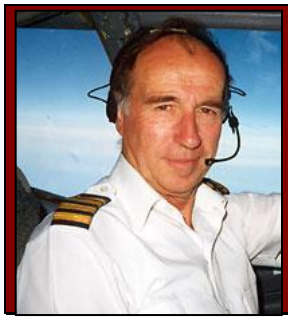


John Laming.

WW2

As a school boy I lived in this street during WW2 from 1941 to 1945. It is Deakin Leas, Tonbridge, Kent and I lived at No. 58 which is where the nearest car is parked. I took the photo some 25 years ago on a visit.

It was while walking up Deakin Leas coming home from my school, that I saw a V1 Doodle bug (flying bomb) scorching right to left heading towards London at about 2000 feet. Behind it by

2-300 yards was a RAF Hawker Tempest. The V1 was making a one hell of a noise with its pulse jet engine. You could hear those things coming a mile away. I heard the Tempest fire its cannons. There was a huge explosion of flame and smoke as the V1 blew up right over the Tonbridge railway junction yards which are out of sight in the photo. I saw the whole event quite clearly. The Tempest had no time to avoid the explosion and seemed to go straight into it. It then flew away, so damage to it was probably not enough to cause a problem.

A year or so earlier I saw a Dornier 217 at 1000 ft (I was looking slightly down on it from the top of Deakin Leas) low flying from right to left in the photo and aiming for the railway yards. I saw about six bombs dropping from the Dornier and heard machine gun fire also from the Dornier presumably aiming at the railways. The Dornier disappeared from view in a just a few seconds, heading east. I heard later that several bombs failed to explode but I sure heard the others explode. Another time in the middle of the night I heard rapid fire coming from a Bofors 40mm anti-aircraft gun positioned in a field adjacent to Deakin Leas. I have no idea what he was firing at.

You get good views of Tonbridge from where I lived near the top of Deakin Leas. An aeroplane spotter's paradise. Towards the end of the war we frequently saw ragged formations of Liberators and Flying Fortresses at quite low level coming back from over Europe. Some had feathered props. We tried to note the squadron markings on their tails like train spotters at Clapham Junction (my favourite hang out with train spotting mates).

Some five miles from Tonbridge was Penshurst emergency landing ground. Crippled USAAF aircraft would be diverted to belly land there. Penshurst Place manor was nearby and was the seat of Lord D'Lisle of Dudley who won the VC at Anzio I think. In 1964 or around that time, he became the Governor General of Australia and lived at Canberra. At the time I was flying Convair 440's with the RAAF VIP Squadron also at Canberra. In that capacity I frequently flew the GG to destinations in Australia and met him personally. A most pleasant gentleman.

It was in the front garden of 58 Deakin Leas in late 1945 that I heard the sounds of a mid-air collision in overcast cloud one mile away to the east. Looking in that direction I saw a US Thunderbolt fighter spinning in flames minus one wing. It crashed into wooded country just off Pembury road one mile from where I lived. I was playing with a school mate at the time so we grabbed our bikes and pedalled furiously to that area where the aircraft crashed.

Meanwhile, I saw a parachute floating down and smoke from behind other trees where the second Thunderbolt had crashed. The parachute came from that aircraft. The aircraft in flames with one wing gone which I had seen - well the pilot was killed. We saw the flaming wreckage in the woods but it was too dangerous to get close as ammo was cooking off. In later years I read the history of that accident on the internet. The Thunderbolts were from a fours formation and got into cloud and broke formation. Two collided. The surviving pilot told the story.

Interesting times and wouldn't have missed them for the world.

The nicest thing about the future is that it always starts tomorrow.

Emirates B777 crash was accident waiting to happen.

The Australian

“The crash of an Emirates B777 during an attempted go-around in Dubai on the 3rd August 2016 was always an accident waiting to happen. It was not the fault of the pilots, the airline or Boeing, because this accident could have happened to any pilot in any airline flying any

modern glass cockpit airliner, Airbus, Boeing or Bombardier, or a large corporate jet with autothrottle. It is the result of the imperfect interaction of the pilots with supposedly failsafe automatics, which pilots are rigorously trained to trust, which in this case failed them.

