ace", many of the pilots were veterans of World War II, and this applied to the USAF pilots as well as the exchange pilots from the RAF and RCAF. Although younger pilots did score, and some scored high totals, the majority of the USAF aces were "old sweats". Lt. Col. James Jabara, the first all-jet ace and second highest *MIG*-killer (15 in two tours) had been credited with 3 1/2 German aircraft in World War II. Col. Francis Gabreski (6 1/2 *MIGs*) had been the leading American fighter pilot in Europe with 31 victories. Among the Canadian pilots, most had seen action in the last war, including five of the six credited with confirmed victories over *MIGs*. For those who lacked combat experience there was on-the-spot instruction from the USAF pilots, who bore the brunt of the air fighting in "MIG Alley."

The RCAF pilots had a minimum of 50 hours on Sabres before going to Korea. Once assigned to their squadrons they, together with all other new pilots, gained additional hours ferrying aircraft and in practice flights south of the lines. Finally, before going into action all pilots attended "Clobber College", a one-day course on proper methods of baling out if hit, plus a briefing on escape and evasion techniques.

THE *MIG* pilots encountered in the Korean War of 1950-53 were of two kinds, very good and very bad. There seemed to be no happy medium. The skilled pilots were dubbed "honchos" (Japanese for "boss") and the others were known as "students". From time to time the calibre of the enemy pilots would start to rise, then fall off again as a new group appeared. Enemy units appeared to rotate frequently, either through decimation in combat or to make way for combat training of more pilots.

Inexperienced Communist pilots were reluctant to take evasive action. Some chose to sit tight in their cockpits, fearing to expose their persons to gunfire. Their aircraft would be shot from under them, and they would then save their lives by ejecting. These low calibre pilots were named "jackpot flights".

Flying Officer S. B. Fleming's official report is worth quoting on this aspect:

"Now and then, Dentist Charley (code-name for a USAF controller) offered an additional service to the F-86 formations, that of providing a clue as to the nationality of the enemy pilots. When he called 'Jackpot Flight over Anju' he implied that the Anju-bound *MIGs* were manned by North Koreans of low pilot ability and would provide a field day for the 86s that could track them down. When the 86s descended like vultures on the rarely-seen North Korean formations, the latter would break up and scatter, becoming easy meat for the well-disciplined pilots of the USAF. These 'Jackpot Flight' members would demonstrate seat ejection at the slightest excuse, often before a shot was fired. It was nothing for a North Korean wingman to bail out simply because he had seen his leader set the example, or for another pilot to do likewise because he had broken too hard and his *MIG* had flicked into a spin."

Not all the enemy pilots were so bad. The "honchos" sometimes made life miserable for Sabre pilots, and would stick to a Sabre through endless manoeuvres and screaming dives. Had the enemy had more "honchos" and better aircraft, the air war might well have been harder for the UN.

Both sides used a variety of tactics. The *MIGs*, flying in large formations, resorted to hit-and-run methods. While one formation acted as decoys, another group would fly behind and either above or below, ready to dive or climb into the Sabres which took the bait. In other cases, the *MIGs*, flying high above the Sabres, would be vectored over them by the efficient enemy controllers and then pounce, sometimes through clouds. At times the enemy pilots experimented, resorting to varying types of formations and even trying head-on attacks.

The basic Sabre formation was the "Finger Four" — two elements of two aircraft each. These flights were usually spaced in time and altitude. When one flight spotted *MIGs* it called in the others and attacked. It was not unlike a controlled street fight, where everyone rushed up to take part.

The heart of the system was the two-plane element, with the leader and wingman. The element leader did most of the shooting while the wingman guarded his tail. Wing-men had fewer chances to fire, and they did not attack *MIGs* on their own, leaving the leader uncovered. The selection of element and flight leaders was made on the basis of experience. Normally, a pilot flew about 20 missions as a wingman before being made an element leader, and 20 more as an element leader before being upgraded to flight leader. The number of missions varied according to the individual pilots themselves. Flight Lieutenant J. C. A. Lafrance, for example, shot down his *MIG* on his first mission as an element leader. Having shown that he could handle himself in a dogfight, he was quickly made a flight leader.

