

# The Crash of Capt Mark Van Stone In F-106A 59-0004, 318 FIS



## McChord jet pilot dies in crash

By Jeff Weathersby - Tacoma News Tribune - Tuesday June 25, 1980

McCHORD AIR FORCE BASE - A 29 year old pilot was killed last night when his F-106 jet fighter crashed about two miles short of the runway.

The victim was identified as Capt. Mark Van Stone of the 318th Fighter interceptor Squadron which is stationed at the base.

Maj. Micki Hogue, a base spokeswoman, said the cause of the 11:49 p.m. crash is unknown and under investigation.

The crash occurred on an unpopulated portion of Fort Lewis. All that remained of the 70 foot long fighter this morning was a section of fuselage lying in a clump of trees.

The plane appeared to leave large chunks of metal debris in a trail several hundred yards long as it crashed. Security police refused to allow a Tacoma News Tribune reporter close to the plane.

The cockpit area of the plane was gone. The fighter carried a crew of only one person.

Falls was on a routine training flight when the crash occurred, McChord officials said. They said the veteran pilot had made one landing approach run and was making a second approach when disappeared from base radar screens.

The wreckage was found at the 3,400-foot level on Bald Mountain, an outcropping on the larger Huckleberry Mountain.

## EXPLANATION OF McCHORD CRASH

Tacoma News Tribune - june 1980

McCHORD AIR FORCE BASE - The official investigation into the crash of a F-106 fighter Tuesday could take a month to complete, according to a Air Force spokeswoman.

The pilot, Capt Mark Van Stone, was killed when his plane crashed into a wooded section of Fort Lewis just short of the McChord runway.

Maj. Micki Hogue said the Spanaway pilot was returning to base after completing a training mission in a flight that took approximately an hour and 25 minutes.

He had flown to the Hoquiam area, Hogue said.

Hogue said that Van Stone was not accompanied by another F-106 although planes were sent out in pairs on some missions.

The fighters, in service since 1959, are designated to attack enemy bombers.

Full Details of the crash would probably be released in "one package" after an inquiry board completes its findings in about a month, Hogue said.

## **CAUSE OF FIGHTER CRASH SECRET**

**REPORTS, THOUGH, DETAIL COMPLAINT ABOUT RADAR**

**Jeff Weathersby - Tacoma News Tribune - Thursday June 04, 1981**

McCHORD AIR FORCE BASE - The supersonic jet fighter that crashed near here a year ago apparently dived unexpectedly into a tree as it approached the base runway, the News Tribune has learned.

Capt. Mark Van Stone, 29, of the 318th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, was killed in the June 25 crash.

The Air Force has refused to reveal the official results of an investigation board's study of the accident.

But Documents obtained by The News Tribune suggest the crash occurred when the F-106 suddenly dived and hit the tree.

"The investigating board's opinions, conclusions, findings, and recommendations are not releasable. Release of this information would have a stifling effect on the free and frank expressions of ideas, opinions, and recommendations of the Air Force officials," according to Col Reginald W. Shaleski, Chief of Staff of the Air Force Inspection and Safety Center.

According to Air Force documents outlining the board's findings, the plane was apparently on course but made a rapid, sudden descent as it came in, Air Force sources said.

A sudden wind shift may have caused the dive, sources said.

In the Air Force transcripts of his last transmissions, there are no records of Van Stone reporting that anything unusual had occurred.

Air Force Documents concluded that the plane was not having engine trouble.

But the transcripts do indicate that air controllers were unhappy with the base's precision approach radar.

The radar is used to provide flight path and azimuth information to pilots on their final approaches, according to an Air Force spokesman.

Shortly before the crash, the operator of the radar said, " this is pathetic. It's great having precision radar that only works in good weather."

But Air Force sources claimed the precision radar was only serving as a back-up to Van Stone as he landed his plane.

Seconds after the complaint, the air controllers reported they lost Van Stone's plane and then the tower reported seeing a "big ball of fire"

Investigators' diagrams indicate the right wing of the \$4.7 million plane hit the tree about two and a half miles from the runway.

Air Force document also say a warning light, that would have indicate a possible problem with the plane's airspeed, apparently went on just before the crash.

For many years the McChord Air Museum's F-106, s/n 56-0459, carried the name of Capt. Van Stone as a tribute to the loss of the pilot.

## **The Crash Of Capt Mark Van Stone F-106A s/n 59-0004**

**E-mail from former 318 fis member William G. Lover**

"I was the Line Chief the night of the mishap... The weather that night was off & on fog with wind and rain, with some heavy gusts."

"I was asked by many about the ball shaped glow that had appeared out on approach. We though the Army had misfired some artillery. It was not long when the call came in to impound all of the forms for 004.. I knew then."

"Capt Van Stone had not been with us long. Many of us had not met him. I met him for the first time that night. He had just made the transition to the F-106s, He had been in Alaska flying T-33,s. before going to Tyndall to pick the F-106 training. SSgt Larry Sanovld was the Crew Chief at the time."

"This may have been his (Van Stone) first night flight (with the 318). The night exercise started with fairly good weather."