



US AIR FORCE

"Tribute to a Hero" Historical Portfolio 2020 Guide



Wally Yocum Jr.

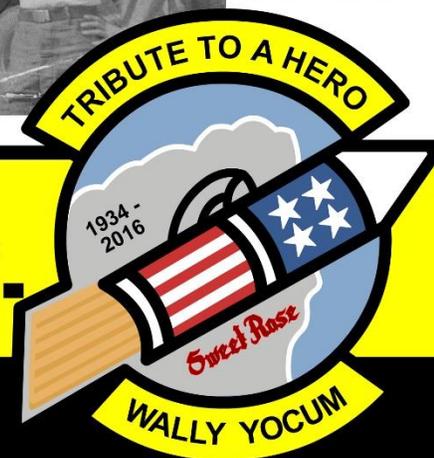


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Veterans Day, November 2015.



When Wally's History began...



Photo of Wally at age 18 in late 1952. His cap displays the enlisted cap badge and US pin on his collar.

In 1952, Wally Yocum Jr. joined the United States Air Force after graduating from high school in Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania. In nearly the same period, he met Rose Portaro in Marion Heights; a town located just a mere few miles from him. He would date and carry his love for Rose through his air force training at Sampson AFB, Amarillo AFB and then Shaw AFB in South Carolina. He would travel back and forth from Shaw AFB to Marian Heights, Pennsylvania on the weekends just to see Rose. This was over 625 miles one-way! That is a round trip of 1250 miles alone each weekend. After Wally completed his training at Shaw AFB, he travelled on the troopship USS General J. C. Breckenridge to Japan and Korea. There he would be become crew chief for a F86-F fighter-interceptor jet.



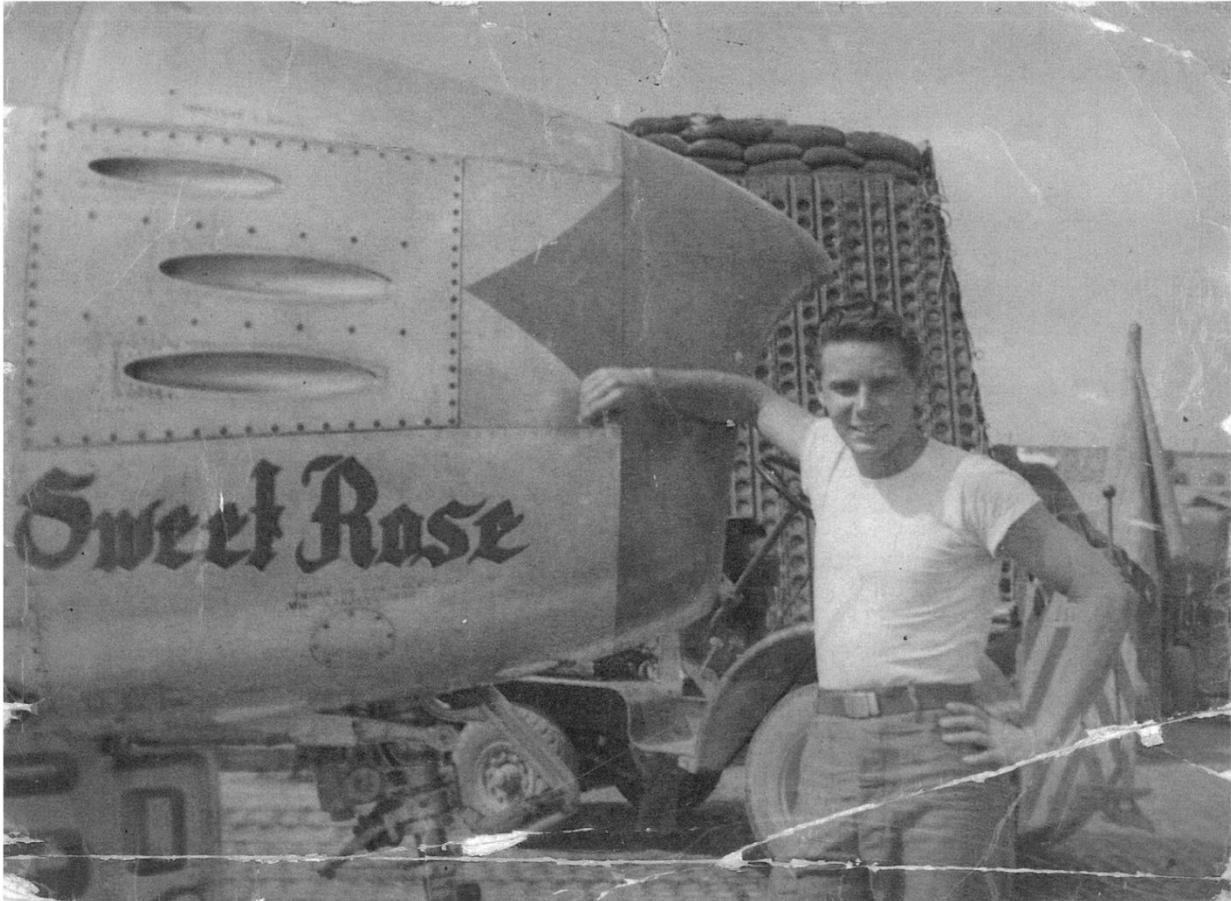
USS General J. C. Breckenridge troopship





