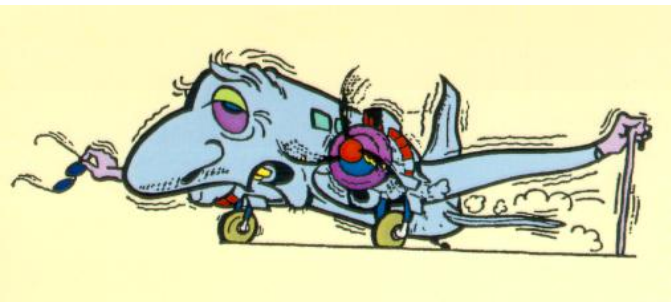


# “Swiss Association of Aeronautical Science”

Polytechnic of Zürich  
Mar 2026

*It is a Complex Business this Aircraft Structural Integrity...*



*L. Molent AM*

*Molent Aerostructures Pty/Ltd*

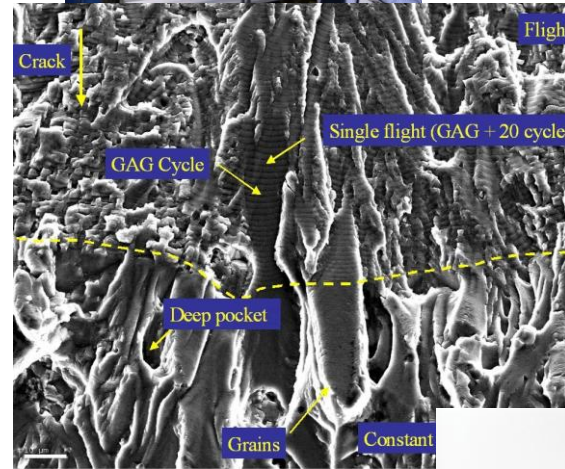
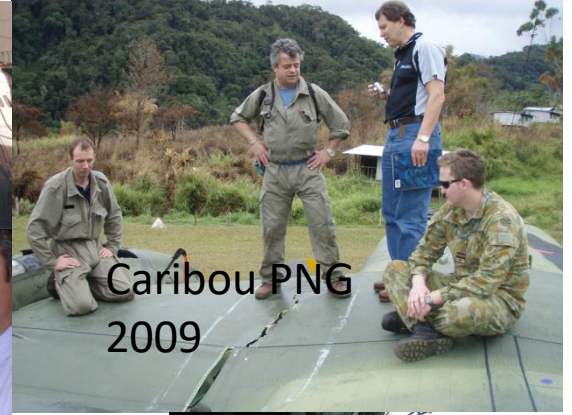
[www.molent.com](http://www.molent.com)



# About Me – Loris (Lorrie) Molent AM\*

- Aero Structures Consultant & Trainer
- Aeronautical Engineer
- Principal Research Scientist
- Head, Aircraft Structural Integrity (Retired)  
Aerospace Division Defence Science & Technology Group (DSTG) - Australia
- Experienced Aircraft Accident Investigation – Airframe (Retired)
- Failure analyst not Designer

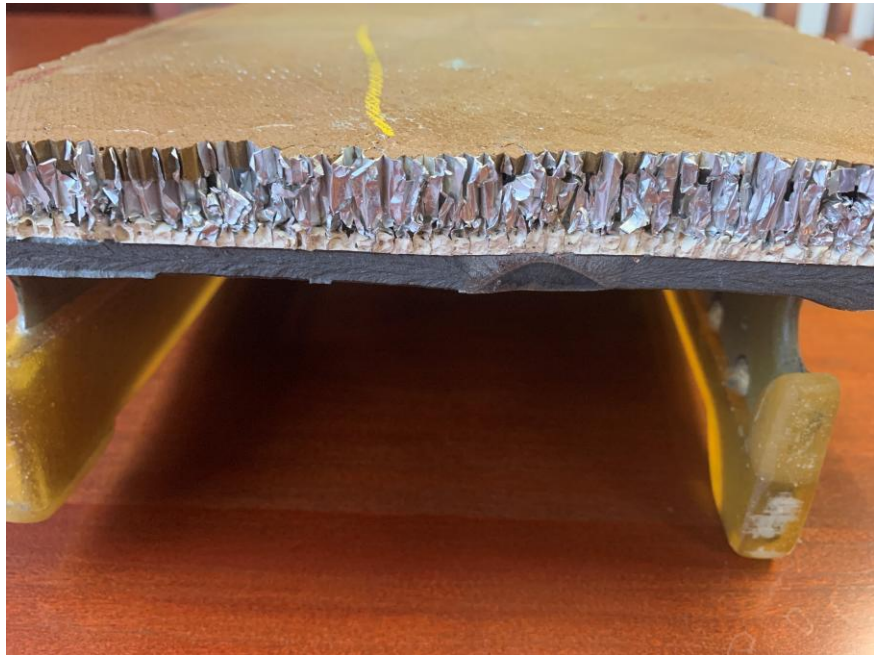
\*Order of Australia



F111G Pulau Aur  
Malaysia 1999



# USAF Lincoln Award Dec 2025



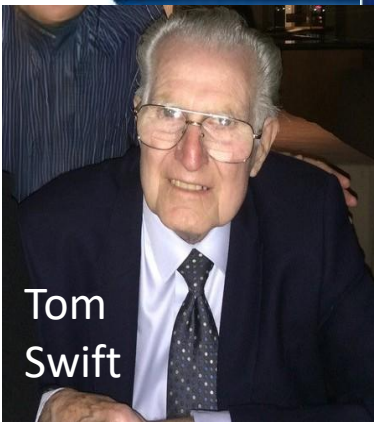
Jack's door-stop! 1969 F111 Wing Failure  
"Vigilance - Never Forget"



Dr. John (Jack) W. Lincoln, Ph.D., P.E. 1928 - 2002



# Acknowledgements



Tom Swift



Crack Hunter



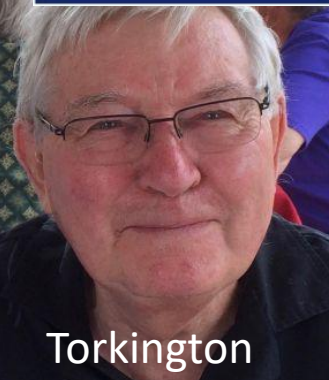
Hart-Smith



Rav



White



Torkington



RHYS



Wanhill



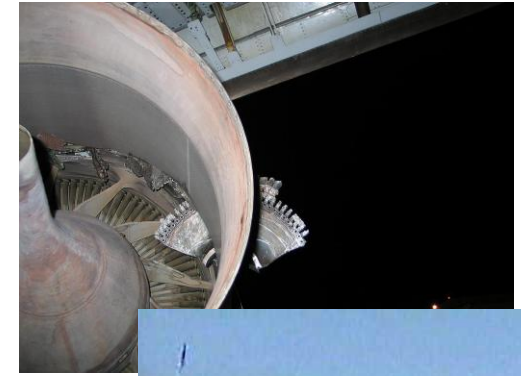
Goldsmith



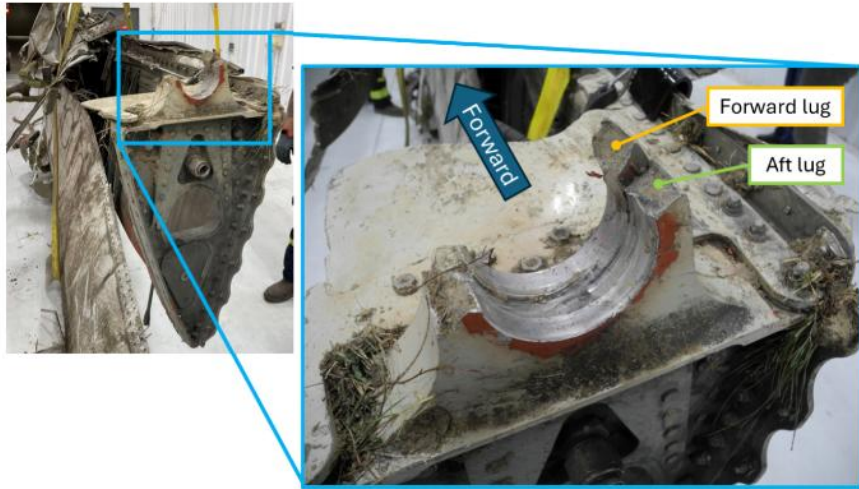
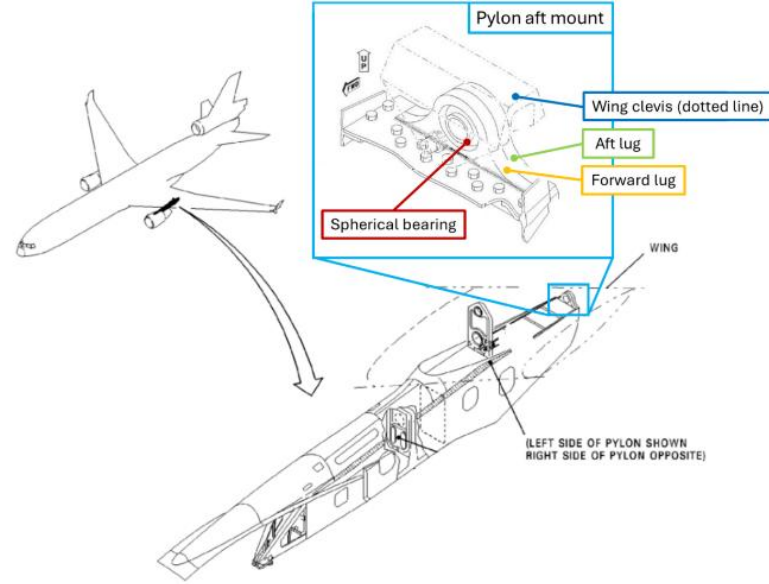
# Significant Ways Aircraft Fail Operationally

☐ Aviation is inherently safe; Probability of Failure =  $1 \times 10^{-7}$  flights

- Ultimate failure - under the application of a single (over) load.
  - Excessive yielding, distortion or buckling - application of a single load above material yield but below material ultimate load.
  - Overheating/Fire – Degraded material properties due to heat above allowable.
  - Flutter - onset of flutter is directly proportional to the stiffness of the structure and its speed.
  - Explosion/Warhead
  - **Fatigue** - cracking and failure after the repeated application of subcritical loads.
  - Creep - Deformation under static stress at elevated temperatures at long periods of time ( $> 0.4 T_m$ )
- Influencing factors:
- a) corrosion and material degradation
  - b) pre-existing or induced defects (cracks, damage, poor repairs)
  - c) weight and balance of the aircraft



# UPS MD-11F 4 Nov 2025



The pylon-to-wing mount diagram, with the inset image showing details of the pylon aft mount connection to the wing clevis. (Source: Boeing, edited by NTSB)

AA DC-10 in 1979??

The separated left pylon after recovery (left image) and the left pylon aft mount's fractured forward and aft lugs (right/enlarged image). Clear signs of fatigue (NSTB)



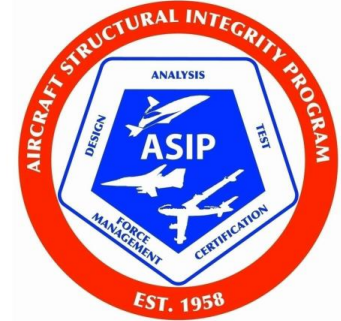
# Long History of Collaboration



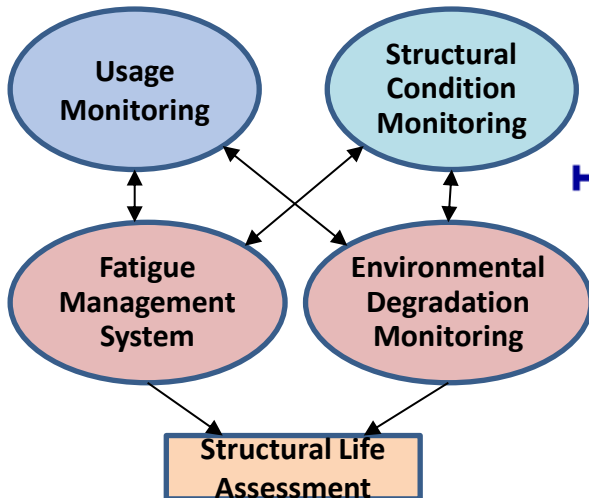
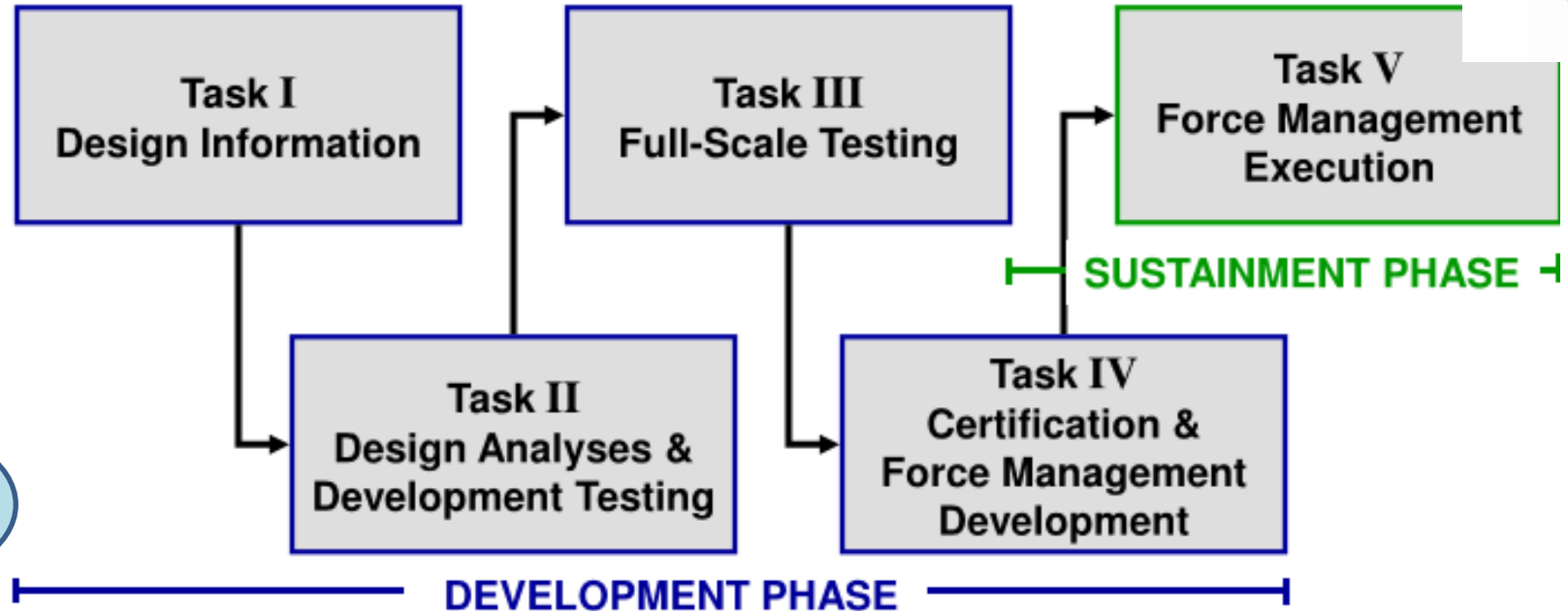
Mirage III Full-Scale Fatigue Test @ Emmen  
circa late 70s



# ASIP Tasks Overview (Vigilance)



- Many elements
- Complex
- Costly
- Multi-Organisations

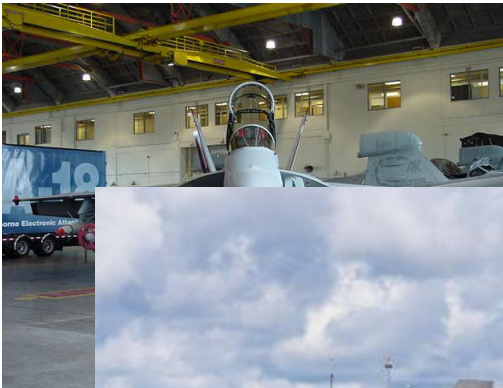


**ASIP Goal**  
 Ensure the desired level of structural safety, performance, durability, and supportability with the least possible economic burden throughout the aircraft service life

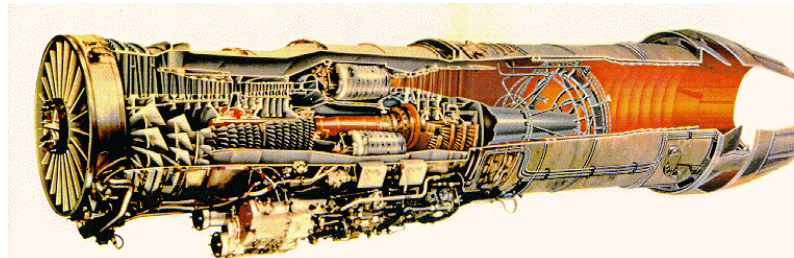
Courtesy: C.A. Babish



# Royal Australian Air Force



**Owner, Maintainer, Regulator and Operator**



# But, what did I (we) do for the USAF?

COMPOSITE REPAIR OF AIRCRAFT STRUCTURES  
The Australian Experience

By  
L. Molent  
Aeronautical Research Laboratory  
Melbourne Australia

ARL has pioneered the use of composite repairs to metal structures. This work has established Australia as a leading exponent of this technique in the world. Whilst initially developed for military aircraft the technique is now being applied more widely to civil aircraft. In view of the growing number of problems in the ageing aircraft fleet, and economical restraints, there is great potential for this technique to gain much wider use.

