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Lawrence Dale Bell

April 5, 1894 - October 20, 1956

HIS LIFE: SEARCH

Larry Bell's death took from the U. S. a man who spent

LAWRENCE DALE BELL
April 5, 1894 - October 20, 1956

LAWRENCE Dale (Larry) Bell, a tireless, diminutive man whose vision and phenomenal energy carried him from an Indiana farm to leadership in a major U. S. Industry, was laid to rest last Tuesday in Buffalo, N. Y.

Bell, board chairman of Bell Aircraft Corp. and dean of United States aircraft executives, died Saturday afternoon, Oct. 20, the victim of a heart condition. He was 62 years of age, 44 of which were spent setting the pace in aviation.

To people everywhere, he was known simply as "Larry," and his name was almost synonymous with aviation's greatest achievements.

More than 1,500 mourners paid tribute at funeral services for him in Buffalo's Delaware Baptist Church. Included were civic and business leaders, officers from all branches of the Armed Forces, industry colleagues, and coworkers.

Bell employes formed an honor guard outside the church and the cortege proceeded to Forest Lawn Cemetery, where brief committal rites and a Masonic service were held.

The Rev. Robert N. Zearfoss, pastor of the church, told the overflow congregation:

"Life has purpose beyond what we can see and touch and hear. We share a portion of the spirit of Lawrence Bell, but the greater portion of his life is now in the hands of his Creator, far above the highest accomplishments of man's conquest of space.

"Lawrence Bell," the pastor continued, "believed the greatest horizons are beyond the physical life and now he has entered that frontier."

Larry Bell probably had more to do with forging aviation frontiers than any single man in the 53 years of powered flight. But to Larry, once called America's most seasoned dreamer, the real challenge was that of the future in the wonderful world he believed directly ahead for aviation. Determined that his company would lead the way in the search for a better tomorrow, he put such tremendous emphasis on research that one veteran of the Penta-

FOR TOMORROW

his life pioneering for the future

gon felt moved to explain to a magazine writer recently that:

"Because of Larry Bell's special personality, Bell has come to be a 'frontier' company. They're most likely to be all steamed up there about something that's 10 or 15 years away, not something they can put right on the assembly line."

The Visionary Flame

His was a personality that accepted no limitation and overcame many. A true leader, he inspired others, brought out the best in men, yet never lost that touch of humbleness and humility that led people to call him "Larry" and feel perfectly at ease in his company.

His phenomenal success in the industry never ceased to amaze others. This success was based upon ambition, vision and just plain drive. He had little scientific educational background other than as a graduate of Polytechnic High School in Santa Monica, Calif.

He garnered his ability by making planes and over the years was credited with "instinct" for design and production. To him, blueprints looked and felt right or they didn't, and he seldom guessed wrong.

The visionary flame never failed him. He had it when, at 20, he became superintendent of Glen L. Martin's aircraft plant in Los Angeles. It inspired him, and his tireless energy led him to vice president and general manager, first of the Martin Co. in 1917, and then of Consolidated Aircraft in 1929, which he had joined in Buffalo the year before.

It sustained him in 1935 when, after Consolidated left Buffalo, he decided to found his own company. He rang doorbells in that bleak depression year to sell stock to help raise $150,000, his company's total original capitalization.

It flared in 1937 when, after two years of meeting payrolls by subcontracts with established companies, he unveiled the Airacuda. A twin-engine, multi-place, long-range plane, with pusher props, the Airacuda embodied his revolutionary ideas and was the first in a long line of pioneering aircraft, the more notable of which are:

- The P-39, World War II fighter that featured engine behind pilot, tricycle landing gear, 37-milimeter cannon which fired through the nose.
- The country's first jet-propelled plane.
- The world's first commercial helicopter.
- The world's first supersonic airplane.
- The world's first jet VTOL aircraft.
- The X2, world's fastest and highest flying manned airplane (more than 2,000 miles an hour and 126,000 feet altitude).

He was born Lawrence Dale Bell in Mentone, Ind., April 5, 1894, the youngest of 10 children of Isaac Evans and Harriet Sarber Bell. His family moved to California when he was a boy. His aviation career began in 1912, and nearly ended one year later when tragedy struck.

His first job was as a mechanic for two exhibition pilots, his brother, Grover E. Bell, and Lincoln Beachy. His brother was killed in an airplane crash in 1913. Stunned, Larry decided to quit the aircraft business.

