

Star Wars and Stealth

Vought closes the 1970's and begins the 1980's with a \$1B order backlog and employment at 9,207. The eighties continued a period of growth and change within the Company organization. In April 1980 Vought won the \$115.8M Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) production contract, and Billie Smith became Vice President and General Manager of the program.

On April 12, 1981, the Columbia space shuttle orbiter made its first flight and became the first reusable manned spacecraft. Vought produced the shuttle's space radiators wing leading edges, and the nose cap. The leading edges and nose cap were fabricated from reinforced carbon-carbon (RCC), a material produced using a Vought-developed high-temperature process.

In August of 1981 Boeing rolled out its latest jetliner, the 767. Vought produced its horizontal stabilizer and other airframe structural components.

In 1981 President Reagan, in his quest for a strong defense, asked for 100 B-1B long-range combat aircraft, as well as 132 super-secret B-2 stealth bombers to replace the aging fleet of B-52's. Vought became a subcontractor for Rockwell International and Northrop Corporation, prime contractors for those two aircraft respectively.

On August 19, 1982 Vought officially debuted the successful MLRS weapon system.

Paul Thayer, CEO and President of LTV Corporation, resigned on December 8, 1982 to become Deputy Secretary of Defense. Raymond A. Hay succeeded Thayer at LTV on December 12, 1982.

On January 27, 1983, Vought was awarded the Small Radar Homing Interceptor (SRHIT) contract. This program evolved through a series of projects (FLAGE and ERINT) and finally resulted in a major contract to replace the Patriot missile (PAC-3).

On May 24, 1983, LTV Aerospace and Defense (LTVAD) Company formed two divisions — Vought AeroProducts Division (VAPD), headed by Ed Cvetko as President, and Vought Missiles and Advance Programs Division (VMAPD) headed by Bob Parker as President. LTV announced the acquisition in August of AM General, producer of the Army "Hummer" ground vehicle. In September the merger of Sierra Research Corporation into the aerospace group of LTV was announced. In December 1983, LTVAD was realigned into four divisions, with Bob Kirk as President and CEO. This new group consisted of VAPD, VMAPD, Sierra Research, and AM General.

The employees' 1983 canned food drive at the Jefferson St. and Marshall Drive facilities netted a total of 11,000 cans of food for the North Texas Food Bank.

In the spring of 1984 LTVAD entered the Navy Supersonic Low-Altitude Target (SLAT) competition. MLRS passed the first "fly-to-buy" test. At the Jefferson facility the Flexible Machining Cell (FMC) began its preliminary testing.

June 28, 1984 marked the 25th anniversary of the Scout Program, started in 1959 by Vought under contract to NASA.

The first Rockwell International B-1B bomber was rolled out in September of 1984 from Rockwell's Palmdale, California facility.

One month later the Scout missile successfully passed its 104th launch from the Western Test Range at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California. In January 1985, VMAPD jumped into the competition for the Joint Tactical Missile System — Army (JTAMS—A), and Martin Marietta joined in as a partner.

VMAPD had a successful flight on the SRHIT program and successfully passed high-rpm spin test on their Extended Long-Range Integrated Technology Evaluation Program (ELITE) RCC turbine wheel. The first two-place A-7P was delivered to Portugal in June 1985.

VAPD offered the strike fighter to the USAF in July 1985, and in September VMAPD successfully launched its Anti-Satellite vehicle (ASAT) from a F-15 aircraft. December 1985 proved to be very rewarding for the employees, as 44,433 cans of food were collected for the Christmas Canned Food Drive.

At VMAPD the year began with contract awards for development of the hypervelocity missile (HVM) and a contract for integration of the TCAMS into the MLRS weapon system. Meanwhile, VAPD continued production of the B-1B, the B-2, and all Boeing subcontract programs — the future looked very bright.

In June the Navy celebrated 75 years of aviation, in which Vought aircraft played a key role.