This presentation will highlight some examples of composite repairs, and briefly address the philosophy behind their design.

1991, and Bill Schweinberg  
said....

Presented at:

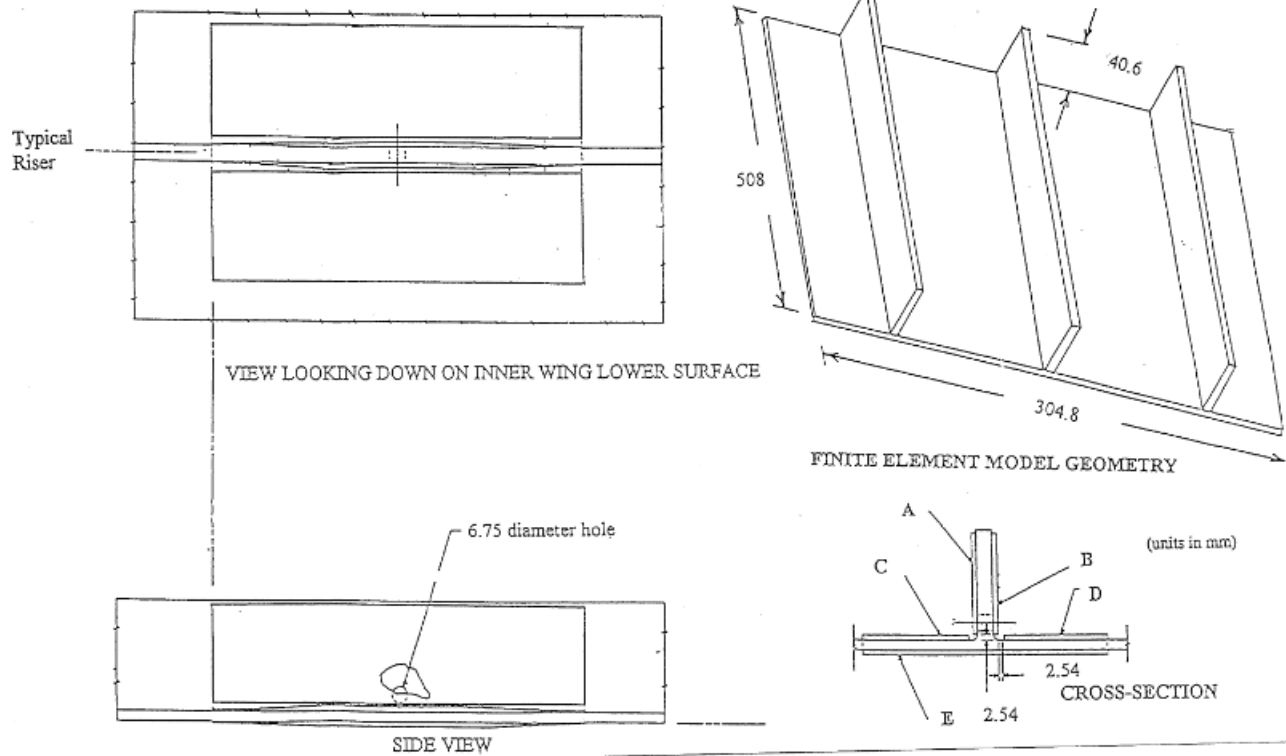
AIAA 1991 International Aerospace Engineering  
Conference and Show  
Feb 12 - 14 1991; Los Angeles USA.

A World Of Opportunity For Aerospace



# C141 Wing Weep Hole Cracking Repairs (circa 1993)

- So, you need to recover heavy lift capability Bill?



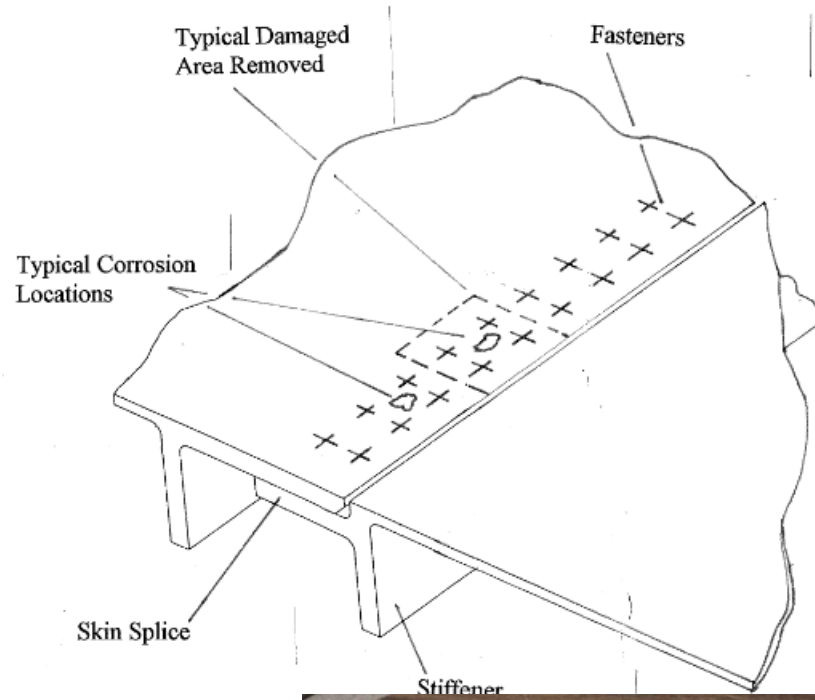
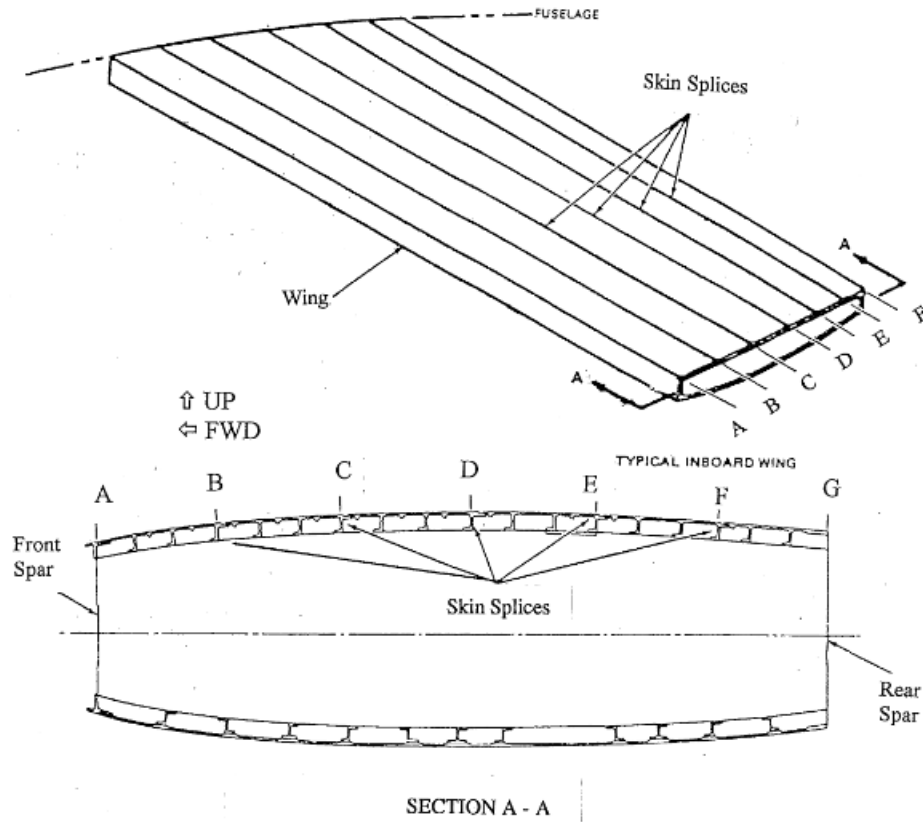
- 120 aircraft repaired
- Usually 3 patches per repair
- 2300 bonded patches
- After 10 years – No problems (see Butkus [4])



ARL-Tech Note- 62, Dec 1993



# B52 Wing Corrosion Repairs (circa 1994) [5]



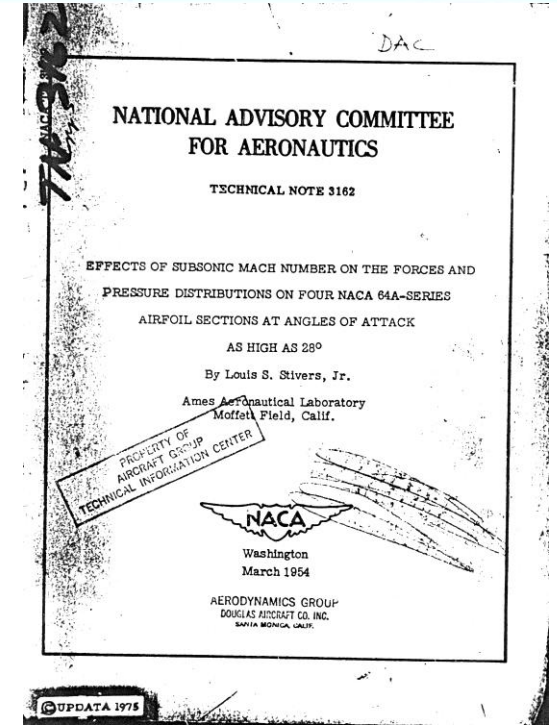
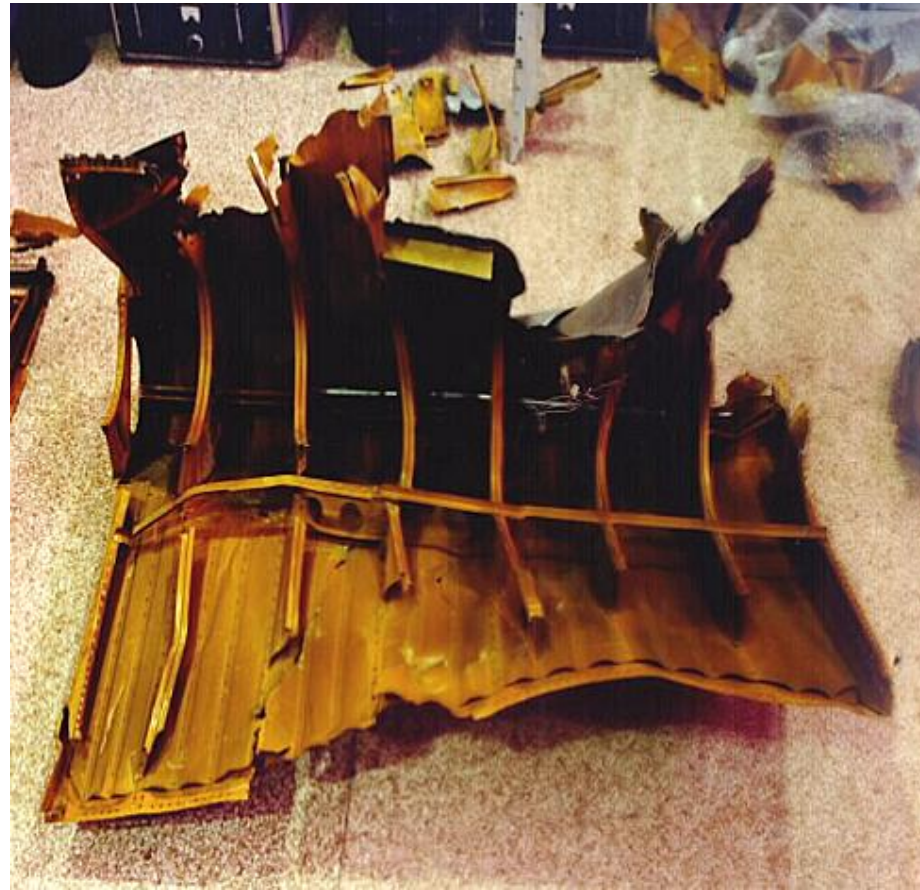
Not to Scale

Repair design and validation testing  
(Specimens with B52 wing Spec)

Courtesy R. Jones



# SuperSonic P3C Orion (circa 1991) [6]



At the 1992 P3C International Users Conference... Lockheed laughed at this suggestion and called me !#\$%!&\*

Transonic Compressibility



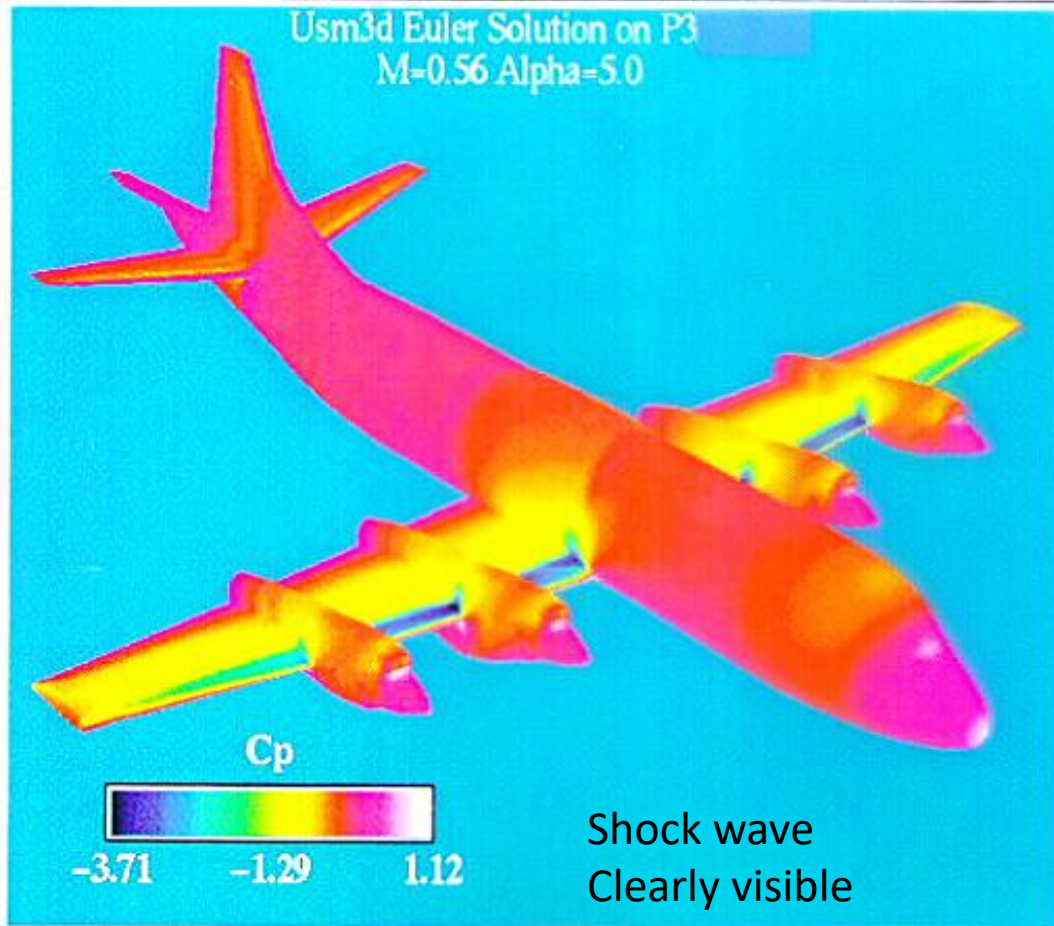
# Super Orion Con't



APPENDIX

## Surface Pressure Distributions

(4.5g case)



Lockheed White Paper on 1.5 factor [7]

Recertification test at DST



# Interesting times in 91...



- Hornet cleared to carry 15Klb modified cannon-barrel bomb...
- Boys & girls came home
- Service Life Bulletin (SLB) No. 3 released under my signature...

Don P: “Lorrie, Admiral wants to see you”  
 Lorrie: “That can’t be good”  
 Don P: “Yes”

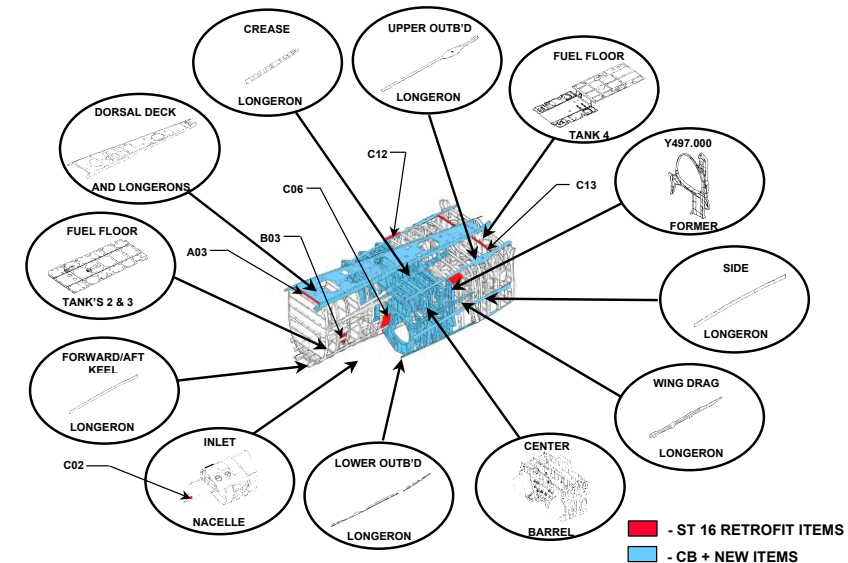
Admiral Dyer: “The RAAF want to sue us because of the limited life of the aircraft (sic SLB)”

Me: “Sad to hear that Sir”

Admiral: “You will get sadder, as we will sue you!”

