

Colourful Career of CF-TCA

Peripatetic Orphan Flies Into History

by B. R. Cormier

The polished aluminum Lockheed 10A now sitting at the Dorval Base began life with TCA in October, 1937 pretty much in its present, restored condition. But in between its arrival as TCA's first new aircraft and its re-acquisition as a retiring pioneer lays countless thousands of miles and a career unparalleled in aviation history.

Given the Canadian registration CF-TCA, it immediately entered service in 1937 with Trans-Canada Air Lines, the fledgling forerunner of the Company today. It flew the 122-mile Vancouver-Seattle route and others before being sold to the Department of National Defence on October 12, 1939 after logging 1,877 hours of TCA flying time.

It did its stint with the service and was given serial number 1526 by the Royal Canadian Air Force. Shuttling back and forth from the RCAF to TCA about four times, it served some 60 months with TCA and 56 months with the air force.

In early 1947 the Lockheed was sold as surplus by the Canadian War Assets as CF-TBD and was acquired by the Thunder Bay Flying Club in Fort William, Ontario where it remained until February, 1947. It was then purchased by a W. C. Siple who kept it until August of that year before selling it to H. D. Moody of Decatur, Illinois as N-79237.

It was operated on lease and charter until April, 1950 when it joined the fleet of Wisconsin Central Airlines (now North Central) as the airline upgraded its equipment from a previous fleet of two Cessnas.

It wasn't much more than a year later when increased passenger loads forced WCA to expand to Douglas DC-3s and the Lockheed once again went on the trading block.

Mid-Sky Company of Northbrook, Illinois bought the aircraft and the registration was changed to N-1285. Old CF-TCA was then christened "Lady Alice".

A little later "Lady Alice" joined Midway Airlines which operated the airport shuttle between Meigs, Chicago Midway, Chicago O'Hare and Sky Harbour in Northbrook.

Peripatetic by nature, or an involuntary orphan of the aviation world, the now much-travelled Lockheed went to Banker's Life and Casualty Company in 1957 and in August, 1959 was acquired by International Air Services Incorporated.

This company removed the cream, white and green paint applied by former owners and the Electra was again seen in its plain, highly-polished metal finish.

In 1961, the aircraft was damaged in a wheels-up landing and shortly after was bought by Lee Koepke of Willow Run, Michigan who had first seen the Lockheed while working as a mechanic for Wisconsin Central Airlines. N-79237 was one of six Lockheeds Lee helped maintain.

With a patience born of love Koepke rebuilt the aircraft from a stripped down wreck to flying condition. Before he acquired the aircraft, the engines, radio gear and instruments had been sold separately.

Lee shopped around, acquired the necessary parts and repaired the damage. In July, 1966 the aircraft was ready for re-assembly and, with one of Koepke's friends in the left-hand seat, the silver craft lifted off the ground for the first time in more than four years.

Back in 1963, Koepke had suggested to a school teacher and part-time aviator, Ann Pellegrino, the idea of making a flight with CF-TCA commemorating the around-the-world flight first attempted by Amelia Earhart in 1937.

Sister Ship

CF-TCA was a sister ship of the one used by the famed aviatrix.

The plan intrigued Miss Pellegrino, and at the end of the 1966 school year she left teaching to take up full-time flying. Working as a flight instructor and charter pilot, she logged the necessary hours to fly the Lockheed. The flight was to begin May 20, 1967.

Bill Polhemus, part-time navigator (at times with Air Canada) and public relations executive joined the team in March and was instrumental in obtaining much of the communications and navigational equipment required for the flight.

To allow time for equipment installation, take-off was later moved back to June 7.

Bill Payne was obtained from the United States armed forces to act as co-pilot, and after a number of equipment installations, modifications and checks, the plane was ready on June 6 to begin its epic flight.

At 8:00 a.m. on June 7 amid a heavy downpour, the wheels lifted off the runway at Willow Run Airport in Detroit bound for Oakland, California, Miss Earhart's departure point. On board were Miss Pellegrino, pilot; Bill Payne, co-pilot; Bill Polhemus, navigator; and Lee Loepke, flight engineer, mechanic and owner.

