

Pre-Flight



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A Queen Remembered

50th Anniversary Banquet
of the First Flight of the Avro Jetliner

by
John Thompson



ON SATURDAY, August 7, 1999, some 200 plus former Avroites and aviation historians converged on Toronto Airport Holiday Inn Select to commemorate a red letter day in Canadian aviation. The occasion, of course, was the first flight, on August 10, 1949, of Avro's C102 'Jetliner', the 'Queen of the Airways'. From far and wide they came: British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, California, Florida, to meet former co-workers, and pay tribute to a wonderful aircraft that performed just as its creators expected: superbly. It was entirely fitting that the banquet be held less than a mile from where C102 was built and took off on her maiden flight. People began gathering in the exhibit hall after lunch. A colourful display of Jetliner photographs, models and other mementoes awaited them. After everyone had taken their seats in the banquet hall, they were welcomed by Past President Nick Doran, who expressed the wish that they would take home fine memories of the day. Each guest received a gold Jetliner pin, distributed by the Air

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AHFC

Aerospace Heritage Foundation of Canada



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The Aerospace Heritage Foundation of Canada (AHFC) is a federally-chartered not-for-profit organization. The current emphasis is on Avro and Orenda and the Foundation is actively trying to locate former employees of these companies.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

On the 7th of August, we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the first flight of the Jetliner. What a time we had, thanks to the efforts of Chairman Nick Doran and his team.

In my closing remarks after the dinner, I observed that when I arrived at Avro Canada, I did not join a company; I joined a legend, a living legend. From 1946 to 1959, we had the Jetliner, CF100, Avrocar and the Arrow. We also had the Orenda series of engines, the Iroquois engine, plus many other project studies. All this in 13 years! No wonder the politicians could not comprehend; they wanted toasters and kettles.

The Arrow model recovery program has been deferred to enable us to comply with the conservation regulations. This is only a temporary delay and we should be under way again in a couple of weeks.

In my last report, I indicated that AHFC had the only search permit from the Ontario government. It appears I was wrong. The Arrow Recovery Group has advised me that it also holds a search permit.

Our participation in the new Flight Centre at the CNE has been well received. Many thanks to those members who volunteered their time. This event certainly gave the Foundation a lot of public exposure.

 IAN FARRAR

Banquet, continued:

Cadets of the 845 Avro Arrow Squadron. Director Chirstine Mason then said grace, after which the guests enjoyed a delicious meal.

Following supper, Master of Ceremonies William Coyle, AHFC Patron, introduced the first guest speaker, Don Rogers, copilot of the Jetliner on that historic first flight. Bill Baker, Flight Engineer, was also with us, as were test pilots Mike Cooper-Slipper and Jan Zurakowski. In his remarks, Bill Coyle said "what a wonderful team (Avro) and set of accomplishments".

Don began his talk by remarking, "I've flown many aircraft during my life, but my favourite was always Jim Floyd's 'Jetliner'". He then introduced Bill Baker, Bill Wildfong, Mike Cooper-Slipper, William Devine, Jan Zurakowski and Tommy Thomson's daughter, Marilyn, and paid tribute to the late Jimmy Orrell, the Jetliner's pilot on August 10, 1949. Continuing, Don recounted the flight to New York City in 1950 and the tremendous publicity the Jetliner received as a result; the demonstrations to various American airlines, the USAF and United States Navy; and Howard Hughes, eccentric, but very knowledgeable about aircraft. Hughes flew the Jetliner several times, generally preferring to come in a bit fast for a smooth landing. (Historical might-have-beens: too bad Avro didn't think to offer the Jetliner to Hughes in 1956; he probably would have put it beside his 'Spruce Goose', where we could see it today.)

Don wrapped up the bittersweet saga of the Jetliner by describing how, in late 1956, the Avro inspection people said that a thorough, costly inspection of the aircraft was needed if it was to continue flying. It was felt that this was not justified and, there being no immediate takers among museums, the Jetliner was scrapped.

