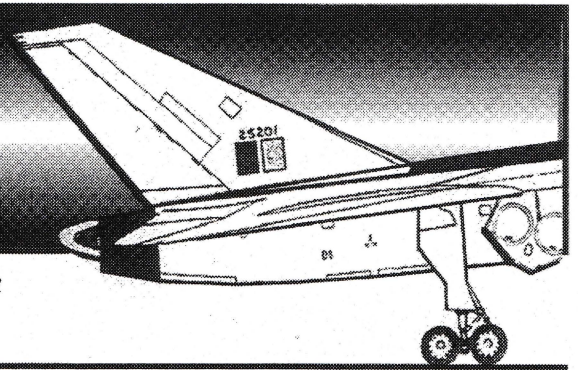


# Pre-Flight

A Publication of the Aerospace Heritage Foundation of Canada  
P.O. Box 246, Etobicoke "D", Etobicoke ON M9A 4X2



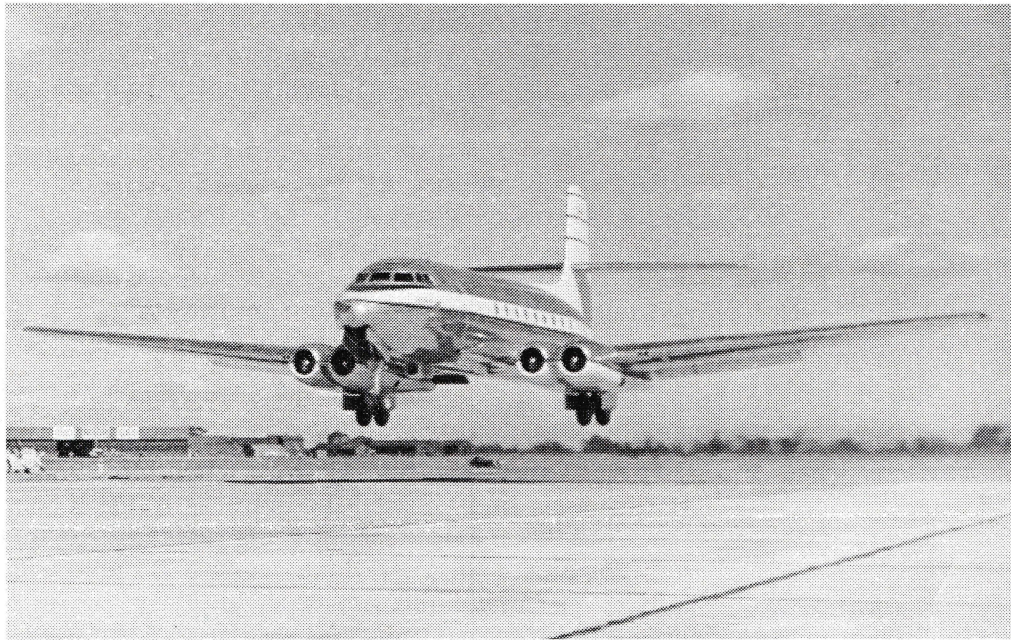
Vol. 21, No. 1

January - February 2010

## AVRO & SAAB: PARALLEL UNIVERSES

by  
William F. Mellberg

### Part Two



Avro Jetliner

*During the twelve years between 1946 and 1958, Avro Canada and Sweden's SAAB seemed to be following parallel paths. Each of the similarly-sized firms designed and built a regional airliner (both terminated by their respective governments), a two-seat, all-weather interceptor and a highly-advanced supersonic warplane. But sadly, the outcomes of the "Avro saga" and the "SAAB story" were quite different, as described by aerospace author and historian Bill Mellberg in his address at the Canadian Air and Space Museum for the Avro Canada Jetliner 60th Anniversary programme on Sunday, August 9, 2009. In this second part, William Mellberg continues with the fates of the Avro Jetliner and the SAAB Scandia.*



**Founded 1989**

**AHFC**

**Aerospace Heritage Foundation of Canada**



Patron William Coyle  
President Frank Harvey  
Secretary Keith McLaren  
Treasurer Al Sablatnig  
Membership Nicholas Doran  
Director Web Michael Bringham  
Director Bill Daniels  
John Hughes  
Tim Patten  
Dave Sotzek



Legal Consultant Jerry Faivish  
Editorial Consultant John Thompson

PRE-FLIGHT Nicholas Doran  
Ted Harasymchuk

**President's mailing address:**  
1951 Rathburn Rd., E.  
Unit 199  
Mississauga ON L4W 2N9  
905-624-4909

*The Aerospace Foundation of Canada (AHFC) is a federally chartered non-for-profit organization. The current emphasis of AHFC is on Avro and Orenda. The Foundation is actively trying to locate former employees of these companies. No part of this newsletter may be reproduced without prior written permission. Opinions expressed in Pre-Flight do not necessarily reflect those of AHFC. Cash donations over \$25.00 and "gifts-in-kind" will be acknowledged by a receipt for income tax purposes. For more information on AHFC and how to support its activities, please write to:*

**Aerospace Heritage  
Foundation of Canada  
P.O. Box 246, Etobicoke D  
Etobicoke ON M9A4X2  
(416) 410-3350  
www.ahfc.org**

## From the President

On January 4th, I had the pleasure of attending a function at which Jim Floyd received an award from the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP) for his contributions to Canadian Aerospace.

