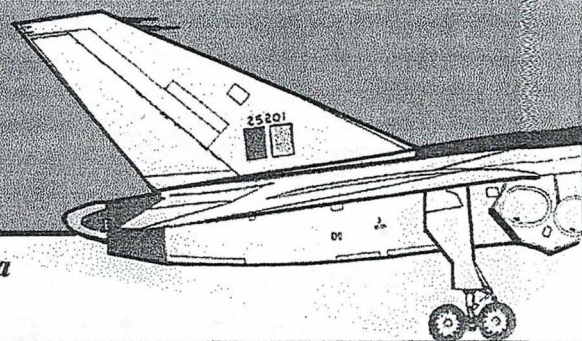


# Pre-Flight



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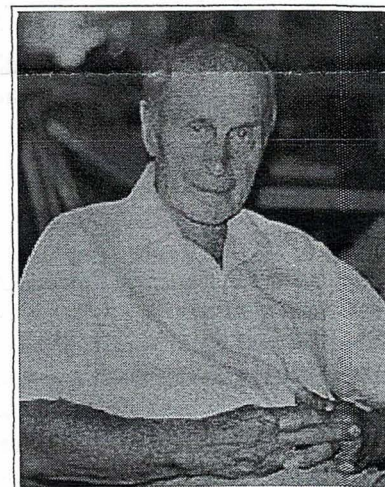
May - June 2001

An area resident who made aviation history may soon be honoured by the community that has been his home for many years. A memorial, possibly including a park and museum honouring Jan Zurakowski, chief test pilot for the Avro Arrow, is in the early planning stages by the Economic Development Committee of Madawaska Valley Council. The proposal is just in the beginning stages, but it has already received from the Aerospace Heritage Foundation of Canada (AHFC). Councillor Hildebrandt met recently with Ian Farrar, president of AHFC and Nick Doran, as well as a number of other people representing the aerospace and aviation industry of Canada. When the idea first surfaced for a memorial, it was the Zurakowski's son, Mark, who suggested contacting AHFC. When Councillor Hildebrandt travelled to Toronto, he received a tour of the Toronto Aerospace Museum (TAM) in Downsview Park. The focal point is the full-scale replica of the Avro Arrow, which is being built by volunteers, and Jan Zurakowski is a prominent part of this display. The councillor was enthusiastically received, with offers of encouragement and support, such as a model of the Arrow (AHFC), memorabilia connected with Zurakowski, videos, photos and even personal involvement in the memorial project. He was encouraged to put a plan together and contact the Toronto group. It was his opinion that Jan Zurakowski has not been recognized locally, even though he is world famous. He said that there is even the possibility of an annual air show at the Round Lake airport. Additionally, there was the possibility of using the downtown park in Barry's Bay as the site for the memorial/museum.

— Debbi Christinck,  
Staff Writer  
Eganville Leader

## Zurakowski Park

A plan to recognize Janusz Zurakowski is well underway in the Madawaska Valley and excitement is building in the area community.



Jan Zurakowski

Zurakowski is easily the most famous pilot alive in Canada today. He was the chief test pilot for the Avro Arrow, an aircraft seen even now as an example of Canadian excellence. Although not native to this area, he and his family chose the community around Barry's Bay as their home following his illustrious career in the aviation industry. He settled on Kamaniskeg Lake in the late 1950's, when he built Kartuzy Lodge there. After living in Russia, Poland and Britain, this became home.

In the minds of many Canadians, Zurakowski is best known for flying the Avro Arrow. He completed the first flight of the Arrow in 1958. He was also the first to fly a Canadian aircraft faster than the speed of sound in a Canadian interceptor, the Avro CF-100 "Canuck".

His history is fascinating. Born in Russia to Polish parents, the family fled to Poland after the Russian Revolution. He became a fighter pilot in Poland, and fought with the Polish Air Force when the Nazis attacked Poland. They were quickly outmatched by superior equipment. Zurakowski, like many

(cont'd on p. 2)



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**From the President:**

On June 2nd, AHFC attended the annual parade of 845 Air Cadet Squadron, where Senior Vice-President Frank Harvey presented the "Jan Zurakowski" Trophy to the top glider pilot in the squadron this year. The trophy bears a cast portrait of Jan and a glider overhead. This trophy will be awarded annually, along with a cash prize.

The Annual General Meeting went off well on June 16th. A new Director was nominated and approved. He is Tim Patten, who has been a member for a while and has been helpful in AHFC business. The bad news is that the film maker who wanted to cover the Arrow Model recovery has withdrawn until next summer, as he could not get to Toronto at the available time.

You will note the inclusion of the CAPA logo in this issue, indicating that AHFC is a member of that organization. Its annual meeting is in Hamilton this year, and flights for members will again be generously provided by WestJet, the CAPA airline of choice. AHFC members are invited to consider WestJet for any travel plans.

