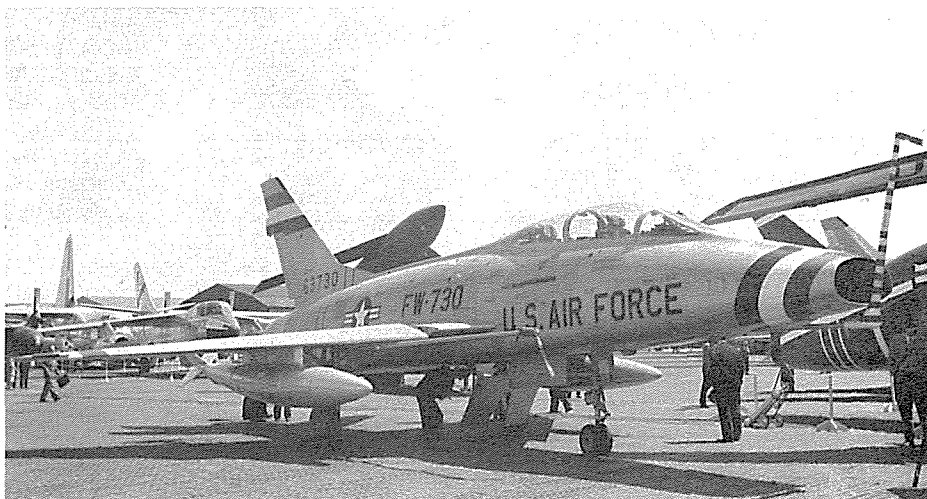


Spirit of St. Louis II

By DAVID W. MENARD



Throughout the years many stories have been told, and much has been written, of various aircraft and their changes of ownership, paint schemes, and locations, but rarely have any modern jet aircraft been able to fit into this category. It is no doubt due to their relative newness and high exposure rate to possible accidents, and this applies especially to fighter types where the rate is even higher in the training role.

One notable exception to this is F-100F-1-NA, Air Force serial number 56-3730, which has served in Europe, South East Asia, and the United States during the past 14 years, carrying at least six different sets of markings on innumerable assignments. As a study in longevity, the story is not over yet.

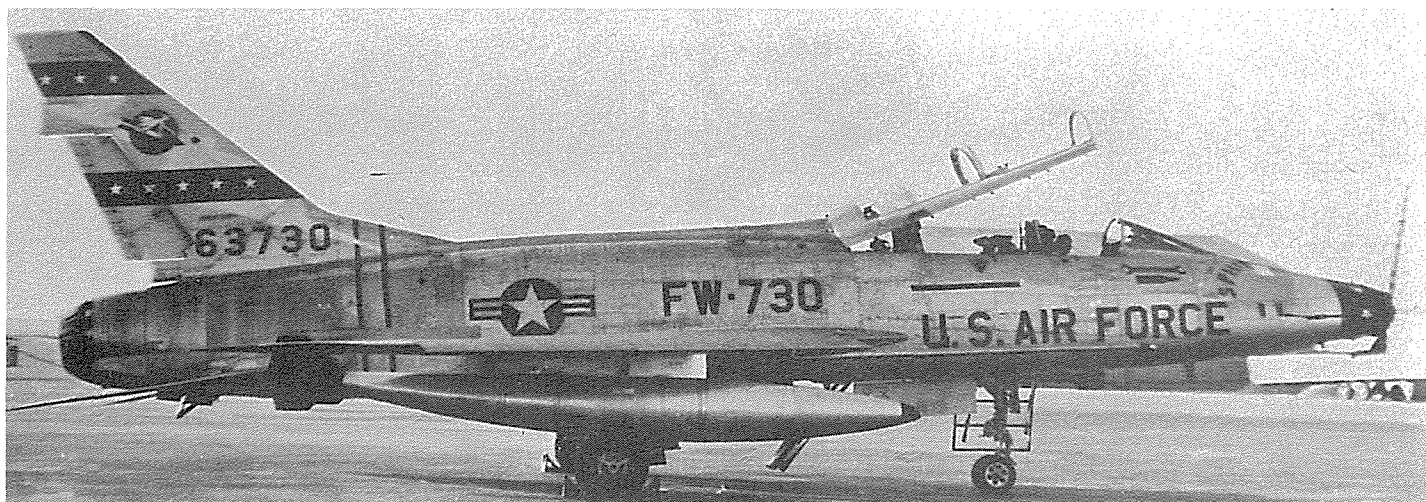
"730" was delivered to the Air Force in early 1957, and was selected to be an exhibit at the 1957 Paris Air Show.¹ As the Show was held on the same date as the 30th anniversary of Charles Lindbergh's famous flight, the "Spirit of St. Louis II" was painted on the nose, and plans were made for Lindy himself to ride in the rear seat on the flight from McGuire AFB, New Jersey to Paris on May 21st. Gen. Lindbergh could not make the flight, so Major (now Lt. Col.) Robinson Risner of the 479th Fighter Bomber Wing based at George AFB, took the SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS II to Paris, a flight of 6 hours and 37 minutes. In addition to the famous name on the nose, red, white and blue bands had been painted on the nose and fin.

