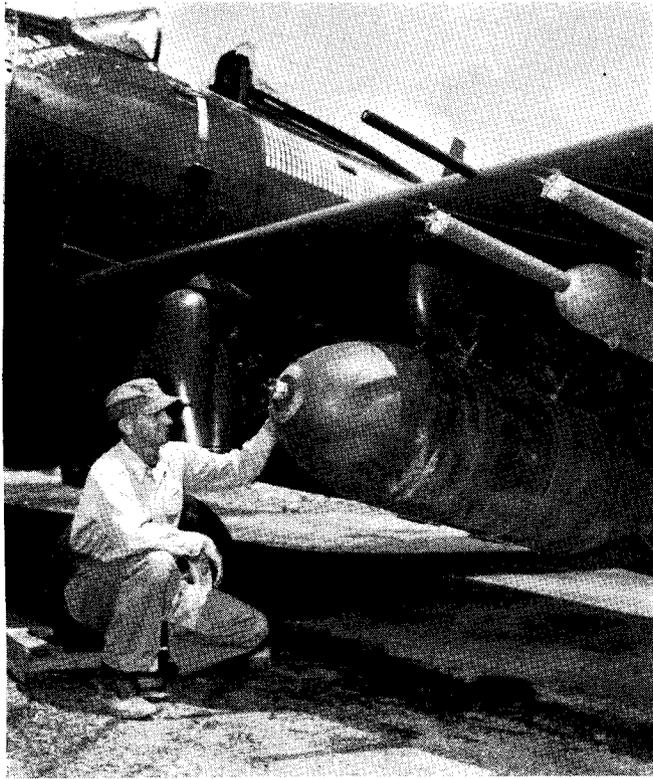


# LAND-BASED MARINE AIR HAMMERS REDS



**COL. ROBERT E. Galer**, head of MAG-12 and World War II ace with 13 Japs, inspects heavy bomb loaded on AD with many missions



**MARINES** train South Koreans, then give them jobs assembling rockets, fusing bombs and belting 20 mm shells for the next strike

A HUGE, billowing cloud of yellow dust rises over the rice paddies and farmlands a few miles behind the bomb line in Korea. Stooping farmers in white sack-like clothes straighten their bent backs and stare skyward to watch. Womenfolk, with babies strapped to their backs, look also as the stifling dust cloud swoops down on them.

Neither the billows of Korean "good earth" blown upward nor the propeller roar that goes with it is new to them. One hundred times a day, seven days a week, it has been going on—dawn to sunset—at Marine Aircraft Group 12's base nearby.

Dust in summertime, mud in rainy season, sub-zero cold and ice in the wintertime are typical of conditions under which the fighting Leathernecks carry on their air war against Korean Communists.

Although the Korean peace talks have been going on for many months, there is no letup in the launching of strikes every few hours. Pilots may step out of MAG-12's dust-covered little chapel on Sundays to fly combat hops, the same as any other day of the week.

As the Marine combat squadrons closest to enemy lines, the four attack units under Col. Robert E. Galer's command take the daily strikes in stride.

Three of the squadrons are based at a former Japanese air station. The fourth operates off the escort carrier *Bataan* offshore.

When the Japs had the field in World War II, they flew Zero-type fighters from its runways. Expecting U. S. bombing attacks, they built miles of taxiways and plane revetments out into the surrounding countryside. Underground caves were built and cemented in to hide their command posts.

Because their planes were light, the runways were not strong enough to stand up under the pounding wheels of heavy Marine attack planes, fighters and transports that now pour in and out of the field. Extensive reinforcements by an Army engineers unit brought them up to U. S. standards.

Twice the field had been lost when the North Koreans and later the Chinese Communists poured southward, but it was retaken and built into the base for heavy Marine attacks.

Although it is the biggest Marine air station in Korea today, it still is primitive to stateside eyes. Marston matting runways, macadam taxiways take the planes, but the men and the jeeps fight dust everywhere else. Everyone lives in Quonset huts. Grass and trees are practically non-existent and the men wear

sidearms or carry rifles and helmets as they walk to work on the planes. Guerilla warfare is not unknown behind the lines and some of the maintenance stands are a long way from the tower.

