

News from Nan

DICK'S FAMILY HISTORY

HOW THE JOHNSONS ENDED UP IN CALIFORNIA

JANUARY 13, 2020 | DICK



Consolidated Aircraft in San Diego 1940

Recently I have uncovered new information that gives me better insight into why and how my family moved to California in the 1950s.

It all started with Art Thursam. Art was my grandfather Alfred Johnson's first cousin (making him my first cousin twice removed). Art's mother was Alfred's sister Leonora Johnson Thursam. Art was born in Tonawanda in 1891.

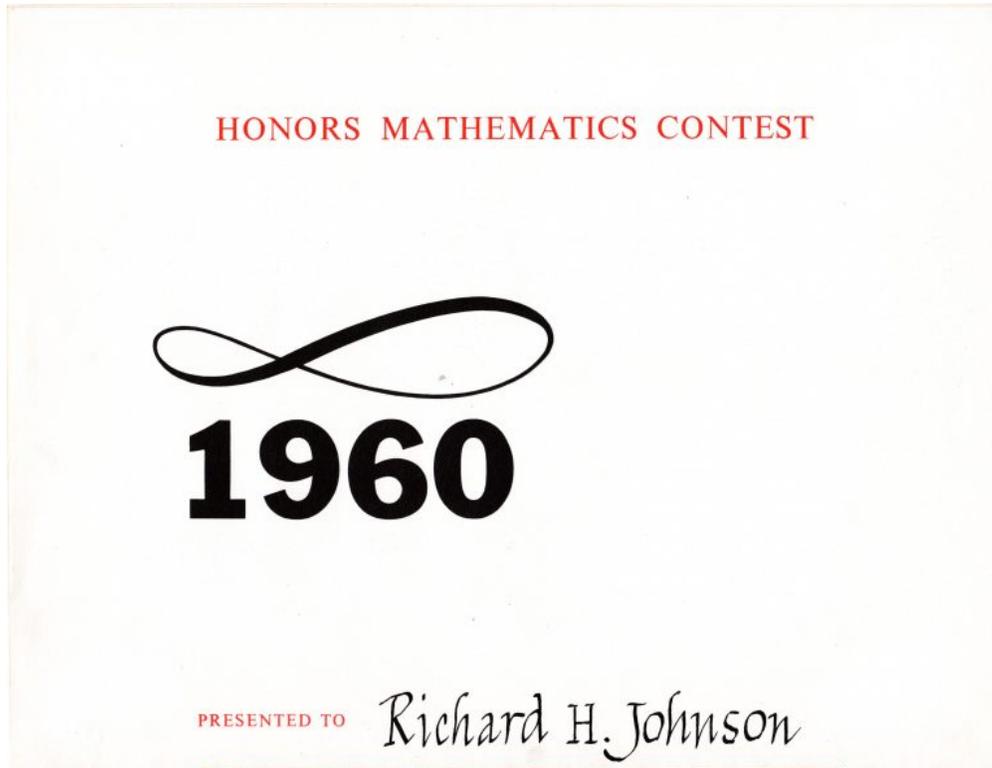
By the early 1930s, Art was working as a foreman at Consolidated Aircraft Company in Buffalo. Consolidated was an aircraft manufacturer building "PBY flying boats," airplanes that could take off and land on the water.

In 1935 (in the middle of the Great Depression), the owner of Consolidated, Reuben H Fleet, decided to move his company to San Diego, California, where weather conditions allowed year-round testing of the PBYs. Art apparently moved with the company as a manager. During World War II, Consolidated built B-24 bombers.

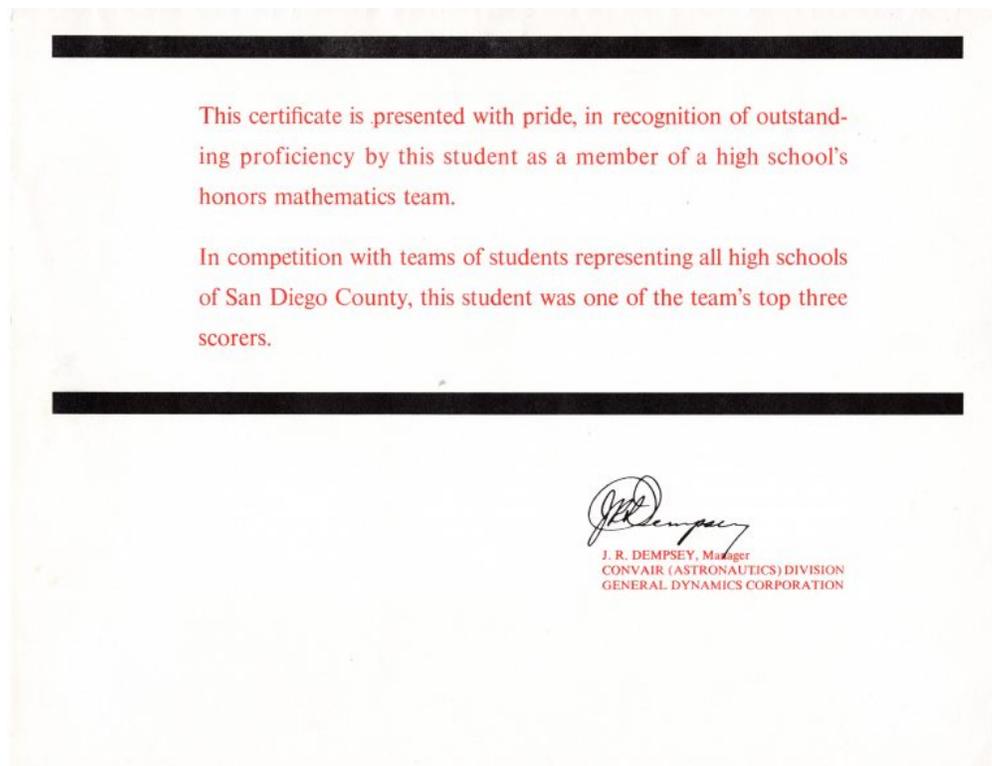
There must have been some communication between Art in San Diego and my family in Tonawanda, because in 1940 my uncle Kenneth "Kenny" Johnson left his job as a machinist at Spaulding Fibre in Tonawanda and moved to San Diego and went to work for Consolidated.

In 1943, Consolidated became Convair. The Convair building in San Diego is pictured above as it looked in circa 1940.

(I remember being in the Convair building before its demise in 1994: once on a tour and another time (in 1960) for a high school math contest.)

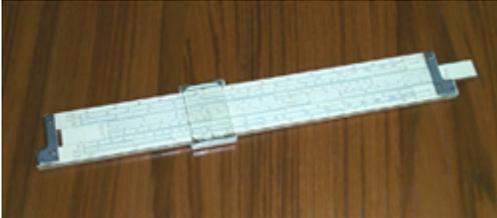


My Convair math contest certificate (top half)



My math contest certificate (bottom half, signed by a Convair executive)

After World War II, Kenny returned to Tonawanda for family visits. At that time the economy in San Diego was still booming, while the Buffalo area was in economic decline. That plus descriptions of the pleasant weather in San Diego must have been made a big impression on the “snow-bound” Buffaloni-ans, because in 1951 my family also moved to San Diego, where my father worked as a tool and die maker in the aircraft industry.



◀ 2020 ◀ ART THURSAM ◀ BUFFALO ◀ CALIFORNIA ◀ CONVAIR ◀ HAROLD JOHNSON ◀ KENNETH JOHNSON
◀ NEW YORK ◀ RUBEN H FLEET ◀ SAN DIEGO