

TIMELINE (#7B)

ON LOAN TO GENERAL DYNAMICS / FORT WORTH DIVISION

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Reference: Timeline (#7), 2 Job Changes (Douglas to Solar & Solar to Convair)

In October, 1966, I accepted Convair's job offer to work on the structural design of the Centaur space vehicle. However, by the time I started working there on 11/7/66, I was assigned to the C-5A cargo airplane structural design group. I was unhappy about this turn of events and didn't look forward to working on the design of another "aluminum airplane."

2. At this point of my career, I had already spent over 8 years working on ballistic missiles at Chrysler Missile Division, an advanced bomber at North American Aviation/Columbus Division, ship-to-air missiles at Convair/Pomona Division, space nuclear reactors at North American Aviation/Atomics International Division and the C-5A proposal as well as DC-8 and DC-9 commercial airplanes at Douglas Aircraft Division.
3. At Convair I was put to work at a drafting table to design, detail, and release minor structural parts for the C-5A horizontal stabilizer. Before long, I realized that this job was non-challenging, repetitive, boring, and could have been accomplished by a draftsman.
4. In February, 1967, a memo was circulated within our department. It indicated that the Fort Worth Division of General Dynamics was seeking numerous structural design engineers for some brief period of time to help solve a severe problem encountered on their F-111 military fighter. For more information, we were to contact our immediate supervisor.
5. Curious about this memo and wondering if it was worth considering, I talked to my supervisor, Bill Swenson (or as he was affectionately known, "Sweet Old Bill" or "S.O.B."). He knew only the scantiest of details about the job requirements, dates, working hours, living and travel accommodations and the like. He suggested that for complete information, I should talk to our Chief Engineer, Max Yale.
6. I sought out Mr. Yale but quickly realized that I had been trapped. To him, it was a foregone conclusion that anyone requesting information was, in fact, volunteering. It would have been virtually impossible for me to explain that I was merely seeking additional information. Before I knew what had happened, he congratulated me for unselfishly volunteering to help the company. He gave me a 2-page handout covering everything I needed to know about my upcoming 6-week loan to the Fort Worth Division.
7. When my loan started, I was 31 years old; Barbara just turned 29; David was 6; Bobby had just turned 4; and Glen was only 1. We had been living in our house at 4192 Avati Dr., San Diego, for less than a year.

STORY

1. On 3/6/67 (Bobby's 4th birthday), I flew to the Dallas/Fort Worth Airport after a layover in Los Angeles. A limousine drove me the remaining 40 miles to the Midtown Holiday Inn (Room 402) in Fort Worth, Texas.
2. The motel was very large, nice and conveniently located about 5 miles from the General Dynamics plant. However, it was sandwiched between a freeway interchange and a railroad track and was fairly noisy.
3. The other 5 members of our structural design team from Convair had arrived about a week earlier. I met up with them after work on the day I arrived. They were Fred Dorris, Rod Savary, Jack Currie, Frank Signorelli, and George X.
4. There were 2 rental cars available for our use. Within a few days we sub-consciously divided into two groups by age. My group was comprised of Fred (1 year younger), Rod (2 years older), and myself. Each of the other 3 men was at least 10 years older. Each group stayed intact not only for car-pooling but for restaurants and other entertainment throughout our loan period.
5. Ultimately, some 35 or 40 men were placed on loan for various periods of time. Many of them stayed at our Holiday Inn, some stayed at other motels and a few rented apartments.
6. The Fort Worth plant is essentially one building about one mile long (not an exaggeration). Because of the emergency F-111 problem, the engineering department was extremely over-crowded. There were drawing boards in all the aisles. It was very difficult to move around.
7. There were many, many people working there and most of them were on overtime. Our Convair group was working 58 hours per week (10 hour days + 8 hours on Saturdays).
8. The reason for this emergency was a serious F-111 problem that had been discovered. The plane's inlet ducts, in certain attitudes and angles, did not feed the engines the right amount of air. There were 8 possible solutions to resolve this problem and the company was working full steam on all of them. Not all of us worked on the same solution.
9. My initial observations were that none of the Convair men really enjoyed being on loan because:
 - They were away from home.
 - Fort Worth can't compare with San Diego.
 - Many people considered the F-111 to be a "pile of junk."
 - Others, who had worked on the program for years, assumed that they knew all there is to know.
 - Texans seemed to be slow moving and thinking and didn't seem to offer anything.
10. After about 3 weeks, it was decided to use one of the other possible solutions so all my work to that point was scrapped. I started a new job that amounted to nothing more than drafting. This job was uninteresting but I managed to last until the end of my loan without going berserk.
11. We had more than our fair share of rented car problems. There were numerous times when our car wouldn't start and we had to push it or get it towed to a service station or the Chevrolet garage. The problem was in the electrical system and was finally resolved after many tries.

12. Initially, I bought my lunch each day from the lunch wagon. But their food was so bad that I started buying my own food and making my lunches at the motel. I bought a small, cheap ice chest and filled it with ice from the motel daily. I bought my own groceries and made my lunches and snacks for the evening.

13. Ultimately, I also got tired of restaurant food. I either skipped these meals or made peanut and jelly sandwiches and had cookies and motel coffee.

14. For entertainment, I:

- Played Bridge and Hearts card games
- Watched TV, went to the movies and read several books
- Drove Go-Carts and went to swap meets
- Played tennis against the large wall of the motel
- Played ping-pong at a bowling alley
- Toured Fort Worth and Texas Christian University (TCU)
- Toured Dallas, the Cotton Bowl, and the Kennedy assassination site

15. One evening we drove to Dallas and had dinner at a swanky restaurant on the 37th floor. Their drink menu seemed to have reasonable prices for their fancy drinks - until we realized that Texas was a dry state and you had to add your own liquor. It looked very strange to see high class people carrying their own bottles (usually in brown paper bags).

16. People were always getting shot and murdered in Texas. There seemed to be a shooting in Fort Worth about once a week. Almost everybody had guns. A fellow employee had a revolver in a holster hanging on his bed. We went to a restaurant where our waitress had been shot by her husband a week earlier.

17. Toward the end of our loan, the management asked several of us to stay on for an extra month. Some men agreed to stay on for an additional week or 2. But most (myself included) wanted to return to San Diego as soon as possible.

18. My last day of work at the Fort Worth Division was Friday, 4/14/67. I was driven to the airport with another man in a company car directly after work. I had a direct flight that left Fort Worth at 8:20pm and arrived at 9:04pm in San Diego.

19. It seemed that I had been on loan for an eternity, but the real time was actually 40 days (a little less than 6 weeks).