

KOREAN AIR WAR



SOUTH Korean farmer, busy with late spring plowing in his rice paddy, pays little attention to Marine helicopter, forced to land temporarily on road near Panmunjom.

AD Night Interceptor

The versatility of the Marines and their airplanes paid off in Korea in the last days of combat. They adapted an AD *Skyraider*, night intruder version, into a night interceptor to take care of "Bedcheck Charley."

To combat Charley's nuisance raids, MAW-1 stationed two of the AD's at a forward air base that was receiving the brunt of the raids. Originally intended as an intruder-type, single-place aircraft, the planes were rigged so that radar gear and a radar operator could be carried in the belly.

Radar normally used for night interception was not adaptable, so a type of radar-bombing gear was installed and made suitable for this purpose. Two planes, piloted by Maj. Robert H. Mitchell and Maj. George H. Linnemeier, were assigned to fly night combat air patrols.

Maj. Linnemeier got his kill, a PO-2, but ended up in an enemy flak trap and almost got shot down himself. The following night, Maj. Mitchell damaged his "Bedcheck Charley" but was overtaking him too fast and had to break it off.

The pilots described this type of flying as rather "hairy." In order to com-

pete with "Bedcheck Charley," they had to fly at a speed of 90 knots and at an extremely low altitude. The terrain over which they flew was from 800 to 4,000 feet altitude.

Here the radar operator came in real handy. While tracking the enemy plane, he also "mapped" with his radar gear, keeping the pilot informed of the terrain ahead, so that he could pull up or cut through ravines as necessary.

He Wouldn't Ditch

Landing an F2H *Banshee* without a nosewheel is about as easy as learning to ride a unicycle. Successfully landing such a plane on the deck of a fast-moving attack carrier is little short of miraculous.

Lt. (jg) Eddie I. Coleman performed the miracle when he landed his jet on the *Boxer* after returning from a reconnaissance mission over North Korea. As he approached the carrier for a landing, he discovered his nose gear wouldn't lower. Housed in the nose section of his jet were some of the finest cameras in the world—fragile, hand-made precision equipment used in mapping the battle zone from high altitudes at high speed.

After trying every roll and jerk pos-

EDITOR'S NOTE: Long after the truce was signed, stories of the Korean Air War continued to filter into NANews. Because these exploits in the last days of the war still make good reading and the pilots deserve some credit, NANews is running the Korean Air War again this month.

sible in an effort to shake the forward landing gear down, Coleman radioed the *Boxer* for permission to attempt the hazardous landing rather than ditch his plane and cameras. All eyes were focused on the plane as it winged into position and received the "cut off" from LSO Lt. (jg) Dale E. Shover.

Luckily, Coleman set his plane down on the one spot on the *Boxer's* flight deck where his arresting hook would grip the deck cables just as the wheels touched the deck. Cable pressure prevented the plane's nose from tipping forward.

As the plane teetered off balance, the flight deck crew raced to weight down the tail, while another crewman lowered the jammed nose gear. A possible costly mishap had been averted and thousands of dollars of delicate aerial cameras had been saved.

Only a tiny scratch on the bottom of the plane's nose attested to a pilot's skill in avoiding catastrophe.

He's Not Superstitious

After returning from a mission, Ens. Joseph E. Jannotta was willing to admit that 13 must be his lucky number. He had just completed his 13th mission over Korea on the 13th of the month in Corsair #13.

Jannotta had a field day against Communist transportation facilities in and around besieged Wonsan. He destroyed two bridges and wrecked three trucks.

Just Like Home

It's a sad day when the sailors aboard ship have nothing left to gripe about. That's what happened aboard the *Philippine Sea*.

The skipper, Capt. Paul H. Ramsey, felt that long hours of steaming, replenishing and keeping the ship's planes on enemy strikes was deserving of reward. Accordingly, he implemented a policy of allowing the men to sleep

in until 0900 whenever the ship was steaming to port from her operations with TF-77.

