



A WILD RIDE IN F-106B 57-2509

By Philip S. Viener

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The 106B in question was not part of a formation - they were on their own after a night training ride - night IFR currency check, I think. The pilot in for the currency check flew it into the lights (and busted the ride), and the check pilot took it around after they contacted the lights. Once he realized they weren't going to fall out of the sky, there was time to get the field ready for them. Emergency crews head out, and another F-106 up at the time tried to verify he had three gear down, but it was too dark.

Somehow, the 106B still had three green lights on the landing gear indicator (or so the pilot told me the next morning when he visited the crash site)...so down the wounded aircraft comes. A mutual decision not to foam the runway was made (I heard because it was too damn messy to clean up after!).

He did a pretty good job of flying it, too - he got written up in the ADC magazine a few months later for saving the plane. However, even though he held the left wing off as long as he could, the 106 landed at such a high rate of speed, he could only do so much. As soon as the left gear touched, the gear collapsed and the two guys inside were passengers. The plane left the runway and described a long arc that aimed it directly at... not only the large group of parked aircraft Doug described, but it also scattered the emergency crews waiting in front of Base Ops. The Fire Chief told me the next day he thought for sure there would be funerals, as people just scattered and emergency vehicles tried to get out of the way. The 106B had gone between six parked 106s before it took aim at the emergency vehicles. By this time the plane's slowing down some, but it's still kicking up a shower of sparks on the asphalt ramp, and it heads between two hangars (right down the yellow taxi strip somehow) and disappears from sight of the tower.

This was the first night in years Hamilton had a designated Supervisor of Flying working in Base Ops, and the SOF that night was Capt. Tom Hedgecock, a good friend of mine who at that time was about 90 days short of getting out of the service.

Just about the time the plane disappeared between the hangars, Tom picked up the phone and called me at my off-base residence. He was totally incoherent, but I managed to figure out a plane had crashed and that I'd better go to work. I doubled just about every speed limit on the way in, came screaming up to the guard shack at the base entrance and yelled at the guard "Where's the crash site?"

"What crash site?" was his reply. I began to suspect things might not be as bad as Tom had indicated...

Meanwhile, the 106B has crossed Hangar Avenue, which ran parallel to the runway but at least 1.5 miles away, and finally come to a stop going the wrong way on a one-way street. These two guys were definitely blessed – they stopped less than 30 feet from a building full of tanks of compressed - and very explosive - gases. The check pilot had presence of mine to shut the engine down just after they left the runway, and there was no fire, but fuel was leaking out of the left wing tank. But they were nowhere near the O Club, and the story they stepped out of the plane and into a quick one is a canard. In fact, they were less than a block from my office. According to the pilot, once the plane stopped, they egressed with all possible speed and ran like hell to get away from the plane, which they thought was going to go up in a ball of flame at any second. And the worst part was they both almost got run over by the fire trucks that had finally caught up with them after losing them in front of Base Ops...

And that's the truth. The one possibly apocryphal part of the story I heard was that an airman was driving home from work down the one-way street - the right way - when suddenly this airplane appeared right in front of him. Airman manages

to stop short of a collision. Supposedly, this airman had been drinking on the job, but immediately swore off the stuff and never had another drink. Can you imagine trying to explain that one to your insurance agent? "Yes, I was hit by a driver going the wrong way on a one-way street. The other vehicle? An F-106B..."

Hope this helps - or at least clarifies some things. And thanks for bringing back some memories.

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