

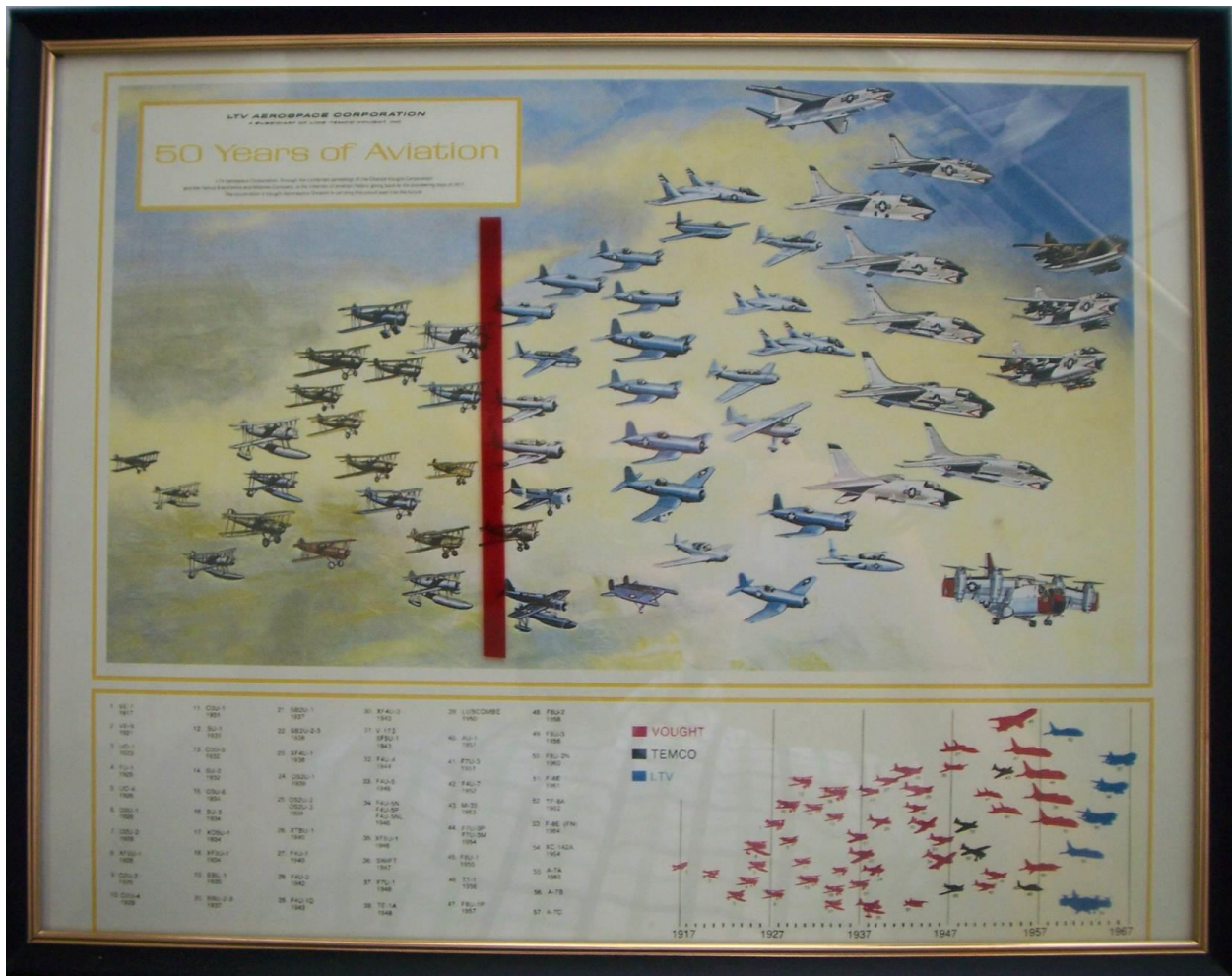
## **Hank Merbler – 41 Years of Service to Chance Vought & LTV**



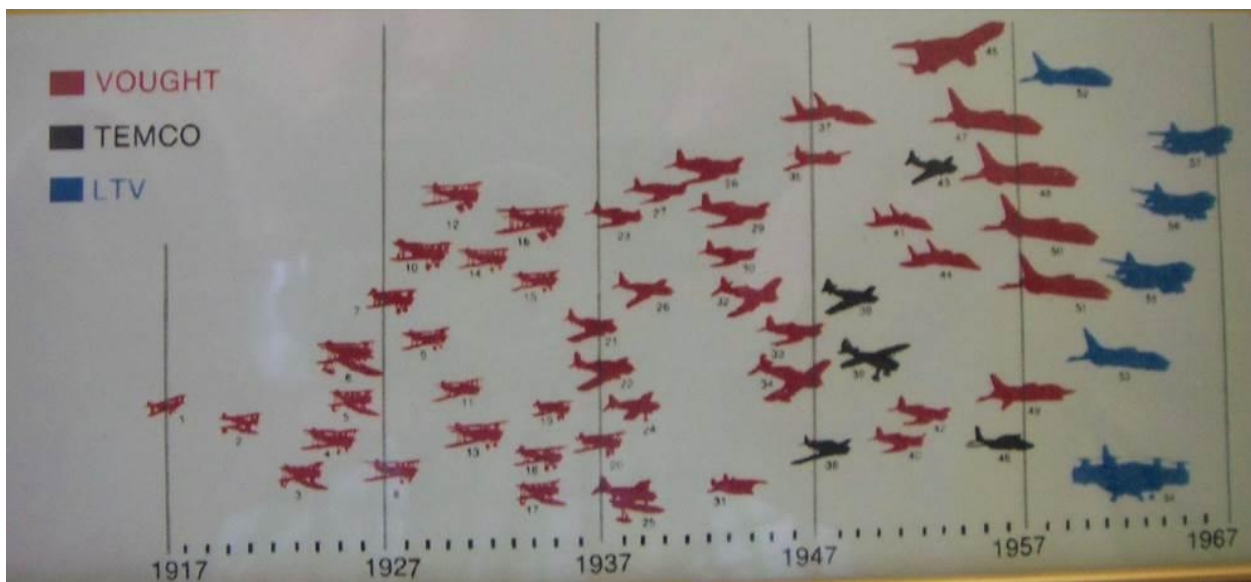
*Hank Merbler working at his desk, 1948.*

Well, we say Hank Merbler has given 41 years of service to the Company when he retired a second time in 1996, but he is still going strong at 93, serving the Company with its retiree volunteers today in 2014!

Hank worked from 1941 to 1982, and after consulting for the Company retired a second time in 1996. Hank worked on 26 airplanes, missiles, and rockets (to the right of the line in the following graphical representation of Vought products. The functional groups that Hank worked in were Engineering, Quality Control, and Manufacturing.



