

Col. Bob Scott

By Paul Backshall

The MIG Killer who loves horses

AS Colonel Bob Scott takes the controls of his Goose to ferry passengers from St. Thomas to St. Croix or Tortola, not many of his charges realise that they are in the hands of a man who distinguished himself as a fighter pilot in World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

And, as he quietly asks his charges to fasten their seat belts for that leisurely 15 minute trip across the bright blue waters, it must seem a long time ago that he strapped himself into a F-84F Thunderstreak to set an official U.S. Transcontinental speed record.

Colonel Scott was born in Des Moines, Iowa, which he describes as 'the land of tall corn, fat hogs and pretty girls'. He was the son of an insurance company executive and

his training he flew Luscomb Travelaires, the first all-metal airplane. From this he graduated to the Waco bi-plane which was designed for aerobatics.

At about this time a travelling Air Force team came around and Bob, then 20, enrolled as a flying cadet.

With the advent of World War II, Bob went for primary training to Lindberg Field in San Diego and, after soloing in a Monasco powered Ryan, he knew that he wanted to be a fighter pilot. But combat was to elude him for at least a year when he was made an instructor.

During this time, he joined an organization called the Caterpillar Club and was engaged one day in a

Japanese at that time controlled two thirds of China. Bob's targets were then rolling stock, marshalling yards, army headquarters and bivouac areas. Although there was no air opposition the Japanese army was well equipped and the Air Force suffered significant losses from ground fire.

At the end of World War II, Bob's squadron was recalled to the U.S., but Bob stayed on to take part in a liaison mission with the nationalist Chinese to combat the threat of the Communists. His job was to help supervise the formation of the Nationalist Chinese air force.

In 1946, he returned to the U.S. and was sent to the air force instrument school at Bryan, Texas, but en route there he stopped in



Capt. Charles Blair (right) visits Col. Scott at his fighter command base.

credits the start of his flying career to an avid interest in horses.

The Iowa National Guard had a contingent at Des Moines airport and a polo team. He and other kids from his neighborhood would exercise the horses and, in return, the National Guardsmen would give them rides in their aircraft.

Prior to the start of World War II, the government established a civil pilot training program and college credits were available for this. Bob planned to major in aero-nautical engineering and here was a chance to do some flying as well. During

tricky scissors maneuver when someone cut off his tailplane with a propeller obliging Bob to make his one and only parachute jump.

Bob was finally able to escape his role as instructor and get himself assigned to a squadron headed for China to protect the countryside and shoot down Japanese intruders. Bob distinguished himself by becoming the first pilot to shoot down an enemy aircraft at night in that theatre of operations.

When the U.S. Air Force finally wiped the Japanese out of the sky, Bob's squadron was switched to an air-to-ground role. The

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Dallas to see some pilot friends who were flying with Braniff. He decided to join them and resigned from the Air Force, since there seemed little prospect of further action. But before he could enroll in the co-pilot school, the U.S. A.F. offered him a commission with the promise that he could go back to school on a major's salary and get his master's degree. Bob accepted and won himself two degrees in aeronautical engineering.

Following this he got to go to Eglin Field, Florida, to join the fighter test squadron trying out new jet aircraft for the Air Force. Bob was now flying F-84 and F-86 single seater jet aircraft. The F-86 was the first combat aircraft capable of supersonic speeds during a dive. Bob was later given a temporary assignment at Edwards A.F. base in California where he graduated from the Air Force Test Pilot School. He went on to test the F-86-D night all weather fighter, capable of firing folding fin rockets.

By this time the Korean war was going on and Bob, now a Lieutenant Colonel, was eager to get back to combat. His experience testing the F-86 paid off and he was assigned to a squadron whose mission

was to combat the deadly Russian-built MIG. 'Now we were on our own. Man versus man in our own test of skill.'

Then his F-86 squadron became the first to do fighter bomber work and because they were fighter pilots they were not provided with air cover on their bombing missions. So if a bunch of MIGs turned up, their orders were to continue to the target instead of scrapping with the MIGs. Bob flew 117 missions over Korea.

Bob had a horror of getting stuck in the Pentagon and was reluctant to come home after the

Korean war ended. But he was promised a job with the Tactical Air Command and assumed command of the 510th Tactical Fighter Squadron at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia for a three year period.

He was now flying the swept-wing F-84, capable of carrying nuclear weapons, and was dispatched to Sandia in New Mexico to learn what the nuclear bomb was all about. The air force was testing nuclear weapons with the nuclear charge removed and replaced by a piece of lead.