Me: “yes, Thank you, Sir. ”

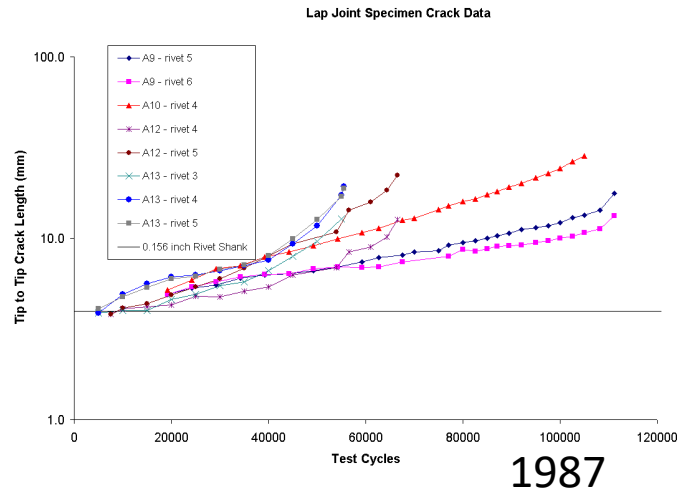
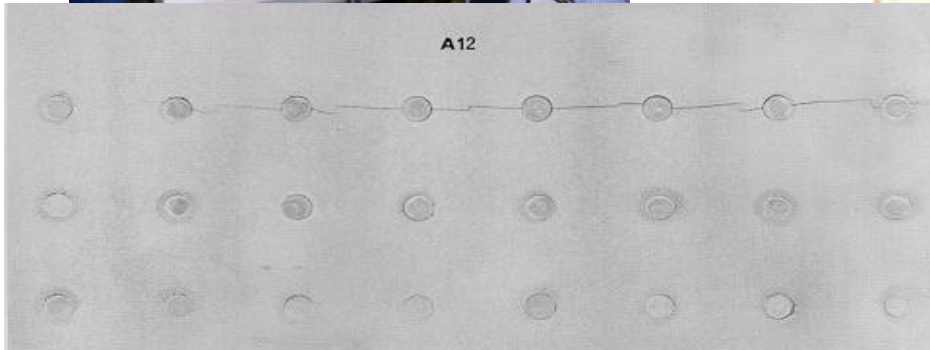
## Center Barrel + Work Content



# Aloha Airlines Boeing 737 29 April 1988



Chief Investigator  
Tom Swift in Oz



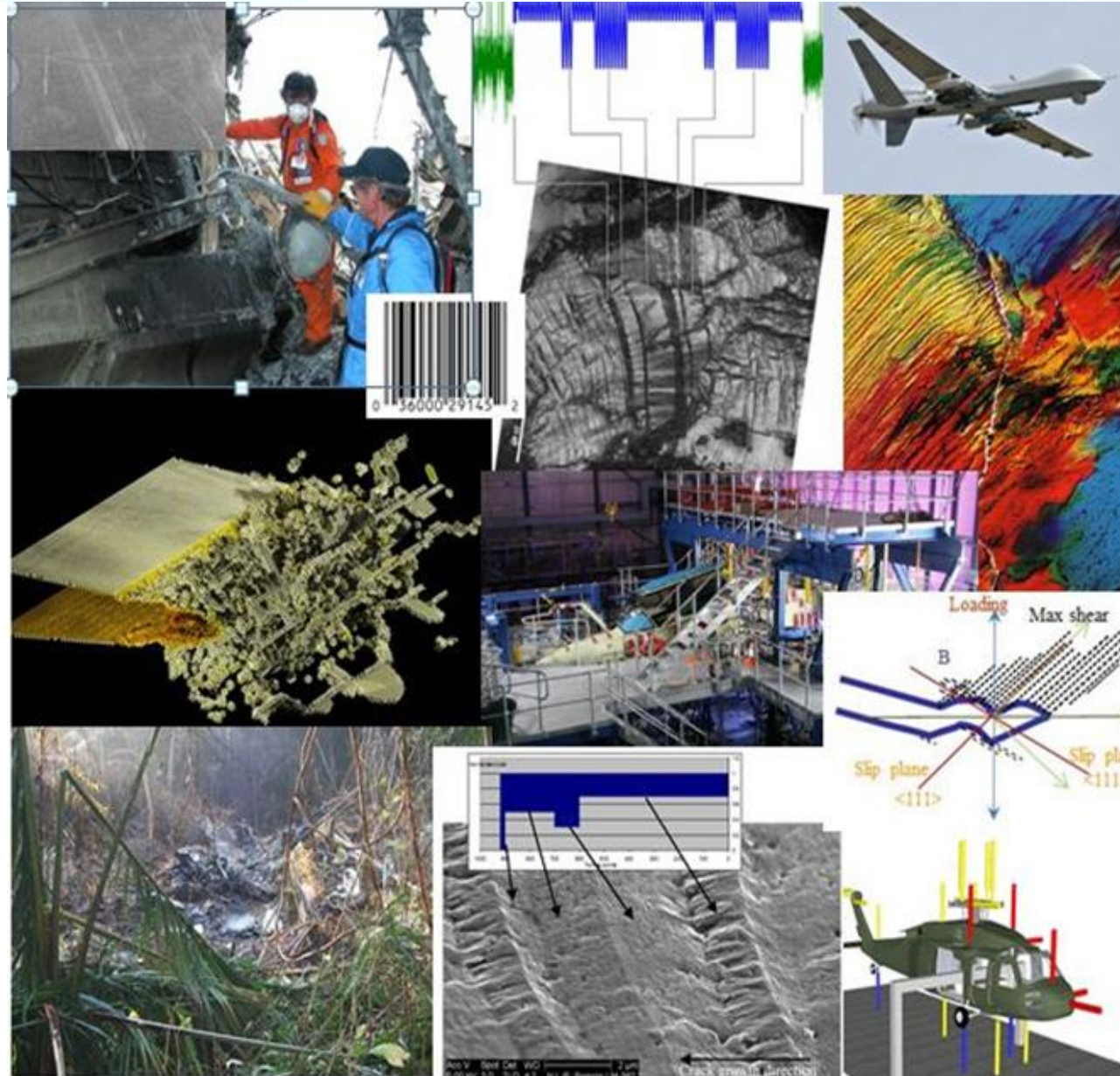
Data provided to  
FAA & Boeing

Ulf (Chief Structures  
Boeing) & Inger Goransen

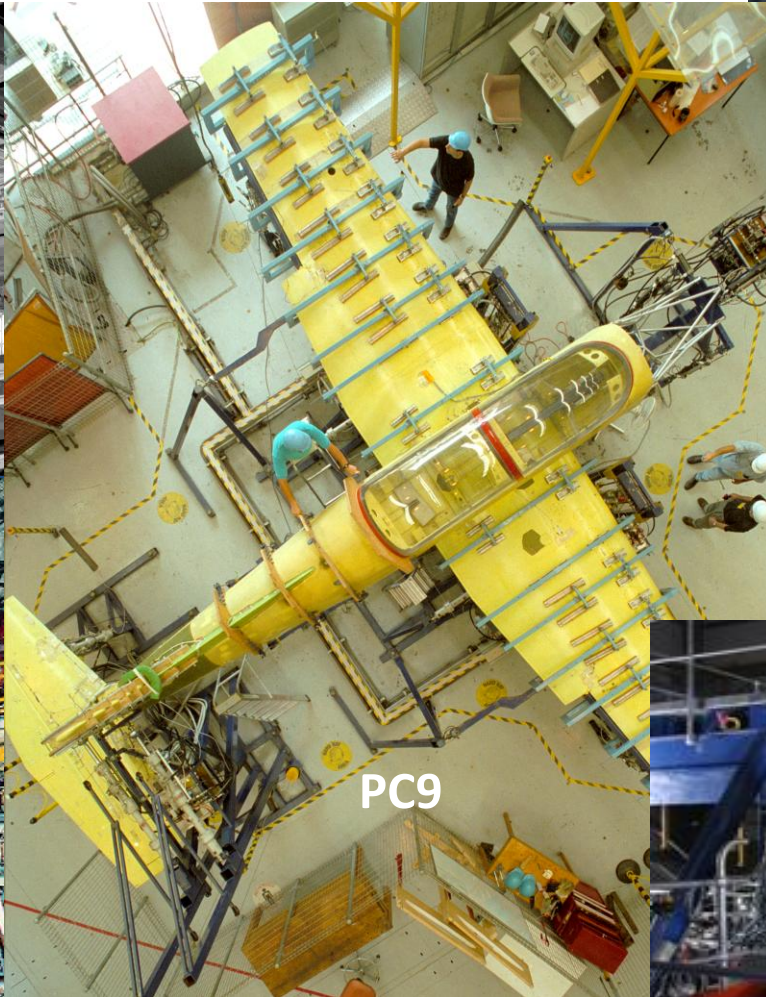
See [8-10]



# Back in Oz....



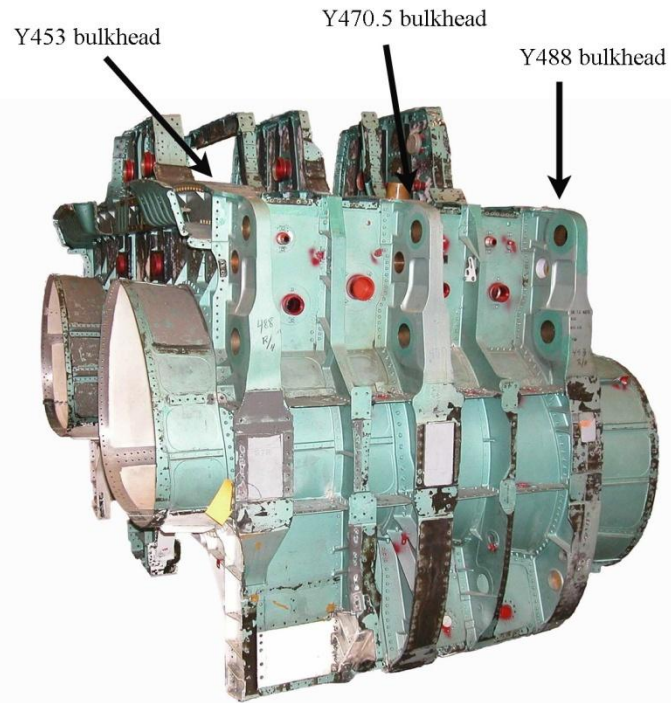
# FSFTs [12-15]



And ....



# Hornet “Centre Barrel” Test (High Speed Film)



- Fleet life extension of > 10%
- \$400M in real savings
- Delay purchase of JSF by 10 years

movie

**Material:** 7050-T7451 Aluminium Alloy

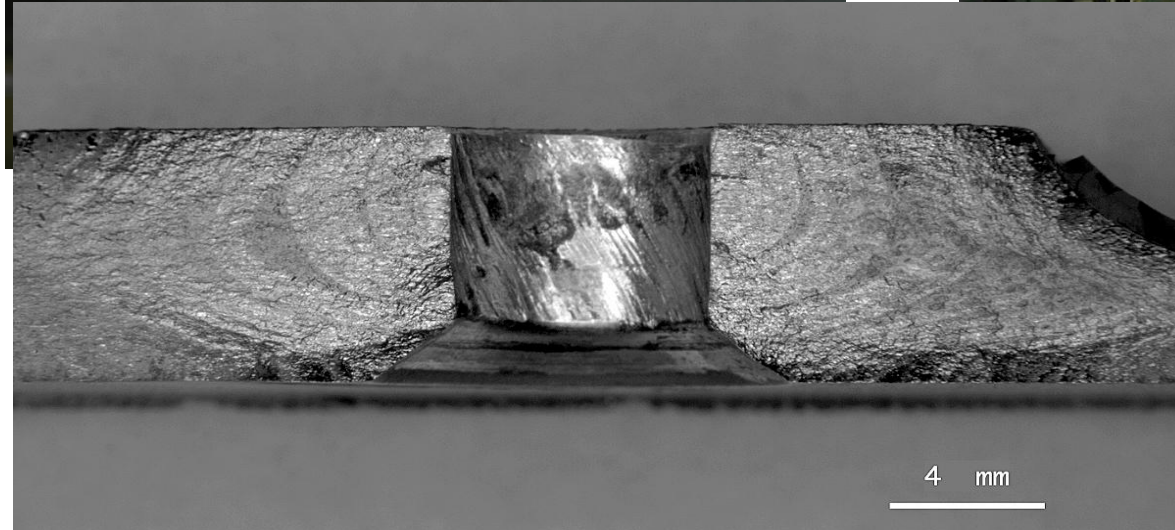
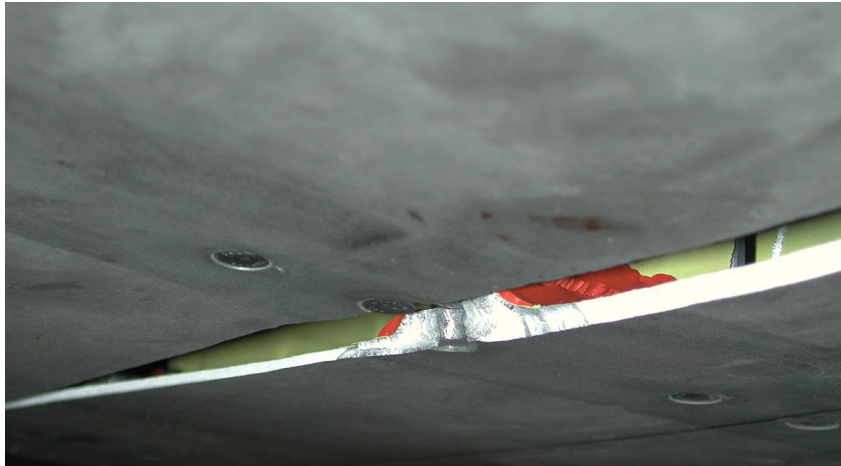
**Weight:** ~ 500 kg (bare structure)

