

# Galaxy of Stars Honor Roll

**ID**   **Name (Maiden Name),**   **Rank, Service**

**Service Dates**

24 **Mahlon Smith, Capt, USAF**

to



**Assignment Dates**   **AFSC   Job Title**  
**Unit, Assignment Location**

to                      F-86D Pilot  
37th Fighter Interceptor Sq, Ethan Allen AFB, VT

**Comments:** Mahlon was killed 11 Nov 54 when his F-86D flamed out on takeoff on a hot scramble.

"MAHLON SMITH - COLD WAR HERO. In the tense days of the Cold War the nation's first line of defense were a band of Air Defense Command pilots who manned the Northern borders of America with fighters barely up to the task. Such a group were the men of the 37th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, based at Ethan Allen AFB. Their F-86D Sabre Jets sat at the ready in the Alert Hangar at the end of the Runway 33 at Burlington Airport.

One such warrior was thirty year old Captain Mahlon Smith. Mahlon was a Navy aircrewman in the Navy in WW2. He was a 1949 graduate of West Point and came to the 37th from an instructor assignment in Texas. His wife's first husband was killed in an aircraft accident during the war.

Mahlon was know as a good pilot and a recruiting poster image of a fighter pilot with movie star good looks. He was a favorite of the Flight Line troops as he was always smiling and had a good word for everyone.

On the morning of November 11, 1954, the scramble horn goes off and the "five minute" birds scramble. One aborts but Mahlon continues down the runway to meet an unidentified aircraft approaching the U.S.

The takeoff roll was unusually long due to a tailwind, the left main tire blows but the aircraft lifts off. At about 2000 feet over St. Mikes his engine flames out. Directly below was downtown Winooski. Mahlon was faced with a hard choice, to eject or stay in his dying bird.

Fighter pilots at the base often speculated that they could do an emergency landing on the Old Firing Range (where Costco is located off Exit 16 on I-89). Unfortunately, they were not aware that the ground was littered with tree stumps. The Sabre Dog slammed into the ground shearing the gear. The rocket pod tore off spewing 2.75" rockets about and the wing tore off and exploded.

Mahlon was still in his seat in the upside down fuselage when rescuers reached him. They were too late to save him and he died soon after.

The entire Burlington/Winooski community joined the Air Force in mourning his death. Storefront windows on Church St. said, "Thank you, Mahlon!" The City of Winooski created a memorial plaque.

Mrs. Smith quietly left the base with her two children for her home in Alabama after being widowed for the second time. (We are asking any of our readers if you know of the whereabouts of the Winooski plaque.)"

Information from Brian Lindne and Bill Green, author of "First Line, the ADC Story in the Northeast"