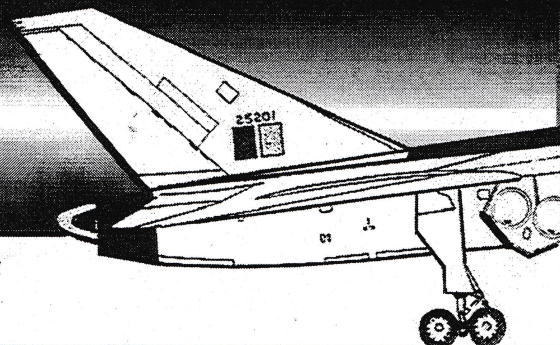


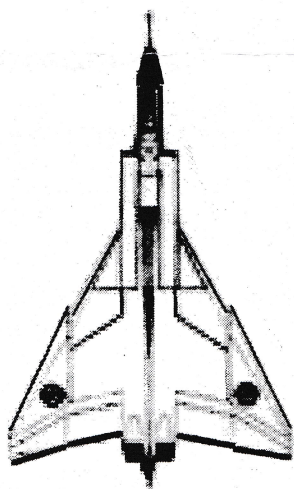
Pre-Flight

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The Fallen Arrow

by

Gerry Barbour

**"I shot an arrow into the air.
It fell to earth, I know not where."**

*Somebody wrote those words. Author unknown, to me.
It is, I think a fitting beginning to the final chapters on the
Avro Arrow.*

In Part Two, Gerry continue to share his feelings about those wondrous days during and after the rollout of RL201. He recalls the speech given by the Minister of National Defense, the Honourable George Pearkes, a holder of the Victoria Cross. Gerry considered it to be 'marvelous'. It augured well for the future of the aviation industry for Canada. Words of his friends help to understand the boyant mood of hope of those who helped to produce the Arrow. In doing so, the reader is reminded of its dimensions and potential. In spite of some rumours and uneasiness with political agendas, he was full of enthusiasm at being where he was at the moment, on the floor working on the Arrow. As with the Jetliner, he was completely fascinated and exhilarated with the future security of Canada. He was proud.

The days that followed the cancellation of the Arrow project were extremely hectic. Pressed into service by the Chief Administrative Engineer, to handle all dealings with the United States (U.S.) aircraft representatives clamouring at the gates, clamouring for attention, clamouring for an audience with any individuals desirous of pursuing their chosen profession in the United States of America, I found the days and the time flew by. Busy I might be, but in reality, I found it an easy task. Pick up these people at the various hotels and transport them to the Administration Building. Get them kitted with badges and all necessary items to allow them entry into what was, a few days previously, a bustling aircraft plant. Escort them to the rooms designated for the purpose of interviews. Control the lineups. (No problem there, as the lads and lassies had until Wednesday to pickup their tools, their equipment and the like.)

I knew so many. The sad part of the whole "shemozzle" was realizing it was quite likely I would never set eyes on any of them ever again. They would be crossing the border, then going south, east or west. Representatives from all major aircraft manufacturers were present. Douglas, McDonnell, Republic, N.A.S.A. (The North American Space Administration) Boeing, Bell, North American, all were there. Fisher Body from Detroit attended eager to add our keen-eyed loftsmen to their design group. The representatives were good. Supplied with adequate information as to the fitness of the "interviewee," they chose those who, to their minds, would best be suited for whatever project their company was presently engaged. The ground rules were established, a satisfactory stipend arrived at, a contract signed and on to the next. I compared it to old time slave markets all around the world. Parade the goods. Haggle a bit. Sold to the highest bidder.



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From the President

It was encouraging to see additional members attending this year's AGM held at the Toronto Aerospace Museum on June 29th. More members attended than at most of our meetings over the last few years.

Attendance at the AGM gives all of us a chance to one-on-one interaction to address concerns and joint ideas on how to improve our service to members, and our commitment to the general public.

Frank

The Fallen Arrow, cont'd

Watching these Americans-to-be, I mentally cursed John Diefenbaker and his gang of misfits in Ottawa. Did John D. have the slightest inkling what his ill-advised cancellation of the Arrow project was doing to the welfare of this, my country, combined with the rapid drain of high class and very bright people southward?

I thought of sending off a telegram, "Come see what you've done, John. Why not eat humble pie? Eat crow. Admit you made a terrible mistake. Resurrect the Arrow contract. Put everyone back to work. Send these nice Americans back home with a pat on the back. "Sorry guys, I've changed my mind. I acted hastily on ill advice. I made a stupid mistake. I can't afford to lose these highly educated, highly taxed and valuable citizens." The interviews went on and on. The ranks of the "interviewees" thinned. The Americans got what they wanted, smiled, shook my hand, thanked me for my help and departed the premises.

Moi? I had been interviewed in a mild sort of way, purely out of politeness, I thought. My dossier lacked the magic letters spelling proficiency in the higher phases in the aeronautical world, such as "Aeronautical Engineer," "Aerodynamicist" and the like. Nobody wanted my services. "Been around too long, Lad. You have plenty of practical experience but we need bright brainy young people with college education. It's high-tech time in this day and age. Sorry."