**Fracture Critical**

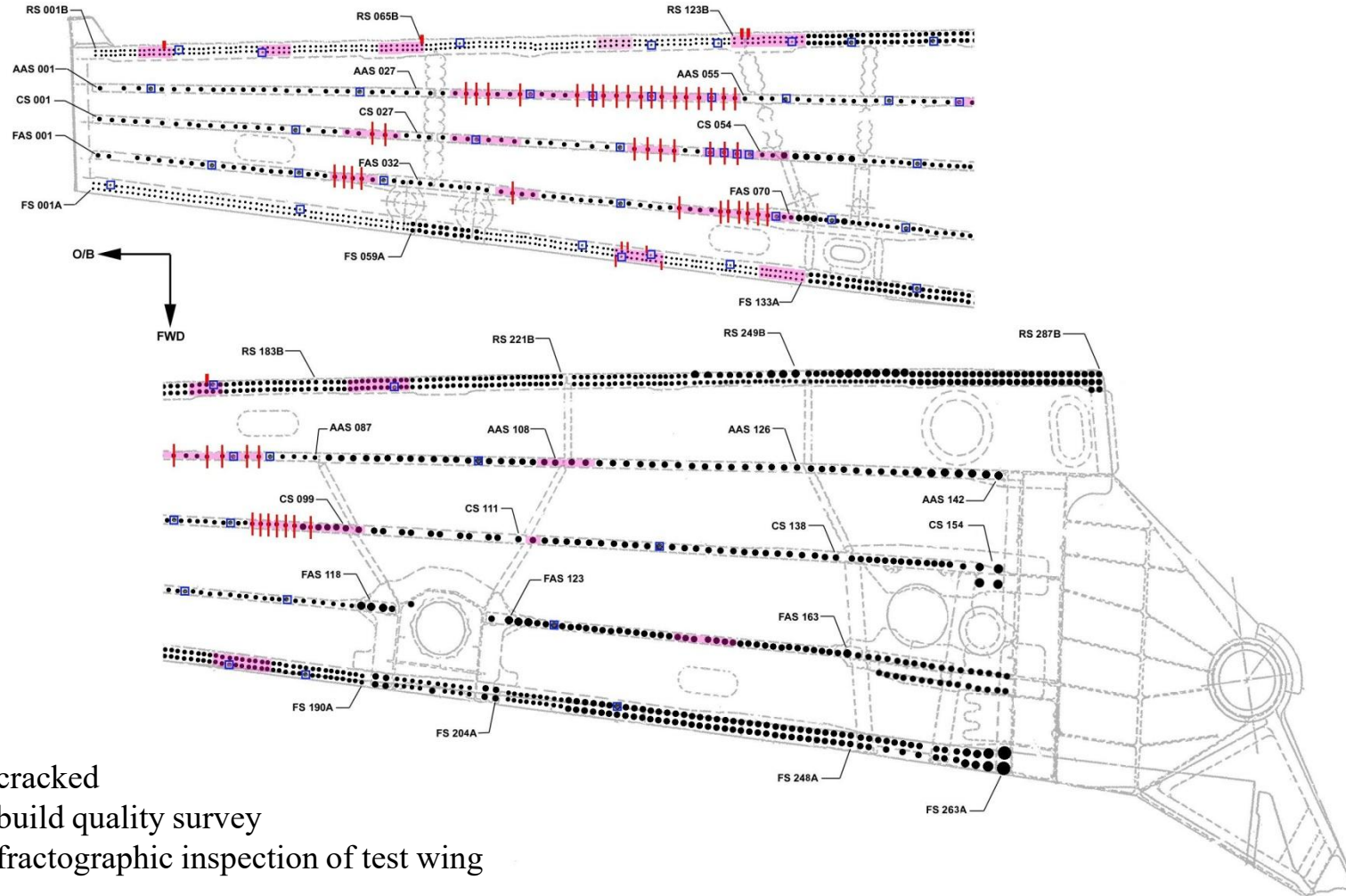


# F111 Wing Tests

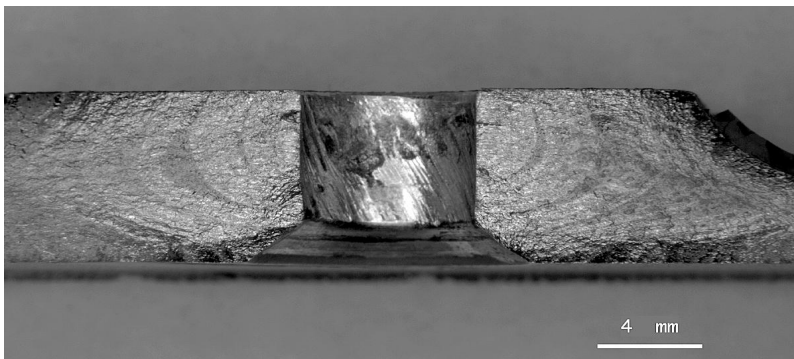
## RAAF Sole Operator Program



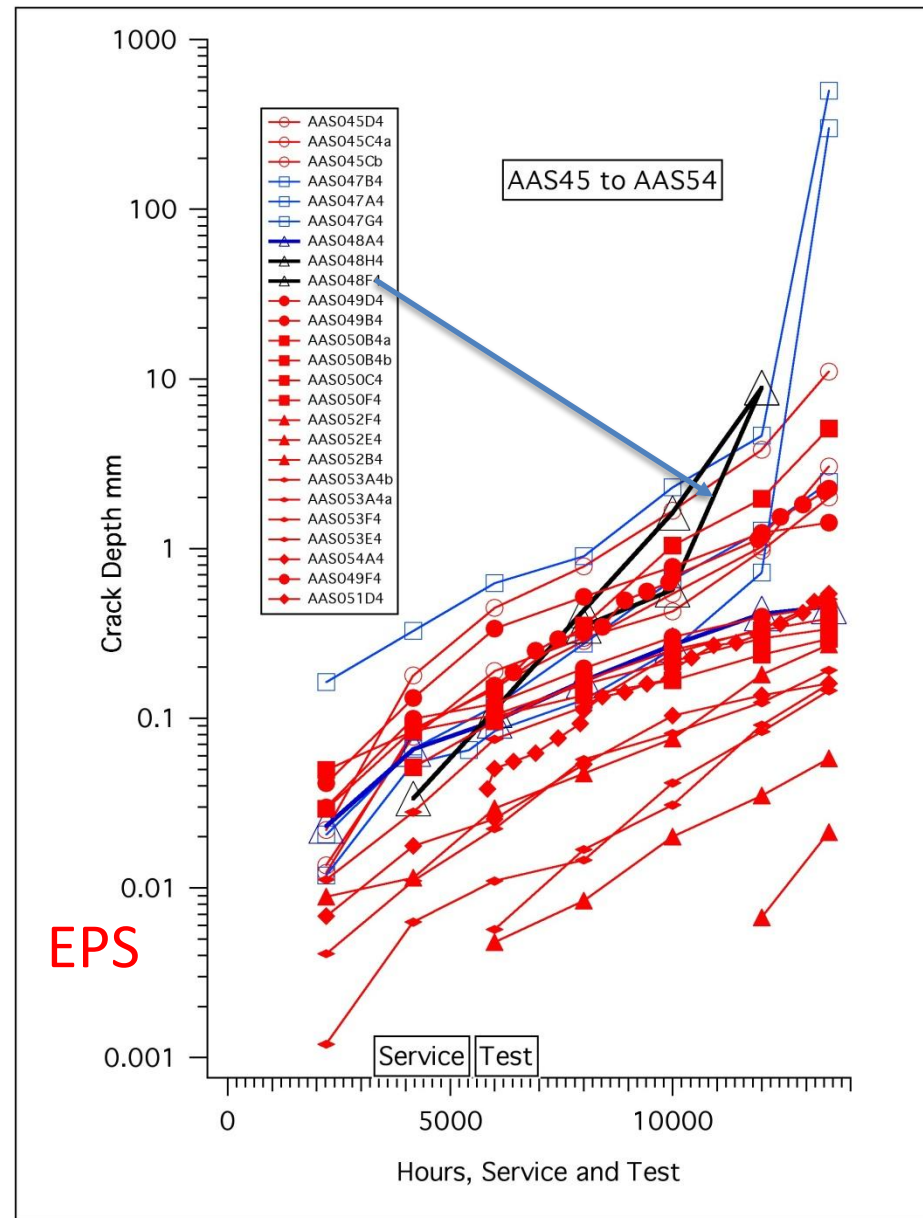
# Quantitative Fractography (QF)



# Test Results from QF



- High confidence due to CPLT marker bands
- Appeared in-service **more** severe than test
- Data  $\approx$  Exponential
- Data used to life fleet wings; along with condition assessment



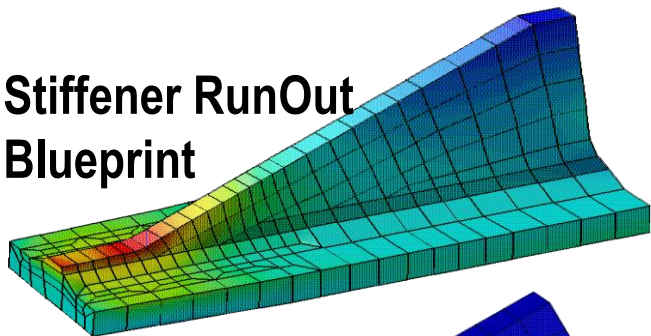
See [14-15]



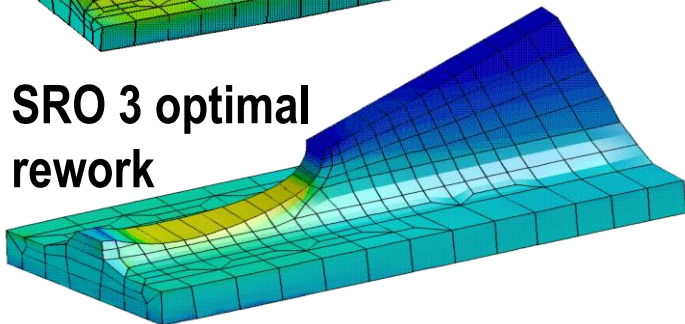
# F-111 WING MODIFICATIONS



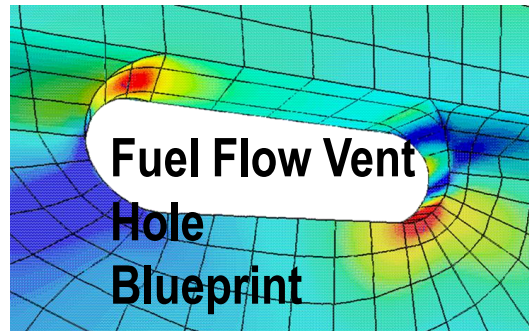
Stiffener RunOut  
Blueprint



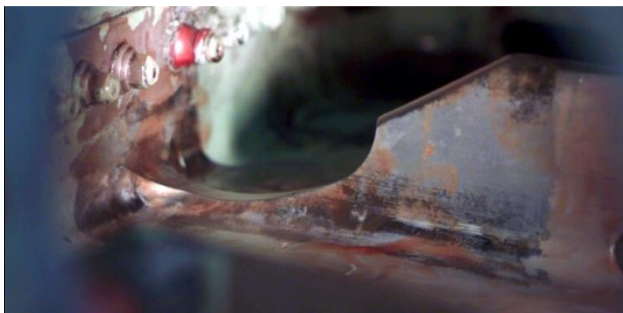
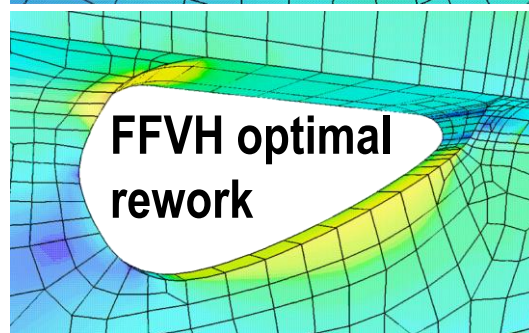
SRO 3 optimal  
rework



Fuel Flow Vent  
Hole  
Blueprint



FFVH optimal  
rework



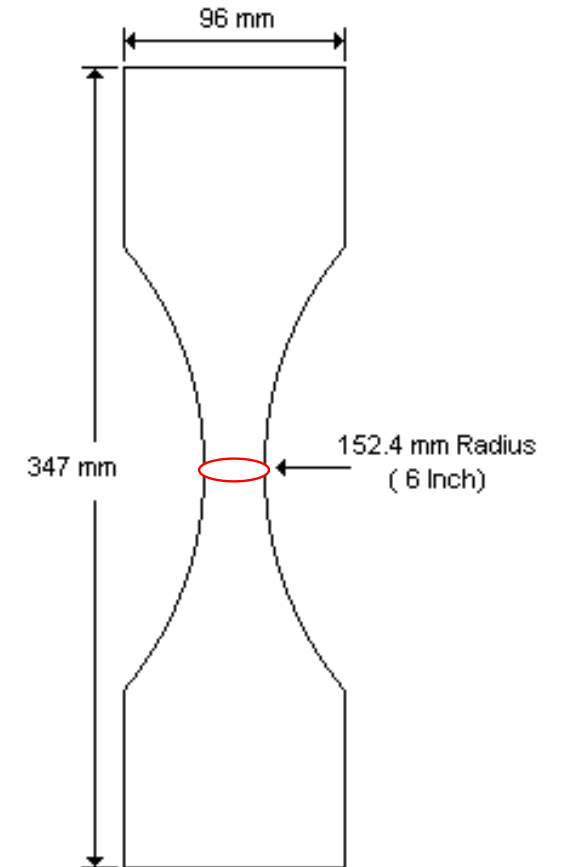
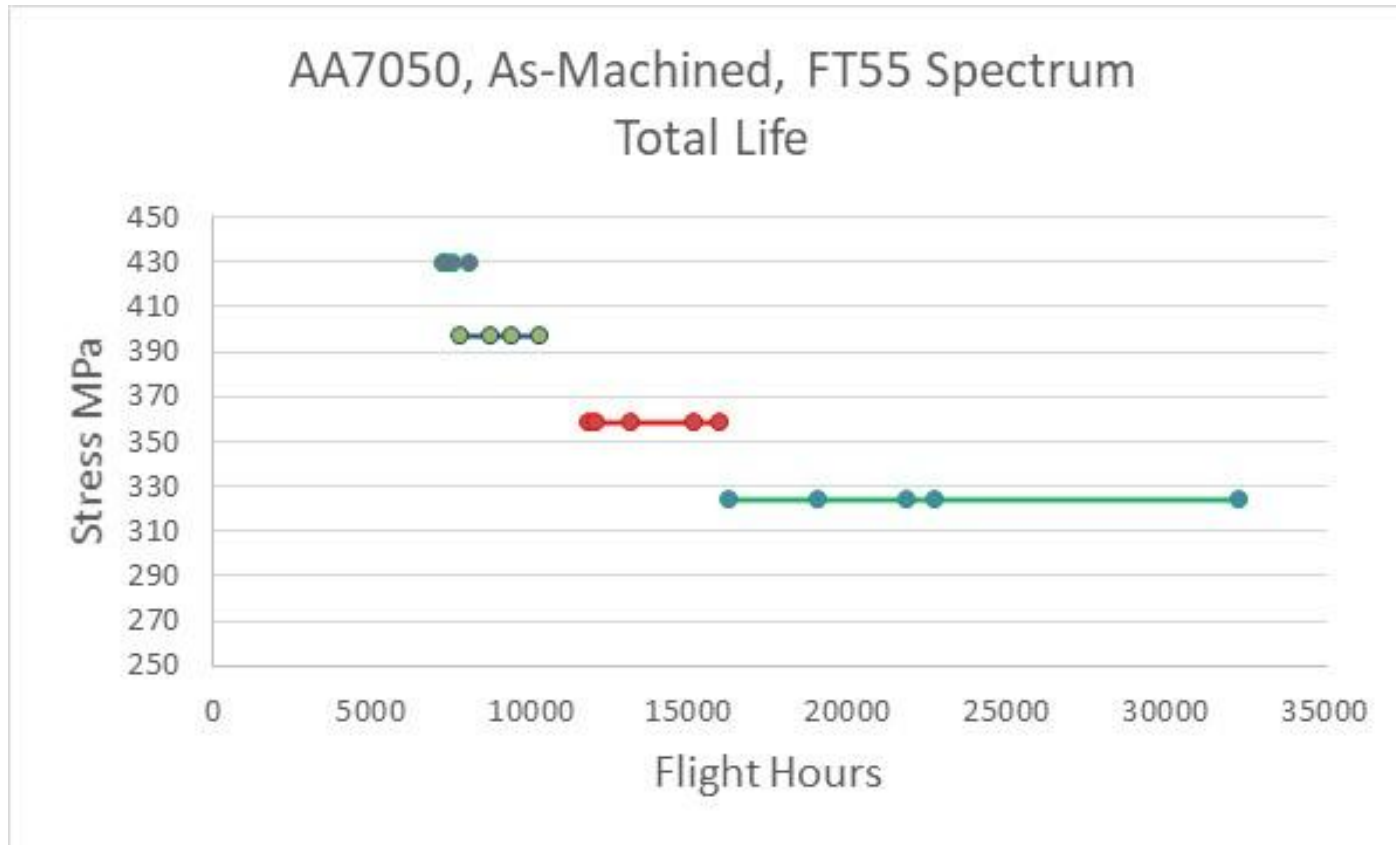
Boron/Epoxy Strengthening Doublers [14,16]

## The journey continues

- With cracks....
- The critical importance of the short cracks or low  $\Delta K$  regimes!
- Some novel fatigue analyses tools



# In the beginning: Fatigue Coupon S-N Results [17]



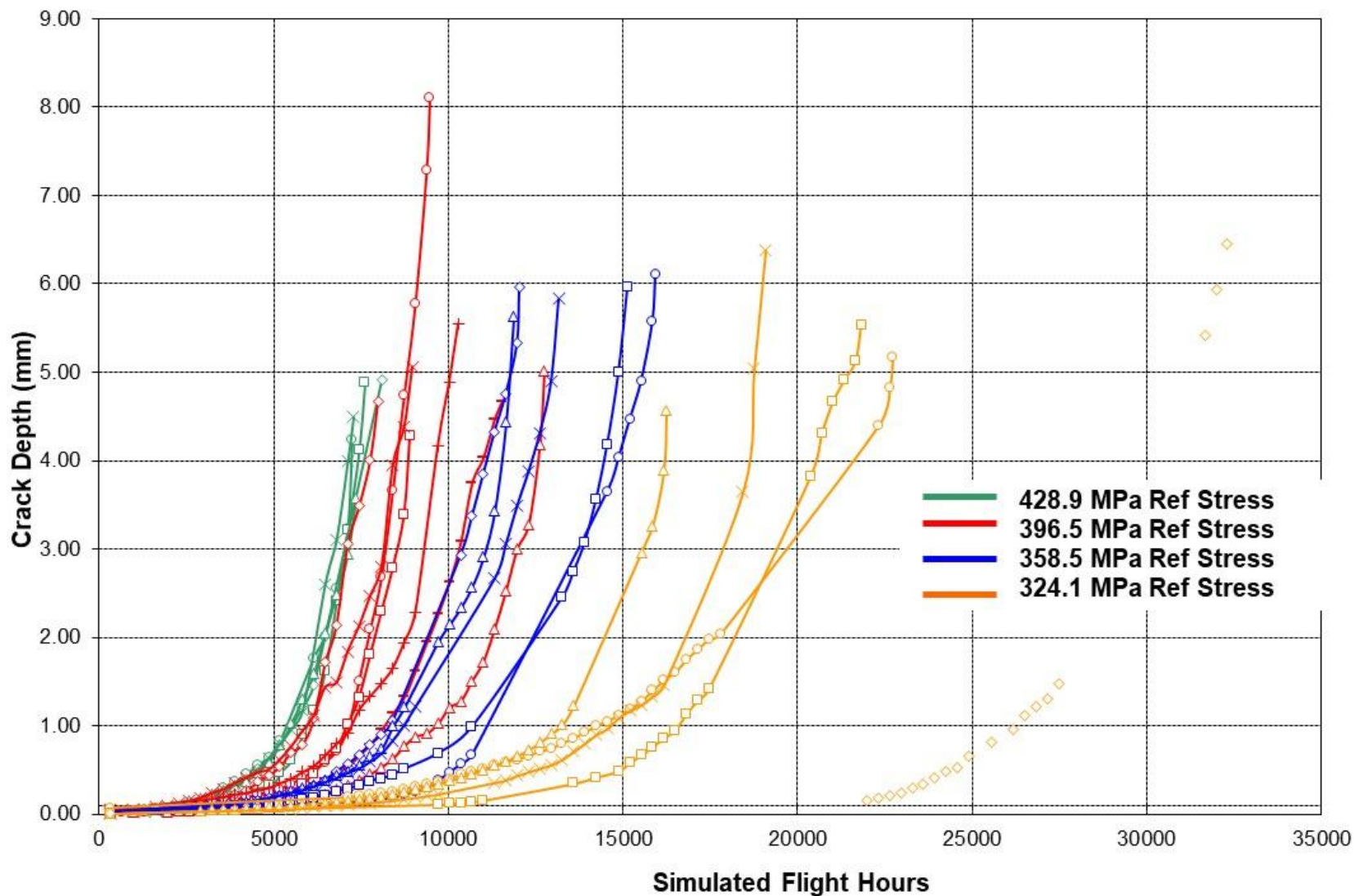
Specimen thickness: 6.25mm

7050-T7451 Aluminum alloy

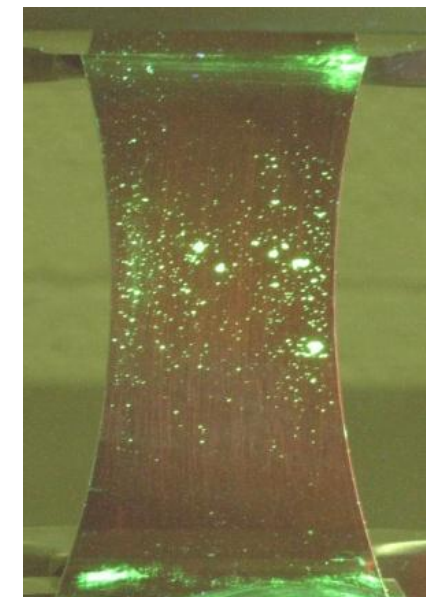
- Nominal test section is 28mm wide by 6.25mm thick
- Analytical  $K_t$  of 1.055
- Four or Five Coupons per Stress level



