

puzzled us,  
as did the Air Force's mandating  
the labelling of every last plastic bottle in the shop  
whether it contained cutting fluid or soap or water,  
until the supervisor at the meeting considerably explained  
that we probably had trouble understanding  
the importance of these new Air Force rules  
because all we ever thought about  
was producing aircraft parts.

## COPING

After the 6:00 a.m. start-work buzzer  
blares Mitch begins humming and la-la-ing  
cha-cha rhythms louder and louder  
as he fills out his time card at his workbench  
until he turns toward Bobby  
on machine #451 next to him and shouts, "Suck my cock,  
BobBEEE!" in cha-cha rhythm  
cha-cha-ing his feet back and forth and beating out  
a rhythm with his fists at his side as if he were  
holding maraccas,  
turning around to face Alan  
on machine #462 and sing out, "Bend...over, AaaaLAN!"  
as he grins and cha-chas his feet  
then turns to face Tom across the aisle  
at machine #456 and shout, "Suck me off, TomMEEE!" and go  
into a prolonged  
near hysterical giggle until he has to grab the edge of  
his workbench to keep from falling over.

Some machinists  
take having to be away from their wives 8 hours each day  
pretty hard.

## LUCKY

I am machining  
2 blocks of sawed aluminum bar stock  
into 2 identical parts,  
and filling out separate First-Time-Conformance cards  
on each one  
because each one came with its own separate  
manufacturing order  
bearing different part numbers, serial numbers,  
and issue numbers,  
and I am spending most of my time  
confusing the 2 parts and then trying to re-identify them  
and record  
their different dimensions to the thousandth of an inch  
in the tiny little boxes  
all over the separate First-Time-Conformance cards,

and getting angry  
over the fact that Goodstone Aircraft Company  
didn't put the identical parts on one manufacturing order.

Of course, it could have been worse —  
Goodstone could have followed its usual procedure  
and sent me 1 part on 1 manufacturing order and then,  
when I had finished the part and torn down  
all of the complex set-ups and sent back  
all of the special tooling and cutters  
for the job,  
sent me the second identical part on a separate  
manufacturing order.

#### FAN CLUB

Whenever Maintenance arrives  
to work on one of our machines,  
we make a point to gather about  
the machine they are working on and stare at them,  
munching apples and  
leaning back with arms folded  
elbowing each other in the ribs  
as we crack jokes  
at their expense,  
chuckling and shaking our heads  
and whistling the Laurel and Hardy theme  
as the Maintenance men  
sweat and strain and grapple,  
turning and pushing and hammering  
machine parts,  
turning red with embarrassment  
and cursing and having fits  
because they know they must do a good job  
if they don't want to endure  
having us watch them all over again.

#### NOT AS EASY AS IT SOUNDS

Graveyard shift machinist  
Gus springs at me the moment I arrive  
at the beginning of my day shift  
to take over for him,  
shoving the part he is working on  
under my nose  
and rattling off with speeded-out-of-his-mind baggy-eyed  
intensity,  
"You can put the head on an 8-degree 42-minute angle to  
go in on the Y axis and hold the 35 thousandths radius on  
the A datum, well actually you can go in 100 thousandths  
extra because of the 4-degree 12-minute angle on the B  
datum, but you don't want to go past the middle of the