*Vought and LTV Products -- 50 Years of Aviation, 1917-1967  
Hank Merbler worked on all of the products on the right of the thick red line.*



1. VE-7 1917	11. O3U-1 1931	21. SB2U-1 1937	30. XF4U-3 1943	39. LUSCOMBE 1950	48. F8U-2 1958
2. VE-9 1921	12. SU-1 1931	22. SB2U-2-3 1938	31. V-173 XF5U-1 1943	40. AU-1 1951	49. F8U-3 1958
3. UO-1 1923	13. O3U-3 1932	23. XF4U-1 1938	32. F4U-4 1944	41. F7U-3 1951	50. F8U-2N 1960
4. FU-1 1925	14. SU-2 1932	24. OS2U-1 1939	33. F4U-5 1946	42. F4U-7 1952	51. F-8E 1961
5. UO-4 1926	15. O3U-6 1934	25. OS2U-2 OS2U-3 1939	34. F4U-5N F4U-5P F4U-5NL 1946	43. M-33 1953	52. TF-8A 1962
6. O2U-1 1926	16. SU-3 1934	26. XTBU-1 1940	35. XF6U-1 1946	44. F7U-3P F7U-3M 1954	53. F-8E (FN) 1964
7. O2U-2 1928	17. XO5U-1 1934	27. F4U-1 1940	36. SWIFT 1947	45. F8U-1 1955	54. XC 142A 1964
8. XF2U-1 1928	18. XF3U-1 1934	28. F4U-2 1942	37. F7U-1 1948	46. TT-1 1956	55. A-7A 1965
9. O2U-3 1929	19. SBU-1 1935	29. F4U-1D 1943	38. TE-1A 1948	47. F8U-1P 1957	56. A-7B
10. O2U-4 1929	20. SBU-2-3 1937				57. A-7D

Hank first retired in April 1982, but then consulted for the Company after that. He had “Earned his Spurs” --



Henry John “Hank” Merbler was born on Monday, August 2, 1920, in Passaic, New Jersey. Hank attended grade school and high school in Garfield, New Jersey. Foreshadowing a future of life-long leadership, Hank was elected the President of the Senior Class of 1938.







On March 21, 1941, Hank graduated with an Associate's degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the Casey Jones School of Aeronautics after a grueling 24-months of concentrated shop, work at the Newark Airport, and a design course in which each student had to design their own airplane. Three days later, on March 24, 1941, Hank started to work in the Engineering Department at Vought-Sikorsky Aircraft in Stratford, Connecticut. Hank's first job was working in the Wing Design group for Ray Palmer. Hank was an engineer assigned to the F4U Corsair design team. Hank was assigned to design the inboard center section flaps of the F4U Corsair, and then the engine cowl flaps of the F4U.



*Vought Wing Department in Long Island City,  
similar to the Stratford, CT factory where Hank Merbler worked*

Hank then went to the Structures organization for Joe Silverman (1942-1948). While working for Joe, Hank got involved in reports from the field. Hank answered Reports of Unsatisfactory and Defective Materials (RUDMs) for the Structures Department on the F4U aircraft at Patuxent River and at Cherry Point, North Carolina.

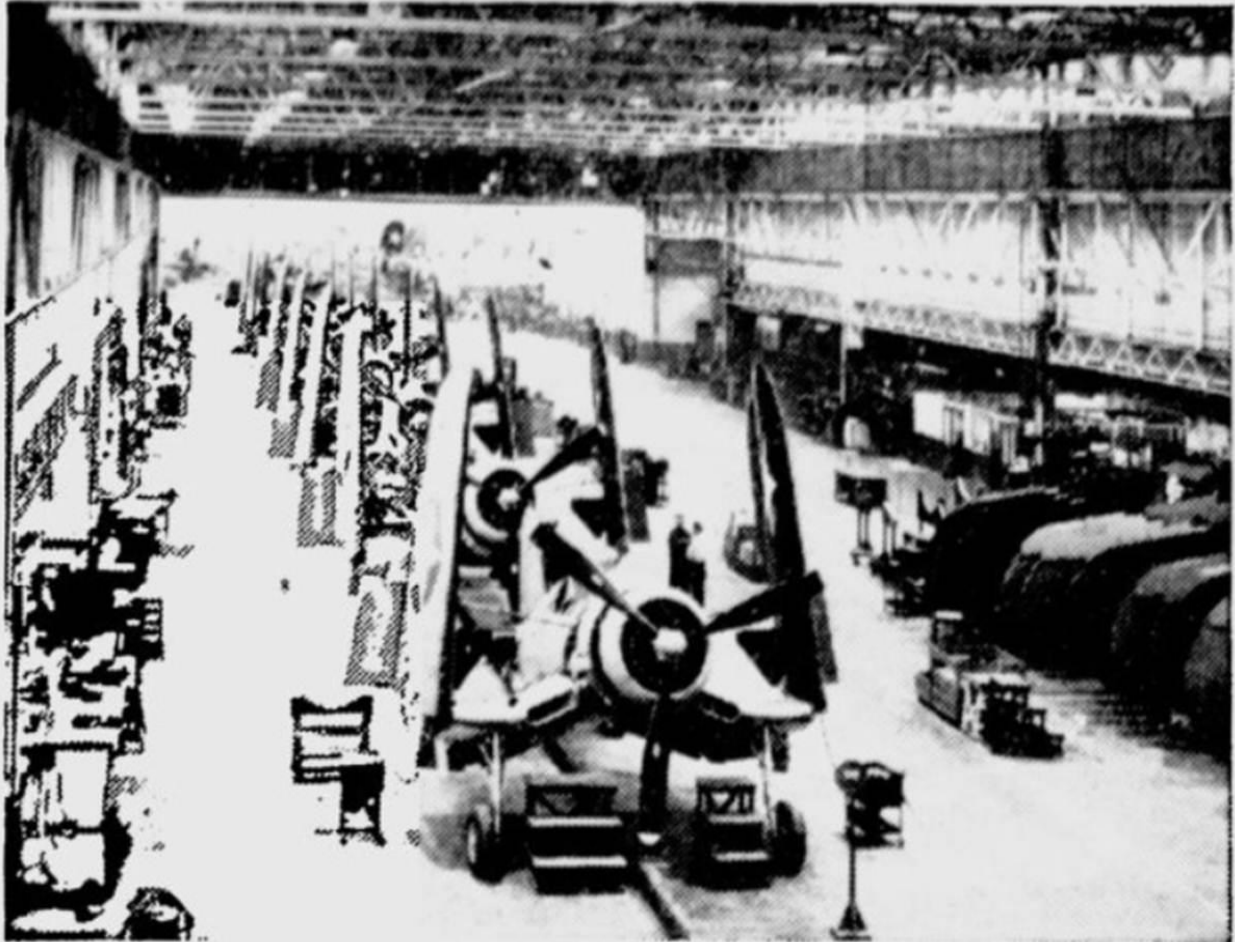
During that time, one of the pilots told Hank that Vought needed to change its manual – the manual said that after five spins, the F4U would not recover. The pilot got into a spin, and after 5 spins, he bailed out. As the pilot floated to earth, he looked up, and saw that the airplane had recovered itself!

Hank said that he was assigned to go to Cherry Point, NC, as the Chance Vought Representative there. Hank said that he was 25 years old, and “walked into Cherry Point like I had bought it.” Hank went up to a guard and said, “I’d like to see the CO.” (CO = Commanding Officer). When Hank got to the CO’s office, the CO looked at him, and said, “What the hell do you want?” Hank told him, “I’m here to help you, Captain.” Hank said that he had no fear of any problem. He thought that this confidence came from working with Joe Silverman. Working in Structures Repair, Hank had to go to the F4U Rejection Crib and determine which ones were good parts and which were bad parts. He got to know all the parts, and why they were designed the way they were. He also went to the Designers and Engineers to learn about each part.

