

= John F. Bolt =

John Franklin Bolt (19 May 1921 ? 8 September 2004) was a United States Marine Corps aviator and a decorated flying ace who served during World War II and the Korean War . He remains the only U.S. Marine to achieve ace status in two wars and was also the only Marine jet fighter ace . He rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel during his military career .

Born to a poor family in Laurens , South Carolina , Bolt was a self @-@ described " workaholic " and was involved in numerous groups and social activities throughout his life . After dropping out of the University of Florida for financial reasons in 1941 , he joined the US Navy and trained as a Marine Corps pilot . Sent to the Pacific Theater of Operations , he flew an F4U Corsair during the campaigns in the Marshall Islands and New Guinea , claiming six victories against Japanese A6M Zeros .

Bolt continued his service through the Korean War , entering combat through an exchange program with the United States Air Force (USAF) in late 1952 . Over a period of several weeks in mid @-@ 1953 , he led flights of F @-@ 86 Sabres into combat with MiG @-@ 15s of the Chinese Air Force , scoring six victories during fights along the northern border of North Korea , commonly known as " MiG Alley , " giving him a total of 12 victories over his career .

Bolt stayed in the Marine Corps until 1962 , serving as an analyst and instructor in his later career , before retiring and earning a Juris Doctor degree from the University of Florida . He subsequently settled down in Florida and began a private real estate law practice ; he continued to be active in law until 1991 . He died from leukemia in 2004 .

= = Early years = =

John Bolt was born on 19 May 1921 in Laurens , South Carolina , to Thomas Crews Bolt and Brucie Bolt (née Bagwell) . John had a younger brother , Bruce . In 1924 the family moved to Sanford , Florida . In his youth , John Bolt gained the nickname " Jack " from his friends and family . His family was poor and he was for the most part responsible for providing his own clothes and social expenses from the time he was ten years old . He worked several part @-@ time jobs , at one point working 30 to 40 hours a week at a local creamery in addition to attending school . He also enrolled in the Boy Scouts , eventually attaining the rank of Star Scout .

In June 1939 , Bolt began attending Seminole High School . Described as modest and hardworking by his high school classmates , he was elected class president in his final two years in school .

Bolt attended the University of Florida , majoring in accounting and meeting most of the costs himself using money that he had saved while working through high school . He joined Phi Eta Sigma , an honor society and professional fraternity , and Alpha Tau Omega , a social fraternity . In 1941 , his brother Bruce also enrolled at Florida , straining the family 's expenses ; John dropped out after his second year so that his brother could complete his degree . Bolt enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve in April 1941 to train as a pilot , but deferred his training when the Marine Corps offered him the chance to finish college and attend law school , paying him US \$ 500 a year to do so .

= = World War II = =

Bolt left for basic training in June 1941 . Though he intended to join the US Marine Corps , he signed up for the US Navy Flight Training Program , which would allow him to fly for the Marines . On completion of his basic training in November 1941 , he was selected as a pilot , and moved to Naval Air Station Atlanta , Georgia in February 1942 . He was placed on active duty just before the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States ' entry into World War II . Completing his initial pilot training and transferring to Naval Air Station Jacksonville , Florida for the next phase , he started flight training in the AT @-@ 6 Texan . He also qualified to fly in the N3N Canary trainer aircraft . His final phase of flight lessons occurred in Naval Air Station Miami in Miami , Florida , where he flew the Grumman F3F , a biplane which was the Navy 's most advanced trainer at the time . Bolt completed this training on 18 July 1942 , and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S.

Marine Corps , receiving his aviator wings that day as well .

Around this time , Bolt began dating Dorothy E. Wiggins , whom he knew from Sanford . The two married after two years of dating , and they eventually had two children together , Robert and Barbara . Years later , during the Korean War , Bolt had the words " Darling Dottie " stencilled on the side of his North American F @-@ 86 Sabre jet as a tribute to this wife .

