

Myths and errors make their own way without assistance, and that is the case in a recent article about Wally Byam. The author wrote that Wally, who was my mother's cousin, had received an advanced Engineering degree from Stanford University. I knew that Wally's degree from Stanford was a Bachelor in History, so the article set a red flag in motion.

During WWII, Wally worked in Los Angeles for Lockheed, and at one point he supervised about 300 employees. I have in my possession a collection of his notes dated between January 1942 and late 1944. Those wartime notebooks and folders contain letters of introduction, personal notes, telephone numbers, records of staff and production meetings, as well as other miscellaneous items that he scribbled down in his small handwriting, some of which is illegible today.

The section for January 1942 contains his resume. It shows that he received an AB from Stanford University, and that he was rated as a "Senior Industrial Engineer by the Society of Aircraft Industrial Engineers." Those statements are true. During the war Wally also taught engineering classes at UCLA, and he took classes there to make himself more effective at Lockheed.

What about the "Advanced Engineering degree"? Wally Byam's name is a pitfall in verifying his professional credentials, and the origin of the problem goes back to when he was three years old. About 1899 his mother, Carrie Biswell, divorced his father and married Dave Davis. Wally was either legally adopted by Dave Davis or otherwise changed his name from Byam to Davis. That part of his history is not known in any more detail.

What is clear is that during his high school and university years Wally was known as Wallace Davis. Stanford University Yearbooks from 1919 and 1921 show pictures of him with Sigma Chi, and in 1921 his picture also appeared among the pages of the graduating class. In all cases he was identified as Wallace Davis. Sometime in the early 1920s he discarded the name Davis and again assumed his father's surname. I know from personal experience that he cherished the name Byam for the rest of his life.

However, that is not the entire *Davis* name problem; another person by the name "Wallace Davis" graduated from

Stanford in 1939. That man returned to school after the war and received a Master's in Industrial Engineering. While the second Wallace Davis was an undergraduate at Stanford, our Wally Byam was building Airstream trailers, which he did until the start of the war. Wally Byam resumed trailer work shortly after the War, first with Mr. Curtis Wright's operation and then with his own Airstream production line.



1921 QUAD (Stanford Year Book) Wallace Davis (Wallace M. Byam) Graduation Picture Bottom Row 2nd from Left

Re Tolsted Bros., -
18 yrs. owner Andrew Tolsted,
employing an average of 200
men, producing \$500 ~~thousand~~
~~metal truck bodies~~
metal & plywood truck
body production
& Owner of Kegan Publications, Co.

Educational Background

A.B. Stanford University, ~~Completed~~
+ U.C.L.A. ~~Completed~~ Defense
Training Courses. Teacher of
U.C.L.A. course in aircraft production.
(no) Senior member of Society of
Aircraft Industrial Engineers.
Technical editor of "Air-
craft Production", official
magazine of Society of Aircraft
Industrial Engineers.
member Society of Tooling
Engineers.

Characteristics

mature, level-headed judgment.

Eyes that see what they are
looking at, like a good Army
Inspector of lines - I know
where to look for trouble.

As a kind knowledge of
aircraft "know-how",
gained through 3 yrs. of
intensive apprenticeship work
already experienced eyes.

Wally kept notebooks during the Second World War. This particular page has notes to be used either for a letter, or a resume. Wally notes that he had his AB from Stanford University. He goes on to mention that during War he took training classes at U.C.L.A. He also was credit as a Senior Member of the Society of Aircraft Industrial Engineers, and a member of the Society of Tooling Engineers.

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