Kaman HOK-1.

Piasecki H-25A Army Mule.

Piasecki H-21C Work-Horse.

Piasecki Work-Horse with inflatable pontoons.

Sikorsky H-34A.

Sikorsky XHR2S-1.

OFF TO PHILADELPHIA . . .

have been a blood-stirring show by these American-built Canberras materialized as a languid, distant procession. Few people appeared to notice it.

From the same Command a section of two F-100s, for which a gross weight of 28,000 lb was announced, struck with imaginary napalm, cut in their reheat and returned individually. One afterburner sounded hesitant. The U.S.A.F., incidentally, consider the F-100 to be a greater improvement over the F-86 than was the F-86 over the P-51.

With nine F-84Fs, which had themselves strafed the airfield, milling above them, nine C-119s simulated a re-supply drop from 600ft (total drop-load five dummies), to be backed up by nine barn-like C-124s, likewise of Tactical Air Command, mightily massed.

In none of these demonstrations, however, was there the element of realism which had distinguished the Army's performance; nor was the offering of Strategic Air Command what I had hoped for. The FICON GRB-36/RF-84F which should have opened for this Command failed to materialize, but six "36s" in open formation, with F-84Fs flying top cover, passed over with their throbbing, baleful note. A B-47 JATO-d off at a flattish angle (the rockets reduce the unstick run by 2,000ft) and a second underwent a simulated flying-boom refuelling from a KC-97. Fifteen more, smoking heavily and in a formation something less than immaculate, succeeded in making an impression by passing over at about 1,000ft and 400 m.p.h. These, too, had an escort of twelve F-84Fs. The JATO demonstrator turned on its base leg, popped its approach 'chute miles away, to be followed, at touchdown, by the 32ft ribbon drag 'chute. It was explained that the first 'chute permits a "slower flying pattern" and enables the aircraft to "carry more power."

Far distant were approaching what I took to be three formations, but which materialized as individual B-52s (span 185ft) flying at some 500 m.p.h. and with thin smoke trailing from their batteries of J57s. All had wing tanks and white anti-atom bellies. (I learned at Philadelphia that the take-off speed of the B-52—now equipping the 93rd Bomb Wing at Castle Air Force Base, near Merced, California—is lower than that of the B-47, that acceleration is much the same, and that the 52 cruises faster and higher. Accommodation is such that "short walks" are possible for relaxation. Control forces are slightly heavier on the 52, but considerably lighter than on other machines of comparable size. They are, in any case, light enough to be handled with one hand on the approach. The pilot has no aerodynamic indication of when the bomb doors are open. The undercarriage can be used as a speed brake at high Mach numbers, and the spoilers can be operated symmetrically for additional braking effect. Transitional crews, however, learn to apply the brakes with care, especially at high speed and high altitude, as sharp pitching moments can be induced. The approach pattern can be flown closer on the 52 than on the 47, and the landing speed is lower. Advantages accrue from the use of the spoilers on the approach.)

More new equipment was to come: a C-130 with its Allison T56s pulling it along briskly though noisily; an F-101A strategic fighter which shocked with the blast of its reheat, though it was certainly higher than the announced 100ft; and, widely spaced, two F-102 all-weather intercepters, smoking and suddenly reheating for a climb at a rate and angle appropriate to their function. (Before the show I had seen what I took to be the same pair—temporarily based at McGuire A.F.B., New Jersey—rolling at approximately the rate of an F.D.1 or P.111.)

It remained for the Thunderbirds, the official Air Demonstration Team of the U.S.A.F., to raise the contribution of that Service above a pedestrian level.

The team was formed in May 1953 and its officially prescribed functions are: "(a) To exhibit the performance capabilities of front-line tactical fighter aircraft and the precision skill of the U.S.A.F. pilot; (b) to indoctrinate Air Force personnel by displaying the level of skill produced by the flying training program; (c) to demonstrate by formation acrobatics and flight maneuvers the precision necessary in actual fighter tactics; (d) to instill in all spectators a new concept of air power, and to interest qualified youth in the pursuit of a flying career."

Formerly on F-84Gs, the Thunderbirds have been equipped since March this year with the later, swept-wing F-84Fs. Their standard formation is a diamond, with the 84Fs five feet or so