I wasn't worried or angry. That stint in our navy had taught me survival tactics. I would get along. When push comes to shove, I would be right up there with the best of them. I was still of a mind that bullshit baffles brains and I had seen nothing in almost thirty-five years of industry to alter my thinking on that score. When my number came up to receive the "golden handshake," I would spin a line of pure unadulterated horse manure hit past any prospective employer and go from there.

The flow of bodies stopped abruptly. "Mahogany Row" emptied. The bays, once ringing with the sound of hammers, "wheee" of air drills, the "brrruup" of riveting guns were silent. The drawing office, once humming with activity, the lads and lassies bent over their drafting boards, was now dark and quiet. The atmosphere of the place was so depressing. Why I wasn't dumped remains a mystery. My own opinion, which counted for little, was simple. They needed a jo-boy, a dog's body. I was needed to clean up. Help destroy drawings, models and design data.

Fallen Arrow, cont'd.

The word came down from the front office. "Destroy all information pertaining to the design of the Arrow. Leave nothing. Everything is to get the chop." Armed with those huge scissors, so expertly handled by the blueprint staff a short time ago, I glumly took up this grim task reflecting on the fact that John Diefenbaker seemed determined to remove all vestiges of the airplane. It was to be as if the Arrow design was.... never. Glancing out the window, I saw RL 201-202-203-204 and 205 being assembled on the north side of the Details Building. They looked absolutely gorgeous, to a lover of airplanes, clad in their day-glo paint, wings shimmering in the afternoon sunshine. Five little Arrows all in a row.

I also saw my buddy, Al Cox with his "cut-em-up" crew. They were walking around, waving their arms, talking up a storm, and gazing reflectively at the airplanes: cutting torches and tanks standing nearby.

What in the world is going on down there? A dreadful suspicion began forming. Diefenbaker had issued orders to destroy drawings, models and such, obliterate those items, but the aircraft? Surely not. Only a deranged individual would dream of destroying these airplanes. The Avro Arrow? An airplane bought and paid for by the tax-burdened people of Canada? An airplane that belonged to the people of Canada? An airplane so far ahead of its time as to be the forerunner of all future supersonic aircraft?

Leaping to my feet, I gained the out-of-doors in a hurry and crossed the tarmac on the run. Brusquely interrupting Al, who was drawing lines on the fuselage of the nearest airplane, I breathlessly exclaimed, "What's going on, Al? Why the cutting equipment? What are you planning on doing to these airplanes?" Al, always the happy sort, looked anything but. "Haven't you heard? Avro has been ordered to destroy all these airplanes. Every Arrow is to be cut up for scrap. Diefenbaker has threatened to bring in the military if Avro doesn't co-operate. Look over there. There are trucks, ready and waiting to haul the bits to the scrap yard in Hamilton. The scrap yard of Sam Lax. Say good-bye to the Arrow. It'll take me six or seven days to destroy what took you guys two years to build. Not only that, my friend, look over there. Do those guys watching my every move look like Avro employees? If I had to guess, I'd say they have the look of government employees. They refuse to comment on their presence and I get the distinct feeling that my services will shortly be terminated in favour of a sub-contract crew."

"All this is terrible. Diefenbaker must be a candidate for the loony bin to sanction this act of madness. To cut up these machines? That's a sacrilege."

"Nothing I can do about it. I can put the torch to certain sections but I have to put the saw to others. Risk of fire, you know."

He turned away. I noticed how grim he looked, Al, the soul of cheerfulness. He must be deeply disturbed. But not half as much as I. I was horrified. I could see those beautiful airplanes lying in bits on the tarmac, Sam Lax standing over them rubbing his hands in anticipation of the big bucks made from the sale of the scraps. No, no, scratch that. Sam was a Canadian, and although a business man ever alert for the almighty dollar, he would experience deep sadness as he watched his trucks, loaded with bits and pieces of the Arrow, wend their way westward to his scrap yard in Hamilton. I had met Sam once, while pawing through our scrap bins on my noon break. We had chatted up a storm. Sam was OK.

There had to be a mistake here. Al must be misinformed. These airplanes couldn't be put to the torch. They had cost big bucks to design, manufacture and put through our exhaustive test program. The tax-paying public, long-suffering though they might be, would never stand still for something as stupid as the wholesale destruction of these magnificent flying machines. Shortly, I was to find that Diefenbaker had issued the order. Every Arrow was to be destroyed immediately. Cut into bits for easy handling and carted off to the scrap yard. It was to be as if the Arrow had never ever been thought of, never existed.

I was beside myself with rage. I had come to love this airplane, Just as I had felt so strongly about the Lysander and the Jetliner. Returning to my workplace and taking up those damnable snips exasperated beyond all reason, I buried them deep into a pile of drawings. I laid them aside, my thoughts returning to events of the past few days. We had heard that an Arrow was to be flown to the United Kingdom for evaluation. The Brits were contemplating building a supersonic transport, we had been told. The Arrow would fit right in with their plans. They would benefit greatly from their association with our Arrow. What had happened to that? Had Diefenbaker "nixed" that plan? Did the man have his sticky fingers into everything that pertained to the Arrow indeed anything pertaining to Avro Aircraft?