After commissioning , Bolt was assigned as a cadet training instructor , training aviation cadets at Naval Air Station Jacksonville and at Naval Auxiliary Air Station Green Cove Springs , Florida , until December 1942 , when the unit was deactivated . Until May 1943 he was trained on the F4F Wildcat , a carrier @-@ based aircraft , in preparation for movement to a front @-@ line combat unit . Over the next few months , Bolt was stationed at Naval Air Station Glenview in Glencoe , Illinois , where he trained for 60 hours aboard the paddlewheel aircraft carrier USS Wolverine . After qualifying to operate carrier @-@ based aircraft , he was assigned to Marine Corps Air Station Miramar in San Diego , California , until June 1943 , when he and his class departed for the Pacific Theater aboard the USS Rochambeau .

= = = Formation of VMF @-@ 214 = = =

On his way to the front lines , Bolt traveled to a number of islands as the Rochambeau stopped at New Caledonia and New Hebrides to avoid Japanese submarines . Upon arrival at Espiritu Santo , Bolt was placed in a pool of new officers who were intended to replace casualties in several squadrons . Casualties at this time proved to be less than expected , so the replacement pool was used to form a new squadron . The new unit was designated VMF @-@ 214 , and became known as the " Black Sheep " because its pilots had originally not been assigned to a squadron . Under the command of Major Pappy Boyington , the unit was equipped with F4U Corsairs . Moved after several months to the Russell Islands , they were ready for combat by 13 September . Bolt flew the aircraft every chance he got , and although new to the war in the Pacific , Bolt had over 700 hours flying in the F4U Corsair by September , more than many combat pilots accrued in two combat tours .

On 14 September , the squadron began flying missions to escort B @-@ 24 Liberator bombers . The Japanese had 200 aircraft at Kahili Airfield and Balalae Island , opposed by only 50 aircraft from the U.S. squadrons in the area . The first couple of missions that the squadron undertook were relatively quiet but , on 16 September , VMF @-@ 214 was attacked by a group of 35 Japanese A6M Zeros . The squadron repelled the strike , destroying 11 Japanese aircraft for the loss of only one of their own . Several costly engagements with the strong Japanese forces in the area followed . Bolt did not score any victories during this time , but was promoted to first lieutenant that month .

= = = Marshall Islands = = =

Bolt got his first victories of the deployment on 23 September when he was with a flight of 15 VMF @-@ 214 aircraft escorting B @-@ 24 Liberators back from a raid on Kahili . The bombers had been followed by 20 to 30 Zeros , and a dogfight quickly ensued . During the course of the engagement over Bougainville , Bolt scored two victories . His wingman , Ed Harper , also claimed a victory . For the next several weeks , the squadron operated out of Munda in the Solomon Islands .

A self @-@ described " workaholic " Bolt was considered by the other pilots to be the most energetic member of the squadron . He took to collecting and sending home keepsakes from daily life on the front lines ; he and two other pilots were known as the " Quartermaster Kids " because they collected so many souvenirs and shipped them home . He could often be found in the harbor near their airstrip dynamiting fish and was known to organize many of the squadron 's pig roasts and beer parties . Bolt also took it upon himself to test out many different ammunition configurations for the .50 caliber guns on the F4U during his free time . His research was conducted by firing rounds into 50 @-@ gallon drums partially filled with gasoline and at abandoned aircraft in the Espiritu Santo boneyard . He found that incendiary rounds were more effective , and convinced his squadron , and eventually most of the aircraft squadrons in the Pacific Theater , to begin firing six incendiary

rounds for every one armor @-@ piercing or tracer round , rather than firing one for one .