First, let us be clear about the effect of hot weather on the day. All twin-engine jet aircraft are certified at maximum take-off weight to climb away on one engine after engine failure on take-off at the maximum flight envelope operating temperature, 50 degrees C in the case of a B777, to reach a regulatory climb gradient minimum of 2.4 per cent. The Emirates B777-300 was operating on two engines and at a lower landing weight, so climb performance should not have been a problem. I have operated for years out of Dubai in summer, where the temperature is often in the high 40s, in both wide-body Airbus and Boeing B777 aircraft.

Secondly, a pilot colleague observed exactly what happened as he was there, waiting in his aircraft to cross runway 12L. The B777 bounced and began a go-around. The aircraft reached about 150 feet (45 metres) with its landing gear retracting, then began to sink to the runway. This suggests that the pilots had initiated a go-around as they had been trained to do and had practised hundreds of times in simulators, but the engines failed to respond in time to the pilot-commanded thrust. … Why?

Bounces are not uncommon. They happen to all pilots occasionally. What was different with the Emirates B777 bounce was that the pilot elected to go around. This should not have been a problem as pilots are trained to apply power, pitch up (raise the nose) and climb away. However pilots are not really trained for go-arounds after a bounce; we practise go-arounds from a low approach attitude. Modern jets have auto-throttles as part of the auto-flight system. They have small TOGA (take off/go-around) switches on the throttle levers they click to command auto-throttles to control the engines, to deliver the required thrust. Pilots do not physically push up the levers by themselves but trust the auto-throttles to do that, although it is common to rest your hand on the top of the levers. So, on a go-around, all the pilot does is click the TOGA switches, pull back on the control column to raise the nose and, when the other pilot, after observing positive climb, announces it, calls “gear up” and away we go!

But in the Dubai case, because the wheels had touched the runway, the landing gear sensors told the auto-flight system computers that the aircraft was landed. So when the pilot clicked TOGA, the computers, without him initially realising it, inhibited TOGA as part of their design protocols and refused to spool up the engines as the pilot commanded.

Imagine the situation.

One pilot, exactly as he has been trained, clicks TOGA and concentrates momentarily on his pilot's flying display (PFD) to raise the nose of the aircraft to the required go-around attitude, not realising his command for TOGA thrust has been ignored. The other pilot is concentrating on his PFD altimeter to confirm that the aircraft is climbing due to the aircraft momentum. Both suddenly realise the engines are still at idle, as they had been since the auto-throttles retarded them at approximately 30 feet during the landing flare. There is a shock of realisation and frantic manual pushing of levers to override the auto-throttle pressure.

But too late. The big engines take seconds to deliver the required thrust and before that is achieved the aircraft sinks to the runway.

It could have happened to any pilot caught out by an unusual, time-critical event, for which rigorous simulator training had not prepared him. Automation problems leading to pilot confusion are not uncommon; but the designers of the auto-flight system protocols should have anticipated this one. Perhaps an audible warning like "manual override required" to alert the pilots immediately of the "automation disconnect".

My feeling is the pilots were deceived initially by the auto-throttle refusal to spool up the engines, due to the landing inhibits, and a very high standard of simulator training by which pilots are almost brainwashed to totally rely on the automatics as the correct thing.

Seat belts are not as confining as wheelchairs.

Convair B-58 Hustler.

The Convair B-58 Hustler (First flight 11 November 1956, Introduction 15 March 1960) was the US's first operational supersonic jet bomber capable of Mach 2 flight. The aircraft was designed by Convair engineer Robert H. Widmer and developed for the United States Air Force for service in the Strategic Air Command (SAC) during the 1960s. It used a delta wing, which was also employed by Convair fighters such as the F-102, with four General Electric J79

engines in pods under the wing. It carried five nuclear weapons; four on pylons under the wings, and one nuclear weapon and fuel in a combination bomb/fuel pod under the fuselage, rather than in an internal bomb bay.