Over behind the hills, long rows of napalm tanks, 1,000-pound bombs, and smaller missiles are laid out on the ground for the next day's strikes. Korean laborers who work for up to \$1 a day assemble them. Marine ordnancemen put them on the F4U's, AD's and AU's at night.

MAG-12, incidentally, was the first to put the new AU-1 *Corsairs* in combat use. The heavily-armored attack plane has a single-stage engine since it does no high-altitude combat and does not need the supercharger. Marines were glad to get them to replace their war-weary F4U's.

From their Quonset-hut cluster on the Korean plain—if mountainous Korea can be said to have a plain—Marine Attack Squadrons 121, 212, and 323, the famous *Wolfraiders*, *Devilcats* and *Deathbrattler* outfits fly seven days a week, often from 0500 to dark. Offshore, VMA-312, the *Checkerboard* squadron under LCol. Robert E. Smith, Jr., adds its sting with close air support missions and interdiction hops. LCol. Philip L. Crawford heads the AD squadron, 121, LCol.



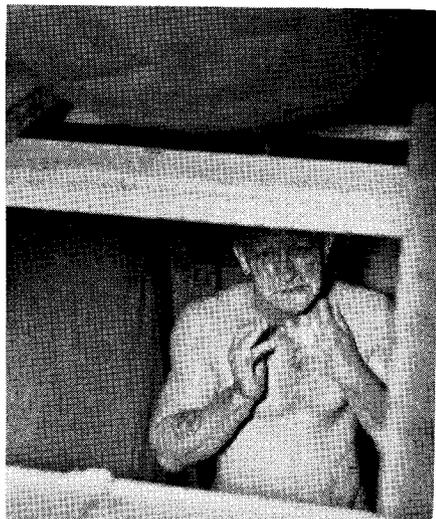
**KOREA** orphans taste first ice cream as MAG-12 Chaplain Lineberger supervises party

Graham H. Benson 212 with its F4U's and AU's and LCol. Henry S. Miller 323.

Other squadrons also help keep the big base operating around the clock. They are NAMS-12, the maintenance men, under Maj. J. G. G. Taylor, and MABS-12, the base housekeepers, under Maj. Sumner H. Whitten.

The group comes under the tactical command of the Fifth Air Force and their planes go out on missions for Army and Korean troops as well as Marine troops. Instead of working most of their missions from orbits directly over the heads of their infantrymen, the Marines now often fly hops about which they are briefed the night before. In other words, under the present set-up, the close air support is not quite so close as it used to be.

The Fifth Air Force control of Marine air operations does not extend to the CVE *Bataan* offshore. VMA-312, except in cases of all-out strikes, carries out mis-



**OLD BELLY** tank makes shower for crash men of MAG-12; Pfc. Kallenberger tries it out

sions selected by the task force. Targets may be selected by the ship from aerial photography or on advice from other ships.

Front line requests for strikes against bunkers, gun positions or other enemy targets are sent in via forward controller to the Joint Operations Center. This center coordinates the Air Force and Marine air and directs which will make the particular strike. Sometimes there may be planes orbiting overhead or flying nearby which can be immediately diverted to hit the target. Or the request may be sent to their bases and flights scheduled the next day to wipe out the enemy strong points.

On the ground back at MAG-12's base, the lineup of planes on the taxi strips includes all kinds of armament. One *Corsair* may have *Ram* rockets to use on bunkers and tanks, plus a couple of napalm bombs on its belly. Another may have two 1,000-pound bombs slung under it and 250's on the wings. As soon as the calls for help come in from the front, the planes go out to deliver their messages of death. Sometimes as many as 100 sorties a day pack up to 200 tons of bombs.

That kind of flying calls for plenty of work on the part of ordnancemen, mechanics and other technicians. The old Jap plane revetments serve as operations centers for the day-and-night work. Ordnancemen load at night, check crews make minor fixes on the planes and heavy maintenance work goes on during the day.

