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Eamonn Fingleton

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by Eamonn Fingleton

ONE EVENING A GENERATION AGO, several up-and-coming aerospace executives gathered to commune with the Boeing aircraft company's chief executive, Thornton Wilson. The discussion turned to Boeing's vaunted expertise in making

aircraft wings. Wilson evidently came across as boastful—so much so that a young General Electric executive named Harry Stonecipher suggested that Boeing was arrogant. “And rightly so,” came Wilson's serene reply.

The exchange, which was recorded in Fortune magazine a few years ago, is worth recalling partly for what has happened to Stonecipher in the meantime—and partly for what has happened to Boeing.

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