

ED: Many to whom I spoke think the cancellation of the C102 Jetliner, the world's first regional jet to fly, was a greater tragedy than scrapping the Arrow. Do you agree?

Floyd: This is a subject on which I get very angry. I know of no military aircraft in service today that would fully meet the specifications laid down for the Arrow in 1953. But while the complexity, and therefore, the cost of the Arrow program, based on the almost unheard-of performance specified by the RCAF requirements team, was probably the cause of its demise, there was no such reason for the abandonment of the Jetliner. It was cancelled when we were negotiating a contract with National Airlines for an initial fleet; when Howard Hughes had offered to fund 30 of them for TWA; and when the American airforce had set aside funds for 20 to be used for pilot and navigator training for the crews of their proposed jet bombers. The cancellation was stupid, unconscionable and without merit of any kind.

ED: After the Jetliner, you took charge of the development of Avro's CF-100 (the only Canadian-designed fighter aircraft to see service) and finally you fathered the Arrow. This era is often referred to as Canada's "golden years" of aviation technology. What do you remember most?

Floyd: While that work amounted to not much more than a quarter of my professional life, it was certainly the most exciting, demanding, frustrating and formative time. There are two events that are indelibly etched on my mind. One is the first flight of the Jetliner on August 10, 1949, a hot, humid day when you could have fried an egg on the tarmac, and the other is the Arrow's first flight on the morning of March 25, 1958, a raw and overcast day, with a

relief when the flights were over is equally difficult to put into words.

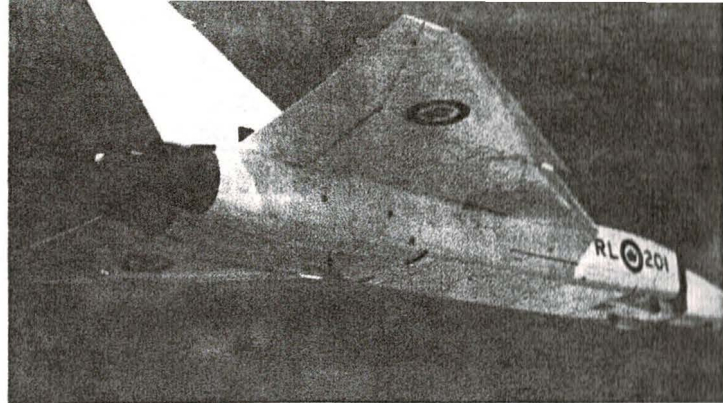
While the Jetliner was a particularly docile aircraft, the Arrow was incredibly complex.

Despite the fact that we had "hedged our bets" with an enormous amount of ground and wind-tunnel testing, I was thinking about the 38,000 parts that had to behave as we expected them to. Luckily, they did.

ED: One of the things in the 1997 CBC miniseries that would concern P.Engs from an ethical standpoint is a scene in the control tower. Your character is asked by Avro's president, Crawford Gordon, to falsify the Arrow's test results in order to ultimately market the still-developing Iroquois engine to foreign countries. Can you set the record straight?

Floyd: The miniseries on the Arrow is widely acknowledged as a fantasy, and as the authors point out, based loosely on a true story. In the film, some characters are invented or changed beyond recognition, some mouthing innuendo that bears no relationship to the real facts of the story. All in the cause of producing a sensational film, which it certainly is, and brings into focus some remarkable things that were happening in our country so many years ago.

But engineers don't design aircraft using Coke bottles, paper darts and home grinding machines as depicted by the whimsical characters in the film. The scriptwriters pointed out in a letter to me that the facts were "manipulated for dramatic purposes." I objected strongly to real names being used for the characters, resulting in



Breathtaking: some things fans and critics agree on—the Arrow was big, bold, beautiful and short-lived.

Now to your specific question of Gordon attempting to coerce the film character—in fact, the truth was exactly the opposite. Because of the criticism and sniping that was going on from certain government organizations questioning the aircraft's performance, everyone at Avro was delighted, none more than I, when our test pilots reported that our performance figures were being vindicated. RCAF flight evaluation pilot Jack Woodman has stated that "the Arrow was performing as predicted and meeting all guarantees."

Whatever else Gordon was or was not, he was no fool and would not have jeopardized the continuation of the Arrow program by asking us to downplay the performance. There is no way we would have agreed to that nonsense in any case.

ED: There aren't many events in our history that have created a controversy like the Avro Arrow. Do you feel there is any lesson that can be learned?

Floyd: I was so privileged to have the support of a team of incredibly talented and dedicated professional engineers and technicians at Avro Canada. After the

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wintery wind hanging over the scene. Since I had been in charge of these projects from inception to takeoff, the responsibility for the results and the safety of the crews was firmly planted at my feet. That is a feeling that is almost impossible to describe, and the

copious correspondence between me and the writers for a considerable length of time, since I felt that some of their presentations come very close to libel. But I lost that battle and bailed out of any further discussion of the project.

Arrow's cancellation, many went on to groundbreaking activities all over the world. As a result, that integrated and highly trained team was lost to this country. I think that was the real tragedy of the Arrow story. ♦