Replacing the Boeing B-47 Stratojet medium bomber, it was originally intended to fly at high altitudes and supersonic speeds to avoid Soviet fighters. The B-58 received a great deal of notoriety due to its sonic boom, which was often heard by the public as it passed overhead in supersonic flight.

The introduction of highly accurate Soviet surface-to-air missiles forced the B-58 into a low-level penetration role that severely limited its range and strategic value, and it was never employed to deliver conventional bombs. This led to a brief operational career between 1960 and 1970 when the B-58 was succeeded by the smaller, swing-wing FB-111A.[5]

Convair built 116 of the aircraft, at a unit cost of US$12.44million. It had a Top speed of 2,132 km/h, a range of 7,081 km, a Wingspan of 17 m and a Length of 30 m. It would cruise at 982 km/h.

It was a big aircraft, the F-111 was 22 m long, 8 m shorter.

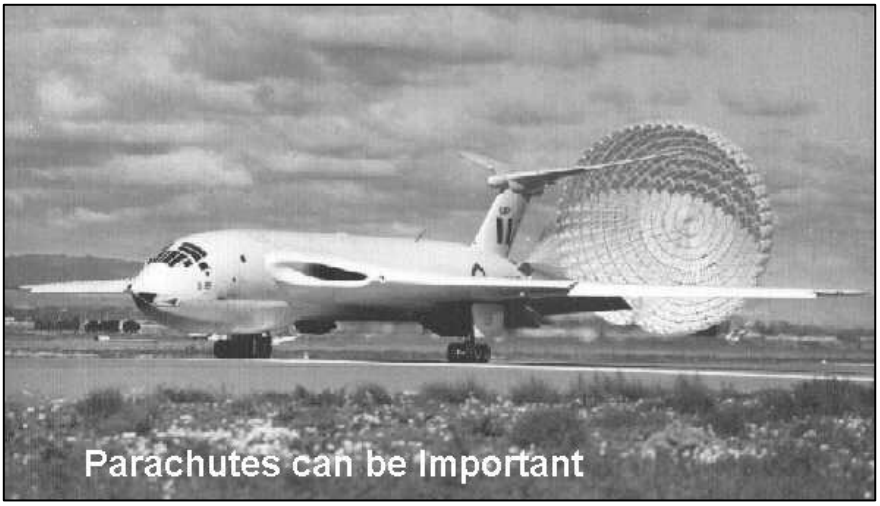
Money will buy a fine dog, but only kindness will make him wag his tail.

Victor Incident – All in a day's work.

John Saxon.

This was going to be another Blue Steel "carry over" trial to test missile systems – they had almost become routine. But flying in V-bombers always got the adrenalin flowing just a little. I was a civilian working with Elliott Brothers – an English firm now part of GEC I believe. We were concluding the first development phase of one of the world's first Inertial navigation systems which was used to guide the BlueSteel stand-off bomb. Our Handley Page Victor B.2 aircraft was parked in the loading bay on Edinburgh air field near Adelaide South Australia. The 6 ton 36ft long missile was secured under the bomb bay – fully fuelled with Kerosene and High Test Peroxide – a rather nasty mixture, and so the loading bay was fairly well flooded with water – just in case.

We walked out to the aircraft in a group and climbed on board – John Baker the Pilot, and chief test pilot for AVROs. Flt Lt Jimmy Catlin was in the right hand seat. Flt Lt Charlie Gilbert in the rear Radar Navigator position – myself in the centre rear looking after the Navigator systems. Flt Lt "Glen" Glendinning in the right hand rear Air electronics officer's seat looking after the missile autopilot and other aircraft systems. Finally sitting in the 6th "jump" seat was Frank Longhurst – another civilian working for AVROs who was there to see that Glen was doing the right things with "their" missile. At that point in the trials the civilian crews were beginning the gradual training and hand over to RAF crews who were to complete the trials. We plugged in Intercoms, oxygen, suit cooling air, and begun the seemingly endless pre-flight checks.