In 1948, Hank became the Chief of Quality Control.



## NEW CONVEYOR LINE SPEEDS CORSAIR PRODUCTION



Vought Corsairs at Stratford, Conn., head for duty with the United States Navy. Note folding wing design enabling Navy to pack more fighters in carrier hangers.

### Hank's Wife and Family

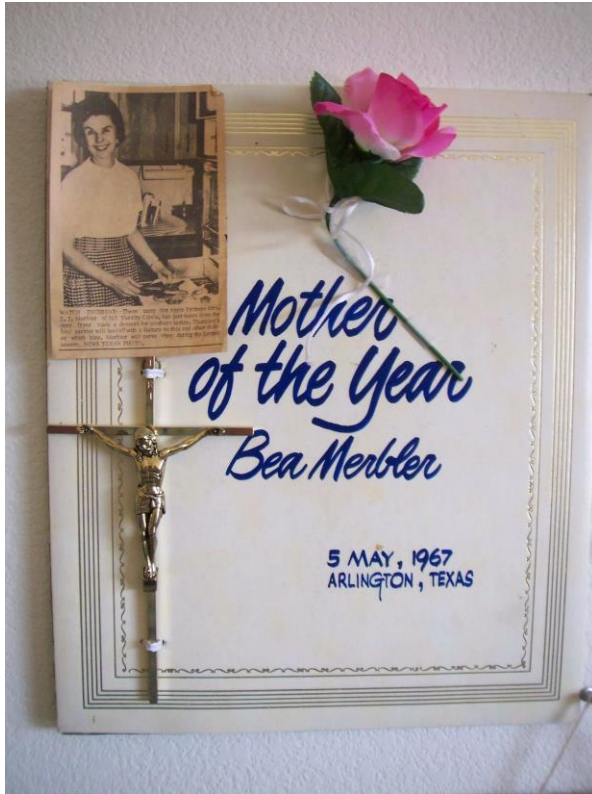
Hank married Beatrice (Bea) Irene Loomis on Thursday, November 26, 1942. Bea and Hank were married for over 65 years!



*50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary (November 1992) of Hank Merbler and wife Beatrice (Bea), who passed away in August of 2008.*



*60<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary (November 2002) of Hank Merbler and wife Beatrice (Bea)*



*Bea Merbler was named Mother of the Year in Arlington in 1967*



*Bea Merbler made Apple Fritters for the Lenten season*

Bea died at home on Sunday, August 10, 2008. She was survived by her husband Hank, and sons Jack of Dallas, Kenneth Merbler and his wife, Linda, of Florida, Richard Merbler and his wife, Amy, of Garland; grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Brian Merbler and his wife, Kelly, and their sons, Evan and Cole, of Florida, Steven Merbler of Missouri, Kate and her husband, Ryan Bradley, of Denton, Henry John Merbler of Dallas, and Robyn Barbary of Toronto, Canada.

### **Chance Vought Moves to Texas**

Hank moved with his family to Texas when the company (Chance Vought Corporation) moved to Dallas from Stratford, Connecticut, on November 16, 1948.

In 1950, he was assigned to Production Flight Test Operations for the F6U-1 at Ardmore Oklahoma.

In the early 1950s, Hank became the Chief of Experimental. Hank said that the first Scout missile was built in the Experimental shop, and the first F8U3 was built there also.

Hank moved on to be the Night Superintendent, then in 1955, the Superintendent of Final Assembly at the peak of F4U production, reporting to Henry Steinmeier, Factory Manager, who in turn reported to Bert Taliaferro, the VP of Manufacturing (who also had the Shop, Quality Control, and Tooling). Hank oversaw 3 shifts, and about 500 employees. Work in Final



Assembly started with the F4U, then moved on to the F6, the F7, the F8, Regulus I, and Regulus II. Hank also became involved with the Lunar Excursion Module (LEM) -- the lander portion of the Apollo spacecraft built for the U.S. Apollo program to carry a crew of two from lunar orbit to the surface and back. Hank became the Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) Factory Manager in Dallas, reporting to Billie Smith (Senior VP and General Manager of MLRS). With Lou Nabors, Hank set up the manufacturing facility for MLRS in Camden, Arkansas.



*Top left to bottom right -- F4U, F7, F8, Regulus I, Regulus II, LEM, MLRS*

Hank Merbler, in about 1958, was responsible for the Scout Program electric shop and the bond shop in the TEMCO building. He was reporting to Eddie Hiler. An R&D materials engineer named Brennan Forcht came to him with an idea for a shielding for space temperatures. Forcht received a plaque award for his work to develop "burnt toast" (later known as carbon-carbon).

That was used to keep leading edges of the Space Shuttle cool for the astronauts. Hank remembers holding a blazing torch on a small sheet in a vice, and Brennan holding a sheet of paper on the back side to prove the insulation.



*Space Shuttle Leading Edge tiles*

## **Blackfeet Indian Tribe Manufacturing Project**

In the 1965-1966 timeframe, Hank got involved with the Blackfeet Indian tribe and reservation at Fort Yates along the border of North and South Dakota. Hank's assignment was to determine if the Blackfeet Indians could fabricate wood furniture and electrical harnesses for our company, and if so, to get an operation started there. For two years, Hank worked there and flew back to Arlington every weekend. When he first went there, Hank flew into Bismarck, ND, and drove the 60 miles south to the reservation. As he was driving, Hank appreciated the stark beauty of the Dakota landscape, and stopped the car and got out. He noticed some rocks along the road, and decided he would take a couple as souvenirs. When he arrived at the reservation, Chief Douglas Sky asked Hank if he had had any car trouble. Hank was puzzled, and told the chief, "No, the car was fine." The Chief then said, "I know how long it takes to get from the airport to here, and you are late. Did you stop along the way?" Hank answered, "Yes, I stopped to admire the scenery, and I picked up some rocks to take home as a remembrance of my time here." The Chief said, "Those rocks stay here."

In the end, Hank and the Chief got along very well and enjoyed each other's company.

When Hank arrived at the Oasis -- the main building complex on the reservation, he was impressed. There was a long building about the size of a football field in length and width. It contained all the communal building space that the tribe needed in one central location -- for the tribe offices, children's classrooms, the hardware and food stores, the jail, and the meeting rooms, as well as guest rooms. Hank was assigned to a guest suite, but was not allowed out except to go to see the Chief. An Indian guard was stationed at the doorway 24/7.

Chief Sky took Hank on a tour of the jail at the central complex. Hank said that he couldn't believe how nice the jail was, and how clean it was. He asked the Chief how they kept it so clean. The Chief said, "People don't stay here long." Hank asked why that was. The Chief answered that people who misbehave are properly disciplined to make a lasting impression of consequences for wrong doing, "...so they don't like to come here."

Hank determined that the Blackfeet Indians could help our company by building wood furniture and making electrical harnesses for our aircraft. He designed two buildings (each about 30,000 square feet) to produce these. Since Hank had little knowledge in the way of carpentry skills, he needed to hire a wood expert to work with the Indians. He found him at the A. Brandt Company wood manufacturing plant in Fort Worth. Every day for 30 days, Hank went to A. Brandt's and learned the wood business. One thing Hank learned was that to quickly "antique" a piece of furniture, you could do it by beating the wood with chains, making holes with drills, and digging marks with knives.