*Jan*

**Park, cont'd**

other Polish pilots, fled to an unoccupied country, to continue their fight against the Nazis. Jan Zurakowski ended up in England. He flew with the Royal Air Force (RAF) throughout the war, including the Battle of Britain, for which he was decorated. After the war, he was a test pilot in Britain, and even set a speed record between London and Copenhagen. He was also an accomplished air show performer, drawing on his past experience with gliders to perform aerobatics of which other pilots only dreamed.

Jan Zurakowski emigrated to Canada in search of a better place to raise his sons. In Canada, he was the first pilot to exceed the speed of sound in a straight-wing, pure jet aircraft without rocket power(?). He was the chief test pilot of the Avro Arrow and took it for its first flight on that memorable day, March 25, 1958. He continued in the test program for another 21 flights. Though the Arrow held promise for something great, the Diefenbaker government, citing high costs, cancelled the project.

The cancellation of the Arrow project was a devastating blow to those in the aerospace industry in Canada. The Arrow was an amazing aircraft for its day, years ahead of any aircraft at the time. Zurakowski, in his seventh flight of the Arrow, took it to 50,000 feet and exceeded 1000 miles per hour. Forty years later, this speed is matched by the CF-18 Hornet.

Jan Zurakowski, a name which lives on in Canadian aerospace history, is being recognized by the community he calls home. The community and the men who initiated the memorial/museum park project, John Hildebrant, Jerry Kosnaski and Mark Robbins, deserve to be commended. They have captured the vision and are working on the project with the blessing of Jan Zurakowski. The park project, besides honouring Canada's most famous test pilot, will have a potential spinoff: to become another draw to the beautiful Madawaska Valley where Jan Zurakowski and his family settled and made it their home forty years ago.



# IMPOSSIBLE?

- of course!

by Geoffrey Norris

**WHEN** at Farnborough, 1955, a point was stretched and the Canadian CF-100 allowed to fly, the all-British tradition of the show was broken. The few diehards who muttered against this entirely sensible move could hardly have been mollified when the aircraft gave its demonstration.

Normally a military aircraft at Farnborough is flown in the manner which best shows off its fighting abilities. For the CF-100 the obvious routine would have been roaring low-level passes, steep climbs and tight turns. But instead, the heavy twin-engined aircraft climbed over the airfield and proceeded to fall earthward in a spin. An accident? No. The aircraft made an effortless recovery, climbed again, and then appeared to hover horizontally in the air. For a split second it seemed frozen against the sky. Then a wing dipped - a side-slip to port - then a side-slip to starboard - and the heavy fighter was falling gracefully earthwards in as impeccable an interpretation of the "falling leaf" manoeuvre ever seen at Farnborough. This difficult evolution is, however, only made by top-rate pilots flying in light aircraft. In an Auster it would have merited applause. In the CF-100 it was impossible!

If you mentioned the word "impossible" in the pilots' tent at Farnborough that week, no doubt you would have received the reply: "Of course it's impossible - it's Zurakowski!" For Janusz Zurakowski, the pilot who was flying the CF-100, was already a living legend. Only a few years earlier he had thrilled and baffled the world of aviation - again at Farnborough - by performing cartwheels in a Gloster Meteor. This remarkable manoeuvre was hailed as "The first new aerobatic manoeuvre in 40 years". The word "zurabatics" was added to the aviation glossary.

Most recently Zura - as he is invariably known - hit the headlines again with the first and subsequent flights of the CF-105 Arrow - one of the most advanced military aircraft in the world. Now, with the first phase of Arrow testing successfully completed, he has announced that he is retiring from flying. Before the many legends which surround Zurakowski grow and become distorted, let's take a look at a man who is certainly as remarkable as any exaggeration could make him.

He was born in Poland on September 12, 1914. He had a military education at the Officers' School, Deblin, and was soon showing himself to be a young man with



a firm and able grasp of engineering and scientific problems. Another facet of his abilities began to show itself when he learned to fly in 1935 and soon became an able pilot. Already Zura has the attributes of a first-class pilot - flying skill and a true understanding of aerodynamics and engineering. He became a pilot in the Polish Air Force. The war came, Zurakowski fought for his country. Poland was overrun by Germany and Zurakowski escaped. He soon reappeared as a Pilot Officer in the RAF at Eastchurch.

It did not take the RAF long to discover that in Zurakowski they had an officer who was extremely valuable. His war record shows a continuous series of postings from unit to unit as an instructor, as a commanding officer or as a liaison officer with the Polish units. During this continual movement, Zura still found time to fly operationally. He flew in the Battle of Britain and his is one of the signatures appearing on the famous black-out board at the White Hart Inn near Biggin Hill.

