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North American P-51 fighter planes preparing for test flight, Inglewood California 1940's

Next meeting is on Sunday, September 17th at 1:30 PM– First Baptist Church in Downey– Use 2nd St. Entrance
Employees enjoying a company program during their lunch hour at North American Aviation in Inglewood, California. Below assembly area.

Employees coming to work at North American Aviation in Inglewood, California.

“Because Southern California had excellent year-round flying weather, Kindelberger moved the company, including machinery and 75 people, to a 159,000 square-foot facility on 20 acres near the edge of the Los Angeles Municipal Airport. Rent was $600 a year”
In 1996, Boeing acquired the aerospace divisions of Rockwell International, which had its own sterling history. Founded in 1928 as North American Aviation, this firm pushed strongly into rockets and jets after the war. Its Rocketdyne Division made North American the only company able to build both large missiles and their engines within the same corporation, while its Autonetics Division gave it strength in electronics. North American went on to build large portions of the Saturn V, including its manned spacecraft and all its major rocket engines. Mergers in 1967 and 1973 erased North American's name, becoming part of North American Rockwell in 1967 and Rockwell International in 1973, but in 1972, NASA picked this firm to build the Space Shuttle orbiter, with Rocketdyne supplying the main engines. Source: http://www.centennialofflight.gov/essay/SPACEFLIGHT/companies/40.htm
The Aerospace Legacy Foundation is a major sponsor of Bill Winship's new film, "Pioneers in Aviation: The Race to the Moon". After recently attending the premiere at the Seattle Museum of Flight, I can assure all of our readers and members the film is excellent. When DVD's become available ALF will be selling them for fundraising efforts and membership drives.

"If the 20th Century can be accurately characterized as the "American Century," surely it is the achievement of flight--from the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk to a handful of American astronauts on the surface of the Moon--that makes it so. In celebration of this achievement, the new Public Television documentary series, "PIONEERS IN AVIATION: THE RACE TO THE MOON," profiles four of America's legendary aerospace pioneers--William Boeing, Donald Douglas, Dutch Kindelberger, and James McDonnell--whose achievements led the nation and the world from the era of open-cockpit biplanes to the very threshold of Space. Interweaving the stories of the four aviation pioneers with on-camera interviews from several of America's foremost aviation scholars, "PIONEERS" structures this seminal chapter of American history into three one-hour episodes:

- Episode I: "The Early Years"
- Episode II: "The War Years"
- Episode III: "The Race to the Moon."

"PIONEERS IN AVIATION: THE RACE TO THE MOON" will be broadcast nationwide on Public Television during the coming months. Please check listings with local PBS stations for exact time and date".

Pioneers In Aviation: The Race to the Moon captures every significant event in aviation history, from the Wright Brothers' first flight at Kitty Hawk and the birth of the airlines to the triumphant Apollo moon landing. The three-part documentary uses archival footage and newsreels, along with commentary from aviation scholars, to profile industry pioneers Boeing, Douglas, Kindelberger and McDonnell. Some of the newly rediscovered and never-before-seen footage includes General Jimmy Doolittle's legendary 1942 Tokyo raid, the famous 1924 "Round-the-World Flight," a rare glimpse inside the wartime factories at Boeing, Douglas and North American Aviation and President John F. Kennedy's eloquent 1963 speech which set forth the goals of the Mercury Space Program. APT
North American Aviation Years

“As Convair’s military contracts evaporated at the end of the war, North American Aviation, headquartered in nearby Inglewood shifted its focus to jet aircraft, and in need of more manufacturing capacity, began to lease Convair’s assembly plant. North American produced the AJ-1 Navy bomber, a post-war T-28 trainer, and the AT-6 wartime trainer in Downey, as well as conducting research and development on a number of other projects for the government. Among the most significant of these R & D projects was the Navaho missile program, designed to produce a surface-to-surface guided missile capable of carrying an atomic warhead 5,500 nautical miles at a speed of at least Mach 2.75. Although the program was ultimately cancelled in the late 1950s, the technical discoveries that came out of the program were abundant in the areas of rocket guidance and propulsion, and these technologies were transferred into the new generation of weapons (ballistic missiles). In 1958, North American’s Downey Missile Division took on the contract to produce the Hound Dog Air-to-Ground Missile, designed to be launched from the B-52 bomber in order to destroy heavily defended enemy targets. The missile continued to be produced at the Downey plant through the early 1960s. Also in 1958, North American won the contract to produce the Little Joe Launch Vehicle to test the Mercury program”.

Columbia Memorial Space Science Learning Center News  
Loren Berh, Executive Director

The Columbia Memorial Space Science Learning Center is beginning the New Year with a number of major projects being finalized, as others begin.

Chief among the projects nearing completion is the architectural design plans for the learning center’s new facility to be located just to the southwest of Building 290. Construction documents should be completed in the next several weeks and then must go through a rigorous code-checking process. Design of the learning center’s interactive and historical exhibits is also nearing completion. A number of the exhibits went through a fast-track design process and fabrication of those exhibits is already nearing completion. The exhibits will be held in storage pending construction of the facility.

Also notable among recently completed projects is the web-based Downey Aviation History Archive. The Aviation History archive is unique in both its content and functionality. It is designed to allow any former employee of Downey’s former NASA site to record and upload personal histories and pictures of the site’s illustrious history as they experienced them, and for the public to have direct access to these histories on line. The entries are searchable by name, project, company or key word.

The first (and at the time of writing, only) entry into the History Archive is by Jerry Blackburn. It is our hope that ALF will be instrumental in getting the word out to former NASA site employees to add their own memories so that the site can become a rich resource for preserving memories and for those wishing to learn more about Downey’s contribution to aviation and aeronautics.

To upload stories or to view the site, go to the Learning Center’s home page: www.columbiaspacescience.org/ and click on the Aviation History Archive button, or go to www.aviationhistoryarchive.org
The foundation began in 1995. By a group of scientists, engineers, business people, educators, retirees, and the public at large. Incorporated as a nonprofit foundation in 1997. Our mission is to preserve Southern California’s innovative aerospace and aviation heritage. Over seventy years of advancements from the Downey NASA Plant continue to influence many generations. Through our website and public meetings we honor and preserve the legacy of flight and space travel. We have an opportunity to teach future generations the magic created in Downey AND Southern California. And most importantly, about the people who made it all real. The foundation is currently working with the City of Downey planning and promoting the future Columbia Space Science Learning Center. “If the 20th Century can be accurately characterized as the "American Century," surely it is the achievement of flight--from the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk to a handful of American astronauts on the surface of the Moon--that makes it so”.

The DEI Room, the Shuttle Mock-up etc....

Left: Aft section of mock-up turns a corner. Above: View of the Shuttle orbiter Mock-up from observation deck in the former D.E.I. room at Downey Studios.

“In the early 1970’s Rockwell built a full-scale mock-up of the orbiter in the DEI Room of Building 1 at the Downey plant. Built with steel framing, a plywood skin and a variety of other materials representative of each of the shuttle’s components, the mock-up was continually updated and was in active use until the Downey facility was officially closed in 1999. The mock-up was officially deeded to the City of Downey in December, 1999 as a unique artifact of the space shuttle program. In the summer of 2003, in order to protect the mock-up from encroaching development activities at the former engineering and manufacturing facility, the City engaged a team of professional museum conservators and movers to evaluate, inventory, partially disassemble, and move the shuttle to a nearby storage facility where it can be better protected and stabilized until it can be moved to a new, permanent home”. Text and Pictures from www.columbiaspacescience.org (Learning Center Website)