

ART and the AIRMAN

By JAMES H. FARMER

On the night of July 16th, 1953, Navy Lt. Guy P. Bordelon, of Ruston, Louisiana, firmly established his place in the annals of aviation history by becoming the only "triple threat" ace. He was the Navy's only Korean War ace, that war's only night-fighter ace, and its only pilot of a propeller driven airplane to down five airplanes — all within the short span of seventeen consecutive nights.

Though North Korean airmen had begun making sporadic night raids on the Seoul, Kimpo and Suwan areas of South Korea very early in the war, their intensity and regularity reached a new high during the latter part of April 1953. They were, admittedly, "a small but very antagonizing thorn in the side of the United Nations forces." The Fifth Air Force's air defenses, conceived to combat high-performance aircraft, were wholly unprepared for the collection of slow but highly maneuverable biplane and monoplane types of airplanes the Communists began to fly regularly into the Seoul area.

Symptomatic of the Fifth Air Force's growing frustration, a USAF F-94 stalled out and crashed on the night of May 3rd while attempting the interception of a low flying, 80-knot PO-2 biplane. In the night of May 26/27 from five to eight PO-2's again returned to the Seoul area with a load of bombs, and again, all got away. On June 12th the commander of the 319th FIS was killed when his F-94 overtook and rammed its slow-flying target, and a few nights later, June 16/17, fifteen Russian-built PO-2's, LA-11's and Yak-18's raided Seoul and a tank farm in the Inchon area, touching off a blaze that destroyed millions of gallons of high-octane fuel. All the enemy escaped.

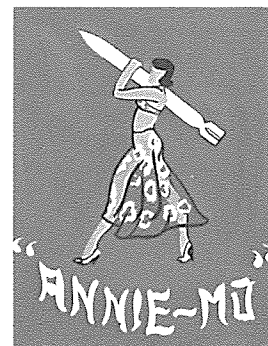
At right, Lt. Bordelon in the cockpit of his NP-21, c. 1953. (Courtesy of Jim Sullivan)

OPPOSITE PAGE

Lt. Ralph Hopson's YOKOSUKA QUEEN at Pyongyang in late June 1953. The name appears in red below "24" on cowl. (Photo Fritz Gemeinhardt, MSgt, USMC (Ret))

Lt. Bordelon's ANNIE-MO at Pyongyang in late July 1953 after crash by Air Force pilot due to torque of R-2800 engine. (Photo — Gemeinhardt, via Jim Sullivan)

Re: Art & the Airman. The purpose of this series is to display the individuality of character of the airmen as reflected through their aircraft art and unique markings. We encourage Members to submit adequately captioned photographs of previously unpublished aircraft art which they feel would be of interest. Write James H. Farmer, Associate Editor, 1015 Mt. Olive Drive, Apt. H, Duarte, CA 91010.

