

BARNES AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Massachusetts -- Major Richard W. Mahoney died when his jet flamed out and crash-landed near the New Orleans Naval Air Station, New Orleans, LA on April 22nd, 1961. He and his passenger, Major Philip B. Burke, were returning home from a commander's conference at Ellington AFB, Houston, Texas. Burke walked away from the crash with numerous cuts and mild shock. Mahoney was married and served as chairman for the reception and guest committee for the 10th anniversary ball on 19 Oct 1957. 16 April 1956 he became the Commander of the 131st FS. In April 1952, Mahoney competed in the national gunnery competition for guard units in Victorville, CA. The team, which included Capt. Grabovsky, Lt Barus and Lt Matera placed 3rd. They flew the F-51-H and the competition consisted largely of individual and formation attacks on towed targets. The team was beat by two California teams which made them the highest ranking out-of-state team. He had been operations officer of the 131st Tactical Fighter Sq, MANG, for many years. Mahoney, a lifelong resident, was first cousin of Mayor John D. O'Connor of Westfield, MA. Mahoney was a WWII Air Force veteran and was assigned in Europe during the late stages of the war. He was a graduate of Westfield High School and a member of the Kiwanis Club. His flying career stretched back over 19 years. He enlisted in the flying cadet program in June of 1942 and after graduation he continued training and assignments in this country. He had been with the 131st MANG unit since Dec of 1947