



How the INTERCEPTOR was born

BY Roger G Crewse – AFISC/SER

Just about this time—October 1958—21 years ago, I had been at Palmdale as the F-106 project officer attending a contractors' technical compliance inspection (TCTI). A group of people, all experts, with the exception of myself, were buying the aircraft by observing whether the contractor had complied with the specifications or not. My contributions were mainly limited to unsuppressed "gee whizzes" every time one of the contractors' group told us about a specific aircraft system and how it performed. After we got to where we could fly the airplane in weather, two or three years after delivery, it has never disappointed us. In fact, right today, that still is a "gee whizz" bird, one of the true Cadillacs of the world's flying community.

But that is not what I set about writing. It was on my return from this particular TOY that my story really starts. My wife and I had a cabin on the Old Stage Road, and she and the kids had gone up there early in the week. I was to meet her there that Friday evening when I got back from Palmdale. I went by the Safety office after duty hours to check my mail and couldn't find my desk. It just simply wasn't there. The implications, of course, weren't good. When a fellow loses his desk in the bureaucracy, chances are someone is trying to tell him something.

I went on up to the cabin and met the wife and kids there. The next morning about 10 o'clock, a car comes scratching its way up the little old mining road to our cabin. It turned out to be Col George Orr, who at that time was Chief of Safety for ADC. He had his family with him-his kids, and my kids were about the same age, and he had brought a picnic lunch and some beer, which our wives were sorting out while Col Orr and I sat on the porch soaking up the Colorado sunshine, and I might add, in view of my recent California experience, soaking up a lot of good Colorado air. In the course of the conversation, I happened to mention to him that I had not been able to find my desk.

He said, "Roger, I have been meaning to talk to you about that. You know we got authorization for a command safety magazine, and we have been looking for an editor."

I said, "Yeah."

He said. "Well, we found an editor.

I said, "Yeah," knowing full well what was on his mind.

He said, "You are the editor of the INTERCEPTOR."

I said, "But I am your F-106 project officer, the first and only, and I haven't even flown the aircraft yet."

He said, "the INTERCEPTOR is a more important job."

I pled *my* case as best I could; that I had flunked every English class I took, that expletives made up 40 to 60 percent of my vocabulary, and that I was pilot oriented to the degree that it was extremely difficult for me to believe that there was such a thing as dumb pilot-just dumb airplanes designed by dumb people, maintained by a dumb support system and that pilots had to make up for all the dumb things everybody else did.

He thought that over a bit and suggested that the facts hardly bore that out. I told him right there-him with his feet up on my porch rail that I never let a fact stand in my way. My head was made up.

He said, "That's good enough for me. I'll go with that. You dedicate that magazine to reducing the opportunities for the pilots to make mistakes, and I'll support you."

When I got to work the following Monday, I found my desk, and I found that I had Craig Schafer as an art director and SSgt Rolf Dooterman as his assistant. TSgt Nick Zetta as a managing editor, and the promise of two pilots for assistant editors and a gal to help us put it together. There was just one major problem-not a one of us- not any of us had ever put out anything vaguely resembling a magazine. We didn't know how you did it, how to contract for it, what the production stages were. None of that, or anything vaguely resembling it, had ever been within the scope of our experience.

Nick Zetta and I took a crash course on magazine publication. We got a T-bird, and since Nick didn't have an altitude card, we flew at 18,000 to SAC and looked at the way they put their "AIRCREW" together, and MAC to see how they put their "FLIER" together; then came back to Colorado Springs knowing more than we really wanted to know about magazine publication. The reason I remember the 18,000 ft is I had to go through a TSTM on the way back.

During the month, Captains Harry Tyndale and John Lane showed up as the assistant editors. During this same time frame, we had our first experience in hiring a Civil Service employee (everyone should go through that at least once) and finally settled on Ann Malcolm, whose only qualification, as far as we knew, was that she always wanted to work on a magazine. We kept our record pure-no experience. In fact, not a one of us even had a college degree- unless it was Nick or Craig. In the midst of this, a printing contract was let, and Harry, John, and I began figuring out departments, specialties, and the first series of articles that we would run in the January 1959 INTERCEPTOR edition.

