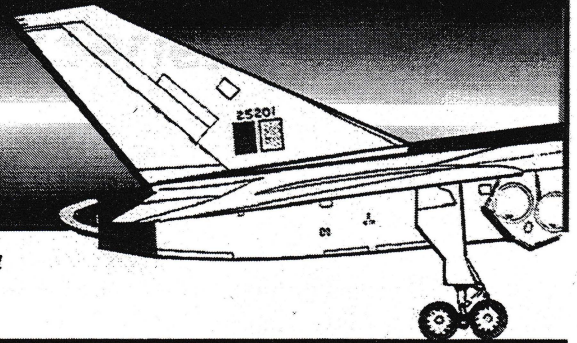


Pre-Flight

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100 Years
of
Flight

The people at Avro did not sit on their respective hands after the cancellation of the Arrow. They began to look for possibilities to be developed, then built. Time was of the essence, before the skilled workforce totally disappear. Suggestions were relatively plentiful, in a way akin to a 'brainstorming' session. As expected, most would have preferred an aircraft. Perhaps park like a car. Like some of those built and flown in the 1930s, only upgraded. Gerry proposed a helicopter. At the time; this was a look into the future. But the man behind the desk settled the matter. Boats!

Boats

by

Gerry Barbour

The boatswain of a ship is generally called the "Bosun" or "Boats" whichever strikes the fancy of the crew. That appellation seems to be worldwide, no matter the size of the vessel. "Boats" generally wields considerable power and is respected by all personnel from the skipper on down

I somehow could not give Mr. Harvey Smith the respect he probably deserved during his tenure of office with Avro Aircraft, him being associated with the production end of things. This man continually found fault with the Lofting Department, continually bitched about our "tardiness" in producing the layouts for the tooling that came under his jurisdiction. He finally succeeded in placing a section of the Lofting Department under his direct control, leaving the production of the actual layout of the lines of any Design Engineering project, under the able direction of Mr. Ronald Adey, Chief Administrative Engineer. It always struck me that the layout of any part of an airplane from which expensive tools are to be made requires a special skill. Good eyesight in the extreme, patience, the ability to read any scribbles and blueprints, be able to work to very close tolerances, and finally, to correlate the adjoining parts so that all comes together in harmony in the main assembly jigs.

Mr. Smith clearly felt that, from the vantage point of his plush office in "Mahogany Row," he could direct the work much better if it came under his eagle eye.



Founded 1989

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Aerospace Heritage Foundation of Canada



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From the President

This year we celebrate 100 years of flight in Canada. Many of the Aviation Museums across Canada are planning special displays and events. I encourage members to check with their local museums to learn what they have planned. The AHFC will be assisting the Toronto Aerospace Museum in their celebration projects.

Frank

Boats ...

He put the arm on the Engineering Division who, tired of his incessant bitching, finally turned a segment of the Lofting department under his direct control. "Smitty" put the snatch on many employees who toiled on a daily basis in the Lofting Department. Thankfully, I escaped the net. I would have lasted exactly one day. Personally, I failed to see much improvement in the amount of time it took to get the work to Harvey's "men on -the floor" from his newly formed layout department. However, if it made him happy, well, good for him. With the collapse of the Arrow project, and the dismissal of all but a very few employees, the word went out. "Give us some ideas, something we can produce without government aid; an item much in demand by governments of any nation and the public; keep the company afloat."

Oh boy just ask anyone for ideas on anything, especially if it doesn't cost them a dime, and watch the response. Ideas came pouring in thick and fast. No pots and pans, thank you, better ideas than that. Sports car enthusiasts enthusiastically placed their plans front and centre. The production of an automobile was looked at extensively.

"How about a small four-cylinder beauty, nicely put together, aesthetically pleasing? A plastic body, no more rust from salt so liberally spread on highways during our Canadian winters. It had possibilities, certainly. But, as with the build of an airplane, certain items would have to be obtained from outside manufacturers, wheels for example. We were definitely not in a position to step forward and manufacture wheels. Many of these manufacturers were under contract to G.M., Ford and Chrysler. Would "The Big Three" give the (green light to this fledgling motor car company?

"Sure guys, go ahead, give this competitor all the parts they need to get their inexpensive little car on the road. A car that will get fifty or sixty miles to the gallon? A car that won't rust out in a few years. Won't require replacing until a long way down the road (no pun intended.) Sure they would. In a pig's eye. Another airplane? That's the ticket. We had the tools and the know-how, all that background gained over the years from the Lysander on down to the Arrow. We could build an inexpensive handy dandy little machine. Safe, very safe. Fold the wings and tuck it in the garage beside the family car. Tow it to the airport when the owner was in the flying mood.

