

An aircraft of “firsts,” the sleek Grumman F9F Panther was the first jet powered fighter to see widespread service with the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. It was the first Navy jet to shoot down an enemy aircraft, the first Navy jet to shoot down an enemy jet-powered aircraft and the first jet aircraft used by the Blue Angels aerobatic team.

The Panther was initially designed as a four engine night fighter. However, when the Pratt & Whitney J42 engine became available in 1946, Grumman redesigned the XF9F-1 into a single-engine day fighter, the XF9F-2. The first XF9F-2 flights took place in November 1947 and the Panther entered service in May 1949.



The remarkably strong and reliable F9F proved that jet powered aircraft could handle the rigors of carrier operations. During the Korean War, Panthers supported United Nations operations there and illustrated the type's flexibility and effectiveness. The F9F, although clearly outperformed by the Soviet MiG-15, brought down five of the swept-wing enemy fighters. Armed with bombs and High Velocity Aircraft Rockets (HVARs), F9Fs also conducted thousands of interdiction and close-air-support (CAS) missions.

Grumman produced the Panther in a number of different variants. The F9F-5 had a longer fuselage and the more powerful Pratt & Whitney J48 engine. The F9F-2P unarmed photo-reconnaissance version conducted numerous dangerous missions over Korea. The F9F-6 Cougar utilized the F9F-5's fuselage, but had a swept wing that gave the Cougar a top

speed of nearly Mach 1 and a climb rate of 5,600 feet per minute. Some Cougars remained in service until the 1970s.

The Cavanaugh Flight Museum's Panther, Bureau No. 123078 was accepted by the United States Navy on October 21, 1949 and initially assigned to Fighter Squadron VF-31 at Naval Air Station (NAS) Quonset Pt. RI until 05/01/50. The next assignment was to Fleet Aircraft Service Squadron (FASRON) 2 also at NAS Quonset Point, until 05/12/50. The remainder of its assignments are as follows: VF-61 with Carrier Air Group (CVG) -6 at NAS Oceana VA, 5/50-8/50; VF-22 / CVG-6 at NAS Oceana VA, 08/50-04/51; Marine Fighter Squadron VMF-115 at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Cherry Point, NC 04/51-8/51; Navy Bureau of Aeronautics (BuAer) for overhaul & repair (O&R) at NAS Norfolk VA 9/51-3/52; VF-72 at NAS Quonset Point RI, 03/52-4/52; BuAer at NAS Norfolk VA for O&R 4/52-5/52; On May 23, 1952, 123078 was transferred to Reserve Fighter Squadron VF-721, the "Starbusters". In August 1952, VF-721 was assigned to the aircraft carrier, USS Kearsarge (CV-33) which was deployed to waters off the Korean coast. During the months that followed, 123078 participated in over 30 combat missions attacking targets in North Korea. After receiving damage from anti-aircraft fire, 123078 was transferred to (FASRON) 11 for O&R. After repair, 123078 resumed combat operations with VF-91 aboard USS Philippine Sea (CV-47), 5/4/53-7/28/53 and subsequently VF-151 aboard USS Boxer (CV-21) 07/28/53-02/23/54.

The Cavanaugh Flight Museum acquired 123078 in 1993 and put it through a 25,000 man hour restoration to restore it to its original flying condition. It was awarded the title "Grand Champion Warbird" at both the 1995 E.A.A. Sun-N-Fun Fly-In at Lakeland, FL and the 1995 E.A.A. Fly-In in Oshkosh WI. The Plane is painted in the colors and markings it wore when in service with Fighter Squadron VF-721 "Starbusters" during the Korean War.

ENGINE Pratt & Whitney J42-P-8 5,750 pounds of thrust  
ARMAMENT 2 20mm Cannon and up to 2,800 lbs. of ordnance  
WING SPAN 38 feet  
LENGTH 37 feet 3 inches  
HEIGHT 11 feet 4 inches  
MAX TAKEOFF WEIGHT 19,494 pounds  
CREW 1  
MANUFACTURED BY Grumman Aircraft Corporation  
TOTAL BUILT 76  
TOTAL EXISTING 9  
FIRST BUILT 1947  
MUSEUM'S AIRCRAFT BUILT 1949  
ON DISPLAY AT Cavanaugh Flight Museum, Addison Airport (KADS), Dallas, Texas  
MAXIMUM SPEED 526 mph

1 RANGE  
13301  
4 SERVICE CEILING  
4500 ft  
1 BUROU NUMBER  
2075