# Fatigue Coupon Crack Growth QF Results



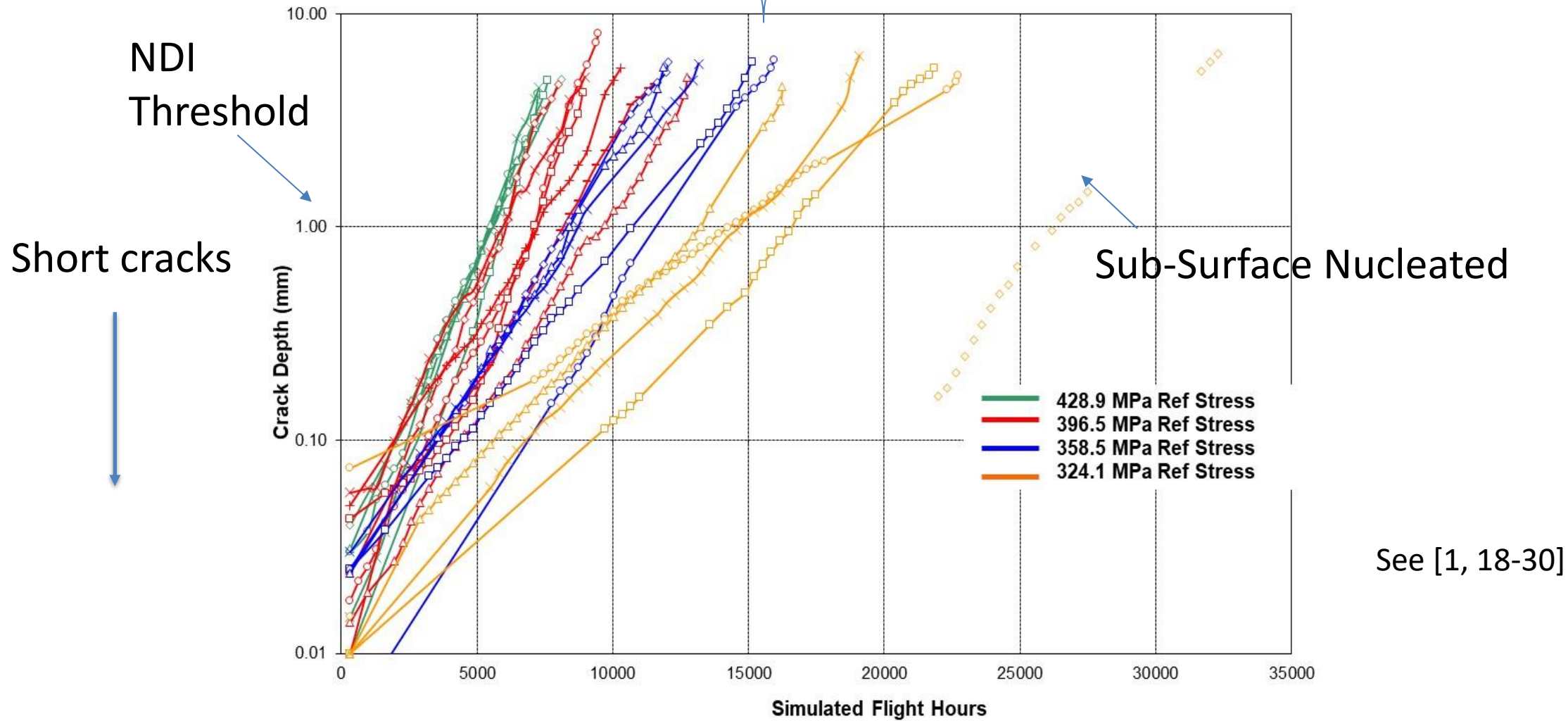
Each point is 1 block of crack growth from Quantitative Fractography (QF)



Lead Cracks Only

# Fatigue Coupon Crack Growth Results - Exponential

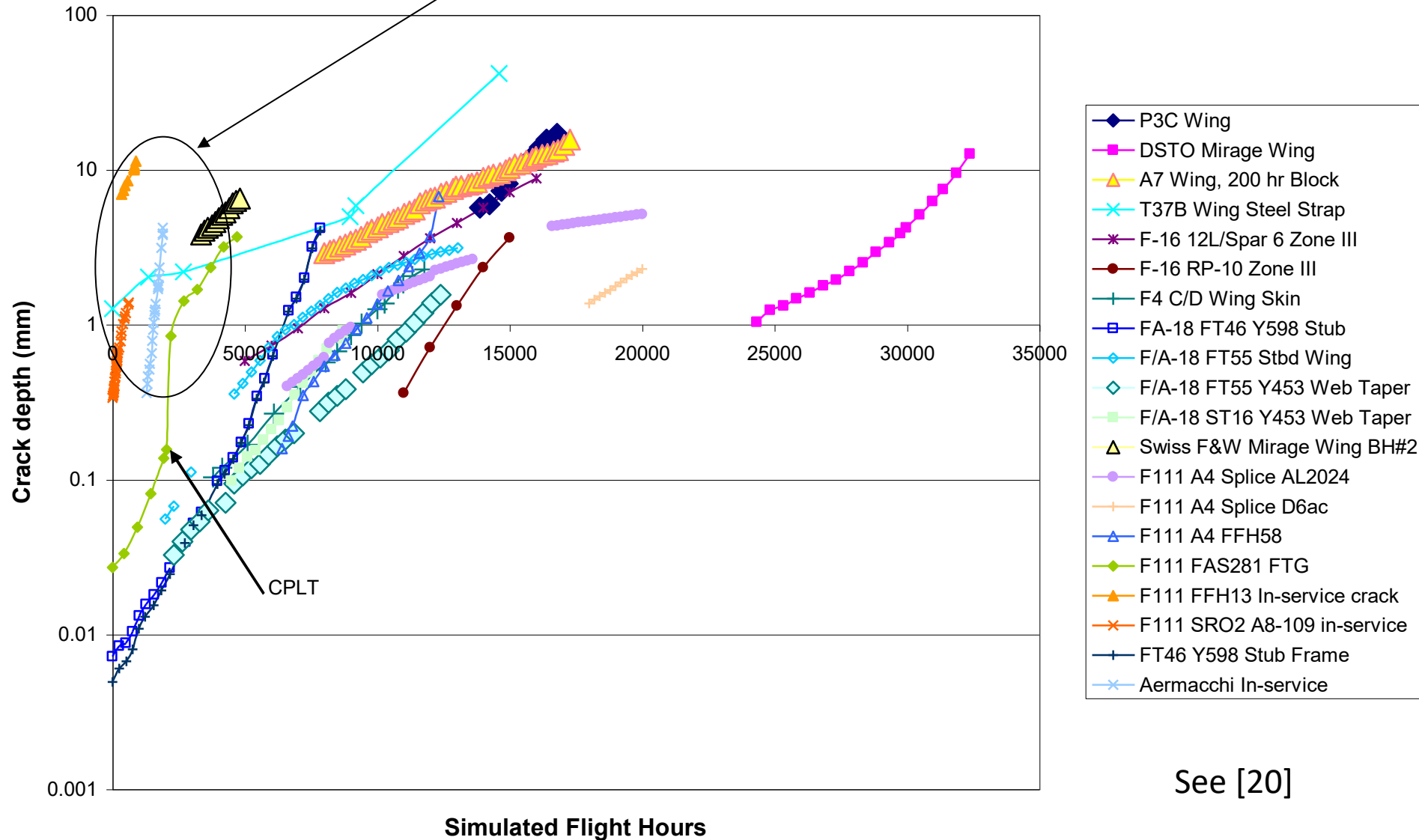
Near-Surface Nucleated



See [1, 18-30]



# A few In-Service and FSFT results



See [20]



# Ye ol' 1963 Paris Re-Visited [18]

$$\frac{da}{dN} = C\Delta K^m = C\left(\beta\Delta S\sqrt{\pi a}\right)^m \quad (1)$$

$$\ln\left(\frac{da}{dN}\right) = \ln C + m \ln K \quad (2)$$



ICF Jun 17

Integrating:

$$a_f = a_0 e^{C\pi(\Delta\sigma\beta)^2 N_f} \quad \text{For } m = 2 \quad (3)$$

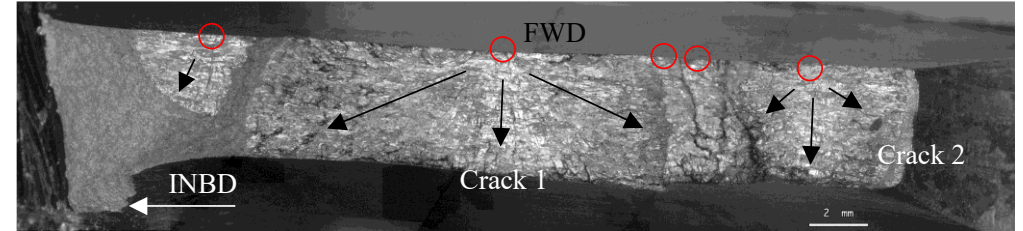
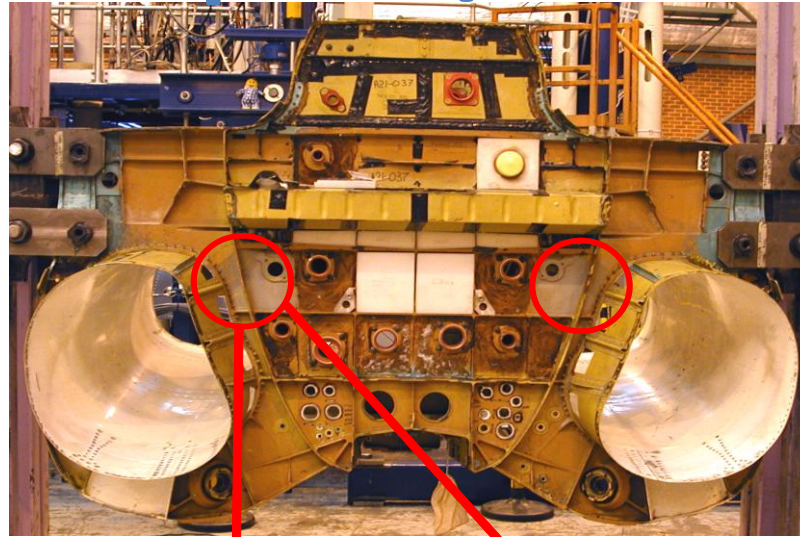
$$a_f = \left[ a_0^{(1-\frac{m}{2})} + N_f C (1-\frac{m}{2}) (\Delta\sigma\beta\sqrt{\pi})^m \right]^{\left(\frac{1}{1-\frac{m}{2}}\right)} \quad \text{For } m \neq 2 \quad (4) \quad \text{LEFM}$$

Where  $a$  is the crack length at cycle  $N$ ,  $\Delta K$  is the stress intensity range (or similitude parameter), constant width correction factor  $\beta$ , and  $C$  and  $m$  are nominally material constants,  $a_0$  is the initial crack size,  $a_f$  is the final crack size and  $\sigma$  (or  $S$ ) is the far field stress.

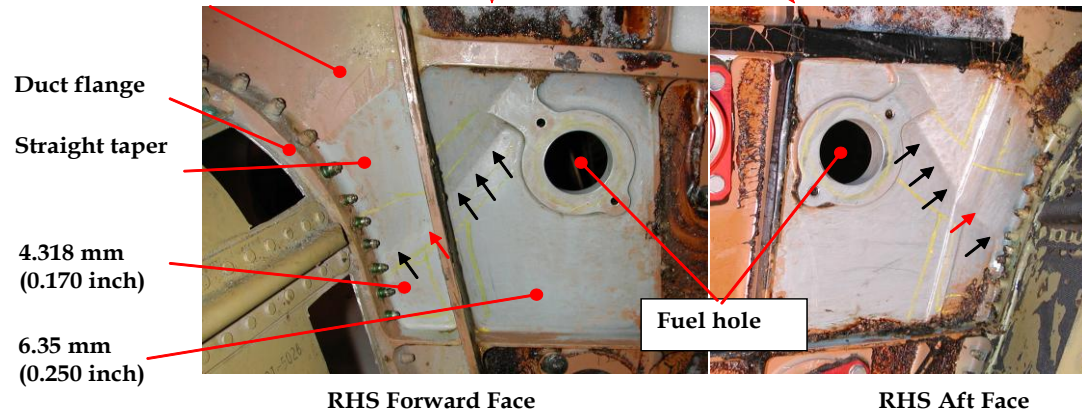
**What about the long-neglected Equation 3 ....???**



# An Example: F/A-18 FSDT “Web-taper”



57.15 mm (2.25 inch)

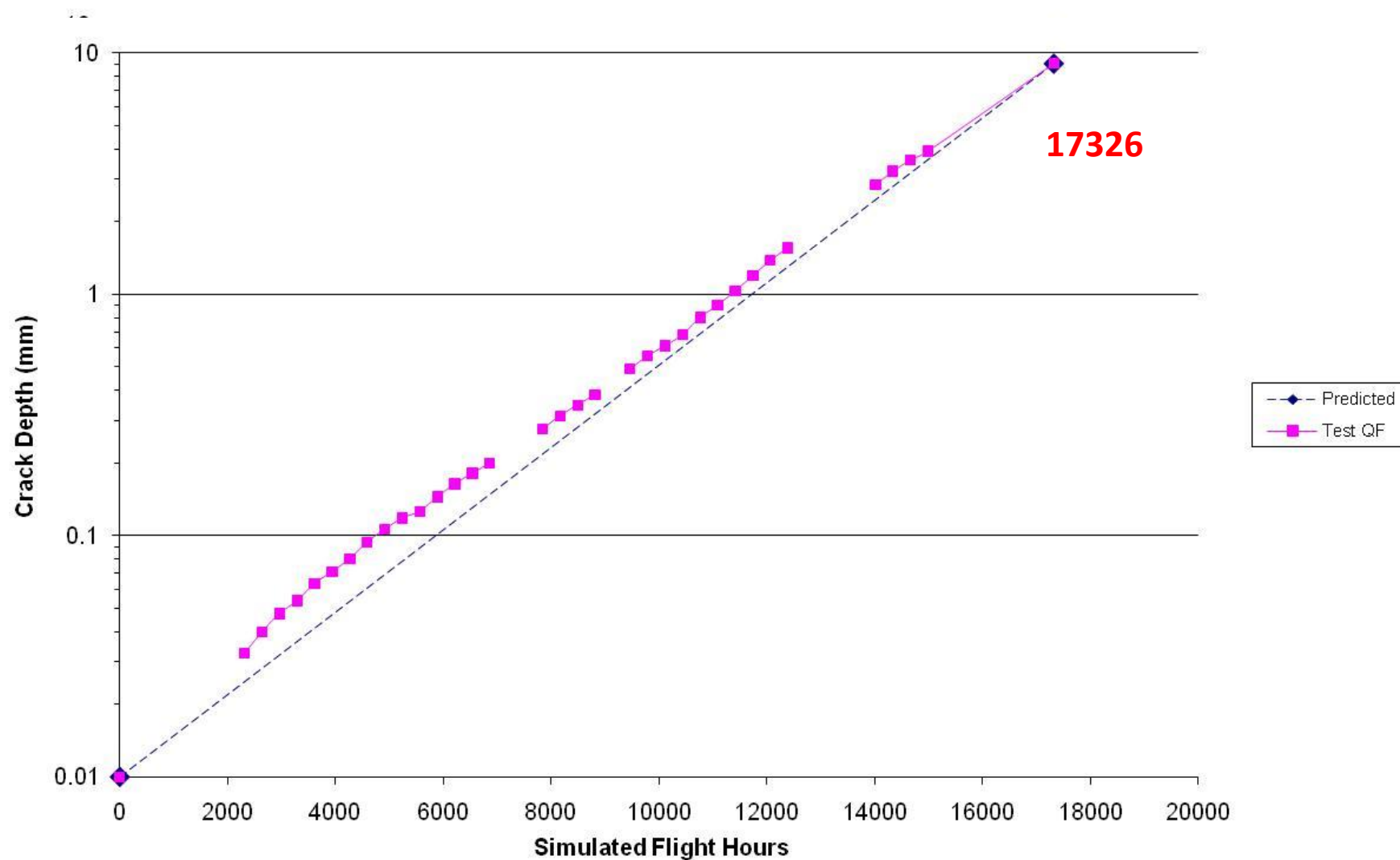


Complex geometry  
High Stresses  
Multiple origins

**Teardown: At 17326 SFH crack depth was 9.04mm deep (FT55)**



# My Prediction: F/A-18 FSDT “Web-taper” Crack



Typical NOT  
Surrogate,  
See [21-23]