Sound good? You bet! The remaining officials however, still stinging from the Arrow cancellation, would have none of it. A few lads actually departed the premises and set up shop near Brampton and set to work on their own project. It didn't get off the ground. They ran out of money. You're waiting for an idea from yours truly. Right?



Boats ... cont'd.

My love affair with flying machines took precedence over all things that ran along the ground. I submitted my idea, wrapped up nice and neat. I proposed that Avro build helicopters, all sizes, all shapes: long range, short range. We could do it all.

It really was a comparatively new field at that time. We had designers, stressmen, draftsmen still hanging around, still reluctant to leave Canada for the greener pastures south of the border. "C'mon Avro! Take a chance, float a loan. Don't let all that wizardry go to waste. All that information that John Diefenbaker and his Conservative party tried so hard to suppress by the shredding of blueprints and the torching of the Arrows. It's still there. Right between our ears." Once the word got around that Avro was back in business with a viable saleable product the lads and lassies would come flocking back.

"Want a neat little fellow? Sort of a backyard chopper"? Set it down beside the family automobile"? Wash 'em down on Sunday mornings'? We got it." "Hey, Mr. Government of Canada, you want a Search and Rescue chopper"? For anywhere in Canada? East coast? West coast? Anywhere in between? We got 'em." "You were dumb enough not to want our beautiful Jetliner." "You were dumb enough not to want our beautiful Arrow. You'll want our helicopters. Cost you though. We're no longer dependent on misguided politicians for orders. We sell to anybody, any nation on earth-or from outer space." Heck, if an alien spacecraft limped in asking for repair, we'd put our lads to work. Might steal a look at its propulsion methods, of course. Our Avrocar was a bit unstable, needed a boost.

"Anybody want a chopper capable of carrying heavy armament? Rockets, heat-seeking missiles? That sort of stuff?" "You want a fast nimble machine capable of handing a nasty surprise to anyone belligerent enough to have a go at a neighbour using conventional weaponry? A flying gunship? That sort of thing?" "How many you want, Mister? We got 'em. Furthermore it won't break the bank to purchase our machines." No luck. They didn't buy it. However, they did buy the idea of building boats. That idea was put forward by the Bos'un." "Boats," Mr. Harvey Smith. Boats? Boats?

An aircraft company building boats? Sure, we can do boats. Harvey Smith, a water enthusiast, got us involved in the building of boats. Not just any boats. No wave-runners. These were good-sized boats capable of use on fresh or salt water, a proven design having been built for many years by the Richardson Boat Company of Tonawanda, New York, U.S.A. Wooden boats...only we were going to built 'em of metal. A special type of aluminum alloy impervious to salt water.

And supplied by Henry Kaiser, a well-known U.S. industrialist. Sizes? 46', 43', 40', 38', 36', 33'. Take your choice.

Before work can commence on a boat, the lines of the craft are laid down full size in the loft of the boathouse. Plan, side elevation, and sections. The hull designer casts a weather eye along the completed lines, "humms" and "hawes" a bit, suggests various adjustments to chine, stem, bulkheads, and work began on the hull. Working with wood is somewhat different than working with metal. "The lines don't quite fair in?" "They don't look smooth.?" No matter. A few strokes with a plane or a spokes have and voila! Smooth as a baby's bum. Never mind making any changes to the pattern, too time consuming. Working with metal? A different ball game altogether. "A few strokes with a vixen file? Smooth out a ripple?" Nope, can't be done.

Harvey sent two lads off to the Richardson Boat Company and they came back loaded with drawings and layouts and set to work. Tools were made, expensive tools. The formers or bulkheads were cut out, pressed to shape, installed in the specially made jig and the stringers refused to lay perfectly smooth against the formers. Harvey was upset, understandably so. His splendid first-off-the-line forty footer had run aground. His idea of producing a boat using our aircraft methods, formers, stringers and such, using patterns supplied by Richardson, making a smooth, sleek lightweight boat which would streak through the water like a javelin, hardly making a ripple,...went glimmering.