Photo of “Sweet Rose” that Wally had of her when they started dating. Wally carried this picture of her in his wallet until the day he passed away in 2016.





Wally at K-14, Kimpo AFB, Korea near the 38th parallel.

Wally was assigned to the 336th Rocketeers of the 4th Fighter Group. As crew chief, he added his loves name on his side of the F-86-F sabre in red "Sweet Rose". Shortly after his return from overseas, Wally and Rose married in the fall of 1955. With Wally stationed at Dover Air Force Base, they decided to move to Camden, Delaware. Wally and Rose quickly had a son, Ken. After 1956, Wally left the Air Force at the rank of Airman First Class. He put his family first and decided to work at the Dover Air Force base as a civilian with the 436th Field Maintenance Squadron. Due to this change, Wally and Rose were able to stay in Delaware. A few years later, they had a second son, Steve. With their house starting to seem smaller with a larger family, Wally and Rose moved to Dover in 1962. They eventually had two more sons, Tom and Eric. They would spend the rest of their lives at the Dover residence. Sweet Rose passed away in 2014, while Wally passed away in 2016.





Sweet Rose and first son Ken in 1957.



Wally and Rose's residence in 1962.



Wallys Military Career



Photo of Wally's training squadron in September 1952 at Sampson AFB.

Wally's first stop was at **Sampson Air Force Base** in New York. He enlisted in the USAF on August 4, 1952. Wally was stationed here for two months being a part of FLT (Flight) 1926 and 3660 BMTS (Basic Military Training Squadron). In September of 1952, the Air Staff started 12-week courses from the previous seven to eight week courses. Between 1950 to 1956, Sampson AFB trained over 300,000 airmen in preparation for the Korean War and support of the NATO defense of Western Europe. With the end of the Korean War, Air Training Command discontinued its training school in July 1956. The AFB closed shortly after this.





Photo of Wally's training squadron in February 1953 at Amarillo AFB.

After Sampson Air Force Base, Wally transferred to **Amarillo Air Force Base** in Texas. In the background, Amarillo AFB was reactivated in March 1951 due to the needs of the Korean War. In 1952, The Air Training Command reached its planned maximum of 3,500 students. Wally continued his training at this base for almost six months. His major course of study was jet mechanic as he completed the Aircraft Mechanic General Jet Course Number 43151-1 on February 6, 1953. Wally at this time was listed as Airman Third Class. Amarillo AFB eventually closed in December 1968.





First photo is of Wally with his friend Cliff. Second photo is Wally working on a B-26 in 1953.

From Amarillo AFB, Wally transferred to **Shaw Air Force Base** in South Carolina. This was the last base he stayed at before travelling to the Far East (Korea). Wally learned his trade at Shaw working on B-26 bombers and continuing jet engine school. From this base, Wally would travel to see Rose most weekends in Marion Heights, PA.



