

## MY FLIGHTS IN A "6"!

An [F-106 Delta Dart Story](#)

By [Marv Donnelly](#) 2004

This ALL started when I first was assigned as a MA-1 troop to the 343<sup>rd</sup> Cam squadron at Duluth AFB, Minnesota. I was totally thrilled to see the "Six" for real and amazed that I was allowed to touch, work on, sit in the cockpit, and do "ALMOST" everything on that aircraft that a pilot gets to do! The ONLY thing I could not do was fly it! I was young then, 19 and really eager to try and do most anything. I used to go to sleep at night at Duluth, thinking of the time I might get the opportunity to actually FLY in one of those machines! Some nights I could hardly get to sleep, because I was imagining the actions of flying one of the aircraft I had just worked on that evening. I often wondered what the pilot had been doing in flight and how the system might have looked to him. I always tried to keep that in mind whenever I worked on fixing a write-up.

I asked many times about flying in the backseat of our "B" models. Always I seemed to get the same answer. "You need to get an altitude chamber card and ejection seat training! I often wondered as to HOW could a JEEP like me get the opportunity to acquire an altitude card and ejection seat training. That answer was slow in coming!!! About 6 years slow!!! I was a Staff Sergeant stationed at K.I Sawyer when I had the opportunity to get into an altitude chamber and ejection seat training class, while I was TDY at Tyndall AFB. Then I got to wait a couple more years before I actually had a chance to use it! The big day came while I was stationed at Castle AFB with the [84<sup>th</sup> FIS](#). We were TDY at Tyndall for the annual live fire and I had asked about riding in the "B" model during the certification run, the following day. That night we started putting the aircraft to bed and called the tower to let them know the TDY ramp was secure.

BIG SURPRISE!!!! The tower controller told us, over the phone, to get our aircraft ready to fly in 15 minutes, because there was a real world DEFCON3 situation happening! WOW!!! There were two of us SSgt's running the night shift, (SSgt Cliff Price and myself) and we had to tell our younger troops to get going with setting up all the aircraft to fly.. Immediately!!! My heart skipped a beat or two, and I know the younger kids we had were all looking quite amazed and dazed by the news we had just given them. The first question was "Is this Defcon3 for real?" Yes, was the answer! We went about the business of getting the aircraft hooked up, powered up, and air compressors running. I forgot all about the possible ride I was going to have. The pilots started showing up! You should have been there to see some of our pilots! Civies, shorts, t-shirts, sandals, and a few VERY drunk ones as well. Those in such condition started sucking down the oxygen as soon as they got into the cockpit. What a scramble to get them up and running!

We were relieved by the dayshift crews and sent back to our barracks. We were finally back in our barracks, much later than planned, and were told to sleep on our bunks, and "do not" get undressed. We did just that. I was Sleeping rather fitfully when I was sharply awakend by one of the dayshift guys. "Hey Marv, Get up and come on. You are leaving in the "B" model!!!!" That was a tremendous statement to me! Leaving?? In the "B" model?? To where??? I got my answer rather quickly.

We arrived at the flight line and I was ushered into the pilots lounge. I was told that there were only enough pilots for the aircraft on line, but someone was needed for the backseat of the "B" model and that was me. The decision was made because I had asked for the ride and was scheduled to fly as the back-seater anyway. "WOW! I'm going to fly in the "B" after all!" "Where is it going?" I asked. "The flight of four sixes is going to Klamath Falls to be put up on alert. Loaded HOT!" was the reply. My next thought was "OK, I wanted to see and be there

when this aircraft actually fired a weapon", but I was now having doubts about see it happen in this fashion.

I went through the personal equipment room and picked out a helmet that fit, along with a backpack parachute that seemed a little uncomfortable. I was escorted to the aircraft and climbed into the backseat. The crew chief helped me to get buckled in and also pointed out a few of the ejection features to me. I listened very intently!!!