However, Bell changed his mind, went to work in Martin's factory, and helped develop the world's first bomber for Pancho Villa. When Martin's superintendent resigned, Bell, 20, got the job and suggested that Martin hire an engineer, something no airplane maker had ever done before. Martin agreed. The man they hired was Donald W. Douglas.

In the early years, the three pioneers worked closely in Martin's plant. When Martin retired in 1952, Bell became the top man in seniority among the country's aircraft executives.

His Own Company

He was vice president and general manager of Consolidated at Buffalo in 1935 when that company, now Convair Division of General Dynamics, moved to San Diego. It was then that Bell started his stock-selling campaign to found Bell Aircraft.

Larry's company was incorporated

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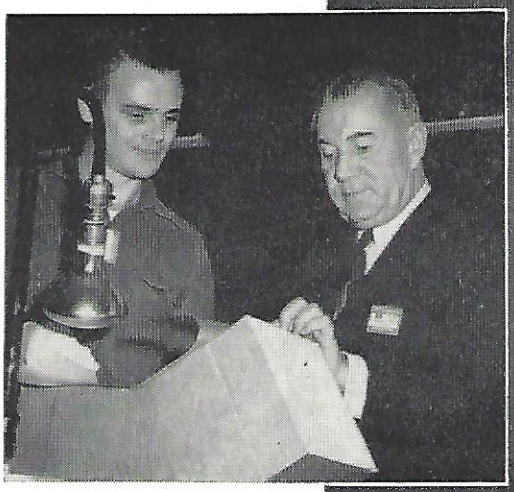
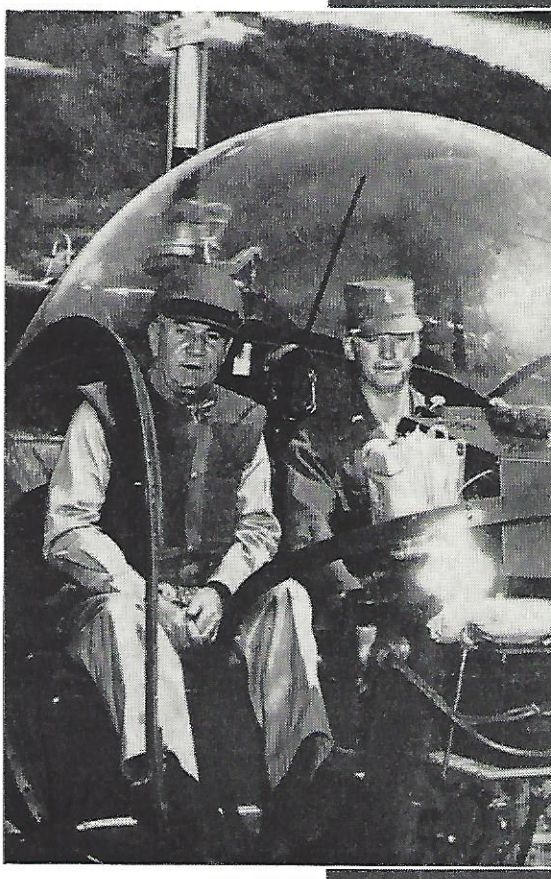
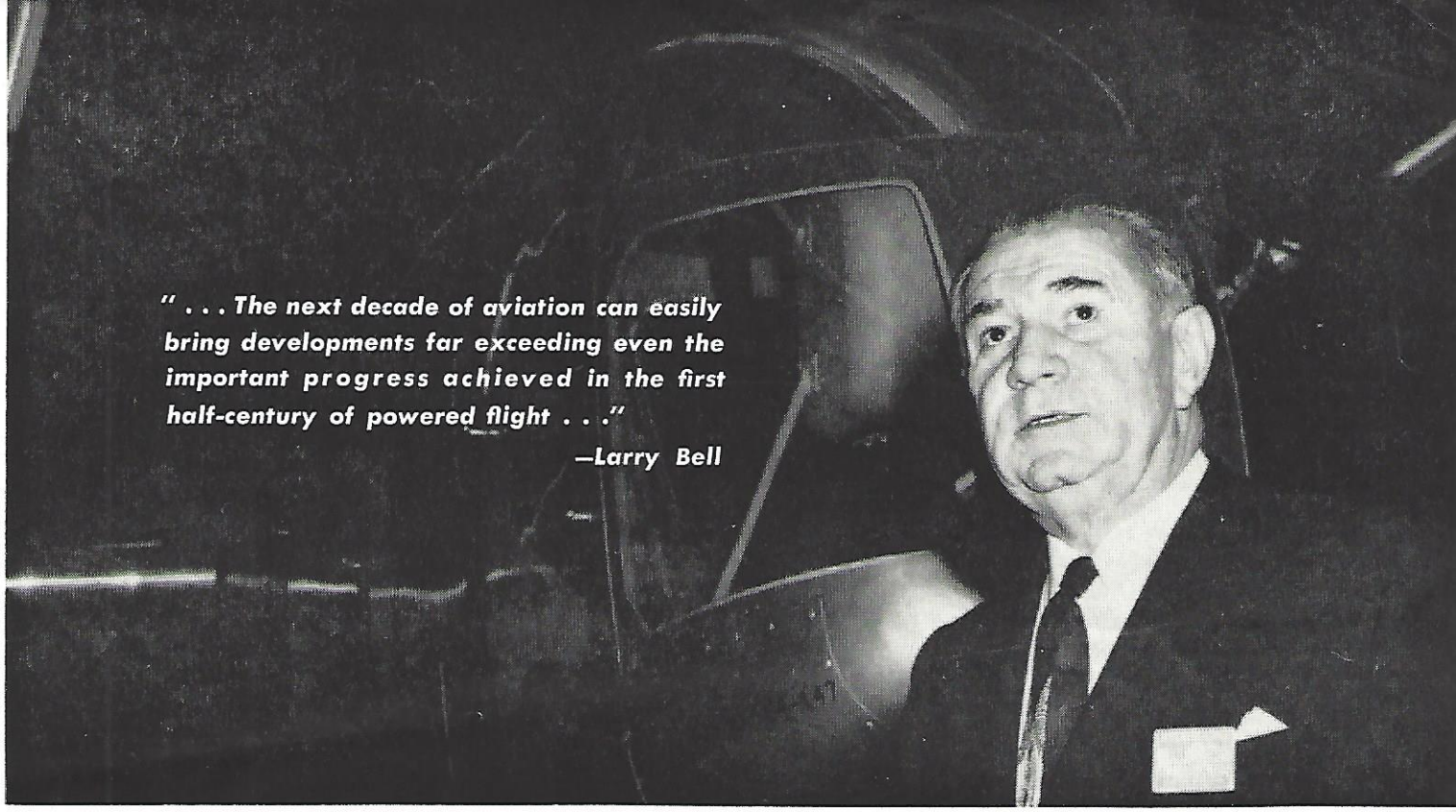