Bolt became well known ? but also drew the ire of his squadron 's commanding officer ? during what began as an escort mission for B @-@ 24 Liberators . The bombers were lost in the clouds and the flight ran into poor weather , forcing them to turn back . During the flight home , the U.S. pilots noticed much Japanese surface traffic but did not engage because of the weather . On their way back to Munda one of the aircraft had a mechanical problem , and a group including Bolt had to land at Barakoma Airfield on Vella Lavella . He tried to convince others to go with him to attack the ships they had seen , but they refused . He refueled and took off , against Boyington 's orders , and destroyed four enemy barges and strafed several ground concentrations in the vicinity of Tonolei Harbor before returning to Munda . Disobeying a direct order drew Boyington 's wrath until the next day , when a telegram was received from Admiral William " Bull " Halsey : " That one man war ... conducted by Lieut Bolt against Jap stuff in Tonolei , warm heart (stop) Halsey . "

On 17 October , during a mission over Kahili Airfield , Bolt 's squadron was ambushed by Japanese fighters . Bolt downed one of the Japanese aircraft in his last mission before a scheduled rest and recuperation (R & R) in Sydney , Australia .

= = = Vella Lavella = = =

When the squadron returned from its R & R , Bolt had been promoted to captain and the squadron had been relocated to Vella Lavella . The new base was within 150 miles (240 km) of Rabaul , which was the center of Japanese activity on New Britain , and was the squadron 's next primary target . Defended by 98 @,@ 000 Japanese troops , the island was of great strategic importance as it had a harbor and several airfields and was within striking distance of the Marshall Islands , defended by 400 Japanese aircraft .

On 23 December , 16 Corsairs from VMF @-@ 214 formed part of a force of 120 U.S. fighters and bombers that undertook a mission over Rabaul . The strike against the city and harbor areas was countered by a large force of Japanese aircraft . While defending the bombers , Bolt shot down two more Japanese aircraft , making him the squadron 's sixth flying ace . Two days later , he took part in another mission during which his squadron mates claimed four victories , bringing VMF @-@ 214 's tally of confirmed aerial victories to 76 .

On 3 January 1944 , VMF @-@ 214 was among 75 U.S. aircraft raiding near Rabaul when they were surprised by 300 Japanese aircraft . Boyington was shot down and parachuted into the St. George 's Channel . The next day , Bolt led a flight of four Corsairs from VMF @-@ 214 in search of Boyington . Despite hazy weather and the need to take an indirect route to avoid Japanese radar , Bolt managed to lead the flight to the area where the battle had taken place the day before . Although they did not spot Boyington , they discovered and engaged a flotilla of Japanese barges , destroying six of them . Bolt also claimed his sixth victory against a Japanese aircraft attempting to defend the barges .

Bolt 's tour , along with the rest of VMF @-@ 214 , came to an end on 8 January 1944 , five days after Boyington was shot down and captured by the Japanese . VMF @-@ 214 was disbanded and its pilots assigned to other units . In his time with VMF @-@ 214 , Bolt developed a reputation among his peers as a leader and an accomplished pilot . He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross twice , and scored a total of six confirmed victories and one probable victory and two aircraft damaged in his 92 missions with the squadron .

= = = Subsequent assignments = = =

Bolt was reassigned to VMF @-@ 211 , at an airfield on Nissan Island in the Green Islands , 75 miles (121 km) north of Bougainville and 100 miles (160 km) west of Rabaul . The aircraft there were primarily concerned with the destruction of convoys and ships . The missions , nicknamed " Truck Busters " , were very successful , but at the cost of damaged aircraft and wounded crewmen , including Bolt 's wingman . This tour lasted until May 1944 when Bolt returned to Marine Corps Air Station Santa Barbara with his squadron .