'The squadron and I got to
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drop 23 of these things and, with huge charges of dynamite, they made a big bang," said Bob. The testing was done at Eglin, Florida.

In 1955, there was an Air Force assault on the transcontinental speed record and Bob and the squadron were assigned. There were eight aircraft involved and all my guys dropped out one after one so I could win it," said Bob with a smile. The run was from Los Angeles to New York and took three hours and 44 minutes with inflight refuelling. The record stood for two years and was eventually broken by a marine pilot named John Glenn.

The Air Force had a world wide gunnery meet and Bob was part of the Tactical Air Command team in 1955 and was awarded an individual trophy for air to air gunnery, air to ground gunnery, dive bombing, and skip bombing (skipping a bomb along the ground using delayed fuses).

About this time, Captain Charles Blair, when not in the cockpit of a Pan Am Stratocruiser, was working with the Tactical Air Com-

mand in helping to develop long range aircraft and was assigned to Scott's 510th at Langley for test work. This was his first contact with the man who was later to form Antilles Air Boats and provide Col. Scott with the perfect post-retirement occupation.

They were to fly together again later when the Air Force needed guidance on the F100s which were having problems with navigational gear. Captain Blair helped develop a system of celestial navigation to get the long-range jets across the oceans where no radio signals were available. Also Capt. Blair helped Tactical Air Command's first Mach 2 fighter squadron, equipped with F-105s and commanded by Bob, to develop a suitable Doppler navigational system.

At the outbreak of the Vietnam conflict, Bob was placed in charge of the standardization and evaluation group covering all flying organizations in the Pacific Air Force. He went on to accomplish 134 combat missions over North Vietnam. As commander of the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing based at Takhli Air Force Base in Thailand, he led his wing of F-105 Thunderchiefs in many strikes against the Hanoi-Haiphong-Thai Nguyen area. Here he was

pitched against the MIG-17 and joined the elite group of American "MIG Killers" by downing one of these aircraft on the outskirts of Hanoi.

Before retiring, Col. Scott logged over 8,300 hours total flying time with more than 4,500 hours in single engine jet fighters.

He maintained his contact with Charles Blair and was invited down to the Virgin Islands to have a look at the operation. He liked what he saw and decided to continue with his main desire in life - flying, despite having bought himself a working ranch at Tehachapi, in Southern California. There he is already continuing in the Iowa family tradition of farming. The horses are there too, to remind him of his first contact with flying.

But he will keep flying the Goose for as long as he is able and help Charles Blair to run the airline. Bob is now Vice President - operations with the company.

He commutes to the ranch as often as possible from his home in St. Croix. 'One day, when I am too old to shove Gooses around, it will be my final resting place,' said Col. Scott.

GADELOUPE

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the Natural Park, had no name, a great view, plastic tablecloths and a very polite waiter who spoke perfect English. There was no menu, nor would he state a price or exactly what there was to eat. It was one of those try it you'll like its and we had gizzard soup with assorted hairs, boiled goats blood, goat stew, red wine and a tiny banana and were charged \$20.00 for two! Beware.

It was our intention to spend the afternoon at the Natural Park and Le Soufriere, the volcano, not realizing that in order to see it you must leave your car and hike for miles. Now the threat of Le Soufreire erupting has taken the volcano off the list of tourist attractions. It should be pointed out however that the volcano is a great distance from most of the hotels on the island and the threat of the possible eruption should not deter visitors.

And as for a capsulized summary of Guadeloupe and how it stacks up against the other French islands, let it be remembered that Guadeloupe is not a cheap date. It is overall,

hotels, food and shopping, expensive, although most downtown shops will take 20 per cent off if you pay in travelers checks. French and creole is spoken here and although more and more English is being studied, don't depend on it. Practice up and pack the phrase book. As for reports that Guadeloupians are very snooty particularly towards Americans, that shopkeepers raise their prices when they see us coming, I disagree. The average Guadeloupien is sincere, exceptionally well mannered and cordial and will go out of his way to aid a foreigner. Like most French islands there is practically no racial tension and very little crime. Possibly some of the residents originally from the mother country can be accused of snobbishness, and perhaps some of the boutique keepers, but in only one hotel did I experience anything other than niceties. As a point of comparison, I found Guadeloupe larger, and far more beautiful and friendly than Martinique. Although not quite as exhilarating nor nearly as inexpensive as Haiti, it is far more pleasant without the upsetting poverty or stomach viruses! Given the opportunity, I shall return.

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