Parachutes can be Important

Eventually everyone was satisfied and we taxied and took off – turning to the SW to climb to our first navigational fix point over Kangaroo Island. Now despite being an aircraft weighing around 80 tons, the Victor was no slouch in the climbing stakes. I have been from sea level to 50,000ft in around 8 minutes but it was probably a lot slower rate with the BlueSteel missile loaded. Nevertheless the 10,000 ft climb points were passing rapidly until we got to around 46,000 ft I believe and then all heck broke loose. Lots of rapid discussion and attempts to pull up from the front deck, the start of a real roller coaster ride (pitch ups, pull overs, etc.) with engine noise doing wonderful things. Then what seemed (from the back) to be a wingover followed by increasingly violent positive and negative G forces. John Baker activated the "Abandon Aircraft" signs which also dumped cabin pressure, and Frank (who was nominally first out of the rear door) unstrapped and hit the roof quite violently and took no further escape action. In the nominal escape plan I was next to get out, and I managed to half stand and hang onto the camera bracket in front of the nav equipment. But I could get no further towards the side door as we were rotating fast and in what seemed to be a very steep dive. Then after what seemed like a long time (actually about 20 seconds), there was a loud bang from the rear of the aircraft and the rotation changed to a near vertical dive and rapid pull out, accompanied by much creaking and groaning and dust, pencils, pads, etc. flying in all directions. But we were back in semi level flight at around 16,000 ft!

Here is what I believe happened. Others who know better than I can correct me if I'm wrong. When we got to 45,000 ft or so the right hand air speed indicating system had a failure causing it to indicate around Mach 1.03. This sent a "transonic" flight signal to the auto stabilisers which initiated a pitch up manoeuvre as the Victors were not designed to go supersonic. The pilots however compared right and left side air speed indications and as the pitch up had started were

inclined to believe the faulty right hand system. So they too tried to further reduce speed and ended up in a violent pitch up to an almost inverted position followed by a rapid spin which was impossible to control. Very luckily for us, John Baker had done many test flights in prototype aircraft, where it had become routine to fit breaking parachutes to lift the tail of the aircraft into a more stable dive position, which could be recovered relatively easily. Now this had never been attempted in an 80 ton crescent wing Victor – but nothing much else was working. So John pulled the tail chute which lasted a few seconds before breaking away, but long enough to do the job and allow some heavy stick pulling to level out before doing a submarine imitation.

So how does one feel at a time like that? Not too great, but certainly I felt reasonably calm and I remember I had time to think about flight insurance and dependants! As usual when the adrenalin is pumping, everything seemed to go into slow motion. But it was really nice to get roughly straight and level again. It was good that we had all the records from the inertial navigator recorders and were able to analyse them later. The aircraft experienced maximums of about minus 3 and plus 5 G's (more than airframe design limits), and the whole incident lasted about 60 secs with the descent from 46,000 to 16,000 in about 20 secs – vertically supersonic!

Several things happened before we finally got to land. First there was a concern about the correct airspeed as the two systems were still reading differently. Then possible structural damage. Luckily the radio was still working so a chase plane was requested. It was decided to jettison the missile as it was full of highly explosive fuel (whose temperature was rising) and even had some TNT on board for range safety break up if it strayed outside the Woomera range limits. Also because there was no tail parachute, if there had been undercarriage or brake problems, a wheels up landing with a fully fuelled BlueSteel underneath would have been very spectacular! We started missile jettison procedures aiming for a Military bombing range near Port Wakefield, several of the crew had "confirm" switches for jettison, and at the last minute the pilots called stop, and then a go (I think I was the last to select my switch) and away it went. It turns out that the "stop" calls were due to the pilots spotting a school below.

There were two guards on the range where we jettisoned and they had been told to keep a look out for a bomb drop. No one thought to mention that it was 36 feet long, weighed 6 plus tons and was full of explosive mixtures, so they walked out onto the sand to take a look. Apparently they "heard it gurgling" on the way down and took off to find their hard hats when it got rapidly larger. But it crashed relatively harmlessly and burnt with only minor explosions between the high and low water marks. But they certainly got a shock!