Wally (left) with friends from Shaw AFB in 1953.





FU-539 F-86F Sabre – s/n 52-4539 “Sweet Rose” side.

Wally travelled by the troopship USS General J. C. Breckenridge to **Kimpo Air Force Base** in Korea during the war. Kimpo was known to the military as K-14. It was home to the world famous Rocketeers fighter squadron. The Rocketeers were a part of the 4th Fighter Group, who’s motto was “Fourth but First”. The pilot of the Wally’s aircraft was Lt. Kenneth C. Ewing. Ken had “Dreaded Gombo” nose art on his side of the aircraft, while on the opposite side Wally had “Sweet Rose”. “Sweet Rose” was painted on Wally’s fighter jet to honor his then girlfriend, Rose Portaro.



Wally driving a tug at Kimpo AFB in 1954.



Ken and Wally's sabre was model F-86F-30-NA (this plane is one of 859 F-86F-30-NA's planes built). The serial number was 52-4539, and visibly on the tail of the aircraft was FU-539 in bold, black letters. This sabre was equipped with at that time the new 6-3 wing that allowed speeds to increase to 695 + miles per hour at low altitudes. The plane could now match the speed of the MiG and climb to altitudes of 47,000 feet. Wally claims this wing allowed for tighter turns as well. This jet was also equipped with the General Electric J47-GE-27 engine that boosted thrust above 5900 pounds. Wally recalls that he would tweak on the fuel controller to make sure the Sabre achieved a high tack reading. This enabled his pilot to keep a fast plane if needed, citing that Ken needed to keep up with the squadron formation.

Wally also remembers some good days that he was allowed to eat with the pilots, receiving a meal with Ken of real milk and cheese, instead of the normal crew meal of powdered products. He also remembers being told that he was responsible for that plane no matter what and had to take his turn at guard duty as well. The Army Sergeant told him to put the bayonet on his gun for guard duty because you only have 90 rounds, that when the Chinese come, they come 10,000 at a time.



Wally's tent at K-14 Kimpo AFB in 1954.

Wally got to go into Seoul with the Army. The city was destroyed and he rode in the back of an Army truck. He said they stopped in the road by a blown up building. At this building, there was



only a foundation wall left. He noticed huddled in a corner was a woman and children and they were freezing. He said he grabbed some blankets and threw them to the woman.

He also told the story of the night sky being lit up orange and red and thought it was a big storm. He said he could not hear anything, but was told by the Army Sergeant that the Navy was well off the coast and was shelling the trail to keep the enemy back. The Sergeant said he was a stupid son-of-bitch thinking it was a storm and he took dads gun and pierced the sand bags making up the wall around the sabre. The Sergeant then told him to fix it for being a dumb ass! He said the shelling was a hell of a night there in Kimpo.



Wally calling out for two generators, August 2, 1954.

Sweet Rose

"Sweet Rose" artwork.





Wally in front of "Sweet Rose" F86-F Sabre, August 10, 1954.



Back shot of FU-539 F86-F Sabre, September 26, 1954.





FU-539 scrambling in 1954.

After the war, Wally travelled with the fighter squadron to **Misawa Air Force Base** in Japan and then to **Dover Air Force Base** for the remainder of his working career. He retired from the air force after 38 years on October 3, 1990.



Wally in front of FS-139 at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware.





Receiving an Outstanding Performance Rating award and 20 years with the military and civilian at Dover AFB in August 1972.



A plaque Wally received for "In recognition of 38 years of faithful and devoted service to the Propulsion Branch".



Wally worked on the following airplanes in his career:

Wally worked on all kinds of fighter aircraft. He worked on B-26 bombers, F9F Panthers, F86 Sabre Mig Killers, F100 Super Sabers, F94 Starfires, F105 Thunderchiefs, F80 Shooting Stars, F84 Thunderjets and eventually even cargo planes such as the C-141 Starlifter and the C5 Galaxy. He became an expert with Pratt & Whitney and GE engines. GE even would consult with Wally on engine upgrades and reliability improvements.