This went over fine with the crew, but none of them was prepared for the shock that came the next morning. Off went the sound of the boatswain's pipe. However, no harsh words of "Heave out and lash up," grated the ears of the late sleepers.

The boatswain had gotten into the swing of things too. "Now this is your friendly boatswain's mate," came his dulcet voice. "I hope you all feel rested after your long sleep."

Then came the shocker. "There are coffee and rolls in the mess hall for any of you gentlemen who care to partake." The ship's band then played "You can't get 'em up in the morning."

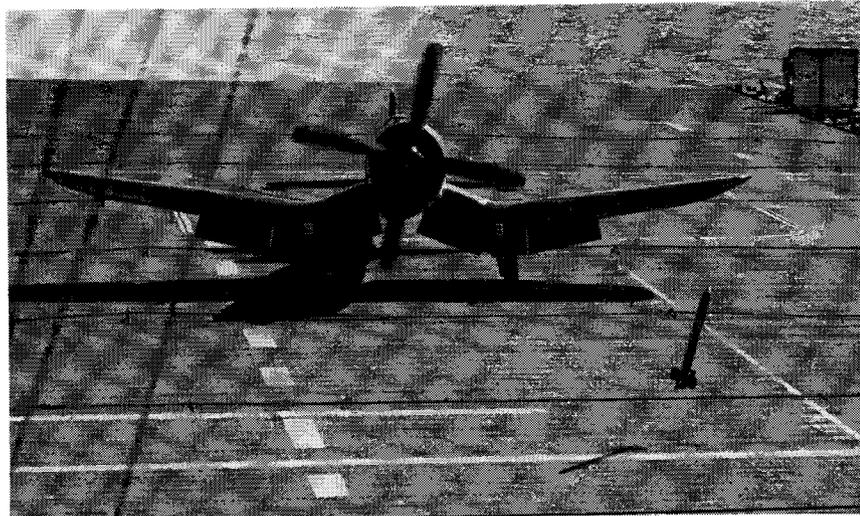
Said one crewman with a big grin, "Can you imagine a boatswain talking like that? I was too shocked to eat."

As Good as New

A crippled *Panther* shuddered to a stop in the mud after an emergency landing at an Air Force field in South Korea. Damaged by enemy ground fire, the pilot was unable to return it to his home base, the *Princeton*.

He landed at 1945. The next day at 1400 he took off for his carrier, his jet equipped with new wings and the other battle damage repaired. His plane was an example of Navy and Marine Corps teamwork at its finest.

Shortly before the Navy pilot made his emergency landing, a salvage crew



BOUNCING dangerously, this five-inch rocket made its way down the flight deck of the *Bairoko*. The rocket was jarred loose under the impact of the Corsair's landing.

from MAG-33, led by Lt. Floyd Seamans, had just finished loading a Marine *Panther* on a flatcar for shipment back to an MAW-1 base. The jet had landed at the AF field after receiving damage in an earlier raid on the Reds.

The pilot and Lt. Seamans got together. With two damaged planes available, why not see if they could put one of them in flying condition again? Seamans called his base and received permission to replace the Navy plane's damaged wings and tip tanks.

The Marines went to work and unloaded the needed parts from the railroad car. They borrowed portable flood lights and starting at 2330 worked

through the night. The Navy jet was ready to fly by 1130 the next morning. The jet was gassed and the pilot was able to return to his carrier.

