

VINTAGE WINGS OF CANADA

CENTENNIAL HERITAGE FLIGHT

HAWK ONE

THE RETURN OF A LEGEND

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Canadians will bear witness to a historic event in 2009 as one of the most famous aircraft to have served in the Royal Canadian Air Force tours Canada as the mainstay of the Centennial Heritage Flight celebrating 100 years of flight in Canada. Chosen by the RCAF as its front line day fighter in August 1949, the Canadair F-86 Sabre served in Western Europe as a deterrent to the Warsaw Pact from the early days of the Cold War until it was replaced by the CF-104 Starfighter beginning in 1962.

Photo: Peter Handley

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All told, some 300 RCAF Sabres were based in Europe at the height of the fighter's operational service as part of Canada's collective defence contribution to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Spread throughout 12 Squadrons on 4 Wings, the aircraft saw service in three countries in the interceptor day fighter role – 1 (F) Wing North Luffenham, England, latterly Marville, France; 2 (F) Wing Grostenquin, France; 3 (F) Wing Zweibrücken, West Germany, latterly Lahr, West Germany; and 4 (F) Wing Baden-Soellingen, West Germany.



Photo - Cpl. Jennifer Chiasson

RCAF Sabre Squadrons

No. 1 Air Division

By September 1953 Canada had 12 F-86 Sabre squadrons operational in Europe with the RCAF's No.1 Air Division. In 1956, four of the Sabre squadrons were disbanded to give way to the Avro CF-100 All Weather Interceptor. Ultimately, all were replaced by the CF-104 Starfighter as the RCAF switched its NATO role to low level nuclear strike and reconnaissance.

The following Canadian squadrons saw service in Europe between 1951 and 1963 equipped with the F-86 Sabre: 410, 439, 441, 416, 421, 430, 413, 427, 434, 414, 422 and 444.

A total of 107 RCAF Sabre pilots gave their lives in service of their country during this period.

In Canada

RCAF pilots destined to fly the Sabre in Europe trained at No.1 (F) Operational Training Unit (OTU) based at RCAF Station Chatham, New Brunswick. In 1959, the station also became home to the RCAF's famous aerobatic team, the Golden Hawks. When the Sabre was phased out of service in Europe in 1963, it continued to serve as a lead-in fighter trainer for the CF-104, the training unit being renamed the Sabre Transition Unit (STU). The last RCAF Sabre flight took place in December 1968 at CFB Chatham.

For a brief period in 1954, 431 (F) Sqn was equipped with the Canadair Sabre 2 and participated in Operation Prairie Pacific, a program designed to introduce Canadians to the jet age. Although disbanded in October 1954, the squadron was re-formed in April 1978 when the Canadian Forces Snowbirds received squadron status, being officially renamed 431 Air Demonstration Squadron.

A number of Auxiliary Squadrons across Canada were also equipped with the Sabre in RCAF service. These included 400 & 411 Sqns at RCAF Station Downsview, Ontario, 401 & 438 Sqns at RCAF Station St. Hubert, Quebec and 442 & 443 Sqns at RCAF Station Sea Island, British Columbia.



One of the many lives of Hawk One. After she left the Royal Canadian Air Force, the Hawk was registered in the US as N8687D. Here she is in egregious yellow and rust markings at the Reno Air Races in 1972. Her pilot, none other than air show and air force superstar Bob Hoover, shoulder checks while waiting in the blistering Nevada heat. Photo - Doug Fisher, www.warbirddepot.com



Canadair Sabre History

Built under license from aircraft manufacturer North American of the United States, all Canadian Sabres were built by Canadair Ltd at its Cartierville, Quebec plant near Montreal. Modelled after North American's F-86A, the prototype Canadair Sabre 1 (19101) made its first test flight at RCAF Station Dorval on August 9, 1950 piloted by Canadair's chief test pilot, Al Lilly.

Original production models of the Sabre were thereafter designated the Canadair CL-13 Sabre 2 and closely matched the North American F-86E-1 in design and performance. The first Sabre 2 (19102) made its maiden flight on January 31, 1951. By August 1952, Canadair had built 350 Sabre 2s for the RCAF.

Ultimately, Canadair built six variants of the Sabre, the most famous and capable being the CL-13B Sabre 6. Powered by the Canadian-built Orenda 14 engine which produced 7,275 pounds of thrust, the aircraft had a top speed of 710 mph and a service ceiling of 55,000 feet. The first Sabre 6 bore the serial number 23371 and took flight on October 19, 1954. When the last F-86 Sabre (23752) rolled off the assembly line at Canadair on October 9, 1958, the company had manufactured a total of 1,815 Sabres, including 655 Sabre 6s.

Hawk One Lineage – Going for Gold

The F-86 Sabre that forms the backbone of the Centennial Heritage Flight is a Canadair Sabre 5 bearing the serial number 23314. Manufactured in 1954, it was the 1,104th Sabre to come off the Canadair



DND/RCAF Photo

assembly line. It has been retrofitted with wings equipped with leading edge slats and an Orenda 14 engine, thus bearing all the resemblance of a Sabre 6. Purchased by Vintage Wings of Canada in October 2007, it is being refurbished in the colours of the RCAF's most famous aerobatic team, the Golden Hawks. Hence the moniker, "Hawk One."

Known Aircraft History

Serial Number – 23314

Canadair Constructor Number – 1104

First Flight – August 13, 1954



RCAF pilot Don Syms of 441 (F) Sqn took this candid photo of squadron technicians on the flightline at Rabat, Morocco preparing Sabre 23314 for another air-to-air gunnery sortie circa 1955.

