

direct from you...

Arrow History Distorted

Many articles and complaints have been read and heard in recent months about the distortion of the history of Quebec and Canada, as taught in the French schools in Quebec, a fact which, as a "pure laine," I deplore tremendously. However, after seeing *The Arrow* and previously *The Valour and The Horror*, I can assure you that the anglophone media (i.e. the CBC) is second to none when it comes to distorting history.

Having served, during the Arrow years, at the RCAF Central Experimental and Proving Establishment (CEPE), the unit to which our colleague, F/L Jack Woodman, was attached, I was appalled by the artistic licence taken by the authors and producers of *The Arrow*. Although many true facts emerged in the presentation, the characterization of Kate O'Hara was far from being the only fiction in the program.

The majority of Canadians' knowledge of the Arrow program will only be obtained from this broadcast. The distortion of historical facts for the purpose of entertainment is no more justified in a television broadcast than it is in a French history book.

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"Black Friday"

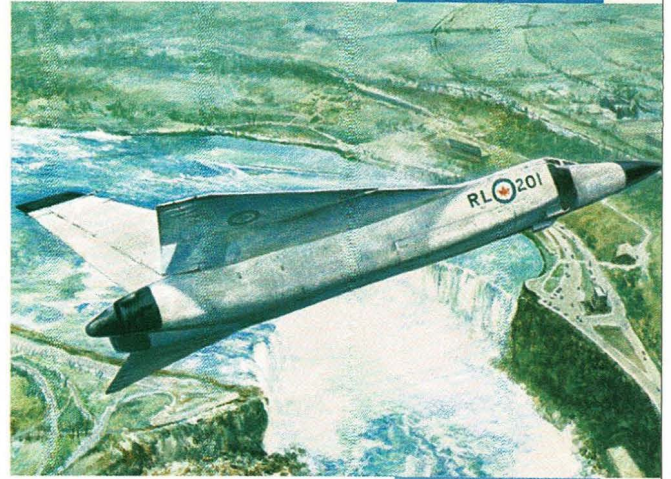
Motivated by the CBC's *Avro Arrow* program, I offer you my recollections of "Black Friday," 20 Feb 1959, concerning the cancellation of the Arrow. That week I represented the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the

RCAF Association at a meeting at Air Force Headquarters in Ottawa. On 20 Feb, A/M Hugh Campbell, then chief of the air staff, gave us a briefing on the status and projects of the RCAF. During the presentation A/M Campbell's aide interrupted us with an important message for the chief. Campbell accepted the chit, read it, and then carried on with his presentation, tucking the message in his tunic pocket. No mention was made of its contents, no consternation, no surprise whatsoever was evident. In retrospect, I conclude that A/M Campbell expected the advice.

We found out the news when we adjourned for lunch at the RCAF Officers' Mess. The whole place was abuzz with it! That morning, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker had announced to Parliament that the Arrow program had been cancelled!

That NEC meeting was chaired by A/M W.A. Curtis (Ret), then the Association's honorary national president. As former chief of the air staff, he had overseen the formulation of specifications for the Arrow. Upon retirement, he became a vice president of Avro, responsible for ensuring that the requirements which he and his RCAF staff had formulated were indeed being met. Much turmoil and discussion ensued at our luncheon. Naturally, different views were taken and freely expressed.

When we reassembled our meeting, A/M Curtis took immediate control of our assembly which had been suggesting, with suitable descriptive adjectives, an immediate adjournment of the NEC in favour of an immediate meeting at the House of Commons to hang the prime minister



— not in effigy but in actuality — and various means to effect this opportunity were suggested!

I shall never forget the words with which A/M Curtis terminated this discussion and put things into proper perspective. This physically slight little man, really about 5'9" in height (but nine feet tall in my estimation ever thereafter), who of all those present had the most to lose by the Arrow cancellation, which we thought arbitrary and ill-considered, said, "Now hold on a minute, everyone! First we are Canadians and dedicated airmen. Second, we think the PM is wrong! I think he is wrong! But as faithful Canadians we should hope that our elected PM is right! And if that aircraft is not needed by a Canada at war within the next 20 years, then the PM will have been proven to have been right. Now let's get back to the agenda for which we came here!"