Monument to Marines

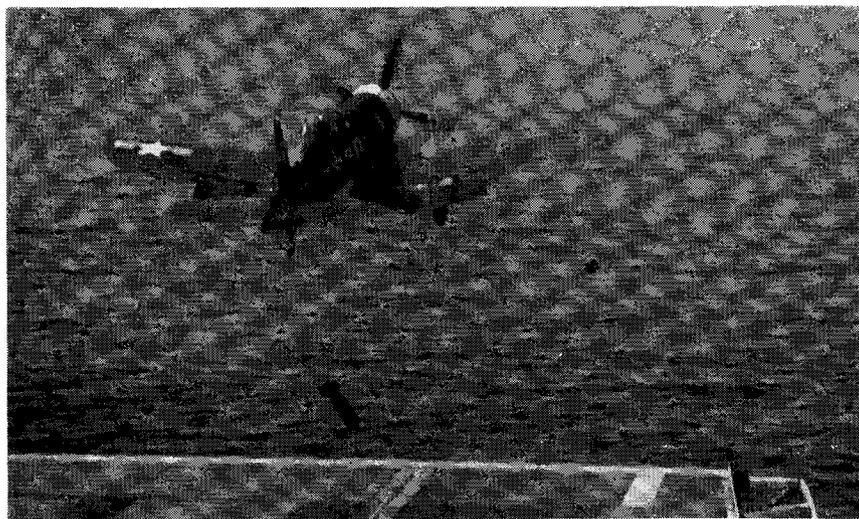
In the small city of Pohang, MGen. Vernon E. Megee, Commanding General of MAW-1, accepted a monument dedicated to the officers and men of the wing who have lost their lives while serving in Korea. Pohang was once the scene of bitter fighting as UN forces stemmed the tide of onrushing North Koreans.

On the face of the monument reads the inscription: "Dedicated to the officers and men of the First Marine Aircraft Wing who gave their lives in defense of the Republic of Korea. May this monument serve as a symbol and an inspiration to the generations of the future to fight for the principle of a free world."

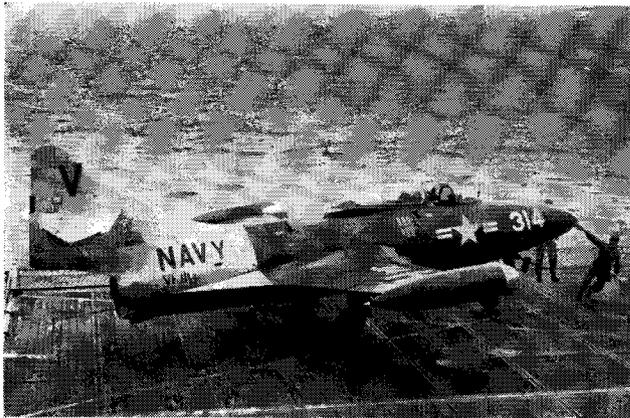
Three Times is Out

While flying a reconnaissance hop between two rows of mountains near Ambyon looking for trucks' moving supplies and troops southward, Lt. P. A. Hayek's plane was hit by a 37 mm shell.

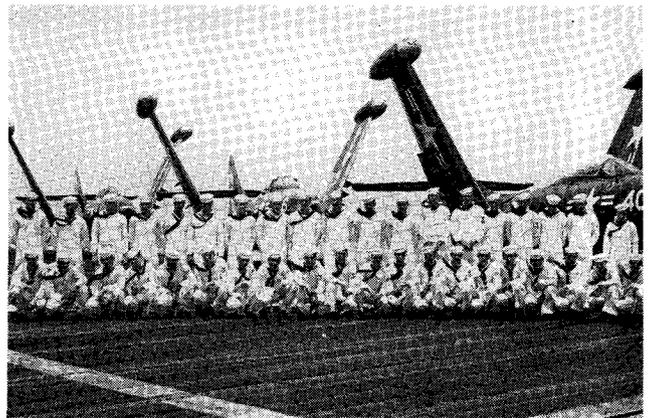
The VF-52 pilot's first reaction was, "this is it . . . I've had it." He thought he was going in. After he realized he could control the plane, he headed for the Sea of Japan to give the plane a thorough check before deciding to ditch it or try to bring it back. It checked



SHAKEN loose under impulse of catapult that launched Marine Polka Dot Corsair, 500-pound bomb barely clears forward end of flight deck on the escort carrier *Bairoko*.



VICE-VERSA, successor to the *Blue-Tail Fly*, swings around on deck edge elevator before being taken below to hangar deck.



PART OF the record-breaking 39 sets of brothers serving together aboard *Princeton* assemble on flight deck for picture.

okay, so he headed for the task force.