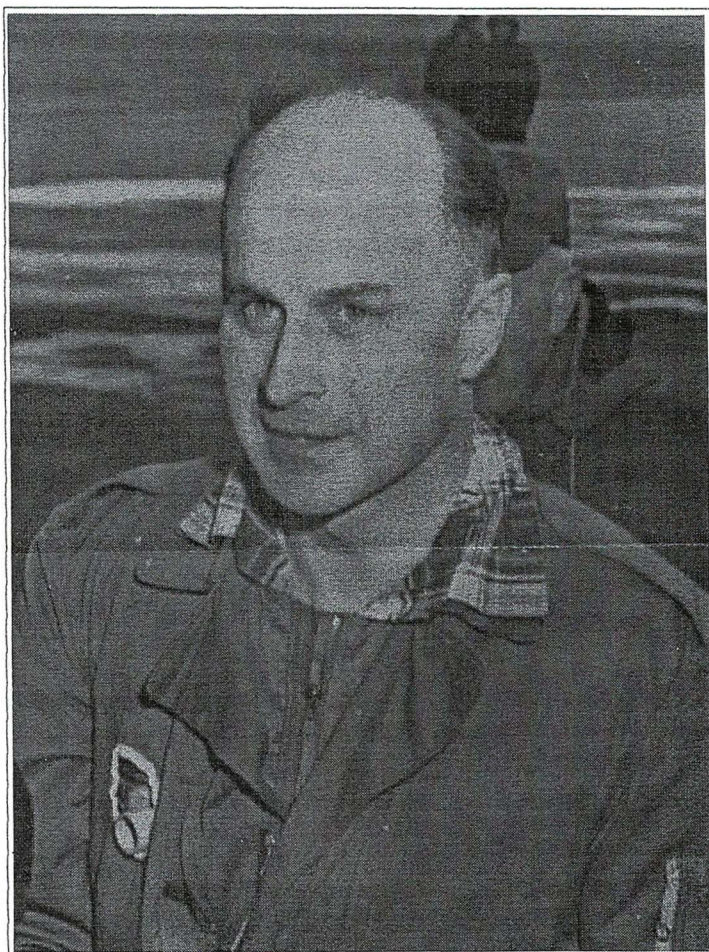
As a fighter pilot, Zura showed the same cool, clinical approach which was later to characterize his test flying. In the late afternoon of September 5, 1940, he destroyed a Me 109 while flying with 234 Squadron. His report, made out immediately after landing shows none of the excitement or elation which might be expected after his first victory in the RAF. "I was Blue 2," wrote Zura. "We were flying at 22,000 feet. I went down to investigate two machines and then saw a Me 109 flying south at 14,000 feet. I approached from astern and as he turned, I gave a short burst from 100 yards. He half rolled and dived and flew low due south. I stayed on his tail, firing one short burst at 140 yards and then the rest of my ammunition from very



close. After my first attack, he was smoking slightly and later heavily. The enemy pilot opened his hood as he crash landed on the sea. The pilot got out and two minutes later the machine sank. I used all my ammunition. The Me 109 out-dived me but I overtook him easily flying straight and level." Zurakowski shot down another Me 109 the next day but was shot up himself. His machine overturned on landing. Zura was unhurt.

By 1944, Zura had progressed to the rank of Squadron Leader. He was officially credited with six enemy aircraft destroyed and wore the ribbon of the "Virtuti Militari" - the Polish VC. That year he took the course at the Empire Test Pilots' School (ETPS). He passed out as a test pilot soon after the end of the war. It was a difficult time for Zurakowski. There seems little doubt that he would have liked to return to his native Poland but he could not reconcile himself politically with the new regime in that country. Perhaps it was as well for the West that this was so. Zura stayed on in the RAF as a test pilot for two years at Boscombe Down and then left to join the Gloster Aircraft Company.

Zura, with his rather spare figure and receding hair, looked like no spring chicken. Yet, when the younger test pilots began putting on the pace and making faster and lower passes over the airfield, Zura proved that he could dice with the best of them. It was not long before Gloster realized that they had in Zura an extremely able test pilot. But they also came to realize that they had someone who was also a character in his own right. The fact is that Zurakowski, even if he had not been able to fly, would have made his mark wherever he went on strength of character alone. His often deliberate ill-treatment of English could almost have brought him fame. Although he had a firm idiomatic grasp of the language, he would delight in such phrases as "What the time is?" "What a weather it is!" was not above using his apparent lack of English to his own advantage.



Says Geoff Worrall, Chief Test Pilot at Gloster and one of those who flew with Zura during his time there: "In any protracted discussion or meeting, it was usually a sign that Zura considered any further 'chewing of the fat' profitless when his English became more and more atrocious. Frequent interjections of 'What is?' at the more awkward parts of an often - for Zura - unnecessarily involved explanation would finally persuade the self-appointed lecturer of the hopelessness of his task."

Language difficulties would also come to Zura's aid when bad weather threatened to stop flying and a call was sent out to all aircraft to return. His English would almost desert him on these occasions. After answering the recall by repeating three times, very clearly, "Allo! Repeat again your message please..", there would be a loud click as Zura switched off his set. Some time later, when he had completed his flying to his own satisfaction, his Meteor would loom up out of the murk and a quiet little voice would say: "Allo! Pinkpill control. Permission to land."

**End of Part 1 "Impossible - of course."  
To be completed in July - August issue.**