I wrote my first Coolstone then-not because of a burning desire to publish Coolstone-but because we were desperate for three pages. It concerned a very real problem at the time, which was, in essence, flying out of a military airport under IFA conditions when the name of the game was to give you climb instructions just as your wheels were in the well-a very aggravating experience.

Harry Tyndale, who has written with tremendous insight some of the most penetrating material on pilot mistakes in stressful conditions ever written, gave us a hint of his capabilities when he wrote "Too Modern for Legends" In that first issue. John Lane scrounged material from Convair, The Defense Forces (Western, Central, and Eastern). And a weather man by the name of Everson came up with one of the best treatments of weather information for fighter pilots that I have ever seen any place.

Craig and Doc put together the cover. Laid out the pictures and created real attractive formats for our departments, which we would live with for a long time. As I recall,

during 1957 or 1958, ADC had 240 plus accidents, and our editorial efforts were limited to just deciding which one we were going to brief and fill two pages.

We learned a lot about typesetting and proofs. And photo-ready copy. I also learned as an editor that there is a law of diminishing returns. There comes a point when as you try to take two mistakes out, you get three more back, and that is when you should quit. We ran five proofs on that first issue, and there were still lots of typos in the final copy. We finally got the whole wad to the printer in photo-ready condition, and we practically lived with the presses until the first copy of that first issue was put together. It even went into the mail on time. Nick boxed it himself and pasted on the labels.

We had a party at Harry's place after Christmas. Harry had the paper hanging all around his party room, showing each stage of the magazine, from the rough drafts of the articles to the final sheets that made up a completed magazine. We drank and giggled a lot about the agonizing we had gone through to get that issue out. Everybody in Safety was there-Harry, John, Nick, Ann, Craig, Doc, and I sat around smiling smugly, proud of our baby, until I had a horrible thought. We just spent three months putting together the first magazine and had exactly 21 days to get the next one together. It took all the fun out of the party. We didn't have the first word for the next one other than the departments we set up. We didn't even know what we were going to write for the next one.

I was a member of the Aerospace Defense Command from February 1951, when our Guard unit was called up, to November 1974, when I moved to my present job. I was, and still am, extremely proud of our command. We pioneered fighter weather flying; we provided a defense capability second to none in the world, whether the threat was real or imagined; and our pilots, WSOs, and maintenance personnel, were second to none in their capabilities and dedication. We made breakthroughs in our attitudes toward safety that were copied by all the rest of the Air Force.

I still tingle a bit when I think of the first time I ever read "a job well done is inherently safe" hand and glove with its companion, "safety is a by-product of an efficient, effective operation." Those words came from a study made by General Casey Vincent, and the findings of that study impacted the entire Air Force. We were all privileged to fly some mighty fine airframes. The 94s, 86Ds, 89s, 101s, 102s, 104s, and 106s span the growth in this nation's fighter development. The Air Guard's contribution to the air defense forces were immeasurable. They came right along, hand in glove, with the command. Our IG teams found them as good as any and better than most.

The INTERCEPTOR, through the years, has been a reflection of the command's policies, problems, and its imaginative approach to those problems, which reflected the excellent, top-notch folks that we have all been privileged to know in the air defense business.

Well, that's how the INTERCEPTOR was born—three fighter pilots, a damn good admin technician, a gal who could type, and two really top-notch illustrators. The goal of that magazine, and as far as I know, it has never changed, was to help the men and now women responsible for air defense to do their mission better, and we know a natural by-product is a reduction in accidents.

I'm proud of the magazine, proud of the contributions that we who started it might have made, as well as being tremendously proud of the men and women who have made ADC go. They did a superb job under the most harrowing of circumstances.

Again, happy landings,

COOLSTONE ONE-OUT!



Lt General J.H. Atkinson, Commander, Air Defense Command, receives the first copy of the INTERCEPTOR from Colonel George W. Orr, Chief of Safety and Capt. Roger G. Crewse, Editor.