He brought his *Panther* aboard the *Boxer* in what was termed one of the best landings ever witnessed. The right elevator was inoperative and most of the maneuvering had to be done by the trim-tabs on the left elevator.

It marked the third time Hayek had brought the same jet aboard after being hit by flak. He said, "That's the last time . . . you can press your luck just so far."

Hocus Pocus

A Navy carrier pilot and his crewmen, flying their first day mission in their night attack-bomber, practiced a little black magic of their own. They parlayed a 250-pound bomb into an explosion which looked like a miniature atom bomb.

Lt. Dan C. Downs and his radarmen, J. P. McCarter and T. J. Joyce, completely wiped out a Communist rear area ammunition dump near Yong-dong-ni. The building was a block-and-a-half long and looked almost square. When the bomb hit, a huge ball of fire shot up and then thick, gray smoke rose from it, making it look like an A-bomb had gone off. The smoke went up to about 3,000 feet.

The radarmen said the building looked like a house someone had moved off its foundations.

"Now you see it, now you don't," said McCarter. "The explosion must have spread bricks for ten miles."

"It happened almost too fast," added Joyce. "I saw the explosion, but by the time we banked around, there wasn't anything left but a lot of smoke."

Vice Versa

With the departure of the *Blue-Tail Fly* from the decks of the *Princeton*, the crewmen discovered that they missed the odd-looking plane. When Lt. Robert E. Chaney crash-landed his *Panther* on an emergency airstrip in Korea, the flak-riddled tail section of the plane was replaced by the still-intact tail of another damaged *Panther*.

As the war ended, the crewmen had another two-colored plane flying from the carrier. It was named *Vice Versa*, successor to the *Blue-Tail Fly*.

Noseless Seadog

Jet fliers on the aircraft carrier *Philippine Sea* are no longer wondering if their *Panthers* will fly without a nose piece.

That question was answered for them and all other pilots by Lt. Hugh N. Batten. He brought his plane home to the carrier looking as bare as Jimmy Durante would if he ever lost his famous proboscis.

Batten was making a rocket and strafing run on a Communist troop billeting area southwest of Ambyon, when a direct hit from an anti-aircraft battery caught him literally "right on the nose." The pilot wasn't sure what damage had been done to his plane, so he radioed his wingman for a rundown of damage. He received a "lean forward and look down" reply. Upon doing so, Batten saw the nose piece had been torn from his *Panther*.

Except for a slight vibration and decrease in speed, his plane was handling normally. After making another target

run without the nose, Lt. Batten returned to the *Philippine Sea* without further incident.

Family Ship of the Fleet

Last year the *Princeton* attracted wide attention when an on-board count revealed 32 sets of brothers. This year she broke her own record with an increase to 39 sets. The combination includes several sets of twins, as well as one trio of brothers.

The men are assigned to almost every department aboard ship. While their battle stations may sometimes be widely separated, routine duties help to keep them in constant contact with one another. On the few days each month that the *Princeton* docked in Japan for a rest from her constant pounding of the enemy in Korea, the brothers were given an opportunity to spend their liberties together.

Sorties Come to Halt

As the truce was signed at Panmunjom, the planes of five aircraft carriers were idle for the first time since the outbreak of the Korean conflict. The *Champlain*, *Boxer*, *Philippine Sea* and *Princeton* were operating off the east coast and the escort carrier *Bairoko* was on the west coast when the dotted line was filled in.

During the last week of air operations, the carriers of TF-77 twice broke the record for number of combat sorties flown. After flying a record number of 592 sorties Sunday, the carriers found room for improvement by flying an all-time high of 596 the next day, to be followed by 611 and 654 sorties the



LT. RALPH Ripple points to his name on the landing scoreboard for 60,000th landing.

next two days of that last week.

The *Boxer* was in her fourth tour of duty in the combat zone at truce time. She distinguished herself by recording her 61,000th flight deck landing, made by Lt. Charles L. Chute, to lead all active carriers in that department. As of June 30th, the *Boxer* had recorded 59,981 landings, the *Phil Sea* 58,212 and the *Valley Forge* 51,458.