Perhaps the Prime Minister, finally waking up and realizing what a colossal blunder he had made, was bent on saving himself further embarrassment by removing every vestige of the Arrow project and the quicker the better. By so doing, his stupidity would be forgotten and the citizens of Canada would go back to their task of grinding out a living. Perhaps John, like a true politician, thought the Canadian people were dumb enough to accept what he had done. If the evidence of his stupidity was totally removed, then his staunch supporters would be likely to keep him in office next election. Oh, yeah, I thought, the Liberal party will make hay on this one. Your days as Prime Minister are numbered, John, old boy. ►

Fallen Arrow, cont'd.

Canadians, on occasion a bit docile, dopey enough to accept what those politicians secure in their plush offices in Ottawa, feel is good for them, nevertheless have long memories. They wouldn't forget. I was certain of that! Why not send these aircraft to various R.C.A.F. stations across the country? Teach our eagles to fly a supersonic airplane. It was the way of the future, no doubt about it. Our air force would be without parallel anywhere. The benefits would be enormous.

I knew the B-47, the flying test bed for the Iroquois engine was being returned to the United States Air Force. Cheerfully loaned to Avro by the U.S.A.F. that airplane was for the express purpose of testing an airborne Iroquois engine. Those flyboys south of the border knew what we were up to and had wished us luck ...with a touch of envy in their remarks. If they could see the worth of the Arrow program, why couldn't our own government? Were they bereft of all reason?

Our sheet metal experts, designers and such, had clamped an Iroquois on the side of that airplane and had been busily engaged in testing the engine under flying conditions. From RL-206 onward that engine would be installed in every Arrow. An engine that would develop twenty thousand pounds of thrust, the most powerful jet engine yet devised. Our cousins across the road in Orenda Engines had the "know-how", the smarts to produce any god's amount of that engine. "How many you want" Name it. We'll deliver "em pronto." Look out world! Our premier test pilot would turn RL-206 loose and two things would happen.

The record for the speediest flying machine would belong to Canada. The high-flying Avro Arrow would bring the altitude record home to the Dominion of Canada.

Lost in thought, chin cupped in hand, my elbow slipped off the desk. The Arrow blueprints, piled high, cushioned the shock to my head. That brought me out of a daydream and ended that brainstorm. Oh Lord! What might have been! Fully awake and thoroughly angry, I continued with the task of destroying the record of Avro's outstanding achievement, but try as I might, I couldn't keep wayward thoughts from entering that airspace in my head. Throwing those snips across the room, I gave wings to my thoughts.

Couldn't those dunderheads in Ottawa check with the United States Air Force as to the worth of the Arrow project? Check with the money moguls down there and realize that the paltry few million dollars spent on the Arrow project had been money well spent? What about Avro Aircraft? Though badly hulled, the ship was still afloat.

Was there no one left in the front office who was willing to put his future career in aviation squarely on the line? Hell! Most of those executives were finished anyway. Why not flout Dief's orders, refuse to destroy those Arrows, thumb a nose in the direction of Ottawa, and dare the P.M. to send in the military. That would create such a fuss the like of which had never been known in Canada. The publicity would be enormous, the newspaper would love it and be on our side for a change. That would force Dief's hand, he would be unable to withstand the adverse publicity generated by our actions.

Given the opportunity, I would gladly lead the insurrection. I was finished anyway. Who cares? Not me. The more I dwelt on the idea of gaining the record for speed and altitude, the more appealing it became. The Avro Aircraft Company should bite the bullet, throw a few dollars in the kitty, contact a few of the workmen, sheet metal experts and the like, call them in to the plant, remove those Pratt and Whitney engines in RL-204, and make the necessary modifications to her nacelles. Then, with all in readiness, pop in a couple of Iroquois engines and send her sky high. If Spud wasn't available, I knew one test pilot who would sell the family jewels for the opportunity to fly the Arrow.

"Cowboy" Lorne Ursel.

A smile crossed my features, the first in a very long day. In my mind's eye, I saw the CF-100 Canuck leapfrog over that ground-off mountain at Point Mugu in California. The world's altitude record? Hell, if Lorne thought it necessary, he would hop out and push RL-204 the last few feet to establish the record. That Arrow would do double duty in one fell swoop. Two for the price of one. A bargain. She would break the world's speed record and the altitude record. That would startle "Dief the Chief." Angry, no doubt, that his explicit orders had been ignored by Avro, and aware of the prestige brought to Canada by those busted records, the P.M. would be in a dangerous position. After that astounding feat, the people of Canada would know Avro had the smarts to design anything, manufacture anything. Prove to the world that Canada could make it on her own. (to be continued)

Members Matter

My operation, thankfully, is over. To those who called with best wishes, I truly appreciated them. Thank you very much. Since the latest issue of Pre-Flight is now in your hands, I can work on the processing of memberships and other related matters.

Nick Doran, Membership