One of Wally's photos of a unit used to test aircraft engines – Dover AFB.



Medals Wally Received



Korean Service Medal



National Defense Service Medal



United Nations Service Medal



Good Conduct Medal



Republic of Korea Service Medal



Ambassador for Peace Medal





Some photos of his actual medals. The left shows his Korean Service Medal and National Defense Service Medal. The one on the right shows his Ambassador for Peace Medal.

Wally received the Republic of Korea Service Medal and the Ambassador for Peace Medal posthumously.



Some of Wally's patches on the left. Republic of Korea Service Medal on the right.





Smithsonian Institution

336th Fighter Squadron Korea Photographs [Yocum]



[Click the above picture or here to enter.](#)

Summary

Collection ID: **NASM.2018.0043**

Creators: **Yocum, Walter Edward "Wally", Jr., 1934-2016**

Dates: **1954**

Languages: **English**

This collection is in English.

Physical Description: **0.05 cubic feet, 1 folder**

Description: **National Air and Space Museum Archives**

This collection consists of 64 black and white photographs relating to Walter Edward "Wally" Yocum, Jr. and his service with the 336th Fighter Squadron in South Korea in 1954.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of 64 black and white photographs relating to Walter Edward "Wally" Yocum, Jr. and his service with the 336th Fighter Squadron in South Korea in 1954. Most of the prints measure approximately 4.5 by 3.25 inches, with a few smaller prints mixed in. The photographs show squadron personnel, scenes of life at Kimpo Air Base (K-14) and in the surrounding area, and aircraft including the North American F-86 Sabre; Douglas A-26 (B-26) Invader; Fairchild C-119 Flying Boxcar; Douglas C-124 Globemaster II; Cessna L-19A (Cessna 305A, O-1A); Douglas C-54 Skymaster; and the Douglas C-47 Skytrain. Most of the photographs have some caption information on the reverse, and additional caption information was provided by the donor.



Eduard's Model of FU-539

Eduard produces a 1/48 scale model variation of FU-539 Sabre.

Eduard came out with a F-86F model labeled as the "Ultimate Sabre". A limited edition release feature five variations of sabres (Kit #1163) in late 2015. One of the variations was of Ken and Wally's FU-539 Dreaded Gomboo / Sweet Rose.



Photo of Eduards F-86F model FU-539 left side angled view. (José Pires).



Photo of Eduards F-86F model FU-539 right side view. (José Pires).





Photo of Eduards F-86F model FU-539 rear top view. (José Pires).

To help promote the model kit, Eduard model company wrote an article about Wally. The article was titled "Crew Chief Wally Yocum and his F-86F-30-NA Sweet Rose, A story of love and passion". This article can be found in Eduard Magazine Volume #14, December 2015 edition [\(Link\)](#).



Photo of Eduards F-86F model FU-539 front view. (José Pires).



Wood Models of FU-539



Photo of Wally with a wood FU-539 model preserved by the pilot's brother – June 2015.

FU-539 wood models

Before Wally and his pilot Ken Ewing started the return trip back to America, they both had a wood model of FU-539. They were hand made in Korea. Ken's model was preserved, and handed down to his brother. Wally's model had extensive use, as he would hand it to his children as they got haircuts.



Wally's original wood model from 1954. It was well played by his children, as it was used to keep them busy while getting haircuts!



Wally Yocum honored by SJAFB



Wally Yocum was honored by the 336th at Seymour Johnson AFB (4th Fighter Group) in North Carolina in September 2014.

Wally was honored by the 336th Fighter Squadron at Seymour Johnson AFB 60 years after the end of the Korean War. They decaled an F15 Eagle to match his sabre jet with Crew Chief Wally Yocum on the cockpit and Sweet Rose on the nose. The F-15E was serial number 89-0488.



Close up of Cc Wally Yocum on the F-15E.



