



**Howard Mitchell**

**Bob Dougherty's**

**Phase Dock**

**Ground Ejection Injury**

**in 58-0771**

# **Bob Dougherty Injured During 58-0771 Seat Ejection in Phase Docks**

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## **Castle AFB, 1960**

*By Howard Mitchell, MSgt, USAF (Ret)*

*Submitted by his Son Richard Mitchell 20 Oct 2019*

My name is Howard Mitchell. I was stationed at Castle AFB from 1960 to 1965.

I was in the 456th FIS. I started out as a Crew Chief on an F-106 tail number 58-0771. Parked next to me was aircraft 58-0765, The Crew Chief on that aircraft was Bob Dougherty. That is how I met Bob.

Later Bob was crossed trained to Egress Systems and I moved on to be a Dock Chief with a crew pulling inspections on aircraft. We both worked in and out of the same hanger. Bob's job in Egress work was to remove, service, repair and reinstall ejections seats in the aircraft.

One day [in 1960] a pilot took off on a training mission, not feeling well. He threw up in flight and made an emergency landing at McClellan AFB near Sacramento Calif. The ground crew at McClellan Tried to clean up the cockpit as best they could without taking the seat out.

The pilot got back in and flew the aircraft back to Castle, however some electronic systems did not work due to shorting he caused by throwing up. When the aircraft returned home, they brought it in the hanger so the seat could be taken out of the aircraft so they could get to the areas under the seat to clean and repair.

I was standing at my dock work stand when I looked up to see Bob standing over the ejection seat getting ready to pull it out of the cockpit. Bob had hold of the headrest and started to pull the seat up the rails.

What no one knew was the men at McClellan trying to clean the cockpit up somehow dropped a ½ inch open-end tool down behind the seat and it landed on the bell crank which is in the ejection linkage that fires the rocket motors on the seat.

When Bob pulled the seat up the tool jammed against a bulkhead and pushed down on the bell crank and fired the two rocket motors.

There was a loud explosion, a bright flash, then I see Bob flying up above the support beams in the hanger. He didn't hit any beam's, but came down face down and landed on the left wing of the aircraft. I rushed over to help him, when I got there he was trying to get up, but I told him to stay still and we would get him off the wing.

I believe the wing saved his life. If he had landed on the concrete hanger floor it might have killed him.

We got him off the aircraft and to the hospital where they Air Evac him to Texas to a Burn Treatment Center. His cloths were blown off and some of the fabric was embedded in his skin. He recovered and returned to work after some weeks of recovery. I ask him if he wanted to go back to Crew Chief work. He said no he liked Egress work and wanted to stick with it.

We lost contact when I departed Castle. This incident was how I remembered it back many years ago. I loved the F-106, it was fast and reliable.

One more thing I would like to add.

One day I had a pilot, a Lt. Col tell me my aircraft was dirty and needed to be washed. I reminded him if he would take it off the flying schedule for about half a day, I could get it to the wash rack to wash it. It never happened.

The next time he came out to fly it he reminded me I needed to wash my aircraft. I reminded him when he takes it off the flying schedule, I can get to the wash rack to wash it. Then I made this remark; "why don't you find a rain cloud and fly through it and wash it for me." I sent him on his way.

When he came back and I was directing him into the parking spot, I could not believe what I saw. From the nose cone back about 4 to 6 feet the paint was stripped gone. Also, from the leading edge of the wings and rudder and engine intake lip back about 4 to 6 feet the paint was stripped off. I got the ladder up to the cockpit and climbed up and ask what did he do to my bird?

He said he found a rain cloud and flew through it to wash it for me. "Thanks, but how fast were you going". He said Mach 1.2. Now I knew how to get my aircraft off the flying schedule and to the wash rack and paint shop.

Howard N. Mitchell, MSgt, USAF (Ret)