



***A BRIEF HISTORY OF  
CONVAIR F106A 'DELTA DART'  
TAIL NUMBER 59-0010***

***"BALLS 10"***



**(ex-5<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER INTERCEPTOR SQDN)**

**Convair F-106A SN 59-0010 is a very interesting aircraft, having survived a number of 'adventures' in its long service career. After being produced at the Convair production facility at Lindberg Field (San Diego) in late 1959, 59-0010 was assigned to Minot AFB's 5<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron, an Air Defense Command unit formerly flying F-86D 'Sabre Dogs' and F-102 'Deuces' out of Suffolk County Airfield in New York State.**

**This aircraft spent its entire life as a 5<sup>th</sup> Fighter charge, operating from Minot Air Force Base North Dakota from 1960 through 1985, when the unit transitioned from 'Sixes' to newer F-15A Eagles. In its 25 years of service with 5<sup>th</sup> FIS, the aircraft was regarded as a particularly lucky bird, due to its having undergone several incidents that would have permanently grounded or even destroyed many aircraft. In one notable 1975 incident, 59-0010 ran off the runway, owing to slick surface conditions and a locked brake that found it ending up stuck in the mud between the MAFB taxiway and the main runway. On another occasion the aircraft successfully landed 'dead-stick' after a flameout complicated by hydraulic problems. There was talk of writing the aircraft off at that time, but fate decided otherwise.**

**The most notable 'escape' 59-0010 had occurred on 17 September 1979. Piloting 59-0010 was Major Paul Norton. He and his wingman, Captain Randy Hardy in 57-0236, had just emerged from a cloud formation in marginal weather and collided with each other. 57-0236 suffered severe damage to one of its elevons, while 59-0010 had its *entire* nose radome sliced off by 57-0236's wing. Amazingly (and perhaps a testament to the capabilities of both pilots as well as the sturdy construction of the F-106), both aircraft were able to return to MAFB and touch down safely. Interviews with some of the ground crew at MAFB, post accident, revealed that a couple of 59-0010's MA-1 weapons system 'black boxes' had actually been ingested into its engine as a result of the impact, although how its engine managed to avoid to 'FOD'ing out' is a perplexing question that lingers to this day.**

**With such severe nose damage as it had sustained, 59-0010 sat in a hanger at MAFB for nearly a year, getting progressively more run-down until finally higher command decided to resurrect it to flying**

status. A crew was sent in to fix a temporary nose and the aircraft was finally readied for a check flight. This was followed up by a visit to Sacramento ALC (McClellan AFB) for permanent repairs and shortly thereafter 59-0010 was reassigned to further active duty at Minot with 5<sup>th</sup> FIS

In 1985, Minot's 5<sup>th</sup> FIS flew their aircraft on a last one way squadron flight to DMAFB's AMARC (then known as MASDC), where 59-0010 was stored with all of the other 200+ other Sixes released from ADC squadrons. Along with about 189 of its fellow Sixes, 59-0010 was selected to be converted to a QF-106 remotely flown target drone as part of the 'PACER SIX' program, and the drone conversion was completed by TRACOR (later BAE) at Mojave Airport. Flown to join Tyndall AFB's 82<sup>nd</sup> Aerial Target Squadron, 59-0010 began a series of flights as an airborne target for US Air Force weapons practice and testing. As such, its chance of emerging unscathed was virtually nil and the likelihood of being destroyed in mid-air by an intercepting practice air-to-air missile was about 80%.

However, in the mid 90s, 59-0010's vaunted good fortune spared it from almost certain destruction when it and another ex-5<sup>th</sup> FIS bird (59-0130) were reprieved from the ignominious fate of being blown out of the sky as aerial targets. This change in mission came about by their selection for use in the 'PROJECT ECLIPSE' program cooperatively conducted by a private contractor and NASA, at Edwards' Dryden Flight Research Center. The 'Project Eclipse' project was evolved to demonstrate the concept of towing a reusable orbital vehicle to altitude before firing its engines to achieve orbital insertion. As a delta-winged aircraft, quite similar to the projected 'Eclipse' reusable orbital vehicle envisioned at the time by NASA, the Convair F-106 was an ideal substitute for the proposed winged spacecraft. As a result, 59-0130 was to be used as primary flying 'proof of concept' demonstrator, while 59-0010 would serve as a backup aircraft for the program.

As things turned out, 59-0010 managed to escape the hazardous duty 59-0130 was exposed to in actual tow flights and quietly sat the program out in a corner of the Dryden hanger until the project terminated in 1998. 59-0010 was then reconsigned to AMARC, where it joined a very small number of other F-106 drone program survivors

and is further remarkable for having been one of the last remaining seven flying F-106s (out of the over 263+ total that were built).

