

chamber, the interior of which somewhat resembles that of an airliner. Pressure in the chamber is controlled to simulate various altitudes and Boyle's Law dealing with the displacement of gases soon becomes fragrantly clear, particularly to those who may have had an ale or two the night before. The visit to the chamber culminates with an explosive decompression, to show the student what it would be like should the canopy suddenly blow from the aircraft.

On our return to Grand Centre, seat training at CFB Cold Lake was next on our agenda. The ejection equipment contained in the seat of today's fighter aircraft varies somewhat from aircraft to aircraft. Anyone about to fly must be completely familiar with seat ejection procedures and parachute gear. As our maiden flight was to be in the CF-5 Freedom Fighter, we had to be checked out in the seat for that aircraft. Apart from losing both arms at the elbows when I went through the ejection procedure, I passed with flying colours, if you'll pardon the pun!

June 5th dawned dark and dirty, with low cloud and light rain. Check-in time at the 419 hangar was 12:30 and the morning passed with a considerable amount of trepidation, not just because of the weather. Before we knew it we were sitting in Col. McCollough's office awaiting the pre-flight briefing. We were joined by Capts. Bob Reid and Ed Kuhar, who were to pilot Cst. Badham and Cpl. Byrne respectively, while I was to be flown by the colonel. The first step was to find flight suits that more or less fit and then we adjourned to the briefing room, but not before picking up full cups of steaming and very strong coffee.

Col. McCollough then briefed us all on what he hoped we would accomplish during the flight: full afterburner climb on takeoff, attaining supersonic speed after reaching altitude, having all three aircraft join up

for some tight formation flying and a radar approach to a full stop landing (with drag chute deployed). Following the briefing we visited the Safety Systems Section and were issued helmets, oxygen masks and parachute equipment. Then it was to the aircraft, where each pilot ensured we were snugly tied into our seats with all gear properly attached and stowed, before they began their own pre-flight checks.

Suddenly there was no time left and we began taxiing to our takeoff position. The rain still pelted down and my thoughts couldn't help stray to what I imagined would be an extremely wet and slippery stretch of runway that lay ahead. One very glaring question took over my mind, "What the devil am I doing?" The colonel's voice on the intercom interrupted my reverie just as we turned onto the main runway and our takeoff position.

He first asked if I was all set, and had me check my oxygen and parachute harness to make sure everything was in order. He then said that takeoff was really the only grey area of the entire flight when problems with the aircraft could be expected. If I heard him say "EJECT", I should do so immediately as he would allow me about two heartbeats and be gone himself! Thankfully, there was little time to think about what he had just said for we immediately began rolling down the runway and, within seconds, attained our liftoff speed of 155 knots. We were airborne!

Unfortunately, the rain had not subsided and we were unable to do an afterburner climb for fear of damaging the jet intake mechanism. A routine military climb was completed to 29,000 feet when we finally broke out of the cloud into the bright, blue sky and sunshine. At this point I couldn't help but wonder how Byrne and Badham were making out somewhere behind and below Jim and me.