

# Frontiers

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## “Boeing Surplus may not be a cash cow, but return on investment cannot always be measured in dollars.”

—Bob Stevens, Renton, Wash.



### Memories stored

I'm writing to the people who can stop the imminent closure of the Boeing Surplus Store in Kent, Wash.

I grew up going there with my father and continue to do so now. I've spent countless hours and dollars there, foraging and dragging home indispensable materials and treasures to feed my addiction of designing and building all manner of useful things. I served eight years with Boeing from 1986 to 1994 as a toolmaker and now work as a toolmaker in the R&D shop of the manufacturing engineering division of a local company—which got its start with tools, machines and materials from Boeing Surplus.

Boeing, in addition to building the world's finest aircraft, has a proud history and long-standing tradition of being a

good corporate citizen by supporting the communities in which it does business. Boeing Surplus may not be the corporation's cash cow, but return on investment cannot always be measured in dollars. Sometimes the greatest rewards come in the form of intangibles, such as community support and goodwill, that foster creative talent and real-world job skills in the community's people. Without Boeing Surplus, I could not have afforded to buy or even had access to the

materials and tools I have purchased from your store over the years. And without these items, I would not have had the opportunity nor the means to discover my talent and develop my skills as a toolmaker and craftsman.

I hope this letter is not a lone plea, but one voice in a swelling chorus of people who have benefited greatly from Boeing Surplus and will sorely miss the Boeing Surplus we came to know and love all these years. You don't have any competition. If it is just a matter of money, raise your prices. We'll pay it (within reason). Please don't let the dream die.

—Bob Stevens  
 Renton, Wash.

**Editor's note:** Ken Botham, Shared Services Group General Services senior manager and the person who leads sur-

plus management and reclamation, provided this response:

"We have long known that the retail store has many loyal customers who find treasures amid the company's surplus. While Boeing has applied innovation and technology to new, Lean production processes, it also has been using Web-based technology to manage surplus materials. Those methods have matured enough that now they are capable of eliminating a significant expenditure of resources required for handling, sorting, transport and storage.

"But the decision also weighed the intangible educational and community roles played by the store. The many intangible benefits you enjoyed at the store are now supported by Boeing in other, more effective ways that were not in place when the store opened in 1972.

"Boeing is a strong supporter of numerous science and engineering educational programs to encourage people of all ages to tinker with technology and explore their talents for innovation. In addition, in the Puget Sound region, Boeing supports the Museum of Flight and the Future of Flight & Boeing Everett Tour as a couple of exceptional 'windows into Boeing.'

"Further, the closure of the retail store does not mean that there is a change in Boeing's commitment to reduce, reuse and recycle. Surplus materials will continue to be processed for sale or reuse, but through large-lot wholesale, online or direct-buy mechanisms.

"Boeing will continue to find buyers who can make productive use of Boeing's unneeded materials and equipment, but it will be done through other, more efficient channels such as online purchasing or direct contracting with resellers."

## Letters guidelines

Boeing Frontiers provides its letters page for readers to state their opinions. The page is intended to encourage an exchange of ideas and information that stimulates dialogue on issues or events in the company or the aerospace industry.

The opinions may not necessarily reflect those of The Boeing Company. Letters must include name, organization and a telephone number for verification purposes. Letters may be edited for grammar, syntax and size.