To get the funding for the Blackfeet project, Hank and Chief Douglas Sky would go to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C. six times a year. They asked for \$5 million from the Federal Government, and told them that the other \$5 million would be provided by the tribe. Hank attended many Indian Council meetings. The Chief led the meetings and was very autocratic, letting the others talk for only a few minutes to get the topic introduced, and then he went on to the next person. The actual details would be worked out outside of the Council meetings. Once, the Chief asked Hank to tell about the mutual project, and Hank started to tell all about the buildings he had designed, and the Chief said, "That's enough, Thank you, Mr. Merbler." In the Council meetings, it was "Chief" and "Mr. Merbler." In the bar, it was "Doug" and "Hank." Hank saw Chief Sky as a happy man, who however, presided at meetings with a formal business atmosphere. Eventually, this venture with the Blackfeet Indians was unsuccessful.



### **Metroliner (about 9 months duration in about 1968)**

After the Blackfeet Indian Tribe manufacturing project, Hank Merbler and his Vought team, with Swiss Industrial Company (SIG) employees, worked on the Metroliner concept. Vought had a contract with the Department of Transportation (DOT) to help develop a railroad system to run at least 100 MPH in the U.S. Vought was teamed with the Swiss Industrial Company (SIG), a railroad company in Switzerland. When Hank went to Switzerland, the name on the side of the building was in big letters and said, "Swiss Wogon Works". Swiss Wogon Works would provide the trucks (wheel and chassis assemblies) that fit under the rail cars.

The Vought Systems Division of the LTV Aerospace Corp. (LTV) in association with the Swiss Industrial Company (SIG) of Neuhausen Rhine Falls, Switzerland, designed, manufactured, and tested the LTV/SIG Truck under contract to the Department of Transportation (DOT). The LTV/SIG Metroliner Truck design was derived from the SIG M-Type Truck. The primary design objective of the program, performed under contract to DOT, was to provide a truck having improved ride comfort at speeds over 100 MPH for the Penn Central Metroliner route. The design features a welded steel frame and bolsters, a coil spring/bellcrank primary suspension, an air spring secondary suspension, and elastomeric components to minimize noise/vibration transmission. A worn wheel profile is used with its attendant advantages in wear and maintenance. Truck designs were completed to allow the use of either General Electric or Westinghouse propulsion systems. However, only the former configuration was completed through final assembly due to the unavailability of government-furnished Westinghouse traction equipment. A final report (LTV/SIG Metroliner Truck Final Design Report, National Technical Information Service (NTIC) accession number 00154024) was written by Harry M. Bumgardner, F.E. Dean, and D.W. Hall II. Because most of the analysis and design was done in Switzerland, metric notation was used extensively in the report.

Hank Merbler went to Wilmington, Delaware, to receive the trucks from Switzerland, and fasten one of them to a railcar. This was then taken to New York City for a trial run. A speed of over 100 MPH was recorded, and thus Vought met the contract commitment. Hank says that it was very interesting to work with the Round House Rail Road workers in Delaware. Hank also had to coordinate with all the cities along the route, to close the railroad crossings at the proper times. Despite success, the DOT decided not to pursue the plan.

### **Modular Home Manufacturing**

In the 1967-1969 timeframe, LTV was looking to diversify into other products, including commercial ventures. Hank was sent to Chatham, Virginia, to oversee the company's modular home manufacturing facility. Hank and six men from the company turned a 100,000-square foot tobacco warehouse into a shop. About 125 employees worked there. While Hank was in Virginia, he was able to attend and watch a tobacco auction in Danville, VA. Hank learned that each of their 125 employees had their own tobacco patch and grew tobacco, and that for one week each year, the plant had to shut down so that the employees could harvest and go sell their tobacco plants. This modular home manufacturing venture was unsuccessful.

### **LBJ Space Center**

Hank was sent in the early 1970s to the LBJ Space Center in Houston, TX. This project was under Service Technology Corporation (STC), which was a part of LTV. Hank was the Deputy Program Manager for Operations, and Lloyd MacDougal was the Program Manager (Lloyd handled Finance and Contracts). The work was in the design and operation of NASA-desired

mock-ups. NASA would tell our company what structures they wanted (e.g., modules to for astronauts to live in), our people would design it, review it with NASA, and then we would build it and operate it for them. These wooden structures would be fully operational mock-ups for the astronauts to practice in. The company had about 1500 people in the field, and 30 design engineers. The field personnel would build the mock-ups, maintain the elevators and the computer building, and do the landscaping maintenance. Back then, working in the computer building rooms was very hot -- due to the use of vacuum tubes -- and the computer operators and other information technology personnel would all wear bathing suits. The Control Building had 6 floors and 12 elevators. Hank had to assign one mechanic to each elevator, since the elevators experienced every possible problem that could happen. Chris Kraft was the head of NASA at the time, and kept Hank busy -- "Hank, what are you doing to those elevators?" Chris Kraft had a palatial office, and Hank went in one time to see him. The secretary told Hank to go in. Chris Kraft was putting. He missed. Hank ribbed him, "That was one hell of a putt." Chris Kraft fired back, "Can you do better?" Hank said, "Sure." Hank sunk 3 in a row, and then said, "That's all. I'm done." Chris said, "PURE LUCK." Hank answered, "Yes, it was." Hank and Chris became the best of friends.

All the electrical, gas, water, air, and hydraulics utilities at the LBJ Space Center were in underground tunnels. There were emergency lights every 25 yards. A number of engineers and other employees did not want to work in, or spend much time in, those tunnels, because every once in a while, there would be explosions at the intersections of the tunnels. The electrical wiring was aluminum, and if the wiring was not wrapped tightly with electrical tape, condensation could get in the free space and cause severe explosions -- manhole covers would go flying!

When the Russians were training with our astronauts, 6 astronauts and 6 cosmonauts met for 2 months, and had microphones with tape recordings. The tapes had to be recorded in both English and Russian. Hank had to hire 24 retired Russian-Americans to translate -- luckily, they thought it was an honor to do the job, and were paid only the minimum wage at the time -- \$4.25 an hour. Also, their working hours were 11:00 PM to 6:00 AM, so that the hard copy would be ready each morning. Hank had to get IBM Selectric typing balls with the letters on them -- 24 in English and 24 in Russian -- he found out that there are multiple Russian alphabets, so he had to get the right ones. The Russian cosmonauts were short and trim, and so were their wives. They asked Hank if there was a limit on the amount of chocolate they could buy in the stores, or the number of cherry tomatoes that they could buy, and they were shocked when Hank told them, "No! Take as many as you want."

STC did not win the follow-on contract. Hank returned to Dallas, and while working for Ed Cvetko (VP -- Manufacturing), Hank retired in August 1982.

