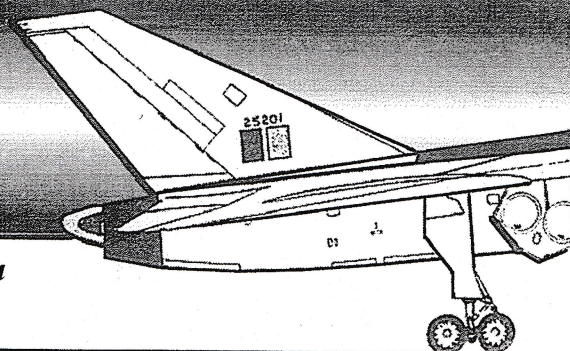


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A Few Familiar Faces from the Fifties

by

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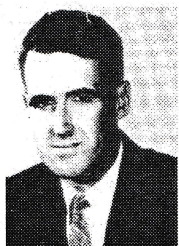
Jim Floyd



Murray Willar



Fred Smye



John Pile



Joe Morley



Brian Willer

Founded 1989

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From the President

Our Annual General Meeting is fast approaching. As I mentioned in the last issue of Pre-Flight, it is scheduled for Saturday, June 19, 2010 at the Canadian Air and Space Museum (CASM) at 10:00 am.

I encourage you to attend and offer your suggestions on how to improve the AHFC.

Frank

A Few Familiar Faces from the Fifties

I can still see him coming down the hall to his office, walking quickly as usual in his dark brown trousers and his Harris Tweed jacket. My first recollection of **Murray Willer** was to see him chatting comfortably and relaxed with the General Manager, **Fred Smye**, in his executive office on the main floor. Fred was the General Manager all the time I was at Avro and his dedicated and stable leadership was appreciated by all. I was a newcomer to Avro and I was just getting oriented. Murray was the energetic head of the Sales and Service department and general assistant to many of the top executives in those thrilling early days at Avro Canada Limited. In those days, none of us could even imagine that such a thing as 'Black Friday' could ever occur. But all that was 60 years ago. Now let's test our memories and see if some of the faces depicted in this article are familiar to our Pre-Flight readers - it was intended that the photos selected should be from an era when you might have remembered them best. Avro is now a thing of the past. However, many books, documentaries and even artifacts are now available to substantiate the record of what promised to be an "unprecedented technical opportunity" for Canada.

We had the aviation world by the tail - or so we thought. Most of the executives and pioneers of that remarkable company are gone. There are probably only a few men and women who can still relate to those thrilling days when a relatively small Canadian company became an envied world leader in the field of aircraft and gas turbine engine technology. In those days, **Joe Morley** was Vice President, Sales and Service, a sort of "Passepartout" in the aviation business and knew just about everyone worth knowing in the airline industry - and on both sides of the Atlantic! Murray Willer was his right-hand man.

It is Joe Morley that I have to thank for a valuable trip I made with him and our European representatives in a survey of European Airlines back in the mid-fifties. Our purpose was to inform them on developments at Avro Canada and to assess their needs for Avro Jetliners in the fast approaching jet age. In that propeller driven era, the Jetliner was years ahead of the competition. It was the last word in comfort and passenger appeal, yet it also offered a cruising speed advantage which all airlines long for - and the promise of more to come!

Familiar Faces ... cont'd.

When the great aeronautical technical strides of the 1950s are discussed, it is **James C. Floyd**, Avro's VP of Engineering, whose name first comes to mind. Jim is the acknowledged father of the Avro Jetliner (North America's first inter-city jet transport), the famed Avro Arrow (supersonic, long range fighter, years ahead of its competition), and consultant extraordinaire on the Concorde. Now, well up in his nineties, Jim has earned the great respect of aircraft designers and engineers worldwide.

However, there is another aspect of Jim's unflagging contribution to Avro's unique place in history which should be better known. By his faithful and tireless endeavors to, sort out fact from fiction of events leading up to Black Friday (February 20, 1959), he has earned the lasting appreciation of Avro employees and associates. In so doing, and at great personal expense, he has persistently sought to reveal the vital truth of a situation which many influential persons in high places preferred to see buried and forgotten.

Jim is the author of many books, reports, articles, press reports, interviews, etc. collectively designed to keep the memory of A. V. Roe Canada Ltd. and its advanced products, out in the open. In recognition of his outstanding contribution to aviation, he was selected for membership in Canada's Aviation Hall Of Fame in 1993. It is interesting to note the number of other Members of that august body of Canadian aviation pioneers which came from such a young Company as Avro Canada Limited. Jim Floyd's personal and unrelenting efforts have served to ensure that the true story of an opportunity lost through unwarranted and vindictive political interference, would not soon be forgotten.

Hopefully, future business and engineering students at our universities (still with stars in their eyes) would do well to familiarize themselves with the Avro story to ensure that such a tragedy will never occur again. That astute observation: "Those who refuse to learn from the lessons of history, will be condemned by them" has never had a more appropriate application. We all owe Jim Floyd a resounding vote of thanks!