Then the first chase plane arrived. Flt Lt Alec Hollingsworth RAF scrambled an old Meteor out of Edinburgh – it was great to see him! He flew tight formation passing on airspeed readings and confirming no apparent physical damage. There was no way we could dump the full fuel load so we had to keep flying for at least another 90 mins or so to burn off fuel to get to an acceptable landing weight. Due to the time remaining the Meteor chase plane was replaced by a Canberra flown by Wing Cdr. David Glenn which escorted us for the remainder of the flight.
In the meantime, we had a nervous 70 minutes or so before the landing. During that 70 minutes Charlie Gilbert introduced me to chain cigarette smoking, I think we got through at least a pack between us in the back. Took me more than 10 more years to kick the habit! Thanks Charlie! So eventually with much foaming of runways, emergency vehicles everywhere and at least one chase plane, we made a good touch down back at Edinburgh.

A couple of aftermath items. We had a couple or more drinks in the mess at the airfield with lots of toasts to our safe return. The story goes that co-pilot Jimmy Catlin was well away by the time he had to go to a church social that evening. Apparently he strode across the dance floor to tell the vicar in a loud voice that "I saw your boss today", before collapsing gently at the vicar's feet. I wasn't there but the story has been confirmed by others! A few days later the crew (plus significant others) had a celebratory dinner at a local hostelry, where this picture was taken.


Back: John Saxon, Frank Longhurst, "Glen" Glendinning
Front: Charley Gilbert, John Baker, Jimmy Catlin

Despite the large excursions outside its design limits, the aircraft turned out to be in pretty good shape and after some minor repairs went on to launch more BlueSteels for the trials – at the Woomera range of course! Later XL161 returned to U.K., and after a refit at the Handley Page plant, went on to RAF squadron reconnaissance duties.

Needless to say – news of the incident leaked out to the press, and after news of the jettison near Port Wakefield got out – there were a few pointed questions in Parliament about large explosive devices being flown around populated areas. Much more fuss would be raised these days, but in the cold war atmosphere of the times, questions soon died away.

All in all, it was an exciting few hours!

After 75, if you don't wake up aching in every joint, you're probably dead.

Neptune fatal accident, Richmond 1959.

In the 4th February, 1959 an 11 Sqn Neppy crashed while coming into Richmond. All 8 crew members died.

The aircraft crashed onto the banks of the Hawkesbury River at Cornwallis, near Richmond, after a fire in the port engine nacelle, caused by the disintegration of the power recovery turbine wheel (PRT). The disintegration of the PRT caused the severing of fuel lines inside the wheel well, which then ignited the fuel spewing out of the lines. The ensuing fire burned fiercely and before the aircraft could enter into an emergency landing pattern the fire burned through to the wing subsequently causing the wing to fail in-flight a short time later. The crew were:

Squadron Leader Geoffrey Ronald Cullen	Pilot,
Squadron Leader Joseph Kevin McDonald	AFC Signaller,
Flt Lt Robert Alfred De-Russett-Kydd	Nav,
Flying Officer Frederick John Wood	Signaller,
Pilot Officer George Ivan Holmes	Co-Pilot,
Pilot Officer Terence Patrick O'Sullivan	Signaller,
W/Officer Vincent Joseph McCarthy	Signaller,
Flight Sgt John Michael Rock	Nav.

The accident occurred on the last flight prior to the aircraft going into the hangar back in the US for fitting with a pair of J-34 jet engines. A89-308 was thus the only RAAF aircraft not to receive the jets.

On that day, Neptune A89-308 from No 11 Squadron became the only aircraft of this type lost in 26 years of service with the RAAF. While on a local training exercise in the vicinity of the unit's Richmond base, the crew discovered a severe fire in the starboard engine nacelle. Realising the gravity of the situation, Squadron Leader Geoff Cullen, a very experienced

Neptune captain, initially reported that he was returning immediately to land. A minute later he advised that he would have to make a crashlanding to the north of the airfield. Within seconds, as the aircraft passed less than 100 feet above the Hawkesbury River, the starboard mainplane folded and A89-308 crashed upside down into the river bank less than three kilometres from the RAAF base. The aircraft exploded on impact and, tragically, all eight men on board were killed.