### **Consulting -- Parts Display Room and Vought Conference Center**

Ed Cvetko asked Hank Merbler to develop a sample parts display room in Building 49, where they could show off parts produced by the company to visiting dignitaries. Hank started with one table and a couple of parts, including a landing gear. The final display room took up about 1500 square feet of space, including a plant layout with wooden models of machinery and



aircraft and a mini-movie corner for 12 people. President Sol Love and VP Ed Cvetko agreed that it was an excellent arrangement for briefing senior military visitors.

Billie Smith hired Hank Merbler in 1982 as a consultant to design and supervise the construction of a large conference center in Building 7. John Ryan was also involved. The Vought Conference Center would contain a theater with multiple language capability at each of 100 seats and rear corner cubicles for interpreters. It also held a 38-foot wide stage and screen, several small meeting rooms, and a big bulletin board that announced in big letters, “GEN \_\_\_\_ WELCOME. We are glad to have you visit today”– all with high quality business atmosphere. Hank’s aim was to make the conference center so elegant that the military officers entering it would immediately think, “This is REALLY good.” The biggest problem was static electricity in the carpets, which required special treating of the carpets to solve.

### **Consulting -- Other**

After Hank first retired in 1982, he went fishing with Bob Kiefer (Hank says he caught about 4000 keepers – crappie, brim, catfish, drum, bass, and sand bass), golfing, and consulting for 10 years. Hank was a consultant to Vought, Murdock Engineering, and Whitehall Corporation. Bob Kiefer had gotten a call from Whitehall Corporation, who wanted a proposal to restore C-130 wings to carry more fuel. Bob Kiefer told him, “I’m retired, but I know a racehorse who is just chomping at the bit to do something like this!” Since a Whitehall representative was in Dallas, Hank went to see them. They handed Hank a Request for Proposal (RFP) book and told him, “Look this over for the next 15 minutes, and tell us if you can do it.” While Hank was reviewing the book, they asked Hank, “Who is your reference?” Hank said “Bob Kirk.” “You know Bob Kirk?” Hank said “Yes. Call him.” After a very short call to Bob Kirk, Hank got their approval. Hank said he would do the job, but that he needed two more guys – Joe Millsap for Tooling, and Ed Roberts for Quality Control and overlap with Hank for Engineering). Hank said, “We were an excellent team.” The three of them went to Clearwater, Florida, and stayed in a motel, with one car and a restaurant nearby – all owned by Whitehall. The wife of NFL sports announcer Pat Summerall had a print shop nearby that printed the proposal. The onsite people in Florida did the typing and the photos. Hank, Joe, and Ed used the storyboard technique to develop the proposal. They presented the final proposal at Warner-Robbins AFB and beat the competition.

### **Hank Merbler’s Leadership Positions**

President of Garfield High School’s Senior Class of 1938 (Garfield, NJ)  
President of the Chance Vought Management Club  
President of the Dallas Council of the Navy League  
Council Member of the Town of Pantego, TX (1980-1984)  
Mayor of the Town of Pantego, TX (1987-1991), and 28 years in politics in Pantego  
President of the Arlington Senior Men’s Golf Association (Arlington, TX)  
President of the St. Maria Goretti Catholic Church Leisure Club (Arlington, TX)  
President of the Serra Club (a Catholic organization)  
President of the Vought Retiree Club

President and Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation (VAHF)

Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation (VAHF)

President of the Horizon Bay Resident Council (2011-2013, 3 years)

Vice-President of the Horizon Bay Resident Council (2014)

### **Mayor of Pantego, Texas**

H. J. "Hank" Merbler was honored by Texas Senate Resolution SR 637, 72<sup>nd</sup> Regular Session, for his outstanding service as Mayor of the town of Pantego, Texas, from 1987 until 1991.

Hank was known as "The Walking Mayor" because he walked the entire 13 miles of roads in the 1.1 square miles of the town before he was elected, knocking on every door and getting to know nearly all the citizens. When he walked to every Council meeting at Pantego's Town Hall, he also talked to citizens along the way. Pantego citizens loved Hank because he was conservative, a penny pincher with their money, and always wanted and solicited their input. But, if funds were needed for the growth of the town, Hank would always find the money. Hank started a Mayor's Report newsletter to keep the citizens informed, but paid for it not with town funds, but with advertising.

Hank had entered politics in 1980 because he thought taxes were climbing too high. Elected to the town Council, he fought a 40-cent tax increase and won, instituting a 5-cent increase instead. Hank left office in 1984, but said he would return if taxes climbed too high again. In 1987, he came back and ran for Mayor. Hank was always a one-man Chamber of Commerce, promoting eating and buying in the town, and filling empty commercial space. Hank left the Mayor's office in 1991 to participate in the Superconducting Supercollider (SSC) program in Ennis, only to find that the program was cancelled shortly thereafter. Arlington Mayor Richard Greene said that Hank was easy to work with, since he saw the big picture and wanted to do the best for the community. Hank praised his town – "This is an ideal place to raise a family. And it's a safe town. You can ride a bike or go for a walk here. It doesn't matter if it's midnight."

Below is the article from the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* about Hank as Mayor of Pantego.



# A new twist to open-door policy



Pantego Mayor Hank Merbler stops to talk with Kelley McConnell on his way to Town Hall

Fort Worth Star-Telegram / BRUCE MAXWELL

## In Pantego, Merbler uses YOUR door

BY JAN JARVIS

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

It's a five-minute walk from Hank Merbler's home to Pantego's town hall, but it always takes him 30 minutes or longer to get there.

Nicknamed the "Walking Mayor," Merbler is not one to take leisurely strolls around town. He walks with a purpose, whether he's headed for a council meeting or the grocery store. A few steps out the door and Merbler is discussing drainage problems with a neighbor. A few feet down the road and a business man stops him to talk about the local economy.

All along the way, Merbler listens to the people of Pantego.

"I have preached long and hard that all the citizens of Pantego are our customers," Merbler said. "I'm glad to be able to help and I'm happy to listen to anything they have to say."

Three years ago, when Merbler ran for the mayor's seat, he knocked on every door within Pantego's 1.1 square miles.

"I had a delightful time," he said. "I walked in excess of 50 miles, I lost 10 pounds, and I met some of the nicest people around."

His diligence won Merbler the mayoral election, as well as the respect of many people in the community.

"Hank has made a very good mayor," said Mayor Pro Tem Hubert Gober. "He's quite involved with the community and likes citizen input."

Residents know Merbler as a penny-pincher who watches the city's bank account as closely as he does his own money.

"He's very conservative and, yes, he is a penny-pincher," Gober said. (More on MERBLER on page 4A)

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(More on MERBLER on page 4A)



"But if revenue is needed to further the growth of Pantego, he'll find the money for the project. He's not close-minded by any means."

When Merbler decided to distribute a newsletter to inform residents about city business, he refused to do it at Pantego's expense. Instead of passing the cost of the newsletter on to taxpayers, Merbler went to business leaders and solicited advertising.

Gary Key, one of those business men who regularly advertises in the *Mayor's Report*, said Merbler is unrelenting in his effort to promote the town.

"He's taken it upon himself to become a kind of one-man chamber of commerce for Pantego," Key said. "He actively promotes the idea of buying in Pantego rather than going outside the town."

Merbler said it upsets him to see people or cities squander money and then try to justify it.

"Frugality is a function of my heritage," Merbler said. "I learned at an early age that you must spend your resources — your money and your ability — wisely."