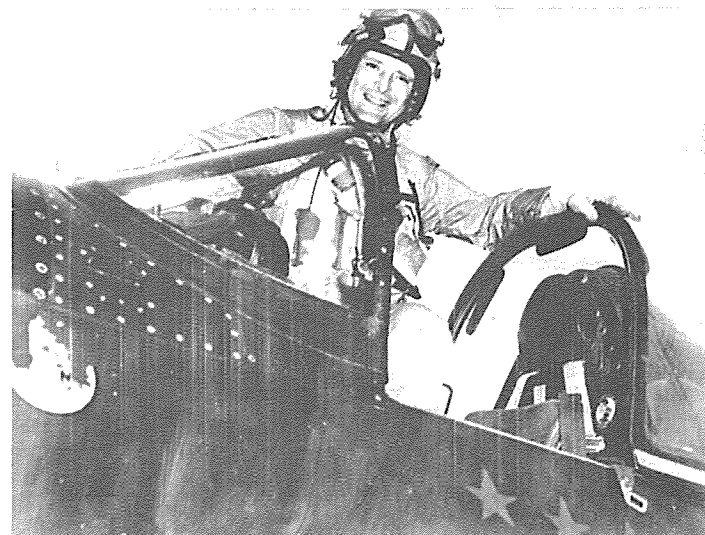


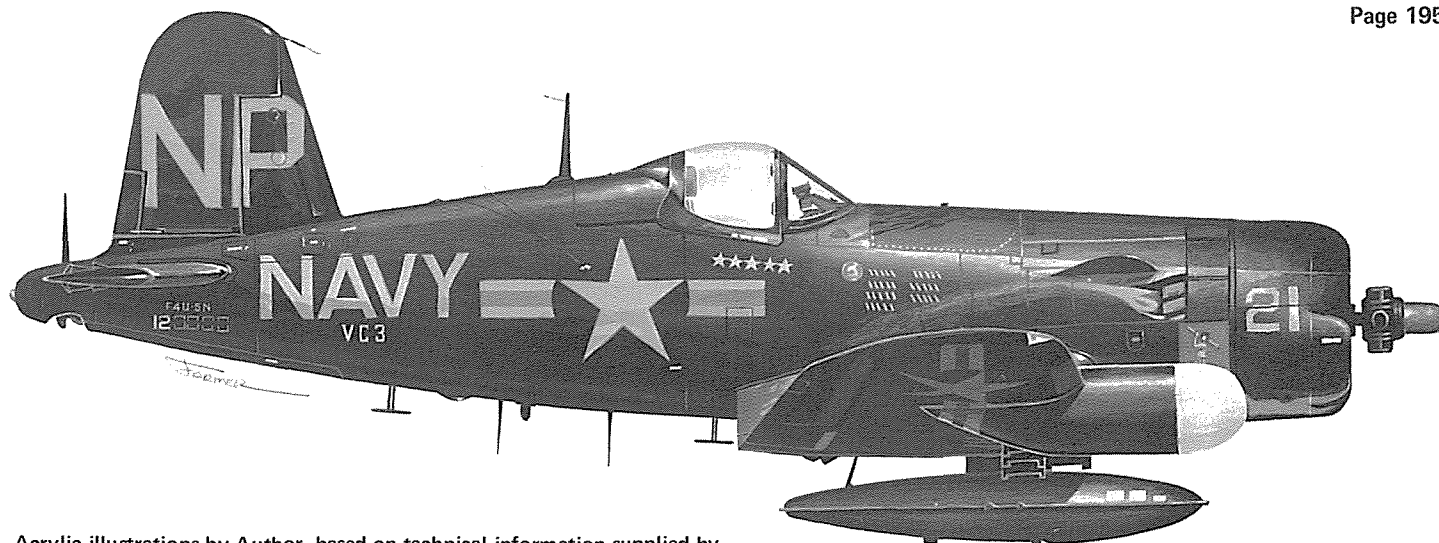
With a temporary lull in these nightly raids, brought about by the new moon in mid-June, the 5th A.F. in mild desperation turned to the Navy and the relatively slow-flying night-fighters, the F4U-5N Corsairs of VC-3, then assigned to the carrier PRINCETON stationed off the Korean coast. Detachment "D", four of VC-3's Corsairs, led by Lt. Bordelon were flown into K-14 airfield south of Seoul in late June, then shifted their base of operations to Pyongyang and K-16 airfield, about 50 miles south of Seoul.

When the Communists renewed their nightly raids at the end of June, the 5th A.F. and the men of VC-3 were ready. In the early morning hours of June 30th Lt. Bordelon and his Corsair, dubbed the ANNIE-MO, intercepted and downed two North Korean Yak-18's. Shortly before midnight on the 1st of July he made his third and fourth interceptions, shooting both light aircraft types down, which he identified as either Russian-built LA-9's or LA-11's. Then, on the night of July 16th, with little more than a week of fighting left before signing of the armistice at Panmunjom, he downed his final enemy aircraft, an LA-11.

Lt. Bordelon flew all but one of his land-based missions out of Pyongyang while flying NP-21, the ANNIE-MO. Though VC-3's NP-24 THE YOKOSUKA QUEEN has erroneously been identified as his from time to time, it was in fact assigned to another Det. "D" pilot, Lt. Ralph "Hoppy" Hopson, USNR. Bordelon did borrow NP-24 for one mission, but it was totally uneventful, and eventually the ANNIE-MO had a near tragic end. Lt. Bordelon described the accident:

"Shortly after my fifth confirmed e.a., Ralph (Hopson) and





Acrylic illustrations by Author, based on technical information supplied by Jim Sullivan and Cdr. Bordelon.

I were sent back to our ship, the PRINCETON, for some rest and relaxation after being relieved by two other Det. "D" pilots. We were ordered to leave our aircraft, NP-21 and NP-24, for the operational use of our relieving pilots as these aircraft had been specially configured with ADF and other gear for land-based operations. About one month after our departure, the Fifth Air Force in Korea sent an Air Force Captain to Pyongtaek to check out in the Corsair with the view towards possible assumption of the night-intruder, interdiction mission by the Air Force fighter squadrons after we Navy units were rotated back to the States. The tremendous torque of the Corsair- 5N's engine was beyond the capability of the Air Force pilot to control on his initial try at takeoff, and he completely lost directional control. My favorite, NP-21, the ANNIE-MO, which he was piloting, left the runway at high speed and over-turned in the soft mud and grass. That was the much to be regretted, almost tragic end of the last flight of NP-21, as the Air Force pilot broke his back, and nearly lost his life."

MARKINGS

Bordelon's Corsair was finished in the then-standard Navy semi-gloss midnight blue, and the anti-glare panel was non-gloss "stove" black. The national markings and unit codes were initially oversprayed with a dark blue haze, but, reported Bordelon, "... after one time on the line in the Sea of Japan, we went to the more efficient and better looking medium blue." This was a solid color, completely replacing the white to give a

finished look and military appearance. Mission scores were placed forward of the squadron insignie on the right side, and the propeller spinner was painted medium blue as well. The five red "kill" markings or stars were reproduced on both sides of the fuselage. In the profile drawing shown here the 6-digit serial number, or BuNo, is incomplete; unfortunately the precise identity has yet to be determined.

ANNIE-MO, Lt. Bordelon's personal marking, in honor of his wife, was painted on the cowl in the right side only and the figure of the girl was without facial features. A picture of this was shown in the Navy's flight safety magazine, *APPROACH*, in May 1971. The girl's costume, outlined in black as were the fold-lines, displayed red and yellow flowers; shoes were black and white, the rocket was silver, and the the name "Annie-Mo" was white on the medium blue field.

The squadron insignie was also on both sides of the fuselage. In this the bulldog was a pinkish tan, the lance and shield were silver, and the bat and collar were black. Collar spikes and lightning were yellow, the clouds were white, and the cloud shading was blue-green. The balance of the circle was Navy blue.

The powder-blue mission markings were, usually on ship-board, a bomb with crescent and star as pictured here, but at the time of Bordelon's 35 land-based missions, each mission was depicted by the bomb only. Lt., later Cdr., Bordelon flew 35 of his total 93 Korean war missions from land. Unfortunately no photographs are available of complete views of ANNIE-MO, only the crashed remains shown here with non-standard red and medium blue national marking.

