

Christine A. Weller

The following details were shared with the Avro Museum via email on Dec 20, 2022:

I do not have much info. relative directly to the time at Orenda, and not sure what use one might find about other incidental events.

I'm unable to locate the one item, being what appeared to be a leather bound booklet on legal matters/rules etc. relative to employment at the Plant. If it turns up when I downsize, I'll pass it along to you. Incidental, leading up to employment.

April 1956 immigrated to Canada, aboard S.S. Empress of Scotland. Over a week-long sea voyage. Met a young RCAF Officer from Trenton and we danced the time away on board. Ship was held over (anchor dropped) off Canadian coast because of Spring icebergs crossing our route. Docked, Montreal. Found it difficult obtaining a Taxi, my strong English accent got in the way. On arrival in Toronto (after train) quickly found work at an Automotive business on King or Queen St. as typist. Someone suggested I try employment at Orenda - "a good place to work."

Had an unpleasant experience while at the required physical examination, by an Avro appointed physician I believe, and his exuberant nurse!

First assignment was to Mr. Johnston/Johnson's? Purchasing dept. typing pool. I have two little leather bound note books from this dept. Nickleson Tool & Die Co. Ltd Windsor, Ont. phone CL. 3-5870 dated 1956 and 1967. This was usually a busy typing pool, I remember myself and one other Maltese young woman. When there was any slack time, I would wander off to another dept. on the same floor. There was a fella who was a horse fancier, like myself, and we would swap equine tales. I believe my horsy friend later had some connection to a Car Dealership in Orillia. By this time I had purchased a horse of my own, and traded an English Hunter seat saddle, for Western gear, including a Stetson.

At this time I was staying at the farm where I boarded my horse, and rented one room there. The bathroom facilities at the farm were very limited (no bath tub or shower) don't know how I made myself respectable to attend my workplace. The farm was off Jane Street, on the outskirts of Maple, Ont. I borrowed a bicycle and rode up the dirt road (Jane St.) about a mile each day, hid the bike in a bush, beside an Octagon house, and met up with my Orenda pool car driver, with four other employees.

Sometime later I was offered a transfer to Mr. Jack Hilton's office. The work there was not very demanding I remember. Sometimes I was asked to deliver documents to another area. This entailed walking across the factory floor, where were hanging engines etc. There were many good hearted, appreciative whistles etc. from the workers. Let's face it, I was nineteen, female, with a pony tail! In Mr. Hilton's office there was also a young man named Bill. Not sure what his job title would have been, but he aspired to becoming a Radio Announcer. Apparently some time after the Black Friday episode, I heard Bill on the radio, somewhere North of Barrie.

It was very quiet, that last drive back in the commuter car. I never met up with them again. But did speak with Jack Hilton when he was apparently visiting a local hospital, and he recognized me and asked for an address where he could send some articles he had saved from my office desk, when we were told to close up and leave. Among the items was a small, white plastic replica of the Arrow. (I don't have this now.)

I do remember a lost opportunity, however. Our commuter driver asked if we wished to stay after work to witness, what I think must have been a test flight of the Arrow. Apparently, we decided not to stay!

Work in Ontario for a steno/typist was easy pickings. I next was employed at Reeves & Sons Orfus Drive, near Dufferin Street. It had a British origin and sold artists materials. I also had lodging at a home on Euphrasia Drive nearby, that offered a private shower! Still kept the horse at the Maple farm.

Life took a dramatic turn from then on. Always grateful I came to Canada. Could have made some wiser choices, all in all I have much to be grateful for. Five children later, divorce, driving school buses, Driver Instructor for John's Driving School, years at Barrie Transit. Still have a horse.

Well Fred, you've had an ear full!

Life continues to be bountiful, good and full of opportunities, including religious and church participation. I hope the same has been true for those good people at Orenda - their spirits and hopes were high. There was a lot of British grit there, and will to survive. Might we dare to think that an Arrow made it too?

All best,
Christine A. Weller