

Ron Fischer - Avro Experiences

In July, 1951, I drove from the family farm in Didsbury, Alberta to Malton, Ontario, with Bob Swenson and Bob Kobel to begin our aeronautical experiences at Avro Canada, Ltd.

We had just graduated from the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art in Calgary, ("Cal Tech") specializing in Aeronautical Engineering.

I started in the CF-100 wing design group supervised by a gentleman by the name of -- if you can believe it -- Norm Wing. We worked on later models and design improvements of the aircraft, as it had been flying for some time by 1951. For a farm boy, the prodigious Avro facility made a deep impression, first with the sight of many acres of cars in the parking lot, and second, the design office which seemed like two acres of drafting boards.

After two years in wing design I decided to expand my experience and requested a transfer to the liaison group to work out problems between the production shop and the design office. This provided an opportunity to get more familiar with production methods.

After a year of shop liaison I transferred to flight test liaison where we coordinated the installation of new modifications on the flight test aircraft. This involved structures as well as systems such as fuel, electrical, hydraulic, avionics, etc. This was a real "hands on" experience and included the excitement of the flight line, which for the young engineer provided a chance to see the results of our efforts.

My next step was as a flight test engineer, where the various improvements were ground and flight tested to prove them out. Most testing was on the CF-100, Mk.IV and Mk.V. However, we did use the CF-102 as a camera platform to photograph the air tests. The CF-102 was the only aircraft in existence at that time that was fast enough and at the same time, able to carry the cameras and test crew. The flight test engineering position meant training in the altitude chamber, explosive decompression, effects of lack of oxygen, etc. And, of course, the even more important instruction, use of the ejection seat!

The Avro Experience ended in the fall of 1959 with the announcement over the company PA system of shutting the place down, a total surprise to many. Some of us had suspected it could happen with the change of the Canadian government and had been working on our visas just in case. As it turned out the next stop for me was a small engineering consulting firm in California, followed by several diverse positions in the field of aeronautical engineering.

In retrospect, the broad background that I gained at Avro qualified me for some of the exciting jobs that followed my "Avro Experiences".

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Hi George

Many thanks for sending the clippings on SAIT and the Avro Arrow. I appreciate the update. I was sorry to hear that the Aero class has been going down. I feel with the aircraft industry as busy as it is in Canada, especially at Canadair and other places like Toronto, Winnipeg and Calgary, they should be able get more interest with more publicity. I haven't forgotten how our class got offers by mail at that time from Avro.

Avro put the SAIT graduates in design and the U of Toronto graduates in analytical work. The SAIT kids knew a lot more of the practical side of the flying machines.

In regard to the Avro picture it seems that the politicians have made a lot of bad decisions all the way through. I was a flight test engineer the last 4 years at Avro and had the pleasure of flying in the Jetliner as a "photography assistant". We were taking pictures of the CF100 firing rockets over Lake Ontario. The Jetliner was dubbed as the DC-3 replacement and can you imagine how many Avro could have sold? I flew several times in the CF100 during other systems test programs, getting paid for having fun as well as working hard.

The CF100 was no slouch in the performance side either for that period. One of our test engineers went to Point Mugu, California on the rocket firing program in the range off the coast. As he described it, the procedure after lift off was to make a gradual turn to the right to avoid a mountain (it would be a 3000 foot hill in Alberta) when using one of the runways. Our flight test pilot, Jan Zurakowski, always got scolded by the tower for not following procedures. He would lift off and accelerate at low altitude, then set it on its tail and go straight up until he was out of sight. The US didn't have an airplane that could do that at that time. The CF100 also had a much better range than the F101 among other advantages.

THE JETLINER WAS THE ONLY
PHOTO PLATFORM THAT COULD FLY
FAST ENOUGH!!

I never had the pleasure of working on the CF105 but saw it every day since it was in the same hangar. As it turned out I was fortunate since after black Friday I continued work at Avro to finish up the CF100 test programs until late fall of that year. That gave me time to finish up with Visa arrangements to come here.

Anyway it was very interesting to hear what is going on at SAIT and I wish good luck for the Aero program.

Thanks again.

Ron

A handwritten signature, likely "Ron", written in dark ink. It features a large, stylized capital 'R' followed by a smaller 'on'.

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