

Jack Krause

# Tailhook vs Tanks

## "If Only"



## If Only - Tail Hook vs Tanks

---

### **539<sup>th</sup> FIS 'Iron Hand', McGuire AFB, NJ 1960**

*By John "Jack" E. Krause LtCol USAF (Ret)*

In my opinion, the aircraft maintenance people working on the F-106 were without doubt premier members of the USAF.

My twenty years in maintenance revealed to me just how great they were -- and are. No doubt about it. Some -- in fact most -- of the senior NCO's I was personally associated with were at the top of the list. I often watched in awe at the performance they provided for our aviation mission, and was amazed at what they accomplished. Maybe some of it wasn't "exactly according to Hoyle", but they did get it done. My experiences stretched across the spectrum -- from peacetime in the States to combat over the jungle.

Every now and then we did have our glitches, however. As a flight line maintenance officer, a captain, I was just out of maintenance school at Chanute in the early 60's assigned as an F-106 Squadron flight line maintenance officer I also wrangled a "squadron check out in the F-106. (Having about 800 plus hours in the Deuce helped my "wrangling" considerably easier.) I participated in alert, daily flying and the occasional exercise.

During one of these exercises, I was landing at about 0500 after a very late evening exercise. The wind was

blowing across a rather slippery runway making my usual 0500 landing a bit more involved than normal. (Especially at that hour.)

As the bird slipped and slid in the crosswind, the drag chute decided to fail on me as I hurtled toward the end. So, I dropped the tail hook. Nothing happened. I eventually did get it stopped in the armament area with a couple of smoking brakes. Luckily. And the brakes were a bit "warm" requiring the attendance of the Fire Department.

The chief of maintenance decided to test the rest of the airplanes to make sure all of the hooks worked.

The "test" simply involved a crew chief climbing up the ladder and depressing the tailhook deployment button to allow the spring loaded hook beneath the airplane near the tail to drop down on a large cushion with a bang. The chief of maintenance, myself, the line chief and others watched as the crew chief climbed the ladder, looked into the cockpit of his airplane, hesitated momentarily, and BAM! Both drop tanks hit the pavement. Yes, they were full of fuel.

**"If only....."**