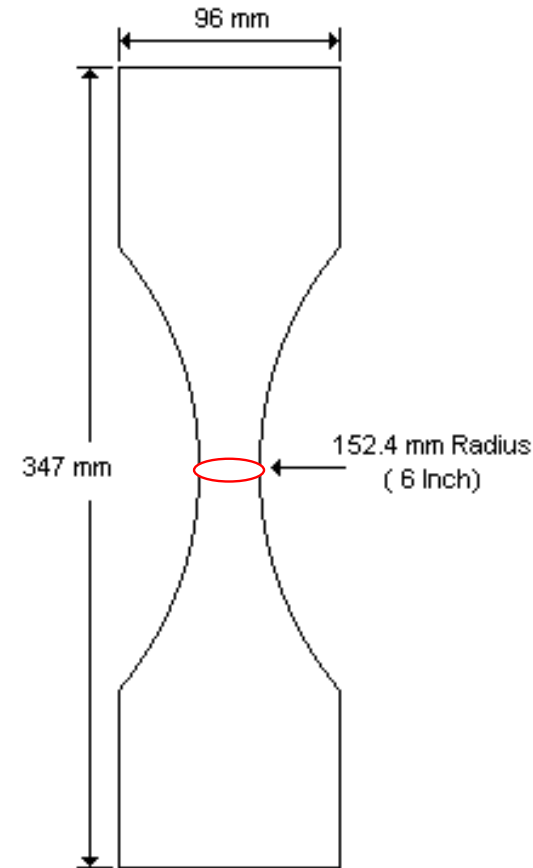
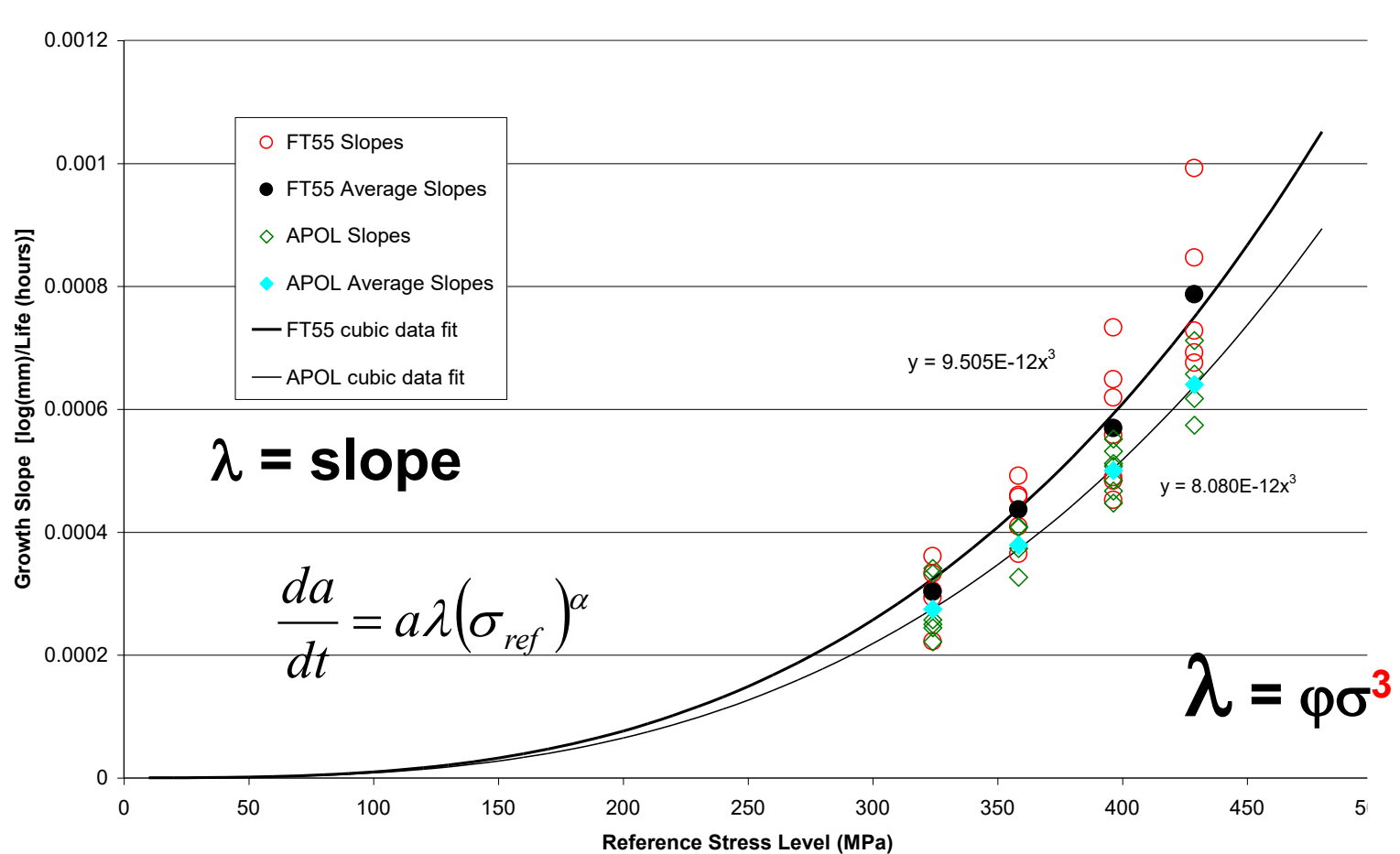


# Cubic Rule [29-31]

(Frost and Dugdale model (circa 1958 [29]) – Constant Amplitude

**Predict lives for same spectrum, material and Kt, at different stresses.**

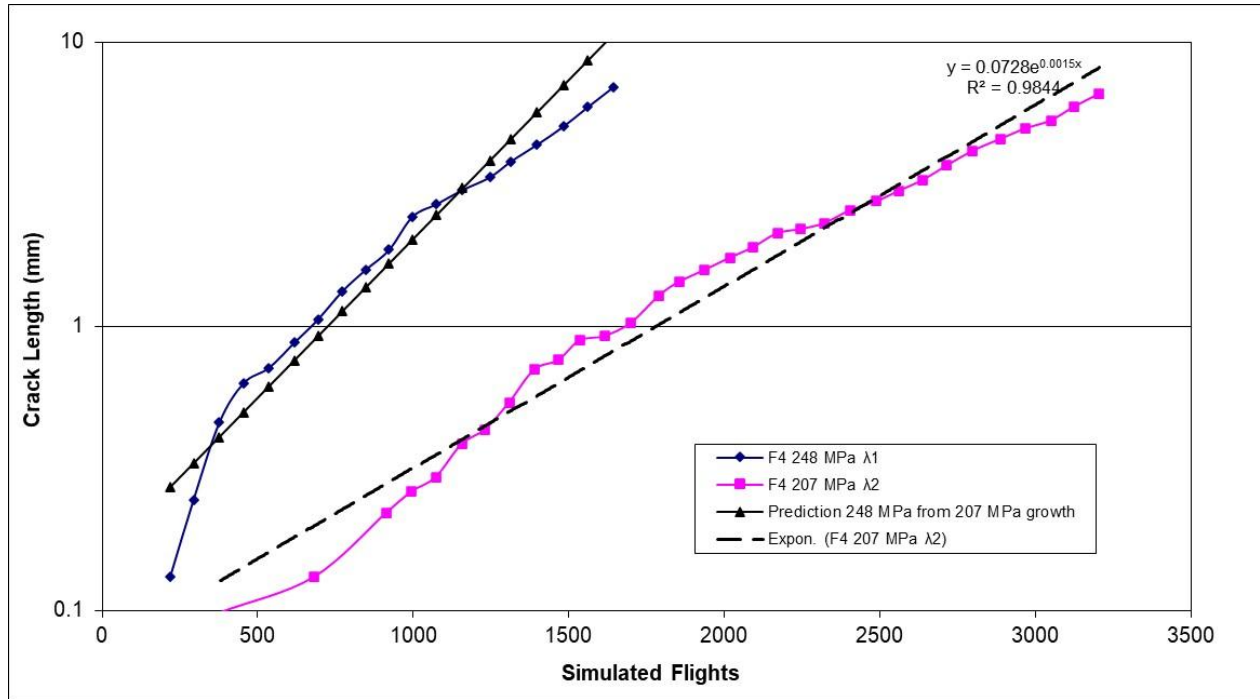
From previous QF data.  
Best fit = Cubic



# Cubic Prediction – F-4 coupon test data

Used in RAAF Hornet, Pc9 and P3C etc structural repair manuals

$$a_2 = a_{0_2} e \left( \frac{\sigma_2}{\sigma_1} \right)^3 \lambda_1 N$$



See [30]

USAF Damage Tolerance Design Handbook. 1998. Wright Patterson AFB, USA



# Effective Block Approach [35-37]

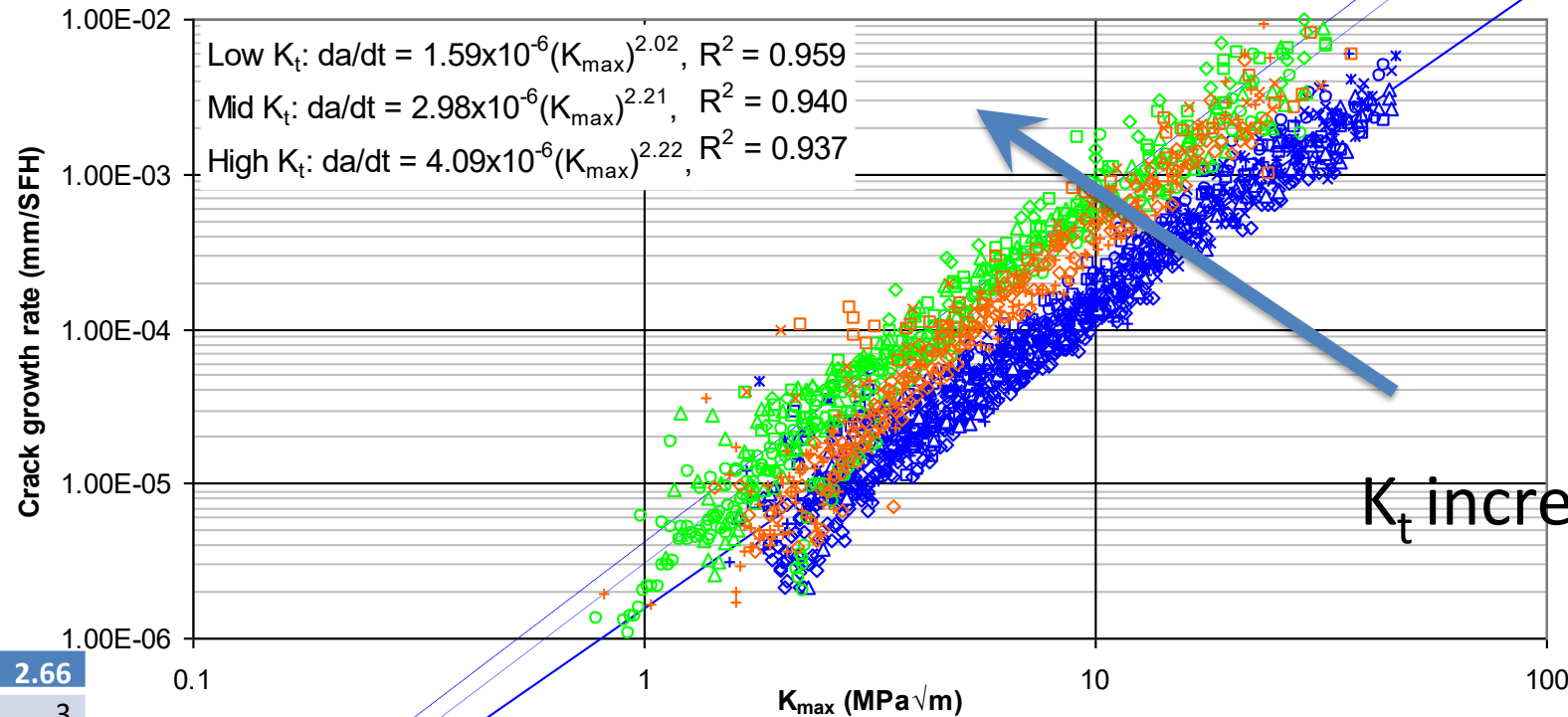
(Gallagher's mini-block [32-34])

$$da/dblock = a\lambda(\sigma_{ref})^3$$

$$da/dblock = C (K_{ref})^2$$

Treat a Block of Variable Amplitude data like Constant Amplitude

Paris-Type Curve (all)



$K_t$  increasing

Net	1.04	2.1		2.66
Gross	1.04	2.15		3

- ◇ Low  $K_t$  - 270MPa, etched
- × Low  $K_t$  - 390MPa, etched
- △ Low  $K_t$  - 330MPa, etched
- × Low  $K_t$  - 360MPa, etched
- ◇ High  $K_t$  - 200MPa, etched
- Low  $K_t$  - 420MPa, etched
- Low  $K_t$  - 450MPa, etched
- High  $K_t$  - 155MPa, etched
- ◇ Mid  $K_t$  - 215.6MPa, etched
- × Mid  $K_t$  - 291.1MPa, etched
- ◇ High  $K_t$  - 225MPa, etched
- ◇ High  $K_t$  - 250MPa, etched
- ◇ Mid  $K_t$  - 323.4MPa, etched
- Paris fit, low  $K_t$
- Paris fit, high  $K_t$
- Paris fit, mid  $K_t$

Hornet spectrum, AA7050 at 3  $K_t$  values



# The Hartman-Schijve Variant [34-38]

$$da/dN = D^* (\Delta\phi)^\alpha$$

$$\frac{da}{dN} = \left( \frac{D(\Delta K - \Delta K_{thr})}{\sqrt{\left(1 - \frac{K_{max}}{A}\right)}} \right)^\alpha$$

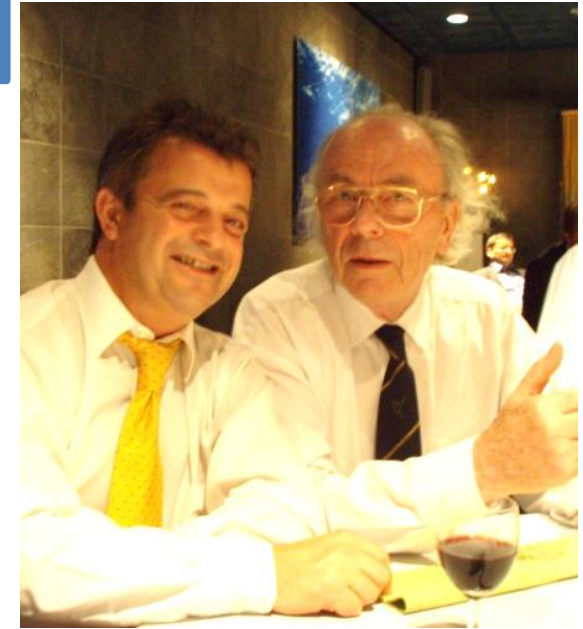
Where A is a constant related to fracture toughness

This equation has the advantage that it allows D to be determined directly from the slope of ONE da/dN versus  $\Delta K$  curve ( $\alpha \sim 2$ )

Note: different  $\Delta K_{thr}$  for short & long cracks

Not ASTM 647 fatigue test standard value of  $\Delta K$  at da/dN of  $10^{10}$  m/cycle

Fits BOTH short & long crack growth rate data. Short cracks are important!!