I am sure that all our members congratulate Jim on this award. It is great that Jim's achievements in Canadian Aerospace are still remembered and recognized.

I also take this opportunity to send my best wishes for the New Year to all.

*Frank*

## AVRO & SAAB: Parallel Universes Part Two

The Scandia was a 32-passenger regional transport - very similar in size, performance and appearance to the Convair-Liner and Martinliner series. As mentioned previously, the Scandia was taken on demonstration tours to various parts of the world, including a visit to Los Angeles in the Fall of 1949, when Howard Hughes flew the airplane. Although Mr. Hughes was greatly impressed by the Scandia, TWA had already signed a letter of intent to buy Martinliners.

The Scandia was originally designed for Sweden's domestic airline, ABA, which later became part of SAS. ABA ordered eight Scandias in 1948. Aerovias Brasil, which later became part of VASP, was the next customer. VASP inaugurated the world's first Scandia service in July 1950, followed by SAS that November. The Brazilian carrier bought ten new Scandias and later acquired the SAS fleet. All eighteen Scandias (including the prototype) wound up in South America where they gave yeoman service for close to twenty years. But why were only eighteen Scandias produced?

This is where the SAAB story mirrors the Jetliner saga. With the Berlin crisis in 1948, and the outbreak of the Korean conflict in 1950, the Cold War started heating up. Because of the growing tensions between East and West, the Swedish Air Force was anxious to put the SAAB 29 Tunnan into service as quickly as possible. The first of more than 650 production models was delivered in May 1951. At the same time, the Swedish government ordered SAAB to stop building Scandias so as to focus its attention on military production.

The same thing happened in Canada a few months earlier when C.D. Howe told Avro to stop work on the Jetliner in order to allocate all of its resources to the CF-100. One almost wonders if the Swedes got the idea from C.D. Howe?! But unlike Avro, SAAB was given the option of moving its airliner production elsewhere. As a result, Fokker built the last six Scandias in the Netherlands -- bringing production to an end in 1954. But with its own F.27 Friendship under development, Fokker had no long-term interest in the Scandia. Thus, as was the case at Avro, SAAB's enthusiastic sales team was left without any airplanes to sell.



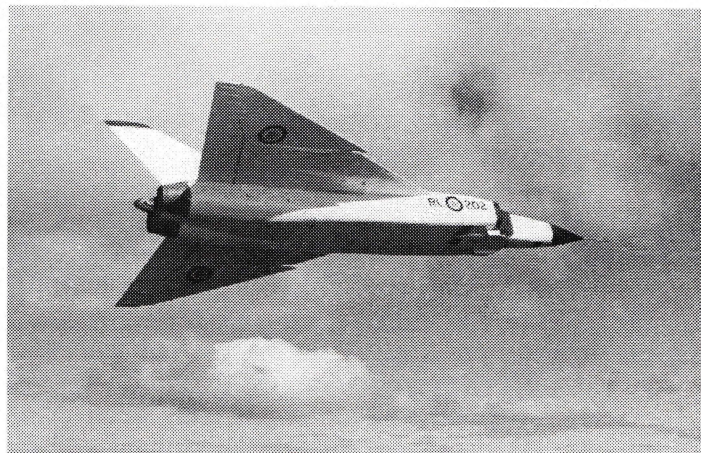
## SAAB ... cont'd.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is obvious that both the Canadian and Swedish governments were mistaken when they ordered Avro and SAAB to stop work on the Jetliner and the Scandia. It would have been in the long-term interest of both companies -- and of both countries -- to establish a balance between civil and military aircraft production. John Diefenbaker compounded C.D. Howe's Jetliner mistake when he cancelled the Arrow; and Howe's mistake proved all the more costly when the Arrow fell. Had Avro been building Jetliners at that time, the company could have survived. Fortunately for SAAB, the Swedish government continued to place orders for its military aircraft.

But the lesson is clear. When a company's financial fortunes are largely tied to government contracts, the government usually gets to call the shots. Despite the success of its military aircraft, SAAB's first airliner was nipped in the bud because of the direct intervention of the Swedish government. The success of the Convair-Liner series - with nearly 1,000 aircraft sold - suggests that SAAB might have shared a good percentage of that market if the Scandia hadn't been stopped. Sadly, the Jetliner was not the only success story to meet a premature ending because of short-sighted politicians. The Scandia had its wings clipped, too. Which is one of the reasons SAAB entered the automotive business, hoping to broaden its financial base.

Thirty years after the last Scandia was built, the SAAB 340 entered service in 1984. It was the first of a new generation of regional airliners which included the de Havilland Canada Dash 8. It was also another attempt by SAAB to balance its production of jets for Sweden's Air Force with prop-jets for the world's airlines. Some 459 SAAB 340s were sold, which represented one-third of the global market at the time. In an effort to build upon that success, the bigger and better SAAB 2000 was launched in 1989. But the 50-seat Swedish prop-jet was quickly overshadowed by Canadair's Regional Jet. Only 63 SAAB 2000s were sold.

