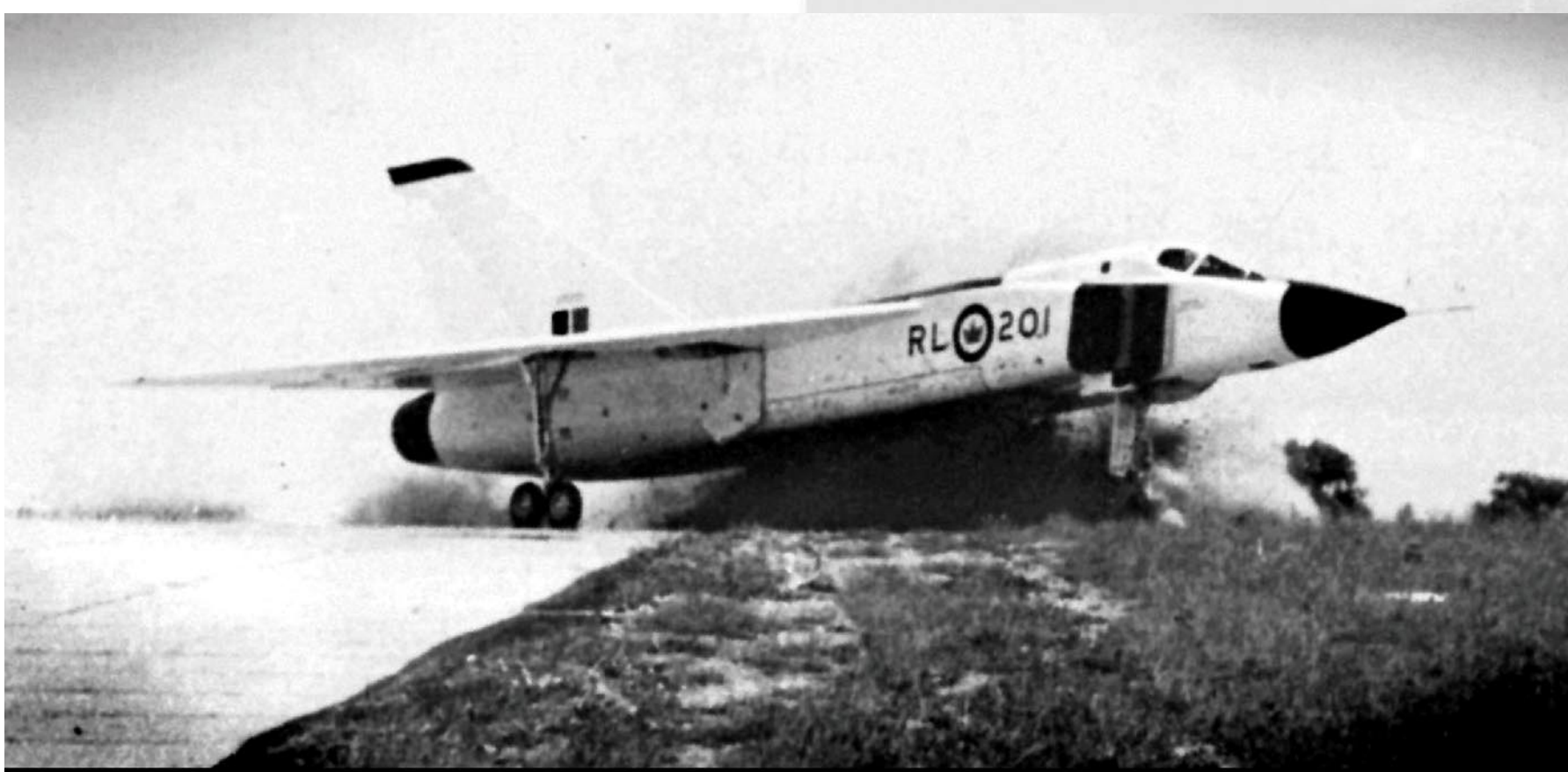
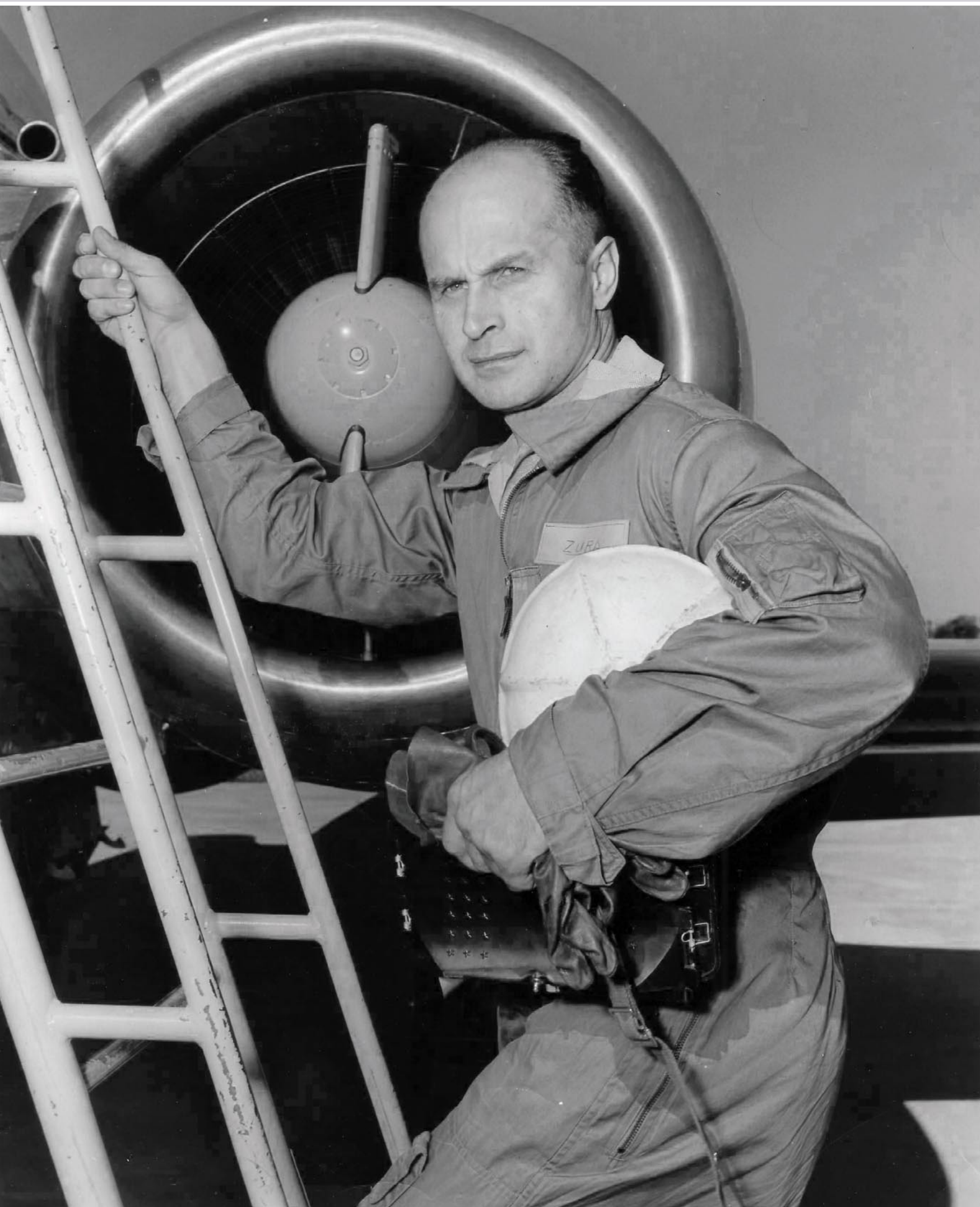


