

CALIFORNIA RETROSPECTIVE

Homage to an aerospace giant

Exhibit casts spotlight on Hughes Aircraft Co.'s place in Southland history

CAITLIN YOSHIKO
KANDIL

JoAnn Cowans has been married for 58 years, but it wasn't until this year that she understood the import of her husband's career.

Ken Cowans had worked for the defense contractor Hughes Aircraft Co., which many credit with helping to end the Cold War, and most of his work was secret.

"The bulk of the work was classified at Hughes," JoAnn Cowans said. "So Hughes people in general don't talk much about it."

But over time, as classified material became acceptable to discuss, she started to learn more about her husband's development of high-tech cooling systems and the implications these inventions had on geopolitics.

"I never realized what Hughes had done," Cowans said. "The people were dedicated to winning the Cold War, and their work was really important."

She spent months researching the history of Hughes and digging up artifacts from her husband's time at the company, which was founded by Howard Hughes in 1932. She also solicited personal accounts from other former Hughes employees, hoping to better piece together the military electronics company's past.

With these materials, including old company newsletters and engineering tools, she approached the Fullerton Public Library about creating a public exhibit so that the city — which was home to a Hughes plant for nearly 40 years — could learn about a company whose historical importance has long gone unnoticed.

The Hughes Aircraft exhibit will be on display at the library in January and February, culminating Feb. 20 in an appearance by D. Kenneth Richardson, former Hughes president and author of "Hughes After Howard: The Story of Hughes Aircraft Company."

The company named for the business tycoon and aerospace engineer started by building aircraft during World War II. After the war, it shifted its focus to electronics, including radar, satellite and missile systems.

Originally headquartered in Culver City, Hughes became a top defense contractor and one of the largest employers in Southern California.

Hughes' development of new military technology is often credited with helping to end the Cold War — a view that many former employees embrace.

"We had a sense that we were conquering Russia



Photographs by KEVIN CHANG Weekend

JOANN COWANS spent months searching for artifacts from the time her husband, Ken Cowans, worked at Hughes Aircraft Co.



THE MEMORABILIA and research on Hughes that JoAnn Cowans collected will be on display at the Fullerton Public Library in January and February.

during the Cold War," said Ken Cowans, who worked at Hughes from 1957 to 1969. "And I feel very good about defeating the Soviet Union, because freedom in the Soviet bloc was almost nonexistent."

Larry Iboshi, an electrical engineer at Hughes from 1961 to 1995, worked on sonar systems for the company.

"Our job was to keep track of where the Russian submarines were," he said. "We were able to upgrade the torpedoes that submarines used so you don't just point it and hope it hits the target — it knows how to listen and track its target."

But Peter Westwick, director of the aerospace

history project for the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, said the relationship between Hughes and the end of the Cold War is not that simple.

"There's an old saying that the Cold War was won in El Segundo," he said, referring to the concentration of defense contractors, including Rockwell, Lockheed and TRW. "I think that argument is overly simplistic. There are a lot of factors that went into ending the Cold War, and no single factor was dominant — ethnic nationalisms, the Afghanistan war, the price of oil in the 1980s and the cost of maintaining both

internal and external empire."

And there are also those who are skeptical that this weapons build-up was worth it.

"Some critics would say that this arms race was unnecessary, bloated, and vast resources — billions if not trillions of dollars and valuable brainpower — that might have been better spent solving social problems here in the United States," Westwick said.

Some of Hughes' technology was developed for commercial use, most notably the communications satellites that power XM Radio and DirecTV, which Hughes once owned; minia-

turizing computers, which led to the smartphones of today; and in-flight entertainment systems, which Iboshi worked on later in his career.

Hughes was part of an aerospace industry that helped to shape the entire region.

"You could look at almost any aspect of Southern California culture in the Cold War and it was touched by aerospace," Westwick said. This included the "Space Age aesthetic" of the area's architecture, Hollywood's computer animation technology and even surfing, which saw a "revolution in surfboard design" driven in part by aerospace, he said.

In addition, the industry helped to drive population and economic growth.

"For much of the 20th century, aerospace was the economic engine, and it lifted up hundreds of thousands of Los Angeles-area families into the middle class," Westwick said. "That whole image of the age of affluence, leisure culture, going to the beaches, recreation — that was built on aerospace dollars."

Hughes also had an outside influence on the city of Fullerton, where it opened a \$6-million, 300,000-square-foot facility in 1957.

"It was one of the first big industries that was brought to Fullerton," said Cheri Pape, adult services librarian of local history at the Fullerton Public Library. At

its peak in 1986, Hughes in Fullerton had 14,000 people on its payroll, making it the largest employer in the city. (At its height, the entire company employed 85,000.)

Hughes brought a "huge influx" of people to Fullerton. In 1950, before the company's arrival, the city had a population of nearly 14,000, Pape said, and by 1960, with the addition of Hughes, it had grown to 56,000.

"And once we had Hughes," she said, "Fullerton became a more attractive location for other industries, and lots of businesses came in around that time."

In 1994, after 37 years of operation, Hughes' Fullerton branch announced it was shutting down. The company had already been in decline for decades, following massive cuts to Pentagon spending after the Cold War. Then, in 1997, defense contractor Raytheon announced it was acquiring Hughes for \$9.5 billion.

