

Date ??

The Canadian Press

TORONTO - Waldek (Spud) Potocki died the way every test pilot wants to - of old age.

Potocki, who became part of Canadian aviation history as a test pilot for the supersonic Avro Arrow fighter, died of pneumonia earlier this week. He was 77.

L DEC 23, 1996

Potocki died in Columbus, Ohio, where he had lived for a number of years with his wife after a long and colorful flying career.

During the 1950s, Potocki was part of the legendary Arrow program, which put Canada, for a brief moment, on the leading edge of the international aircraft industry.

Although it was regarded as the world's most advanced fighter at the time, the Arrow program was cancelled by the Conservative government led by John Diefenbaker in February 1959.

Potocki flew the Arrow on some of its most demanding tests. On Nov. 11, 1958, he took the Arrow to Mach 1.9 - almost twice the speed of sound - a fantastically high speed for the time.

Don Rogers, who was operations manager for Avro during the Arrow era, described Potocki as a real professional.

"He was excellent. Excellent. A great pilot," said Rogers.

After the cancellation of the Arrow, Potocki was lured to the United States by North American Rockwell, which hired him as a test pilot.

Potocki leaves his wife, Margorie, and stepdaughter Gillian Thompson, who lives in Toronto.

The Hamilton Spectator, Copyright © 1997