

# 50 years at the leading edge

## Developmental Center keeps proving 'it can be done'

By Mike Lombardi

On June 19, a small group gathered to rededicate the Boeing Developmental Center, located in Tukwila, Wash., at the south end of Boeing Field. The guest of honor was William E. Boeing Jr., son of the company founder. The event recognized the 50th anniversary of the site as well as the resurrection of an almost forgotten artifact that tied the site to the founder of The Boeing Company.

Fifty years ago, in a ceremony that included William "Bill" Boeing's wife, Bertha, and son, William Jr., as well as then-Boeing President William Allen, the company dedicated its brand-new Developmental Center to company founder William E. Boeing. As part of the dedication, a memorial was erected that featured a bronze sculpture of Bill Boeing's portrait, created by Seattle artist Everett DuPen.

This was not only a memorial to William Boeing, who had recently died, but a tribute to his vision and pioneering spirit—a reminder of the very DNA of Boeing. It included his famous quote: "We are embarked as pioneers upon a new science and industry in which our problems are so new and unusual that it behooves no one to dismiss any novel idea with the statement that 'it can't be done!'"



"We are embarked as pioneers upon a new science and industry in which our problems are so new and unusual that it behooves no one to dismiss any novel idea with the statement that 'it can't be done!'"

— William E. Boeing, founder, The Boeing Company

**PHOTO:** The original memorial is shown during the Developmental Center's dedication in March 1959. From left: Bertha Boeing, William E. Boeing Jr. and then-Boeing President William Allen. BOEING ARCHIVES

The purpose of the Boeing Developmental Center was expressed precisely in the conclusion of this quote: "To keep everlasting at research and experiment, to adapt our laboratories to production as soon as practicable, to let no new improvement in flying and flying equipment pass us by."

Over the past 50 years the memorial was moved and nearly lost. But it was not forgotten. Following her passion for Boeing history, Pam Valdez, manager of sustainment for the F-22A Raptor fighter program, spearheaded an effort to locate and recover the lost artifact. With help from Boeing Historical Services the bronze sculpture was located at Boeing

headquarters in Chicago. With the support of the center's leadership, a new memorial was erected and placed in a new lobby at the main building that dominates the Developmental Center.

The updated memorial was designed by Developmental Center residents Ryan Jutte and Steve Cox. Cox, a Boeing model-maker and artist, built the new memorial using a piece of composite from an F-22 wing skin.

Since its dedication the Developmental Center has lived up to its name and purpose, as home to some of Boeing's most important research and development programs including the Bomarc missile, Minuteman Intercontinental Ballistic

Missile, Supersonic Transport (SST), YC-14 short takeoff/landing transport, YF-22 fighter prototype and the Boeing Joint Strike Fighter candidate. In the past it also has been home to military production and modification programs including significant portions of the B-2 stealth bomber and military variants of Boeing commercial jets.

Some of these programs left behind interesting artifacts on the center's grounds. In one corner of the site are the remains of a nonoperational Minuteman missile silo.

Another famous artifact was the full-size mock-up of the Boeing 2707-300 SST. The mock-up was sold when the program was canceled in 1971. After many years of storage and neglect in Florida it was purchased by former Boeing board member and helicopter pioneer Stan Hiller, who moved what remained to the Hiller Aviation Museum in San Carlos, Calif.

Ironically, a production version of the SST's competition, the Anglo-French Concorde, is on display in the Museum of Flight air park adjacent to the center.

For 25 years Boeing's Developmental Center has and continues to be the primary research and development center for carbon fiber structures on such leading-edge programs as the B-2, 777 empennage, F-22, 787 and a number of proprietary programs. The center also is responsible for the modification of advanced aircraft such as E-3A Airborne Warning and Control System, 737 Airborne Early Warning and Control, C-40 transport, and P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol platform. It is the home for Boeing production work on the F-22.

The work performed today at the center fulfills Bill Boeing's spirit that is celebrated in the updated memorial, said Kyle Duncan, director of operations for Integrated Defense Systems in the Puget Sound region. "I'm continually impressed with the extremely talented people we have at Boeing and how we are working together as 'One Boeing' to create inventions and solutions to some of the greatest challenges the company and industry face today." ■

*michael.j.lombardi@boeing.com*



**"I'm continually impressed with the extremely talented people we have at Boeing and how we are working together as 'One Boeing' to create inventions and solutions to some of the greatest challenges the company and industry face today."**

*— Kyle Duncan, director of operations, Integrated Defense Systems*

**PHOTO:** William E. Boeing Jr. is shown at the new memorial in June with Pam Valdez, F-22 sustainment manager at Boeing. Valdez helped track down the original Developmental Center memorial for updating and re-display. **JIM COLEY/BOEING**