There is another name similarly deserving of thanks and recognition for his selfless contribution to the name of Avro. That person surprisingly enough, is **Brian Willer**, the son of Murray to whom you have already been introduced. The term "unsung hero" fits him well and his light should not be obscured by

allowing it to be hidden under the proverbial 'bushel' of unconcern. During the time of Avro's heyday, Brian had not even reached his teens. He was never an Avro employee. This makes it all the more remarkable that he should now know the number of ex-employees which he apparently does.

Moreover, it seems that for some strange reason (possibly due to a suggestion by Irv Liss - Avro's engineering specialist on anything electronic), he took it upon himself to keep in touch with as many Avroites as possible after Black Friday and to do his best to get to know them and encourage them. They were soon to realize that if this dedicated person had any say in the matter, the proud name of Avro Canada Limited would not soon be forgotten - and their labors would not have been entirely in vain.

Brian apparently inherited much of his father's zeal and outgoing personality and applied his talents in like manner. In spite of the intensely competitive demands of his full-time profession as a photographer, he made it his business to get to know such persons such as Jim Floyd, Jan Zurakowski, Don Rogers, Irv Liss, Bill Baker, Ross Wilmott, Mario Pesando, John Pile, Sid Britton, Lou Wise, -- the list goes on - and their wives and families as well!

Brian has also been more than generous with his personal time and expense where an Avro employee was concerned. For many he prepared framed montages of their Avro achievements showing some of the projects in which the employee had been involved.

I remember how he gave **John Pile** (who at that time was on his death bed), one of those lovely works of photographic art and John was thrilled with it. I too have one of those unexpected Diplomas, which added to my family's appreciation of what old Dad did for a living, and which did not hurt my fatherly home-standing a bit! I also remember how Brian arrived at our home one day with a handful of long stemmed red roses for my wife. She never forgot that occasion either!

Brian, on behalf of the many other families who may have received such unexpected attention - thank you so much! There is yet another side of Brian Willer to which the reader should be exposed. In order to preserve as evidence the achievements of a great Canadian company, Brian has developed his own private Museum! Imagine!



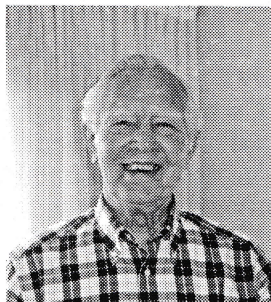
Familiar Faces ... cont'd.

He has assembled single-handedly, a most remarkable museum featuring thousands of Avro artifacts and other paraphernalia: press reports, Jetliner and Arrow models, aircraft items, brochures, service manuals, factory parts, clocks, pictures, etc. It is fantastic -- and to think that he did it all by himself, sort of staggers the mind. All exhibits are carefully identified.

I wonder how many thousands of hours Brian has dedicated to spending quality time with his favorite brain child! A few years ago, my wife and I, along with a number of other Avro associates, were invited to enjoy a personally conducted tour of the Willer Avro Museum. If anyone wants factual evidence on the reality of Avro, Brian has it. It is indeed a labor of love.

I wish it were possible for someone to extol the many similar acts of kindness made by countless other Avro employees, some of whom have already passed unnoticed from the scene. On behalf of the still remaining fellow Avroites, let me dedicate this note of appreciation for many unsolicited and probably forgotten acts of kindness and encouragement by the many unsung heroes of that by-gone era.

So, thank you all (including the few personalities selected here for special consideration) for your unremitting efforts to be an encouragement to those who have been hurt by the past and for helping to restore their faith in human nature - to some extent at least. May some future student or patriot be inspired by the discovery of the magnitude of the contribution made by so many talented Canadians in hopes of making this great country even greater.



**Gil Dunkin,
AHFC # 575**

Members Matter

I just wanted to open Member's Matters wishing our Editor Ted, Harasymchuk a speedy recovery as he underwent surgery this past week. We look forward to your quick return.

I would like to share the following with you received from Brad Martin, Commercial Manager, Industrial Gas Turbines, Orenda Aerospace Corporation Magellan Aerospace Ltd.

Nick, Just finished reading this last Pre-Flight and wanted to send a quick note of thanks. The story by William Wildfong was one of the most entertaining and interesting I've ever had the pleasure to read. What a great great insight into one man's once in a life-time experiences during such an exciting period of Canadian Aerospace.

Absolutely loved it. Brad.

I contacted Bill Wildfong and advised him of Brad's comments. I assure you Bill was so appreciative of Brad's remarks.

Brad's follow-up was.

Nick, I'm so happy to hear that my comments were passed on to Mr. Wildfong. With your audience all being enthusiasts and speaking as someone that has worked around Orenda for 34 years and with my father working here for 39 and at Avro before that, and with all the literature published surrounding our aviation heritage, we're all intimately familiar with the factual history. But stories like this don't come around that often (in my readings in any case) and they bring with them the human story of that history. There are so many of us that are enthralled by that history but fewer and fewer that actually touched it.

I mean really, hanging out with Howard Hughes for months? I could read accounts like that all day. There must be a multitude of cool stories like that out there still. Thank goodness there are avenues such as the AHFC providing a platform for these wonderful accounts.

You absolutely have my permission to use my email. Brad

I trust this will inspire any of you to put pen to paper to share your own experiences in the aviation field.

Nicholas Doran, Membership