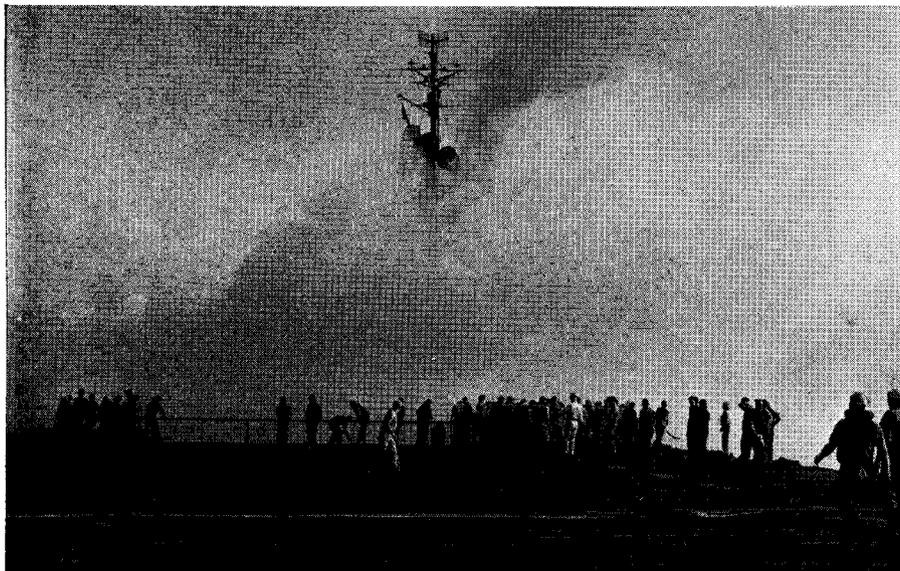


# FIRE ON THE BOXER KILLS NINE



THICK SMOKE POURS OUT OF #3 ELEVATOR AS CREWS ON HANGAR DECK FIGHT FIRE ON THE BOXER

NAVAL aviation's worst accident of the Korean war occurred 90 miles off the Korean coast on 6 August when an unexplained hangar deck explosion on the carrier *Boxer* killed nine men and injured 32 others.

The explosion occurred at 0616 as the *Boxer* was preparing to launch strikes against the Reds. Fed by gasoline, bombs and ammunition in the fully-loaded planes, the ship became an inferno seconds later.

Sixty-three men were forced to jump over the side to escape the flames and explosions. Fire fighters instantly began pouring water and foam on the flames, but were hampered by exploding ordnance and when flames burned around vital fire-fighting gear and communications lines.

Plane crewmen rushed in among the burning planes to strip bombs and ammunition before they exploded. Cdr. R. C. Bengston, the executive officer, and Cdr. J. A. Leonard, engineering officer, led the firefighting efforts, with Capt. Marshall B. Gurney, who had just assumed command of the ship from Capt. Dennis J. Sullivan, in charge.

Many men were trapped briefly in spaces above and below the hangar deck by the dense smoke. Rescue workers in oxygen masks guided many to safety. Far below the water line, engineers donned masks to remain at their posts. For nearly four hours 3,000 men on the carrier battled to control the fire.

Stories on individual heroism were many. R. W. Chapman, AD3, played a fire hose on Airman Ralph L. Finley, who was lying seriously injured under a plane. With bullets flying around him, Chapman dragged him from the spot

into the photo lab. There he was trapped for nearly an hour by the flames.

LCdr. Kenneth McAfee, gunnery officer, asked for help in heaving a hose into place. An eager figure in khaki dashed to his side. Peering through the smoke, McAfee recognized the senior chaplain, LCdr. George Hoglan. "I didn't mean you," McAfee protested.

"I can work as well as anyone else!" the chaplain snapped.

With each plane a potential fire bomb, Lt. W. J. Norton, hangar deck officer, managed to get the #3 elevator lowered with men and fire hoses on it. He then had a plane pushed onto it and the engine started. The whirling prop helped clear the smoke and gas out so the men could fight the fire better.

CADY E. LEIB, AB3, after directing the moving of planes away from the fire, donned oxygen breathing gear and searched for men in the smoke-filled spaces. He first rescued four men from a compartment directly above the hangar deck. Then, on two trips below, he rescued five more. In addition, he recovered the bodies of two who had died from smoke and heat.

Fireman John Lewis, Jr., worked without a mask. Making trip after trip to fire rooms three and four, he rescued at least 11 men. He finally was overcome by smoke himself. In the Marine compartments, five men decided to fight their way out. Holding hands to avoid being separated in the smoke, they felt their way to the hangar deck. As they reached it, a bomb exploded, killing one instantly and blowing another into the sea, where he disappeared. One Marine recovered con-

sciousness and found himself clinging to a pipe on the side of the ship.

One doctor and two enlisted men were killed on the line of duty. Lt. James E. Shropshire, Jr., medical officer for CAG-2, was busy on the hangar deck, 100 feet from the flames. A fragment of an exploding shell ended his heroic efforts. Hospitalmen Richard S. Taylor and James V. Wark died in a similar manner.

(More pictures of fire on inside front cover.)

## Corpus Men Build 'Lung' Polio Project Gets Merchants Interest

NAS CORPUS CHRISTI—Using plans obtained from a scientific magazine, a small group of civic-minded sailors here has built an iron lung for treatment of polio cases in the Corpus area.

The idea for the lung came from John Hults, AD1. After securing the



HULTS, BECHER, BURNS EXAMINE LUNG'S PLANS

plans, he contacted local merchants and got an estimate of \$260 for all the materials in the proposed lung. When the merchants heard about the project, however, they donated most of the materials.

With the cooperation of the Corpus chapter of the Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, the sailors gathered the materials and plans and built the lung, to be given to Nueces county chapter.

## Two VP Outfits Win Honors VP-34, VP-3 Finish Year Sans Wrecks

FAIRWINGS, ATLANTIC—Two patrol squadrons of this wing—VP-34 and VP-3—were the only two units of the Air Force, Atlantic Fleet, to complete the 1952 fiscal year with 100% safety marks.

These two top safety squadrons are ASW patrol bomber units under FAIRWING-11 at Jacksonville. Cdr. C. A. Lenz is skipper of VP-34, which flies *Mariners* from Trinidad. In the last half of the year it logged 3,613 flight hours.

VP-3, flying *P2V's* operates out of Jacksonville under command of Cdr. L. E. DeCamp. Both patrol plane units participated in ASW, destroyer exercises, with airships and hunter-killer aircraft, plus several other fleet operations.