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Janusz Zurakowski, 86, spoke to young test pilots at CFB Cold Lake about his dogfights in the Battle of Britain and flying the Avro Arrow.

Avro Arrow test pilot recalls glory days

FACILITY NAMED FOR HIM

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BY JIM FARRELL

COLD LAKE, ALTA. • A half century of aviation history seemed only a moment in time yesterday as the 86-year-old dean of Canadian test pilots huddled with this country's newest test pilots for a bit of traditional "hangar flying" — the telling of tall air tales.

At air force expense, Janusz Zurakowski was flown to CFB Cold Lake this weekend because the base's Aerospace Engineering Test Establishment was named in his honour. Mr. Zurakowski became famous more than 40 years ago when he took the Avro Arrow into the air for the first time.

Eavesdropping on conversations between Mr. Zurakowski and Cold Lake test pilots more

than 50 years his junior, it turned out things haven't changed much among the people who put new airplanes through their paces.

They still have to complete long, arduous and detailed written reports on the airplanes they fly. They still have their favourite planes. Even young test pilots are still curious about what it was like to battle German Messerschmitt fighters during the Battle of Britain and what it was like to fly the Allies' first jet fighter 56 years ago.

And they're still curious about the Arrow, reputed to be the fastest and most advanced fighter of its day on Feb. 20, 1959, when the project was cancelled and existing models of the plane were reduced to scrap.

Mr. Zurakowski was able to tell them what they wanted to know.

"If you want to do high-altitude intercepts of other planes, the Arrow is still the one you would want to be flying," said CF-18 test pilot, Major Paul Kissmann.

The Arrow would have been faster and could have flown higher than Canada's present-day fighter, the CF-18, Maj. Kissmann said. Mr. Zurakowski agreed. The Arrow was designed to that very well, but unfortunately that's all it was designed for. The CF-18 — a nimble, multi-purpose fighter-bomber is able to drop laser-guided bombs, fire missiles and dogfight.

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