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Avro designer seeks dream boat

Thursday, December 3, 1981 By MICHAEL TENSZEN

James Floyd wants the Sea Hawk back.

He blames John Diefenbaker for taking her from him in 1959, he says, when the late former prime minister caused Mr. Floyd to lose his Toronto job.

He had saved the 42-foot boat from dry rot in 1956 and used his skill as an airplane designer and engineer to remodel her into a high-speed launch, in which he kicked around Lake Ontario with his family.

But, in 1959, the high life on the lake ended when Mr. Diefenbaker cancelled the Avro Arrow jet-fighter project. Mr. Floyd had been vice-p resident of engineering for Toronto's Avro Aircraft Ltd. He, and 14,000 others, were out of work. He had to sell his one plaything, the Sea Hawk, when he returned to his native England to work as an aviation consultant.

Now, just retired and returned to Canada, Mr. Floyd, 67, a self-confessed romantic, wants her back.

For the man who led in the design of two of Canada's biggest aviation flops - the Arrow and the Avro **Jetliner** - the sleek mahogany and teak ship may be his last remaining work of art, if she's still afloat.

But he can't find his nine-ton boat and hasn't seen her since 1967. When he did, in a Lake Ontario harbor at Bronte, Ont., some

scoundrel had painted her black, he says, and she was being used to check drilling rigs for the Long Point Gas and Oil Co. That company is not listed in Ontario corporate records.

He rescued the Sea Hawk from a North Wales scrapyard in 1956 for 400, and spent more than \$10,000 redesigning and refurbishing the Royal Air Force rescue launch. It was built between 1940 and 1942, and used in the North Atlantic to save downed aircrew.

Mr. Floyd blames Mr. Diefenbaker for scuttling his ship.

"He put us out of work, so I couldn't keep the Sea Hawk," Mr. Floyd says. "I should never have gotten rid of the Sea Hawk, but we had to. I couldn't afford to take my wife and four boys to England and also take the boat. We were grief-stricken about giving it up."

"If I can rescue it again and start all over again, I will."

He discovered the Sea Hawk on a business trip to Wales, had it shipped to Canada on the deck of a freighter, stripped it to the bare hull and redesigned it into a high-speed (25 knots) luxury cruiser. He did much of the work himself, including fitting the control and electrical systems. For years he felt guilty about using some of the gauges and controls from North America's first jetliner on the Sea Hawk.

(The Canadian-developed Avro **Jetliner** was a four-engine, 50-passenger craft, scrapped in its development stage when the Korean War broke out.)

An official with the Canada Customs and Excise office in Oakville said yesterday the last person to register the Sea Hawk was Mr. Floyd on Aug. 9, 1957. His department has no other record of the craft.

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