The New Jersey native, his wife and three sons moved to Pantego in 1948. He worked as an aeronautical engineer at LTV and traveled extensively for 41 years before he retired in 1992.

Merbler entered the political arena in 1960 because he felt taxes were climbing too high. As a Pantego city council member, Merbler fought a 40-cent tax rate increase and won.

"I felt like that large an increase was not necessary; in fact, no increase was necessary," he said. "We ended up with a 5-cent increase."

When he left office in 1964, Merbler vowed that he would return if taxes increased again.

"When I left I said that if the city messed up the tax rate again, I'd be back," he said. "So in 1967, I came back."

When he won the election in 1967, Merbler was ready for another fight to keep the tax rate down.

"It's just not proper to increase taxes all the time," he said. "A town, just like a family, must live within its means or develop another source of income."

As someone who is always watching the bottom line, Merbler is concerned about Pantego's business community. Vacant office space within the town troubles him.

"When I walked through the town of Pantego in 1967, I thought we had maybe 250 square feet of vacant off-

ice space," he said. "It turned out we had about a million."

Merbler has made it his mission to fill those empty buildings and boost the local economy. He frequently encourages residents to shop and dine in Pantego.

At the same time, Merbler is pushing for more recognition for his community. Pantego is an ideal place to live and work, but it is not well known, he said.

Gobler said Merbler goes out of his way to promote the town.

"Hank has promoted Pantego to the very fullest," Gobler said. "He lets people know that Pantego is here to stay and that it is very much a part of the Metroplex."

Merbler, 66, clearly sees Pantego as drive-through town that must maintain a strong relationship with its neighboring cities, if it is to survive.

"None of us live in isolation because we're all inter-related in some way," he said. "I believe Arlington, Dalworthington Gardens and Pantego must work and play and survive together. We really do need each other."

Arlington Mayor Richard Greene said Merbler is easy to work with because he sees the bigger picture and wants to do the best for the community.

"He has a good sense of awareness of things going around Arlington and the region," Greene said. "He does an excellent job of representing the people of Pantego and works tirelessly on their behalf."

While Merbler addresses immediate issues, he always has an eye on the future.

"I don't like to look back," he said. "I like to charge forward and have a plan."

Already he is looking toward the next century, when Pantego's population, now at 2,750 people, is expected to more than double.

"By the year 2,000 I figure we'll have 5,000 people living in Pantego," he said. "As the population grows, so does the need for services. Right now Pantego has no church, no swimming pool, no hospital, no library. It doesn't have a lot of amenities."

Due to its size, Pantego, by itself, might not be able to deliver all of those amenities, Merbler said.

But by and large Pantego has a lot going for it, Merbler said.

"This is an ideal place to raise a family," he said. "And it's a safe town. You can ride a bike or go for a walk here. It doesn't even matter if it's midnight."

## **Vought Retiree Club**

In 1996, Margo Parker (VP – Human Resources, Northrop Vought) put out a notice that Vought Aircraft wanted to develop a club for retirees. Interested parties would meet at the Arlington Convention Center near the Ballpark in Arlington on February 15, 1996.

Hank planned to go, but his wife Bea had a massive heart attack the day before, on February 14. But Bea had always wanted Hank to go to the formative meeting, and she was in the best of caring hands at the hospital, so Hank attended.

Several hundred retirees attended the meeting. Margo Parker had a light brunch for everyone, and suggested that a Retiree Club be developed. Margo passed out a questionnaire that asked (1) what a Retiree Club should do, (2) how do you want to participate, and (3) your likes and dislikes. A leadership team of 16 were selected. Hank Merbler became the first President of the **Vought Retiree Club**, the VP was Don Higginbotham, the Secretary was Verda Lee Franklin, and the Treasurer was Ann Christmas. The Vought Retiree Club was formed by a group of retirees dedicated to preserving the Vought heritage, who took aggressive action in 1996 when they became aware that stored Vought archives, which contained thousands of boxes of historical, scientific and related material, were in danger of being lost. The Vought Retiree Club was officially organized on July 18, 1996. The first Vought Retiree Club facilities were in a 10' x 10' room in the cellar of Building 7, equipped with a typewriter, 2 tables and chairs (for Hank Merbler and Verda Franklin), filing cabinets, and no computer! Paul Bower, the photographer, had approval from Margo Parker to buy some new computers. Dick Atkins and his team developed decade assignments for gathering historical information, and developed a world-class website at [www.vought.org](http://www.vought.org).



Through the Vought Retiree Club, Ann Christmas has had the opportunity to work with and get to know Hank, not only as a co-retiree, but as a friend along with his sweet wife, Bea (deceased). Ann said, "As part of the founding committee of the Retiree Club in 1996, we named Hank as our first president on an interim basis. In 1997, Hank was voted in by membership of the Retiree Club to serve as our first president. Under his leadership, an Executive Committee was formed who developed the Constitution and Bylaws of the club. From this, Hank led the Executive Committee in the development of social activities, the website, library of historical data, and the restoration projects. When Hank first decided to get a computer, he and Ann Christmas had some good times working on computer skills, which he quickly mastered. He continues to amaze everyone at age 93 with his quick wit and active mind.

There were about 100 members to start with. Programs were developed for the Retirees, including going to baseball games and other sporting events, trips to casinos, and tours to view Christmas lights.

Hank Merbler talked with Vought Public Relations personnel, and was told that retirees at General Dynamics (GD -- now Lockheed Martin Aeronautics) in Fort Worth were restoring airplanes. Hank asked if they had a contact there. They said yes, and gave him the name of the contact person. So, Hank and Ed Cvetko drove over to GD and talked with the GD retiree club contact, and the Vought Retiree Club Governing Board of 10 (GB10) used a whiteboard to write down their ideas and put together a plan and funding requirement for Margo Parker. Hank briefed Margo on the plan, and told her it would take \$150,000. She said that she could provide start-up funding. The Vought Retiree Club then put together a plan to restore an A7B Corsair II from Pensacola. It was trucked to Dallas for about \$4,000, after six retirees went to Pensacola to take it apart. The A7B restoration was completed in 2002, and was loaned to the Frontiers of Flight Museum in Dallas, TX.

**Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation (VAHF)**

Despite many accomplishments as a heritage organization, the **Vought Retiree Club** had not been able to acquire the Vought centerpiece, the F4U Corsair. Funds that were allocated by the company were insufficient to purchase a non-flyable structure for restoration.

This led to creating a task force to locate F4U hardware and finding funds to make it happen. On October 15, 2002, with the guidance of Vought Aircraft Industries, Inc. (VAII), the **Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation (VAHF)** was established. VAHF is an independent 501(c)(3) corporation. This allows tax-deductible donations to fund the VAHF, which is operated by an independent Board of Directors. Ed Cvetko was the first Chairman of the Board and CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of the VAHF, and Hank Merbler was the first President and COO (Chief Operating Officer). The Secretary was Verda Franklin and the Treasurer was Bob Turney. After Ed Cvetko retired from his positions in 2008 or 2010, Hank Merbler became the Chairman of the Board and CEO, and Jim Hill became the President and COO.

Eight VAHF Restorations have been completed and are on display in museums, and 2 more are in work as of March 2014.

