

## Star attraction arrives at Expo 86.

By Raymond Guérin.

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She may be old and too small by today's standards, and unable to function properly, but she certainly has been around in her lifetime. Fourteen employers she has had, including three government agencies and corporations!

And now, at the venerable age of 48 - that is, venerable for an airplane - she is about to know one of the great moments of her colourful career. She arrived in Vancouver at the end of a 14-day journey from Ottawa (on board a flatbed truck, for Billy Bishop's sake!) to become one of the star attractions at Expo 86. She will be the pride and joy of the Air Canada pavilion, displaying all her 38-foot length that could seat ten passengers.

Hold it. We're talking about fin number 23. A little respect is "de rigueur". After all, this was one of the original "three sisters" purchased from Lockheed by Trans-Canada Air Lines (Air Canada) in October 1937, when the airline was only in its second month of operations. So, this is truly a memento to aviation history, especially since Air Canada would be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 1986-87.

As we know, the national carrier was called Trans-Canada Air Lines (TCA) until 1965. But the aircraft identification letters of CF-TCA were merely coincidental with the airline's initials. The "three sisters" had been registered in alphabetical order, the other two being CF-TCB (fin 24) and CF-TCC (fin 25).

Earlier this month, technicians had to remove CF-TCA's 55-foot wingspan before a crane lifted her and deposited her gently on the truck for her Vancouver bound journey. They put the wings in huge boxes, they covered CF-TCA with a tarpaulin, and off she went - yanked from the comfortable retreat she had been enjoying since 1968 at the National Aviation Museum, which is located at Ottawa's Rockcliffe airport. CF-TCA had ample time, in those last 17 years, to reminisce about her full life.

She could recall the day she was born, when she was rolled out of Lockheed's plant at Burbank, California, on September 21, 1937; and when she was delivered to TCA on October 6, 1937 for the sum of \$73,000 - a paltry amount compared to the us\$49.7 million Air Canada paid for its latest Lockheed model, an L-1011-500, four years ago.

But then, this latest state of the art Lockheed has a length of 164 feet, and a wingspan just as long. It carries 214 passengers (other Air Canada Lockheed types can carry as many as 289), has a cruising speed of speed of 548 mph and a range of 5,500 statute miles, whereas tiny CF-TCA 's cruising speed did not exceed 190 mph and its range was only 713 statute miles.

Tiny? Believe it or not, the aircraft was dubbed the "Silver Giant" in its early days. And later, in 1951, she was also called "Lady Alice" by the Mid Sky Co. of Northbrook, Illinois, which happened to be - but only for a year - one of her several owners.

The flighty life of CF-TCA goes like this: Trans-Canada Air Lines had her in active service for only two years, but she performed significant feats during that time. Among them: completing the first dawn-to-dusk flight from Montreal to Vancouver on July 30, 1937, carrying Transport Minister **C.D. Howe** and other government officials. Her pilot was **J.H. Tudhope**, the co-pilot was **J.D. Hunter**, and the flight engineer was **Low Parmenter**.

In October 1939, the aircraft was sold to the Department of National Defence, to become unit #1526 of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). After World War II. in May 1946, she became war asset disposal equipment and was sold to the Thunder Bay Flying Club, at Fort William, Ontario.

That was the beginning of CF-TCA's civilian life. In June 1946, she was sold to Wally Siple of Dorval, Quebec; one month later, she was acquired by **H.C. Moody**, of Decatur, Illinois.

Wisconsin Central Airways bought her in January 1947, then she went to the Mid Sky Company in 1951 and, in 1952, to Midway Airlines in Chicago.

Five years later, in January 1957, CF-TCA found herself working for the Bankers Life and Casualty Company of Florida. In 1958, she was forced to make a short career move within Florida, being purchased by International Air Service of Lantana.

This brought her eventually into the hands of Great Lakes Airmotive, of Willow Run, Michigan, in February 1959. She then went to State Airlines of Fort Lauderdale, which promptly sold her, within a month, to Lee Koepke who made CF-TCA famous in 1967, when he took her around the world between June 7 and July 10, under the command of pilot Ann Pellegrino, to commemorate Amelia Earhart's ill-fated flight of 1937.

Aviatrix Earhart, who had twice achieved transatlantic crossings (once in solo flight), was lost with co-pilot Fred Noonan when she tried to cross the Pacific on July 2, 1937.

CF-TCA, having circled the globe, went back to her initial employer: she was acquired by Air Canada on March 11, 1968. Seven months later, on October 14, the airline donated her to the National Museum of Science and Technology, which includes the National Aviation Museum.

There the little aircraft enjoyed her well-deserved rest, as a permanent exhibit of the aeronautical collection. And there she will return after Expo 86, in the vast new building that will be inaugurated by the Aviation Museum.

She shouldn't worry about her wings being temporarily clipped for the Vancouver rendezvous. She only has to think of the fate that befell her second sister: CF-TCB was ignominiously "cannibalized" to provide parts for other aircraft.

On the other hand, the third sister, CF-TCC, is still frisky and doing quite well. Unlike CF-TCA, she is still airworthy and was performing at a flying club meeting in Texas when Air Canada found her and re-acquired her. She, too, participated in Expo 86, as well as in the various celebrations marking Air Canada's 50th anniversary.

**Editors' Note** - In 2022 CF-TCC was donated to the Royal Aviation Museum of Western Canada in Winnipeg.

Altogether, Trans-Canada Air Lines operated five L-10As. They were replaced in 1939 by other Lockheed equipment the L-1408 (Super Electra) and L-1808A (Lodestar), In 1945, the DC-3 took over as the fleet's main aircraft, although the Lockheeds were kept in service until 1949.

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