Reassigned , Bolt flew to Hawaii , then to Long Beach , California . He reunited with Dorothy Wiggins in San Francisco , and the two married on 23 May 1944 in Oakland , before going on a one @-@ month honeymoon . His next assignment was with the newly formed VMF @-@ 471 at Marine Corps Air Station El Toro . While posted to VMF @-@ 471 , he attended the Aviation Ground Officer 's School at Marine Corps Air Station Quantico , Virginia , from November 1944 through February 1945 . He saw no combat for the rest of the war , but did manage to break the Corsair endurance record by keeping an aircraft aloft for 14 hours and 9 seconds . After briefly returning to VMF @-@ 471 , Bolt was reassigned to VMF @-@ 215 in March 1945 , tasked with training pilots for new carrier @-@ based aircraft . He remained in this role until V @-@ J Day , the end of hostilities .

Following the war , Bolt served in various units around El Toro . He was at various times assigned to MASG @-@ 46 , VMF @-@ 512 , VMF @-@ 323 , VMF @-@ 312 , VMF @-@ 452 , and Marine Aircraft Group 12 (MAG @-@ 12) , before transferring to Quantico again in November 1949 to attend the Aircraft Maintenance Course . Diving in Florida 's Tampa Bay on leave , Bolt (then a captain) set a world spearfishing record when he caught an Atlantic goliath grouper weighing hundreds of pounds .

= = Korean War = =

In May 1950 , Bolt was reassigned to VMF @-@ 224 at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point , North Carolina , and he remained there until May 1951 . The squadron flew the F2H Banshee and within three months of joining the unit he had flown more hours on the aircraft than any other pilot in the squadron . This was followed by a quick four @-@ month tour on the staff at the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing . During this time , the US Air Force was operating its first squadron of F @-@ 86 Sabre aircraft . The Sabres were the only U.S. aircraft which performed well against the MiG @-@ 15s operated by China and North Korea in the Korean War . Bolt used his connections to enter an exchange program with the USAF in September 1951 , becoming an exchange officer with the 318th Fighter @-@ Interceptor Squadron at McChord Air Force Base in Washington flying the F @-@ 94 Starfire . Soon after , he began piloting the F @-@ 86F Sabre which had been transferred to the squadron . He continued training with the squadron and was promoted to major in December 1951 .

= = = Fighter @-@ bomber missions = = =

In November 1952 , Bolt transferred to squadron VMF @-@ 115 , an element of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing flying F9F Panther fighter @-@ bomber aircraft in South Korea . He flew 94 combat missions with the squadron , all of them in bombing runs and close air support and air strike missions against ground targets . He did not enjoy this duty , preferring instead to fly the Sabre in air @-@ to @-@ air combat . As his squadron headed to Japan for R & R , he traveled to Seoul to visit the 4th Fighter @-@ Interceptor Wing at Kimpo Airfield .

At the 4th Wing , Bolt met with its commander , Colonel Royal N. Baker , who refused his request to fly in combat units . He then went to the 51st Fighter @-@ Interceptor Wing at Suwon Air Base to observe its operations , where he met with George I. Ruddell , an acquaintance from El Toro , who was commanding the 39th Fighter @-@ Interceptor Squadron . Ruddell agreed to let Bolt join his unit as part of another officer exchange . This apparently angered some of his commanders in VMF @-@ 115 , and Bolt only completed a requisite six weeks of duty with the wing prior to its next R & R.

= = = Exchange and combat = = =

Six weeks later , Bolt again turned down his R & R and joined the 39th Fighter @-@ Interceptor Squadron , flying the F @-@ 86 Sabre . Ruddell assigned him to First Lieutenant Joseph C. McConnell , who would be the top ace in the war . Bolt and McConnell quickly established a close friendship in spite of Bolt 's superior rank , and he attributed his success in Korea to McConnell 's

guidance . Ruddell sent a request to Lieutenant General Glenn O. Barcus , commander of the Fifth United States Air Force , that Bolt 's tour with the squadron be extended . The request was granted , and McConnell and Bolt began going on combat missions together as wingmen in MiG Alley , the area in northwestern Korea where air @-@ to @-@ air combat was most frequent . Bolt 's Sabre , tail number 52 @-@ 2582 , was named Darling Dottie .

