

Jetliner reunion marks 50th Anniversary

By Cam Bailey

It had to happen. I had such fun at the 45th I just knew I'd make it back to Toronto for the 50th Avro Canada Jetliner reunion.

Local Wetaskiwin resident Allan Jackson, he of full-size Arrow fame, was there, as well as Donnette Hyslip from Calgary. Hyslip brought a great display reflecting their new A.V. Roe Canada Heritage Museum. The response to this was overwhelming. I overheard two gentlemen discussing the fact that even Ontario hasn't done this for Avro Canada. The Hyslip's R.C. Hangar in Calgary was responsible for the 10-foot-long flying model of the Arrow made for the CBC movie a couple of years ago.

Once again there was a great gathering during the "Hangar Flying" get-together, and this time I was determined to sift through all the material I had missed five years ago. Ha! This time there was three times the amount, but I had about four hours to see everything I wanted to.

It was still an incredible experience. I recognized individuals I had met five years ago, and in some cases struck up conversations. Folks were very interested in talking with Allan Jackson, and he got to meet Ralph Marsh, the man who gave me the data plate and control wheel for lowering the undercarriage on Arrow #203 at the 45th reunion. It was also great to see some of the younger generation in attendance (younger than myself, that is).

Once again there was a great gathering of Avro workers and renewing of memories at dinner. There were some marvelous speakers as well: Jim Floyd, Chief Designer and Engineer of the Jetliner, Don Rogers who was the youthful-looking co-pilot (to Jimmy Orrell, chief test pilot at Avro in England) on that first flight, and Bill Baker who was the original Flight Engineer.

Rogers and Baker gave their account of that first flight, and how Baker was a little uncomfortable flying with Rogers at first. As Baker put it, nothing ever happened to Don Rogers while pilot-in-command. He always felt more at ease with pilots for whom something had gone wrong, because then he could at least know how they would react.

The next morning had most folks saying

so long until next time. Some of us piled into a car for a tour of the Trenton Air Base. Dedicated to those in the RCAF and CAF it makes one proud to be a Canadian just to go through and feel the history we have.

Workers and volunteers there are laboring to restore the RCAF Halifax bomber from

WWII, brought up from over 700 feet down in a lake in Norway. Alas, there was only one survivor, but he was there when his bird came up from the depths.

The next Avro reunion is planned for the first flight of the CF-100 in January 2000. Who knows?



A group of Avro notables at the podium on the occasion of the 50th Avro Canada Jetliner Reunion: (L-R) Murray Willard, Jim Floyd, Don Rogers holding a Jetliner model, Bill Baker, and Mike Cooper-Slipper.

Test pilot recalls Jetliner saga

By Don Rogers

Avro Chief Test Pilot

In 1949 the Jetliner was getting ready to be flown and Jimmy Orrell came over from England. The great day arrived on August 10th, just a little over three-and-a-half years from when the design was started, which was pretty good.

On October 4th, we had the first public demonstration of the Jetliner. We had officials from the government, the Air Force and the airlines come to look at the airplane and see it fly. By the middle of October, I had done quite a bit of flying on the Jetliner with Jimmy Orrell and Mike Cooper-Slipper, and Jimmy returned to England.

During 1950 and '51 we did demonstrations for TCA, the RCAF at Ottawa and St. Hubert, the USAF at Dayton, Ohio, and down to Miami for the airlines there as well.

Those of you who are pilots will appreciate the fun it was flying cross-country in this airplane because most of the transports operated in the 5,000 - 15,000 foot level. We were cruising at 30,000 feet and Air Traffic Control wasn't accustomed to our speeds and altitudes. So this was all quite fun for us sitting in the cockpit in pressurized comfort, flying on autopilot and working the computer across the countryside.

By mid-1951, there was enough interest on the part of several airlines that they were getting serious about writing orders.

Unfortunately, the Korean uproar got going at the wrong time. The lure of military orders for the CF-100 and the Orenda engine, with the possibility of continuing military orders, resulted in the company stopping Jetliner development, and never putting it into production.

From 1952 on, the aircraft was in a state of decline, but I was surprised, when I looked in my log book, to find out how long it went on flying. For another four years, it was used primarily as a photographic platform for observing rocket firing and other development work on the CF-100. We did a few demonstration flights, we flew in the Toronto air show for two years, and we took the Jetliner to Ottawa for an RCAF show there. All these flights were made to keep the Jetliner flying, but without doing any development work on the aircraft.

Then sadly, I note from my log book the last flight of the Jetliner was on 23 November, 1956, just about seven years from the time it first flew. Flight time totalled approximately 440 hours with very little trouble. It was a fine airplane and a dream to fly. So much for the saga of the Jetliner from my log book.

[Editor's note: This is condensed from a much longer story. For the complete saga, please see Pre-Flight, a publication of the Aerospace Heritage Foundation of Canada, July-August 1999.]