



Movie extras run through a scene in Winnipeg in which a model of the Avro Arrow is rolled out of a hangar for the first time during filming of a movie on the history of the Canadian-made jet

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Allan's Arrow resurrects Canada's aviation heritage

Westaskiwin man creates a replica fit for the movies

CHARLES RUSNELL
Journal Staff Writer

Westaskiwin

"Action!" yelled the director. As the film cameras rolled, the hangar curtains were drawn to reveal a giant, gleaming white plane — the Avro Arrow, circa 1957.

"It was absolutely stunning," says Allan Jackson. "I just kind of froze in awe. Many people who had a mind for aviation were in tears."

The Westaskiwin man was among the crowd assembled at a Winnipeg air museum earlier this month for the first day of filming of *The Arrow*, a \$7.8-million mini-series scheduled to air on CBC early next year.

Jackson was not there as a movie extra. On evenings and weekends over nearly six years, he created most of the actual-size replica of the CP-105 Arrow that is the movie's centerpiece.

The producers of the movie had heard about Jackson's project on the Internet, through chat by Avro Arrow buffs. They cut a deal.

Jackson supplied the roughly 70 per cent of the plane he'd completed — enough to fill three semi-trailers — and his knowledge of how to assemble it. The producers finished the plane and promised to return it at the end of filming to Westaskiwin for display at the Reynolds Alberta Museum. The museum is now trying to find space for the plane.

"It was a win-win situation," he said.

Jackson, 60, works as a sales estimator for a steel-grating manufacturer. But as a teenager in the 1950s he built model airplanes and dreamed of being an aeronautics engineer.

After high school, he enrolled in an aeronautics program at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Calgary. But his career — and those of thousands of others — effectively ended Feb. 20, 1959,



Charles Rusnell, The Journal

Allan Jackson and a photo of his replica

when Avro Aircraft of Malton, Ont., announced that the federal government had cancelled the Arrow project. Avro laid off 14,000 employees.

"I felt as this green person with no experience that aeronautics was a dead-end career so I went on to other things," Jackson said.

In 1987 he found a book about the Arrow, richly illustrated with diagrams and pictures. He believed the plane represented the pinnacle of Canadian aeronautics achievement. Capable of flying at twice the speed of sound, the long-range, fighter/interceptor was reputed to be the most technically innovative aircraft of its time.

"It had a lot of technology back in 1957 that is now in use on modern fighter jets," he said. "It was way ahead of its time."

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what the Arrow was and what could be done about somehow bringing it back."

Three years passed before he decided to make it a reality. His first tentative step was to try duplicating the plane's cockpit and nose section. In his garage, he made an air intake out of wood and fibre-glass.

That wasn't so difficult, he said, so he built the other air intake. Then the nose cone and finally the cockpit. The finished section was installed in the Reynolds Alberta Museum in 1994.

"For some unknown reason, I thought, 'Why not try to build the rest of it?'"

By early 1996, he had fabricated the plane's 26-metre-long steel frame, which he stored in a cow pasture. He was completing all the air surfaces — the rudder, wings and hinged flaps on the wings — in his cramped two-car garage when the movie people discovered his work.

Jackson is quietly proud of his achievement, not just for himself but for Canadian aviation history.

The Canadian government, he contends, tried to erase the plane from history by destroying everything — the prototypes, which were cut up for scrap, the tooling, the plans. But he brought the Arrow back.

"As it turned out, the Arrow didn't die despite all that destruction," he said.

"The legend lives on."