

# Celebrating 90 years of rich heritage

Matthew Montgomery | DCMA Public Affairs

*Artifacts of the history of the Defense Contract Management Agency Boeing Seattle Office. These artifacts were displayed during the DCMA 90th anniversary event. (Photos by Matthew Montgomery, DCMA Public Affairs)*

**S EATTLE – Over the past nine decades, the civilian and military workforce at**

Defense Contract Management Agency Boeing Seattle has supported a full spectrum of aerospace power to include bombers, missiles, spacecraft and high energy airborne laser programs.

The office recently held a 90th anniversary event to pay tribute to the rich history of government in-plant service. Past commanders, former DCMA employees and the current workforce gathered to celebrate the momentous occasion.

“We have a unique heritage because this Boeing plant has delivered weapon systems to the Department of Defense for almost 100 years,” said Air Force Lt. Col. Louis Orndorff, DCMA Boeing Seattle commander. This support has spanned World War II, the Korean Conflict, Vietnam, the Cold War, Desert Storm and current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The office is also unique because it symbolizes the beginning of representation for the government in contractor facilities. “The people here have always prided themselves on being the first in-plant

office in the country,” said Rnita Jacklin, retired DCMA Seattle commander’s secretary.

“I worked on the 75th anniversary celebration and it gave me such a sense of pride to celebrate the history, accomplishments and dedication of the people of this office,” continued Jacklin. “It’s awesome to continue the tradition of celebrating these milestones.”

Karen Crumley, DCMA administrative contracting officer, agreed. “It gives me great pride to be part of the oldest in-plant representative office. We have survived countless reorganizations yet our focus and dedication does not waver – we know our jobs and how to do them well.”

The organization has changed many times over the 90-year history at Boeing Seattle. What started as the Army Air Service Office in 1921 changed to the Army Air Corps, then the Air Force Plant Representative Office, eventually the Defense Contract Management Command and currently DCMA.

During this time span, DCMA employees have provided contract support and oversight to a myriad of programs. Some of these include weapon systems like the B-52 and the KC-135, which are still in

service today.

The Boeing plant was also responsible for the B-17, an iconic plane from World War II.

Through all the programs and changes, Orndorff said, “The mission has mostly remained the same. Our job is to make sure quality products are delivered to the warfighter and this is why we’ve been here all along.”

“I think the basic idea of having a group of people in the plant who know how the contractor does business across the board is a core function,” continued Orndorff. “Contract oversight is about making sure the government gets what it pays for and DCMA Boeing Seattle has focused on that for 90 years, and continues to do so today.”

During the ceremony, a number of former employees were recognized for their contributions. The oldest attendee was Kermit Metcalf, a procurement inspector for 27 years. Metcalf, age 97, worked as a Boeing foreman on the B-17 bombers, and then as a government representative for the Navy. He finished out his career working for the Air Force Plant Representative Office in Seattle.

“Kermit is a prime example of the pride people take in the office,” said Jacklin.

“From the day I started, I had the feeling the people weren’t just employees, but they had a sense of family.”

Jacklin and Metcalf are both members of the Boeing Air Force Plant Representative Office Retirees Club and were present at the 75th anniversary. The club is probably one of the most unique and well-kept secrets in DCMA, said Orndorff.

“In all, over 30 retired members attended the celebration,” continued Orndorff. “The DCMA Boeing Seattle legacy has a continued reputation for excellence and in the room were people who had been at the core of that excellence for more than 50 years.”

Having these individuals present made the event special to a number of employees. “As a relatively new DCMA employee, it was an awesome experience to be able to talk to retired employees and sort through old photos,” said Emily



*Kermit Metcalf, an Air Force Plant Representative Office procurement inspector for 27 years, poses for a picture following the 90th anniversary event. Metcalf, age 97, was the oldest employee present at the event. (Photo courtesy of DCMA Boeing Seattle)*



*Defense Contract Management Agency Boeing Seattle personnel, both past and present, pose for a picture following the 90th anniversary event. More than 80 attendees celebrated the momentous occasion.*



*David Degl Innocenti, Defense Contract Management Agency Lathrop deputy commander, looks through artifacts during the 90th anniversary event at DCMA Boeing Seattle.*