# Variability in CG rate? E.g. Hillberry et al. data [37]

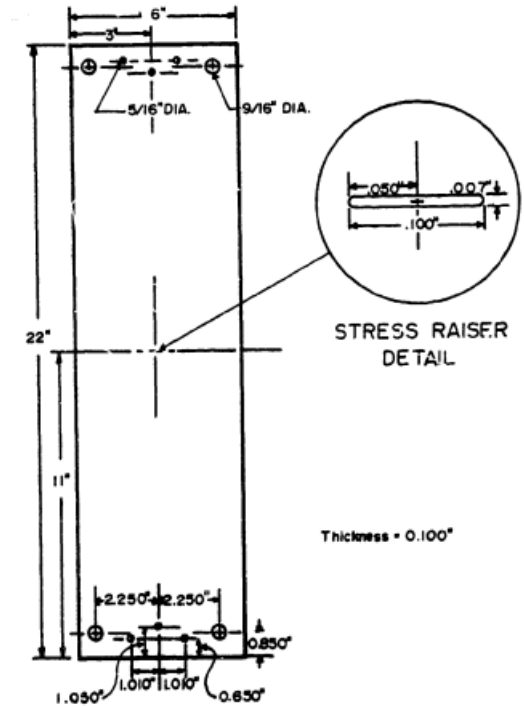
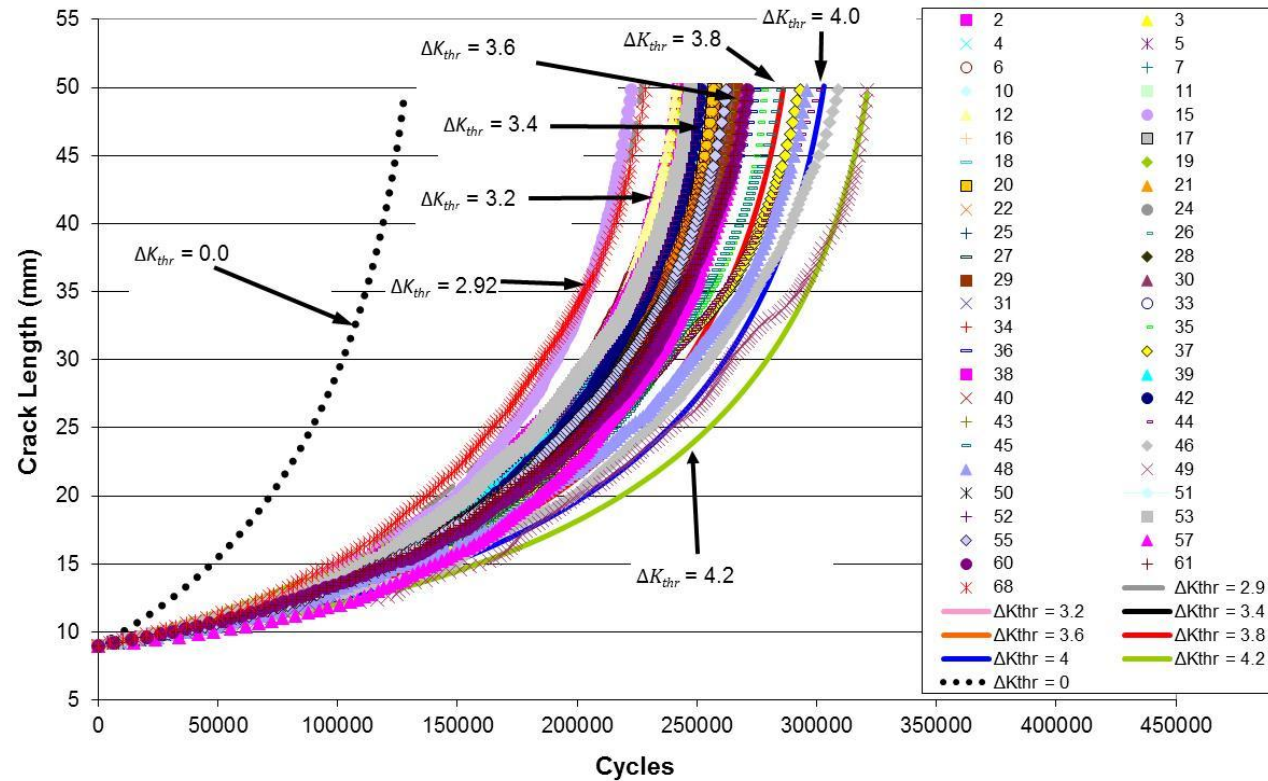


Figure 21. Test Specimen

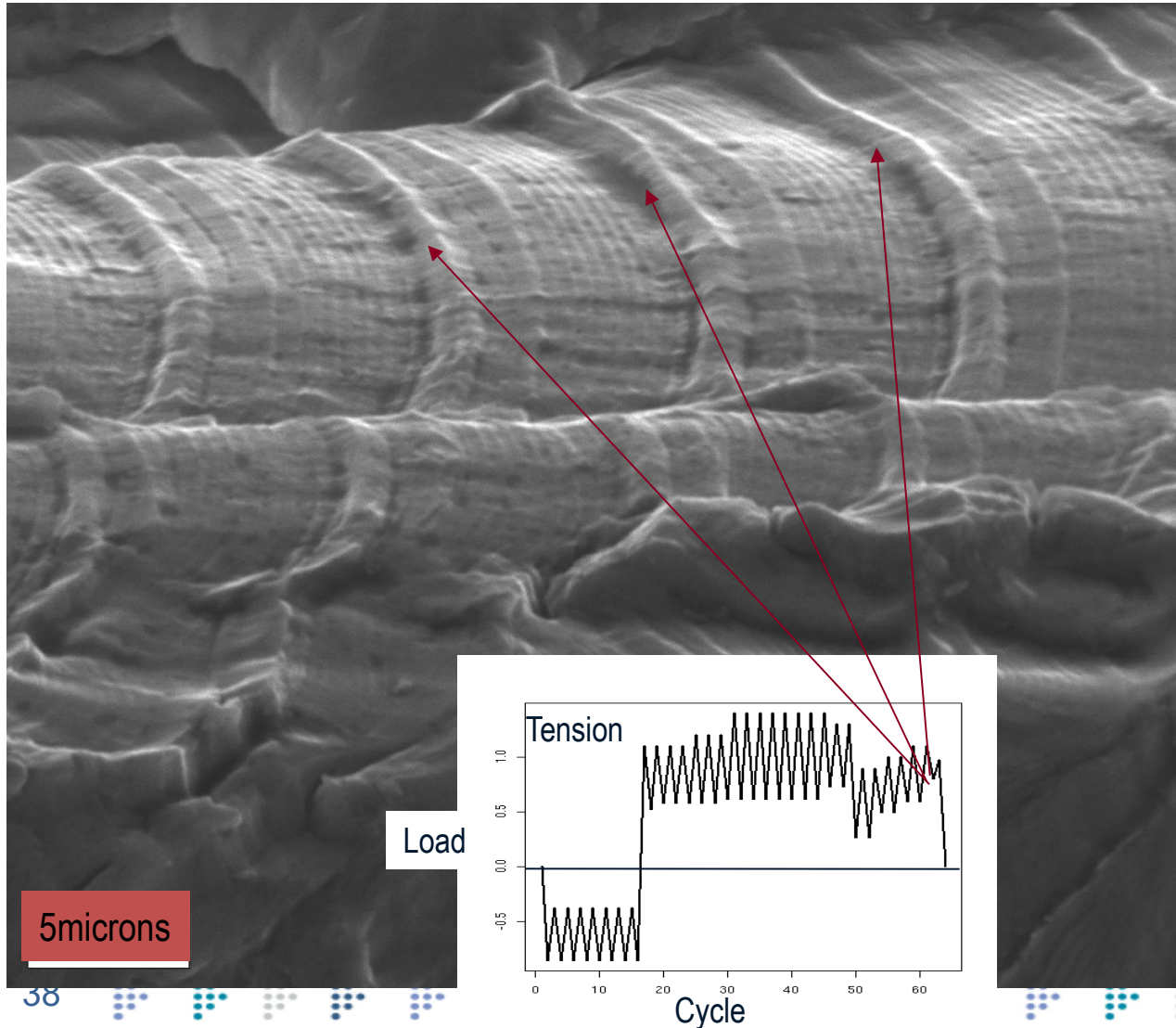
Crack growth data from Virkler et al. [39] AA2024-T3 and computed variability with various  $\Delta K_{thr}$ .

Half-crack length plotted.

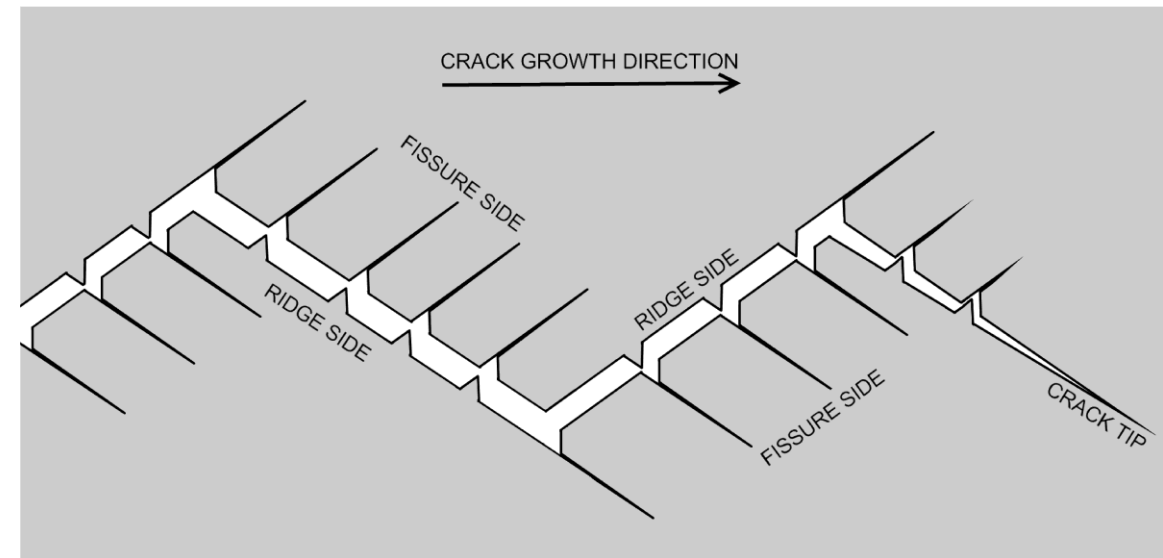
Also collapses Stress Ratio (R) data....



# Cracks and Fissures [39-41]



- Loading changes the plane on which growth occurs.
- This changes the profile of crack surface.
- It produces ridges on one side which match depressions on the other.
- Alternative crack formation mechanism



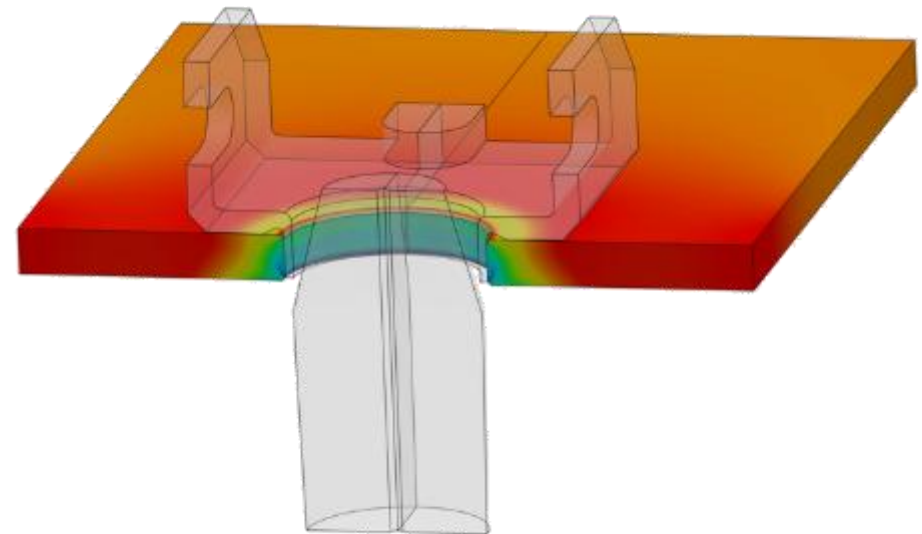
# Corrosion #\$\$%@^&



F35B on deck showing signs of corrosion causing discolouration – Source: *US Finds Solution to Corrosion Problem on F-35 Jets*, Aeronaut Media 13 Jul 25

## PART WORKS

- We can “handle” pitting corrosion, see [43]
- Prevention better than repair
- Elephant: Corrosion in fracture critical parts



Cold Expanded & Bonded Bush Mod or Repair [42]



## Conclusions



- Vigilance required for Continued Safety
- I have been on a fabulous ASI journey
- We did some good things and learnt much
- Many achievements made possible because of a sovereign Air Force with sovereign ASI expertise
- Much more to learn – I wish you all a successful journey
- ASI is much more than fatigue! Fatigue is all about cracks and we have some useful tools
- Master the rules before you bend them!



# Now Available



# Questions



No Highway in the Sky

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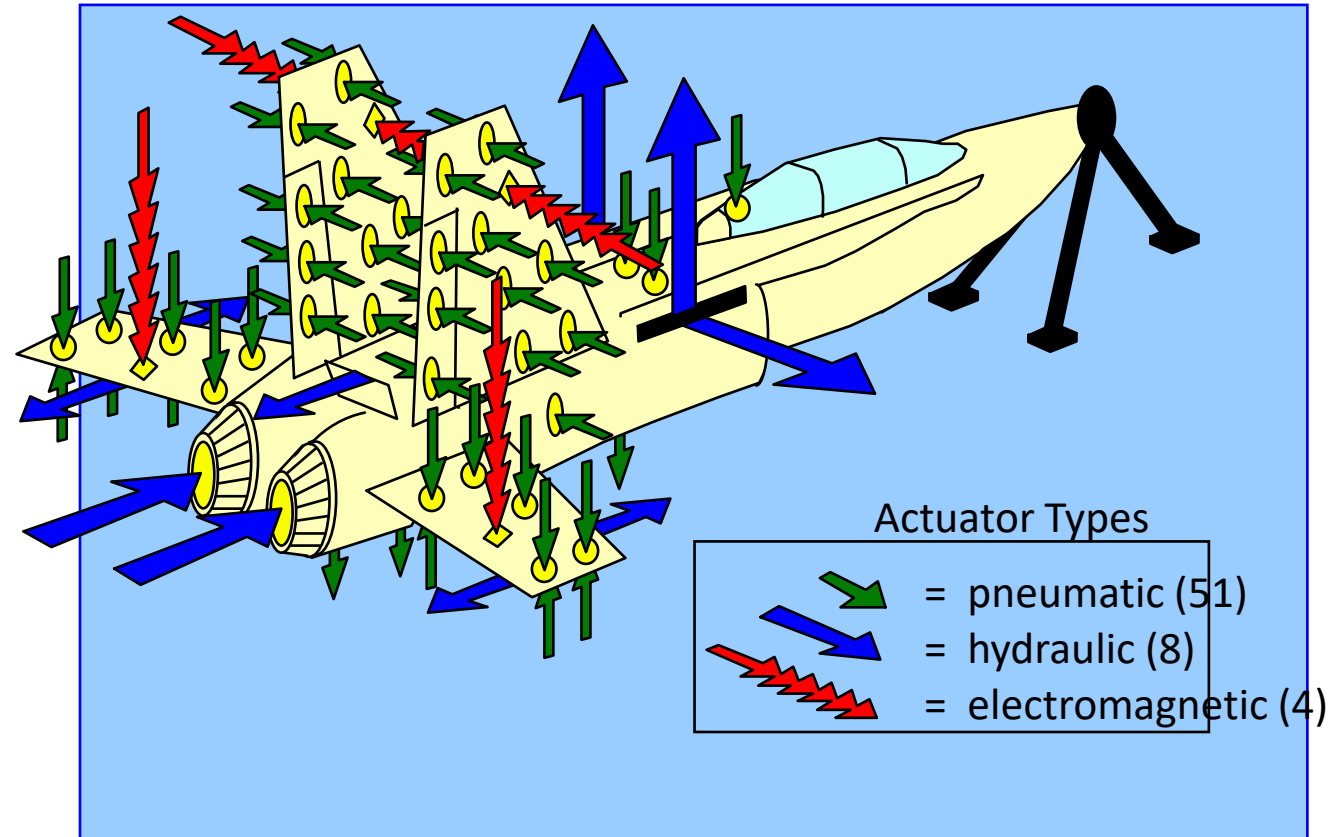
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# Back-up Slides



# FT46 – Simultaneous manoeuvre and buffet



# Caveats (departure from exponential) [1,18]

- Sub-surface (in vacuum)
- Residual stresses
- Quasi static tearing
- Periodic Overloads
- Change in geometry
- Slow starting crack (e.g. multiple local nucleation sites)
- Growth towards neutral axis (load shedding)
- Discontinuity not initially crack-like
- Change in Usage



# Top NAVAIR Priority post Gulf1



## VIDEO RECORDER/CAMERA SYSTEM



- DESIGN REQUIREMENTS
  - UTILIZE OFF-THE-SHELF TECHNOLOGY TO MAX. EXTENT POSSIBLE
  - MAINTAIN COMMONALITY BETWEEN F/A-18C/D AIRCRAFT
  - 2 HOUR RECORDING TIME
  - ENHANCED RESOLUTION
  - GREATER COMMONALITY WITH EXISTING COMMERCIAL & PRIVATE PLAYBACK EQUIPMENT