Well, he could ask his very own special layout group, broken off from the Engineering Lofting Department to sort out the problem---only they weren't there anymore. All gone. When the Arrow crashed, all those employees were out, finished. That department stood silent and empty, gathering dust and cobwebs. Reluctantly, very reluctantly Mr. Smith sent out an SOS. "What could be done to save the ship?" He actually asked for help from the two individuals remaining in the Engineering Lofting Department. Jack Wilson, of the Walter Deisher wet rag incident, and yours truly. Not humbly, mind you. That would never cross Harvey's mind. Ask the Engineering Lofting Department for help? Perish the thought.

But he came, he came. Not crawling on his knees certainly, but so concerned that his project had been hulled by sharp rocks that he appeared on our doorstep hat in hand pleading for a lifejacket to be tossed his way-and yours truly was just the boy to fling it-just out of reach. I remembered all the unkind remarks tossed my way, his ranting and ravings about the slovenly slow methods used by my Lofting Department, and how if it came under his jurisdiction he would light a fire under any and all personnel; get their ass in gear. ►

Produce layouts swiftly, away ahead of schedule. All bullshit, of course. So you can imagine how I relished the thought of telling Harv to stuff it. I couldn't do it. The company, my company, the company that had given me my start in the aircraft game was gasping for the breath of life. I would do anything to keep it afloat. A stacked layout was the requirement. Every bulkhead, since we were now boat people, would be laid out on white-painted metal using close tolerances. The necessary adjustments would be made and I was positive the result would be, providing the necessary changes were made to the tools, a sleek smooth hull.

Harvey was not a happy camper when shown the error of his ways. His short comment? "You guys sure you're right?" Right, Harvey? Certainly we're right. The engineering Lofting Department doesn't make mistakes. A stacked layout shows any errors. See how the chine lines are so smooth? Too bad you didn't send us over to see your buddies in Tonanwanda. Would have saved you a lot of money Harvey not to mention embarrassment. Right Harvey? He was wise enough however, to accept the inevitable, bite the bullet, scrap the offending tools and manufacture new ones.

He actually paid us another visit and gazed grumpily at the completed layouts. We, in turn, watched the end result, the completed hull with more than a little interest, it being loaded on a trailer and sent off to Tonanwanda for the finishing touches; mahogany superstructure, cabins and the like. We were told of the outstanding success of the forty footer during her trial runs. Fast, nimble, a real racehorse, she was an eye catcher for the maritime minded.

Richardson was happy. Harvey was happy and we were asked to loft a variety of different sizes. However, would we please have an eye for design and incorporate into the lines of the various sized hulls as much as was possible of the forty footer so that expensive tooling would be kept to a minimum.

In other words stretch the 40 footer to 44' or 46', or squuunnch the lines down to 33' or 36'. Sure Harv, why not? The 46' might just be a little slimmer and the 33' just a bit tubbier. You sure you want this, Harvey? I took to Harvey's boats like a duck takes to water. Warren Lucas, known far and wide as "Luke," was put in charge of this boat building enterprise taking shape in the huge building directly across Airport Road. It's now called The International Building.

The Lofting Department was now down to one man-me. "Luke" was happy, I was happy. I knew the layouts, the tooling, the bulkheads, the planking. All by number. It wasn't difficult. We built 'em. Water minded people bought 'em. That goddamned Avro jinx reared its ugly head again.

The boat-building business sank into the muddy waters of the infamous Buffalo Love Canal. The game was over. No more boats and no explanation as to why.

Avro was gone. "Boats" Smith was gone. Luke told me that as a parting gift, the golden handshake Harvey received a forty footer. A bit large for his bathtub, he by now, the garrulous type that he was, telling us details of his home life.

I had the opportunity to move to De Havilland. DeHavilland? Of all places? No way. They had rejected me twice in the past. They might review their very old service applications and promptly write back "DeHavilland only hires experienced workers."

I would not give them another crack at me.

Members Matter

Greetings to one and all!

As we enter another year, I will once again be heading south for two months. To those members who already have renewed for 2009, I will process your membership prior to leaving.

I am also working on processing the gifts requested for a donation. I will see if it is possible to process the tax receipts and have them out before I leave.

Any mail received after January 10, 2009 will be put on hold until my return, including the memberships processed for the second mailing of Pre-Flight.

If any member is unsure if they have anything coming to them or have not received anything, please drop me a note in the mail. I will check it for you and will advise you as soon as possible.

Please bear with me. It is difficult to have the processing completed in such a short time. I have your best interest in mind, and I assure you that as in the past, I will continue to do my best.

Nicholas Doran, Membership