From California old CF-TCA flew eastward to Miami, down over the Caribbean Sea to South America and over the Brazilian jungles. Across the Atlantic the

silver bird gallantly flew through the buffeting of thunderstorms and on to Africa to land at Dakar. After a short servicing and rest, the aircraft took off for Lisbon, Rome, Ankara, Teheran, over the snow-covered peaks of the mountains of Iran to the blistering heat of Karachi. Here, Koepke performed the 100-hour inspection and found everything in excellent condition.

From Karachi, the plane travelled across India to Thailand and Singapore. On to Indonesia, Australia and finally, Lae, New Guinea, the last place Amelia Earhart had been seen back in 1937.

On July 1, CF-TCA lifted off over the Huon Gulf to Nauru Island, last fueling stop before the onward flight to Howland Island. At Nauru, with special permission from authorities, CF-TCA made the second night take-off in the history of the island and the next morning it was Koepke himself who finally spotted the elusive bit of island which would have meant "safe harbour" to another Lockheed 30 years before.

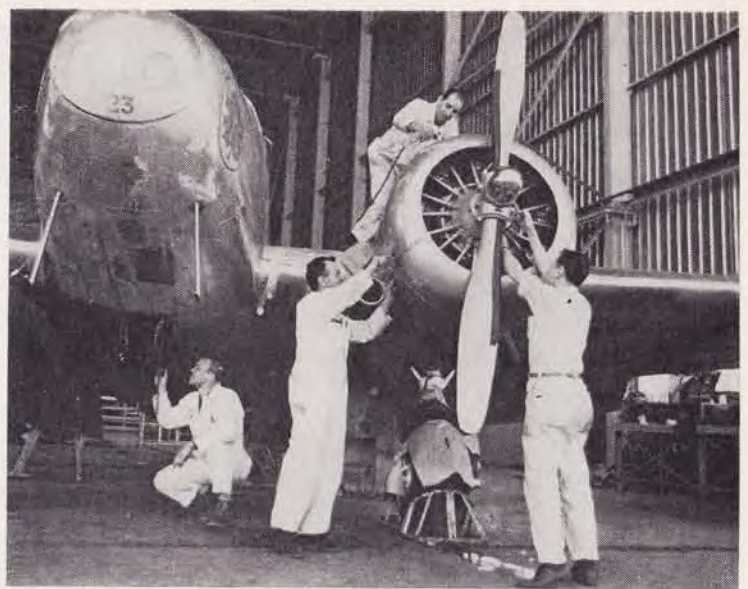
Bill Payne flew low over the island as Ann dropped a commemorative wreath. The tired crew then flew on to Canton Island and within a few days were back in Detroit.

Not one single delay had resulted from a mechanical problem.

Before the rare old bird returned to Air Canada it performed still another commemorative flight.

On February 24 of this year, CF-TCA led a five-plane formation flypast as North Central Airlines (formerly Wisconsin Central) celebrated its 20th anniversary.

At about this time the Company contacted owner Lee Koepke. ▶



INGENUITY AND AFFECTION were the main ingredients in the complete refurbish job on the original Lockheed 10A bought by the Company back in 1937. Mechanics Helmut Schulz, Stan Fafoutis, Marcel Bourdeau and Pat Fay are shown above at work on old CF-TCA.



A CHIEF ATTRACTION of a recent 15-city tour of Germany was Chief Khoti-La-Cha, seen above with Hanover Sales Manager J. Hoffman. The Canadian Indian and a German lecturer toured the country with a two-hour presentation jointly sponsored by Air Canada, CPA and the Canadian Government Travel Bureau to promote tourist traffic from Germany to Canada.



TRANSLATING A QUESTION from one of the 80 participants in a recent Tokyo seminar reception is Cargo Sales Supervisor Kinichiro Yamaguchi. The Company's new vaning service for Sea/Air cus-

tomers was introduced at the session, conducted by Yamaguchi and District Sales Manager Ken Keith, left. Special guest was Manager, Cargo Traffic Buso Gaynor. On the right is Mr. K. Tsutsui of Nissing.