RCAF/CAF Service

Taken-on-Strength by the RCAF – September 14, 1954

RCAF Squadrons/Units:

- 441 (F) Sqn
- AFHQ Jet Practice Flight
- Golden Hawks
- Sabre Transition Unit (STU)

Special historical notes involving Sabre 23314:

1. While flying 23314 with 441 (F) Sqn during a thirty minute "trophy shoot" sortie on November 25, 1955 at French Air Force Base Rabat Sale, Morocco, F/O Jerry Westphal scored 94 hits air-to-air with his six 0.50 Colt-Browning machine guns. This was at the time, and may well have remained, an all-time record.

2. Although 23314 was never painted in Golden Hawk colours, it was seconded to the team at RCAF Stn Trenton for the team tryouts in the fall of 1962 as



well as the 1963 workups. This was a common practice each season. Log book records reveal the aircraft was flown by both lead solo F/L Ed McKeogh and opposing solo F/L Dave Barker for formation, solo and co-solo aerobatics during this period.

3. The Sabre featured with the Centennial Heritage Flight in 2009 finished its RCAF/CAF service at the Sabre Transition Unit at RCAF Stn/CFB Chatham, NB. Of significant coincidence, it was the aircraft flown by F/L Terry Elphick in 1967 as a member of the STU's Centennial Sabre Team that toured Canada. He recalls those magical days:

"F-86 23314 was my aircraft. My uncle, Maxwell Elphick, worked for Canadair and sent my father a series of pictures of 23314 in the 1950's. At that time I was drawing pictures of F-86s in my school books and when I saw these pictures I swore I would fly 314 some day. Later my dream became to fly 23314 with the Golden Hawks. When I arrived at RCAF Stn Chatham and saw 23314, I flew it at every opportunity. By 1967 it was known as "Terry's aircraft," and it is the aircraft I flew with Bernie, Mark and Reg when we toured

Canada in 1967. I often wondered what happened to it and was delighted to see it in "Going for Gold" in the Fall issue of Airforce Magazine."

4. Included among the dozens of RCAF pilots that flew 23314 were the following:

Name	Sqn/Unit	Aircraft Flown Between
F/O Don Myles	441 (F) Sqn	15 Mar 55 - 4 Jul 56
F/O Ed Rozdeba*	439 (F) Sqn	30 May 55 - 31 May 55
F/O Don Syms	441 (F) Sqn	Jun 55 - Jun 58
F/O Jerry Westphal	441 (F) Sqn	8 Jul 55 - 27 Jun 56
F/L Archie Debenham	AFHQ Jet Prac Flt	8 Jul 55 - 27 Jun 56
F/L B.R. Campbell*	AFHQ Jet Prac Flt	7 Aug 59 - 13 Jul 60
F/L Ed McKeogh*	Golden Hawks	22 Nov 62 - 30 Nov 62
F/L Dave Barker*	Golden Hawks	5 Dec 62 - 19 Mar 63
F/L George Miller*	STU	23 Jul 64 - 7 Aug 64
F/L Larry Hill	STU	20 Apr 64 - 6 Oct 65
F/L Bill Turnbull	STU	25 Nov 65 - 30 Nov 65
F/O Ron Chercoe	STU	22 Jun 66
F/O Gerry Morrison	STU	13 Jul 67 - 23 Aug 67
F/L Terry Elphick	STU/Sabre Team	3 Mar 66 - 31 Dec 68

* Denotes former Golden Hawk pilots



Two historical photos of 23314 taken by RCAF Sabre pilot Bill Turnbull, one airborne near RCAF Station Chatham and the other on the STU flightline, January 1966.



Capt Terry Elphick, the last RCAF/CF pilot to do a full tour on the F-86 in Canada, guides 23314 in for a landing at CFB Chatham. He was one of the last air force pilots to fly the aircraft, doing so for the last time on Dec 31, 1968. The aircraft was then shipped to Mountain View, Ontario and placed in storage. Photo - Terry Elphick



Sabre 23314 was struck-off-strength from the Canadian Armed Forces on September 9, 1970, having been sold to Maritime Aircraft Repair & Overhaul .

Civil History (Registrations CF-BKH, N8687D, C-GSBR)

September 1970 - Purchased by Maritime Aircraft Repair & Overhaul, Moncton, NB, but remained in outdoor storage at Mountain View, Ontario until at least June 1971. Canadian civilian registration became CF-BKH.

1973 - Leroy Penhall/ Fighter Imports Inc., Chino, CA (N8687D)

1976-78 - Whittington Brothers/ Air Sabre Inc., West Palm Beach, FL

1980-86 - David C. Tallichet/MARC, Chino, CA

October 1987 - Jim Robinson/ Combat Jets Flying Museum, Houston, TX

May 1992 - EAA Aviation Foundation, Oshkosh, WI (flown in USAF colours as 12897/"The Huff"/FU-897)

December 1996 - John J. Mark/MA Inc., Oshkosh, WI

October 2007 - Vintage Wings of Canada, Gatineau, QC (New Canadian registration C-GSBR)

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Sabre 23314 at Shearwater in 1967. Towards the end of her RCAF career, 314 made an appearance at CFB Shearwater during Canada's Centennial Year as part of the 3Centennial Sabre Team2 formed by the Sabre Transition Unit at nearby CFB Chatham New Brunswick. Photo Credit: Barrie MacLeod



Sabre 23314 reinvented as Hawk One. In this photo taken from the same angle as the one to the left, but 42 years later, our Sabre shows her age very well indeed. Photo credit: Peter Handley, Vintage Wings of Canada