Wally Yocum and NASCAR

After being honored at SJAFB, this led to Wally being honored before the start of a NASCAR race in Martinsville. As the Air Force teamed up with Richard Petty Motorsports, the event was set. An Air Force General and Richard Petty thanked Wally for his service and spent many hours with him prior to the start of the race. Wally pulled out his worn photo of the “Sweet Rose” jet that he carried in his wallet since the Korean War. He showed the General and Richard the picture and began to tell many stories.



Wally was an honored guest before the start of the NASCAR race in Martinsville, Virginia. He spent time with Richard Petty and the Major General Garrett Harencak of the USAF. Wally got to show a picture that he carries in his wallet and talk about stories of the 'Sweet Rose' F-86F sabre.



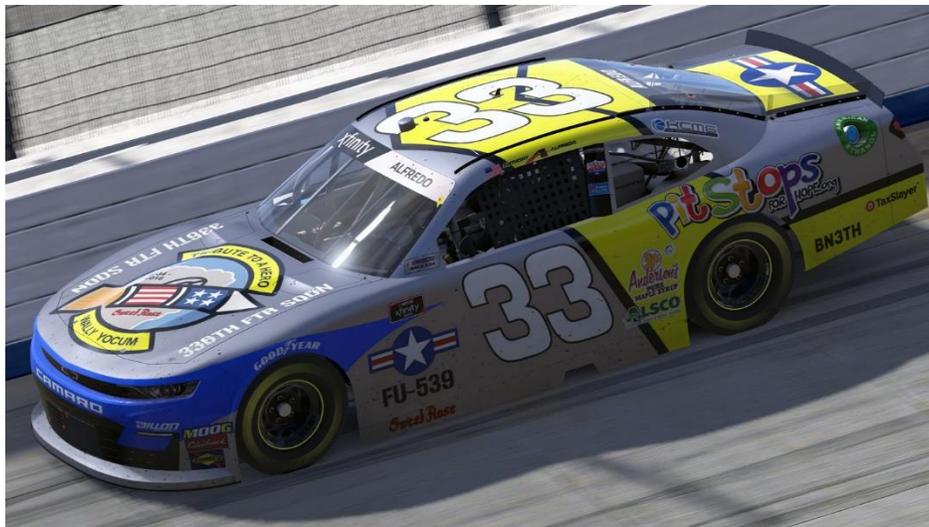
Tribute to a Hero Racing History

2020 – Team Dillon Management



Anthony Alfredo sports the Tribute to a Hero colors on May 2, 2020.

Anthony Alfredo and Team Dillon Management honored Wally Yocum as they won the virtual Dover Downs presented by NASCAR's Saturday Night Thunder Pro Invitational Series race on May 2, 2020. They sported the Tribute of a Hero F86 sabre paint scheme. Anthony was proud to get this win for Wally!



Anthony Alfredo #33 Tribute to a Hero Wally Yocum Chevrolet.



2020 – Reed Racing



Greg Reed practicing at the Delaware International Speedway on May 30, 2020.

Reed Racing will honor Wally Yocum the in the #21 Coveys Car Care race car for full 2020 season in Delaware.



Reed Racing's hood panel has artwork to honor Wally.



2018 – Snow Racing



Snow Racing #0 Tribute to a Hero Chevrolet.

Snow Racing honored the Tribute to a Hero logo with the #0 Chevrolet driven by Justin Snow in the NASCAR Whelen series. Tom Yocum, son of Wally Yocum, was the crew chief in several events. From the few races they ran, they grabbed a top 5 at Myrtle Beach Speedway in South Carolina on May 5, 2018.



Planes of Fame Museum – Korean War Memorial



A sabre painted as FU-539 will be on a pedestal at the Planes of Fame Museum in 2020.

Currently in the works, the Planes of Fame Museum is opening a new Korean War Memorial in Chino, California. At this memorial, they are replicating a F-86 sabre in the paint scheme of FU-539 "Dreaded Gomboo"/"Sweet Rose". The sabre will be on a pedestal, where all can walk around and enjoy the views of the jet. Work currently has begun on the aircraft to prep it for paint, but a target date has not been set yet due to Covid-19. Once the museum reopens, they will pick a dedication ceremony date. There will even be a Mig Alley sign for all guests to walk under. This sign will be a replica of the one formerly at K-14 in Korea, where many great pilots used to walk under. It was a famous landmark at that time.



