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Beautiful Sabre



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Synopsis

In the spring of 1957, I was awarded the silver wings of a pilot in the United States Air Force. Because I stood first in my pilot training class, I had my pick of next assignments. To my unbounded delight, on the list of openings presented to us there was one that I, and many other brand new, single engine jet pilots, coveted above all others: it called for the boy who picked it to fly the storied North American F-86 Sabre, the great, air-to-air victory bird of the Korean War. He would do that at the gunnery school at Williams Air Force Base in Arizona, the famous Willy. I leapt at it. This book starts with my father's insistence that I, on the eve of entering Princeton University in 1951, agree to join the military on graduation. Having commanded a ship of war in World War 2, he believed with fervor that privileged Americans such as ourselves have a moral obligation to serve the country. My initially surprised but soon entirely willing response was to join at Princeton the ROTC of the United States Air Force. In doing that I was tracking much admired uncles who had flown in the Army Air Corps in the big war. In return for the promise of a second lieutenant's commission on graduation, I committed to the Air Force that I would serve on active duty for three years. It was my hope that I would be accepted into pilot training. Happily, in spite of flat feet, I was. This book follows me through a year of pilot training in places in Texas I had never heard of, mastering, step by step, the business of flying single engine aircraft, at first prop driven, then jet driven. It then describes great days at Willy. My time with the beautiful Sabre was everything I hoped it would be, if not more.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I sailed through this book about the author's experience in flight school in the late 1950's. Mr. Mills described the insular experience of Princeton ROTC and the wider world of the US Air Force with equal aplomb. His love for the F-86 came through beautifully, not only as a responsive, mechanically wonderful machine, but as a conveyer of pure joy. The end of the author's flying career carried a sense of sadness: what could possibly replace hurtling into the sky in his "beautiful sabre"? A great read!

I found the book interesting and it reminded me of my days at Tyndall AFB working on the F-86D as a Fire Control Radar Tech. Later as a Link Aviation Tech Rep, I went to many of the Bases that the book describes. Service to your Country will never be the same as it was then.

I so enjoyed this book. Since I have never piloted a plane, I found that the technical descriptions easy to understand and I felt I was in the rear seat during various maneuvers. Besides it was fun to recall that period in time when I was also young. I do admire the commitment to service, although, as the author mentioned, the Air Force gave him the gift to be able to fly and to fly this particular airplane. The description of Texas towns in the fifties was a bonus. Although this book is not a WAR book, and maybe because of it, I would recommend it to almost any reader. It is a quick and enjoyable trip.

A fellow from an Ivy League School who just can't forget that he's a fellow from an Ivy League School. Narrated using the first person voice, which he is certainly entitled to, it reeks of self admiration and has little else to recommend.

Enjoyed the story of his going through flight training, especially flying the F-86. The F-86 was always everyone's favorite fighter.

Beautiful book, which I enjoyed tremendously. I just have to echo what other top reviewers said, and almost wish he had stayed three more years in the Air Force so we could hear even more of his experiences as a pilot. Well written.

OK

Mostly about the training command. Very little concerning the F-86.

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