

Jim McNab sent this to me in April 2014. Thanks Jim!

I remember Donn Austin's crash very well. We had just moved from Hayward to Fresno. It was September of 1955 and we were living over by Radcliffe Stadium (Near the intersection of Fresno St and McKinley Ave). I had just turned 6 years old and was out in the front yard with a bunch of other kids when I saw a column of thick black smoke rising up to the north. An F-86A was circling around the column of smoke. I ran inside the house and told my dad. He went outside and saw the smoke and said one of the aircraft at the base must have crashed. He immediately left and drove over to the crash site, which was on Dakota a little west of Cedar.

We later moved into a house not far from where the crash site was. It was a big, open field back then and I remember finding several .50 caliber brass casings that were burst open from the resulting fire after the plane crashed. Evidently, Austin had -- for whatever reason -- rolled thru a fence on the departure roll, which foddred the engine and also damaged the leading edge of the wing. I never did find out from any of the old heads what happened. It was a shame he didn't eject.