After the Paris Air Show, in which the SPIRIT was shown on display in the static exhibit, it was flown to the 20th Fighter Bomber Wing at RAF Wethersfield, England, where it was used in the transition training from F-84F to F-100D types. At this time, the SPIRIT retained the red, white and blue nose bands, but green lightning flashes were painted on the fuselage and fin, and the 20th FBW insignie was placed on the fin.

In 1958, SPIRIT was transferred to the 417th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 50th TFW, at Toul-Rosieres Air Base, France, where red bands with white stars were painted on the fin and nose. Just the single word "Spirit" appeared in red, forward of the cockpit. The 417th squadron's insignie was a white ghost, riding a white and black rocket, on a red circular background. This was painted on the fin between the two red bands.

The SPIRIT stayed with the 417th in its move to Ramstein AB, Germany in December 1959. It then received another, new paint scheme, consisting of red band with white stars and border, yellow band with black stars and border, and blue band with white stars and border, equally spaced on the fin. Centered on the yellow band was the 50th TFW insignie, while the 417th insignie was painted on drop tanks. Again, the word "Spirit" appeared on the nose, but in a different arrangement of letters, circularly around a pilot's wings. A near accident occurred while landing at Hahn AB, Germany on one occasion; SPIRIT brushed its left stabilizer





on an approach light. Had it been a few feet lower, it might have crashed.

In September 1961, "730" returned to the USA for duty with the 140th TFW, Colorado ANG at Denver. No longer the SPIRIT, "730's" paint scheme was changed again, this time to a dark blue nose band, an arrowhead with orange-yellow border on the fin, and the ANG Minuteman emblem. "730" was put through "Project Hi-Wire," a modernization program, somewhat later and the block number was changed; it was now F-100F-2-NA.

The 140th TFW took very good care of "730" during the next six and a half years. When the squadrons left for a year's tour of duty in South East Asia, "730" went along and came back in the spring of 1969 with the Wing's other F-100C's. It was then sporting still another paint scheme, the new Air Force camouflage, with code letters, XA, on the fin.

So "730" keeps on flying, now the third oldest surviving F Model in the Air Force, helping to train new F-100 pilots, very few of whom may realize where their famous trainer has served, or for how long.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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¹ Author David W. Menard, the AAHS Editorial Consultant for the F-100 airplane, has had the SPIRIT II under observation for many years. His first report was in *JOURNAL of AAHS*, Volume 7, No. 1, (Spring 1962), pp. 58-60.



THE SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS II. Upper left, as shown on display at the Paris Air Show, May 1957. (Photo by author). Lower left, SPIRIT with green flashes and insigne of 20th FBW on fin, 1957-58 at RAF Wethersfield. (USAF courtesy of George Pennick). Top of page, SPIRIT transferred to 417th F.S. at Toul-Rosieres in 1958 where the author photographed it again. Upper right, still with the 417th but in new scheme, at Ramstein AB, 1960. Center right, now "730" at home with 140th TFW, COLO ANG. (Photo — Roger Besecker). Lower right, "730" came home, 1969, from Vietnam after a year's deployment, with Air Force camouflage scheme, tail code XA. (USAF photo).

