***The Wright Brothers***

*1903, United States*

Two brothers stood for hours along the beach

Imitating seagulls as they soared

As if to learn the secrets birds could teach.

Instructed by the wind, the ocean roared.

And perched on dunes they call Kill Devil Hills,

Their wheelless biplane known as *Flyer I*

Rattled like a stunned machine until

Uncertainly it sought the frozen sun

By rolling down a wooden monorail.

The *Flyer* bounced up off the earth and flew

Twelve seconds on that legendary trail—

One hundred twenty feet of ocean view.

Four times that day Orville or Wilbur took

Wright flights of fancy never known before.

It was a cold December day that shook

The world and opened aviation’s door.

***Bell Rocket Belt***

*1961, United States*

Surprising!

I’m rising

Materializing

Right here in the middle of the sky!

I throttle

The bottle

Of my rocket model—

Bazzooom! I’m a highflying guy

Freewheeling

To ceiling—

And no sinking feeling.

A human can zoom up so fast

By rocket—

The shock at

What’s in my back pocket—

A turbojet engine’s a blast!

**Lockheed F-117A Nighthawk**

*1982, United States*

Who was that

radar evader,

cloud irrigator,

metal Darth Vader

impersonator,

invisible raider,

black jet aviator,

and wicked wind-skater?

*So long, see ya later!*

**Author’s Notes**

**The Wright Brothers:** Orville and Wilbur Wright, self-taught engineers and bicycle shop owners from Dayton, Ohio, will forever be known for having inaugurated modern aviation. Their achievement at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, went beyond merely inventing a plane. The Wrights built their own wind tunnel to test airfoils, discovered that a narrow wing shape was the perfect architecture for flight, placed a pair of twin rudders in the back to control the side-to-side yaw, devised a pulley to harness the wings, and built their own lightweight, gas-powered engine.

**Bell Rocket Belt:** In 1953, Wendell F. Moore, an employee at Bell Aerosystems, was analyzing small hydrogen peroxide rockets. Late one evening, he sat doodling at his kitchen table and drew a picture of a man between two rocket jets, with fuel tanks on his back. For his own amusement, he added gauges, valves, and controls, and the idea of a rocket belt was born. Bell was awarded $150,000 to develop prototypes of what was nothing more than two backpacks filled with nitrogen and hydrogen peroxide. Moore died in 1969, and Bell halted the development program. The rocket belt, despite some successful flights, was ultimately another fascinating dead end in the history of aviation.

**Lockheed F-117A Nighthawk:** The U.S. Air Force wanted an aircraft capable of attaching important targets without being deteched by enemy radar. The F-117A Nighthawk, often called the Stealth Bomber, was deployed in 1982 to fill that role. The plane achieved its stealth by way of flat panels that were arranged as to scatter more than ninety-nine percent of radar signal energy. The F-117A’s short but storied career included service in Panama, Kosovo, and wars in Iraq. Superseded by more advanced stealth aircraft, the plane made its last flights in 2007.