That Ominous Feeling

When a fast jet plane is hit by flak, the sensation is like "driving down a smooth highway and suddenly hitting a chuckhole." That's the way Lt. John W. Fornof described it when he brought his schrapnel-riddled *Panther* home to make a next-to-impossible landing on the flight deck of the *Boxer*.

An eight-plane flight was headed for the carrier after completing an aerial strike over Korea. It was when they approached the rugged coastline through skies flecked with an intense flak screen that Fornof felt that ominous "chuckhole."

Unable to spot any damage to his craft, he radioed his wingman, who replied, "You've got a hole in your wing. In spite of the damage, Fornof made a final strafing pass with his flight on supply vehicles on a road below. Pulling out of the run, he noticed his elevator wasn't functioning properly.

Nursing the crippled plane back to the ship was simple in comparison to the task ahead. The real test was landing without flaps. Approaching the *Boxer*, he was forced to maintain excessive speed to keep the nose of the plane up—a dangerous situation for

a pilot making a carrier landing.

The *Panther* approached the deck at a bullet-like pace, but arresting gear brought it to a jolting halt. Flight deck personnel and Fornof were amazed to see the damage to his plane. His left-wing control flap had a hole big enough for a man to put his head through. A tail assembly elevator cable was severed and another elevator was off its track.

Just Like a Sponge

All of the pilots in VF-153 aboard the *Princeton* liked to have Lt. (jg) George M. Benas, Jr., fly with them. They claimed he soaked up all the flak in the sky. He was hit seven times during two Korean tours.

His first tour with CAG-15 aboard the *Antietam* ended with him having been hit five times. On three occasions, Benas had his hydraulic lines pierced so badly that he was unable to apply flaps when landing.

The last of those five hits was the most scary. A 37 mm shell entered directly under the cockpit and veered to the right, missing his leg by a scant few inches. Luckily, it didn't explode as it passed through the cockpit and the starboard side of the plane. Benas was awarded the Purple Heart when the shell splattered schrapnel which entered the right side of his neck in two places.

As he landed, the plane nosed to the deck after his tail hook caught an arresting cable. This was because a hydraulic failure wouldn't permit him to lower his nose wheel.

Actually, the worst of his hits was



"TOO CLOSE for comfort," Lt. J. W. Fornof thinks as he surveys damage to his plane.



FLAK sponge, Lt. (jg) George Benas, is congratulated by Cdr. Parks aboard *Princeton*.

his sixth. A 37 mm shell struck the nose of his plane, exploding inside and ripping the electronic gear. Returning aboard, he discovered that the ammunition cans containing high explosive incendiary shells were peppered with flak. If the schrapnel had hit any of the shells, the plane and Benas would never have returned to the carrier.

Seven-Man War

Members of VC-35's Team #18, which spent six months plastering North Korea in night-attack Skyraiders, received as souvenirs a three-page pamphlet entitled "The Bazedrine Boys over Korea, or, Life Can Be Difficult, by A. North Korean."

Since it lacked the funds to put out a more elaborate cruise book, the Baker unit listed its "score board" for the Korean fray from January to June, 1953. The box score included 12 locomotives destroyed and 10 damaged, 129 box-cars destroyed and 57 damaged, 120 trucks destroyed and 70 damaged, 298 buildings destroyed and 166 damaged, three bridges cut and 8 damaged, 59 rails cut and two power plants destroyed and three damaged.

On 325 sorties the VA(N) team dropped 150 tons of bombs and fired 56,230 rounds of 20mm ammo. The seven pilots—LCdr. W. C. Griese, Lts. W. H. Herrick, C. C. Walstrom, E. J. Weinbeck, W. E. Decker, B. W. Warren and H. R. Counihan—won six DFC's, 55 Air Medals and six letters of commendation.

● MCAS CHERRY POINT—June may be a month of weddings but Cherry Point storks worked overtime to deliver 109 babies.