



Corky Meyer poses for an air-to-air photo during the airplane's first flight. Notice the prominent zero-degree angle of incidence as well as heavy cloud cover that day. (Northrop Grumman History Center)



Now sporting a snazzy black-panther nose art insignia, an instrumented XF9F-2 awaits flight testing at Grumman's Bethpage plant. Note data booms mounted on both the nose and tailfin of the airplane. (Northrop Grumman History Center)

First Flight and Flight Testing

The first prototype (BuNo 122475) began engine ground running tests in October 1947. On 21 November 1947, Grumman test pilot Corwin "Corky" Meyer made the first flight of the Panther. A flight had been planned for a week earlier, but the aircraft had been damaged after getting stuck in the mud when Meyer tried to cross a

muddy area between the runways.^{xxxv} Meyer tried to dislodge the Panther by applying full power, but it would not budge. A tow truck had to be called to remove the XF9F-2, but in the process, damaged the nose gear. The aircraft spent part of the next week in the plant undergoing repairs and pre-flight checks.

Meyer's initial flight departed from Bethpage's 5,000-foot runway and landed at New York



Test pilot Corky Meyer inspects the XF9F-2 one day prior to its first flight on 21 November 1947. (Northrop Grumman History Center)



The second XF9F-2 prototype, BuNo 122477, is shown here on the runway at Bethpage, with instrumentation affixed to the nose and the black-panther insignia. (Northrop Grumman History Center)



An excellent view of a highly polished XF9F-3 in flight sometime during 1948, with wingtip tanks installed. (Northrop Grumman History Center)



This picture shows the XF9F-3 at Bethpage in an odd configuration with one wing folded and the other in its proper inflight position. Note right aileron fully deflected upward. (Northrop Grumman History Center)