Torrance Douglas Plant Still Expanding, Needs Men

Airframe manufacturing, the No. 1 industry in Southern California, has come to Torrance in a big way since Douglas Aircraft Company, Inc., and the United States Navy combined forces 18 months ago to build a modern, first class factory here, thereby supplying jobs for thousands of workers and thousands more still to be hired.

The new facility at 190th Street and Normandie Ave. has such a great potential that officials of the El Segundo Division of Douglas of which it is a part, disclosed this week that they anticipate hiring several thousands of more men by next August. Known as the B-6 location of Douglas, Torrance already has about 5000 men and women on the job.

Recent highly publicized cutbacks in government funds for defense planes has had little effect on the long-range production program at the rapidly expanding new Torrance facility, a company spokesman declared.

The local Douglas production lines currently are turning out sub-assemblies for the F4D Skyray, bat-like carrier interceptor which earlier this month zoomed to a new world's official speed record of 753.4 miles per hour at the Salton Sea. Sub-assemblies also are being built for the famed AD Skyraider series, both the AD-5 "Multiplex" and the AD-6 attack bomber which was cited by the Navy as the "backbone of the aerial war in Korea."

To build these crack Navy planes, Douglas is in the market for thousands of additional workers. Men with or without aircraft experience are needed immediately, according to company employment officials, and many may learn a new skill on the job at full pay under Douglas' popular on-job training program. Hiring is going on daily except Saturday both at the Torrance location and at the El Segundo plant at Imperial Hwy and Aviation Blvd.

Since Douglas and the Navy took over the former Aluminum Company of America plant in April, 1952, millions of dollars have been spent on the installation of the most advanced machines in the world to manufacture high-performance aircraft required by the Navy's air arm officials said. In addition to the outstanding working conditions offered at Torrance, they pointed out, the factory is surrounded by dozens of low-cost housing projects, modern shopping and entertainment centers, and numerous schools including El Camino Junior College, and is located within a few minutes driving time of the beaches and adjacent to Los Angeles.

Officials also revealed that purchasing by El Segundo Douglas from outside concerns runs a million dollars a day with weekly employe payrolls reaching several millions. Approximately one-half of the El Segundo Division's entire multi-million dollar backlog of orders from the government is spent on outside sub-contracts and purchases, the company stated.

Huge Factory

The new Torrance location covers 214 acres, while factory and office buildings encompass 1½ million square feet of floor space. That the development is still going strong and will at least until mid-1954, is evidenced by the fact that a $1,000,000 administration building will be ready for occupancy by Jan. 1 and a new receiving and inspection laboratory is slated for completion by next July 1.

Other construction projects under way or contemplated in the near future include grading and paving of a 25-acre parcel at the southwest corner of the Douglas property; installation of a flood control drainage system in this same tract; rehabilitation of all railroad tracks on company grounds, and relocation of several spurs; and erection of steel chain link fencing around the entire B-6 location.

Record Move

History will show that conversion of the Torrance facility to actual production usuage was achieved in 38 days—a feat that is believed to be unprecedented for its swiftness. As an example, over one week-end in August of 1952, two complete manufacturing departments shut down at El Segundo on Friday evening, moved into 90,000 square feet of space at Torrance on Saturday and Sunday; and reported for work—250 employes strong—on Monday morning with all machines in place and operating.

Construction under the Naval Industrial Aircraft Reserve Program continues at Torrance as building after building goes up and is activated. Nearly all of the 15 main buildings originally planned are in use.

The Torrance facility of Douglas came about under a plan conceived by the El Segundo management to speed up production. This plan called for B-6 fabricate detailed machined parts and make major installations in fuselage, wing, rudder, and stabilizer assemblies. Parts fabricated here are then sent to 12 major sub-contractors located in both Northern and Southern California, Nevada, and Texas for further assembly into larger components of AD Skyraiders and F4D Skyrays. These are then returned here for installation of electrical, hydraulic, and other systems. On completion of fully assembled units such as fuselages and tail assemblies, they are transported to the main plant at El Segundo for final assembly and flight testing.

