

NEVER WAS AN ARROW

A LITTLE BIT OF AVIATION, A LITTLE BIT OF RELIGION...AND A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING ELSE

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FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 2009

BLACK FRIDAY and Secret Toronto: Briarcrest



Black Friday + Two Weeks.

Well, I was truly surprised when I discovered the inside of Briarcrest virtually untouched since the Avro days.

Avro STILL in our midst.

AVRO CANADA Inc. purchased this 11 acre English-style tudor estate from Avro President and General Manager Walter N. Deisher who had used it as a personal residence. Walter was let go by Avro to make way for **Crawford Gordon Jr., one of Canada's famous dollar a year boys**, once called forth by CD Howe to run the country's industrial war effort during World War II.

"Crawford, go in there and fix Avro, and fix that damn CF-100!"

Howe's sentiments, if perhaps, not his exact words.

Gordon Crawford had been Howe's "Boy Wonder" during the war years and received the coveted OSC award, which was given to only a very few of this elite.

Remember, when Crawford arrived, Avro Canada was in utter disarray.

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Completely demoralized as an organization. The CF-100 which had been proudly delivered to the RCAF, with so much fanfare only shortly before, months maybe, and had now just been returned to the company by the very same RCAF!

It was quite bad.

The wonky CF-100 examples that were returned had warped wings! Rivets were popping out everywhere.

Stress problems. Only a few short years previous, Sir Roy Dobson had publicly stated that the Lancasters built by Avro Canada (then the crown corporation Victory Aircraft) under license, were better made than the English produced ones!

But we won't go into it here. That's another story all in itself.

So here is the living, and meeting room at Briarcrest. Like I said, much like it was back when Crawford Gordon lived here during the final (last gasp) days of Avro.

Lived here?

Crawford, somewhat of a womanizer, had left his wife and needed a place to stay. So he came here, to the solitude, and quiet and refinement of Briarcrest.

Previous to Crawford's stay, Briarcrest was the Avro executive get-away cottage. Complete with pool, tennis courts, a games room, and hand carved totem poles. Four authentic totem poles. All INSIDE the house, by the way, and located downstairs in the game room!

Inside the tudor style abode is a serious, yet cozy atmosphere. Intricately hand carved woodwork, ancient handmade metallic light switch plates, exotically tiled rooms...oh, I could go on and on.

Not important here.

And yeah, that's the secret passageway to the right in this picture. It leads up to the meeting room, directly from the games room downstairs! By way of a large block stone hewn corridor!

The Diefenbaker government was to declare the results of their review about the ongoing viability of all Avro Canada related projects on March 31 of 1959. That was the declaration and promise of the Canadian government to Avro Canada. However, Diefenbaker, not listening to reason at all, whether voiced by the Opposition, the GTA

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ABOUT ME



NEVER WAS AN ARROW II

Hey...what's to say. Aviation photos that have been published worldwide and currently researching for a book to be published in 2012. All photographs, text and graphics are mine, unless otherwise specified. **I am a Canadian**, a free Canadian, free to speak without fear, free to worship in my own way, free to stand for what I think right, free to oppose what I believe wrong, free to choose those who shall govern my country. This heritage of freedom I pledge to uphold for myself and all mankind. Prime Minister Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker , July 1, 1960, House of Commons * enshrined in the Canadian Bill of Rights NOTE: I don't believe in **small** photos. —

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community, or Avro management prematurely cancelled the projects in a spiteful move on February 20, 1959 at 11 am in the morning. This caught the company by surprise and was well before the agreed upon review date. It became known as Black Friday. Forever.

And where was Crawford when the Company received the bad news from Ottawa?

By fax I might add.

Home in bed.

Crawford had been a bit out of sorts of late, and had given express orders NOT to be disturbed unless an emergency arose at the office. Well, this was such an emergency.

Fred Smye, Assistant General Manager of Avro Canada

Limited, went to Briarcrest and told a drowsy Crawford personally the bad news. News, which was already circulating like wildfire throughout his plant of 14, 000 workers. This was an utter shock to the Avro executive who had been reassuring Avro employees that all was indeed well, and that the Arrow and the Iroquois would go into full production as expected. On that assurance Avro people were buying cars, and buying homes, and having kids...with no hint of the dark days immediately before them.

Crawford Gordon now enraged, rose to the occasion. Bull. China. Shop.

He immediately called the remaining Avro executive to Briarcrest. And it was here, right in this very room, the famous Avro employee dismissal notice was crafted by those very Avro executive, and later that day delivered over the company PA system at 2 pm by **J.L. Plant**.

That termination notice would make headlines, splashed across Canadian newspapers, in the late evening addition, shocking Canadians everywhere.

Oh, and did ya' notice?

SOMEBODY BESIDES me, in this GTA city of eight million, knows about Briarcrest's Avro related days.

I didn't hang that print, folks!

And so, in honour of that historical connection, a framed print of the CF-105 Avro Arrow being escorted by it's aeronautical precedent, the CF-100 Canuck, proudly hangs above the Briarcrest fireplace 50 years

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later, put there by the present owner!

Small wonders never cease—

Oh, and Crawford, well he was let go a few months later. Yes, by the very company he had spawned and nurtured into an national empire and which had quietly became the third largest company in the Dominion of Canada by 1959. Crawford, now disillusioned, quietly moved on, to Montreal.

It has been said that once Crawford was done with a place, he never looked back. Or went back.

But Crawford we had to come here. Even fifty years hence.

We had to return to Briarcrest, if only for a moment, to once again get caught up in that aura of our past Canadian aviation excellence. Avro, the Arrow, and all that could have been...that once was the glorious Avro Canada—

And the anguished story that just won't go away.

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