The Marines are pretty proud of their record last winter of flying 2,062 accident-free landings in all kinds of weather off the *Rendova* and *Badoeng Straits*. One day there was half a mile visibility, snow squalls and ice on the



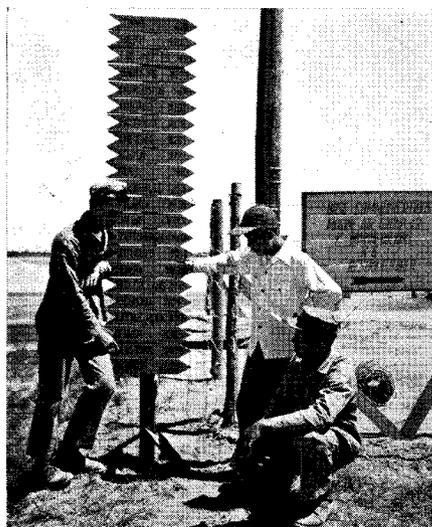
**FLAK HOLE** in wing by 90 mm shell fails to scare Deathrattlers' Capt. John W. Walker

deck, but the squadron brought its planes in safely.

One pilot had to be talked in via radio because he could not see through his windshield icing. Landing signal officers Capts. Lucky Waller and Warren Young cooperated to get him down alive. One gave him signals with the paddles which he could not see, the second relaying the information via radio.

One innovation which the Marines use on carriers is to keep a doctor on the LSO platform during landings and on the bridge during takeoffs—often he is the first man reaching an accident scene.

So that the LSO's can keep their hand in on flying and retain the confidence of other pilots, they go out on missions every other day. That way they also build up missions for themselves toward rotation. Marine pilots have flown as high as 150 missions before being shifted to staff jobs to finish out their combat tour.



**HOMESICK** Marine shows mileage post to a pair of Koreans, telling of his home town



**SOUTH** Korean laborers dig bomb shelters; sandbags on tin roof are air raid defense



**KOREAN** houseboy washee-washees for Marines in his Quonset hut, using dishpan made of old beer cans by his "papasan" (father)



**KOREAN** laborer attaches nose on anti-tank Ram rocket; note row of bomb trailers in rear; laborers' wages set by high command

Capt. John J. Danner went home this summer with 150 missions under his belt. A VMA-323 pilot, he had been hit by enemy anti-aircraft or small arms fire on 32 of those sorties—none of them injuring the apparently impregnable Danner. Besides being the leading pilot in MAG-12 for Korean missions, he also had 100 missions to his credit in World War II. The Cincinnati pilot almost finished his Korea tour before he started, however. On his first mission of the KoWar, he crashed landed at night with a hung bomb and lived to tell about it.

Another of MAG-12's outfits, VMA-323, the *Deathrattlers*, set what is believed to be a record for combat sorties flown when it made 1160 during May. Its mark of 1,522 tons of bombs dropped during that time and 191,000 rounds of 20-mm cannon shells also is believed to be a Navy-Marine record. An average day for the *Deathrattlers* saw it delivering 250 hundred-pound bombs, 75 thousand-pounders and 6,000 rounds of cannon shells.

While we are talking about records, MAG-12 reports it sent up 10 planes at one strike, along with 21 other aircraft.

Out of the total of 59 tons of bombs dropped by the whole group, the Marines' 10 AD's carried 30 tons. The largest load carried by a Marine AD land-based at a Marston-matted rear-area field was three 2,000-pound bombs and 12 250-pounders — a staggering 9,000 pounds. That is more than World War II four-engined B-17 bombers carried. *Skyraiders* have flown off carriers with 7,200-pound bomb loads.

Nobody likes to move, but MAG-12 has been at three different Korean airfields in six months period, each time moving closer to the front line foxholes. In the second move, a 110-mile transfer, VMR-152 airlifted most of the group's gear. The unusual thing about the move was the fact the air group did not lose a single day's sorties during the transfer. The morning strike went out from one field and the afternoon's from the new location—a feat which put Col. Galer's outfit in the "eager" class.