Other Media/Reference to Wally Yocum

Delaware State Newspaper – May 9, 2020 ([Link](#))

Richard Childress Racing Dover Downs preview online article – May 1, 2020 ([Link](#))

Korea Veterans “The Graybeards” – Volume 22, No. 6 ([Link](#))

The News-Item Newspaper – October 6, 2019 ([Link](#))



FU-539 on the cover of Fine Scale Modeler, April 2017.

FineScale Modeler in the April 2017 issue. ([Link](#))

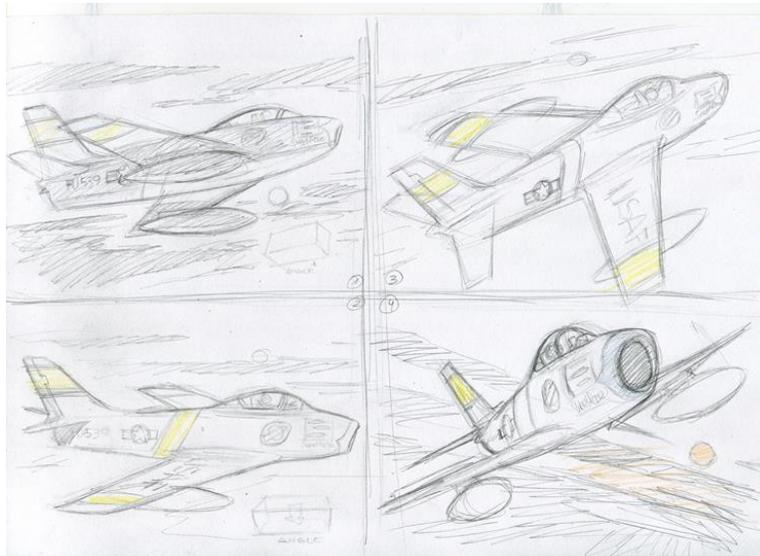
AirFix Model World Magazine March 2017 issue ([Link](#))



Painting of FU-539 “Sweet Rose”



Javier Bordon painted and completed this art on January 3, 2017. [Download link](#)



Initial sketches for artwork by Javier.



Other Memorials to Wally Yocum

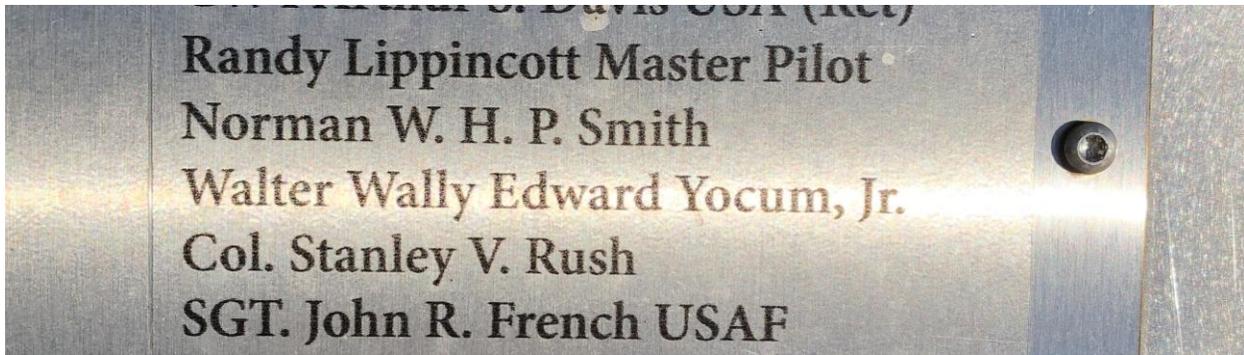


One of the billboards on display in Reading, Pennsylvania. In 2018 and 2019, Tom Masano Auto Group honored Wally on billboards throughout Berks County, Pennsylvania.