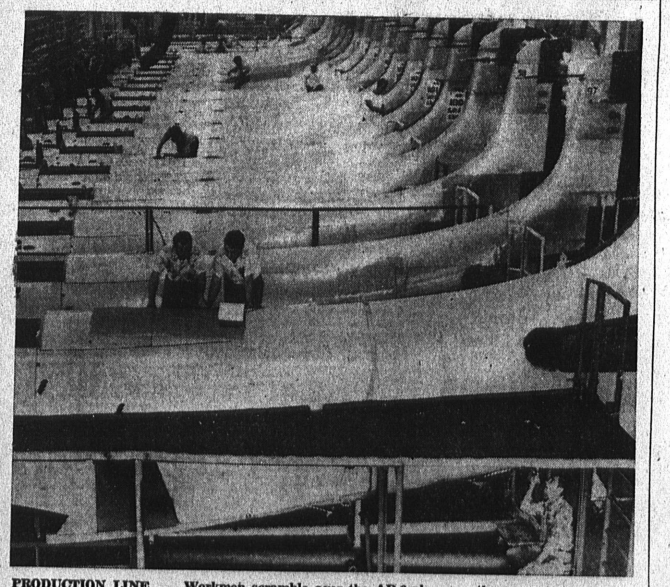
Huge Truck Fleet

Douglas has solved its logistical problem in a typical American manner with its own private trucking line which operates on a tighter schedule than some of the nation's major freight lines.

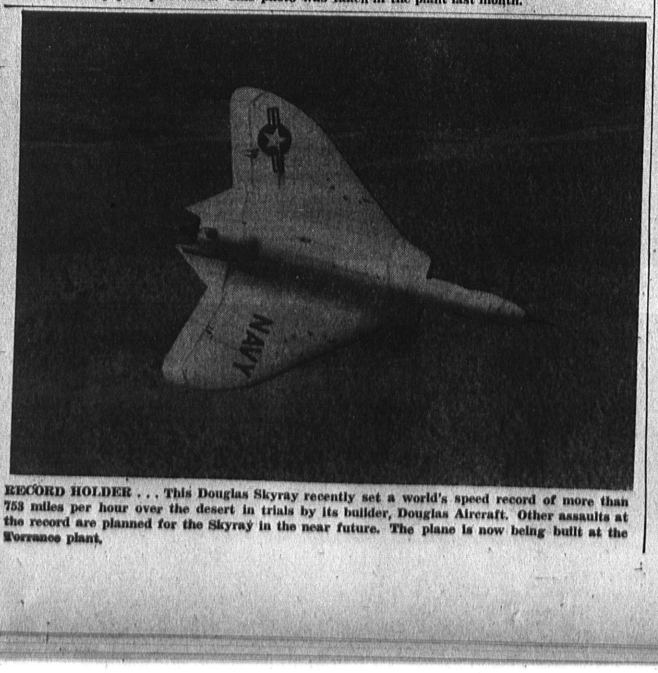
Huge semi-trailer-withpuppy vans loaded with machined parts, travel 900 miles from Torrance to San Leandro, Hayward, and Fresno and return with fuselage, center, and outer wing assemblies. Another run to Reno, Nev., for completed horizontal stabilizers, rudders, and flaps is 480 miles each way. This same fleet of trucks also hauls completed assemblies from here to El Segundo.

Superintendent of the rapidly growing Torrance facility is James D. Thomas who was born in Eugene, Ore., and attended Washburn College in Topeka, Kan., where he was captain of the football and track teams. Joining the tooling section of Douglas in 1936, he rose to supervisor of tool design and planning and assisted in activation of the company's Tulsa, Okla. Division during World War II. This proved to be valuable experience for the swift conversion operation that Thomas and his crack team of management shop and engineering personnel are now carrying out in Torrance.

NEW LANDMARK . . . Among the new scenes on the Torrance industrial horizon is this huge neon-lighted sign which points the way to the new Torrance plant of the Douglas Aircraft Co. at the Normandie Ave. entrance. Similar signs grace the entrances on 190th St. and Western Ave.



PRODUCTION LINE . . . Workmen scramble over the AD-6 planes as they are put together at the local Douglas plant for trucking to El Segundo where the wings are attached and other final assembly jobs performed. This photo was taken in the plant last month.



RECORD HOLDER . . . This Douglas Skyray recently set a world's speed record of more than 753 miles per hour over the desert in trials by its builder, Douglas Aircraft. Other assaults at the record are planned for the Skyray in the near future. The plane is now being built at the Torrance plant.