I saw and heard a great Canadian that day! I wish that more Canadians could possess and show that kind of personal self-sacrifice for the ultimate benefit of our country. Such was done over and over again from 1939-1945! Why have we forgotten so soon?

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Avro Arrow

I was surprised to see the amount of space you devoted to the CBC film *The Arrow* (mini series) which is another example of the CBC's attempts to rewrite history. I watched the series until overcome by boredom and went back to a good book. The CBC is no friend of the Canadian Forces, and hopefully CBC Television will be sold off to ensure that revisionist history has no place in the forum of public funding.

The real story of the Avro Arrow is exciting history. The screenplay by Keith Ross Leckie was a work of fiction, and not very good fiction at that. What's next? World War II, the mini-series?

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(Ed note: That has already been done. It was called "The Valour and The Horror.")

CFS Ramore

As a new Association member, I would like to hear from other members in the Kirkland Lake, Ont, area. I spent my youth in the

village of Ramore, Ont, once the home of CFS Ramore. This radar station was closed in 1974 and was sold to the private sector. Lately, the buildings are being dismantled by the present owner and soon it will be only a memory for many people. I would like to gather information on the history of the Ramore station, from start to finish. The information can be in the form of an anecdote about yourself, your family or people you have met.

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W/C Harry Bryant

I would hope that someone more eloquent than I would write a few words about the passing of W/C Harry Bryant, one of the originals of the RCAF; there must be more than a few of us who remember him and enjoyed his sense of humour, his many anecdotes, and his dedication to the service that he loved.

Harry joined the RCAF as 17 year old "Boy" Bryant in 1927, and as a sergeant/pilot in the early 30s, he took part in an air-mail service from a detachment in Belle Isle, Nfld, to and from ocean-going ships in the St Lawrence, as well as participating in rum-runner chasing off the Atlantic coast. He was commissioned during WWII, and in addition to service as an RAF test pilot and as OC of a detachment in Rabat, Morocco, he served as station commander in RCAF Stn Dunnville, Ont.

I first met Harry shortly after I was posted from Sea Island, near Vancouver, in the spring of 1952 to set up the station headquarters for the re-activated RCAF Stn Comox, BC. Within weeks Harry arrived from Edmonton to be the CTechO, and was soon followed by

an advance party including such stalwarts as Barney Hainer, Paul McNicol, Al Birchall, and Dick Wynne. They in turn were followed by Cam McNeil, Jake Drake, Doc Gordon, et al, and the Lancasters of 407 Sqn.

Many of us came to be enthralled by, albeit sometimes sceptical of, Harry's anecdotes and vivid descriptions of his experiences during the bygone era of the RCAF. His reminiscences of his encounters with A/V/M Ken Guthrie while serving as Guthrie's personal assistant at the old North West Air Command were particularly humorous, and possibly slightly embellished upon. I like to remember him as "Uncle Harry", a sobriquet given him (but not directly) by Paul McNicol and Barney Hainer, and one that lasted during my tour at Comox. I remember him too, as an avid fisherman, a good and reliable friend, and as a senior officer who would offer sound and practical advice to a sometimes overburdened subordinate.

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Harvard 3840

The Atlantic Canada Aviation Museum based near Halifax has recently acquired a Harvard Mk.II, No. 3840 for restoration and addition to its collection. Undoubtedly, there are many stories associated with 3840 which are known only to those many individuals who flew this aircraft during their FTS training many years ago. It would be most appreciated if readers would consult their logbooks and forward any information that might be in anyway relevant to the history of No. 3840.

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Classified

"Woodwings"

Will produce woodcarvings, any size of any RCAF, CF, paratroop or Air Cadet wings. Product information available from "Woodwings," 2624 Iris St, Ottawa, ON K2C 1E5, or contact Ed Grose, tel: (613) 820-0959, e-mail: Woodwing@ftn.net. See Woodwings home page at <http://www.ftn.net/~woodwing>.

Please support the RCAF Memorial Museum and the RC Air Cadets. See Bomber Harris Trust home page: <http://www.blvl.igs.net/~jlynch/>.

(Ed note: A nominal fee of \$50 (taxes included) will be requested from non-Association members and non-subscribers for Airmail and Classified entries.)

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