Restorations of the VAHF include:

<b>RESTORATIONS</b>			
<b>Project</b>	<b>ID No.</b>	<b>Completed</b>	<b>Present Location</b>

<a href="#">A-7B</a> Corsair II	154502	2002	Frontiers of Flight Museum Dallas, TX
<a href="#">RF-8G</a> Photo Crusader	GM-3048	2004	Frontiers of Flight Museum Dallas, TX
<a href="#">REGULUS II</a> Supersonic Cruise Missile	146882	2004	Frontiers of Flight Museum Dallas, TX
<a href="#">VE-7</a> Bluebird	000000	Dec 2006	National Naval Aviation Museum Pensacola, Florida
<a href="#">F8U-1/YF8U-2</a> Crusader Fighter	140448	2008	McAuliffe - Shepard Discovery Center Concord, New Hampshire
<a href="#">F4U-X</a> Corsair Fighter	000000	Jan 2009	National Museum of WWII New Orleans, Louisiana
<a href="#">F6U-1</a> Pirate Fighter	122479	Aug 2011	National Naval Aviation Museum Pensacola, Florida
<a href="#">V-173</a> Pancake	02978	Jan 2012	Frontiers of Flight Museum Dallas, TX
<b>O3U-3</b> Corsair Observation	0000 Build to Print	Started 2009	TBD
<b>F7U-3</b> Cutlass	129565	Started 2012	Will return to: USS Midway Museum San Diego, California

**UT Arlington -- Chance Vought Engineering and Science Endowment** -- October 8th, 2013



*Board members of the former Vought Employees Club & Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation (in photo above, Hank Merbler is 3rd from left) meet on October 8, 2013 with UT Arlington President Vistasp Karbhari. The Chance Vought Engineering and Science Endowment, established by the Club and Foundation, will provide scholarships to engineering and science students and will support K-12 outreach efforts in the colleges of Science and Engineering.*

To extend Vought's legacy into the future, the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation (VAHF) knew they would need to promote education. Using money from the former Vought Employees Club and funds raised by the VAHF through the sale of restored aircraft, the VAHF and the former Vought Employees Club established the \$300,000 Chance Vought Engineering and Science Endowment at the University of Texas at Arlington. This gift was supplemented by The Maverick Match, which used the University's natural gas royalties to match endowment gifts—dollar-for-dollar--to create a \$600,000 endowment.

“Chance Vought was an early pioneer in aviation and his companies have been on the leading edge of the aviation industry since 1918,” said Cathie Barrington, financial manager of the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation. “This endowment will continue the legacy that Chance Vought started.”

The Chance Vought Engineering and Science Endowment will provide scholarships to engineering and science students and will support K-12 outreach efforts in the colleges of Science and Engineering. Twenty percent of the endowment will support UTeach Arlington, a program that recruits science and engineering students for careers as high school science or math teachers.

Vought and UT Arlington have a long history of collaboration, primarily through a cooperative education program with the colleges of Science and Engineering that stretches back to the 1960s. “Vought hired many UT Arlington co-op graduate students,” said Dillon Smith, treasurer for the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation. “They became valuable, long-term employees.” This relationship, Smith said, along with the one-to-one matching funds, were big factors in selecting UT Arlington for the endowment. Another factor was the University's central location between Dallas and Fort Worth, Smith said. “We wanted to support local high schools and magnet schools in North Texas.”

UT Arlington President Vistasp Karbhari called the partnership with the Vought Employees Club and the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation a fitting tribute to Chance Vought. “Through this new endowment, aspiring engineers and scientists will be given the tools they need to lead future generations into technological frontiers we can barely imagine today,” Karbhari said.

Barrington said helping the development of future leaders in engineering and science is important to former Vought employees, “and we also look forward to continuing Chance Vought's legacy, not only through these future leaders, but also in our relationship with UT Arlington.”

### **Chance Vought Survivors Club -- Speaker at meetings**

The sixteenth meeting was on September 17, 1997 at the Royal Oaks Country Club in Dallas. Hank Merbler discussed the plans for a web site of the Vought heritage to be funded by Northrop Grumman and constructed by retirees. Bob Fissette organized and chaired the meeting.

The twentieth meeting was on January 20, 1999 at the Royal Oaks Country Club. 121 members were present. Hank Merbler briefed them on the status of the web site. John Ryan organized and chaired the meeting.

The forty-second meeting was held on September 24, 2008 at the Ruthe Jackson Center. Three speakers summarized the update to the Survivors on the status of the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation's Restoration Program and Heritage Data Center. Hank Merbler covered the restoration, Dick Atkins, the data center, and Ed Cvetko, future plans. There were 79 Survivors in attendance. Bob Turney organized and chaired the meeting.



## F4U Corsair Restoration



*F4U Corsair Roll-Out on December 4, 2009 at Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation Hangar*

After four years of painstaking labor under the leadership of Bert Noble, artisans of the Vought Aircraft Retirees Club have restored an icon of U.S. aviation history, a World War II-vintage F4U Corsair fighter plane.

Working with pieces and parts from wrecked and scrapped aircraft, and building many others themselves from drawings, the retirees have spent thousands of hours and thousands of dollars re-creating a version of the distinctive, gull-winged plane that Japanese soldiers and sailors dubbed "Whistling Death."

Rebuilding the Corsair, one of the greatest fighter planes that enabled Navy and Marine pilots to dominate the skies in the Pacific theater, "has been a real work of love for the last four years," said Hank Merbler, president of the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation.

This airplane was rolled out for several hundred invited guests on January 24, 2009 in a hangar at Vought Aircraft Industries' west Dallas complex.

Launched in 1938, the Corsair is the most famous aircraft designed and produced by the company founded by the aviation pioneer Chance Vought.

"It's an airplane I'm really proud of. If you read all the history of it, it's really something," said Dillon Smith, a 34-year employee of Vought who retired in 1994.

"It did what it was designed to do and that was defeat the Japanese Zero," Smith said.

The first new, highly capable fighter aircraft to reach the Pacific theater early in 1943, the Corsair was initially deployed with ground-based Marine squadrons.

Corsairs were flown by the famous "Black Sheep" Squadron, led by Marine Maj. Gregory "Pappy" Boyington, whose exploits were the basis for the mid-1970s television show **Baa Baa Black Sheep**.

The F-4U Corsair restored by the men and women of the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation is now displayed at The National WWII Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana, since 2009.



*Hank Merbler with former LTV CEO Paul Thayer at F4U Corsair Roll-Out on January 24, 2009*

### **V-173 Flying Pancake Restoration**

The V-173 was built as a prototype technology demonstrator for the XF5-U1, a high speed Navy fighter developed in the 1940s that was capable of short take-offs and landings. The aerodynamic design is a version of a flying wing enhanced by the large propellers located at the outer edges of the wing. The XF5-U1 contract was cancelled in 1947 just before its first flight, so the V-173 was the one and only article remaining for this endeavor.

The V-173 has a wing span of 23.5 feet and weighs 2750 pounds. It has two 80-HP piston engines driving 16-foot diameter propellers through cross-shafting and 90-degree gearboxes. It accommodated a single pilot and had fixed landing gears.

