Planned Sonic Booms Get Praise From Successes

By ROBERTA ULRICH
United Press International

Spokane, Wash. – (UPI) – Most Air Force pilots are strictly forbidden to use their fast flying jet planes to create sonic booms, largely because of adverse reaction from civilians who tend to become irate over broken windows and frightened livestock.

But 1st Lt. William D. Spillane, a former Purdue university football player from Chicago, is assigned at Geiger Air Force Base near here to planning and creating sonic booms – and the affected civilians are enthusiastic about his successes.

Spillane, 26, is project officer for "operation safeslide," an Air Force program aimed at creating avalanches in Glacier National park in the northwest corner of Montana.

Pose Real Danger

In the high rugged Rocky Mountains where the park is located, snow slides pose a real danger to park road crews and early season tourists in the spring and early summer.

The Air Force in "safeslide" is using the pressure from its F106 jets breaking through the sound barrier to send slides plunging down the mountains where no one is around instead of leaving the snow poised to roar down without warning.

Now in its third year, "safeslide" is considered a success by both the Air Force and the National Park service.

The process sounds simple: Take one airplane designed to fly faster than the speed of sound and fly it at top speed, creating the sonic boom which bounces off the mountain and dislodges snow.

Use Two Methods

But it's more than that. Air Force pilots use two methods of sliding the snow. In one, they drop about half way down the mountainside at subsonic speed, then pull up at supersonic speed to create the boom. In the other, they use high altitude angle bombing methods at about 20,000 feet.

The first method is the most effective – and the most breath-taking.

The peaks involved range close to 10,000 feet. To make matters worse, they are close together. This means flying into a narrow canyon 6,000 feet below the mountain tops, then pulling up and out before running into another mountain at nearly 1,000 miles an hour. The only exit is just about straight up.

Said To Problem

Adding to the problem, according to Spillane, is the fact that "there's quite a bit of turbulence in those canyons. In fact, it makes a pretty rough ride. It's not a job for amateurs."

The big blond flyer considers his job a pleasure, however. But then, he like things a little rough. He was a linebacker on the Purdue football team before graduating with a degree in economics in 1958 and played for the Philadelphia Eagles the next fall for a short time before being injured.

Stationed at Geiger with the 498th fighter interceptor squadron (Geiger Tigers) for the past two years, he is in his second year of law school, attending night at Gonzaga university. He was graduated first in his class from at least two of his flight schools and at one attained the highest grades on record.

One of Two Pilots

Spillane got into "safeslide" because "I like all kinds of flying and this was one more thing to do." He has been one of the two pilots making the "safeslide" flights on three of this year's five runs.

The real search for a means to prevent the dreaded snow slides began in the mid-1950's after two men were killed and a third was burried alive in snow seven hours when an avalanche swept a road-clearing crew off Going-To-The-Sun Highway in 1953.

Dynamite was tried and found impractical. Artillery proved ineffective. Then in 1960 the Air Force began "safeslide." It worked.

A STAMP-EED!

Fullerton, Calif. –(UPI)– An Orange county housewife alarmed over the recent price dip of blue chip stocks on the nation's exchanges, called the Fullerton News Tribune Tuesday to inform: "Stocks are down and I'm going to trade in my trading stamps before they fall too."

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Chicago –(UPI)– The National Pickle Packers Association sent President Kennedy 45 jars of pickles Tuesday, noting that the Chief Executive's birthday "just happened" to fall in the middle of national pickle week.

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