



*With his cockpit canopy in the open position, Skeets Coleman thunders over Brown Field Auxiliary Naval Air Station after having taken off vertically and converted to horizontal flight in the XFV-1. (Convair via Author's collection)*

*“It’s more maneuverable and responds faster than any plane I’ve ever flown,” Coleman observed of the Pogo. “We’ll do a little more maneuvering, try a few tricks, as we go along.”*

And so he did. Two months later, Coleman made the first transition to horizontal flight after a vertical take-off in the XFY-1. Later, Convair flight testing moved to the Brown Field Auxiliary Naval Air Station, where Coleman made the transition to horizontal flight many times. On 2 November 1954, he made a widely publicized flight over downtown San Diego. For making his historic first flights in a VTOL aircraft that transitioned to horizontal flight, Coleman was awarded the Harmon Trophy, which honors Americans who have made significant contributions to aviation.

In the course of 32 test flights, Salmon never made a vertical take-off or landing in the Lockheed airplane, although he did make the transition from horizontal to vertical flight after a horizontal take-off.

Both Convair and Lockheed would soon discover, however, that it wasn’t the take-offs that were the inherent design flaw in the concept. It was the landings.

Because the pilot literally had to look over his shoulder to back one of these aircraft down, landings were found to be impractical and even dangerous! Landing the airplanes on a sunny day at a test field was one thing, but imagine trying to land one on the pitching deck of a ship during bad weather or under enemy attack.

Kelly Johnson never liked the concept. He said, “We [Lockheed] practiced landing on clouds, and we practiced looking over our shoulders. We couldn’t tell how fast we were coming down, or when we would hit. We wrote the Navy: ‘We think it is inadvisable to *land* the airplane.’” They came back with one paragraph that said, ‘We agree.’”

Both XFY-1 and XFY-1 programs were canceled in 1955 at the request of the contractors, and the second prototype of each aircraft was never made ready for flight. Neither firm wanted to be involved in the continuation of a project that was so clearly misguided. No FY-2 or FV-2 production aircraft would ever be built. The Convair test aircraft had logged 40 hours of flight test; the Lockheed XFY-1 completed about 23 hours. Both of these aircraft still survive: The Lockheed XFY-1 is in the collection of the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum and the Convair XFY-1 is at the San Diego Air & Space Museum.

The true legacy of this early 1950s VTOL program is told not in aircraft that were derived from these aircraft—because there were no successor aircraft—but in a way of thinking about aircraft design, outside the box. In my 1994 interview with Roland J. “Shorty” Hogue, Sr., who was supervisor of the machine shop during the XFY-1 Pogo program, he said, “I think the Pogo was great. It was the first ship that made everybody think ahead, and see what we could do. What we have today comes from all those airplanes. They were handmade.”

#### **CONVAIR XFY-1 (MODEL 5) PRODUCTION CLOSE-UP**

XFY-1 2

FY-2 (Production series considered, but not ordered)



**The Lockheed XFY-1 in horizontal flight with the apparatus that was used for horizontal take-offs. The Lockheed aircraft was able to convert to vertical flight after a horizontal takeoff, but it never took off vertically.** (Author’s collection)



**Unlike the Lockheed XFY-1, the Convair XFY-1 was not configured for horizontal take-off, so in order to transport it horizontally on the ground it was mounted to this specially designed hydraulic apparatus and slowly lowered from vertical. This trailer was used to transport the Pogo between San Diego and Brown Field Auxiliary Naval Air Station.** (Convair via Author’s collection)