CLOSE MISS

Sometime around 1976/1977/1978, Charlie Jackson was promoted from Branch Head of the 16-Foot Transonic Tunnel (probably officially named the Propulsion Aerodynamics Branch at that time) to a Division Chief position and his office moved from the 16'TT building to the Unitary Tunnel building. Also during this period of time, the 4-Foot Supersonic Pressure Tunnel (4’ SPT) was shut down and decommissioned to make way for the new National Transonic Facility (NTF).

Before the 4’ SPT was demolished, Larry Leavitt and I made a scavenging trip to the facility. One of the items we came back with was a missile or rocket model (about 4 or 5 feet long) that had been tested in the 4’ SPT. Charlie was known to be a fun loving guy who appreciated a good joke so we decided to stick the missile model nose down (when no one was around of course) into the lawn about 5 yards outside Charlie’s new office window at Unitary. We had added some messages to the model that I can paraphrase as:

“Free missile model for Unitary delivered from 16'TT”

“Range 10 yards short; range will be increased on next delivery”

I heard that the first person to see the missile was a female engineer at Unitary who happened to come walking down the sidewalk and thought that it was a bomb. She apparently wanted to call security but was talked out of it. Of course, Charlie got a big kick out of it.

(submitted by Bobby Berrier)