Janusz Zurakowski

(1914-2004)

Test pilot



Janusz Zurakowski began his career in Poland, as an excellent fighter pilot, squadron leader and aerobatic performer. Considered one of the greatest test pilots of his time, he flew more than a hundred types of aircraft and invented an aerobatic manoeuvre known as Zurabatic Cartwheel. He had a distinguished military career, first in the Polish Air Force and then in the Battle of Britain, with a Polish squadron of the Royal Air Force.

Zurakowski came to Canada in 1952 with his wife Anna and two young sons. He became the first Canadian pilot to break the sound barrier (in 1996 Royal Canadian Mint issued a special \$20 silver coin to commemorate the occasion). In 1958, he was chosen to be the official test pilot of the CF-105 Avro Arrow, the last Canadian-designed fighter plane.

After the Avro Arrow project was cancelled in 1959, Zurakowski rejected lucrative offers from American aeronautical companies and decided to stay in Canada. Near Barry's Bay, Ontario, in the heart of a region settled by the Polish Kaszub minority in the second half of the nineteenth century, he and his wife opened Kartuzy Lodge, a tourist resort that became a vibrant centre of Polish life. An expert sailor, Zurakowski enjoyed practicing and teaching his skills in the adjoining chain of lakes.

In 2000, Zurakowski was named Honorary Fellow of the International Society of Experimental Test Pilots in Los Angeles, joining the ranks with the Wright brothers, Charles Lindbergh, Neil Armstrong and Igor Sikorsky. He was a member of Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame, and received many other distinctions, among them Poland's highest military decoration, the Virtuti Militari. He was named a Pioneer in Canadian Aviation and won the Trans-Canada McKee Trophy. When the Aerospace Engineering Test Establishment was founded at Canadian Forces Base in Cold Lake, Alberta, it was named after him.

Janusz Zurakowski was buried in Barry's Bay, and a park there was named in his honour.

Photos from left top clockwise:
• Janusz Zurakowski „Legend in the Skies,” as Bill Zuk, a biographer, titled his book about him • March 25, 1958, the Avro CF-105's historic flight has just ended • Reflecting on the death of a young pilot • In 1999, the Canadian Flight Test Centre in Cold Lake, Alberta, was renamed in J. Zurakowski's honour • CF-105, christened Avro Arrow, the most famous of Avro Canada's aircraft had its hard time
All photos – family archives

POLISH SPIRIT