On tour of the Texas Division factory in 1955, Larry stops to chat with C. F. Little in Dept. 37.



One of greatest achievements of any Bell product, Larry thought, was record of Bell helicopters in Korea. He went to the front lines to see them.



HIS LIFE: SEARCH FOR THE FUTURE

July 10, 1935 and he served it as president until last Sept. 18 when illness prompted him to step down. He was elected chairman of the board and Leston P. Faneuf was named president.

In World War II, the Bell plants turned out mostly fighters and Larry's contributions to the war effort through his then far-flung facilities were legend.

Bell engineers worked closely with the Air Technical Services Command and helped develop many innovations still in use. Remote radio flight control, systems to transmit flight data to automatic recorders, and firing systems, are examples. At the same time, Bell was busy turning out 663 Superfortresses in one of the world's largest industrial plants at Marietta, Ga., and developing the P-59 Airacomet, first U. S. jet.

Bell directed his own production and engineering, at the same time finding time to serve terms as president of the National Aircraft War Production Council, East Coast, Inc. As chief of two wartime councils, he spearheaded interchange of plans, materials and key personnel to help the war effort.

He and his company received virtually every type of award for war production, and almost every honor to be had in aircraft has been bestowed on Bell himself. Included are the Daniel Guggenheim Medal, awarded in 1944; honorary degree of doctor of science from Hobart College; Chancellor's Medal from the University of Buffalo; honorary doctor of engineering degree from Thomas S. Clarkson Memorial College of Technology; French Legion of Honor; the Collier Trophy, aviation's highest award; and the Air Force Citation, highest award the AF can make to a civilian, in 1950 and 1955.

Pursuit for the Unknown

But plaudits for past feats failed to slacken Bell's zealous pursuit for the unknown, the untried.

