

Charlotte N.C.

Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> 1978

Mr. Donald P. Heath  
Director of Langley Research Center

My Dear Mr. Heath

I was surprised and delighted to receive your nice letter of Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> and am very sorry it has taken me so long to answer. I want to thank you very much for the pictures and other material about Langley Research Center especially the label pin which I am wearing on my best coat. The pin has a double meaning to me - 1<sup>st</sup> as Langley Field was started in 1917 & 2<sup>nd</sup> I went from NYC to Newark N.J. to work for the Gov. on the construction of 150 Steel freight boats & stayed 5 years & he detailed each piece in the ship with labels for the parts & had the various pieces fabricated in shops east of Chicago & Milwaukee his line had 28 ways at Port Newark but only finished 50 ships when they were ended. I just celebrated my 98<sup>th</sup> birthday with three parties - it was Dec 15-77. I did not know I had so many friends. I am legally blind and am about deaf but I married again in 1972 after losing my 1<sup>st</sup> wife in Oct. 23-1967 after having a 60<sup>th</sup> Ann. She was from Pittsburgh. I am from Asheville, N.C. & a graduate of UNC State Raleigh in 1901 & am now its oldest graduate - I have a BE & CE. I went to American Bridge Co. in Pittsburgh Pa. abt 3 years & then to NYC for 13 & Newark 5 - came to Charlotte in 1922 as Ch. Engr. of a New Steel Co. - Southern Edge Co. - we have 3 plants now. I retired July 1<sup>st</sup> 1953, after 52 years in steel work.

In 1929 I was asked by Edwin Jones of the J.A. Jones Const. Co. if we would make a design and price on the Full Scale Wind Tunnel at Langley Field. Being a small Co. & not knowing much about this kind of Bldg. I said leave us the sketches & I would think it over. I went to the right and met 4 nice men in charge Messrs - REIB-SHIPPLE MILLER + DEFRANCE. I was there 2 days & they showed me a model in the yard & Pres. Hoover left them money & it was out of Politics. I came back & got in touch with Philip Cary about roofing & siding. So I told Edwin Jones. I would make the design & price. Before taking bids I took my design to 4 men to show them what we were bidding on and if they had any criticism. At the first letting the price was too high & Mr. Miller & DeFrance ask me to remain over & I did. They ask me how could we lower the price. I said change the conduits of the 2 large fans to the way they are now. So the 2nd letting Jones got the contract and we furnished the steel and did not have a misfit that I know of - we finished our work 1930 and I am glad to know it is still in use.

DeFrance told me I took more interest in the Wind Tunnel than any bidder. I went back to see them 6 years later and I certainly would like to go now. I have no chance. I would like to meet you and that 30 Wind Tunnel employees who sent me a Christmas card. I do appreciate this attention. I know you have the records. I repaired the Propeller Research Tunnel - furnished steel for NACA Tank - Staff Honors exhibit Airplanes & the repair shop between W.T. & Propeller Research.  
Ever yours especially the day. Sincerely Ben O. Wood.