The Jet Age, which the Avro Jetliner helped launch, had finally triumphed. At the same time the production of SAAB's prop-jets was winding down in 1999, the sales of Canadair's Regional Jets were soaring. Of course, if it hadn't been for the short-sightedness of C.D. Howe, Avro Canada could have been selling hundreds of regional jets -- and generating millions of export dollars -- 50 years earlier!



*Avro Arrow*

In the end, countries and companies are like people. Each is unique. Each has its own character. Each has its own story to tell. No matter how many similarities might exist between their stories, the outcomes can be very different - and usually are. Had the highly-talented people at Avro been given the same support from successive Canadian governments that the highly-talented people at SAAB were given from successive Swedish governments, Malton could have turned out as many innovative and successful aircraft as Linköping. Like SAAB, Avro Canada might still be in business today.

But we can't change history. We can only learn from it. Hopefully, today's leaders have learned the lessons of the past, and will apply those lessons to the future. However, the similar fates of the Jetliner and the Scandia remind us that politicians often fail to see beyond the present. As my friend Dr. Harrison Schmitt, the last man (and first geologist) to set foot on the Moon, once said of the six years he spent as a United States Senator (following his Apollo 17 mission): "I discovered no intelligent life in Washington!" Which is why Dr. Schmitt encourages technically-minded people to get involved in politics to help influence policies. That doesn't necessarily mean running for office. But it does mean writing letters to the editor, becoming active in professional organisations (such as the AHFC) and making your views known through these and similar venues. Indeed, one might ask, "Would history have been different if C.D. Howe and John Diefenbaker had heard from more technically-minded people, rather than the ill-informed advisors who convinced them to kill the wonderful Jetliner and the fabulous Arrow?"

In closing, I might note that Avro and SAAB have something else in common - something the veterans of each firm can take pride in. Neither company was especially large. Yet both firms assembled world-class



## SAAB ... cont'd.

In closing, I might note that Avro and SAAB have something else in common - something the veterans of each firm can take pride in. Neither company was especially large. Yet both firms assembled world-class teams which designed world-class airplanes. Both left their mark on aerospace history. And in my opinion, having known many members of the Avro Team personally -- including their remarkable leader, Jim Floyd - I believe the Canadians could have flown circles around the Swedes had they been given the chance. (But don't tell my Uncle Ole that I said so!)

Ladies and gentlemen, the Avro Canada Team will never be forgotten. Because 60 years ago, on that hot August afternoon, the Jet Age arrived in North America. That day changed air travel forever. Which is why the Avro Canada C102 Jetliner was an achievement worth remembering this day -- and every day. Had circumstances been different, there is no doubt in my mind that we'd still be seeing Avro Jetliners in the air today. As I said five years ago, the original Jetliner would still look right at home at any of the world's major airports.

Of course, for those who were at Malton that hot August afternoon 60 years ago, the Jetliner will fly in their hearts forever. For the rest of us, who can only imagine that day, the men and women who created the Jetliner will live in our hearts forever. They were Jet Age pioneers and true Canadian heroes. As the old song says, "Bless 'em all!"



## Members Matter

In the past two issues of Pre-Flight you have been privileged to read the address given by William (Bill) Mellberg at the 60th Anniversary of the Avro Canada C102 Jetliner's maiden flight held at the Canadian Air and Space Museum. The Foundation was honoured to bring Bill to Toronto.

With permission, I am reproducing a couple of paragraphs from Bill's year end sharing of information to his many aviation colleagues.

*"I had another return engagement in Toronto where I was invited to give another keynote address -- this time marking the 60th Anniversary of the Avro Canada C102 Jetliner's maiden flight. The Jetliner was the world's second jet transport (North America's first). I was honoured to be asked to speak at the Canadian Air & Space Museum, and I was delighted to see some good friends, including Jim Floyd (now 95), who designed the Jetliner. Jim kindly wrote the Foreword to my "Famous Airlines" book.*

*I was also delighted last Spring when my friend Dr. Harrison ("Jack") Schmitt, the Apollo 17 scientist-astronaut and former U.S. Senator, and his wife Teresa kindly invited me and my Dad (Frank Mellberg) to join them for Afternoon Tea at the Four Seasons Hotel while they were in Chicago for a business meeting. As some of you know, Dad (now 89) designed the cameras for the Surveyor lunar landers which preceded Jack and his colleagues to the Moon. Dad and I were at his launch in December 1972, and Jack generously wrote the Foreword to my "Moon Missions" book. The four of us enjoyed a wonderful time talking about the past, present and future.*

*I've had my hands full for the past six weeks as my dad has been very ill. I thank you for your encouragement and prayers for dad during the last while. Our prayers have been successful."*

For those members who want a more complete update on Frank Mellberg, please drop me a line at AHFC's address or the alternative, my e-mail address: [dorans@idirect.com](mailto:dorans@idirect.com).

Nicholas Doran, Membership