

***Truckbusters from Dogpatch:
The Combat Diary of the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing in
the Korean War, 1950–1953***

Tracy D. Connors

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During World War II the P-51 Mustang, a propeller-driven airplane, destroyed more enemy aircraft than any other fighter. Toward the end of the war, Hitler released one of his secret weapons: the Messerschmitt Me 262 jet fighter. The plane caused equal measures of shock, panic, and awe in those who faced it in combat. It also marked a new era in aviation. Immediately after the war, the U.S. focused its military aircraft development exclusively on jets.

When North Korea launched a surprise invasion of South Korea on June 25, 1950, the United States had a problem. The newly formed U.S. Air Force simply did not have enough jets to effectively wage war. To fill the gap, the Air Force gathered as many old P-51s as they could find, re-designated them as F-51s, and shipped them off with the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing to Korea. The pilots of the 18th were a mix of WW II Mustang veterans who hadn't flown the plane in years, and jet pilots who were quickly taught to fly the Mustang.

Truckbusters from Dogpatch: The Combat Diary of the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing in the Korean War, 1950–1953 describes how a group of dedicated and determined men, flying an obsolete airplane unsuited for the missions it was tasked to perform, contributed profoundly to victory in the Korean War.

The book's Introduction provides a timeline of the Korean War and a brief description of the 18th Fighter-Bomber Wing in the months before war broke out. It also includes an excellent overview of the 18th's operations and accomplishments during the war. Called "Truckbusters" because they flew interdiction and close air support missions often aimed at destroying enemy trucks, trains, supply lines, and materiel, the 18th achieved many firsts in combat history, including the total number of effective combat sorties.

The remainder of the book is divided into 37 chapters, one for each month of combat. Each chapter begins with a summary of major events in the war, as well as combat statistics for the 18th, including total flying hours (often 3,000 or more), number of sorties flown (often 1,400 or more), fuel consumed, ordnance expended, and pilots lost. The vast majority of each chapter, however, is a vivid story of the Wing during that month of war, concluding with hair-raising and often hilarious first-person accounts by commanding officers, pilots, and crew. These veterans share their memories of dicey missions, makeshift latrines, being shot at by MIGs, the difficulty of securing adequate supplies, being shot down, and watching helplessly as friends "go in." The book concludes with an excellent glossary and a list of the 18th's veterans.

With more than 1,000 black-and-white photographs and an engaging page layout somewhere between magazine and scrapbook, *Truckbusters from Dogpatch* is a rich historical document, entertaining read, and ode to the dedication, professionalism, creative problem-solving, and sacrifice of more than 3,500 of the Air Force's finest. Author Tracy D. Connors has done a truly admirable job in writing and assembling this book. From the macroscopic view of the Wing's role in the war, to the workarounds crew chiefs used to keep their Mustangs in the air, *Truckbusters from Dogpatch* is fascinating, informative, and visceral.

There is much too much here to be absorbed in a single sitting, and if while reading the book you smell motor oil, feel the thrum of a 1,650-horsepower V12 engine, and hear the clinking of champagne glasses as another pilot finishes his tour of duty, you have Mr. Connors and 3,500 veterans to thank.

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