Because of financial difficulties with its steel producing operations, LTV Corporation on July 17, 1986 petitioned for reorganization under Chapter 11 of the Federal Bankruptcy Code. Only time would tell whether good or bad days were ahead for Vought.

LTV reported a \$610M loss in September 1986, and the aerospace and defense business was once again realigned.

LTV Missiles and Electronics Group was formed with Bob Parker as President, and LTV Aircraft Products Group was formed with Billie Smith as President. Bob Kirk left LTV Aerospace Corp. to join Allied Signal Aerospace and Electronics Company.

In December 1986 LTV Corporation reported a charge (loss) of \$2.1B.

The LTV Aircraft Products Group collected, in 1986, more than 205,200 cans for the Food Bank of North Texas.

A contract to LTVAPG from Douglas Aircraft Company (DAC) to fabricate C-17 subassemblies, which had been previously agreed to, was awarded in February 1987. In March, LTVAPG won a \$500M Boeing contract for the aft body section and horizontal and vertical stabilizers for the 747 and 757, as well as the vertical stabilizer for the 767.

By April of 1987, LTV Aerospace and Defense operations reported receipt of more than \$1.5B in new contracts.

In May the APG was awarded the A-7 Plus (YA-7F) contract worth \$133.6M.

Work began in June on the High Tech Flexible Composite Center to support the projected high-rate production of composite structural assemblies for the B-2.

In December of 1987 the employees of the Aero Products Group again surpassed their previous efforts and collected over 384,000 cans of food for the North Texas Food Bank.

Boeing rolled out its new 747-400 in February of 1988.

The B-1B Program ended on a high note when the 100th and last, B-1B was delivered to the Air Force in April of 1988. The Air Force announced in August of 1988 that the checkout activities of the B-2 had begun and rollout was scheduled for mid-November.

Once again employees of Aircraft Products Group outdid former efforts and collected over 700,000 cans for the 1988 Christmas Canned Food Drive.

In January 1989 LTV reported income of \$95.8M on sales of \$1.8B; things continued to look good.

LTV Aircraft Products Group President Billy Smith announced Gordon Williams would head the Commercial Aircraft and Group Operations, a move designed to streamline the Boeing Programs.

In July 1989 Gordon Williams was appointed President of LTV Aircraft Products Group (APG), and the company was restructured to streamline the Aircraft Group. The B-2 made its maiden flight on July 17, 1989. In August APG was awarded an additional \$36M contract to produce 106 engine nacelles for 53 Canadair Regional Jet aircraft. In November the YA7F made its first flight. December saw employees collect 1.1M cans for the 1989 Christmas Canned Food Drive.

In 1990 the LTV Aircraft Products Group participated in three unsuccessful programs: (1) the Pampa, a joint-service trainer in a teaming arrangement with Fabrica Militar de Avionics of Argentina; (2) the Panther 800, a light utility helicopter, manufactured by Aerospatiale of France; and, (3) the McDonnell Douglas AX which was canceled due to funding limitations.

On February 20, 1992 LTV received court approval to sell AM General, and the divesting of assets by LTV began. In August the Carlyle Group acquired 51 percent of the Aircraft Division and Northrop purchased the remaining 49 percent. The Loral Corporation purchased 100 percent of the Missile Division. The Aircraft Division was renamed Vought Aircraft Company, and the Missiles Division was renamed Loral Vought Missiles Division by the new owners.

The first meeting of the present "Chance Vought Survivors" took place on October 22, 1992 with the objective of getting a few Chance Vought retirees together for fellowship, to keep alive the Chance Vought heritage and share their career experience. Qualified members had to be professional level personnel that had worked for Chance Vought Aircraft Company, that is, they had drawn a pay check from the company prior to 1 October 1962, and were retired.

At the end of 1992, 1.04M cans of food were again collected by Vought employees for the Christmas Canned Food Drive.

Employment at the Vought Aircraft Division was stable at 8,961 at the end of 1992.