By May , McConnell was rotated back to the United States and Bolt was given charge of the flight ; in 16 combat missions and 27 combat hours , his flight had never engaged any MiG fighters . This changed on 16 May , when the flight was attacked by a group of MiG fighters at 45 @,@ 000 feet (14 @,@ 000 m) . He was quickly tailed by one of the aircraft , but managed to avoid its fire and tail another MiG himself . With several well placed shots , Bolt forced its pilot to bail out . Six days later on 22 May , MiG aircraft attacked again , and he managed to outmaneuver a fighter which had been attacking his wingman and shoot it down at 7 @,@ 000 feet (2 @,@ 100 m) . On 24 June , he flew his 31st combat mission , during which he engaged a single MiG and shot it down after a quick battle in the vicinity of the Yalu River . A week later on 30 June , he was flying another mission in the same area when he spotted and quickly shot down another MiG . By the end of the month , he had credit for four victories and two aircraft " damaged " .

On 11 July , Bolt led another flight of four fighters in a reconnaissance mission above Sinuiju , his 37th combat mission of the deployment . Two of the aircraft departed after their fuel tanks were depleted , leaving him with one wingman to continue the patrol . Soon after , the two pilots spotted a formation of four MiGs taking off from Antung airfield on the Chinese side of the Yalu River . Despite being low on fuel , Bolt ordered an attack . He made a head @-@ on dive toward the formation , which was attempting to gain altitude , and downed the leading airplane with four machine gun bursts . He then banked his aircraft and aimed for the second aircraft in the formation , continuing the attack and scoring hits on its fuselage . The pilot bailed out , and the remaining two MiGs fled . Within five minutes of the engagement , Bolt had shot down two of the MiGs after firing only 1 @,@ 200 rounds of ammunition , an exceptional feat . This brought his tally of confirmed victories during the war to six . For these actions he became the final Marine aviator to be awarded the Navy Cross during the war . Bolt is the only non @-@ USAF pilot to become an ace in the F @-@ 86 and the only naval aviator to become an ace in two wars . Shortly after this final mission , his tour of duty ended and he was rotated back to the United States for an extended rest and vacation , which he spent with his family .

= = Later Marine Corps career = =

Following his return from Korea , Bolt was assigned to the U.S. Navy Bureau of Aeronautics in Washington , D.C. as an aircraft design engineer . In this duty , he was detailed to The Pentagon and a board which reported on aircraft performance and tactics . A press conference was held in September 1953 to welcome him to the position , and during this he recounted stories from his service in Korea for the first time to local newspapers . Bolt 's experiences in World War II and the Korean War were used to help shape air combat doctrine . He worked in this assignment for around a year , until 1954 when he was promoted to lieutenant colonel and moved to the Naval Pilot Test Center at Naval Air Station Patuxent River , in St. Mary 's County , Maryland . During this time , he took evening classes at the University of Maryland , eventually earning a Bachelor of Science in Military History .

In 1957 , Bolt was ordered to Marine Corps Base Quantico to attend a one @-@ year course at the Senior School of Amphibious Warfare as part of a program which would later be incorporated into the accredited curriculum of the Marine Corps University . On 5 November , after this one @-@ year stint , he was assigned to command VMF @-@ 214 , his World War II squadron , at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay on the Hawaiian Islands . The squadron , which was part of Marine Aircraft Group 13 , flew the FJ @-@ 4 Fury ; Bolt remained in command of it until 14 August 1959 . His final assignment as an instructor was at the Senior School of Amphibious Warfare at Quantico . He taught at this school for the final three years of his career , before retiring from the Marine Corps on 31 March 1962 .