The last thing I remember the crew chief telling me was "I wish I was you!, getting to go on this ride!" How lucky I was, I could only begin to fathom. The flight of four sixes took off from Tyndall and I do admit that it was exhilarating! That afterburner kicked in and the liftoff was mesmerizing to me!

"I'm actually FLYING! In a SIX!" The pilot and I finally were able to establish a little chatter and I tuned in the rest of the conversations that were taking place around me. Lead was established and we followed. The flight path was to go to Denver, at Buckley and refuel, then on to Klamath Falls, Kingsley Field where we would set up the aircraft for alert. What a ride. Cross country and a refueling stop in between.

The arrival into the Buckley airspace was not overly different than arriving in a small commercial airliner. The excitement of landing in a "Six" and getting to fly again after our stop really had me going. As we came into the landing pattern, I thought of the many times I had seen these sleek machines slip into the 180 degree turn to down wind, then slide into the landing patter and set down on the end of the runway. I was watching the lead aircraft while listening to the intercom voices from the other pilots. They were counting "1,one-thousand, 2 one-thousand, 3 one-thousand" and they would flip into that 90 degree roll so very quickly then disappear to my left. I was watching #2 disappear when my pilot hit "3 one-thousand" then my head was violently crammed into the right side cockpit window. Evidently my front seater knew what had happened, or at least heard the "Thud" when my helmet met the glass, because he asked if I was alright? I said "It took me by surprise and that yes, I was fine".

After the touchdown and landing roll, the taxi to the main ramp was a little rough! Must have been the suspension! I never noticed that before. The pilot from #2 asked if I could look at the IR on his aircraft. It had stopped working and seemed to have lost the normal vibration in the nose from the compressor. After the aircraft were parked and chocked, and I had climbed out of the "B" I was in, and I checked it out for him and found the compressor had indeed stopped because it had been seized. To ensure the compressor not coming on again and causing further power problems or "Smoke in the cockpit" write-ups, I disconnected the IR power connector and tripped the circuit breaker to prevent any possibility of burning something up. I felt a little strange writing something up and actually putting it into the forms! The other pilots all told me that it was great to have their own "Personal" Ma-1 technician along for the ride. I do admit that the complement felt well earned! They wanted me to do a little "Tweaking" in between flights. I declined!

We stayed on the ground long enough to take a potty break, and wait for the re-fueling to complete. After the refueling was completed, we all climbed back into the cockpits, and started the second leg of our journey. I was again exhilarated by the effects of the afterburner kicking in, and the rush of the ground speeding by as we got into the take-off roll. The view was "Awesome!" I had never experienced the view of the front range in Denver, like I did that day! We shot straight out towards the west, over the city center, then on up the I-70 corridor past Mt Evans. It was a magnificent sight! I only wish I would have had a camera with me! In the years since, I have never seen the equal of that day, leaving Denver. I have flown out of Denver many times since, but nothing can compare.

I listened intently to the radio during our flight and watched the TSD and the interceptor bug movement, all the while looking out the side cockpit window to see everything! I could not get enough of all that was happening in the cockpit, and from the other aircraft flying with us. That day was "Heaven" for me! I was also looking at the radar set and finally got to see the famed "Christmas tree and Altitude Line" that I had only read about and imagined. I actually found and locked on the an in flight moving target. The system worked just fine! I wanted to go back and pat Sgt Mark Wandry on the back for doing such a great job on the system last night!

We soon entered the Kingsley Field approach and this time I was ready when the pilot started counting "1 one thousand, 2 one thousand---". The aircraft rolled into the pattern and I didn't bounce off the windshield this time! It was something! We taxied in to the shelter and shut down. "WHAT a RIDE!!" I exclaimed.

"Well Welcome to Klamath Falls!" a familiar voice said behind me, as I climbed down from the ladder. I turned to see who that voice belonged to and I froze, somewhat in terror and somewhat in sheer surprise. The voice that was so familiar to me, was that of a former Avionics Supervisor I had back at Duluth AFB. None other than SMSGT Lyle G. Young! Now that's another story! I'll end it here!

MARv

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