The number of victories credited to RCAF personnel was necessarily small because of their short tour — 50 missions as against the standard American tour of 100. It was not until near the end of their tours that the Canadians became element and flight leaders, and as noted, these were the positions that gave the best opportunities for firing. Members of the RCAF were in Korea to gain enough combat experience to make them useful to the service in passing on their knowledge. No broader aims were planned. Nonetheless, the abbreviated tour was slightly disruptive for the USAF squadrons, for it meant that a few RCAF pilots were promoted to lead positions to the detriment of USAF fliers, and then these element and flight leaders were transferred just as they were becoming experienced in jet combat.

The system of confirming *MIGs* destroyed was strict and comprehensive. A pilot who claimed a victory had to have it witnessed by another pilot, or else have his claim backed up by clear gun-camera film. On occasion the gun-cameras gave trouble, the film refusing to run. At least one of the Canadians saw a *MIG* crash after he had fired on it, but could not be credited with a victory because the crash was not seen by another pilot, while the gun-camera developed a malfunction. In such cases the claims were downgraded to "probably destroyed" or "damaged".

RCAF personnel in Korea came under the operational control of the USAF wings, and while attached to these wings they were recommended for a number of American decorations. American fliers were normally awarded the Air Medal after 20 missions, with an Oak Leaf Cluster after 60. In addition, there were awards of the American DFC for particularly outstanding achievements in combat.

In view of the shorter tour which the Canadians served, plus the fact that they would generally qualify for the Korean War Medal and the United Nations Service Medal, the Air Council moved to restrict the number of awards made to members of the RCAF. The policy, as laid down in Dec. 1952, set criteria for the award of the Commonwealth DFC, and for the acceptance of the American DFC and Air Medal. No pilot would be eligible to accept more than one US decoration. The exception was S/L J. A. O. Levesque, who had been given two awards by the Americans before the rotation program to Korea came into effect.

The only RCAF pilot to win a Commonwealth award for gallantry was F/L E. A. Glover. Glover was another veteran of World War II, having flown *Hurricanes* and *Typhoons* before being shot down and taken prisoner in May 1943. In June 1952 he joined the 334th Sqn. at Kimpo. Up until 26 Aug. he never saw a *MIG*. From then until the end of Sept. he saw them almost every day.

He opened his scoring on 30 Aug. by damaging two *MIGs*. On 8 Sept. he was flying No. 4 position in a flight which got into a scrap with two *MIGs*. The enemy turned sharply to starboard, putting Glover in the best firing position. He opened up on the pair, scoring hits all over the wingman. The two *MIGs* went into a screaming dive, but Glover stuck with them from 40,000 to 15,000 feet. The trailing *MIG* tried to pull up, started to spin, and crashed. Glover went after the second, saw strikes, but had to break off as the damaged enemy plane streaked into Manchuria.

The next day a force of Thunderjets with Sabre escort attacked the North Korean Military Academy at Sakchu. The strike stirred up a hornet's nest, and no fewer than 175 *MIG-15s* tried to break up the raid. Six *MIGs* were shot down, one of them by F/L Glover. The enemy fighter was closing in on some *Thunderjets* when Glover sneaked in behind and set it on fire. On the 16th he was leading a flight of three *Sabres* which piled into 20 *MIGs*. Glover set one on fire and it dived away spinning. The *MIG* became Glover's third confirmed victory.

Flight Lieutenant Glover completed his tour in Oct. 1952. He was subsequently decorated with both the American and Commonwealth DFCs, the only member of the RCAF to win the latter when this country was technically at peace.

Two pilots were posted to Korea in July, F/L R. E. Lowry and S/L (now W/C) J. D. Lindsay. The former had joined the RCAF in 1943, but the war had ended while he was on operational training. Korea was his first experience in combat. He was assigned to the 25th Fighter Sqn., flew 20 missions before completing his tour in Nov. 1952 and returned to No. 430 Sqn., RCAF.

Squadron Leader Lindsay was another example of the Old School of Fighter Pilots. During the war he had flown Spitfires with No. 403 Sqn. and had won the DFC after shooting down three *ME 109s* in one sortie. He was the most experienced RCAF fighter pilot so far in Korea, with seven German fighters to his credit. He soon showed that he had lost none of this touch. After only four missions he was made an element leader.

