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October 20, 1998

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BORIS SPREMO, CM/TORONTO STAR

ON THE WING: Airplane mechanic John Bailey at work on a Canadian Forces CF-5 Freedom Fighter at Toronto Aerospace Museum at Downsview. The museum will be in the former de Havilland plant.

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Amateur sleuth uncovers missing Arrow jet engines

Toronto to gain from parts found gathering dust in Ottawa

By Derek Baldwin
Special to The Star

An eagle-eyed museum volunteer has uncovered a priceless trophy for Toronto's aerospace museum - a jet engine that somehow escaped Prime Minister John Diefenbaker's order to destroy anything and everything having to do with the Avro Arrow.

And more pieces linked to the fabled jet fighter may be buried somewhere in north Toronto, says Mike Mcallister, who discovered two Pratt and Whitney J75 engines gathering dust at the National Research Council in Ottawa during a visit in March.

One of the engines is being prepared for shipment to Toronto, where it will join a full-scale replica of the Arrow at Toronto Aerospace Museum. The other is destined for display at Ottawa's National Aviation Museum.

"I was so excited when I first saw it, I couldn't believe it," Mcallister said. "Here was this national treasure just sitting there hidden away.

"I knew we had to get it out to the people, to witness a piece of time no one should ever forget."

Robin Murray, president of the \$10 million Toronto museum being constructed in a former de Havilland plant at Downsview, is still in disbelief the Arrow engines remain at all.

Like everything else associated with the Arrow, they should have been destroyed under a Department of National Defence order issued just hours after Diefenbaker told a stunned House of Commons on Feb. 20, 1959 - Black Friday - that he was cancelling the \$500 million Arrow project in favour of the U.S.-designed Bomarc missile system.

"We're just stunned at our good fortune," Murray said.

"These engines are a great gift to the Canadian people."

As many as 200 museum volunteers have been working around the clock to welcome the J75 engine to a prominent place in the first phase of their museum.

A full-sized scale replica of Arrow RL-203 is being built. When completed it will stand beside the engine, Murray said.

The aluminum skin and steel frame is expected to be completion by spring.

Officials at the museum, a three-year heritage project due to open next month, are anxiously following Mcallister's progress as he continues a quest to uncover the north Toronto burial site of other Arrow remains. After more than a decade of research, he is

preparing for an archaeological dig on a secret site in north Toronto.

There, according to records he has obtained - but is not making public - dismantled Arrow pieces trucked in from Malton were buried.

Mcallister has also talked with a trucker who confirmed driving the scrap to the secured location, which was razed and then filled with topsoil.

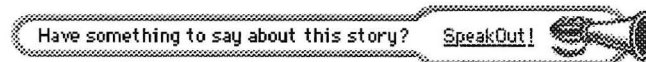
"I've been researching this forever, and I have documents which show 50 to 60 tonnes of Arrow parts buried in Toronto," Mcallister said.

"This is a crucial find - if we can convince the owners to allow us in to begin magnetometer tests to confirm the parts are in the ground.

"A lot of parts were sent to scrap yards, but have been picked clean over the years by Arrowheads," as cult fans of the Arrow are known, Mcallister said.

"Whatever we find at this site may be restored and put up for display here at the museum.

"It belongs to the people," Mcallister said.



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