

Iowa Paint Shop Restores F-100 Jet

By RICK FREDERICKSEN • 4 HOURS AGO

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"Before" photo of the historic F-100 as it arrived in crates last year.

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The "after" picture, following repairs and repainting; ready for its last mission.

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The F-100 Super Sabre was manufactured by North American Aviation.

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Gov. Harold Hughes (r) got a back seat ride in #880 with Lt. Col. Warren Nelson in 1966.

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A newly-painted F-16 is ready for final markings to be applied.

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An F-16 Falcon can be painted in two weeks.

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The empty paint booth where aircraft are sprayed by hand.

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It takes one month to prep and paint an A-10.

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Canopy windows and jet intakes are taped and protected.

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Norm Schaap was the last man to pilot the F-100 in 1977.

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The restored F-100 tail markings. "HE" designates its secret "Misty" mission in Vietnam.

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The air wing's operations center in 1961.

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military aircraft and will soon be on display at the Air National Guard Headquarters in Maryland. The preservation was a homecoming for a team of specialists in Sioux City.



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3:06

For 15 years, the Iowa Air National Guard Paint Facility has quietly been spray painting aircraft. It's not your neighborhood body shop; it's the only one like this in the nation according to Colonel Larry Christensen, commander of the 185th Air Refueling Wing.

"We're over 600 airplanes right now, and once you add up the savings on each one of them that gets to be a huge savings for the country."

The paint shop specializes in refinishing some of the nation's most distinguished combat aircraft; F-15s, F-16s and the A-10 "tank killer." Dave Miller manages the paint shop and a team of 13 corrosion control specialists.

Dave Miller manages the paint facility, where more than 650 aircraft have been painted.

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"Aircraft will come through our facility and they will get sanded, primed and repainted and the whole purpose is to keep the corrosion at a minimum or nonexistent and that way it keeps

the aircraft structural integrity intact and always mission ready."

The guard claims this unit has saved more than \$50 million, through efficiency according to Wing Commander Christensen.

"It's cheaper because we've been doing it a long time, we've figured out quite a few things to speed the process along, get it painted, get the plane back to where it needs to be, flying missions."

A surprise project arrived here last June, a legendary F-100 Super Sabre jet fighter that was rescued from the Arizona desert where she was retired in 1977. What's more, this particular two-seater, with tail number 880, was based in Sioux City in the 60s and 70s. For one Iowan in particular, preserving 880 is sentimental. Former Major Norman Schaap is from Sioux Center.

"Some of my life is in that airplane yet."

Maj. Schaap logged 2,000 hours in the F-100, wearing his 1977 flight jacket.

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Schaap, now 79 years old, was the last man at the controls of 880 on its final flight to the aircraft bone yard, just as aviation technology was being revolutionized.

"All the airplanes today, they're smart. You go and punch a button and they're smart, but the F-100 wasn't. It was just dumb, it couldn't think for itself. You have to fly it."

Iowa Air Guard pilots flew the Super Sabre in the Vietnam War when they helped locate the enemy and interrupt supply lines.

Pilots muster for this 1968 photo before going to Vietnam. Lt. Warren Brown (front row, second from right) was killed in action.

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Paint shop manager Dave Miller remembers when F-100s thundered over in Sioux City and the pride of working on the first Air Force fighter to break the sound barrier.

"And the fact it was loud and had an after burner and made a lot of noise. You know that's something that most people don't get to experience."

The restoration of number 880 is now finished, and spectacular; wearing a new coat of multi-colored camouflage. Its final mission will be atop a pedestal for display at Andrews Air Force Base, outside Washington. In Sioux City, I'm Rick Fredericksen, Iowa Public Radio News.