Our second speaker was Jim Floyd, who held overall responsibility for the design and engineering work on the Jetliner. Jim began his remarks by saying, "I don't need to tell you how special this night is for the Jetliner team. Many have come a very long way to celebrate one of the milestones in Canadian aviation." He then paid tribute to those past colleagues who are no longer with us "and their contribution to our memory of those incredible years".

"Why was the Jetliner so special to us? Because it represented so many firsts." Jim went on to describe the 1950 New York flight, and pointed out that the percentage of increase in speed achieved by the Jetliner was the highest of any passenger aircraft in North America, before or since. After showing his 'Tribute to the Jetliner' video, he remarked that "my grandchildren find it hard to believe that the Jetliner existed so long ago; it still looks so modern".

Recalling how the Jetliner was designed without the help of modern techniques, such as Computer Assisted Drafting (CAD), Jim observed "Many things in the aviation industry are changing for the better ... Canada is now the leading supplier of regional jets to the world's airlines ... but, it's important to look back periodically". He explained that Avro knew, in the late 1940s, that the development of jet engines was "moving along very well" and the Jetliner was therefore designed to accept new engines as they became available.

Jim described the Avro Jetliner employees as "the most fabulous team of enthusiasts that it has ever been my privilege to work with". He summarized briefly his 50 year aviation career, saying that, of the 20 projects he was involved with, "the one project that leaps up is the Jetliner. I made friendships then that have lasted ever since." Jim concluded by asking all former Avro people to stand for the audience's recognition, and commended 845 Avro Arrow Squadron Cadets.

President Ian Farrar then made a presentation to Nick Doran, AHFC Past President, in appreciation of his tireless dedication to the organization.

Several attendees' names had been drawn to give brief speeches. Bill Baker recalled the wonderful spirit of the Jetliner workers. "From a maintenance and reliability point of view, the Jetliner was the best of any plane I've ever worked on."

Author and researcher Palmiro Campagna read a recently-discovered report by TCA official Jim Bain, dated May 2, 1949. Following an inspection of the Jetliner, Bain praised the quality of workmanship as being the best he had ever seen on a prototype. "The skin and metal work are beautiful, better than on the North Star. Care and foresight have been obviously taken with the Jetliner."

Murray Willer mentioned the rather ironic fact that the 50th anniversary of the Comet's first flight, unlike the Jetliner's, passed virtually without celebration. He then read out Jimmy Orrell's account of the Jetliner's first flight as printed in Avro News, the staff newsletter. The Jetliner, Murray pointed out, shattered five aviation records in a single day. "The Jetliner was so advanced, that nothing ever caught up to it during its lifetime."

Another speaker recalled how, on the way home from holidays in August 1949, he and his wife drove past the Avro plant just to see if anything was happening with the Jetliner. This proved to be a most fortuitous detour, for they were greeted by the sight of C102 in full flight!

Des Todd said the airport at Elliott Lake, Ontario has a waiting room featuring display models of an Avro CF100, CF105 and now, courtesy of AHFC, a C102.

Bill Coyle thanked the speakers for sharing their Jetliner memories with the audience. He then asked the audience to stand and recognize Jim Floyd, who was accompanied by his wife, Irene, and family. After closing remarks by Ian Farrar, the guests reluctantly dispersed for home, pausing for a few final

AHFC (August 7, 1999) LOTTERY

WINNER	SELLER
1st Prize Trip for two to Bermuda Ray Brosinsky Rocky Mountain House AB	Self
2nd Prize 27" Colour TV Edwin Wright Mount Forest ON	Self
3rd Prize 30" X 20" Vanderhorst Print Scott Young Scarborough ON	George Barkey Markham ON
4th Prize 15" X 20" Plaque "Three Avro Arrows" (simulated photo) Bill Coyne Jr. Orangeville ON	Self
<i>Congratulations to the winners and sellers!</i> <i>Sincerest thanks to those who went out and</i> <i>sold tickets and told people about AHFC!</i>	

sessions of hangar talk. It had been a splendid, truly enjoyable evening for all, a chance to meet old friends and recall that wonderful time at Malton, when the Jetliner team took on the world. ✓

Candid camera snapshots at the banquet . . .