Our own McClellan Aviation Foundation Museum had been interested in acquiring a 'Six' for a number of years, due to McClellan AFB having been the chief air logistics facility for all 'Six' maintenance throughout the type's long career. In 2004, the museum formally applied for and eventually received permission from USAF Museum Headquarters (in early 2005) to recover this splendid example of one of Convair's most spectacular and storied delta aircraft designs.

At the time, there were less than seven of these aircraft left in existence at AMARC, due to attrition of the type in the 'Pacer Six' aerial target program. All of us at the museum (now known as *The Aerospace Museum of California*) were extremely pleased when in May of 2005, this splendid surviving example of the Convair F-106A Delta Dart was successfully recovered from AMARC and brought to the McClellan Air Park by truck. From that date through December of 2007, it underwent the process of being restored to the original appearance it presented when it was last on active air defense duty with Air Defense Command's 5th Fighter Interceptor Squadron '*Spittin' Kittens*' at Minot Air Force Base!

Of all the many interesting and exotic aircraft developed in the immediate post WWII period of the 50s, 59-0010 is a particularly interesting specimen of the 'Ultimate Interceptor' design that protected US airspace successfully for almost 30 years. The staff and personnel of the Aerospace Museum of California can take justifiable pride in the success of their efforts to preserve for our museum and the air-minded public one of the most significant 'Cold War Warriors' ever to leave an aeronautical engineer's drawing board.

59-0010 may today be viewed in the new \$7.0 million dollar museum facility that has just been formally dedicated and opened to the public (2 Feb 07), where it is displayed as it originally appeared in 5<sup>th</sup> FIS squadron colors.

The 'Six Team' that consists of museum volunteers responsible for both retrieving and restoring includes many dedicated individuals, all of whom deserve our respect and admiration for helping save this

**'lucky bird' at the end of its career as a fighting aircraft. We are most pleased that it is now permanently on display at our museum, where it will serve to educate and inspire a thousands of visitors throughout the coming years.**

**Of special note is the fact that the head of the 'Six Team' (and one of those most responsible for helping us acquire the aircraft) is Colonel Dick Stultz, a former ADC pilot and Chief of Flight Test at McClellan AFB. Stultz (whose exploits as a wildly funny cartoonist while on active ADC duty are today almost legendary among ADC F-106 alumni), has over 3300 hours in the Six and actually flew our Six several times in the course of its various maintenance visits to McClellan.**

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(A series of photographs of 56-0010 taken both during its service career and during its restoration may be viewed on the following pages.)

## **ACTIVE DUTY (USAF, 1959 to 1985)**



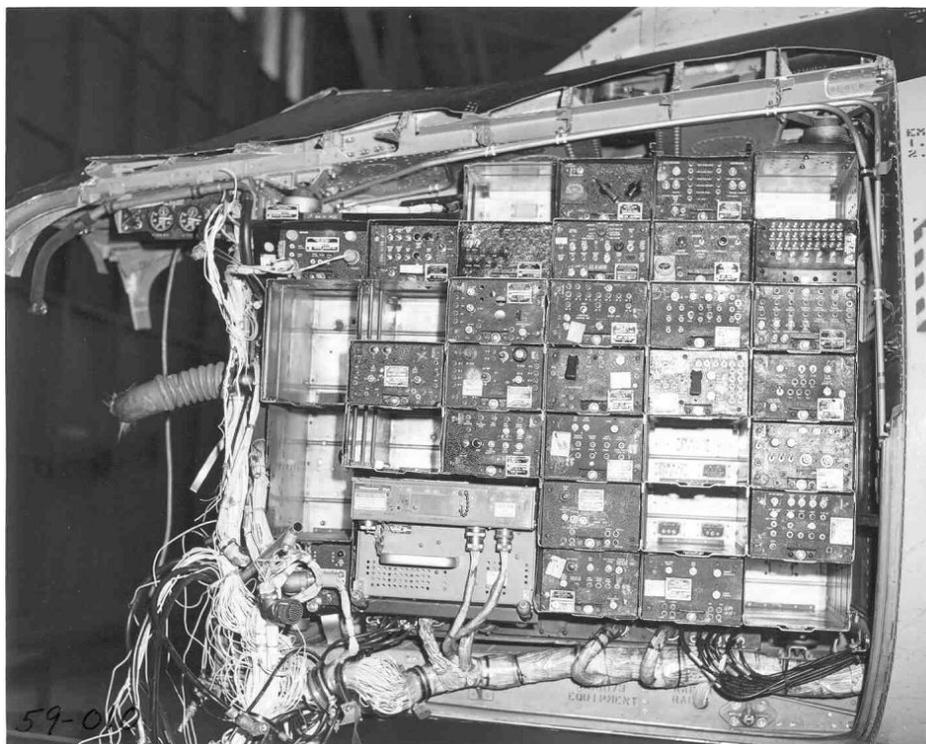
59-0010 in flight, during active service life