12/16/91

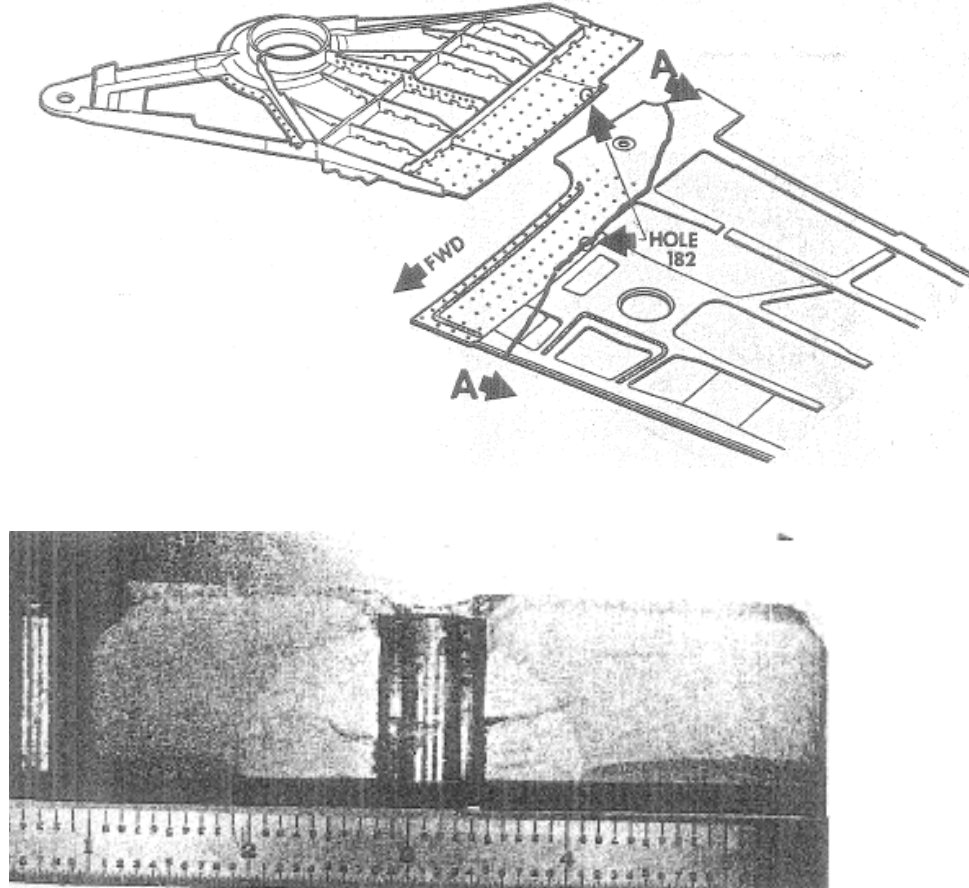


# Boeing 747-400 FSFT Bonded Repairs 1990 [49]

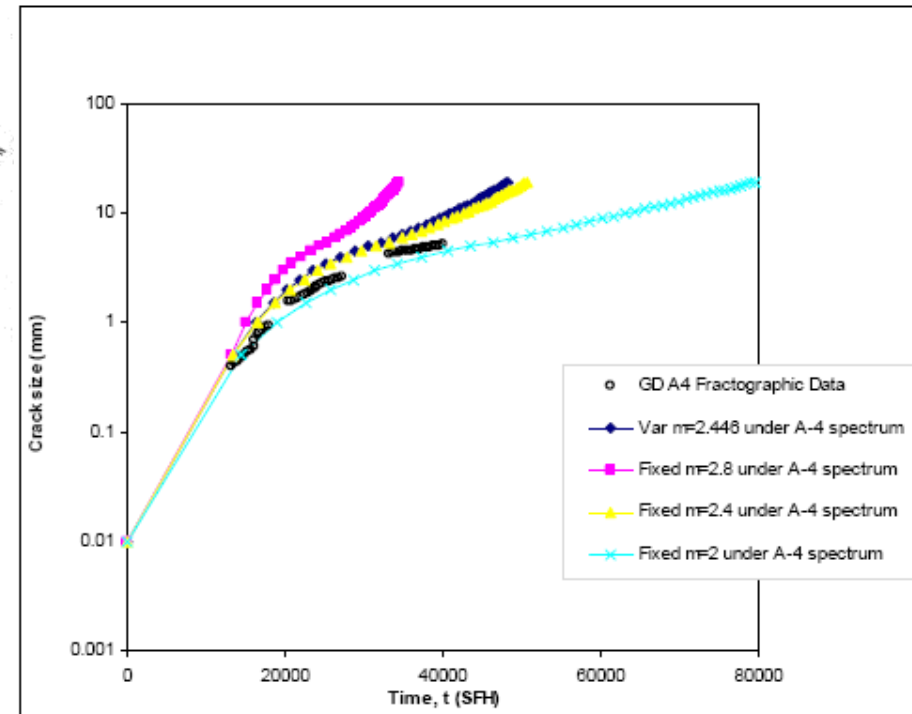


# EBA Example (varying m)

Figure 1 FRACTURE SURFACE OF L/H LOWER WING SKIN

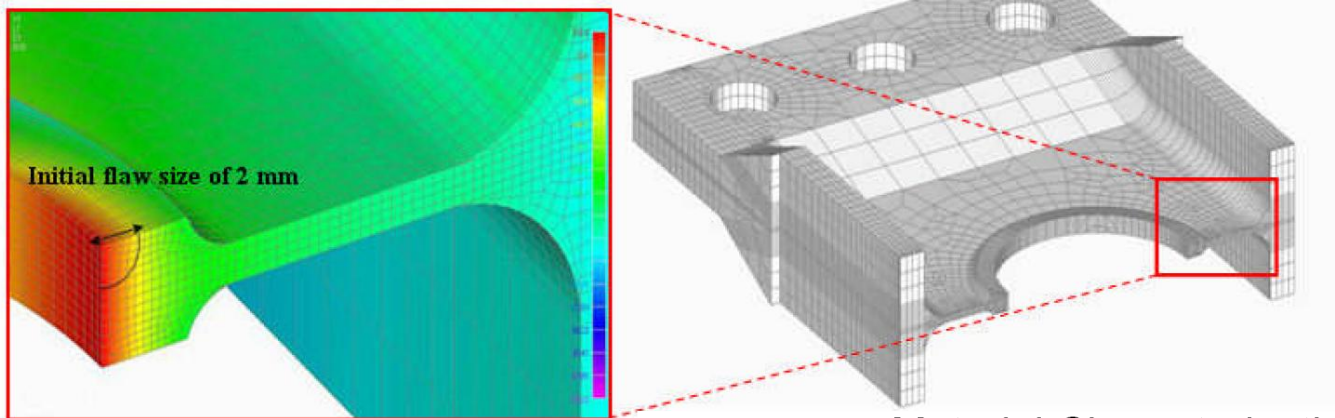


m = 2 best (i.e. exponential)



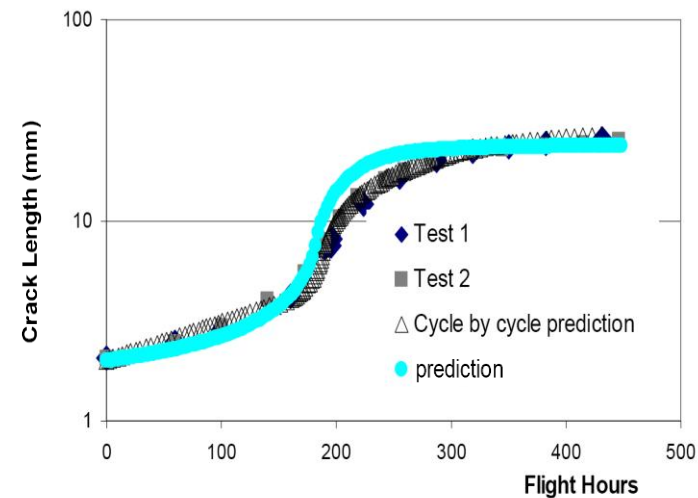
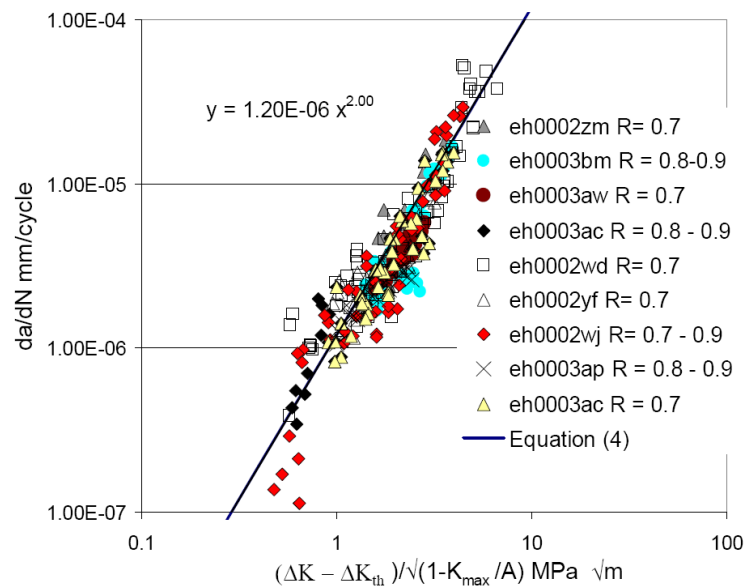
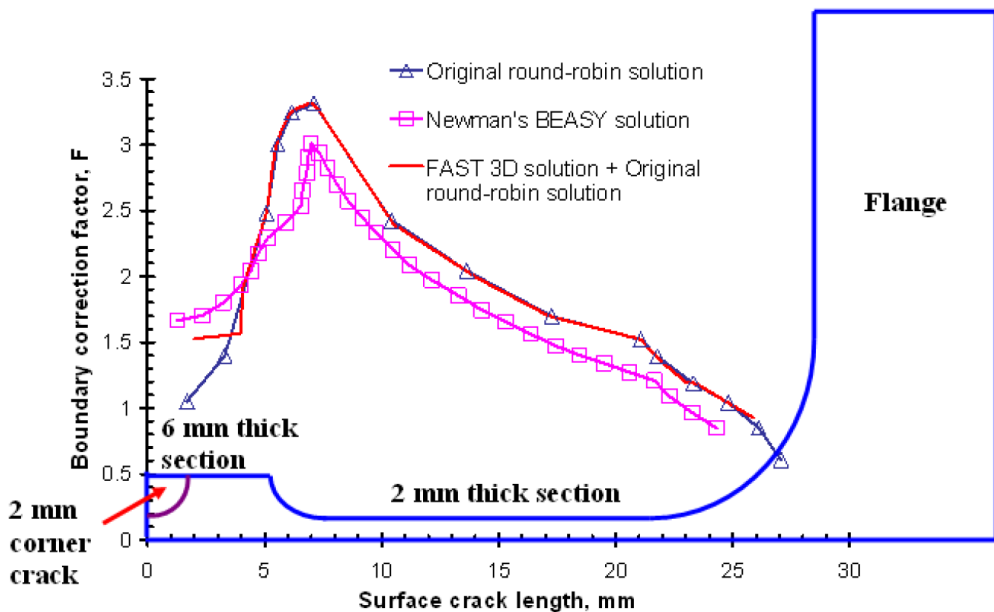
**EBA prediction of the OEM's F111 (A4) full-scale fatigue test data (FZS-12-327, 1972)**

# H&S VA example; AA7010-T73651 flanged plate with lightning hole tested to ASTRIX spectrum



Data courtesy Prof Irvine Cranfield.  
Analyses by Prof R. Jones, Monash.

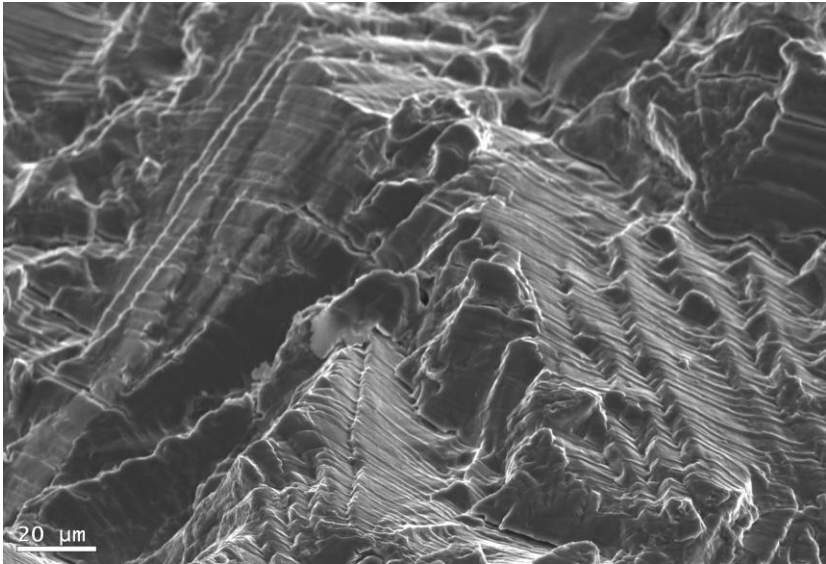
## Material Characterisation



PREDICTION

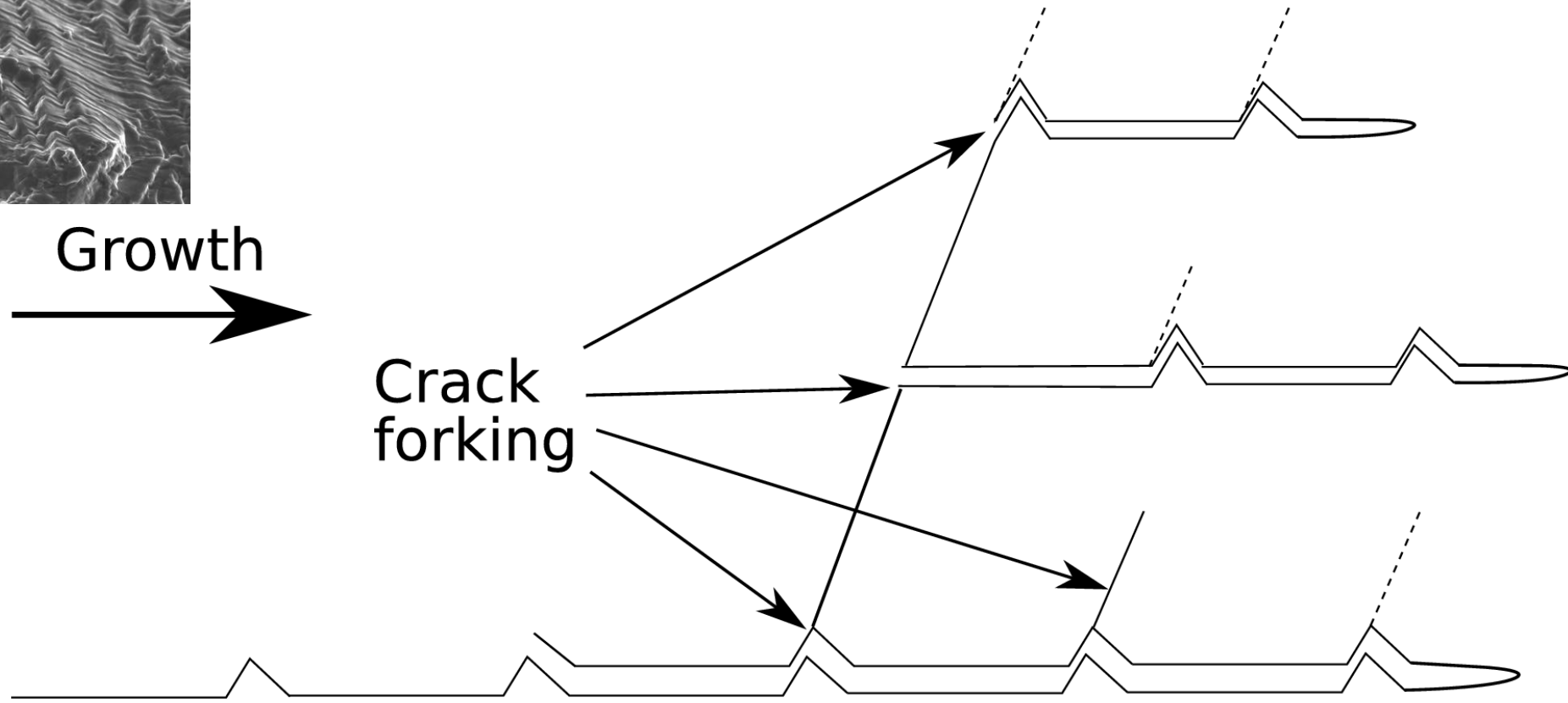


# Periodic underloads produce a family of fissures [44,45]



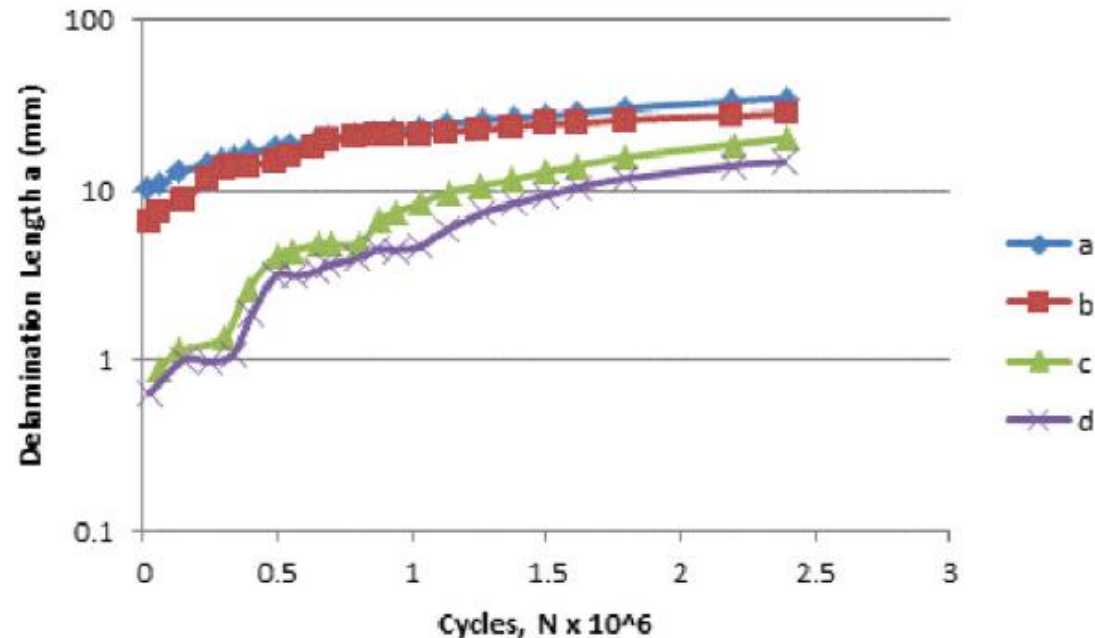
Growth  
→

Crack  
forking



## Damage Growth in Composites [48]

- Challenging the no growth design/sustainment basis
- General behaviour: Short period rapid growth followed by plateau



Development of delamination cracks in the interface between bonded metallic sheets and a composite laminate under cyclic loading ( $\Delta\sigma = 198$  MPa,  $R = 0.1$ ) as a function of fatigue cycles, where the lengths of four delamination cracks in a specimen are shown

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