It was this pursuit that led him to hire Arthur M. Young in 1941 to start work on the Bell helicopter. Bell gave Young a shop of his own near Buffalo, away from the company's other activities. He told him to work without interruption and personally spent hours with Young in the isolated shop despite the press of other duties.

His faith in Young, and in the future of rotary flight, paid off when Bell was one of the first passengers in the full-scale model helicopter developed by Young.

Bell Aircraft received the world's first commercial helicopter license issued by the CAA in March, 1946, and nine months later the company made its first commercial delivery.

Korea further justified Larry's faith in the helicopter. Bell helicopters alone evacuated more than 18,000 wounded from the front lines and Larry himself journeyed to war-torn Korea to visit with United Nations fighting men. Since then, Bell had seen the helicopter grow into an important tool for industry and commerce and several new models progress from the drawing board to production.

It was near the end of World War II that Bell began to look to another horizon, the attack on supersonic flight and the cracking of the "unbreakable" sound barrier.

"Throw away the books," he told his engineers. "In supersonic flight, there are no previous aircraft standards." This type thinking culminated, finally, in the X2.

Bell designed and is building the rocket-powered GAM63 air-to-surface guided missile, capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, and—reflecting Larry's leadership — has plunged deeper and deeper into the realm of electronics in aircraft.

Bell was active in many industry,

service, and business organizations and officer and director of several companies other than Bell.

Philanthropic Work

Widely known for his philanthropic and charitable work, he was a director of the American Heart Association, president of the Society for the Rehabilitation of the Facially Disfigured, Inc., a member and past chairman of the board of Aircraft Industries Association and a life trustee of Clarkson College.

The Bell Foundation has helped many worthy causes, including donation of libraries to the high school in Mentone, Ind., and in the Lawrence D. Bell High School, opened this year near Euless, Tex, for the Hurst-Euless Independent School District. He died before formal dedication of the Lawrence D. Bell High School, parts of which are still under construction.

Survivors include two brothers, Clyde Bell of Baltimore and Vaughn Bell of Santa Monica, and a sister, Mrs. Mary Mills, also of Santa Monica.

Eight employes who have been with Larry since he founded the company in 1935 served as pallbearers at his funeral.

At The Funeral

Among the many dignitaries who attended Bell's funeral were Lt. Gen. Thomas Herren, commander of the First Army, representing Gen. Maxwell Taylor, U. S. army chief of staff; Maj. Gen. William F. McKee, vice commander, Air Materiel Command, representing Donald A. Quarles, secretary of the Air Force; Brig. Gen. Clyde Mitchell, Air Materiel Command; Rear Adm. F. N. Kivette, representing Adm. Arleigh Burke, U. S. Navy chief of staff.

Bell Aircraft directors from out of town who attended were Ellery O. Huntington Jr., David M. Milton, R. Sheppard Elliot Jr., Albert Fink Milton, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick F. Robinson, all of New York City; Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Gaylord, Fort Worth; Mr. and Mrs. Otto A. Pfaff, South Bend, Ind.; and C. S. Stuckenholt, Cleveland, O.

Other dignitaries at the rites included:
Dr. William G. Vannote, president, Clarkson College of Technology; James Murray, vice president, Boeing Airplane Co.; William Davey, vice president, Vertol Aircraft Corp.; Adm. D. C. Ramsey, USN, (ret.) president, Aircraft Industries Assn.; Mundy I. Peale, president, Republic Aviation Corp.; George A. Strompl, representing Donald W. Douglas, president of Douglas Aircraft Co., Inc.

Also, John DeForest, former Bell director; Arthur L. Fornoff of the Bell Aircraft Supply Corp., Glendale Calif.; Charles Hall, Bell's Dayton, O. representative; Col. Stuart G. McLennan, Bell's Washington representative; Peter Pinkernell, vice president of the Arthur Anderson Co., New York City.

Also, James P. Carmichael, formerly vice president in charge of Bell's World War II bomber division in Marietta, Ga.; Maj. Gen. James F. Phillips, (ret.) Aircraft Industries Assn.; Morrison Rockhill of Warsaw, Ind., one of Larry's boyhood friends; John E. Bierwirth, Jr., New York City; Dr. Harry Shapiro, executive director of the Society for the Rehabilitation of the Facially Disfigured; Mrs. Mabel Perry and John Bell, both of Washington, niece and nephew of Larry.

From the Many Tributes Paid . . .