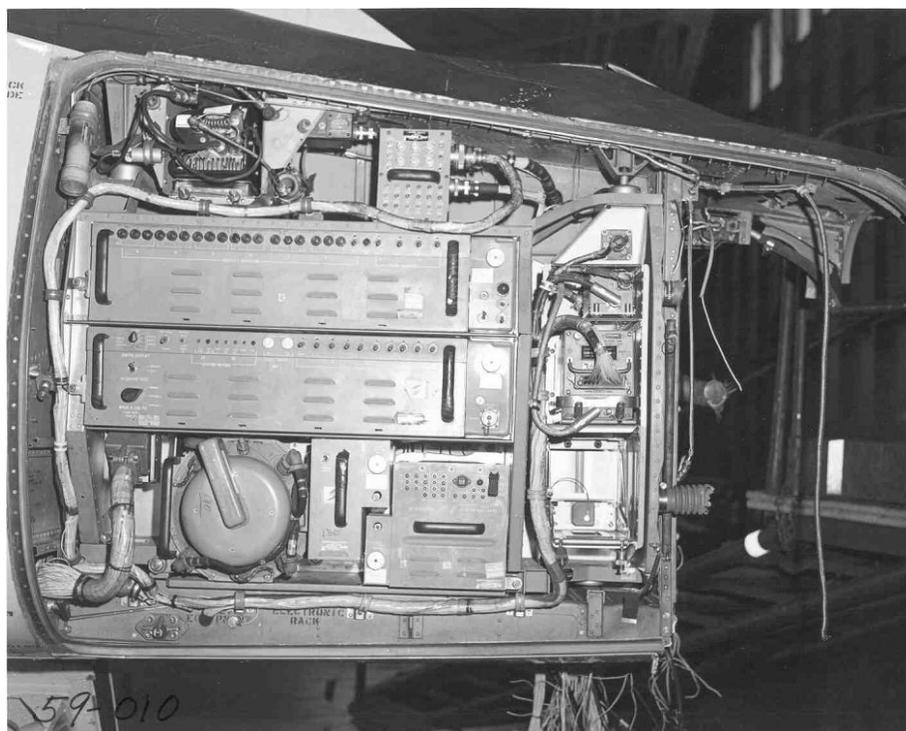
Part of flight of two 5<sup>th</sup> FIS Sixes in 1978



Landing *without* nose radome, after mid-air with 57-0236 in 1979!



59-0010 left side nose (MA-1 system), on ground after mid-air!



59-0010 right side nose (MA-1 system), on ground after mid-air!



59-0010 landing with drogue chute, MAFB 1980



59-0010 taxiing in after flight, MAFB, 1980s

## PROJECT ECLIPSE BACK-UP, 1998-99



59-0010 on the Dryden Flight Center ramp, 1998



Waiting patiently for the call in Dryden Hanger (Edwards), 1998



59-0010 being shown off for the press at Dryden—celebrity status, 1999



With ex-5<sup>th</sup> FIS stablemate 59-0130 (left) at Dryden, 1999



One of the last flights for 59-0010 at Dryden Flight Research Center, '99



With other NASA research stable-mates at Dryden, 1999

## **BACK TO THE BONEYARD—FATE UNCERTAIN!**



59-0010 at rear, with other survivors, awaiting final disposition



59-0010 (above & below) with last 5 flyable sixes, AMARC, 2001



The long uncertain wait for...recycling into cola cans? (2003)



## RECOVERY, RESTORATION, REBIRTH!



McClellan Aviation Museum recovery crew at AMARC, with 59-0010



More waiting, patiently, in pieces, on Museum hanger ramp, early 2005



Sunset on a long and distinguished career, but rebirth just around the corner!



Initial reassembly begins on 59-0010



Somewhat like assembling a 25,000 pound plastic model airplane....but not quite!



Happy restoration crew—wings on, gear down!



Non-standard lift augmentation device deployed—November 2005



January of 2006—a proud bird, waiting finishing touches and new paint!



November of 2005, all the major reassembly done! Time to finish up the beak!



59-0010—almost complete! May of 2006!

# RESTORATION COMPLETE!



59-0010 on display (above, below) in new AMC pavilion (Jan 2007)





59-0010 shares spotlight with Blue Angel A-4 in new museum (Jan 07)





LTCol. Dick Stultz, former ADC Six driver (far right) Jan 2007.



AMC 'Six" dedication day (above & below)