Five former commanders sent notes and expressed their appreciation for the hard work and dedication DCMA employees symbolize on a regular basis. Excerpts from their messages below:

“Your dedication and commitment to excellence in getting the best weapon systems for the most fantastic warfighters of the mightiest military serving the greatest nation on Earth are awe-inspiring to say the least.” - **Dante Legaspi, Commander 2009-2010**

“We can continue to be proud in how you have served your country and done so with the highest level of professionalism and dedication. As I now travel the world on business with our services in Afghanistan, Russia, Asia and around the globe, I can sincerely say that what you do has, and does, make a critical difference and impact on our nation.” - **Gregg Hughes, Commander 1994-1998**

“You alone have stood watch in Boeing’s factories, ensuring every contractual requirement has been met, every piece of government property accounted for, every industrial procedure completed within specifications, and every test completed safely. Your service has been honorable and heroic.” - **John Gilmour, Commander 2004-2006**

“What I remember most about my years was joining one of the most professional and dedicated groups of people I have ever worked with. Both military and civilian people found high-quality compatriots to work with, challenging jobs, an excellent company to work with and a great area to live and work in, so the people stayed on as long as they could. This resulted in an experienced, topnotch, extremely professional workforce who knew its business.” - **Robert Shipman, Jr., - Commander 1989-1990**

“I am very glad DCMA Boeing Seattle is still going strong and the service and expertise each one of you is currently providing in the defense of our great nation is in existence. You are doing a very important job within DCMA Boeing and what you do helps to strengthen the defense posture of the nation.” - **Rick Diehl, Commander 1991-1993**

Wanninger, DCMA Keystone intern. “I realized just as the planes have evolved over the past 90 years, so has DCMA as an agency.”

“This celebration took all the collective years of hard work and made it personal to a large scale,” continued Wanninger. “Even though many of the guests have been retired for a number of years, they still spoke of their programs with pride and excitement. The speeches and the presentations showed DCMA has played a critical role in the aviation industry and continues to do so.”

Additional highlights of the ceremony included comments read from previous commanders, an artifact display table showcasing the office’s history and a collage of pictures throughout the years for attendees to sign.

Orndorff said the turnout was exceptional. “I am very proud to be the leader of this outstanding organization,” he said.

“One of the highlights for me is to come to work every day and walk down the hall with previous commander pictures dating

back to 1921,” continued Orndorff. “It is surreal to imagine the challenges they faced and the pressures they were under as they oversaw the production of thousands of aircraft during World War II.”

“It is a great honor to have my chance to lead this organization,” continued Orndorff. “I always feel a special sense of wanting to make sure I maintain the heritage they worked so hard to build.”

“I think every employee here is proud of the long history we have as in-plant government representatives,” said Orndorff. “On a daily basis, we find that the answers to many of today’s problems lie in the past. We have employees who remember solutions and they help us focus on ways to approach current issues.”

Jerry Smith, DCMA Boeing Seattle deputy commander, summarized the event. “Today was an outstanding event and it made me proud to be associated with DCMA, and prouder yet to be part of something much bigger than any one of us. After today the word heritage has a much clearer meaning for me.” 



*Bruce Ross, Air Force Plant Representative Office Boeing Seattle commander from 1985-1987, shares his memories during the 90th anniversary event held recently. (Photos courtesy of DCMA Boeing Seattle)*



*Defense Contract Management Agency Boeing Seattle current and former employees watch a presentation on the history of government service at the Boeing plant.*

### Boeing Seattle Milestones

- 1921: the first government representative office was established at Boeing. Charles Cresswell from McCook Field, Ohio, was the first representative.
- 1922: Lt. Frank Tyndall was assigned to the office as the first military Army Air Service representative to test the first Boeing pursuit airplanes, the MC-3As.
- World War II: employment increased to 38 officers and 347 civilians in the office.
- 1947: name is changed to the Air Force Plant Representative Office.
- Three years after the war, the jet and missile age began. AFPRO was reorganized. At the peak, the office had more than 400 employees.
- From AFPRO, the office transitioned to the Defense Contract Management Command and later Defense Contract Management Agency.