The farmer on whose land the aircraft crashed lost his ute in the accident. He took the RAAF to court stating he had 3000 pounds ($6,000) its its glove box which he was going to bank. We don't know the result of the case.

Sad story because it was believed that the pilot was trying to put it down on the flats there. His landing at the runway was delayed by a Sabre which had a cocked nose gear.

Bob Hoover, Legendary Pilot, Dies at Age 94.

On Tuesday the 25th October, 2016, Bob Hoover, often called "the pilot's pilot" and an aviator whose career spanned 70-plus years and nearly every facet of aviation, died at age 94.

Hoover was an annual visitor to Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) at Oshkosh, including in 2016, where a one-of-a-kind Ford Mustang painted in colours of his iconic P-51 Ole Yeller was auctioned at EAA's Gathering of Eagles fundraiser.

"We lost a true, one-of-a-kind aviation hero today," said EAA CEO and Chairman Jack Pelton. "We all knew of Bob's incredible aviation career and witnessed his unmatched flying skills. It was Bob Hoover as a person that also made him legendary. He was a true gentleman and unfailingly gracious and generous, as well as a true friend of EAA through the years. We can only hope to use his lifelong example as a pilot and a person as a standard for all of us to achieve."

The aviation career of Bob Hoover had a nearly storybook quality to it, a story that was often a mix of thriller and adventure. After working at a Nashville grocery store to pay for flight lessons as a teenager and teaching himself aerobatics, Hoover entered the Tennessee National Guard and eventually was sent to Army Pilot Training School. In World War II, Hoover talked his way out of test pilot duty into combat missions, where he eventually was shot down, captured, and escaped from a German prisoner of war camp.

During World War II, he was sent to Casablanca, where his first major assignment was flight testing the assembled aircraft ready for service. He was later assigned to the Spitfire-equipped 52d Fighter Group in Sicily. On February 9, 1944, on his 59th mission, his malfunctioning Mark V Spitfire was shot down by 96-victory ace Ltn Siegfried Lemke of Jagdgeschwader 2 in a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 off the coast of Southern France, and he was taken prisoner. He spent 16 months at the German prison camp Stalag Luft 1 in Barth, Germany.

After a staged fight covered his escape from the prison camp, Hoover managed to steal a Fw 190 from a recovery unit's unguarded field, the one flyable plane being kept there for spare parts and flew to safety in the Netherlands. He was assigned to flight-test duty at Wilbur Wright