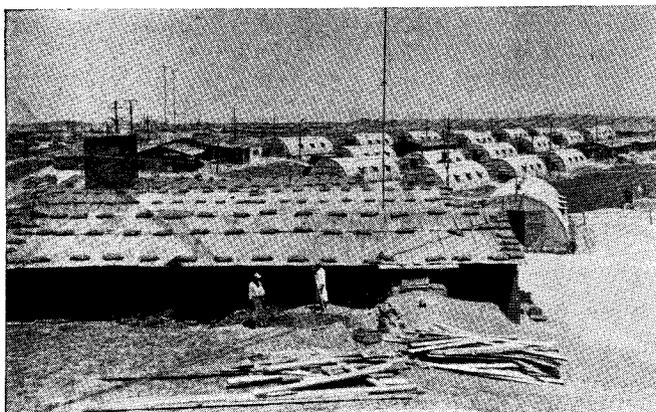
An individual member of the "eager" clan is Capt. Clyde R. Jarrett of VMA-121. Shot up behind the UN lines, he made it to an emergency landing strip safely. That afternoon he was back at

his base and complaining bitterly for being left off the flight schedule. They put him back on the list and he went out again that day.

Col. Galer, incidentally, goes out on combat missions about three times a week. A World War II leading ace with 13 Jap planes and a Congressional Medal of Honor to his credit, the former University of Washington basketball star takes his place in formation with the rest of his group's pilots. On one of these missions in August, Col. Galer was shot down, but a "chopper" rescued him from the Reds before they captured him.

MAG-12, since it operates in the front-line area mainly, has had only one contact with the Communist air force. One day when VMA-212 was doing some rail cutting north of the bomb line at Pyongyang, a *Mig* jet jumped the *Corsairs*, made one pass and scooted home. One F4U pilot kicked his tail around and got the jet in his sights but his guns would not work—result, one disgusted Marine pilot.

So that its pilots will have a better understanding of front line problems of close support, MAG-12 has sent small



**TREELESS** and dusty is this Quonset-but city occupied by MAG-12 in Korea; laborers dig air raid shelter by sand-bagged building



**MECHANICS** with MAG-12 walk to work with their rifles and helmets since guerilla warfare is not unknown behind the lines of combat

groups to the forward area. There they work with forward air controllers, mosquito aircraft pilots and fly in helicopters so they will know what the other fellow's problems are.

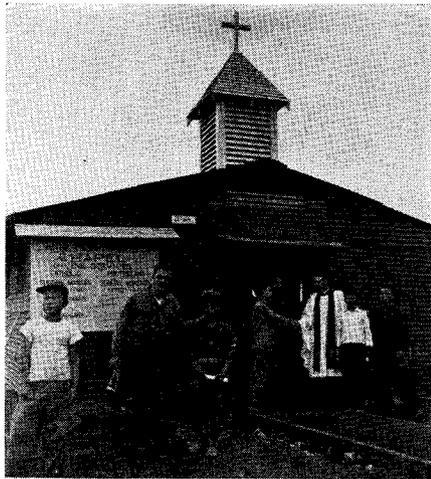
Individual exploits of MAG-12 pilots on combat missions have made many a headline for the NEWS in the past months. Besides close support hops, they get in their share of rail-cuts, bridge blasting and train-torturing. Capt. Malcolm D. Evans led a flight down on an enemy tunnel near Chorwon. Planting their bombs at both ends of the tunnel, they sealed it up, together with a self-propelled gun and crew which had taken refuge inside. Accompanying him on the runs were Capts. John L. Lawler, Robert W. Cole, Richard McMahon, P. M. McGinnis and 1st Lt. J. S. Thompson.

Another recent story involves the rabbits-foot luck of Capt. Eugene F. Smith of the *Deathbrattlers* squadron. He was out with 11 other *Corsairs* to knock enemy supply points at Hwachon. Antiaircraft fire hit his engine. Heading back toward friendly lines, he tried unsuccessfully to jettison a 1,000-pound bomb and a 100-pounder hung up on his racks.