Lindsay attracted the name of "MIG Magnet". By the time he had completed 20 missions he had had five engagements with *MIGs*, and had damaged two on 5 Sept. After his 20th sortie he was presented with a bottle of "Mission Whiskey" and made a flight leader, a promotion which opened up new opportunities.

On 11 Oct. he was leading a flight of four *Sabres* when he spotted 12 *MIGs* above him. He started to climb while the *MIGs* swept in, trying to cut the *Sabres* off from base. Lindsay singled out the last four *MIGs* and led the *Sabres* into the enemy formation, shooting down one *MIG*. His victory brought to three the number of *MIGs* downed by the 39th Sqn. and six downed by all *Sabres* that day. It had been his 29th mission.

On 25 Oct. he damaged his third *MIG*. As his tour drew to a close it appeared that he would have to settle for that. November was a slack month. The enemy used the Manchurian sanctuary more than they had in September and October.

He was flying his 49th mission on 26 Nov. with 2/Lt. H. E. Fischer as his wingman. At 46,000 feet they attacked a force of 21 *MIGs*. Two enemy aircraft broke right in a climbing turn. Lindsay shot one down — his second. Fischer also got one, the first of 10 which he would eventually destroy. Lindsay was awarded the American DFC.

Going back to August, S/L E. G. Smith was selected as the exchange pilot for that month. An ex-bomber pilot with the DFC, Smith was awarded the American Air Medal and completed his tour with the 334th Sqn. in Dec. '52. Although he made no claims, the experience of S/L Smith does point up the importance of the wingman. He frequently flew with the American ace, Captain L. W. Lilley. He was Lilley's No. 2 on 14 and 16 Sept. when the American shot down his third and fourth *MIGs*.

September 1952 brought another colourful RCAF pilot to Korea, W/C (now G/C) R. T. P. Davidson, DFC. He had joined the RAF before the war and had a string of German, Japanese, and Italian aircraft to his credit. Flying with the 335th Sqn. out of Kimpo, he had ten brushes with *MIGs* and, in his own words, "made a couple of them smoke". The air war had gone into a momentary lull at that time, however, and he was unable to add further to his World War II record before returning to Canada in December.

Next up was F/O (now F/L) A. Lambros. He was fortunate enough to be there when the enemy "students" gained more confidence and became increasingly aggressive. During his tour he damaged two *MIG-15s*, one on 22 Jan. and the other on 31 Jan. 1953.

So far the Canadians had been fortunate, having lost none of their numbers. In mid-Nov. 1952 S/L A. R. Mackenzie was posted to Korea, where he joined the 39th Sqn. at Suwon. Ominously, he was the 13th pilot sent under the rotation program. Mackenzie was another experienced pilot, having won the DFC in Europe and destroyed 8½ German aircraft. He flew four missions without seeing a *MIG*.

It was different on 5 Dec. 1952. That day he was flying an F-86F, acting as wingman for Major Jack Saunders. At 40,000 feet they ran into 20 *MIGs*. The enemy fighters closed in all directions, and in a few seconds Mackenzie became separated from Saunders. Suddenly, a burst of cannon fire tore off his canopy and knocked out the controls. At 40,000 feet, Mackenzie baled out into the bitter cold of the North Korean sky.

He landed in a Korean field where he was almost immediately captured by Chinese soldiers who took him to Manchuria. At first he was treated well and his captors kept assuring him that he would soon be home. In fact, he was not to be freed until December 1954, two years after his capture and 17 months after the Korean Armistice. He was to endure countless interrogations, poor food and enemy attempts at brainwashing. He was to spend 465 days in solitary confinement and lose 70 pounds. Not until Apr. 1954 was he permitted to write letters to his family. Squadron Leader Mackenzie learned about Communism in the hardest way possible, yet emerged with his sense of humour intact. Moreover, on his release he was able to provide USAF authorities with information on American airmen who were still being held captive by the Chinese, including Captain Harold Fischer, Lindsay's former wingman.

Meanwhile, the Korean war went on. Flight Lieutenant (now S/L) F. W. Evans joined the 334th Sqn. in Dec. 1952, and F/L (now W/C) G. H. Nichols joined the 16th Sqn. in Jan. 1953.