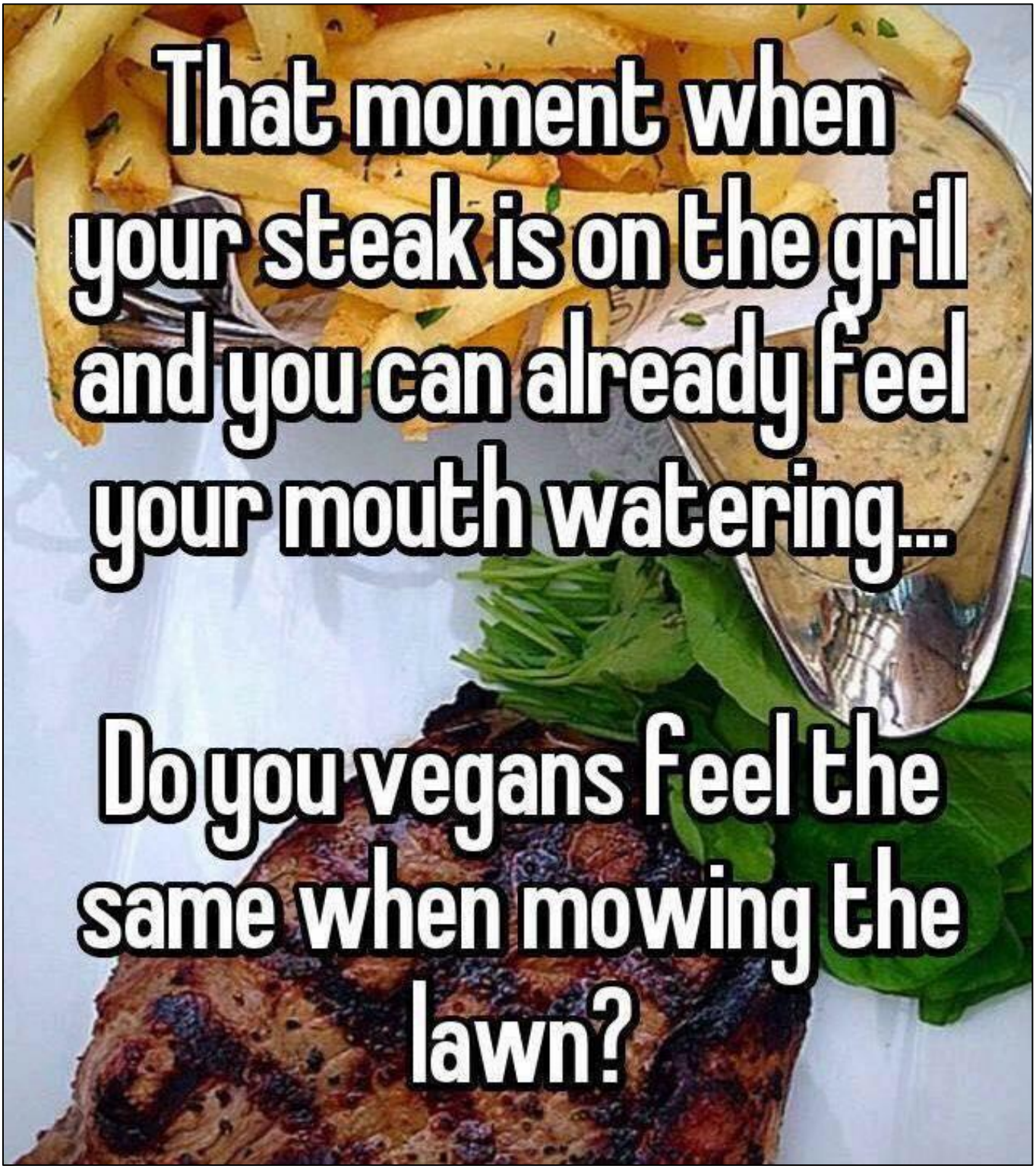
Field after the war. There he impressed and befriended Chuck Yeager. When Yeager was later asked whom he wanted for flight crew for the supersonic Bell X-1 flight, he named Hoover. Hoover became Yeager's backup pilot in the Bell X-1 program and flew chase for Yeager in a Lockheed P-80 Shooting Star during the Mach 1 flight. He also flew chase for the 50th anniversary of the Mach 1 flight in a General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon.

He set numerous aviation records and his long association with North American Aviation and Rockwell International allowed him to test many aircraft, ranging from the T-28 trainer to the F-100 jet.

Many EAA members and air show fans knew Hoover from his impeccable air show performances in the P-51 as well as in the Shrike Commander, where he would showcase his energy management sequence without engine power. His flying skills allowed him to pour himself a cup tea while flying a complete roll in that aircraft.

Hoover also won a lengthy battle against the FAA in the 1990s, when he fought against the revocation of his medical certificate. His flying career was documented in the 2014 documentary Flying the Feathered Edge, which was first shown to an invitation-only audience at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2014. You can see that video HERE.

A 1988 inductee to the US National Aviation Hall of Fame, Hoover also received numerous awards throughout this life. That included the Freedom of Flight Award, EAA's highest honour, in 2011.


That moment when your steak is on the grill and you can already feel your mouth watering...
Do you vegans feel the same when mowing the lawn?