He spotted an abandoned observation plane airstrip just over the lines and headed for a landing. He managed to shake the big bomb when he landed and it bounced away, but the 100-pounder hung tight. A soldier rushed out and helped get Smith away from the burning wreck before it blew up.

Getting hit seems to run in his horoscope. On his second mission in Korea, he lost a wingtip to Red antiaircraft while searching for LGen. Van Fleet's missing son. Another time a 90-mm shell ripped his right wing open. During WWII, he was badly hit four times during Marshalls and Okinawa raids.

The flyingest man aboard MAG-12's *Bataan* squadron has a gripe. "These guys won't let me fly", fumes Capt. R. R. Tabler. "I haven't had a double hop



MARINES of MAG-12 take time out from fighting war to attend Sunday chapel services

(two flights in one day) since I've been out here!"

Despite his "inactivity," the restless Leatherneck leads the *Checkerboard* squadron with 127 battle missions by the middle of June. He is shooting for 200 before his 12-month combat limit sends him home.

His best day's work, he believes, was the time he helped wipe out 720 Communist troops as they dug into a Korean ridge. He never had any trouble from enemy air, but his plane was hit three times by ground fire on the first four hops he made over enemy lines.

Pilots of VMF-323 have a new version of "I've Been Workin' on the Railroad". Each man as he completed 10 rail cuts on enemy lines is awarded a card in the "Railroader's Union" identifying him as a "Journeyman Rail Cutter".

The cards grant the bearer the privilege of working on railroads in Korea north of the 38th parallel as directed by higher authority. They also are entitled to an annual pass to a free ride on any North Korean railroad, if desired. Nearly half of the *Deathbrattlers* belong.

Assisting Col. Galer in the task of operating complex MAG-12 operations are

LCol. J. A. Gray, executive officer; LCol. George C. Axtell, tactical officer; Maj. W. A. Weir, intelligence officer; Maj. Leroy T. Frey, operations officer, Maj. George E. Wasson, logistics officer, and Maj. J. E. Gray, adjutant.

When NAVAL AVIATION NEWS' editor visited MAG-12 at its "Quonset Heaven" in June, the base was in the throes of a water shortage. Despite the heavy dust, water for much-desired shower-baths was severely curtailed. Drinking



EAGER Beaver Tabler of VMA-312, on Bataan, who griped on lack of combat missions

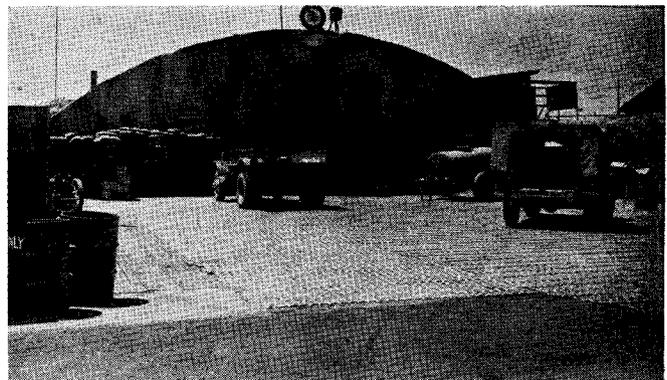
water was scraping the bottom of the barrel and was heavily chlorinated.

Besides working in the ordnance pits assembling bombs and rockets, many Korean laborers are hired as station guards, laborers and youngsters as house boys, the latter drawing down 35¢ a day. Salary standards are fixed by the high level command.

A familiar scene around the base is Korean laborers staggering home in the evening carrying on their backs loads of discarded wooden bomb packing rings. They use them as firewood in their nearby "government housing project". The frugal Koreans dislike seeing anything tossed away and the base's disposal problem thus is made easy.



BENEATH hot Korean summer sun, mechs of VMA-212 repair F4U's and newly-arrived AU's, latter especially designed for low altitude



JAPANESE concrete revetments left in Korea are used by Marines of VMA-323 air raids shelter and protection from heat and cold