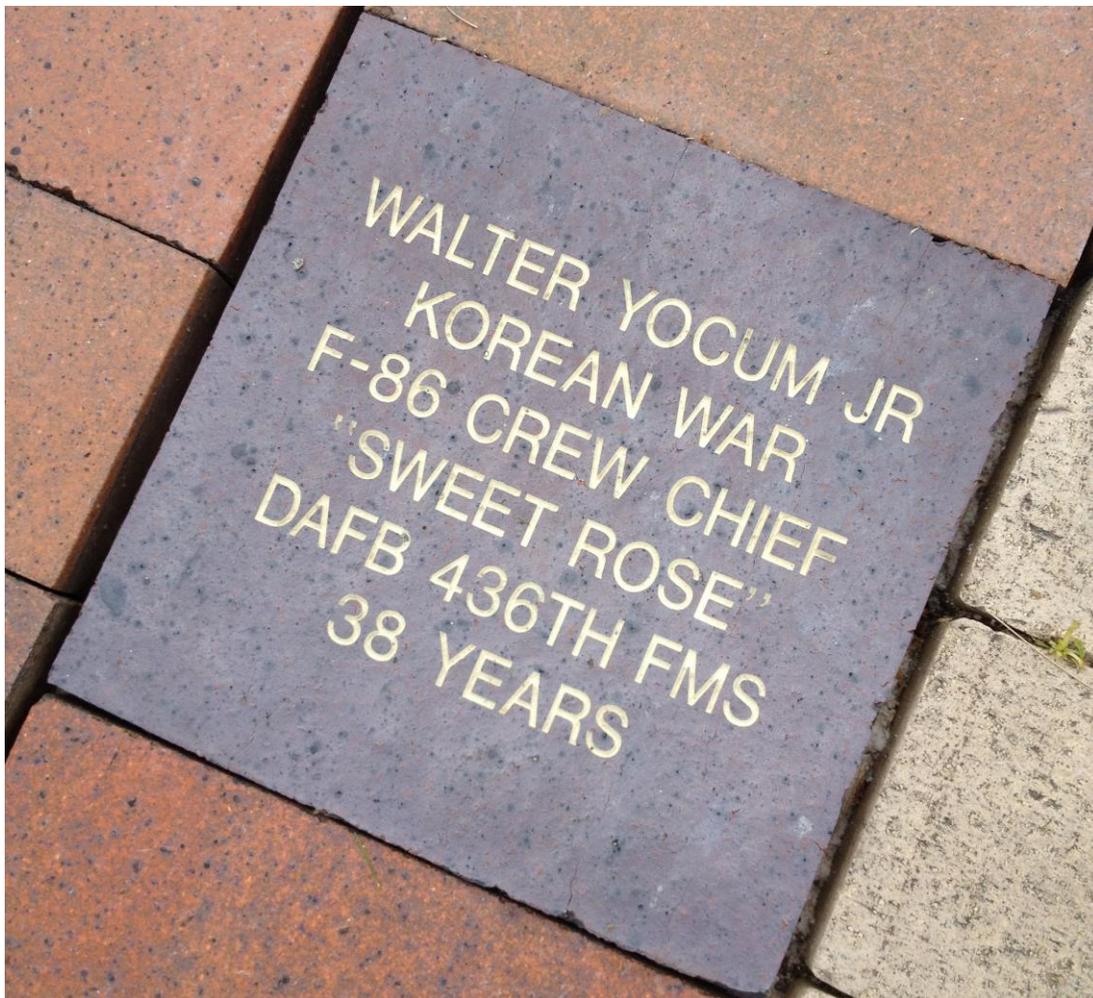


A brick dedicated to Wally Yocum Jr at the Veterans Memorial Park in Dover, Delaware – Photo taken May 2019.





Wally's name engraved on the Wall of Honor at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in May 2018. His name is located on Foil number 63, Panel 1, Column 4, Line 8.



A brick dedicated to Wally Yocum Jr at the Dover Air Force Base Museum in Dover, Delaware. Photo taken Spring 2014. - [Certificate](#)



End of Historical Portfolio



Walter E. Yocum, Jr.

January 20, 1934 – February 29, 2016