I am extremely sorry to hear of the death of Lawrence D. Bell. . . . I have written to the family but wanted you to know also of our deep regret at this loss of the company, the Air Force and the nation.

—Donald A. Quarles, Secretary of the Air Force

On behalf of the Army, I should like to express our deep sympathy on the passing of Larry Bell, the founder and chairman of the board of your company. We recall with gratitude his service as a member of the mobility sub-panel of the Army Scientific Advisory Panel. He surely will be missed by all those who had the pleasure of working with him.

—Wilbur M. Brucker, Secretary of the Army

The loss of Larry Bell is keenly felt by all of us. His inspiration and leadership helped us build The Texas Division and his memory will continue to guide us through the years.

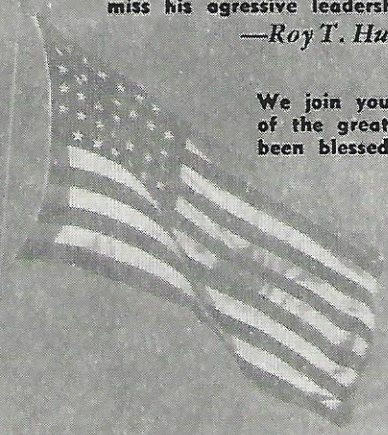
—Employes of the Texas Division

Please convey to the family and associates of the late Larry Bell our deepest sympathy in their great bereavement. One of my oldest friends and associates in the early days of aviation, I knew and admired his great ability and sterling qualities. His many contributions to aviation's progress will long remain his finest monument and I'll match the esteem in which he was held by all who knew him.

—Donald W. Douglas, Pres. Douglas Aircraft

All of Curtiss Wright join with me in expressing deepest sympathy to Bell Aircraft on the passing of Larry Bell whose contributions to aviation progress extend from the triplane era to tomorrow's rockets and jets. The entire industry will miss his agressive leadership and wise counsel.

—Roy T. Hurley, Pres., Curtiss Wright Corp.



We join you in mourning the loss of one of the greatest men our country has ever been blessed with.

—James S. Ricklefs, Pres., Rick Helicopters

Helicopter Council membership and staff are deeply shocked and grieved at the untimely passing of Larry, our first chairman and a continual staunch supporter of our program. Our sincere sympathies to you and all his associates who have lost a true leader and devoted friend.

—The Helicopter Council

Sincerest condolences on your loss. Larry Bell was a great man and a great friend.

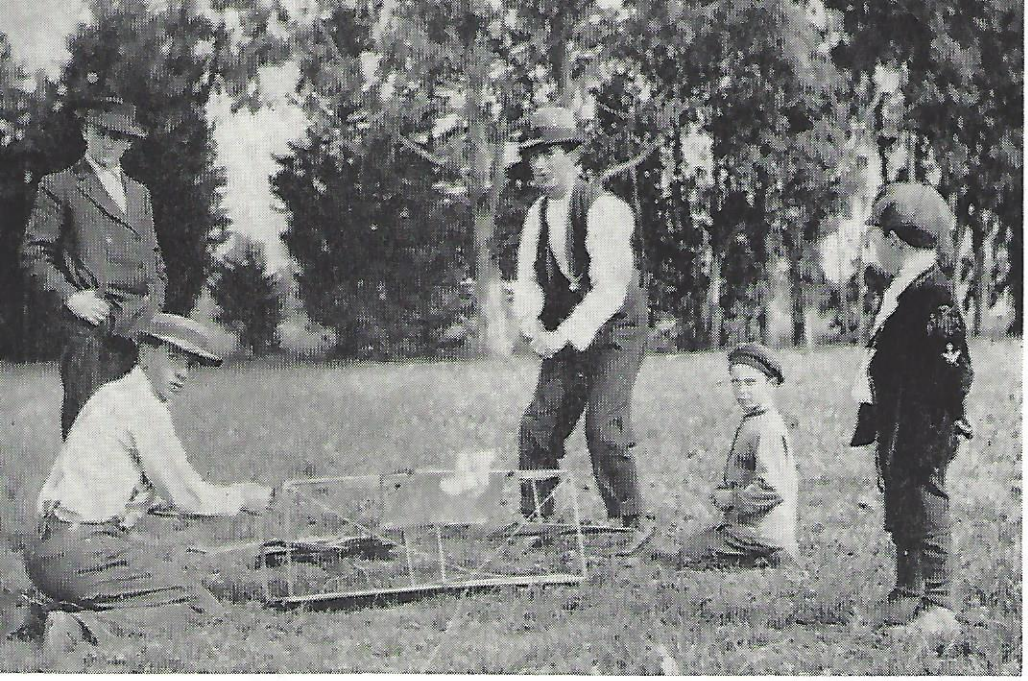
—Art Young, Malvern, Pa., Inventor of the Bell Helicopter

