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## White Lie

We were young men, dressed in our green Air Force fatigues. Each day at the Training Center, we learned a little more about the electronic systems of the F-106 interceptor aircraft. There were so many systems - communications, navigation, landing, weapons, radar, flight control, electronic countermeasures.

I had enlisted in the Air Force because I didn't have a clue what I was doing in college. I did well in coursework before I dropped out of school, and this training on the electronic systems of the F-106 wasn't that tough either. My classmates might not have had as much education, but we worked together and really learned the F-106. We knew that we would be going on to permanent duty stations where we would have to maintain these fighters in top operational condition. The F-106 was being used in real battles, so lives could be at stake. We took the training seriously. Ours was probably the best-trained class in the squadron.

The systems of the aircraft were often updated, and we had just learned about the new Hughes computer that would act as the brains for all the other subsystems. The Air Force decided to make a training film that could be sent to the field, and our group of airmen was selected from all those in training. I was about to be in the movies at the age of nineteen. All of us were excited and a little nervous.



The day came for filming and we did several rehearsals. We were told what to do, where to stand, and what to say. Over and over we practiced. Then we got to the dress rehearsal. We were told to do everything like the real thing one more time before the final filming. To make sure that it would look right, the last rehearsal would be with full lighting and sound. We thought that finally we were nearing our brief moment of fame, actually making it to film. It would only be seen by other airmen, like us, but that didn't matter. The real shoot was next, just after the last full rehearsal.

We ran through it like the several before, saying our lines effectively, if sounding a little bored. Nobody showboated. Nobody smiled at the camera. Nobody was nervous. It was, after all, just the last rehearsal.

When it was over, the camera technician put the lens cap on and started to disconnect the lights.

We were ready for the real thing but something was wrong. One of the airmen asked if they decided not to shoot the training film. "We just did." was the reply. When the director told us we were running through just another rehearsal, he knew it wasn't a rehearsal at all and that the camera would be rolling. He lied to us. He knew it would make a better film, with us acting natural and calm, methodically going through our roles as if we had been doing it for some time, as we had. If we knew the camera was rolling, we would almost certainly have acted differently, flubbed a line, or for me, probably forgotten to breathe altogether.

It was a lie, a white lie as they are called, because nobody was hurt and the result was better for it. But it was still a lie. It only bothered me for a while, because soon we were assigned to our duty stations and we had serious, important work to do maintaining our interceptor aircraft. I got over the white lie, but I didn't forget it.

The lesson I learned was to do your best every day. In the classroom, as a teacher you never know which day will make a difference to which student. There are no rehearsal days - they are all the real thing. The camera is always rolling.