Evans was another veteran of World War II, having won the DFC with No. 421 Sqn. In Korea he often flew with such aces as Col. James Jabara and Captain Manuel Fernandez. The latter was probably the best shot in the war, sometimes hitting *MIGs* at a range of almost 1000 yards, and Evans described him as "the wiliest of them all." Evans was wingman to Major F. L. Smith when, on 2 Mar., the American destroyed the first of 4½ *MIGs* which he was to shoot down. He also did a bit of strafing and destroyed one locomotive and four boxcars.

Nichols had a little more luck in the air. On 7 April he damaged a *MIG-15* during a bitter fight with "honcho" pilots. That day saw three *MIGs* shot down and seven damaged, but the American ace, Capt. Fischer, was forced over the Yalu and shot down. Nichols left Korea on 6 May 1953.

By this time the Commander of the American 5th Air Force, General Barcus, had embarked on a program which he described as "turning the Sabres loose". A scheme of bombing prestige targets, coupled with provocative challenges issued by leaflet and radio was designed to draw the enemy out or force him to lose face.

At the same time "Operation Moolah" was initiated, by which the USAF offered \$100,000 to the first enemy pilot who would defect and bring a *MIG-15* over to our side. It may have had no connection, but Russian-language broadcasts making this offer were jammed by the enemy, while Chinese and Korean-language broadcasts were not. At the same time, the "honcho" pilots all but disappeared and during May and June 1953 the hapless enemy fliers were shot down in droves. In that two-month period, 133 *MIGs* were shot down. Only one *Sabre* was lost to enemy action.

A *Sabre* that did go down — but not through anything done by a *MIG* pilot — was flown by F/O (now F/L) R. D. Carew. He was the RCAF's 16th pilot to rotate to Korea, flying his first mission on 5 April.

One day, at 43,000 feet, his engine flamed out and he was unable to get an air start. At that point Carew was a sitting duck, but the other *Sabres* covered him while he began a long, wallowing glide southwards. At 7000 feet he was still a long way behind the enemy lines. The UN forces controlled the sea, so Carew baled out over water. On his way down he saw two helicopters, a "dumbo" flying boat, and a friendly launch cruising around waiting for him. As it turned out, he didn't even get his feet wet. He landed on a small island held by UN forces and was quickly flown home to Kimpo.

The last *MIG* shot down by a Canadian fell to S/L (now W/C) John MacKay, DFC, a World War II veteran with a total of 11 German aircraft destroyed, including a share in a *ME 262* kill. He arrived in Korea in Mar. 1953 and was attached to the 39th Sqn. He flew his first mission on 1 April and had flown 20 by 9 May. As his tour drew to a close it began to appear that luck was not with him, for although he took part in several engagements, he was not able to claim anything.

On 30 June the air war exploded into a series of engagements which saw 16 *MIGs* shot down — the one-day record for the Korean War. In the early afternoon MacKay was leading a flight when he saw a lone *MIG* on the tail of four friendly aircraft. He closed the range and opened fire, scoring hits around the tail section, and the enemy pilot ejected. Ten days later MacKay completed his tour and left for home.

Two other pilots were posted to Korea before the shooting ended, S/L (now W/C) W. H. F. Bliss and S/L W. W. Fox, sent in April and May 1953. Both pilots were able to see action before the Armistice became effective at 2200 hours on 27 July.

In June F/O J. B. Mullin was posted to Korea, followed in July by S/L (now W/C) D. Warren, DFC. Neither arrived in time to see action. They spent the remainder of their tours ferrying aircraft or in flying patrols south of the frontlines. Sometimes they glimpsed *MIGs* flying similar patrols only a few miles to the north. It was a strange sight, but the air war was over.

Korea was probably the last major conflict to see the old-style dogfights. Though similar combats have since taken place in the Middle East, changing technology has made fighter vs. fighter combat technically impractical and tactically pointless. It was a form of warfare which began in 1915 in the skies of France and ended, less than half a century later, in a small corner of Asia.

Canadians were participants at the first and at the last, and at all times played their part with gallantry, courage, and devotion to duty. Thus passed an era.