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# AVRO ARROW

## Resurrection

### The Resurrection of a legend

June 24, 1999



*One of the Arrow artifacts at  
the bottom of Lake Ontario*

The loss of almost every tangible remain of the Avro Arrow program has had an impact on the psyches of Arrow aficionados worthy of a Freudian epithet. Denied access to the material remnants of the craft by the cruel events of the '50s, the few remains that are left have undergone an almost fetishistic sanctification. For a long time, apart from a few odds and ends, these consisted of little more than a nose-cone and landing gear of an Arrow, saved for

scientific posterity, and a lone Iroquois engine, all housed at the National Aviation Museum. But the search for the true Arrow has followed a few different paths.

### The models

When the Arrow program underwent its final agonies of destruction, the engines, airplanes, blueprints and parts were all destroyed. But beneath the surface of Lake Ontario laid remnants that couldn't be reached – nine large test models of the Arrows, made of solid magnesium alloy, and launched piggyback-style on a Nike missile.

At this writing, two of these national treasures have been reported found though one of them seems to be a Nike missile. Their acquisition provides a bittersweet complement to the scanty legacy the Arrow left behind. Two different amateur searchers located the models on the silty bottom of the lake, and want the models to go to aviation museums. For the moment the models remain on the bottom.



The solid-alloy models were  
integral to the designing of a



*One of the Arrow models mounted on a Nike booster.*

supersonic jet for which production was demanded immediately -- without the usual intermediary prototype-building step. They were one-eighth size, about three metres long with a two metre wingspan, and were equipped with 23 sensors that would relay information about surface airflow back to the test team. Hitchhiking on the Nike missiles, they could reach speeds of Mach 2.6, something like 3,000 km/hour. Within a few seconds of take-off, the models' flights would come to an end, and they would disappear beneath the waters of Lake Ontario.

In all, 11 models were launched, but two of them were fired off from Wallops Island, Virginia, into the Atlantic Ocean. Though salt water would have corroded those two models years ago, the other nine at the bottom of Lake Ontario have ostensibly been well-preserved by the cold fresh water.

### **Full-bodied Resurrection**

The quest for something that at least looks convincing is an aspiration of the Toronto Aviation Museum, an all-volunteer organization. They hope to build a life-sized faithful replica of the plane. Arrow enthusiast P. Connors describes it in this excerpt from his website:

"The new Arrow will be the exact size of the original aircraft and will be taxi-able for outdoor exhibitions. The replica will represent Arrow 251203 being aircraft number RL 203, specifically painted in white and day-glow colours with the Canadian ensign impressed on the tail. The replica aircraft is being manufactured of a stainless steel frame with aluminum skin. The replica is over seventy feet long and has a wingspan of fifty feet and an overall height of twenty-three feet. Estimated finished weight is expected to be in the range of 12,000 pounds."

At the same time, another quest is being led by a group calling itself The Arrow Alliance. They seek to rebuild a replica of the Arrow that will incorporate its revolutionary advances. The idea of building a flying model is seen by many Arrow experts as virtually impossible, as the enormous and costly machines that milled and manufactured the Arrow's unusual parts were completely destroyed along with the rest of the artifacts. A life-sized replica that can roll around the



## Engines and Parts

Many were surprised last year when two Pratt and Whitney J-75 engines residing at Ottawa's National Research Council were brought to the public's attention. The engines, which were used to power the first five Arrow prototypes, were to have been replaced by the stronger Iroquois engines, then under construction at the Avro Orenda plant. But in the end they were to be the Arrow's only flying mates, as the order to halt the project came only a day after the Iroquois-fitted Arrow models were declared sky-worthy.

The search for parts continues. A variety of legends exists about the efforts to save parts of the Arrow, its plans, blue prints and associated documents, and the elaborate machines that were created to manufacture the plane. A picture emerges of indignant Avro employees going to great lengths to secret away artifacts, or of rival technology companies managing to get their hands on parts. If these tales are true, Arrow enthusiasts believe, perhaps Arrow parts can be found under heavy coats of dust in a variety of places.

For insights into how the mysterious circumstances around the disposal of the Arrow has created an aura of intrigue right up to the present day, read Mike McAllister's ['Where they lie, nobody knows.'](#)

## The Arrow that got away

The legend with the most mythic proportions is the enduring idea that one single Arrow was spared the welders arc, and remains in a secret location today. There are few shreds of hope, even for true believers. Legend has it that late one night, after cancellation, part of the Avro plant was cordoned off and covered trucks were seen leaving. To date, no records confirming that all the Arrows were destroyed have been uncovered. One of the latest books on the Arrow, *Storms of Controversy*, notes that in some of the photos of the Arrows on 'death row', Arrow RL25202 is nowhere to be seen. Records attest that it was being fitted with a new missile system around the time of cancellation. However, Palmiro Campagna, the author of *Storms*, is of the opinion that any spiriting away of an Arrow would have been highly unlikely, and in any case would have had to be approved by the Arrow Termination Coordination team that had been set up to oversee the disposition of Arrow remains. If an Arrow model were to have escaped, Campagna suggests, it would more likely be found in a military installation than a farmer's field.