Terribly shocked to learn of Larry's death. He was a great pioneer of aviation and his place cannot be filled. Please express the sympathy of all members of the Boeing organization to Larry's family and his associates. We have lost a fine friend.

—William M. Allen, Pres., Boeing Airplane Co.

The death of Larry Bell is a great loss to the nation. His deeds and his skill and his personality have profoundly influenced the aircraft industry to which he devoted his life. Those of us who have worked closely with him feel a deep sense of personal loss. We at Vertol extend your organization our sincerest sympathy.

—Don R. Berlin, Pres., Vertol Aircraft Corp.



In 1910, Larry (lower left) built his first model airplane. His brother, Grover (center) was killed in 1913 plane crash and Larry nearly quit the industry.

LARRY

His personality was

EARLY in Larry Bell's aviation career, a Japanese Army officer asked him to teach him to fly an airplane. Because aircraft then had only one place, Larry taught the officer on the ground, then watched him solo successfully.

There's nothing particularly unusual about this — except that Larry Bell himself didn't learn to fly until three years later!

This incident illustrates something of Larry, the man. He was a dynamic salesman and leader with never-faltering confidence. He believed he could do most anything he set out to do, and usually did. What made him great?

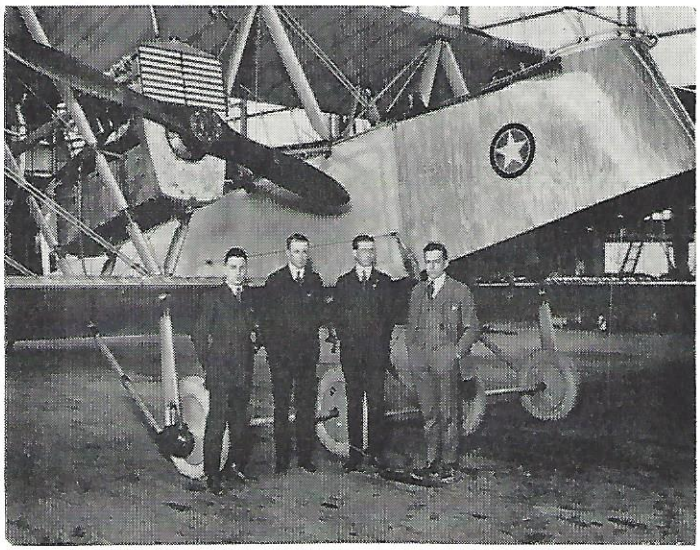
He had vision. He seemed able to see into the future, and this insight made it possible for Bell to break the sound barrier, make the helicopter a practical business tool, build the world's fastest, highest-flying plane.

He had ambition. His visionary flame was backed by the will to achieve, and his achievements speak for themselves.

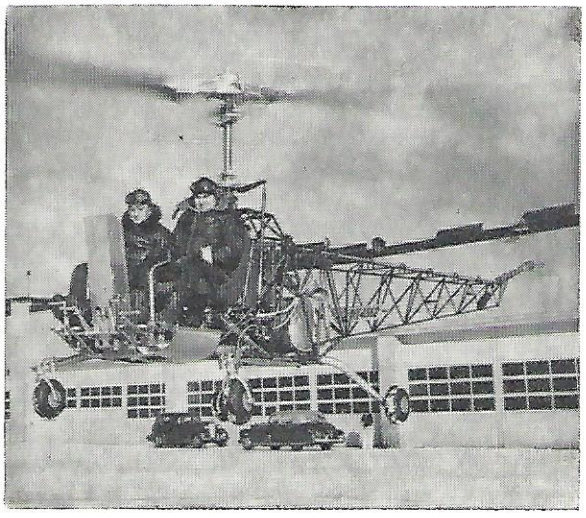
He had unbounded energy and enthusiasm. If you walked with Larry Bell, you almost ran or were left behind, and you didn't try to open doors for him. He worked a "killing" schedule through World War II and, indeed, his life.

