roll with JATO operating perfectly. He had difficulty keeping the nose down and the main gear left the ground after 100 feet of travel while the tail skid continued to drag on the sand. Nevertheless, after 320 feet and 12 seconds, the FH-1 left the ground. Blass jettisoned the JATO bottles and flew on to Ciudad Trujillo, D.R., for refueling.

The cause of the forced landings was not nearly so puzzling to the Dominicans as the takeoffs. One native said that "the plane could not remain airborne because they had lost their propellers."

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On August 9, 1949, in the skies over Walterboro, S.C., Lieutenant J. L. "Pappy" Fruin made aviation history. The

An FJ Fury fires an air-to-ground Bullpup missile in 1961.

An F9F Panther is waved off USS Essex in July 1951.

VF-171 pilot became the first man in the U.S. to make an emergency ejection to escape a stricken airplane. He "punched out" while traveling at the fastest speed at which an ejection, experimental or real emergency type, had been made by any known living man. (During the war, German jet pilots had reportedly ejected from aircraft. Also, a British test pilot had ejected from a crippled machine some time before Fruin). Pappy was at 39,000 feet in an overcast en route to Cecil field, Fla. His F2H experienced icing difficulties and the *Banshee* fell off into a graveyard spiral.

His starboard engine had quit between 20,000 and 30,000 feet. As he recalled, his airspeed needle was indicating 40 knots above the plane's Mach needle. It was calculated that he was traveling at 600 mph. He felt severe buffeting and all other instruments were erratic. He jettisoned the canopy, grasped the two rubber handles, and yanked the curtain down over his face. Despite the speed, he did not black out when pitched into the airstream although his oxygen mask, helmet and shoes were blown off, and his Mae West became inflated, making it difficult to reach his parachute release ring. He opened his lap belt and kicked away from the seat with minimum difficulty. He gyrated somewhat during the free fall phase but, by placing his hand on his chest and compressing the life jacket, could see the red parachute handle and he pulled the rip cord. He believed he was at 1,000 feet of altitude at that time. Pappy landed in a sitting position in salt water about 30 feet from swamp land. He began swimming toward shore but was slowed by a broken leg and other fractures. Fortunately, local citizens came to his aid and got him to a hospital. The aircraft plunged into deep water and was never located.

Fruin's ejection eclipsed an experimental ejection by the Air Force from an F-80 in level flight at 555 mph over San Francisco Bay.

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San Diego-based Air Group Five was perhaps typical of similar units which flew both jets and props. By 1950, its *Bearcats* were being relieved by Grumman F9F *Panthers.* The switch to the "blow torch special," as the jets were called in some quarters, inevitably prompted comparisons. VF-111's Lieutenant Commander U. L. Fretwell said about the *Panther* his unit flew after shedding F8Fs, "The greatest difference I noticed was the lack of rapid acceleration when adding full throttle on takeoff and the touchy aileron boost control. The *Bearcat* could get off the ground in mere hundreds of feet and climb, seemingly, straight up. Not *so* the *Panthers."*

Lieutenant Junior Grade Carl A. Dalland noted that after being used to hearing the roar of a "conventional" engine, the quietness of the jet cockpit was astonishing. "Ordinarily, after a flight in a propeller-driven plane, the pilot comes down with his ears ringing. But in

the jets, all the noise shoots out the tailpipe. The pilot hardly hears a sound."

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The second Navy pilot to use his emergency ejection seat to bail out of a stricken plane was Lieutenant Hugh J. Tate of VF-171, the same squadron which claimed the number one man to make such a bailout, Lt. Pappy Fruin. In May 1950, Tate ejected from his F2H near Jacksonville. Onlookers saw explosions as the *Banshee* seemed to come apart in the air while performing snap rolls. The aircraft landed on a highway near a beach. Tate had trouble with G forces before escaping but got a good chute and descended safely. He suffered only a bruise under his right eye when wind force tore the oxygen mask from his face.

Five days later, on May 24, Lieutenant Alden M. Pierpoint of VF-11, became the third flyer to eject when his F9F-2 flamed out at 37,000 feet over the Atlantic. Interestingly, Marine First Lieutenant L. E. Lovett of VMF-223, MCAS Cherry Point, was searching for Pierpoint when he discovered a heretofore missing wreck of an F4U near Sandy Hook, N.C. About 30 miles away, he located Pierpoint who was eventually collected by a Coast Guard helo and transported to Elizabeth City, N.C.

Korea

The Korean war erupted in the summer of 1950. Carrier aircraft went into action on July 3. USS *Valley Forge* with Air Group Five on board and HMS *Triumph,* a British flattop operating in the Yellow Sea, launched strikes on airfields, supply lines and transportation facilities in and around Pyongyang, northwest of Seoul. This signaled the first combat test for Grumman's jet-driven *Panther.* It was also the occasion for the first Navy kills in aerial combat when *Panther* pilots of VF-51, Lieutenant L. H. Plog and Ensign E. W. Brown, shot down two prop-powered Yak-9s on the first strike over Pyongyang.

In comparison to the forces engaged in WW II, Korea was a small war. No more than four large carriers were in action at one time. Yet in the three years of war, Navy and Marine props and jets flew 276,000 combat sorties, dropped 177,000 tons of bombs and expended 272,000 rockets. This was within 7,000 sorties of their WW II totals in all theaters and bettered the bomb tonnage by 74,000 tons and the number of rockets by 60,000. In terms of national air effort, the action sorties flown by Navy and Marine Corps aircraft rose from less than 10 percent in WW II to better than 30 percent in Korea.

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Lieutenant Carl C. Dace of VF-111 became the first American to use his ejection seat in the war when his F9F-2B was struck by antiaircraft artillery (AAA) while strafing at 400 knots, 2,000 feet over the ground. He was rescued at sea.

The first blind jet carrier landing also occurred in the early months of the fighting when Ensign Edward D. Jackson, in his VF-112 *Panther,* was speeding along at 100 feet over the terrain. He struck a cable strung across the Han River just below Seoul. The canopy was smashed and Jackson knocked unconscious for about 20 seconds. He came to in a steep climbing turn, blood from facial lacerations pouring down into his eyes impairing his vision almost 100 percent. He radioed his wingman, Ensign Dayl E. Crow, and requested attitude and direction instructions. He slowed his machine and flew 120 miles back to USS *Philippine Sea.* Crow issued commands like "left wing up," "left rudder," and "nose down" en route to the center.

On the downward leg, Lieutenant Junior Grade L. K. Bruestle, Air Group 11 LSO, dropped his paddles and talked Jackson down by radio. He gave him a "cut" and the plane landed right of center engaging the number five wire. A flight

An F2H-2 catapults from USS Intrepid in February 1955.

Harold G. Martin

The F9F Panther first flew in 1947 and was the first Navy jet fighter in combat in Korea in July 1950.