The V-173 aircraft was built under a 1940 Navy Contract, and made its first flight on November 23, 1942. Test flights continued until 1947 for a total 199 flights, totaling 131 hours. The aircraft was put in storage in 1947 at the Norfolk Virginia Naval Air Station, where it spent part time parked outside in the weather. In 1961, it was transferred to indoor storage at a National Air and Space Museum (NASM) of the Smithsonian Institution facility in Silver Hill, Maryland. In 2001, a Vought executive taking a tour of the NASM facility spotted the V-173 in the storage area. Immediately, discussions began to convince NASM that Vought had the facilities and personnel to perform an authentic restoration of one of the most interesting aircraft ever built and certainly the most unique produced by Vought. In 2003, NASM approved the loan to the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation for the restoration.



*V-173 arrives at Vought Aircraft in its transport box.*

V-173 first flight on November 23, 1942 witnessed by Hank Merbler – In 1942, Hank Merbler was the Field Engineer at the Stratford Airport. Pilots were proving the contract performance specifications on the F4U in 1941 and 1942. On November 23, 1942, with no advance notice, the V-173 appeared from the hangar adjacent to the hangar for the F4U. The V-173 had been in work, with no reports on progress. It was a very “quiet” program. Hank was watching, along with a group of fellows who were on the F4U program. The V-173 was pulled out to the runway. Charlie Zimmerman, designer of the V-173, was talking with pilot Boone Guyton while they were both walking to the V-173. (On the previous day, Boone Guyton had made a test flight in the F4U.) Boone Guyton climbed into the V-173, and taxied down the runway for a short distance. After a very short run, the V-173 seemed to jump up at about 45 degrees, and rise into the air at a surprising rate of climb. Hank guessed that at about 1,000 feet altitude, Boone began to fly nose high in a generous circle one time, and then returned to where he had taken off. His landing was unusual in that he seemed to hang for a short time, maybe 10 feet off the ground, and suddenly but gently set down (more like a helicopter, with a short run out). Charlie Zimmerman was at the aircraft to greet Boone as he climbed out from the cockpit – big hugs with big smiles! (Hank Merbler lived about a mile from the airport and his wife saw many flights; Hank saw about 15 flights.)

After VAHF was given approval to restore the V-173 aircraft, it was transported to the Vought facility in Dallas, Texas, arriving November 1, 2003. The Pancake transportation saga began with the development of a shipping program and design of a shipping box. A giant blue box was fabricated to protect the fragile airframe of the V-173 during transport. The box was very large since the airplane was built in a single section. The landing gear and horizontal tails were removed to reduce the box size. This left a 35 x 35 foot airframe box, which challenged road clearances. This required the airplane to be rotated 32 degrees from horizontal to maximize top and side highway obstacle clearances. A Vought team preceded the Chapman Trucking Company box carrier to assure that the highway path was safe and clear. The aircraft was showing its age after fifty-four years of storage. The outer skin fabric was torn and missing over large areas of the surface. Fortunately, the wood truss structure underneath was in good



condition. There was small damage to the right hand and left hand outer edges of the wing. The aircraft was partially disassembled but all of the parts came with the shipment to Vought. The V-173 came from NASM with a set of very strict restoration requirements. Detailed instructions and requirements described very specifically how cleaning, preservation, fabric replacement, and painting were to be conducted. NASM's primary goal is to restore their aircraft as close as possible to original, as fabricated condition.

The V-173 was restored under the leadership of Dick Guthrie and a dedicated team of retirees. Most restoration was accomplished in a special fixture – a large rotisserie – which permitted rotation of the structure to service all sections of it. The rotisserie fixture was a masterful design by Vought tool designer Ray Neal, who was the sole designer and led its fabrication. Test pilot Joe Angelone was the leader for the restoration of the wooden propellers and the paint scheme of many coats for the fabric-covered wing, resulting in the super-looking picture-perfect V-173 that is now on display in the Frontiers of Flight Museum in Dallas, TX.



*V-173 with its cloth outer skin in tatters after decades of storage.*

In the below photo, Hank is sewing the ceremonial final stitch in the cover of the V-173 Pancake in mid-2010. (Photo taken by Kelley Fling.)

# Merbler Making Ceremonial Last Stitch

on the V-173  
Flying  
Pancake

(mathematically, the  
68,000<sup>th</sup> stitch)



The Vought V-173 "Flying Pancake" arrived Tuesday, March 27, 2012, at the Frontiers of Flight Museum at Dallas Love Field for a VIP pancake breakfast and a sneak peek. The experimental World War II-era plane went on public display on April 15, 2012.



*Restored V-173 Flying Pancake at the VAHF hangar at the Jefferson Street Facility in Dallas.*



*Hank Merbler (in photo above), Chairman and CEO of the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation, at the delivery on Tuesday, March 27, 2012, of the Vought V-173 "Flying Pancake" to Dallas Love Field's Frontiers of Flight Museum. The plane is on loan from the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum.*





*Hank Merbler (in photo above), Chairman and CEO of the Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation, speaks at the 3-27-2012 delivery of the Vought V-173 "Flying Pancake" to Dallas Love Field's Frontiers of Flight Museum.*

### **Restoration of a tail of a World War I German airplane**

In the two 2009 photos below (taken by Dick Guthrie) Hank is presenting a completed restoration of a tail of a World War I German airplane to its owner. Jack Brouse, who did most the work, is to the left of the restored article and next to the owner; Evelyn Wray, who did sewing on the article, is in both photos next to Hank.





## UT Dallas Celebration of Support



*UT Dallas Celebration Honoring Donors, including Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation's \$100,000 Donation to Fund McDermott Library Archiving Project*

Hank Merbler was among special guests at UT Dallas on October 18, 2012 for a Celebration of Support, an event to honor and thank donors to UT Dallas. A half-scale model of a Vought F-4U Corsair was on display as a part of the festivities. The [Vought Aircraft Heritage Foundation](#) on September 4, 2012 presented a \$100,000 gift to the UT Dallas. The gift provides for an archivist to integrate Vought Aircraft's historical documents, pictures and films with the library's [History of Aviation Collection](#). Dick Atkins, Director of Archives for the VAHF, said "The project is expected to take two years."

## Hank Merbler and his Sons



*Hank Merbler with his sons at Rockfish restaurant in Dallas, this past August 2013.  
From right -- Hank Merbler, son Ken, grandson John (little Hank), son Richard, and oldest son  
Jack Merbler (far left – John's Dad).*

During the Thanksgiving holidays in 2013, a Merbler Foursome... composed of 4 generations, played golf on the Winter Park Country Club, Florida, golf course (see photo below).



*November 2013 Photo shows MERBLERS... Cole, Evan, Brian, Ken, and Hank, plus Canadian friend John Connolly on the far right. Four generations -- "Evan is 7 years old and Hank is 93 ! Evan challenged his great-grandpa Hank thru 9 holes !!! Hank sez ... It was an enjoyable sight to see Evan match me with some lengths on the fairways !! It was a wonderful day !!!!"  
(Winter Park is near Orlando in Florida.)*

Hank says, "I've had a great life." Then, as he thought about all the things that he has done in his life, Hank said, "I must have been a sporty and stern Headmaster!" Hank says that he is an incurable optimist, pro-life Roman Catholic, who loves God, Family, and Friends, and that he would like to be remembered as always helping people.