= = Later life = =

After retiring from the Marine Corps , Bolt , then 40 years old , began a new career in agriculture . He and his wife moved back to Sanford , Florida , where he worked for Chase & Co . He remained in that position for five years , until 1967 . That year , he decided to follow his original career aspirations to be a lawyer . He enrolled in the College of Law at the University of Florida , where his son Robert was also in attendance . The two formed an American handball team during their spare time , and won several tournaments . Bolt 's program had a three @-@ year curriculum , but he completed the degree in 27 months , graduating with a Juris Doctor degree in December 1969 . For two years after graduation , he stayed with the university to teach , and from 1969 to 1971 he was a law professor as well as the president of the Board of Trustees of Alpha Tau Omega , the fraternity he had joined while an undergraduate at the university .

After this stint as an instructor , Bolt and his wife moved to New Smyrna Beach , a place both of them had enjoyed in their childhoods . He began a private law practice and became a local property owner . During this time he was described as a " softspoken , kind , gentle person who would go out of his way to help a friend or a stranger . " He specialized in real estate law and was the attorney for the city 's utilities commission for 13 years . He retired from law in 1991 .

Bolt subsequently lived a quiet life and kept frequent contact with his children . Robert became a lawyer in Tampa , Florida , and Barbara wrote for Reader 's Digest . In May 1993 , Bolt attended the 50th reunion of the original " Black Sheep " or the 8th Fighter Squadron in New Orleans , Louisiana , and gave the toast at the beginning of the festivities . In 2003 , he was inducted into the American Combat Airman Hall of Fame at the American Airpower Heritage Museum in Midland , Texas .

Bolt died of acute leukemia in Tampa on 8 September 2004 after fleeing the approaching Hurricane Frances . At the time of his death , he was the last surviving of the seven Americans to become aces in both World War II and Korea . He was survived by his wife and children , as well as two grandchildren .

= = Aerial victory credits = =

Bolt scored a total of 12 confirmed aerial victories during his career , with an additional " probable " victory and two aircraft damaged . He was the only U.S. Marine Corps pilot to become an ace in the Korean War , and remains the only U.S. Marine Corps pilot to be an ace in two wars . Bolt was one of 1 @,@ 297 World War II aces from the United States with six confirmed victories during that war . He later became one of 40 Korean War aces from the United States with six more confirmed victories during that war .

Bolt is one of seven U.S. pilots who achieved ace status as both a piston @-@ engined pilot in World War II and as a jet pilot in Korea . The others are all USAF pilots : Francis S. Gabreski , James P. Hagerstrom , William T. Whisner , Vermont Garrison and Harrison Thyng , as well as George A. Davis , Jr .

= = Military awards = =

Bolt was decorated during World War II and the Korean War . His military decorations and awards include :

= = = Navy Cross citation = = =

The Navy Cross is presented to John F. Bolt . (0 @-@ 13522) Lt Colonel , U.S. Marine Corps for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the united Nations while attached to the First Marine Aircraft Wing and serving as a pilot of a plane in the THIRTY NINTH Fighter @-@ Interceptor Squadron , Fifth Air Force , in action against enemy aggressor forces in the Republic of Korea on 11 July 1953 . Sighting four hostile jet interceptors

immediately after the second section of his four @-@ plane flight was forced to retire from the area because of a low fuel supply during a reconnaissance mission deep in enemy territory . Major Bolt quickly maneuvered his aircraft and that of his wingman into attack position and deliberately engaged the numerically superior enemy in a head @-@ on firing run , destroying one of the hostile planes with his initial burst of fire . Although his fuel supply was dangerously low , he initiated repeated attacks on the remaining enemy aircraft and severely damaging the engine section of the lead interceptor , routinely pressed his attack against the crippled plane until the enemy pilot was forced to bail out . By his exceptional courage and superb airmanship in destroying the two aircraft , Major Bolt raised his total of enemy jet planes destroyed during the Korean War to six , thereby becoming the first jet ace in Marine Corps aviation . His inspiring leadership and great personal valor reflect the highest credit upon himself and was in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service .

For the President , / S / Robert Bernard Anderson , Secretary of the Navy .