

## Fresno Air National Guard History

### Oldsmobile Delta 88 Commercial

Back in 1968, Oldsmobile Automobile Company visited the Fresno ANG Base to film a commercial introducing their *Delta 88* automobile. Coincidentally, the 194<sup>th</sup> Fighter Interceptor Squadron was beginning their transition from North American F-86L Sabres to Convair F-102 Delta Dagger aircraft.

John "Shorty" Powers was the "star" of the commercial. "Shorty" -- a nickname he received for his 5-foot, 6-inch height -- was a TV commercial spokesperson for Oldsmobile in the mid-1960s. From 1959 until 1963, Powers, a U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel and war veteran, was public affairs officer for NASA and known as the "voice of the astronauts," the "voice of Mercury Control," and the "eighth astronaut".

I remember my father talking about the team of people who produced the commercial arrived at the base and how flight operations were suspended for a portion of the day while the commercial was filmed. Fresno had received only a few F-102 aircraft and numerous F-86Ls littered the tarmac in front of the hangar. A two-seat TF-102 trainer was chosen to be in the commercial on both the ground and airborne sequences. The TF-102 was unique in that it had side-by-side seating versus the tandem configuration of most trainer versions of fighter aircraft. The wide profile of the TF-102 inspired the nickname of "Tub" and the TF-102 was referred to as "the Tub" forevermore. If you look closely in the video you will notice the right seat is unoccupied as the Tub taxis into camera view.



*... the 194th Fighter Interceptor Squadron was in the beginning of their transition from the F-86L Sabre.*

F-86s were everywhere in the background of the commercial and the 194th Griffin is seen prominently displayed on the top of the vertical tails. These aircraft also sported the old practice of having the respective state name and the words "AIR GUARD" painted on the fuselage as opposed to "USAF".



*...Fresno had received  
only a few F-102  
aircraft*

Aerial sequences were filmed with the Oldsmobile both on the tarmac in front of the hangar and on the runway. The opening sequence displays a beautiful view of the delta wing and the aircraft's drag chute deployed. An old model airliner aircraft (Fokker F-27) can be seen in the background later on in the video.

It was exciting to see the commercial video aired on television, possibly in a commercial break from *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *Bonanza*, *Leave It To Beaver*, or... oh well, you get the idea.

**Click on the link below to view the commercial in its entirety.**

<https://youtu.be/e1iEz930dFw>

***JIM "B.O.B." MCNAB***