Even though Hughes Aircraft Co. no longer exists, Ken Cowans sees its legacy enduring.

"The place where I worked, Google is now moving into," he said. "The work we did at Hughes formed the scientific basis for that which is done at Google, so it's interesting that they're moving into the same installation in Culver City."

Caitlin Yoshiko Kandil writes for Times Community News.

CRIME WATCH

Messy science of lineups

Study finds confident eyewitnesses may be more accurate in identifying suspects.

BRADLEY J. FIKES

The accuracy of eyewitness identification of criminal suspects increases with the certainty of the witness in the first test, according to a new study led by UC San Diego researchers.

In addition, traditional police lineups that show suspects along with known innocent people work best, the study found. The results mean recent legal reforms based on the supposed inaccuracy of identification by eyewitnesses should be reevaluated.

If confirmed by further research, the study offers a way to improve the usefulness of suspect identification, and adds new insight into the system's failures. Numerous studies and reports have found that eyewitness testimony is often unreliable, and the usefulness of this testimony is continually questioned in criminal cases.

The study was published Monday in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Eyewitness errors are the most frequent cause of wrongful convictions, according to the Innocence Project, a group that seeks to exonerate those wrongfully convicted.

John Wixted, an experimental psychologist at UC San Diego and one of the study's authors, said the study points to methods to reduce such errors.

Data from a 2013 Houston Police Department experiment in its robbery division were used in the study. Eyewitnesses were asked to rate their level of confidence as low, medium or high. Moreover, the lineups were double-blind, with neither the eyewitnesses nor the officer running the lineups knowing who the actual suspect is.

The experiment found that suspects identified by an eyewitness were more likely to be guilty than those identified by other evidence that didn't include an eyewitness. For those identified by eyewitnesses, 97 out of 114 were (85%) had independent corroborating evidence

of guilt against them. For those not so identified, only 67 out of 130 (51%) had such evidence.

Researchers said their results jibe with recent studies of simulated crimes that found eyewitness confidence strongly correlated to accuracy and validated the use of simultaneous lineups.

"The significance of our study is that these issues were investigated using actual eyewitnesses to a crime," the study stated. "Recent laboratory trends were confirmed: Eyewitness confidence was strongly related to accuracy, and simultaneous lineups were, if anything, diagnostically superior to sequential lineups. These results suggest that recent reforms in the legal system, which were based on the results of older research, may need to be reevaluated."

While memories can become unreliable over time, the first eyewitness assessments are more likely to be accurate, the study found. So instructions to juries to downplay this evidence, such as those recently adopted in New Jersey, deprive them of a useful tool. Subsequent

eyewitness recollections are less accurate, because they can become contaminated with other information, Wixted said.

In cases of wrongful conviction, the eyewitness often first gives an identification with a low confidence level, indicating that the recollection is likely to be erroneous, he said.

"But by the time the case gets to a court of law, there often has been other memory tests in between," Wixted said. "Now the witness is more [confident], because the picture is more familiar, and the police give confirming feedback.... But what everybody overlooked was that at the beginning, they were lacking in confidence."

Other studies must replicate the finding before it can be considered definitive, Wixted said. That means studying eyewitness accounts from other police departments to see if the finding was a fluke or a dependable observation.

"No scientific finding is completely trustworthy merely because one person publishes a study," he said.

Fikes writes for the San Diego Union-Tribune.

CALIFORNIA BRIEFING

CERRITOS

Man's body found in burning car

The body of a 55-year-old man was found Sunday in a burning sedan in Cerritos that had several gasoline cans inside, authorities said.

Shortly before 8 p.m., firefighters and investigators found the 1999 Toyota Corolla engulfed in flames in the 7800 block of Denni Street, said Deputy Mike Barraza of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. After the blaze was extinguished, investigators found the man's body in the front seat of the car, Barraza said. Officials said the unidentified victim lived in La Palma.

— MATT HAMILTON

SAN FRANCISCO

Two charged in children's deaths

Prosecutors have charged a couple with first-degree murder after authorities said severe abuse, torture and neglect caused the deaths of two young children whose bodies were found

stuffed in a plastic bin at a storage facility.

Tami Joy Huntsman and her 17-year-old companion were charged Monday after the bodies of the 3-year-old girl and 6-year-old boy were found Dec. 13.

Investigators believe the children died on Nov. 27 while in the care of the 39-year-old Huntsman in a Salinas apartment. Her relationship to the children remained unclear.

Prosecutors also charged the couple with three counts each of torture involving deprivation of food, shelter and clothing for at least a year.

— ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lottery results

Tonight's Mega Millions
Estimated jackpot: \$94 million
Sales close at 7:45 p.m.

For Monday, Dec. 21, 2015

Fantasy Five: 2-14-15-37-38

Daily Four: 6-9-0-7

Daily Three (midday): 6-5-8

Daily Three (evening): 8-9-5

Daily Derby:

(01) Gold Rush

(09) Winning Spirit

(08) Gorgeous George

Race time: 1:48.13

Results on the Internet:

www.latimes.com/lottery

General information:

(800) 568-8379

(Results not available at this number)