He had almost uncanny instinct and

Sixteen-year-old Larry takes wheel of 1911 pusher bi-plane.



Early 1920's brought together four men destined to leave their stamp on aviation. From left: Larry; Eric Springer, a Douglas VP; Glenn L. Martin; and Donald W. Douglas.



Larry (right) gets ride in first Bell Model 47 helicopter in 1946, remained ever-enthusiastic about helicopters and their future in aviation.

BELL, THE MAN

a blend of qualities that make men great

ability. His formal education ended at high school. But, even in this incredibly complex aeronautical era, he wasn't often fooled on aircraft design and production. In fact, he inspired engineers to overcome goals they thought impossible.

He was friendly. If you knew aircraft pioneer Lawrence D. Bell, you called him "Larry." Often, he visited production lines, chatting with employes.

He was courageous. Louis A. Johnson, a former assistant secretary of war, told how Larry Bell pulled a shroud from a Messerschmitt plane, then top secret, on a visit to an underground Berlin factory in 1938. He drew from memory for the Army Air Corps blueprints that materialized into the Douglas A-20 attack bomber used against Germany. "The Germans would have shot anyone else," Johnson said.

He had humility. Larry took little personal credit. On the 20th anniversary of his company, he said: "What we have done we could not have done merely as a company on our own," then thanked customers, communities, bankers, suppliers, friends.

He had a sincere concern for his fellow man. He continually tried to protect his employes against aircraft peaks and valleys. And, though he received dozens of personal honors, he gained more personal satisfaction when the American Legion honored him and his company for employment of physically handicapped veterans in 1951. Of 9,123 employes at the time, 4,113 or 46 per cent, were veterans and 943 or 23 per cent were handicapped. Bell supported many charitable institutions working for the benefit of mankind.

He had purpose. Although determined to keep his company healthy, the desire to make money was secondary to Larry. He wholeheartedly believed the U. S. must maintain a strong striking force to preserve itself and contributed in every way he could toward this end. He hoped that Bell Aircraft's work would help make the world a better place in which to live, and his pride soared when Bell helicopters, acting as life-savers rather than as death-dealing craft, rescued more than 18,000 wounded United Nations troops in Korea.

He had love. It extended in every direction, especially to his work. "I wouldn't change jobs with any man," he once said, "for no other industry presents so absorbing a mingling of change, science and romance as the manufacture of aircraft." And, like the small boy, he admitted:

"No matter where I am, at home or elsewhere, when an airplane flies overhead, I'm going to go outside and look at it; I don't think I'll ever get over that."

A dynamic leader, Larry was warmly human. Here, he pets "Lady," former mascot at this Division's Globe plant.

Presidents and leaders the world over were among Larry's acquaintances. Here, he accompanies President Franklin D. Roosevelt on 1940 auto tour of Bell plant.

RIGHT—Larry prepares to fly in TP-30 WWII trainer. →

From the Texas Division Manager . . .

TELEPHONE
ATlas 4 3424

OFFICES AND FACTORY
HURST, TEXAS

BELL *Aircraft* CORPORATION
TEXAS DIVISION
POST OFFICE BOX 482 • FORT WORTH 1, TEXAS

October 26, 1956

Fellow employes:

In this time of great sorrow, it is impossible to even try to describe my own feeling of loss and shock at the death of Larry Bell, the man who founded our company and who believed so devoutly in the helicopters which we build.

Larry's death is indeed a great loss to Bell Aircraft Corporation and his country, but the scope of his vision and planning will be with us many years to come. He spoke of the helicopter in only the most glowing terms, calling it the most mobile and most nearly self-contained vehicle in the world.

He steadfastly believed in the helicopter's ultimate future as a machine for the mass market and always told those who asked only to give us a little time and we would bring dimensions of transportation to the world that no one dares even dream of today.

Larry firmly believed that we are already leaders in what will become one of the greatest industries in this country. His dynamic leadership is largely responsible for our present enviable position and we can do no greater honor to the memory of Larry Bell than to dedicate ourselves anew to his goals and plans for our product. Hesitation on our part at a time like this is the last thing he would have wanted, preferring instead to place his trust in people who, like he always did, look to the future with confidence.

Sincerely,
Harvey Gaylord
Harvey Gaylord

TEXAS EDITION BELL *Aircraft* NEWS

Norman Spray, Editor
Hurst Plant, Ext. 406

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